

EWIS 2019 Call for Papers

Extraterritoriality in 19th Century International Relations and Global Inequality Today

Workshop Conveners:

Felix Rösch, Coventry University (ab3522@coventry.ac.uk)

Atsuko Watanabe, University of Tokyo (a.watanabe@ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp)

Workshop Summary

This workshop aims to explore unequal treaties in the nineteenth century that contributed to the current world political order with the intention to investigate the resulting extraterritoriality, i.e. Westerners were exempt from local jurisdiction, for contemporary international politics. For example, in Japan, the first of these treaties were the Anglo-Japanese Friendship Treaty and the Japanese-American Convention of Kanagawa in 1854. In the following decade, several more such treaties were signed with mainly European states like Austria-Hungary, Prussia, France, Spain, and the Netherlands. Conventional contemporary narratives argue that extraterritoriality epitomised for these countries that they were not considered an equal partner within the international, albeit Western dominated society, and that they had to undergo a series of political, socio-economic, and technological reforms to be no longer treated as an “abnormal” state. Such ‘unequal’ treaties were concluded between Western and Non-Western countries, but also within non-Western contexts only. As our workshop intends to excavate, reinvestigating these treaties is important not just to understand the modern historical narratives of these countries, but it also has wider implications for contemporary international relations, as they played a prominent role in constructing the current Western dominated world order. Furthermore, it also helps to gain a deeper understanding about contemporary forms of inequality around the globe and consider pathways to sustain more global equality within and among people and in consideration of natural environments.

Despite this importance, these treaties have not yet received a comprehensive historical and political assessment. However, a reconsideration encourages scholars to challenge dominant geopolitical readings in which the Western domination of world politics was consolidated. Moreover, this intellectual negligence is due to the problématique of modern science that has established a Eurocentric structure of knowledge. Challenging this dominant picture of modern international politics is this workshop’s ambition. In doing so, we do not intend to search for an alternative world political order, but investigating the plurality of the historical context in which the unequal treaties were signed enables the provision of a deeper understanding of how the current world political order evolved, highlighting the significant role unequal treaties played in it. From reconsidering them and the question of extraterritoriality, we also strive to derive greater understanding about contemporary global inequality.

We invite contributions from all theoretical backgrounds and all geographical focuses, but we are particularly interested in contributions that address one or more of the following questions:

- In what way did unequal treaties concluded in the nineteenth century contribute to the development of the contemporary hierarchical, largely Western dominated world order?
- What role did specific countries and/or individuals play in bringing these treaties about and in ending them?
- How did extraterritoriality affect specific groups of people?
- What was the role of inequality between the states in the formation of the current world order, both materially and discursively?
- Can a reconsideration of these unequal treaties help us to envision a more equal and peaceful world order, more suitable for twenty-first century realities and if so how?