Introduction

In 1931, Isma'il Sidqi, then Prime Minister of the Egyptian Cabinet, made a request to Albert Thomas, Director of the International Labour Office, for a mission to be sent to assist the government in implementing social reforms.[1] At this time, as it was not a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), contacts with Egypt were extremely rare. By accepting the Egyptian government's invitation, Thomas hoped to stimulate the introduction of new social laws and show the ILO's support of social policy development in Egypt, while gathering information on the country's working conditions. When Harold Butler, Deputy Director of the International Labour Office, landed in Egypt in February 1932, he found a country in the midst of social and economic change.[2] In Cairo, the government asked Butler to help formulate a social policy programme suitable to industry in its "current stage of development".[3] Butler submitted a detailed report outlying the proposed legislative and administrative reforms. He also recommended a series of reforms inspired by the experiences of European countries as well as the principles laid out in the international labour Conventions. This mission of "technical assistance", as it would later be known, would lead the International Labour Office to take on an entirely new advisory function. By making international civil servants available to governments to implement new labour laws, the International Labour Office was experimenting with a novel practice in international cooperation, which would expand in the post Second World War era as part of international development programmes.[4]

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[1] Letter from Isma'il Sidqi to Albert Thomas, September 30, 1931. CAT 5 – 26 – 1 – 1 "Relations, Informations. Egypte", in the International Labour Office Archives, Geneva (hereafter ILOA).

[2] Mitchell, T. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[3] "Mr. Butler's visit to Egypt, February 1932". XT 69/3/1, ILOA.

[4] *Assistance technique en vue du développement économique. Plan d'un programme pour l'extension de la collaboration par l'entremise de l'Organisation des Nations Unies et des institutions spécialisées.* Report prepared by the Secretary-General in consultation with the deputy heads of the specialised agencies concerned, through the Administrative Committee on Coordination pursuant to Resolution 180 (VIII), New York, UNO, 1949; Boris, G. 1950. "Assistance technique et point IV: origine, principe, buts", *Politique étrangère* 5/6: 533–550; Wilcox, F. O. 1950. "The United Nations Program for Technical Assistance", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 268, 45–53; Sharp, W. 1953. "The Institutional Framework for Technical Assistance", *International Organization* 7(3): 342–379; Lengyel, P. 1960. "Le rôle de l'assistance technique dans le développement économique", *Tiers Monde* 4: 461–490 ; Owen, D. 1950. "The United Nations Program of Technical Assistance", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 270, 109–117, and "The United Nations Expanded Program of Technical As-

A Transnational and Social Approach to International Organisations

Created in 1919 by the victors of the First World War as part of the Treaty of Versailles, the ILO was a technical organisation, institutionally tied to the League of Nations.[5] It was and is still composed of an executive body known as the Governing Body (GB); the International Labour Conferences (ILC), where international labour Conventions and Recommendations are adopted; and the permanent secretariat, the International Labour Office. The latter, sometimes referred to as the Office, was tasked with implementing ILO policy, under the control of the Director and the GB. It originally acted as an international documentation centre. One of its main duties was therefore to collect, produce, and disseminate social information through scientific articles, reports and studies. In this context, international civil servants were regularly sent on missions to gather documentation, establish relations and develop any activity likely to strengthen the organisation's position. ILO action was and is still based on social dialogue as a key factor in moving towards progress and as instrumental in allowing the different components of the labour world to manage economic and social change. The ILO tripartite structure – where workers, employers and governments participate jointly in leadership – is a living embodiment of this social dialogue, ensuring that the views of all social partners are taken into account within the ILO's programmes and overall policy.[6]

The foundation of the ILO rested on the conviction that universal and lasting peace could be accomplished only if it was based on social justice. In the interwar period, its work consisted primarily in crafting international labour standards.[7] Until the end of the 1920s, ILO activity focused on the protection of work-

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sistance – A Multilateral Approach", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 323, 25 – 32; Wilcox, F. O. 1950. "The United Nations Program for Technical Assistance", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 268, 45 – 53; Blelloch, D. 1957. "Bold New Programme: A Review of United Nations Technical Assistance", *International Affairs* 33(1): 36 – 50; Blelloch, D. 1958. *Aid for Development*, Fabian Research Series, n°195, The Fabian Society; Rens, J. 1961. "L'Organisation internationale du travail et la coopération technique internationale", Revue internationale du travail 83(5): 441 – 466.

5 Ghebali, V.–Y., Ago, R., Valticos, N. 1987. *L'Organisation internationale du travail*. Genève: Georg.

6 Béguin, B. 1959. *Le Tripartisme dans l'Organisation internationale du travail*. Genève: Droz.

7 Bonvin, J.-M. 1998. *L'Organisation internationale du travail. Étude sur une agence productrice de normes*. Paris: PUF.

ers within Europe.[8] At this time, though certain Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries were members of the ILO, their importance remained limited. Moreover, far from disappearing, the colonial system was gaining new legitimacy. However, the 1930s crisis forced the ILO to reconsider the breadth of its work, and to redefine it. The rise of ultranationalisms in Europe,[9] of authoritarian regimes in Asia, the rapid fluctuation between democracy and dictatorship that marked Latin America's history during this period, competing models of economic and social modernisation driven by the USSR, Italy and Germany,[10] the resurgence of imperial policies, the implementation of protectionist measures which led to the disintegration of social protection, along with the consolidation of cartels that participated in exacerbating commercial tensions, were all perceived as signs of economic unravelling foretelling the end of globalisation.[11]

Analysing the transformations brought forth by the Great Depression, a historiography of international organisations has long insisted on the failure of the League of Nations, on its incapacity to propose coordinated economic recovery measures and to prevent the Second World War.[12] However, this research proposes, as was partially carried out for the League of Nations,[13] to test this interpretative framework by demonstrating that the 1930s crisis and the Second World War did not put an end to international cooperation, and did not entirely para-

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8 Guérin, D. 1996. *Albert Thomas* au BIT, 1920 – 1932. De l'internationalisme à l'Europe. Genève: Euryopa; Van Daele, J. 2005. "Engineering Social Peace: Networks, Ideas, and the Founding of the International Labour Organization", *International Review of Social History* 50(3): 435 – 466; Plata-Stenger, V. 2016. "Europe, the ILO and the wider world (1919 – 1954)", EGO | European History Online: http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/transnational-movements-and-organisations/interna tional-organisations-and-congresses/veronique-plata-stenger-europe-the-ilo-and-the-wider-world–1919 – 1954. [last accessed 17.09.2019]

9 Hobsbawm, E. 2008. *L'Âge des* extrêmes : *histoire du court xxe siècle : 1914 – 1991*. Bruxelles: André Versaille.

10 Fritzsche P. and Hellbeck, J. 2009. "The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany", in Fitzpatrick S. and Geyer, M. eds. 2009. *Beyond Totalitarianism*. Stalinism *and Nazism Compared*, 302 – 344. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

11 James, H. 2002. *The End* of *Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

12 See Steiner, Z. 2005. *The Lights That Failed. European International History, 1919 – 1933*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Steiner, Z. 2011. *The Triumph of the Dark. European International History, 1933 – 1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

13 Clavin, P. 2013. *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920 – 1946*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Borowy, I. 2009. *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation 1921 – 1946*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang; Pedersen, S. 2007. "Back to the League of Nations: Review Essay", *American Historical Review* 112(4): 1091 – 1117.

lyse the ILO. This work focuses in particular on the profound changes that took place in the wake of the Great Depression, beginning with the intensification of ILO activities in less industrialised countries, and the emergence of new practices in international cooperation. Originally a European institution, the ILO was forced to universalise its mandate, while in Europe, national borders were gradually closing. For the first time since the First World War, the Great Depression posed challenges on a global scale, provoking a globalising "turning point" for the ILO.[14]

These changes affecting the ILO broadly relate to the capacity of international organisations to establish themselves as international actors, and to overcome opposition between nation-states. On this topic, the debate has long been dominated by political scientists and by Anglo-Saxon international relations specialists, divided into two prevailing perspectives: the realist perspective, which denies international organisations their participation as full-fledged players; and the functionalist perspective, which considers international organisations as part of a network composed of international elites with a set of practices and skills that can be universalised.[15] As such, the historiographical renewal of the ILO is intimately tied to a willingness to analyse the capacity of international organisations to regulate international relations.[16] A significant part of the research

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14 Reference here is to Anne Rasmussen's expression regarding the changes that occured in the international movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, which she defines as a "turning point" in internationalism. 2001. "Tournant, inflexions, ruptures : le moment internationaliste", *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 1(19): 27–41.

15 For the realistic position, see Jervis, R. 1998. "Realism in the Study of World Politics", *International Organization* 52(4): 971–991. For a functionalist perspective, see Martin, L. L. and Simmons, A. B. 1998. "Theories and Empirical Studies of International Institutions", *International Organization* 52(4): 729–757; Finnemore, M. and Sikkink, K. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", *International Organization* 52(4): 887–917; Cox, R. W. et al. 1974. *The Anatomy* of *Influence: Decision Making in International Organization.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 402–409; Claude Jr., I. L. 1964. *Swords into* Plowshares: *The Problems and Progress of International Organization.* New York: Random; Haas, E. B. 1964. *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization.* Stanford: Stanford University Press; Mitrany, D. 1943. *A Working* Peace *System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization.* London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1943. On David Mitrany and his influence, see Devin, G. 2008. "Que reste-t-il du fonctionnalisme international? Relire David Mitrany (1888–1975)", *Critique internationale* 1(38): 137–152.

16 Van Daele, J. 2008. "The International Labour Organization (ILO) in Past and Present Research", *International Review of Social History* 53(3): 485–511. Literature on the ILO has grown considerably in recent years. Among the latest publications, see Droux, J., Kott, S. eds. 2013. *Globalizing Social Rights. The International Labour Organization and Beyond.* ILO Centuries Series, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Lespinet-Moret, I. and Viet, V. eds. 2011. *L'Organisation in-*

aims to restore this organisation's place within the dense fabric of social and political interactions taking place across various geopolitical spaces, using the tools of the transnational approach to do so.[17] Historian Sandrine Kott (2011) invites us to consider these organisations as "globalisation laboratories" and to understand them as "open social spaces", where transnational connections and alliances are established.[18] Transnational history aims to examine connections and transfers occuring across borders, as well as the "circulatory regimes" that can result from them[19]. However, the transnational analysis does not exclude governments as actors in this circulation of models and ideas.[20] Indeed, it can help define a quality of actor, person and/or organisation working beyond state borders, while not necessarily acting independently from the state. Regarding technical assistance, this book shows that transnational circulation occured with the knowledge of the state, which sometimes even encouraged it. Thus, circulation contributed as much to strengthening the nation-state as the latter did to foster transnational circulation.

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ternationale du travail : origine, développement, avenir. Rennes: PUR; Van Daele, J. et al. 2010. ILO Histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century. Bern: Peter Lang; Rodger, G., Swepston, L., Lee, E., Van Daele, J. 2009. The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919–2009. Geneva: ILO; See also the special issue of 2008: "Albert Thomas, société mondiale et internationalisme. Réseaux et institutions des années 1890 aux années 1930", Les Cahiers Irice 2(2). For a more general perspective, see MacKenzie, D. C. 2010. A World Beyond Borders: An Introduction to the History of International Organizations. North York: University of Toronto Press; Reinalda, B. 2009. Routledge History of International Organizations: From 1815 to the Present Day. London: Routledge, 338–344; Iriye, A. 2004. Global Community, The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World. Berkeley: University of California Press.

17 Sluga, G. 2011. "Editorial – The Transnational History of International Institutions", Journal of Global History 6(2): 219–222. In French, see the special issue directed by Sandrine Kott in 2011. "Une autre approche de la globalisation : socio-histoire des organisations internationales (1900–1940)", Critique internationale 3(52). For a reflection on the methods, tools and objects of transnational analyses, see Saunier, P.-Y. 2013. Transnational History. Theory and History. Basingstoke: Palgrave; Iriye, A. and Saunier, P.-Y. eds. 2009. The Palgrave Dictionnary of Transnational History. From the mid–19th Century to the Present Day. Basingstoke: Palgrave; Clavin, P. 2005. "Defining Transnationalism", Contemporary European History 14(4): 421–439.

18 Kott, S. 2011. "Les organisations internationales, terrains d'étude de la globalisation. Jalons pour une approche socio-historique", Critique internationale 3(52): 9–16.

19 Saunier, P.-Y. 2008. "Les régimes circulatoires du domaine social 1800–1940 : projets et ingénierie de la convergence et de la différence", Genèses 2(71): 4–25. See also Saunier, P.-Y. 2004. "Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux", Genèses 4(57): 110–126.

20 For a non-governmental definition of the transnational approach, see Clavin, P. 2005. "Defining Transnationalism", Contemporary European History 14(4): 421–439.

Drawing on the tools of the transnational approach offers great heuristic scope to examine the ILO's capacity to provide international solutions that are able to circumvent opposition among its member states.[21] While the ILO is not an international actor, insofar as it depends on the decisions of its member states, a closer look at how it functions shows that it is not totally dependent on these decisions. Driven by a "nebula" of actors and with the help of experts that were often aggregated in "epistemic communities",[22] the International Labour Office played a specific role in mobilising transnational networks; reflecting, promoting and developing certain themes;[23] increasing its influence in national spaces;[24] and diffusing international labour standards in specific areas.[25]

The uniqueness of this book stems from its focus on the activities of the civil servants at the International Labour Office. The impetus to approach an international institution from this angle stemmed from a second methodological decision. Indeed, attentive to the logic that drove the creation of these very institutions, I chose to prioritise the socio-historical lens. Insofar as it closely considers actors' relationships to these insitutions, this actor-driven approach seemed relevant to understanding the multiple dynamics at work in shaping international organisations.[26] For historians studying the archives of these international organisations, their complexity is undeniable. In the words of Albert Thomas, they are

21 Legro, J. W. 1997. "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the "Failure' of Internationalism", *International Organization* 51(1): 31–63.

22 Haas, P. M. 1992. "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination", *International Organization* 46(1): 1–35; Van Daele, J. 2005. "Engineering Social Peace: Networks, Ideas, and the Founding of the International Labour Organization", *International Review of Social History* 50(3): 435–466. Kott, S. 2008. "'Une communauté épistémique' du social? Experts de l'OIT et internationalisation des politiques sociales dans l'entre-deux-guerres", *Genèses* 2(71): 26–46.

23 Keck, M. E. and Sikkink, K. 1998. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.

24 For case studies articulating the national and international, see Hidalgo-Weber, O. 2017. *La Grande-Bretagne et l'Organisation internationale du travail (1919–1946) : Une nouvelle forme d'internationalisme*. Paris: L'Harmattan; Kott, S. 2011. "Dynamiques de l'internationalisation : L'Allemagne et l'Organisation internationale du Travail (1919–1940)", *Critique internationale* 3(52): 69–84.

25 Droux, J., Kott, S. eds. 2013. *Globalizing Social Rights. The international Labour Organization and Beyond*; Rodogno, D., Gauthier, S., and Piana, F. 2013. "What Does Transnational History Tell Us about a World with International Organizations?", in Reinalda, Bob (Ed.), 2013. *Routledge Handbook of International Organizations*, 94–105. Routledge: London.

26 Nay, O. 2011. "Éléments pour une sociologie du changement dans les organisations internationales", *Critique internationale 4(53): 9–20.*

"living things".[27] This also means that he considered the ILO to be an entity destined to grow and evolve. Thomas saw the International Labour Office as action-oriented in nature. He was one of the guiding forces behind the Office taking new initiatives and going beyond its original functions. This evolution makes the Office a particularly compelling object of study in the context of the 1930s and 1940s.

The ILO, Technical Assistance and the Seeds of International Development

One of the major changes that occurred at the ILO in the 1930s was the intensification of its activities in the European and American peripheries. Analysing the ILO's attempts at universalising its activites allows us to reframe them within the history of development.[28] It redefines the 1930s and 1940s as catalysts for promoting certain ideas on economic and social progress, along with new demands and experiences preceding the political and intellectual changes that would come after the Second World War.[29]

Much has been written about development, but historians have only been truly interested in this issue since the 1990s.[30] Although some of them have

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27 Thomas, A. 1921. "Organisation internationale du Travail : origine, développement, avenir", *Revue internationale du travail* 1(1): 21. ILOA.

28 Rist, G. 2007. *Le Développement: Histoire d'une croyance occidentale.* Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques; Hettne, B. 2009. *Thinking about Development.* London: Zed Books; Wolfgang, S. ed. 2010. *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power.* London; New York: Zed Books; Legouté, J. R. 2015. "Définir le développement : historique et dimensions d'un concept plurivoque", *Economie politique internationale. Cahier de recherche* 1(1): 5.

29 Arturo Escobar's definition of development is particularly useful to anyone wishing to analyse it in a dialectical perspective. Escobar insists on the necessity of understanding development as the result of an encounter between a certain number of ideas (rationalisation, modernity, industrialisation, technology), institutions (international organisations, national planning organisations, research institutes) and practices (statistical compilation, technical studies production, recourse to expertise). Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 40. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press.

30 Cullather, N. 2000. "Development? It's History", *Diplomatic History* 24(4): 641–653. For an overview of research on the history of development, see Unger, C. R. 2010. "Histories of Development and Modernization: Findings, Reflections, Future Research", http://hsozkult.geschichte. hu-berlin.de/forum/2010–12–001 [last accessed 17.09.2019]; Hodge, J. M. 2015. "Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave)", Humanity Journal 6(3): 429–463; Hodge, J. M.

shown that already in the interwar period some protagonists of the so-called "civilising" mission used the language of "development",[31] historiography usually sees the beginning of the Cold War as the trigger for development, referring in particular to the founding speech of US President Harry S. Truman on 20 January 1949, in which he announced, as the fourth principle of US foreign policy, the dissemination of technological know-how for the benefit of "underdeveloped" nations. In the 1950s, the domination of American social sciences contributed to infusing the notion of development with American post-war liberalism.[32] This resulted in development being viewed under a strictly economic lens, in relation to various economic theories of the times, in particular that of growth and modernisation, which had become, due to Walt W. Rostow's contributions, the dominant theoretical framework.[33] The modernisation process was also seen as a bulwark against communism, as evidenced by the subtitle Rostow gave his book: "A Non-Communist Manifesto". As a consequence, historical research themes were primarily concerned with the historical experiences of Western (American) modernisation. Development was perceived as an American instrument used to spread the market economy and liberal democracy to Third World countries.[34] Given the United States' importance in the implementation of international cooperation from the 1940s onwards, this lens has also been applied in studies on international organisations.[35]

2016. "Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider)", *Humanity Journal* 7(1): 125–174.

31 Plata-Stenger, V., Schulz, M. 2019. "Introduction." *Relations internationales*, 177(1): 3–13.

32 Latham M. E. 2000, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

33 Rostow, W. W., 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press. The 1940s also saw Development Economics gradually establish itself as a discipline in its own right in the American academic field. In 1961, UNESCO published a commented bibliography of technical co-operation programmes, containing a large number of American references. *Coopération internationale et programmes de développement économique et social*. Bibliographie commentée par Jean Viet, Comité international pour la Documentation des sciences sociales, Unesco, 1961.

34 Gilman, N. 2003. *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Ekbladh, D. 2009. *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Engerman, D. C. and Unger, C. R. 2009. "Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization", *Diplomatic History* 33(3): 375–385; Latham, M. E. 2011. *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

35 Staples, A. 2005. *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965*. Kent: Kent State Univer-

Since then, various researchers have criticised the American origin of modernisation and development.[36] Although the crucial role played by international organisations in shaping international development policy has long been overlooked, some recent work by Patricia Clavin and Margherita Zanasi for the League of Nations, as well as Guy Fiti Sinclair for the ILO, and Eric Helleiner for the GATT, recognise the importance of the interwar period, as a moment where development thinking was first articulated by international organisations.[37] This book deepens the analysis of the ILO's specific contribution and shows among other things that the United States, an ILO member since 1934, already played a role in shaping ILO's economic ideas. On this point, recent research on the history of the United States challenges the classic periodisation between the interwar and post-1945 periods.[38] I however argue that the idea of development that emerged in the 1930s cannot be reduced to an American-style modernisation

sity Press; Rist, G. 2007. *Le Développement: Histoire d'une croyance occidentale*. Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques; Stokke, O. 2009. *The UN and Development*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Helleiner, E. 2009. "The Development Mandate of International Institutions: Where Did It Come From?", *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44(3): 189–211.

36 Colonial historians were the first to question the centrality of the American framework in modernisation theories. Cooper, F. and Packard, R. eds. 1997. *International Development and the* Social *Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. Berkeley; Los Angeles [etc.]: University of California Press. See also Tournès, L. 2013. "Philanthropic foundations and the exportation of development". Conference paper presented at the "International organisations and the politics of development: historical perspective". Conference organised by the Geneva Graduate Institute and the Fondation Pierre du Bois in collaboration with the University of Geneva. Geneva, 6–7 December 2013; Murphy, N. C. 2006. *The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Jolly, R., Emmerij, L. and Ghai, D. P. eds. 2004. *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

37 Zanasi, M. 2007. "Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49(1): 143–169; Helleiner, E. 2014. *Forgotten foundations of Bretton Woods: International development and the making of the postwar order*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press; Plata-Stenger, V. 2014. "Le Bureau international du travail et la coopération technique dans l'entre-deux-guerres", *Relations internationales* 157(1): 55–69; Fiti Sinclair, G. 2016. "International Social Reform and the Invention of Development": https://ssrn.com/abstract=2842441[last accessed 12.09.2019]; Fiti Sinclair, G. 2017. *To Reform the World: International Organizations and the Making of Modern States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

38 Tournès, L. 2013. "Philanthropic foundations and the exportation of development". Conference paper presented at the "International organisations and the politics of development: historical perspective". Conference organised by the Geneva Graduate Institute and the Fondation Pierre du Bois in collaboration with the University of Geneva.

project and that, for the ILO, development was conceived much more as a social engineering project.

By underlining the importance of the interwar period, this research also challenges the widely shared notion that development was above all tied to decolonisation and that it was primarily a Third World concern.[39] The fact that development finds its source in the colonial and post-colonial eras is largely recognised among specialists.[40] However, this study insists on the need to broaden the geographic framework of development.[41] It stresses the diversity of regions invested by the ILO in the interwar period; from Central and Eastern Europe to the colonies, including China, Egypt – as evidenced by Butler's missions – and a number of Latin American countries.[42]

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39 After the Second World War, the issue of development/underdevelopment was at the centre of the debate in the social sciences. Rist, G. 2007. *Le Développement : Histoire d'une croyance occidentale*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques; Norel, P. 1986. *Nord-Sud: Les enjeux du développement.* Paris: Syros.

40 Cooper, F. and Packard, R. eds. 1997. *International Development and the* Social *Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge.* Berkeley; Los Angeles [etc.]: University of California Press. See also the special issue of the *Journal of European Modern History* edited by Andreas Eckert, Stephan Malinowski and Corinna Unger in 2010: "Modernizing Missions: Approaches to "Developing" the Non-Western World after 1945" 8(1). Some studies have also drawn interesting parallels between international development, humanitarian intervention and the practices of nineteenth-century European empires: Duffield, M. and Hewitt, V. 2009. *Empire, Development & Colonialism: The Past in the Present.* Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer.

41 Recent publications and ongoing research projects examine the relations between "North" and "South" and "East" and "South" with regards to international development. Christian, M., Kott, S., Matejka, O. 2018. *Planning in Cold War Europe. Competition, Cooperation, Circulations* (1950s-1970s). Oldenbourg: De Gruyter.

42 Recent research has paved the way for an analysis of international organisations which takes into account non-European regions between the two world wars. However, these have tended to focus mainly on the League of Nations. McPherson, A. and Wehrli, Y. 2015. *Beyond Geopolitics: New Histories of Latin America at the League of Nations.* New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press; Andrade, J. C. Y. 2014. *L'OIT et l'Amérique du Sud (1919 – 1939). La construction d'un laboratoire social regional.* Phd Diss. Paris, École des hautes études en sciences sociales; Pernet, C. 2013. "Developing Nutritional Standards and Food Policy: Latin American Reformers Between the ILO, the League of Nations Health Organization, and the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau", in Droux, J., Kott, S. eds. *Globalizing Social Rights. The International Labour Organization and Beyond*, 249 – 61; Pernet, C. "L'OIT et la question de l'alimentation en Amérique latine (1930 – 1950): Les problèmes posés par la définition internationale des normes de niveau de vie" in Lespinet-Moret, I. and Viet, V. eds. *L'Organisation internationale* du *travail : origine, développement, avenir*, 167 – 78; Herrera León, F. and Wehrli, Y. 2011. "Le BIT et l'Amérique latine durant l'entre-deux-guerres: problèmes et enjeux", in Lespinet-Moret, I. and Viet, V. eds. *L'Organisation internationale* du *travail : origine, développement, avenir*, 157 – 166.

Although the question of development increasingly rouses the interest of historians of international organisations, research projects on the ILO are rare. The main reason is that the ILO has for a long time been considered an organisation devoted solely to the production of international standards. This being said, the role of the ILO in development is better known to us today, thanks to the work of Daniel Roger Maul for the post-1945 period and Guy Fiti Sinclair for the interwar period.[43] In his study, the latter insisted on the extension of the ILO's social reform mission to non-European countries, the broadening of its competence in the economic field and the development of technical assistance. Fiti Sinclair's research represents an important contribution to the history of development, but it has a number of limitations, mainly concerning his approach to international organisations. Adopting an institutional lens, Sinclair tends to view the ILO as a monolithic organisation, free of conflict and tension. However, the various discourses at the ILO reveal a rather divided view of development.[44] The other limitation stemming from limited consultation of ILO archives, is the relative emphasis placed on the interests, rationales and skills of the actors acting on behalf of the ILO. Examining the organisation through its actors allows us, on the one hand, to specify the challenges and modalities associated with the extention of ILO activities, both geographically and technically; and, on the other hand, to better understand the scope and meaning of ideas on development and technical assistance. This is the approach taken in this book.

Intensifying relations and exchanges with less developed countries (formerly known as "less industrialised" countries) directly confronted the ILO with a new problem: the implementation of international labour standards – developed on a model shaped by the experiences of Western European industrialised societies – could only be done with great difficulty and significant limitations. This gave rise, in turn, to a reflection on the limits of the normative approach; hence the emergence of a discourse on the necessity of developing practical actions to promote social progress and the improvement of living and working conditions.

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43 Maul, D. 2012. *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940 – 70.* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. Geneva: International Labour Organization; Plata, V. 2014. "Le Bureau international du travail et la coopération technique dans l'entre-deux-guerres", *Relations internationales* 157(1), 55 – 69; Fiti Sinclair, G. 2016. "International Social Reform and the Invention of Development". SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2842441. [last accessed 12.09.2019]; Fiti Sinclair, G. 2017. "A Civilizing Task: The International Labour Organization, Social Reform and the Genealogy of Development", *Journal of the History of International Law*, 1– 53; Fiti Sinclair, G. 2017. *To Reform the World. International Organizations and the Making of Modern States.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
44 Plata-Stenger, V. 2018. "L'OIT et le problème du sous-développement en Asie dans l'entre-deux-guerres", *Le Mouvement Social* 263(2): 109 – 122.

This reflection was anchored in a set of practices, which incidentally predate the ILO's own existence. Indeed, before contributing to its internationalisation, the ILO drew inspiration, first and foremost, from the European social reformist movement. It was the bearer of a particular view on development, based on the belief that a world order could be built on common legal principles, equally applicable to all peoples and cultures. It was also founded on the notion that societies can be transformed by science, a hypothesis that rests at the heart of the social engineering project developed since the end of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States. The ILO's development thinking rested on three principles: international organisation of the economy with the aim of improving the living standards of workers, economic and social planning, and modernisation.[45] This analysis focuses on these themes, for three core reasons. First, because they significantly mobilised ILO international civil servants during the 1930s and earlier, and were the source of major scientific and documentary production. Second, because they reflect the aspirations and demands of a large portion of ILO members at the time, especially the workers, namely that the organisation be used as an instrument to regulate and organise the economy. Third, because these themes did not disappear with the end of the Second World War and continued to infuse the ILO's rationale during the implementation of its post-war action program, both for the reconstruction of Europe and for development.[46]

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45 Regarding the economic ideas developed by the ILO, see Aglan, A., Feiertag, O., and Kevonian, D. eds. 2011. *Humaniser le travail. Régimes économiques, régimes politiques et Organisation internationale du Travail 1929 – 1969.* Bruxelles, Bern: PIE Lang; Endres, A. M., and Fleming, G. A. 2002. *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy, 1919 – 1950.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. For a study of economic networks and their interactions with international organisations in the interwar period, see Clavin, P. and Wessels, J.-W. 2005. "Transnationalism and the League of Nations: Understanding the Work of its Economic and Financial Organisation", *Contemporary European History* 14(4): 465 – 492, Decorzant, Y. 2011. *La Société des Nations et la naissance d'une conception de la régulation économique internationale,* Bruxelles: Peter Lang; Clavin, P. 2013. *Securing the World Economy.*

46 Historians of Europe have recently tried to link development to European history, not only for the post-war period, but also for the beginning of the twentieth century, and even to some extent, the end of the nineteenth century. These researchers invite us not only to go beyond the category of reconstruction, but also to understand how the idea of development was designed in Europe and then disseminated in developing countries. Grabas, C. and Nützenadel, A. 2014. *Industrial Policy in Europe after 1945: Wealth, Power and Economic Development in the Cold War*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. A conference on this topic was organised by Michele Alacevich, Sandrine Kott and Mark Mazower: "Development and Underdevelopment in Post-War Europe". The Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University, 10 October 2014. Paul N. Rosenstein-Rodan's article was perhaps the first to recall the importance of Central

Another important contribution made by this book is the attention paid to practices, often overlooked by historiographies on development. Analyses that have stressed the importance of the interwar period and the 1940s as a laboratory for practices on international development predominantly focus on the technical activities of the League of Nations.[47] Regarding the ILO, little exists on the subject.[48] Although development only became enshrined as an institutionalised practice after the Second World War, examining ILO activities shows that some tools first emerged in the 1930s, before development programmes genuinely took shape. For instance, the ILO became a space to gradually build knowledge and craft scientific techniques of development. The study of the modes of knowledge production on development is a little-known field and existing research has primarily focused on poverty and gross domestic product (GDP) measurement.[49] Another significant contribution made by this research is therefore to shed light on the ILO's role as a space where development science was gradually built. This study also focuses on the missions of technical assistance organised by the International Labour Office, which reflect the key role played by advice and expertise in the diffusion of an international social normativity. These missions were born of growing ties between the implementation of social standards, measures to combat the effect of the Great Depression and increasing government involvement in economic organisation. In the 1930s the ILO, much like

Europe as a field for development: Rosenstein-Rodan, P. N. 1944. "The International Development of Economically Backward Areas", *International Affairs* 20(2) 157–165. For a historiographical discussion, see Mazower, M. 2011. "Reconstruction. The Historiographical Issues", in Mazower, M., Reinisch, J., Feldman, D. eds. *Post–war Reconstruction in Europe. International Perspectives, 1945–1949*, 17–28. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

47 Osterhammel, J. 1979. "Technical Co-Operation between the League of Nations and China", *Modern Asian Studies* 13(4): 661–680; Zanasi, M. 2007. "Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49(1): 143–169; Beyersdorf, F. 2011. "'Credit or Chaos'? The Austrian Stabilisation Programme of 1923 and the League of Nations", in Laqua, D. ed. *Internationalism Reconfigured. Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, 135–157. London: Tauris.

48 Dupuy, M. 1956. *L'Assistance technique et financière aux pays insuffisamment développés.* Ed. A. Pedone: Paris; Johnston, G. 1970. *The International Labour Organisation. Its Work for Social and Economic Progress.* London: Europa Publications; Alcock, A. 1971. *History of the International Labour Organisation*, 134–148. London: Palgrave Macmillan; Ghebali, V.-Y. 1975. "Organisation internationale et guerre mondiale. Le cas de la société des nations et de l'organisation internationale du travail pendant la seconde guerre mondiale." PhD. dissert., Science politique, Grenoble 2, 47–48.

49 Speich Chassé, D. 2008. "Traveling with the GDP Through Early Development Economics History", *Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do Facts Travel?*", n°33. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/22501/1/3308Speich.pdf. [last accessed 12.09.2019].

the League of Nations, conceived of the economy as a problem specific to social action, requiring scientific analysis and political regulation. It is precisely in this context that the International Labour Office's missions of technical assistance are analysed, missions through which the Office promoted the diffusion of modern social practices and standards, state involvement in economic organisation and the institutionalisation of social policy.[50] However, strictly speaking the interwar period saw no development programmes such as those that emerged in the 1940s.[51]

Analysing the missions of technical assistance shines light on the transnational dimension of the construction of the welfare state.[52] This study pays particular attention to issues such as the methods used, as well as collaborative or oppositional dynamics surrounding exchange practices. However, this book assesses the impacts of technical assistance from the perspective of the International Labour Office and offers little insights on the effects of social reforms in certain countries. It instead sheds light on the available resources and means mobilised by international experts, which remain under explored today.[53] It is striking how little attention has been given to individual actors, to the "experts" themselves, located as they were at the very heart of the modernisation process.[54] A detailed analysis of these practices aims to elucidate the means by

50 Théry, I. 2005. "Expertises de service, de consensus, d'engagement : essai de typologie de la mission d'expertise en sciences sociales", *Droit et Société 2*(60): 311–329.

51 As William C. Kirby points out with regard to the League's experts: "Never was there articulated a developmental philosophy behind all their activities. There was, however, a consistent pattern of advice regarding economic, technical, and educational development in favor of a state-managed, centralised approach to economic development emphasising the promise of scientific and engineering expertise." Kirby, W. C. 2000. "Engineering China: Birth of the Developmental State, 1928–1937", in Yeh, W.-H. ed. *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and beyond*, 147–148. Berkeley: University of California Press.

52 There are a number of publications that explore the construction of the welfare state in Europe on an international scale. For those studying the role of the ILO, see Kettunen, P. 2013. "The ILO as a Forum for Developing and Demonstrating a Nordic Model", in Droux, J., Kott, S. eds. *Globalizing Social Rights. The international Labour Organization and Beyond*, 210–230; Kott, S. 2010. "Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period", in Van Daele, J. et al. *ILO Histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century*, 173–196.

53 Backouche, I. 2006. "Expertise", *Genèses* 65(4): 2–3. This journal devoted two special issues to the theme of expertise, in 2006 and 2008.

54 There are some exceptions. Webster, D. 2011. "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization: The United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950–1959", *Journal of Global History* 6(2): 249–272; Hodge, J. M. 2010. "British Colonial Expertise, Post-Colonial Carreering and the Early History of International Development", *Journal of Modern European His-

which international experts came to influence reform processes. This requires us, however, to go beyond a purely instrumental view of international expertise, and to look to knowledge models. This approach is directly inspired by the contributions made by the postmodern critique of the late 1970s, which marked an important evolution in the study of development. The most critical authors, such as Gilbert Rist, Arturo Escobar, Wolfgang Sachs and Serge Latouche, insisted on the necessity of deconstructing the framework surrounding ideas on development, which they saw above all as a component of Western imperialism.[55] Though it is clear that the International Labour Office's technical assistance functioned as a system, dominated by representations of Western countries and marked by a civilising ideology, this research focuses in particular on the material and psychological conditions out of which experts emerged, the type of expertise they were asked to provide, and the strategies they put in place to insure the promotion of ILO models. A sociological study of expertise is hence proposed, with the aim of uncovering the social resources that gave these agents the authority to act on an international scale, focusing in particular on their training and professional careers in the national space.

Archival Materials

The archives held at the ILO in Geneva constitute the main body of sources used in this research. Since development was not an institutionalised practice in the 1930s and 1940s, I began by collecting the materials on the general activities of the ILO (series G), in particular one of its sub-series, which contains all the missions of international civil servants and related activities (series G 900). This initial work made it possible to identify the ILO's missions of technical assistance. The information collected was then systematically cross-referenced with the official reports of ILO Directors, as well as the minutes of ILCs and GB meetings

tory, Special Issue on "Modernizing Missions: Approaches to 'Developing' the Non-Western World after 1945" 8(1): 24–46; Zanasi, M. 2007. "Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49(1): 143–169; Mitchell, T. 2002. *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity.* Berkeley [etc.]: University of California Press.

55 Rist, G. 2007. *Le Développement: Histoire d'une croyance occidentale.* Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques; Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, 40. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press; Wolfgang, S. ed. 2010. *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power.* London; New York: Zed Books; Latouche, S. 2005. *L'Occidentalisation du monde. Essai sur la signification, la portée et les limites de l'uniformisation planétaire.* Paris: La Découverte.

between 1929 and 1949. The relatively small number of missions of technical assistance carried out during this period encouraged me to adopt a global approach. However, due to the limitations of the available information, I was not able to analyse all missions with equivalent qualitative treatment. However, some of them, which involve inter-institutional collaboration, were further investigated in other archival collections held at UNESCO in Paris and at the Rockefeller Archive Center in New York. From these missions, it was possible to explore a rich and complex set of themes, which in turn mobilised a considerable number of ILO archives, ranging from the Cabinet files, the various Divisions and Sections files, to the reports and studies produced by ILO civil servants, as well as articles published in specialised journals and the *International Labour Review*. In order to reflect the importance of the actors, a central aspect of this research, I have also carried out a systematic examination of the personal files of ILO civil servants, which allowed me to propose a typology of the expert engaged in technical assistance between the two world wars and, more generally, to understand the role of international organisations in the construction of new socio-professional identities. This information was supplemented by the consultation of private archival funds, which made it possible to place international civil servants in specific environments and to restore the logic of their national trajectory before entering the ILO. Finally, I also had the opportunity to consult the National Archives and Records Administration archives in Washington, in particular the holdings of the Labor Department and the Social Security Board (SSB). These archives were intended to provide a better understanding of the collaborations between the ILO and the United States administration, particularly in the context of the Second World War. However, these funds, which are largely dedicated to domestic activities, provide little information on these aspects, and ILO files generally contain duplicates of existing documents in the ILO archives.

Research Structure

This book is structured using two thematic sections. The first analyses the links between the emergence of a development discourse and the technical and geographical expansion of the ILO. In this section, I argue that the ILO universalisation strategy goes hand in hand with a growing concern for the application of international conventions in less industrialised countries within and outside Europe, the rebalancing of the world economy and, more generally, for the ILO's place and purpose in an expanding world. This last point is important and makes it possible to consider the emergence of development ideas and technical assistance as an aspect of the international technical diplomacy that the ILO was

trying to build at that time. Chapter 1 demonstrates that Europe was a particularly important experiential laboratory for the ILO. The discourse of the Office Directors and its work on the elaboration of an international normativity on national and international social planning reveals the seeds of a reflection on the role of public investment in resource development in Europe and its less developed regions. For Albert Thomas, state intervention and public works were the keys to national and international economic development and social progress. He tried to persuade ILO members, albeit with limited success, of the necessity to organise an international public works programme as a way not only to fight massive unemployment, but also to develop consumption and production, especially in Eastern Europe. The way in which the Office sought to lead Europe out of the economic crisis attests to the emergence of a matrix thinking on development. Chapter 2 analyses the development of collaborations with Latin America that were at the heart of new institutional practices, such as ILO regional conferences. Chapter 3 focuses on the Office's work in Asia. It shows how the ILO participated in the construction of the "under-development" issue, while seeking to export social progress to Asia. The strengthening of international cooperation with this region in the 1930s was above all motivated by a desire to find solutions to the risks of economic and social dumping in less developed countries. The evolution of the Office's perception of social problems in the colonies, especially India, sheds light on the will to inscribe the question of colonial labour within the broader frameworks of production modernisation, as well as nutrition and housing improvement. Madeleine Herren (2013), examining the case of India, exposed how this colony managed to use the international platform offered by the ILO to articulate new demands and achieve a certain form of political independence.[56] My analysis strives to pursue this matter further by linking the ILO's colonial activities with the theme of development. While, in the 1930s, the ILO attempted to "modernise" practices without questioning colonial exploitation – a phenomenon already perceived by other colonial historians[57] – its reflections took place in an ambiguous context, marked by European imperialism and its "civilising mission" on the one hand, and the desire to liberalise trade (a central aspect of US internationalism) and to integrate the colonies into the international economy on the other hand.

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56 Herren, M. 2013. "Global corporatism after World War I, the Indian case", in Droux, J., Kott, S. eds. *Globalizing Social Rights. The international Labour Organization and Beyond*, 137–152.
57 Cooper, F. 1997. "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept", in Cooper, F. and Packard R. eds. *International Development and the Social Sciences*, 64–192. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The second section of the book is concerned with the emergence of development tools and practices. Chapter 4 focuses on how the Office scientifically defined and constructed the notion of "standard of living", which became central in the debates on how the ILO could develop economic exchanges and drive the integration of less developed countries into the international economy. An analysis of statistical research on workers' standard of living, along with the first attempts to define the concept and the elaboration of methods allowing international comparison of living standards illustrates how a science of development was gradually being formulated by the International Labour Office. Chapter 5 takes a closer look at the actors that were mobilised for the missions of technical assistance. A study of international civil servants' profiles and careers, along with the prevailing logic that led to their recruitment is crucial if we are to understand the Office's use of technical assistance. Chapters 6 and 7 provide two case studies, namely the missions to Romania and Greece in 1930, as well as Venezuela between 1936 and 1938. These case studies aim to provide a concrete vision of the ILO's practice of technical assistance. In turn, the difficulties stemming from the geographic displacement of the actors' cultural backgrounds at the time provide a reflection on the limits of technical assistance, and on the impact it may have had on the civil servants involved. This research ends with the Second World War, where the Office's technical assistance efforts continued. Chapter 8 interrogates the impact of the war on technical assistance and measures the extent to which the conflict provided new intellectual and institutional grounds for the ILO's involvement in development after 1945.