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**Citation:** Davies, T. R. (2016). History of Transnational Voluntary Associations: A Critical Multidisciplinary Review. *Voluntaristics Review*, 1(4), pp. 1-55. doi: 10.1163/24054933-12340012

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# **“History of Transnational Voluntary Associations: A Critical Multidisciplinary Review”**

**(V#6)**

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## **Abstract**

This review explores the history of transnational voluntary associations, commencing with general patterns before proceeding to cover the history of different sectors in turn, including humanitarianism, science, education, environment, feminism, race, health, human rights, labour, business, standards, professions, culture, peace, religion, and youth. Coverage extends from the late eighteenth century through to the early twenty-first century and spans histories of particular organizations and of particular campaigns in addition to the evolution of broader transnational social movements. Contrasting perspectives on historical evolution are considered, including both linear and cyclical interpretations. The factors underpinning historical changes are explored, including economic, environmental, political, scientific and social developments. Insights are drawn not only from a transnational historical perspective, but also the many other disciplines that shed light on the subject, such as world sociology. The review also incorporates perspectives from international relations, development studies, peace studies, voluntary sector studies, and women’s studies. It argues that the historical evolution of transnational voluntary associations is longer, less Western in origin and more cyclical

than traditionally assumed.

### **Keywords**

Transnational history; non-governmental organizations; global civil society; third sector;  
transnational relations

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## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

A common misperception in analyses of the history of voluntary associations is the assumption that voluntary association on a transnational scale is a novel phenomenon. All too commonly transnational voluntary associations have been referred to in introductory texts as ‘new kinds of nongovernmental organizations’ that have ‘emerged’ ‘in recent years’ (Hall 2006: 58). As this review will demonstrate, an increasingly rich body of literature has demonstrated the evolution over many centuries of transnational forms of voluntary association.

While transnational voluntary associations share with all other voluntary associations characteristics including un-coerced non-profit private organization, they are distinctive in that their membership, goals, and/or activities cross national boundaries. The scope of transnational voluntary associations may be understood to include a wide array of non-profit groups, from those considered to be altruistic to business and professional associations, all of which have also been referred to as ‘international non-governmental organizations’ (Davies 2014a: 3). They include but are not limited to the many transnational social movement organizations that have been established to promote social and political change beyond national boundaries (Smith, Chatfield and

Pagnucco 1997), and they are a key component of the 'supranational sphere of social and political participation' referred to as 'global civil society' (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001: 4).

The scope of activities pursued by transnational voluntary associations is considerable: those considered in this review will include the educational, scientific, environmental, feminist, health, human rights, humanitarian, labour, business, professional, cultural, race, peace, religious, and youth sectors. While the boundaries of transnational are contested, this review will follow the general convention of considering in this category associations that have international aims and participants in three or more countries (Union of International Associations 1978).

As the subsequent sections will highlight, many transnational associations were established before the formation of modern nation states, rendering the term 'transnational' anachronistic in relation to the earliest stages of the history of the associations considered in this piece. Nevertheless, for the sake of consistency the term will be applied in this review to associations predating the emergence of the modern society of states as well as those subsequently established.

Given that transnational voluntary associations have been active for many centuries, research into their history is also to be found over a very considerable period. Early modern efforts to produce histories of the world, for instance, made reference to what would now be described as transnational religious associations (Ross 1652). Particular categories of transnational associations such as those promoting lifesaving have been the subject of dedicated historical studies for much of the period since then

(Johnson 1773), while broader studies of the development of transnational associations across multiple issue areas also date back more than one hundred years (Faries 1915). Histories of individual associations have been produced since not long after the associations were founded (for instance Yates 1856).

Many of the studies of the history of individual transnational voluntary associations have been commissioned by the associations themselves, often to mark a significant anniversary (e.g. Santi 1991). These studies have a tendency to concentrate on purported success stories, and generally provide a linear narrative reflected in titles emphasizing themes such as ‘how a group of...visionaries changed the world’ (Weyler 2004). More impartial academic studies of individual associations, however, are also becoming increasingly common (Buchanan 2002; Hopgood 2006).

The development of historical scholarship on transnational voluntary associations has been significantly boosted by the post-Cold War wave of research into ‘transnational history’, which aims to challenge the traditional focus in historical scholarship on developments within the confines of individual states (Iriye 1989; Davies 2011 and 2014a; Saunier 2013). Academic research into the history of particular domains of transnational voluntary action such as peace activism, however, has a greatly more extensive lineage (Beales 1931).

With the array of domains in which transnational voluntary associations have worked extending across a wide range of issue-areas, academic research into their history has crossed many disciplines. Important studies of the history of transnational voluntary associations have been produced from the perspective of, *inter alia*, development studies

(Chabbott 1999), international relations (Barnett 2011), peace studies (Carter 1992), religious studies (Fey 1987), social movement analysis (Smith and Wiest 2012), women's studies (Rupp 1997), and world sociology, especially the Stanford School (Boli and Thomas 1999), amongst many others.

In this review it will be argued that in order to provide a comprehensive perspective on the history of transnational voluntary associations it is necessary consider not only literature from across these multiple disciplines, but also to challenge three widely held misperceptions of their evolution. The first of these is that highlighted at the beginning of this review: the notion that transnational voluntary associations are a new development. By contrast, this review will emphasize the long historical evolution of transnational voluntary associations across multiple sectors of civil society. Given the transition that took place from 'ancient' to 'modern' transnational voluntary associations from the late eighteenth through to early nineteenth centuries (Davies 2014a), this review will concentrate on developments from that period onwards.

The second widely held assumption that will be subjected to critical scrutiny in this review is the belief that transnational voluntary associations are 'historically rooted in a Western...tradition' (Scholz 2015: 7). While acknowledging the significance of developments in the 'Western hemisphere', this review will also explore important ways in which the history of transnational voluntary associations involves key developments beyond the traditional focus on Western Europe and North America, paying attention to developments in Asia and regions now referred to as the 'Global South'. Thirdly, this review challenges much of the conventional literature by rejecting an approach that

assumes linearity of progress towards 'global community' (Iriye 2002) and instead aims to reveal the diversity of cyclical and other trajectories of transnational voluntary associations.

Since the variety of transnational voluntary associations is considerable, after consideration of the general historical development of transnational voluntary associations, this review will explore in turn fifteen of the principal sectors in which these associations have been active, including religion, science/education, youth, human rights, feminism, peace, labour, business, standards, professions, culture, race, humanitarianism, health, and the environment. There are many other sectors in respect of which transnational voluntary associations have been active which it has not been possible to cover within the limits of this review.

### **General Evolution**

Evaluations of transnational voluntary associations from a general perspective, especially in the fields of politics and international relations, have often either neglected to consider their history altogether (Eberly 2008), or provided accounts emphasizing their novelty (Khagram and Alvord 2006). For many, a convenient starting point for considering the general evolution of transnational voluntary associations has been the end of the Second World War (Sikkink and Smith 2002; Smith and Wiest 2012). Such a starting point may be justified with reference to the beginning of the use of the term 'non-governmental organization' and the establishment of the United Nations' apparatus for their recognition (Willetts 2011: 6). Statistical evidence for the expanding numbers of these

associations in subsequent decades is also considerable (Sikkink and Smith 2002).

For those considering the evolution of transnational voluntary associations in the longer term, the late nineteenth century has been another popular starting point, on account of the rapid expansion in numbers of transnational voluntary associations in that century's closing decades (Boli and Thomas 1999). Charnovitz (1996) and Davies (2014a), on the other hand, start their analysis a century earlier. For Charnovitz (1996: 190), this is justified with reference to the creation of anti-slavery societies in the late eighteenth century. For Davies (2014a: 23), on the other hand, the period from the late eighteenth through to early nineteenth centuries is identified as a crucial turning point from 'ancient' forms of transnational voluntary association such as religious orders to 'modern' transnational voluntary associations with a more diverse, specialized and secular focus.

A common claim in general literature on transnational voluntary associations is to suggest that such associations are 'basically Western in origin' (Donini 1995: 430). It has even been suggested that their roots lie in particular countries, frequently the United States. Eberly (2008: 13), for instance, has described the formation of voluntary associations as a phenomenon that 'traditionally ... has distinguished America from the political systems of Europe and Asia', and the creation of such associations transnationally as 'America's most consequential export'. Others, such as Lyons (1963), have laid emphasis on the European roots of transnational voluntary associations. Recently, however, such a perspective has been increasingly challenged, with Davies (2014a) emphasizing the significance of learning from experience in Asia in the development of transnational voluntary associations in Europe and North America in the late eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries, and the roles of such associations in multiple regions of the world throughout their history.

A frequent theme in accounts of the general evolution of transnational voluntary associations is suggestion that their development is a part of a broader progressive trend towards 'global community' (Iriye 2002) or even 'the road to a world state' (Boli and Thomas 1999: 48). Such claims are generally backed up with reference to the expanding numbers of recorded transnational voluntary associations. Boli (2006: 334), for instance, justifies his claim that 'the nonprofit sector has been expanding rapidly and in unbroken fashion at the international and global levels' from 1909 until 2000 with reference to how, he argues, 'active INGOs have increased from fewer than 400 to more than 25,000 over these ninety years'. These figures are based on the data of the Union of International Associations, a transnational voluntary association established in Brussels in 1907 for the purpose of promoting the work and cooperation of other transnational voluntary associations (Laqua 2013; Van Acker 2014; Herren 2000).

Suri (2005), on the other hand, has suggested instead that the general development of transnational voluntary associations has taken place in waves rather than in a linear pattern, which he refers to as three 'golden ages' (1880-1914, the interwar years, and the period since the 1960s). Davies (2014a: 6-9) argues that the patterns in the general evolution of transnational voluntary associations vary according to the aspects evaluated, such as numbers of associations, human and economic resources, scale of activities, geographical reach, unity, and impact. Whereas numbers of transnational voluntary associations have generally increased over the last three centuries, the unity of

these associations has fluctuated over time with for instance significant splits during the Cold War era, and their influence has also witnessed significant peaks (such as the early 1990s) and troughs (such as the late 1930s). Moreover, as the subsequent sections of this review will demonstrate, the evolution of transnational voluntary associations has varied considerably across different sectors. While transnational voluntary associations concerned with issues such as promotion of a constructed international auxiliary language have witnessed a marked decline (Kim 1999), others such as those promoting human rights, have grown remarkably (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 89).

Accompanying efforts to evaluate progress in the general development of transnational voluntary associations have been analyses of the factors driving their evolution. The origins of modern transnational voluntary associations in the late eighteenth century have been ascribed to the organizational forms inherited from ancient, largely religious, transnational associations, the development of secular states from the French revolution onwards and the subsequent development of intergovernmental structures, and the spread of cosmopolitan values (Suri 2005: 228-229). More recently, the transition has also been attributed to the spread of ideas and practices from Asia to Europe and to the intensification of international intercourse accompanying the first industrial revolution, amongst other factors (Davies 2014a: 23-26). The expanding numbers of transnational voluntary associations have further been interpreted as strongly correlated with indicators of world development such as the growth of international trade, expanding educational enrolment, the spread of new technologies and expansion of citizen rights and diplomatic relations (Boli and Thomas

1997: 178). Periods of contraction, by contrast, have been associated with both external economic and political developments such as global recessions and major wars, as well as well as factors internal to transnational voluntary associations including problems of exhaustion, factionalization, and over-ambition (Davies 2014a: 178-181). The interrelationship between internationalism and nationalism – and globalization and fragmentation – has been perceived to be crucial to the development of transnational associations (Sluga 2013; Clark 1997; Lundestad 2004).

## **Religion**

Transnational religious associations significantly pre-date the formation of a society of sovereign states and many of them are important precursors to contemporary transnational voluntary associations. According to Boli and Brewington (2007: 212) the earliest transnational religious association ‘is the Sovereign Constantinian Order, founded in 312, the year that Constantine defeated the Roman emperor Maxentius’. According to the organization’s official history, however, the institution’s extant statutes date only to the sixteenth century and strong evidence for the order’s existence before the twelfth century is negligible (Constantinian Order 2012). Nevertheless, a number of transnational religious orders have been in existence for significantly longer than a millennium, and they include both Roman Catholic institutions such as the Order of Saint Benedict and Sufi tariqas such as Chishti Order (Davies 2014a: 21).

Another set of ancient transnational religious institutions significant in the development of transnational voluntary associations are the numerous missionary

societies also with histories spanning multiple centuries. Missionary activities within the Christian faith, for instance, may be dated to the first century AD (Robert 2009). They include not only numerous subsequent Roman Catholic efforts but also later Protestant missionary societies such as the New England Company set up in 1649 (Kellaway 1961) and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge established in 1698 (Allen and McClure 1898). Histories of Islamic missionary activity also extend back to the early expansion of the religion (Arnold 1896).

The influence of religious institutions in the historical development of transnational voluntary associations has been profound. As Froehle (2010: 1303) argues, 'well before the emergence of the public sphere during the early modern period, religious orders provided a model for how people could develop strong horizontal relationships and create flourishing spaces between official society, whether political or ecclesiastic, or both.' In the subsequent transition from ancient to modern transnational associations, religious orders as well as fraternal traditions such as Freemasonry provided models for the organizational structures of modern transnational voluntary associations, sometimes reflected in the names of these institutions, such as the Independent Order of Good Templars transnational temperance association (Peirce 1873).

In Europe and North America, a religious group that was to have a particularly considerable influence on the development of modern transnational voluntary associations was the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Amongst the most notable examples is the role of Quakers such as Anthony Benezet in establishing the first anti-slavery societies in the eighteenth century (Bacon 1959). Quakers were subsequently also

influential in the creation of some of the first modern peace societies in the nineteenth century (Ceadel 1996) and in the origins of transnational humanitarian associations such as Oxfam (Black 1992) and transnational environmental associations such as Greenpeace (Zelko 2013) in the twentieth century.

Evaluations of the moral influence of religious associations reveal a mixed picture. On the one hand, religious bodies played a vital role in the development of modern principles and practices of transnational charity (Brodman 2009). On the other, missionary action has widely been condemned for its role in the development of colonial attitudes and practices (Lehning 2013).

Less commonly subjected to attention have been the many transnational voluntary associations that have been developed within and between religions. Some of the most influential transnational associations of the mid-nineteenth century included ecumenical institutions such as the Evangelical Alliance (Randall and Hilborn 2001) and the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (Shedd 1955). The broader ecumenical movement was slower to develop, but following the end of the Second World War the World Council of Churches was established to bring together Orthodox and Protestant Churches (Visser 't Hooft 1982).

Pan-religious voluntary associations proliferated in the twentieth century, with especial attention having been paid in recent literature to the development of Pan-Islamist associations following the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate (Pankhurst 2013). Amongst the most influential of these has been the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 in the context of British colonial rule (Mitchell 1993). A key reason for its

growing popularity has been its provision through a large array of voluntary associations of services that governments have failed to supply (Harmsen 2008).

Religious diaspora associations have also played a vital role in the historical development of transnational voluntary organization. For example, amongst the paramount transnational associations of the late nineteenth century wave were Jewish diaspora groups such as the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which developed a reputation for its transnational educational work (Kedourie 1974). Over the course of the twentieth century new religious movements of numerous faiths were to be significant in transnational organization of voluntary action (Chryssides 2012).

Some of the boldest transnational religious associations have aimed towards unity among all faiths. At the Chicago world's fair of 1893, for instance, a World Parliament of Religions was convened with this objective (Mazuzawa 2012). Since 1936, the World Congress of Faiths has promoted interreligious unity on a sustained basis (Braybrooke 1996). Since the events of 11 September 2001, transnational action towards inter-faith dialogue has received invigorated attention (Cornille 2013).

Religious institutions have provided a key resource base for other transnational voluntary associations (Zald 1981). Moreover, there are numerous transnational voluntary associations across each of the other sectors of activity explored in this review which conduct their activities in particular fields from religious motivation. In the humanitarian sector for instance, they encompass numerous faiths (Barnett and Stein 2012), including but not limited to Christian bodies such as Christian Aid (Fey 2009: 224), Islamic associations such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan

2009), and Jewish institutions such as World Jewish Relief (Hilton, Crowson, Mouhot and McKay 2012: 45), to name just a few established in the United Kingdom in the twentieth century.

### **Science and Education**

Transnational organization in the scientific and educational sectors is nearly as ancient as transnational religious association. Indeed, religious and educational establishments have highly interrelated transnational histories, with, for instance, the Jesuit Order having been described as ‘the most influential transnational educational organization of early modern Europe’ (Stichweh 2004: 345). Universities have since their earliest origins constituted communities of scholars and students from multiple territories (Stichweh 1991), and specialized scientific societies with transnational memberships have been recorded to have been in existence since the sixteenth century (McKie 1948). Amateur bodies organized on a transnational basis for scientific purposes also have extensive histories: their reach has long been intercontinental, with for instance the Asiatic Society in Kolkata having been established by Europeans living in that city in 1784 (Kejariwal 1988; Visvanathan 1995).

During one of the first major waves of the formation of modern transnational voluntary associations in Europe, that which took place in the early 1830s, transnational associations dedicated to scientific and educational objectives were amongst the most influential. Paramount among these was Marc-Antoine Jullien’s Society of the Union of Nations based in Paris, which brought together an international array of interested

persons in anticipation that ‘by the frequent collision of intellect ... the progress of civilization and improvement’ would be advanced (quoted in Davies 2014a: 29). In its aim to bring together the learned of the world, Jullien’s work has been considered to have helped to lay the groundwork for the much later activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO – Goetz 1954). Other transnational educational associations of this period, such as the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, were more closely associated with missionary and imperialist agendas (Abeel 1847; Midgeley 2007; Seton 2013). A further set of transnational educational associations created in the early nineteenth century, including the British and Foreign School Society and the Society of Universal Education, aimed towards the promotion of particular educational methods (Davies 2014a: 29-30).

The better-known wave of transnational association formation from the late nineteenth century onwards also featured a range of institutions aiming towards educational and scientific collaboration (Crawford 1992). They included associations with general purposes such as the International Association of Academies (Alter 1980) as well as those promoting cooperation in narrowly delimited areas, such as particular branches of science (Schofer 1999) or short-lived idealistic enterprises such as promotion of a universal language (Forster 1982; Eco 1995). The pioneer specialist scientific transnational associations of this period encompassed a wide variety of fields and included the *Société Universelle d’Ophtalmologie* founded in Paris in 1861 (Focsaneanu 1966: 390) and the International Institute of Sociology founded in 1893 (Schuerkens 1996). While many of the scientific and educational associations of this era were focused on European

cooperation, transnational cooperation for educational and scientific goals also took place in other regions, for instance in the Latin American Scientific Congresses from 1898 (Fernos 2003) and through the activities of the World Society in China in the early twentieth century (Bailey 1990: 76).

In the period immediately following the First World War, international scientific collaboration was coordinated on an enduring basis with the formation of the International Council for Science (Greenaway 1996) and the International Union of Academies (Harmatta 1987). Specialist scientific bodies also multiplied following World War One, including the creation of the International Mathematical Union (Lehto 1988) and the International Committee of Historical Sciences (Erdmann 2005). In this period, some of the principal transnational voluntary associations for the promotion of international educational exchange were founded in part motivated by the aim to reduce the prospects of another global war. Key among these were the Institute of International Education and the Institute of Pacific Relations (Halpern 1969; Akami 1995). Their formation has been associated with the evolution of 'cultural internationalism; that is, the idea that internationalism may be fostered through cross-national communication, understanding and cooperation' (Iriye 1997: 27).

Subsequently, during the Cold War, scientists were to be among the primary campaigners for peace, organizing transnational voluntary associations such as the Federation of Atomic Scientists and International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War (Wittner 2003). Moreover, the general expansion of transnational scientific collaboration has been interpreted as critical to the development of globalization and a

‘world polity’ (Drori, Meyer, Ramirez and Schofer 2003). Others have noted a tension between localizing and universalizing strands in transnational scientific collaboration (Charle, Schriewer and Wagner 2004).

## **Youth**

The creation of transnational voluntary associations specifically targeting youth has been a key priority for the religious and educational sectors. According to White (1968: 4) the World’s Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations (YMCAs), established in 1855, may have been ‘the first true international non-governmental organization to be established in the modern era’. While this may be an overstatement, the organization was undoubtedly one of the first enduring transnational voluntary associations to be organized with a federal structure, and its chief organizer, Henri Dunant went on to create the Red Cross movement (Davies 2014a: 35-36). The World Alliance of YMCAs was to be followed by many later associations emulating its structure and aims, including the World Young Women’s Christian Association established in the 1890s (Rice 1948), and the Young Men’s Muslim Association created in Egypt in 1927 (Botman 1991: 116-117).

Less explicitly religious transnational voluntary associations oriented towards youth also grew in number from the late nineteenth century onwards. Many of these had an educational focus, such as the International Federation of Students originating in international student conferences held in 1889 and 1898 (Mola 1999), and the Association for Childhood Education International established as the International Kindergarten Union in 1892 (Lascarides and Hinitz 2000). Others were oriented towards

humanitarian objectives, such as the International Union of Friends of Young Women that aimed from its establishment in 1877 to ‘form a network of protection around every girl obliged to leave her home to earn a living, and so far as possible around every girl alone or in bad surroundings, whatever her nationality, religion or occupation’. (Lyons 1963: 277; Fallot 1902; Limoncelli 2010).

Amongst the most influential youth-oriented transnational voluntary associations to be established in the twentieth century was the Scout movement, developed in the United Kingdom by Robert Baden Powell in the century’s opening decade and organized transnationally in the World Organization of the Scout movement following the First World War (Moynihan 2006; Block and Proctor 2009; Vallory 2012). As with the Young Men’s Christian movement, the Scout movement was to be emulated in respect of other genders and world regions, with, for example, the establishment of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 1928 (Proctor 2009), and of the International Union of Muslim Scouts in 1989 (Union of International Associations 1996).

Transnational youth associations were to constitute a key arena in which the competing ideologies of the twentieth century were to contend. Socialist and Communist organizations were to play a pioneering role in this regard, including the International Union of Socialist Youth Organisations founded in 1907, and the Communist Youth International following the Bolshevik revolution (Luza 1970; McMeekin 2003). Subsequent efforts to generate transnational fascist youth associations, such as those of the *Comitati d’azione per l’Universalità di Roma* (CAUR), were less successful (Leeden 1972). With the onset of the Cold War, transnational youth associations were used to

promote the agenda of each of the competing sides, through for instance the pro-Soviet World Federation of Democratic Youth and the pro-Western World Assembly of Youth (Koteck 2003).

## **Human Rights**

Histories of universal human rights have proliferated in recent years (Ishay 2004; Hunt 2007; Lauren 2011; Stearns 2012; Davidson 2012). Much of the literature on this topic has been criticized for ‘essentialized Eurocentrism’ in its emphasis on purported roots either in classical Greece and Rome or the European ‘Age of Enlightenment’ and its suggestion of a ‘story of inevitable ideological triumph of the Western, liberal world’ (Halme-Tuomisaari and Slotte 2015: 6-7). Those who have focused specifically on the history of transnational voluntary associations promoting human rights have also commonly emphasized the mid to late twentieth century as a key turning point in their development (Neier 2012). However, transnational associations have been promoting human rights for many centuries, with examples including the Universal Confederation of the Friends of Truth of the late eighteenth century, a key player in the French revolution (Kates 1985).

Amongst the most extensively researched transnational associations of the late eighteenth century were involved in a particular domain of human rights promotion: anti-slavery activism (Blackburn 1988; David 2007; Drescher 2009; Oldfield 2013). The abolitionist movement was in large part of Quaker origin (Brycchan 2012; Jackson and Kozel 2015), and transnational composition was present from the outset: the ‘Society for the Relief of Free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage’ established in Philadelphia in 1775

permitted election as corresponding members of ‘foreigners or persons who not reside in this state’ (quoted in Davies 2014a: 26). Explorations of the subsequent development of abolitionism in the nineteenth century have assessed not only Anglo-American aspects of transnational voluntary action in this field (Fladeland 1972) but also global dimensions (Mulligan and Bric 2013). Particularly influential was the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, now known as Anti-Slavery International and widely regarded as one of the oldest modern transnational voluntary associations, having been established in 1839 (Heartfield 2016). It has been described as ‘perhaps the first transnational moral entrepreneur – religious movements aside – to play a significant role in world politics generally, and in the evolution of a global prohibition regime specifically’, given its role in the development of international anti-slavery agreements of the nineteenth century (Nadelmann 1990: 495).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Josephine Butler spearheaded a ‘new abolitionist’ transnational movement, concerned with addressing human trafficking, which was commonly referred to at that time as ‘white slavery’, given the movement’s Eurocentric focus (Butler 1876; Limoncelli 2010). This movement, comprised of transnational voluntary associations including the International Abolitionist Federation and the International Bureau for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, was to be influential in securing intergovernmental agreement upon an international convention on the traffic in women and girls in 1904 (Charnovitz 1997: 203).

Following the First World War, Save the Children International Union successfully promoted intergovernmental agreement at the League of Nations on a Declaration of the

Rights of the Child in 1924 (Marshall 1999), and anti-slavery campaigners were influential in promoting new international legal instruments to address their cause (Ribi 2011). Efforts by other transnational associations to promote more universal international human rights instruments, however, were unsuccessful in the League of Nations era (Burgers 1992). The interwar years were nonetheless notable for the establishment and work of the oldest transnational voluntary association specifically dedicated to human rights, the International Federation for Human Rights, set up in 1922 and campaigning for a 'Global Declaration of the Rights of Man' from 1927 (Sée 1927).

After their success in advocating inclusion of human rights in the Charter of the United Nations (Schlesinger 2003), transnational voluntary associations were also influential in the subsequent drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' work to promote it (Korey 2001). It is in this context that transnational voluntary associations for the promotion of human rights proliferated in the second half of the twentieth century, with organizations such as Amnesty International aiming to address the 'unmet demand for activism among certain populations in the free world' (Bob 2010: 146; Buchanan 2002; Clark 2001; Hopgood 2006). Transnational voluntary associations for the promotion of human rights were also formed in increasing numbers on a regional basis in this period, including the Arab Organization for Human Rights established in 1983 (Kandil 2010: 50).

Amongst the most influential transnational voluntary associations of the late twentieth century developed from the network to address the disappeared in Argentina, which has since become widely referred to as a model of successful transnational

advocacy networking (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Scovazzi and Citroni 2007). Claims with regards to the global influence of transnational human rights associations reached a peak with the end of the Cold War, given the apparent role in this process of transnational voluntary associations including the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (Laber 2002; Snyder 2011).

The period since the end of the Cold War, despite notable apparent achievements for transnational human rights advocacy such as the creation of the International Criminal Court (Glasius 2006), has witnessed the development of more skeptical perspectives. Moyn (2010: 213, 13), for instance, has described human rights as ‘the last utopia’, emerging from ‘the crisis of other utopias’ and contrasting from earlier rights discourse in its detachment from ‘spaces of citizenship in which rights were accorded and protected’. Hopgood (2013: ix), on the other hand, has critiqued the growing detachment between institutionalized proponents of ‘Human Rights’ (capitalized), including transnational voluntary associations such as Amnesty International, and the ‘human rights’ ideal that they purport to promote, and claims that ‘we are on the verge of the imminent decay of the Global Human Rights Regime’ in the context of contemporary shifts in international order.

### **Feminism and Women’s Rights**

The evolution of transnational voluntary associations for the promotion of women’s rights and those promoting human rights more generally are highly interrelated. The Universal Confederation of the Friends of Truth, for instance, is renowned for its promotion of

women's rights and in 1791 it established a transnational Society of Women Friends of Truth led by Etta Palm d'Aelders (Kates 1990). Women's associations were vital to the abolitionist movement (Midgley 1992), and the exclusion of women from discussions at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840 contributed towards the convening of reputedly the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls eight years later (Stanton, Anthony and Gage 1887; Wellman 2004).

Discussions of the subsequent evolution of feminist transnational voluntary associations have had a tendency to describe a series of 'waves'. Anderson (2000) considers the 'first international women's movement' to have developed from 1830 to 1860, while Ferree and Tripp (2006: 55, 59-60) have put forward three subsequent waves of transnational women's voluntary association formation: a first wave from 1880 to 1920 featuring promotion of 'issues of peace, suffrage, temperance, equal access to education and industrial training, equal pay for equal work, ... labor legislation, ... social welfare and religious concerns', a second wave from 1945 to 1975 focused on anti-colonialism, and a third wave from 1985 featuring new South-based networks.

The late nineteenth century witnessed the formation of some of the most enduring transnational women's voluntary associations, including the International Council of Women (Gubin and van Molle 2005) and the International Alliance of Women (Whittick 1979). Especially influential in the development of the transnational movement for women's suffrage in this period, including in spearheading the organized movement for this cause in the first country to grant women the right to vote, was the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union (Tyrrell 1991). The development of transnational

women's associations in the late nineteenth century was also intimately related with the development of European imperialism at this time, with colonial territories forming a significant arena for European feminist activism (Midgley 2007).

The First World War was to split transnational women's associations between pro- and anti-war factions, the latter of which formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an organization that went on to play an influential role in lobbying the League of Nations and the United Nations (Foster 1989). The creation of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations was also to provide significant new opportunities for transnational women's advocacy more generally, and transnational committees of women's voluntary associations were established to lobby them (Miller 1994; Stienstra 1994; Rupp 1997; Berkovitch 1999; Sandell 2015).

The years following the First World War also witnessed efforts by transnational women's voluntary associations 'to become – or at least to appear – what they called "truly international", [when] they added members and national sections in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa' (Rupp 1994: 1580; Sandell 2011). International congresses of 'Eastern' women in the early 1930s, on the other hand, sought to put forward an alternative perspective to those of 'Western' women's transnational voluntary associations (Weber 2008); a decade later Arab feminists were to form the General Arab Women's Federation (Badran 1995: 231). Challenging traditional perspectives on sexuality was also a focus for interwar transnational voluntary action, and the World League for Sexual Reform founded in the 1920s has been described as a 'Homosexual Internationale' (Tamagne 2004: 112; Dose and Selwyn 2003; on homosexual

internationalism see also Rupp 2009 and 2011, Adam, Duyvendak and Krouwel 1999, and Massad 2002).

Decolonization following the Second World War, the social revolutions of the 1960s, and the opportunities provided by the United Nations World Conferences on Women since 1975 are among the factors thought to have facilitated the development of a new generation of more networked and less hierarchical transnational women's associations from the 1970s onwards (Moghadam 2005; Stienstra 1994; Connors 1996). Transnational women's voluntary associations aiming to put forward a 'Southern' perspective multiplied in this era, including Association of African Women for Research and Development and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (Antrobus 2004; Jain 2005). Following the end of the Cold War, the wave of United Nations global conferences of the early 1990s provided new opportunities for transnational campaigns to address violence against women and to promote 'women's rights as human rights' (Bunch and Reilly 1994; Penn and Nardos 2003; Reilly 2009). However, issues such as female genital cutting have been the subject of significant controversy (Boyle 2002; James and Robertson 2002).

## **Peace**

Amongst the most prominent issue areas in respect of which transnational women's voluntary associations have mobilized is the promotion of peace, and 'the first women's peace movement' is said to date to the early nineteenth century (Liddington 1989; Potter 2004: 273). While the promotion of peace has been a key aspect of the work of ancient

transnational religious institutions across multiple faiths (Cortright 2008), the first modern voluntary associations established specifically for the promotion of peace are widely believed to have been formed in Great Britain and the United States in the second decade of the nineteenth century (Ceadel 1996; van der Linden 1987). Older religious groups, notably the Quakers, played a vital role in their origin and development (Ceadel 2002). The geographical separation of Great Britain and the United States from the wars of continental Europe, together with their relatively liberal political cultures and the demise of fatalistic assumptions regarding the inevitability of war are thought to have contributed to the development of peace societies in these countries in the early nineteenth century (Ceadel 2000).

Although transnational in terms of aims, the early nineteenth century peace societies were largely nationally based. It was in the late nineteenth century that transnational organizational structures became more common. The International League of Peace and Freedom established in 1867, for instance, had an international composition (Tchoubarian 1994: 57) and it has been perceived to be 'a landmark in the history of nineteenth century peace movements, being the first significant organization of its kind explicitly to posit a necessary connection between international peace and the achievement of republican democracy within states' (Hazareesingh 2001: 251). An International Peace Bureau was also established in 1891 to coordinate the Universal Peace Congresses that took place in the closing years of the nineteenth century (Mauermann 1990; Santi 1991).

The pursuit of international arbitration and disarmament was key objective of late

nineteenth century transnational peace associations such as the Interparliamentary Union for Arbitration established in 1889 (Tate 1942; Uhlig 1988; Cooper 1991). Multiple transnational women's peace associations were also formed to promote the cause (Cooper 1983). Campaigns by transnational peace associations at the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 are thought to have 'foreshadowed the method employed by NGOs in recent decades of using intergovernmental meetings as opportunities for coordinated lobbying and mass publicity' (Charnovitz 1997: 197).

The idea for the establishment after the First World War of a League of Nations has been attributed to peace societies (Martin 1958). The subsequent creation of this institution provided significant opportunities for transnational peace activism, and national and transnational voluntary associations were established specifically to promote the work of the League of Nations (Birn 1980; Lynch 1999; Davies 2012a). A core focus for transnational voluntary action in the interwar years was the pursuit of general disarmament, in respect of which several global co-ordinating bodies were established to manage the campaigns of multiple transnational voluntary associations (Davies 2007). The failure of this campaign is thought to have contributed towards the closing off of opportunities for peace advocacy in subsequent years (Reinalda 2009: 316-317), and Howard (2008: 115) has described the evolution of peace activism to this point in terms of a 'melancholy story of the efforts of good men to abolish war but only succeeding thereby to make it more terrible'. Peace associations were nevertheless influential in the planning for the peace settlement following the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations (Divine 1967).

Whereas peace societies up to the Second World War had commonly been oriented towards the general promotion of peace, following that conflict their activities became increasingly sectoralized, centered around narrowly defined issues such as nuclear disarmament or opposition to particular conflicts such as the Vietnam War (Carter 1992). Optimistic accounts of the history of the nuclear disarmament movement have credited transnational voluntary associations promoting this objective such as International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War with contributing towards the end of the Cold War, given their influence on Gorbachev and Reagan (Evangelista 1999; Wittner 2003). Following that conflict's end transnational co-ordinating bodies of voluntary associations for the abolition of particular categories of weapon such as landmines and cluster munitions have been notable for their success in campaigning for intergovernmental conventions promoting these goals (Cameron, Lawson and Tomlin 1998; Price 1998; Mekata 2000; Borrie 2009).

## **Labour**

Many of the earliest transnational labour associations, such as Robert Owen's Association of All Classes of All Nations which operated in the 1830s, were concerned with the promotion not only of improved workers' welfare but also peaceful change (Davies 2014b). Despite the subsequent development of violent revolutionary Marxist approaches, peace activism remained a key concern for many later transnational labour associations (Van Holthoon and Van der Linden 1988). The labour movement has also been amongst the most active in the development of transnational voluntary associations

in secondary fields such as education, with examples including the International Federation of Workers Educational Associations (IFWEA), formed in 1947 (IFWEA 1980).

Early transnational labour associations, such as the well-known so-called 'First International' established in London in 1864, had a very broad-based memberships, including in the First International Owenites, Marxists, Chartists, trade unionists, and anarchists, amongst others, but found it difficult to achieve unity across the many divisions (Freymond and Molnár 1966; Thomas 1985). Later nineteenth century transnational labour associations were more specialized, mobilizing particular groups such as trade unionists (Lorwin 1929; Van Goethem 2006), cooperatives (Watkins 1970; Birchall 1997), anarchists (Bantman 2006) and socialists (Joll 1974). The work of the International Association of Labour Legislation formed in 1900 to promote international labour standards has been interpreted as setting important precedents for that of the International Labour Organization (Kott 2015).

The formation of the International Labour Organization was in large part driven by concerns regarding the repercussions of the Bolshevik revolution (Clark 2007: 122), which also resulted in splits among transnational labour associations between pro-Western associations such as the Labour and Socialist International (Laqua 2015) and pro-Soviet front organizations such as the Red International of Labour Unions, the Tenant's League, and the International Peasant Council (Degras 1971). Splits such as these exacerbated following the Second World War, and MacShane (1992: 5) argues that the post-World War Two split between the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (Van der Linden 2000) and the World Federation of Trade Unions 'was one of the causes rather

than a consequence of the Cold War' since 'intra-left hostility in the trade union movement was deep rooted'.

Decolonization and the demise of the Soviet Union have been among the factors facilitating the decline of traditional, hierarchical, transnational labour associations and their apparent substitution by purportedly more networked and Southern-based transnational institutions (Waterman 2010). In the post-Cold War era, much was made of the emergence of the 'global justice movement' (Della Porta 2007), and apparently bottom-up institutions such as the World Social Forum formed in Brazil in 2001 (Sen and Waterman 2007; Smith 2008), although its top-down dimensions have recently been subjected to critique (Peña and Davies 2014). Since the 2008 global financial crisis, the global justice movement has increasingly been supplanted by anti-austerity mobilizations (Fominaya and Cox 2013).

## **Business**

Transnational labour associations mobilized in part in response to the internationalization of business interests (Marx and Engels 1848: 3-11). While the development of profit-making transnational corporations is beyond the scope of this review, the formation of non-profit transnational business associations accounts for a significant proportion of the transnational voluntary associations formed over the past two centuries. Transnational business associations are also among the longest-established modern transnational voluntary associations, and their antecedents can be traced to a wide variety of pre-modern cross-border institutions including merchant hanses (Harreld 2015) and the

international sections of merchant guilds (Ogilvie 2011).

As with many other transnational associations, modern transnational business associations were to expand in numbers significantly in the late nineteenth century. Many of these were centred around promoting the shared interests of particular trades, such as hoteliers in the case of the International Hoteliers Alliance that was established in 1869 and was to provide a range of services such as legal campaigning, gathering statistics, and facilitating placements (Union Internationale Hotelière 1929). Its work continues into the present day, as does that of other associations from this period such as the International Union of Marine Insurance (Koch 1999). Interestingly, a key concern motivating the foundation of a number of transnational business associations in the period before the First World War was the perception that organized labour had mobilized on a transnational footing more effectively than business (Macara 1904).

That there was some substance to such claims became apparent when the International Labour Organisation was established following the First World War and an employers' equivalent to the International Federation of Trade Unions was found to be missing, necessitating the creation in 1920 of the International Organisation of Employers (Oechsli 2001). While the International Organisation of Employers represented business in the International Labour Organisation, the International Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1919, was the most influential private voluntary organization in the activities of the League of Nations (Ridgeway 1938; Charnovitz 1997); it was a key player in the Dawes Plan (Delaisi 1927), and its influence in 'business diplomacy' continued in the United Nations era (Kelly 2001; Hocking and Kelly 2002).

Amongst the most significant initiatives of the International Chamber of Commerce has been the creation in 1923 of its International Court of Arbitration, which dealt with ten thousand cases over the course of the twentieth century and has played a vital role in the development of private international law (Fouchard, Gaillard, Goldman and Savage 1999: 174; Greenberg and Ryssdal 2013). The evolution of transnational merchant law more generally has been interpreted as a key component in the development of 'transnational private governance' beyond the state (Ronit and Schneider 2000; Hall and Biersteker 2002; Cutler 2003; Graz and Nölke 2008).

A further key contribution of transnational business associations to the evolution of 'transnational private governance' has been the development of international standards. Following on from the work of maritime, rail and road transnational associations in their respective domains prior to the First World War (Bekiashev and Serebriakov 1981; Burri, Elsasser and Gugerli 2003; Reinalda 2009; Davies 2013), IATA, originally the International Air Traffic Association founded in 1919 and subsequently the International Air Transport Association formed in 1945, has been significant in the development of air transit and safety standards, sometimes surpassing the activities of the intergovernmental International Civil Aviation Organization (Cohen 1949; Leslie 1971; Zacher and Sutton 1996). Another transnational business association dating to the interwar years, the International Broadcasting Union (IBU), was important in the international division of wavelengths to minimize interference (IBU 1930).

Transnational business associations have also played a significant role in the development of transnational epistemic communities in areas of their interest. Among

the most notable initiatives in this regard was the formation in 1971 of the World Economic Forum (Pigman 2007). These initiatives have become increasingly specialized, and examples include the World Business Council for Sustainable Development formed in 1995 to provide a business perspective on environmental issues (DeSimone and Popoff 1997). With 'corporate social responsibility' developing as a key concern, a wide range of private multi-sectoral initiatives for its promotion have been created in the post-Cold War era, such as the Global Reporting Initiative which sets transnational private standards for 'sustainability reporting' (Sarfaty 2015).

### **Standardization**

While the promotion of common standards is a significant feature of the wider work of transnational voluntary associations in multiple issue areas, a number of transnational voluntary associations have been dedicated as their primary focus to technical standardization (Tamm Hallström 2004; Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000). A key event in their international development was the 1855 universal exhibition in Paris at which the commissioners noted that 'a large portion of valuable time would be saved to all persons engaged in industrial occupations, such as the heads of commercial houses and other establishments, engineers, clerks, and workmen' if a universal decimal system of measurements was to be adopted worldwide, and a voluntary International Association for Obtaining a Uniform Decimal System of Measures, Weights and Coins was subsequently established to promote this objective (Yates 1856: 5; Geyer 2001; Tavernor 2007). An intergovernmental International Bureau of Weights and Measures followed in

1875.

In the twentieth century, private international organizations for technical standardization expanded their scope remarkably. In 1906 the International Electrotechnical Commission was established to develop universal standards for electrical apparatus (Goody, Charnley, Veneer and Clauson 2006). Twenty years later the International Federation of National Standardization Associations was founded with a far broader remit, and it produced a range of common standards from paper sizes to the definition of 'nano'; its successor the International Organization for Standardization (ISO, set up in 1946) has extended its reach to include standards for a vast array of aspects of human activity, from shipping container design to environmental and labour standards (Murphy and Yates 2009). As Loya and Boli (1999: 169) have argued, although the work of international standardization bodies tends to go unnoticed, it 'affects virtually every commodity and productive process in daily life, from the mundane to the esoteric'.

### **Professions**

As with business associations, the evolution of transnational professional associations is closely related to the promotion of international standards. This was the key objective underpinning the creation in 1885 of the International Statistical Institute that was in turn to be a model of institutional design for later transnational professional associations such as the International Actuarial Association founded in 1895 (Davies 2014a: 48; Nixon 1960; Rugland 2008).

A significant benefit that was perceived to derive from transnational professional

association was international protection of the reputation of individual professions through internationally recognized accreditation. The American Dental Society of Europe, for instance, was set up in 1873 to address the problem of fraudulent dentists (Godden 1973). The International Council of Nurses established in 1899 similarly aimed to raise the international professional standing of nurses (Bridges 1967; Brush 1999). Other professional associations founded in the late nineteenth century were concerned with addressing fraud beyond their profession: the International Federation of Museum Curators set up in 1898, for instance, targeted forgeries (Meyer and Savoy 2014).

The scope for transnational professional associations expanded in the League of Nations period, with formations in the 1920s including the International Association of Lawyers, the Association of International Accountants and the International Federation of Library Associations (Sapiro 2009; Johnson and Kaygill 1971; Koops and Wieder 1977). The period immediately following the Second World War was another period of particularly intensive transnational professional association formation, with examples including the World Medical Association founded in 1947 (Richards 1994) and the International Union of Architects established the following year (Vago 1998).

Many of the most influential professional associations internationally are those firmly rooted in a particular national context, such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, a British institution founded in 1868 whose standards are adopted internationally (Thompson 1968). Accompanying the decolonization process since the Second World War, the Western-centric array of transnational professional institutions was increasingly challenged by the development of regional transnational professional

associations, such as those formed from pan-Arab professional congresses in the 1940s (Porath 1986). A further significant post-war development has been the increasing professionalization in other sectors in respect of which transnational voluntary associations operate (Skocpol 2003; Martens 2005; Cumming 2008; Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011).

## **Culture**

Amongst the most numerous and influential transnational professional associations have been those assembling artistic and literary professionals. An early example of successful transnational advocacy by a transnational professional association for an intergovernmental agreement is the campaign for an international intellectual property convention undertaken by the International Literary and Artistic Association in the late nineteenth century (Löhr 2011).

Early internationalism in the artistic and wider cultural sectors more generally has become a particularly popular topic for investigation among transnational historians (Iriye 1997; Geyer and Paulmann 2001; Brockington 2009). Its scope was not limited to ‘high arts’ but included a diverse array of cultural practices including sports (Riordan and Krüger 1999; Eisenberg 2001), with numerous transnational sports associations including both the International Olympic Committee (Hill 1996; Guttman 2002) and the International Federation of Association Football (Tomlinson 2014) dating to the period preceding the First World War.

Following that conflict, the establishment of the intergovernmental International

Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) provided new opportunities for transnational voluntary associations in the cultural sector, and although it fell short of the close relationship between the International Labour Organization and the trade unions, it liaised with the transnational voluntary *Comité d'Entente des Grandes Associations Internationales* (Renoliet 1999). The ICIC's successor UNESCO has not only had a consultative relationship with transnational voluntary associations, it has commonly initiated their formation (Martens 1999).

Preceding the work of UNESCO to promote cultural diversity were the long-standing activities of transnational voluntary associations formed across multiple regions of the world to promote particular cultures. Examples include the East Asian Common Culture Association formed in Japan in 1898 (Saaler 2007), the Eastern Bond Association created in Egypt in 1922 (Porath 1986), the World Muslim Congress established in Jerusalem in 1931 (Kramer 1986), and the Committee for the Spread of Arab Culture set up in 1931 (Gershoni and Jankowski 1995), to name just a few.

Transnational voluntary associations in general have been credited with the promotion of a universal 'world culture' (Boli and Thomas 1999; Lechner and Boli 2005). This is reflected in the names of a number of voluntary associations such as the Indian Institute of World Culture that was founded in 1945 and the World Culture Association set up in 2009. Alternatively, a sector of transnational voluntary associations has promoted intercultural dialogue. Following on from pre-war 'cultural internationalist' initiatives such as the Institute of Pacific Relations (see the science and education section, above), notable associations promoting intercultural dialogue formed subsequently

include the East and West Association (Conn 1996) and the Council on Intercultural Relations (Howard 1984), both formed in 1941. A new wave of intercultural initiatives followed the 11 September 2001 attacks and the launch of the 'war on terror' (Panebianco 2003).

## **Race**

One of the most commonly researched historical efforts for the promotion of intercultural dialogue is the Universal Races Congress of 1911 that was intended to launch an international secretariat (Biddiss 1971; Rich 1984; Holton 2002). More successful in the formation of a lasting transnational voluntary association, however, was another conference the following year also held at the University of London but which promoted a very different approach to race: the International Eugenics Congress at which the Permanent International Eugenics Committee was set up (Kühl 2013; Sussman 2014). Amongst its constituent members was the notorious International Society for Racial Hygiene (Weindling 1993; Kühl 2013).

While racist transnational voluntary associations such as these multiplied in Europe in the period preceding the First World War, pan-nationalist transnational voluntary associations grew in number in other regions of the world (Snyder 1984). These included Pan-Asian (Saaler and Szpilman 2011), Pan-Arab (Khalidi, Anderson, Muslih and Simon 1991), Pan-Islamic (Özcan 1997), Pan-American (Lockey 1920), and Pan-African institutions (Geiss 1974; Esedebe 1994).

Responding to persecution in Europe, transnational Jewish voluntary associations

multiplied from the late nineteenth century onwards, including the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* formed in 1860 (Leven 1911; Kedourie 1974), the World Zionist Organization created in 1897 (Laqueur 2003), HICEM founded in 1927 (Bazarov 2009), World Jewish Relief established in 1933 (Gottlieb 1998), and the World Jewish Congress launched in 1936 (Garai 1976; Segev 2014).

A number of pan-nationalist transnational associations, such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (Cronon 1969; Martin 1976), are reputed to have had some influence among twentieth century movements for decolonization and desegregation. Despite developments such as these, racist transnational voluntary associations persist in the Cold War era (Greven and Grumke 2006; Vejvodová 2012).

### **Humanitarianism**

The promotion of understandings of common 'humanity' beyond racial or other perceived differences has been a key aspect of the work of a variety of transnational humanitarian associations (Barnett 2011: 33). However, few aspects of the history of transnational voluntary associations have been evaluated more in terms of purported Western origins than the humanitarian sector. In his otherwise rich account of the evolution of transnational humanitarianism, for instance, Barnett (2011: 16) has claimed that it 'is rooted in Western history and globalized in ways that were largely responsive to interests and ideas emanating from the West'. Stamatov (2013: 1) also puts forward an account emphasising Western roots in his emphasis on 'the origins of global humanitarianism' in 'the struggles of religious actors in the course of European imperial expansion overseas'.

A small minority, however, have emphasised the role of diffusion of ideas and practices from East to West in the origins of transnational humanitarianism in Europe and North America, especially the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century lifesaving movement, which succeeded much earlier East Asian societies for recovery of the drowned (Evans 2003; Davies 2014a).

While charitable institutions have been in existence for millennia (Flack 2008), it has been common to claim that contemporary forms of transnational humanitarianism emerged in the late eighteenth century (Barnett 2011: 50). Standard accounts such as those of Stamatov (2013) and Barnett (2011) have tended to concentrate on the role of anti-slavery activism in this period, while others have addressed the transnational network of 'humane' (or lifesaving) societies that also developed at this time and which promoted humanitarian assistance on a secular basis without discrimination with respect to nationality, race or religion (Moniz 2008).

The subsequent development of transnational humanitarianism has been strongly linked to nineteenth century imperialism, with colonial territories a key arena for European humanitarian advocacy (Porter 1999; Barnett 2011). The mid-nineteenth century witnessed multiple transnational efforts to promote social welfare (Leonards and Randeraad 2010). A key turning point in the evolution of transnational humanitarian associations is widely held to be the establishment of the Red Cross movement in 1863 (Moorehead 1999; Forsythe 2005), which played a vital role in the development of the Geneva Conventions (Finnemore 1996). From 1877 onwards the Red Crescent symbol was adopted in Muslim countries (Benthall 1997: 160), and in 1919 an international federation

of Red Cross societies was established to coordinate their work, which had expanded greatly during the First World War (Forsythe 2005: 35). The Red Cross federation was to be influential in the League of Nations era, not only in direct provision of humanitarian assistance but also in persuading governments to establish the first intergovernmental disaster relief organization, the International Relief Union, in 1927 (Walker and Maxwell 2009: 29-30).

The humanitarian consequences of the First World War also sparked the formation in 1919 of Save the Children, which Eglantyne Jebb hoped would become 'a powerful international organisation for child saving which would extend its ramifications to the remotest corner of the globe' (quoted in Mulley 2009: 298), and transnational voluntary service associations including International Voluntary Service for Peace (*Service Civil International*), founded in 1920 (Best and Pike 1948). These joined the growing array of international service organizations established in the second decade of the twentieth century, including Rotary International (Nicholl 1984), Lions Clubs International (Kittler 1968), Quota International and Zonta International (Cott 1987: 89). The expanding array of social welfare transnational associations established in the interwar years included the International Federation of Settlements (Carson 1990), the International Council on Social Welfare (Healy 2008), and Alcoholics Anonymous World Services (Mäkelä 1996), as well as new associations promoting the welfare of migrants such as the International Migration Service (Guerrey 2014).

Following a similar pattern to the war of 1914-18, the Second World War also sparked the formation of a new generation of transnational associations to deal with its

humanitarian consequences, including Oxfam (Black 1992) and CARE (Campbell 1990). Having commenced their activities with a focus on post-war relief work in Europe, from the 1950s onwards there was a shift towards providing assistance to developing countries (Walker and Maxwell 2009: 43-44). This decade also saw the formation of World Vision, War on Want, International Voluntary Services and ATD Fourth World (Davies 2014a: 140). The following development decade witnessed a considerable increase in governmental funding to private associations concerning themselves with international development (Smith 1990: 4-5). Their work was also to become increasingly internationally co-ordinated such as through the International Council of Voluntary Associations established in 1962 (Tong 2009).

More radical approaches to humanitarianism were put forward in the 1970s, notably with the creation of Doctors Without Borders in 1971, which rejected the perceived conservatism of the Red Cross movement (Redfield 2013). This decade also witnessed growing numbers of transnational development associations founded in the Global South including Africare in Niger in 1970 (Campbell 2011) and BRAC, now the world's largest development voluntary association, in Bangladesh in 1972 (Smillie 2009). The late Cold War period also saw the formation of significant transnational associations adopting a more networked structure and aiming to put forward a 'Southern' perspective on development, such as the Third World Network, established in Penang in 1984 (Hilton 2009: 136).

In the period since the end of the Cold War, there has been a growing convergence between the objectives of transnational associations traditionally concerned with aid and

development and those promoting human rights (Nelson and Dorsey 2008; Bob 2009). In response to critiques of their accountability, many have also reformed their structures to give greater voice to populations of developing countries (Foreman 1999; Lindenberg and Bryant 2001; Davies 2012b), and taken part in initiatives such as the International NGO Accountability Charter (Ronalds 2010: 98).

## **Health**

A crucial component of transnational voluntary action in the humanitarian sector has been the management of human health. Many of the transnational humanitarian associations of the late eighteenth century aimed to disseminate what in Europe were newly acquired healthcare techniques such as methods resuscitation developed in Asia and the Americas (Evans 2004). Similarly, Chinese methods of vaccination were diffused to Europe in the early eighteenth century (Bazin 2011: 25). Global promotion of Edward Jenner's smallpox vaccine was subsequently to become the focus of one of the most significant transnational voluntary associations of the early nineteenth century, the Royal Jennerian Society (Bazin 1999). Later in the same century transnational voluntary associations were also established to challenge vaccination, such as the International League of Anti-Vaccinators (Darmon 1986).

Many of the leading transnational associations of the late nineteenth century were dedicated to public health, including through promoting particular aspects such as improved sanitation (Frioux 2015) and birth control (McLaren 1978; Barrett and Frank 1999). By the early twentieth century the range of transnational voluntary associations

promoting public health was considerable, ranging from the promotion of comparatively innocuous objectives such as 'pure food' (Guillem-Llobat 2014) through to exceptionally contentious goals such as eugenics (Weindling 1993; Kühl 2013).

As for so many other transnational voluntary associations, the League of Nations provided significant new lobbying opportunities for transnational health organizations, including through its health organization (Borowy 2009: 121). Of its successor, it has been argued that the World Health Organization's 'interaction with a broad range of mostly international NGOs has been and continues to be one of the most active and vibrant instruments through which the Organization pursues its mandate' (Burci and Vignes 2004: 89).

Public health issues in developing countries were a significant focus for transnational health voluntary associations in the late twentieth century. Among the largest transnational voluntary associations in existence is the International Planned Parenthood Federation, founded in India in 1952 to promote birth control (Sitters 1973). The targeting of transnational corporations also became a significant focus of action, for instance the marketing of breast milk substitutes around which International Baby Food Action Network was organized in 1979 (Chetley 1986; Sikkink 1986). The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries also witnessed the formation of a broad spectrum of transnational voluntary associations aiming to target HIV/AIDS, an issue that was to be the focus of pioneering multi-sectoral initiatives involving transnational voluntary associations among other actors (Harman 2010 and 2012).

## **Environment**

Transnational environmentalist voluntary associations have widely been regarded as a comparatively recent phenomenon, developing especially since the 1970s (Doherty and Doyle 2008). Grove (1995: 16), however, emphasizes that the roots of transnational environmentalism can be traced back to 'conservation practices [that] cannot, in fact, be distinguished clearly from the complex web of economic, religious, and cultural arrangements evolved by a multitude of societies to safeguard and sustain their access to resources' over thousands of years. The more recent development of transnational environmentalism has, as with the development of transnational voluntary associations in many other fields, been linked closely to European imperialism (Grove 1995; Barton 2004).

The oldest extant transnational environmentalist associations are commonly said to date from the late nineteenth century onwards (Betsill 2014). Their original purposes include activities such as nature tourism in the case of Nature Friends International founded in 1895 (Günther 2003), and the protection of imperial game reserves in the case of Fauna and Flora International formed in 1903 (Dalton 46; Adams 2013). Frank, Hironaka, Meyer, Schofer and Tuma (1999: 92) have disaggregated two major rationales for the transnational environmentalist associations of this period: 'to (1) protect nature on sentimental grounds (for example, the International Friends of Nature, formed in 1895); and (2) exploit nature on instrumental grounds (for example, the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, formed in 1891).'

Transnational conservationist and animal welfare associations multiplied further

in the League of Nations era, with the establishment of organizations including the International Tree Foundation (Fitzwilliams 1987), BirdLife International (Nicholson 1987: 30), the International Bureau of Societies for the Protection of Animals and Anti-Vivisection Societies (Frank 2002: 44), and the International Office for Protection of Nature (Adams 2004: 45). Despite their not inconsiderable efforts to lobby the League of Nations on conservationist issues, their impact was limited (Charnovitz 1997: 235).

New transnational conservationist groups continued to be established following the Second World War, including the part-governmental International Union for Conservation of Nature set up in 1948 (Holdgate 1999) and the World Wide Fund for Nature established in 1961 (Wapner 1996; World Wide Fund for Nature 2011). While these represented in large part continuation of previous themes, a new generation of more 'activist and political' transnational environmentalist voluntary associations was soon to develop, representing what has been described as a 'new environmentalism' aiming to avert 'environmental catastrophe' (McCormick 1989: 47-9). Notable among these were Friends of the Earth, renowned for its more activist approach (Burke 1982; Lamb 1996) and Greenpeace, renowned for its use of nonviolent direct action (Bohlen 2001; Weyler 2004; Scarce 2005; Zelko 2013).

The Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment provided unprecedented opportunities for transnational environmental advocacy, and the subsequent creation of the United Nations Environment Programme provided a focus for co-ordinated action through the Environment Liaison Center International that was formed in Nairobi in 1974 (Morphet 1996; Caldwell 1996). In the following decades the rate of new transnational

environmental voluntary association formation increased considerably, particularly in developing countries (McCormick 1989: 101). As with development associations aiming to put forward a perspective from the Global South, Penang, Malaysia, was to be an important centre for the creation of transnational voluntary associations aiming to put forward a perspective on the environment from the Global South, with the formation of the Pesticide Action Network in 1982 (Hough 1998: 53), the Asia-Pacific People's Environmental Network in 1983, and the World Rainforest Movement three years later (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 131; Hilton 2009: 136).

In common with transnational associations in the health sector, transnational environmentalist groups made global corporations key targets for their actions (Wapner 1995; Newell 2001). In the post-Cold War era partnerships with business to promote environmental standards, such as the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) principles, became increasingly common (Pattberg 2005). There has also been a growing convergence of agendas with those of development associations in the promotion of 'sustainable development', although it has also been argued that some transnational environmentalist campaigns such as those against large dams may have inhibited economic development (Scudder 2005). Transnational environmentalist associations have also been influential in the international negotiations on climate change that have dominated the global environmental debate since the Rio Earth Summit (Arts 1999; Newell 2006; Betsill and Correll 2008; Bulkeley and Newell 2015).

## **Conclusion**

It is estimated that the number of transnational voluntary associations now in existence may exceed twenty thousand (Union of International Associations 2015). As this review has shown, their historical evolution spans many centuries, even millennia. Although it is still commonly believed that transnational voluntary associations are novel, largely Western in origin, and have multiplied in a path of linear expansion, this review has shown how across many fields of their activities they are older, more global in origin, and more cyclical in their evolution than conventional wisdom would lead us to assume.

The influence of transnational voluntary associations has been considerable. They have played an important role in developing common standards, facilitating transnational cooperation in a vast array of fields of human activity and contributing towards the rationalization and institutionalization of the world polity (Boli and Thomas 1999). They have also played a critical role in international governance by informing, implementing, monitoring, challenging and surpassing the work of intergovernmental bodies such as the League of Nations and the United Nations (Charnovitz 1997). Their role in the promotion of new and transformed ideas and international norms has been profound (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Moreover, they have influenced major world historical developments, both integrative and fragmentary, from the French revolution and imperialism through to decolonization and the Cold War and its ending (Davies 2014a).

In recent years, there has been growth in transnational voluntary associations established and headquartered in the Global South. Many transnational voluntary associations founded in Western Europe and North America have also reformed their

structures with the objective of providing greater voice to other regions, and in some instances they have moved their headquarters to other regions. A further significant trend has been the proliferation of purportedly more horizontal and networked organizational structures in place of hierarchical institutions, although as this review has revealed there are limits to the claimed horizontality in practice.

Although this review has surveyed a considerable array of literature, research into the history of transnational voluntary associations remains at an early stage of its development. There are many transnational voluntary associations that are yet to receive detailed historical attention, and the number of more general accounts of their activities remains limited. Much further research needs to be undertaken especially in respect of the history of transnational voluntary associations beyond the regional contexts of Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. Although there are considerable limitations in respect of the primary source materials available to the historian of transnational voluntary associations, this subject is one of the most promising fields for original historical research.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to David Horton Smith and John Boli for their very constructive feedback on this review.