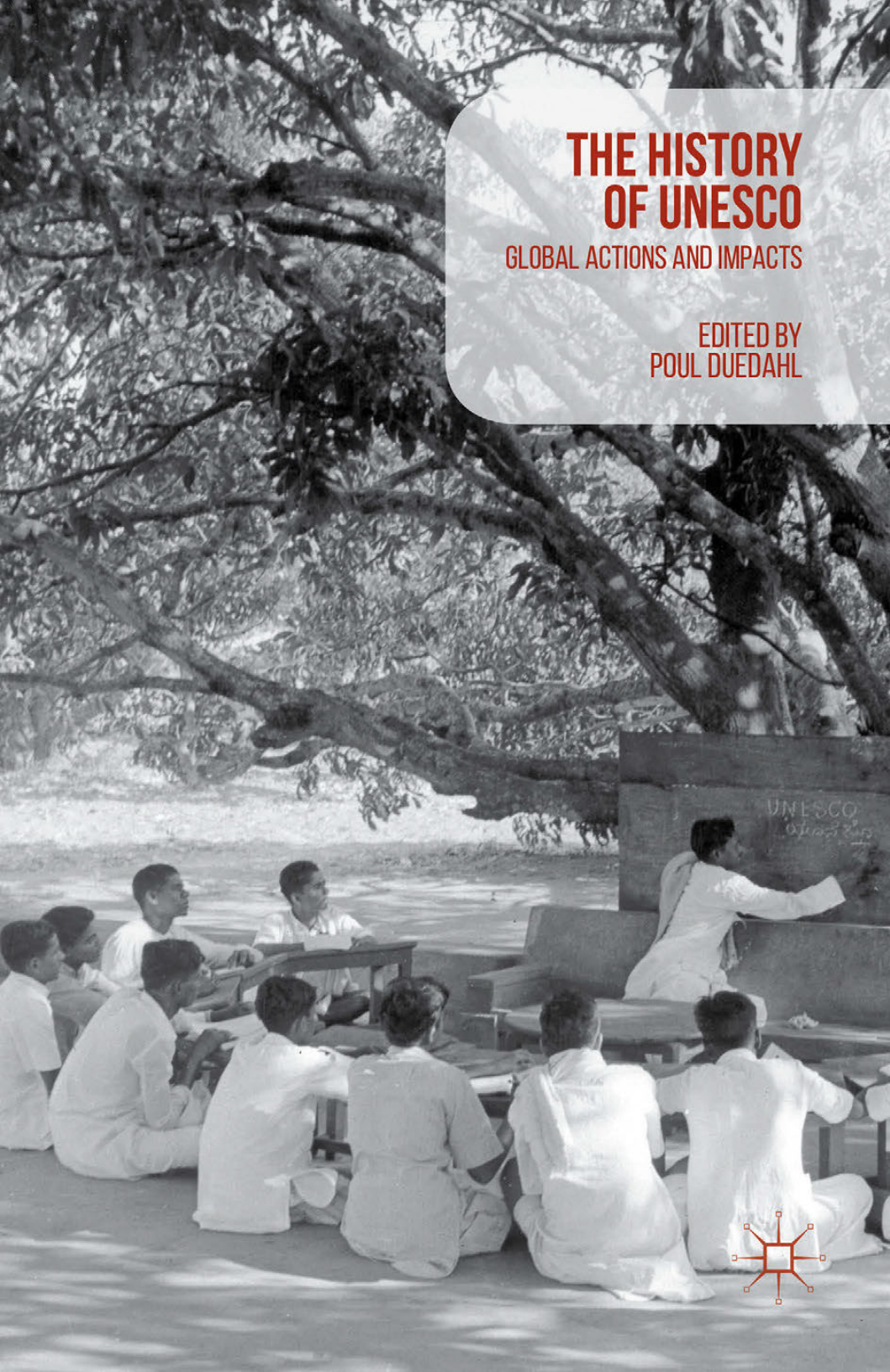


# THE HISTORY OF UNESCO

GLOBAL ACTIONS AND IMPACTS

EDITED BY  
POUL DUEDAHL



# A History of UNESCO

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# A History of UNESCO

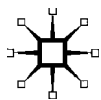
## Global Actions and Impacts

Edited by

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The establishment of UNESCO was a direct response to the violent actions during World War II. Here is a street scene from Siegburg, Germany, in April 1945. A German woman runs through the streets with what belongings she is able to carry, as the American and German troops battle for control of the city. (Photographer: Troy A. Peters, US Army)

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# Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xi
Introduction: Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945–2015 <i>Poul Duedahl</i>	3
<b>Part I Routes of Knowledge</b>	
1 Popularizing Anthropology, Combating Racism: Alfred Métraux at <i>The UNESCO Courier</i> <i>Edgardo C. Krebs</i>	29
2 Weapons of Mass Distribution: UNESCO and the Impact of Books <i>Céline Giton</i>	49
3 And Action! UN and UNESCO Coordinating Information Films, 1945–1951 <i>Suzanne Langlois</i>	73
<b>Part II Rebuilding a World Devastated by War</b>	
4 Bringing Everyone to Trogen: UNESCO and the Promotion of an International Model of Children’s Communities after World War II <i>Samuel Boussion, Mathias Gardet and Martine Ruchat</i>	99
5 Returning to the International Community: UNESCO and Post-war Japan, 1945–1951 <i>Takashi Saikawa</i>	116
6 UNESCO, Reconstruction, and Pursuing Peace through a “Library-Minded” World, 1945–1950 <i>Miriam Intrator</i>	131
<b>Part III Experts on the Ground</b>	
7 UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946–1958: Vision, Actions and Impact <i>Jens Boel</i>	153



- 8 Education for Independence: UNESCO in the Post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo 168  
*Josué Mikobi Dikay*
- 9 The Flow of UNESCO Experts toward Latin America: On the Asymmetrical Impact of the Missions, 1947–1984 181  
*Anabella Abarzúa Cutroni*

#### **Part IV Implementing Peace in the Mind**

- 10 UNESCO Teaches History: Implementing International Understanding in Sweden 201  
*Thomas Nygren*
- 11 UNESCO and the Improvement of History Textbooks in Mexico, 1945–1960 231  
*Inés Dussel and Christian Ydesen*
- 12 UNESCO's Role in East Asian Reconciliation: Post-war Japan and International Understanding 257  
*Aigul Kulnazarova*

#### **Part V Practising World Heritage**

- 13 UNESCO and the Shaping of Global Heritage 279  
*Aurélié Élisa Gfeller and Jaci Eisenberg*
- 14 Safeguarding Iran and Afghanistan: On UNESCO's Efforts in the Field of Archeology 300  
*Agnès Borde Meyer*
- 15 UNESCO and Chinese Heritage: An Ongoing Campaign to Achieve World-Class Standards 313  
*Celine Lai*

- Index* 325

# Figures and Tables

## Figures

I.1	The Egyptian delegation outside UNESCO House in Avenue Kléber near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, November 1946	2
I.2	Young woman who participated in a UNESCO fundamental education class describes the books to village children in the Kumasi region, Ghana, 1959	24
I.3	Fundamental education, Iraq, 1958	25
PI.1	Director-General Luther H. Evans makes a radio broadcast in October 1954 during which he presents a gift for the UN Korean Reconstruction Agency. The collected funds were used to establish a UNESCO children's ward at the Tongnae Rehabilitation Centre in Korea	26
PII.1	Terezska, a girl at a special school for war-handicapped children in Warsaw, Poland, drawing a picture of "home" in 1948, not knowing what a home is after a childhood spent in a concentration camp. The photo was first published in <i>Children of Europe</i> , a UNESCO publication chronicling the situation of children in five countries devastated by World War II	96
PIII.1	School of Technology at the National University of Engineering in Lima, Peru, 1967. The post-secondary school for the training of technicians in the fields of mechanics, electricity and chemical processing was funded by UNDP while UNESCO was responsible for the implementation of the project	150
9.1	Number of UNESCO experts sent on missions worldwide, 1969–1984	185
9.2	Number of experts received by Latin America, 1969–1984	187
9.3	UNESCO science missions in Latin America by discipline, 1947–1973	192
PIV.1	Lessons about the UN and its specialized agencies were being introduced into schools all over the world after World War II as the best means of bridging the gap between nations. The teaching methods had been worked out by UNESCO and aimed to promote international understanding	198

10.1	Number of students, as percentage of total, writing their essays about various historical topics, on the basis of existing statistics, 1952–1957	214
10.2	Individual projects and essays in history with clear geographical orientations	215
10.3	Orientations in titles toward more marginalized groups and phenomena	216
10.4	The relationship between the international guidelines for international understanding and other curricular levels and the world at large	219
PV.1	Afghan boys play football near where one of the Buddhas of Bamiyan once stood. Subsequent to the 2001 destruction of the two giant standing Buddha statues by the Taliban, UNESCO in 2003 simultaneously inscribed the cultural landscape of the Bamiyan Valley onto the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger Conducting UNESCO's Nubia Campaign, Abu Simbel, Egypt, 1966	276

## **Tables**

9.1	Experts sent to Latin America by country, 1947–1984	188
9.2	Orientation of the missions carried out in Latin America, 1947–1973	189
9.3	Missions by thematic orientation for the ten Latin American states that requested the greatest number of experts from 1947 to 1973	190
10.1	Sources reviewed at different curricular levels	203

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*Figure 1.1* The Egyptian delegation outside UNESCO House in Avenue Kléber near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, November 1946. (© UNESCO)

# Introduction

## Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945–2015

*Poul Duedahl*

In the era of globalization, there is a need for research which explains the cause and the importance of transnational phenomena that affect people's lives. International organizations are obvious objects of analysis in order to achieve a deeper understanding of some of the more prominent and organized transnational issues characterizing the 20th century because they are specific places – headquarters with offices, meeting rooms and conference facilities – where people meet beyond national borders and exchange knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

An organization that has attracted much attention in recent years is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), founded in November 1945. Its initial mission was to ensure peace and security by carrying out a considerable amount of mental engineering in the shadow of the aggression of World War II. As stated in the preamble to its constitution, “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.”<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the organization's anniversary in 2005, UNESCO was only subject to scattered attempts at writing its history. The publications were often sketchy reference works commissioned by the organization itself and written on the basis of published material produced by UNESCO, and not its unpublished, administrative documents.<sup>3</sup> In 2005 it then arranged the first of a series of conferences on its history and launched the UNESCO History Project, the objective of which was to encourage research on the history of the organization and use its holdings of archival material. The subsequent research has exposed UNESCO as an excellent prism reflecting ways of thinking that became popular on a global scale in the post-war period in the fields of science, education and culture. However, the research has still not convincingly revealed UNESCO's particular role in disseminating these thought patterns. In fact, one tendency has more or less dominated the research: that of making retrospective analyses focus on UNESCO's initiatives and their roots rather than their impact. This focus on “intellectual history” characterizes the larger overviews, the more detailed studies on the

specific UNESCO departments' history as well as those of specific initiatives. The same strategy applies to the research on the headquarters' physical architecture and the employees' view on art; the organization's key concepts such as universalism, cultural relativism, multiculturalism, internationalization and cultural diversity, as they were formulated in-house; and the research on some of the organization's more influential personalities. In every case the center of attention is UNESCO House in Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Historians have in other words uncovered the roots of many of the soft power initiatives launched to construct sincere solidarity between people, but we still know very little about their subsequent impact. Consequently, UNESCO has come to appear as an organization reflecting contemporary intellectual trends rather than influencing them. It does, of course, make good sense that historians first try to understand the organization's initiatives before assessing their influence on the outside world, but after 70 years of history it also seems appropriate to take it a step further. The organization is, after all, much more than a physical building in Paris and a producer of piles of documents.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the history of the reception of UNESCO's initiatives has not already been written has many reasons. It is not that it is considered irrelevant; quite the opposite. In fact, most historians will most likely acknowledge the importance of historical impact studies, even though they do not make them themselves, because of the fact that the organization's activities were launched in order to contribute to its overall mission of constructing peace in the minds of people outside UNESCO House. The main reason is that they are often relatively easy to begin with but become rather difficult to complete in a fully satisfactory way, which is again a matter of what kind of impact you are looking for.

Let me demonstrate both the easiness and the relatively difficult task of making historical impact analyses by highlighting two of UNESCO's most prominent initiatives in its history. The first came into being after the decision to build the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, which flooded the valley containing the Abu Simbel temples, a treasure of ancient Egyptian civilization. In 1959, after an appeal from the governments of Egypt and Sudan, UNESCO launched an international safeguarding campaign that mobilized international attention on a worldwide scale – from Jacqueline Kennedy to people in the poorest countries buying UNESCO stamps – to support archaeological research in the areas to be flooded and to remove the Abu Simbel and Philae temples and reassemble them elsewhere. The temples at their new locations are undeniably physical evidence of the potential impact of a UNESCO initiative. Also the impact of the subsequent world heritage declarations – the history of which is mentioned by Aurélie Elisa Gfeller and Jaci Eisenberg (Chapter 13) – is to a certain degree possible to show in physical ways, for both its positive, intended and its negative, unintended consequences.



It is much more difficult when we get even closer to what is at the heart of UNESCO's mission – namely, to change mindsets. One of UNESCO's early initiatives in that field was to launch a program that was supposed to combat racial inequality. Most scholars have so far primarily focused on the roots of the program, not least on how the four statements on race, made by experts within the field and issued by UNESCO from 1950 to 1967, came into being.<sup>6</sup>

The statements all stressed human equality. However, to eliminate thinking in terms of superior and inferior races among a large number of people takes more than issuing a statement; its existence has to be known of by people outside UNESCO House. The organization's Department of Social Science therefore sent the statements to a range of scientists, scientific journals, national commissions, newspapers, magazines and so on, and this created a lot of publicity. An inventory of the press clippings that UNESCO managed to collect in 1950 shows that it was mentioned in 133 news articles, 62 in-depth articles and leaders, and eight major news reports from all over the world. The text was also reproduced in full in three magazines, and it was estimated that there were an additional 50–75 articles that UNESCO staff had not tracked. In addition, there was some radio publicity and the distribution of thousands of copies of the statements. "Whenever it is, whatever form it takes, racism is an evil force, and to the extent that UNESCO can kill it by the truth, it will do good," *The New York Times* proclaimed.<sup>7</sup>

Also *The UNESCO Courier*, the organization's popular journal of the time, had an important role to play in the promotion of the race statements, as one can read in Edgardo C. Krebs' contribution (Chapter 1). Promoting such a viewpoint to a range of people and in huge numbers is in itself an impact, but a physical impact, and also an indication that there might have been a subsequent and even more far-reaching mental impact of the kind that UNESCO was put in the world to achieve. But it is not proof.

To reach an even wider audience and for a longer timespan, the Department of Mass Communications suggested that the organization should also engage a number of recognized researchers to write about different topics in relation to race, based on the viewpoints in the statements. UNESCO managed to launch three series of publications – *The Race Question and Modern Science*, *The Race Question and Modern Thought*, and *Race and Society* – each of them consisting of a number of small pamphlets in French and English. However, it soon turned out that the pamphlets had problems reaching the "man in the street" in most of the member states. This was first and foremost because they were written in languages that were foreign to people in many countries, but also, as a study from New York University showed, because they were too difficult to understand. The reader required at least a high-school degree to grasp the content. In addition, their layout was not very engaging.<sup>8</sup>

This fact indicates that the campaign was not as efficient as UNESCO had wished. In the long run, the publications were nevertheless able to infiltrate

national education systems because they were written by recognized scientists, were discussed and used in leading scientific journals, and represented a steady bombardment of publications that at least physical anthropologists had to deal with. In the early 1950s they were among UNESCO's best-selling publications and represented a substantial proportion of all the new titles published in the USA in the field of anthropology, and by the late 1950s they had been translated into 13 languages and more than 300,000 copies had been printed.

That had consequences, of course, but not always the ones intended by UNESCO. In the USA, some of the publications were severely criticized, and in Los Angeles, all UNESCO publications were eventually banished from the public school system in 1953, which again led to apprehension among school administrators all over the USA concerning the use in public schools of any of UNESCO's publications, regardless of their content. South Africa even withdrew from UNESCO in 1956 as a consequence of the race pamphlets and what was felt to be the organization's interference in internal affairs.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, these incidents only added to the public's awareness of the issues, and in some cases we actually have proof that the publications not only reached the intended audience – people on the ground, or at least some of the leading figures – but also influenced them: “UNESCO came out with a study that said that blacks – at that time Negroes – were not inferior, and there was no fundamental genetic difference between blacks and whites. We were determined in our differences by social conditions,” recalls, for example, the famous US Civil Rights activist Revd Jesse Jackson. He got to know the statements and pamphlets around 1960.

We went around the South giving speeches, holding up the UNESCO study, saying that blacks were not inferior. A world body had studied and concluded that we were not inferior. It was a big deal. UNESCO, a world body – not some Southern segregated school, not some Southern governor, not even the President – UNESCO said we were not inferior.<sup>10</sup>

Also, as the cases on segregation reached the US Supreme Court, the outcome of UNESCO's race program would play a role. On several occasions during the 1950s and 1960s, experts affiliated with UNESCO and its race program were brought in as expert witnesses and the statements on race were highlighted as the newest available research, paving the way towards the eradication of state-approved segregation.<sup>11</sup> In 1967, for example, the US Supreme Court drew heavily upon them in its landmark decision to declare those laws unconstitutional that banned interracial marriages.<sup>12</sup>

There is therefore no doubt that the statements and the authority with which the experts spoke had a psychological impact, and that to some degree, due to the early date of the release of the statements, they paved

the way for a new way of thinking. However, with regard to the exact extent and range of UNESCO's impact in relation to the race question, this remains unknown and is for future historians to figure out.

One could mention a lot of other activities outside UNESCO House of which it would be possible, whether easy or difficult, to study using historical impact analysis because, in fact, "direct action" in the shape of pilot projects, expert missions, experimental centers and regional offices – far away from the headquarters – was from the very beginning one of the organization's most prominent working methods, and UNESCO was – and remains – the only branch of the UN family with a network of national commissions.<sup>13</sup> Even though these commissions are often branches of the national educational or cultural ministries, and thus not part of the organization as such, their task is still to select and implement its policies in the world outside UNESCO House, in the member states, and to feed the headquarters with information about national viewpoints and local needs. These field operations and the collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations are very much a part of UNESCO's history, and their history deserves to be written down – not despite the fact, but rather because, they indicate that the impact of the very same initiative most likely varies from place to place.

The focus of this book is therefore on the routes rather than the roots of UNESCO's initiatives, and on the local interventions and their impacts rather than the global initiatives and the ideas behind them. It is important to stress that it is not a book about successes and failures. Impact is a neutral concept which can be observed, whereas the proclamation of successes and failures depend on the eyes of the beholder. The race statements mentioned above were, for instance, conceived as a success by politicians in Brazil, which saw their country as a racial melting-pot, whereas they were conceived as a gross failure by politicians in Apartheid South Africa. But it is hard to deny that the statements had an impact. Impact – the change attributed to UNESCO initiatives, whether good or bad, intended or unintended – is what this book is about. A number of scholars (of which I have already mentioned a couple) have for this purpose been invited to write to contribute to this first attempt at tracing the routes of various UNESCO initiatives from the center to the periphery – from the organization's headquarters in Paris to the member states – to assess its exact impact on mindsets in the wake of World War II.

To do this we have asked all of them to base their contribution to this volume upon one or more of the following research questions:

- How were ideas and initiatives transmitted in practice from UNESCO headquarters in Paris to the member states?
- How did the UNESCO-related national institutions work in practice, and what distribution channels did they have with regard to the different populations?

- Were UNESCO's initiatives implemented equally in all member states?
- What explains country-specific priorities?
- How were initiatives made acceptable to the different populations?
- What effect did the implementation of UNESCO's specific initiatives have on changing people's mindsets? And where this cannot be unambiguously determined, was knowledge transferred, domesticated and made available for the construction of "peace in the minds of men"?

## **Theoretical, conceptual and methodological framework**

This book draws on globalization theories, which indicate that interventions of international organizations have in fact been shaping the lives of individuals everywhere in the world for at least half a century, and on impact assessment methodologies used by governments and international organizations to produce their own precise performance data.<sup>14</sup>

The focus of this volume on the routes rather than the roots of knowledge is on the very hypothesis which underlies these approaches – namely, the close relationship between ideas, initiatives, interventions and impacts, leaving it to the researcher to determine the exact results (impact) attained by an activity (intervention) designed to accomplish a valued goal or objective of a program (initiative) based on the reflections of its inventors (idea).

The above theories and concepts are very practical in the sense that they point at the kind of documents which could prove useful for historians wanting to study transnational interventions and local impacts, while the methods are designed to answer questions about whether a certain initiative actually made a difference – in this case according to the historical documents.<sup>15</sup>

Such a study requires the identification of a number of key factors, as detailed below.

### **Identification of global initiatives whose subsequent local impacts should be studied**

In July 2013 the Danish Council for Independent Research allocated funds for a major research project on the global history of UNESCO, of which this book is part. In their unfolding of the theoretical and methodological framework of the project, Danish historians Christian Ydesen and Ivan Lind Christensen begin by asking two questions: "Impact of what?" and "Impact on what?"<sup>16</sup>

The answer to both questions, with regard to the research project as well as this volume, is that the contributors trace the impact of selected key UNESCO initiatives, and that, in consideration of UNESCO's constitution and overall aim, they want to trace the impact on the construction of peace in the minds of people after World War II.

In international organizations, initiatives are reflected in written decisions, formulated with the purpose of solving specific problems and promoting certain values, and, through a selection process among the more than 50 abstracts submitted for this book, written by researchers who have studied these documents, a pattern soon appeared. The pattern is a reflection of what initiatives historians of today focus on as central to UNESCO's work on mental engineering over the last 70 years. This volume will thus focus on the impact of these five types of initiative:

- Initiatives taken to disseminate knowledge via different media platforms from UNESCO headquarters to implement change in the surrounding world.
- Initiatives taken right after World War II as a first step towards the physical and mental reconstruction of a war-devastated world.
- Initiatives taken to help poor and newly independent countries during the period of decolonialism.
- Initiatives taken to break down hostile stereotypes and promote peace via local educational systems.
- Initiatives taken to implement a new vision of humanity as a unified entity by promoting the idea of a common heritage.

The first step for the contributors was to outline briefly – on the basis of the resolutions of UNESCO's General Conferences, which are accessible via the so-called UNESDOC online archive database – the organization's precise expectations regarding the outcome of the initiatives, which then formed the basis for tracing their subsequent routes and determining their possible local impact on people's ways of thinking and acting.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to what more precisely initiatives can impact on, historians can study the effects on two levels: institutional and beneficiary. The first study focuses on the effects on governmental and civil society institutions, private corporations, regional or local policies, strategic support to institutional actors and so on. The second focuses on the impact of interventions that directly or indirectly affect communities; in the case of international organizations in general, that could be the impact on communities of the local trade liberalization measures, medical treatments and microloan programs. This second level gets closest to what is the overall aim of this book, but the first level is undeniably also important because it is often the gateway into a community that makes it possible to have an impact on the beneficiary level.

Some of the authors in this volume focus on changes at the institutional level, such as Takashi Saikawa in his contribution (Chapter 5) on Japan's efforts as a defeated nation to re-enter the international community after World War II, but never without keeping an eye on how changes at the

institutional level impacted the communities and led to the launch of several hundred UNESCO clubs, and how the widespread popular engagement in UNESCO affairs and values again impacted the institutional level and strengthened the Japanese officials' argument for membership of the organization. One could also highlight Miriam Intrator's contribution (Chapter 6) about UNESCO's policies and their local implementation, which is exemplary in its demonstration of the many different travel routes a UNESCO initiative can take from the headquarters to the national institutional level, in this case with the purpose of implementing new international standards for libraries around the world.

More contributors have focused on the beneficiary level, such as Agnès Borde Meyer in her contribution (Chapter 14) on archeology experts and their impact on museums, and on safeguarding heritage at specific locations in Iran and Afghanistan. However, most of the contributors at the same time have in mind that institutional changes often come before those on the ground – and that it is only due to governmental support that countries eventually open their borders for UNESCO experts to come to assist with the construction of schools, formulating curricula, producing textbooks and so on – and therefore need an explanation too. At the same time, it is the institutional level that has produced our primary sources – the documents. A sole exception is Josué Mikobi Dikay's contribution (Chapter 8) on the D.R. Congo (hereafter Congo), where there was hardly a local government. This paved the way for the direct involvement of the UN and UNESCO in Congolese affairs and made it possible to build up an entire educational system, with the consequence that local communities suddenly had schools where there had not been schools before, and that thousands of children were suddenly able to read and write where they had previously been doomed to illiteracy.

Counting how many books, films and radio broadcasts the organization produced throughout its existence, how many experts it sent abroad and how many schools it helped to create is indeed relevant because the numbers describe the scope and range of means and agents for change, and they represent physical changes and therefore a local impact in their own right. There is also no doubt that UNESCO's initiatives on fundamental education led to the physical construction of schools worldwide with the aim of eradicating analphabetism and empowering people in the local community. One can also assume that a relatively large number of the kids attending were actually able to read and write when leaving the building a few years later. However, the more ideologically profound UNESCO wanted the changes to be, the more difficult they are to document.

For example, it is possible to provide evidence that UNESCO's initiatives within the field of textbook revisions led to the production of several new books, as Inés Dussel and Christian Ydesen show in their case study of history textbook revisions in Mexico (Chapter 11), and we can even read and analyze their content. However, to assess to what degree UNESCO actually

managed to eradicate nationalist prejudice is much more difficult to assess in such an accurate way.

At least we can estimate how many people were exposed to the books. That is more challenging in the case of UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, which also had a physical outcome by leading to the translation, publication and transfer across continents of hundreds of classical texts. However, here it is close to impossible to estimate who and how many had access to them via libraries, and to know if they made a difference in people's perception of other cultures. UNESCO in fact made a few polls to document any changes, but the changes were not necessarily the outcome of UNESCO initiatives.<sup>18</sup>

The fact is that books can be remembered, misunderstood, ignored and forgotten, or used differently, and they have a variety of impacts depending on who the recipients are, what their social background is and where they live. One of the aims of this volume is therefore to try to address some of the more profound methodological challenges of conducting historical impact studies and to find a way to get as close to the mental impact as possible.

### **Identification of methods useful in historical impact studies**

To conduct historical impact research is difficult. Not many interviews, questionnaires or written statements were made before, during and after the local implementation of UNESCO initiatives. At the same time there is no consensus on how best to conduct this kind of analysis methodologically.

However, many historical impact studies with an ideological dimension tend to use qualitative methodologies primarily. These include conceptual history and discourse analyses through which it should be possible to see, for example, whether the content of the concept of race changed in books, articles and magazines in the wake of the UNESCO statements on race of the 1950s and 1960s – that is, whether “race” changed from being perceived as a concept based on both physical and mental differences between large groups of people and which could be used to legally discriminate, to being conceived as only physical differences with limited possibilities for political abuse; and also whether there has been a shift in the use of concepts, such as a switch from the biologically rooted concept of “race” to the culturally rooted concept of “ethnicity”, or whether the concept of “racism” had positive, neutral or negative connotations.<sup>19</sup>

However, analyses of discursive and conceptual change and continuity have, as demonstrated by Christensen and Ydesen, a problem, which is the question of causality: How can we be certain that the potential changes in discursive formations and conceptual architecture are in fact due to the impact of specific initiatives taken by international organizations? And, furthermore, does the international organization represent the starting-point in the construction of a discursive formation?<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes it is relatively easy to demonstrate the direct link between UNESCO's media and their impact, and that is when UNESCO is mentioned by name. One could mention the testimony of the former South African president, Nelson Mandela, about the importance of the *Courier* to his worldview. As a prisoner on Robben Island, he had almost exclusive access to this particular magazine because the Afrikaans-speaking prison authorities for some reason considered it to be harmless reading material. It thus became a major information channel for him and the other prisoners to get to know what was going on in the world outside the prison and outside South Africa. Through the *Courier*, he later explained to UNESCO's director-general, Federico Mayor, they "learnt about so many subjects never before encountered, such as cultural diversity and mankind's common heritage, African history, education for development and so on. All these subjects did not exist in the apartheid lexicon, let alone in the solitary confines of Robben Island."<sup>21</sup>

However, Mandela's statement is a rare case. A few other good examples can be found in Jens Boel's contribution on fundamental education (Chapter 7), where he demonstrates how historians can sometimes be lucky to find letters from individuals writing to UNESCO to explain what the organization meant to them. For example, a letter from a woman from the Marbial Valley in Haiti who learned to read and write at the age of 42 thanks to a UNESCO pilot project on fundamental education. The presence of such material is the exception rather than the rule, but the less tangible nature of discursive and conceptual processes should not discourage us – just the opposite. It simply requires a large number of sources and from a longer timespan – before and after the initiative was launched.

A study of the impact of UNESCO's statements on race in Denmark shows that, with a background of conceptual history and by comparing the content of a variety of written sources, it is indeed possible to estimate their exact impact with regard to mentality change. In this case the analysis shows that UNESCO's anti-racist agenda did in fact make a difference, but also that it to a large degree impacted scientists more than ordinary people.<sup>22</sup>

Let me also mention an almost exemplary example in this book of how to undertake discourse analyses on UNESCO initiatives, and that is the contribution of Thomas Nygren (Chapter 10), in which he demonstrates how textbook changes were implemented in Sweden and actually made a difference in the long term according to a comparison of the topics taught by teachers and chosen by pupils as interesting to write about – most likely as a consequence of a change in mentality, and most likely as a consequence of UNESCO's efforts due to the similarities between the concepts and values promoted by UNESCO and the ones to be found in the Swedish curricula and the written outcome of the pupils' exams.

However, in order to get there we need to address the fact that observed local changes can be the outcome of competing initiatives. After all,



international organizations consist of many different agents that are located in an international political context and draw on both ideological and institutional predecessors, and often almost similar initiatives exist out there so, as Christensen and Ydesen conclude, “the choice of the international organization as a starting point for the analysis is not the same as understanding the international organization as the starting point of the discourse”.<sup>23</sup>

The question of “noise” – discourses that are present at the same time and similar to the ones promoted by the international organization – is in fact something that the impact evaluations of international organizations are often preoccupied with because they aim to demonstrate the “effectiveness” of a certain initiative, and are therefore inclined to eradicate the “pollution” of the multiple factors which can affect the observed changes.<sup>24</sup>

This volume does not necessarily have to show which effect was solely the result of a UNESCO intervention and which was only caused by external factors. Its approach is rather to investigate the interplay between various factors, and is an attempt to be open to both the effects intended by UNESCO and the possible unintended effects or local varieties – assuming that UNESCO initiatives were never conducted in complete isolation. However, to at least make sure that the observed changes were not achieved totally independently of the UNESCO initiative, we have chosen a research strategy where local activities are only seen as representing an impact if the local documents contain direct references to UNESCO. This might lead to a slightly conservative estimation of UNESCO’s impact, but it will at least not overestimate it.

### **Identification of the time period on which the studies will focus**

When evaluating their programs, international organizations tend to focus on the immediate rather than the long-term effects because the timespan of their programs is much shorter than the time significant effects would take to manifest, and because the member states want to be able to tell their populations what they get for their membership fee.<sup>25</sup>

However, if there is one thing we can learn from the contributions to his book then it is that there is a chronological delay between when the idea is fostered and the initiative is taken, and when the first institutional changes and physical outcomes of UNESCO’s work can be seen, and till beneficiary changes and the subsequent mental impacts can be observed. That is often long after the experts have left the countries. In fact, most of the organization’s initiatives would require an analysis with the perspective of one or two generations. For example, that would be necessary in order to study the effects of UNESCO initiatives aimed at breaking down stereotypes in early education, and the impact of changes in school curricula and textbooks. However, it differs from initiative to initiative. At the same time the contributions to this volume are made within the framework of the possible and reflect the competence, interest and timeline that made sense to the authors.

The chronological perspective therefore differs considerably, from Thomas Nygren's demonstration (Chapter 10) of how textbook changes were implemented in Sweden over a long timespan to Suzanne Langlois' and Takashi Saikawa's focus (chapters 3 and 5) on the immediate impacts.

The reader will also observe that there seems to be a preponderance of contributions from the first half of UNESCO's history. That inevitably gives the impression that the organization's earliest initiatives were the most important, which would not be a fair conclusion. Even though there were many urgent tasks for UNESCO of lasting importance in the wake of World War II and the decolonization, the weighting is also a consequence of the chronological delay from idea to impact, and the time it takes for an impact to manifest itself and become visible for the historian as something worth studying. Another reason of a more practical nature is that many administrative documents are not available for at least 30 years.

### **Identification of the places and spaces on which the studies will focus**

Historical impact studies cannot be conducted from an armchair because impacts are local and must be studied locally. The local is the site of impact – a specific place, a geographical entity where changes can take place.

That has some implications, since UNESCO consists of 195 different member states and nine associate members. To write a truly global history of the organization, one would therefore either need a very large and expensive research group or to make randomized controlled trials, which can also be challenging because comparative studies that focus on national similarities and differences tend not only to assume but also to construct and reinforce boundaries that are crucial to the possibility of comparison. At the same time they tend to assume that initiatives came to them in the same way, often due to a local demand for them and not as supply-driven transfers of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> However, the interventions of international organizations are in fact often both demand- and supply-driven. UNESCO's race pamphlets were, for example, in great demand in Brazil because the country was often emphasized as one without racial tensions, and something to be proud of, whereas they were supply-driven in South Africa owing to the fact that the authorities there did not want them at all because they were seen as false and offensive, and as an interference in internal affairs.<sup>27</sup>

These differences in the reception of the same initiatives also force us to focus not only on "place" but also on "space", the international, regional and local contexts that cannot be reduced to geographic entities alone. The spaces consist of individuals, groups, networks, organizations and other connections with their own ideas and backgrounds, and living in an environment with specific national or religious narratives – a collective biography – that form the local meaning, which explains the different receptions. This has to be taken into consideration by researchers undertaking discourse analysis.<sup>28</sup>

Demand- and supply-driven moves across place and space are a focal point for historians who study transnational history or *histoire croisée*. They are preoccupied with the process of “transfer”, which is the border-crossing movement via influential agents from, for example, the international organization to the local environment. These agents can be written statements and pamphlets, or visits by UNESCO experts, such as the many hundreds sent to South America as part of the UN’s technical assistance program according to Anabella Abarzúa Cutroni’s contribution (Chapter 9). The transfer can be close to direct, such as the adoption of a UNESCO convention into the national legislation, or the way described by Josué Mikobi Dikay (Chapter 8) in the case of the Congo, where UNESCO experts had almost a free rein to transfer and implement a Western-style educational system.

More often the initiative will first go through a “translation”, which is a reinterpretation of the initiative to make it fit the local environment. That happens when the first people receive the initiative at the national ministries of education, culture and science, and again when it is transferred from there to the national commissions for UNESCO and from there to local communities. Translations happen both unconsciously (as an outcome of a local way to understand the initiative) and consciously (e.g. when an initiative encounters a different set of local political priorities and a translation serves a specific purpose of national interest). Textbook changes and education for mutual understanding were, for example, very hard to implement in Japan, where the country’s relationship with South Korea and China, and disagreements about the correct interpretation of their relationship in the past, made politicians concerned and conscious about them, as Aigul Kulnazarova shows (Chapter 12).

That leads to the process of “transformation”, where the initiative takes its final shape, as it is domesticated and entangled in the new, local setting: a shape which is often different from the intended version and sometimes turns into a completely unrecognizable and unintended form. In the aforementioned case of Japan, the initial skepticism has remained, and UNESCO’s initiative regarding textbook changes has therefore been transformed into a version acceptable in a Japanese educational setting, and which does not mention sensitive historical events, or mention them in a certain way. Another case is demonstrated in Celine Lai’s contribution about the impact of UNESCO’s world heritage program in China (Chapter 15), where it has not only had an impact intended by UNESCO – namely, to safeguard sites and promote them as humanity’s common heritage – but also had a range of unintended impacts, such as sites subsequently overrun by tourists or abused by local politicians for egoistic and nationalistic purposes (a pattern similar to that of many other member states).<sup>29</sup>

Finally, one should mention the “trading” of ideas, which indicates that there is also a movement of ideas and initiatives from the member states back to UNESCO, such as via national delegates at the general conferences,

but this does not hold much interest for the contributors to this book, unless these agents bring other ideas and initiatives back with them, because the aim of this volume is to follow in the footsteps of the postman, fieldworker, mission expert and schoolteacher from UNESCO and out of the house.<sup>30</sup>

With these four concepts (transfer, translation, transformation and trading) in mind, a way to study the global history of UNESCO could be to select a number of case-study countries that would, for example, represent all continents – mainly large countries where an intervention would affect many people, and countries representing different historical, social, religious and ideological contexts that would most likely affect the national reception of UNESCO's initiatives. For example, in the overall research project, we have – for the same reason – chosen to make archival studies in ten countries: Ghana, South Africa, India, China, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, the USSR, the USA, Brazil and Indonesia – the latter, for instance, being the only South Asian representative, a former colony and newly independent country, a country with a huge problem and special needs regarding analphabetism, and at the same time the country in the world with the largest Muslim population.

Having chosen a number of case-study countries, there appear to be a range of more practical problems regarding writing global history: the fact that traveling is expensive and that member states have different traditions for preserving documents and providing access to them, making it difficult to ensure uniformity in the data-collection process. At the same time, historians conducting research on global, historical impacts will often also need assistance from people with local archive knowledge to retrieve the documents and to translate them. These practical problems are probably the main reasons why historians tend to give up long before they have even started. It is much easier to go to the UNESCO Archives in Paris, where they will get instant access to a lot of documents in only one place and with most of them in either English or French. However, there is then a danger that they will plunge right into the field of intellectual history and give up on the historical impact analyses.

None of the contributors to this book, unlike the American historian Matthew Connolly, have had the time, funding and opportunity to conduct research in 50 archives in seven different countries, in this case to tell the history of various international organizations' family-planning policies and their global impact history in the shape of sterilization camps in India and Chinese one-child policy. Instead they have done more like his colleague, Prof. Akira Iriye, by giving an estimation of the impact on the basis of the documents available to them.<sup>31</sup>

The contributions are, in other words, made within the framework of the possible. To address this we have chosen to at least make sure to include chapters that represent the different regions of the world, with the limitation that, for the reasons mentioned above, most of the contributions

are confined to follow in the footsteps of an initiative and assess its impact in only one or two countries. We have as part of the selection process therefore chosen country case studies that can be seen as central and exemplary cases for a correct understanding of UNESCO's activities, such as the reintegration of Japan in the international community after World War II, the construction of an educational infrastructure in Congo in the wake of the decolonization process, and the importance of the world heritage concept today in the world's most populous country, China.

For guidance and inspiration for their own impact studies, the contributors have had several role models due to similar efforts made by scholars conducting research on other international organizations. One could mention the award-winning book by professor of American history Carol Anderson about how the UN went hand in hand with the US Civil Rights Movement and had an impact on the rights of the African-American population, and – from the other side of the globe – the work of Japanese historian Liang Pan on the UN's influence on Japanese foreign and security policy since World War II, as well as the uncovering by English historian Sunil Amrith of the World Health Organization's impact on disease control in India and Southeast Asia. They all take a close look at what happens when initiatives leave the headquarters of international organizations and are received, reshaped and executed in a national and regional setting. European integration researchers have in the same way focused on "Europeanization", or how European cooperation, first and foremost the European Union, has influenced and transformed national politics, administration, culture and society in the members states.<sup>32</sup>

This book is a contribution to this relatively new tradition and another step in a more profound attempt to move the research agenda further away from recognizing international organizations as purely political products and understanding them also as producers of local politics on a global scale.

### **Identification of documents in which interventions can be studied**

As already mentioned, direct action was one of UNESCO's prominent working methods, often executed by regional or national UNESCO-related institutions which adopted responsibility for carrying the initiatives forward and through pilot projects, study grants, radio, film, books and other channels of knowledge transmission.

The documents produced by these intermediaries between UNESCO headquarters and the populations are important in order to clarify how the transmission of initiatives took place and how they turned into publications intended for specific national audiences. The documents, which play an important part in explaining the organization's success or failure nationally, are available at the UNESCO Archives in Paris. They consist of:

- country-specific UNESCO secretariat records, which include administrative files, project files and working files created by UNESCO in relation to each member state;
- topic-specific secretariat records, which include the same types of documents in relation to specific topics across national borders, such as national education for mutual understanding;
- records of national offices, which were official UNESCO agents and thus intermediaries with the task of transferring knowledge from the headquarters to the member states;
- archives of field offices, regional offices and temporary UNESCO expert missions which were other platforms for the delivery of UNESCO activities.

### **Identification of documents in which impacts can be studied**

Comparing UNESCO initiatives with observed changes reflected in local documents with direct references to the organization provides us with the best picture we can achieve of UNESCO's impact. These local records consist of unpublished documents accessible at the various national archives and ministries of education, as well as published documents accessible via interlibrary loan:

- Annual reports of UNESCO's national commissions, which mention the work done within the member state and which reflect their priorities and not the organization's.
- Records of UNESCO's national commissions, which report in detail on the implementation of the nationally favored initiatives and contain assessments on their impact.
- Archives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which, according to the above documents, are identified as local collaborators.
- Local publications with references to UNESCO, which were active by placing national limits on people's understanding of the initiatives.

### **Overall content of this book**

Given the size of UNESCO, and the number of projects it has initiated and taken part in throughout its existence, we have invited scholars to point at what they think has been central to the organization's work within the field of science, education and culture.

We have asked them to focus on how ideas and initiatives with which they are already familiar were transmitted in practice from organization's headquarters in Paris to member states, how the local UNESCO institutions and UNESCO-related national institutions worked in practice, and what distribution channels they had with regard to the populations. We have also