

In this issue

The great aspiration of the United Nations and its sub-organisations is to precipitate a peaceful world order. In the past the UN has primarily been an object of political science research, but lately studies in contemporary history have also come to address the genesis of 'world domestic politics', the involved actors, its intersections and overlaps with the fault lines of the Cold War, as well as the long-term ascent of global values and norms. *Iris Schröder* shows in this issue how, in the late 1950s, the imagined order of UNESCO manifested itself in a concrete architectural order. The UNESCO building complex depicted on the issue cover was inaugurated in Paris in 1958, and was highly controversial at the time. Questions of internal and external design were closely tied to conflicts surrounding architectural modernity and political hierarchies within the world community.

While this contribution deals with spatial, visual and material semantics, the debate section conceptualised by *Kathrin Kollmeier* and *Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann* focuses on the level of terminology. Although Reinhart Koselleck, who can be regarded as an important pioneer in this field, emphasised early on that 'every history of a word or term [...] leads from the identification of historical connotations to the identification of present connotations',¹ he did not systematically expand his mapping of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (fundamental historical terms) to include the twentieth century and the present. *Christian Geulen* indeed pleads for such an endeavour, combining the question concerning the specific basic terms of contemporary history with the proposal of an ambitious theoretical framework. Since it is also part of the research agenda of a Historical Semantics to 'say something without having to have the last word',² other researchers (*Paul Nolte*, *Martin Sabrow* and *Theresa Wobbe*) comment on Geulen's contribution from various perspectives in the issue. This is also intended as an invitation to continue the debate on the possible contours of a Historical Semantics of the twentieth century.

In Geulen's concept, 'popularisation' plays an important role as a distinctive tendency of the twentieth century. In this context, he emphasises the media's circulation and normalisation function. As it were, *Anja Laukötter's* contribution on media of cancer information in the first half of the twentieth century offers a case study of this very tendency. The author shows the double role of medical films as 'media of information and education' and identifies important elements for a broad historicisation of the general societal principle

¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte*, in: Idem (ed.), *Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 19-36, p. 25.

² Ralf Konersmann, *Komödien des Geistes. Historische Semantik als philosophische Bedeutungsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999, p. 184.

'health'. Tobias Freimüller's article in the section 'rediscovered classics' also contributes to the intensive research in the field of medical history of the past years. Fifty years after the appearance of its first edition, Freimüller recalls the pre-history, the content and the reception of the document volume *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit* (Medicine without Humanity), edited by Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke. The book on the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial of 1946/47 can be regarded as a key work in the critical history of science. Its impulses were, however, only taken up later.

A second contribution to the 'rediscovered classics' section is dedicated to Jürgen Habermas's article *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (The New Complexity), whose title has experienced widespread, albeit increasingly arbitrary dissemination since its first publication twenty-five years ago. Cord Arendes explains what Habermas meant by the 'crisis of the welfare state' and the 'exhaustion of utopian energies'. Klaus Waschik, in turn, revisits the high phase of utopian aspirations in his article on Soviet image and censorship politics in the 1930s. The goal of eliminating Trotsky and other public persons who had fallen from grace from the country's cultural memory was utopian in the sense that even with the greatest effort, the visual media and libraries of the Stalinist empire could not be entirely controlled.

In the review section, a review by Hanno Hochmuth of the documentary film *Die Anwälte* (The Lawyers) about Horst Mahler, Otto Schily and Christian Ströbele can be found alongside a detailed portrayal of the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. As we have seen, the Football World Cup in South Africa entails increased interest in the country. From a contemporary history perspective, it is worthwhile to scrutinise local approaches to the Apartheid era. Katharina Fink illustrates the ways in which national narratives overlap with international human rights discourses in the permanent exhibition in Johannesburg.

While Fink offers examples of how different emotions and associations can be tied to (exhibition) objects, in the 'sources' section Annette Vowinckel traces the plurality of interpretations and connotations using the example of the so-called 'safety kits' from the Cold War era. The selected objects, GDR first-aid kits from the 1950s to the 1970s, today are in the possession of the *Wende Museum* in Los Angeles. The context in which they are presented there suggests regarding the kits and their contents as evidence of an apparently naive civil defence that would not have provided an appreciable advantage in the case of a nuclear strike. However, a certain irrevocable ambiguity, which is discernible here also, is part of every material culture. Vowinckel investigates the GDR-citizens' sense of security, and hence her article also offers an outlook for our next issue on the topic of 'Security' (2/2010).

The Editors

(translation: Eva Schissler)