European history is a field of research large enough to defy any attempt at mapping out its contours. Seen in the widest possible scope, the body of scholarship related to «European history» encompasses studies touching upon the geographical or cultural space commonly connoted as «Europe». This includes all historiographical literature that is limited to single nations, regions, or even cities within Europe and hence does not even attempt to cover the entire continent.¹ European history in the widest sense also reaches into a growing range of fields such as oceanic history, colonial history, or global history, which often explore the multifarious entanglements between Europe and other parts of the world.

While such academic literature does not necessarily grapple with the term «Europe», there has been an academic tradition of filling this somewhat ill-defined space with historical narratives. «Europe» has long figured as an important category in world historical reflections, and scholarship has continued to produce general histories of Europe. The past one and a half decades have witnessed a sharp growth of historical writings seeking to approach European history in more immediate and palpable ways. In several societies such as Germany and France, there has been a growing number of textbooks, trade books and more specialized literature presenting aspects of the European past as the experiences of a rather contingent civilization,² as an amalgam of closely related cultures,³ or at least as the manifestation of historically rooted ideas of «Europe.»⁴ In the search of a

¹ The idea of Europe as a distinct continent is of course another outcome of Eurocentric conceptions. K. E. Wigen and M. W. Lewis, The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography (Berkeley, 1997). Europe is also referred to as a continent in official EU documents such as the draft of the constitution.

² For a historical overview of the discourse of European civilization, which intensified since the 1980s, see H. Kaelble, Europäer über Europa. Die Entstehung des europäischen Selbstverständnisses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt, 2001), 218–245.


Europeanized history of Europe, there is now a growing interest in transfers, commonalities or entanglements across and beyond nation states. In this context, many scholars have come to pay more attention to commonly European experiences, \textsuperscript{5} furthermore, there has been a growing interest in the history of images of Europe, European identities, and other themes, which by their very nature are more easily related to a European past than to any national experience. \textsuperscript{6}

\section{1. Conflicting Conceptions of Space}

In spite of all efforts to overcome older national boundaries in historiographical thinking, scholarship has remained remarkably faithful to another preconceived notion of a distinct space: the European continent. The rest of the world is noticeably absent in many recently published histories of Europe. Equally marginalized are the connections between Europe and the outside world, including imperialism and the world wars. In many prominent overviews of modern European history, they are reduced to brief remarks in passing, fitting comfortably onto a few pages. \textsuperscript{7} Excluding the rest of the world from the picture suggests that Europe’s global expansion was not a genuine part of its own past. It also implies that the entanglements with the world beyond had very few repercussions for Europe. \textsuperscript{8} Some recently acclaimed works even openly disputed the idea that Europe had been subject to significant outside influences, \textsuperscript{9} during the Middle Ages and other time periods.

Given this situation, there is a remarkable disjuncture between much of the new literature on Europe as a historical space and scholarship in fields like Atlantic


\textsuperscript{8} A critique of the Eurocentrism in most of the new historiographical research on Europe is A. Eckert, «Europäische Zeitgeschichte und der Rest der Welt», \textit{Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungen – Studies in Contemporary History} 1 (2004) 3.

\textsuperscript{9} For example: S. Gougenheim, \textit{Aristote au Mont Saint Michel} (Paris, 2008). The work which was widely discussed in France turns against the idea of Islamic influences on Europe during the Middle Ages.
history or colonial history. Parts of the new historiography of Europe are in danger of essentializing the European past by filling it with stereotypes and unquestioned generalizations. In the future we will need more sustained and concerted efforts to reconsider critically many spatial assumptions tied to the concept of «Europe». This means re-conceptualizing European history as a product of interactions with the outside world, which would challenge the notion of Europe as a largely independent historical arena.

This enormous task can be divided into several problem zones, which are each characterized by particular necessities and opportunities. First and foremost, Europe-centred visions of European history need to be tested against alternative conceptions of space developed by other branches of historiography. Greater levels of influence from the growing field of Atlantic history, for example, would counteract the tendency in many new European histories to treat the Atlantic primarily as a boundary and to refer to North America as a contrast foil in order to extrapolate some alleged European commonalities. Important social historical work has been produced on the myriad of intra-European migrations, family connections, and personal interactions characterizing the continent before and after the age of the nation-state. What still needs to be explored in due detail are the repercussions of processes such as the mass emigration of Europeans to the American continent, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Close family connections, economic networks, and public spheres were created across continental boundaries, which in turn had a great influence on social life in Europe. Relevant examples range from trans-Atlantic networks of migrant families to European merchant clans with offshoots in the colonies.

If these trans-continental entanglements are taken into account, the conceptions of space underlying our understanding of European societies and their his-

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13 For example D. Hoerder and L. P. Moch, eds., European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives (Boston, 1996).

torical trajectories need to be widened. For example, in many regards the social history of Britain, Ireland, and some other countries was more connected with North America than with much of Eastern Europe, at least during the age of imperialism. Also, the beginnings of transnational urban cultures and fashions need to be understood less in strictly European terms than as spatially far more complex phenomena. Similar observations could certainly be made of consumer patterns and other aspects of popular culture, as well as political and cultural identities. For example, at the time of the British Empire, the English elites, and to a certain degree also the general public, tended to see themselves more closely attuned to the settler colonies in the Commonwealth than to large parts of the «continent». In many ways, Warsaw seemed for more remote from London than New York or Sydney.

Not all colonies were marked by a peripheral status in the socio-cultural flows that characterized imperial formations. In certain regards, it may even be more appropriate to see some empires not so much as the products of «European» dominance but rather as distinct cultural and political systems, which in each case involved parts of Europe but not the entire continent. The flows, transfers and interdependencies within some empires could certainly be more intense than between many nations and regions of Europe. For example, research has begun to show that even important facets of modern English civil society originated in a far more trans-cultural dynamic than had been commonly assumed. Along similar lines, scholars have started taking greater interest in the reverse influences of the colonial system on the United Kingdom, Germany, and other societies. Indeed, much of modern British cultural history, for instance, would be unthinkable with-


out the imperial experience, just as it would be hard to approach Russian history without paying due attention to the consequences of its Eurasian expansion. In many other parts of Europe, by contrast, the upper echelons of society were personally and politically less invested in the trans-Oceanic world.

Also the depiction of political cultures in Europe-wide narratives can benefit from added spatial perspectives, has been argued convincingly that certain facets of Western European political culture are historically rooted in shared institutional and philosophical settings. In addition to this, it would be fruitful and important to add the experience of imperialism and colonialism to the picture. Atlantic experiences and networks, for example, certainly played more important roles in the growing presence of discourses of freedom and democratic movements than a strictly European perspective would possibly be able to grasp. Furthermore, researchers are paying increasingly attention to the colonial and other trans-cultural spaces, in which ideologies such as racism, Social Darwinism, ethnic bias, and genocidal thinking emerged. Whereas these dark aspects of European political consciousness certainly came to affect all of Europe, their origins and trajectories cut through much wider spaces than the European continent. These and other examples suggest that scholarship needs to depart further from the notion that the spatial units ascribable to the European past are more or less fixed.

Shedding new light on the kaleidoscopic dimensions of the European past leads thus to another area of potential inspiration for historiography: the problematization of Europe as a coherent historical space. Much of the new literature on European history tends to focus primarily on single regions and to portray them as sample cases of alleged Europe-wide experiences. Some studies argue that the regions investigated by them constitute the core, the most influential European experiences and hence may duly be regarded as typical for the entire continent.

22. Reinhard, «Was ist europäische politische Kultur?».
24. See for example P. Ther, «Imperial Instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires», in Imperial Rule, ed. A. Miller and A. Rieber (Budapest and New York, 2004), 47–69. Recent studies suggest that even the ideals of beauty during the Enlightenment age need to be understood from the background of colonial worldviews: D. Bindman, Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century (London, 2002). In a certain way these more recent approaches relating colonialism to European racism and fascism lead back to theories that had been prominent in the years after World War II: for example Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism.
In that manner, many scholars seek to overcome challenges to European-wide narratives such as the differences between Eastern and Western European history. The divergent experiences of European macro- and micro-regions make it indeed hard to develop continental narratives of topics such as political cultures, industrialization, political institutions, or social stratifications.\(^\text{26}\) As some scholars have argued, the economic and intellectual marginality of Eastern European societies vis-à-vis the Western parts of the continent may – at least on some levels – be regarded as comparable or even structurally related to the relations of some former Latin American colonies with the same core regions.\(^\text{27}\) The tendency to portray Eastern Europe as the deviation from a standard pattern prevalent in the Western part of the continent has been criticized as a form of orientalism.\(^\text{28}\) The critique that Western European perspectives dominate the writing of European history needs to be taken very seriously when aiming at more balanced and adequate notions of the European past.

One alternative to absolutizing Western European history lies in adding a combination of global and local perspectives to the history of the continent. For example, in a groundbreaking study, Kenneth Pomeranz demonstrated that the bulk of literature on European economic history refers to the continent \textit{in toto} even though these studies are usually based upon relatively small, privileged regions.\(^\text{29}\) The latter are usually single areas with high economic productivity, most notably – for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – England, the Netherlands and some other parts of Northwestern Europe. While it may be accurate to understand these areas as the centres and nodes of larger economic flows, it certainly does not match reality to depict England and a few equally developed regions as typical for the entire continent. It is also not quite adequate to treat them as the centre of a European nexus. As has already been long argued by various schools of thought, the industrial revolution emerged or at least unfolded within much wider, transcontinental economic contexts.\(^\text{30}\) Pomeranz’s study adds new facets to this idea and underlines that it would be impossible to explain the economic rise of England


27 For example, J. L. Love, \textit{Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil} (Stanford, 1996).

28 For example M. Todorova, \textit{Imagining the Balkans} (New York 1997). Some scholars have even started applying postcolonial perspectives to the study of modern East European history. For example: R. Young, \textit{White Mythologies: Writing History and the West} (New York, 1990).


and some parts of Europe without paying due attention to trans-continental dynamics. Particularly the Americas figured both as suppliers of resources and as the destination for excess population. Furthermore, his approach challenges the spatial attributes of «European history» and points to the importance of modifying them. Building on new and daring conceptions of historical space, European economic history starts to look more like an amalgam of various, albeit sometimes overlapping, economic macro-regions that were connected with the world beyond in a variety of ways.

Paying greater attention to the plural interactions and co-dependencies between parts of Europe and other world regions would de-centre certain notions of Europe’s place in the world. Still, many authors of European histories share Michael Salewski’s world historical outlook that Europe «for thousands of years heavily influenced the world and made it into what it is today.» An argument frequently made is that whereas Europe largely shaped the globe, it was hardly subject to any reverse influences. In many works, Europe is still portrayed as solely an exporter of historical transformations and worldwide changes – an idea that dates back to the colonial age but continues to be very influential today. Behind these ideas one can easily detect the old nimbus of a teaching civilization, an unmoved mover in an otherwise purely receptive global environment.

Yet historical reality was more complex than the model of an endogenous European rise and subsequent global influence. Many intellectual currents have long challenged the idea of a global Europeanization and Westernization as simplifying ideological visions. Trans-continental formations underlay many of the revolutionary and transformative processes that are commonly (and somewhat problematically) ascribed to the term «modernization». Furthermore, one should recall that European regions changed or «modernized» according to various rhythms and stages, which often followed the logics of their connectedness to centres and resources in other parts of the world. For example, it would certainly be inadequate to depict massive transformations such as the emergence of the modern nation-state in terms of the global spread of a distinctively European pattern of political order. Rather than emanating from an uninfluenced European epicentre, modern national revolutions emerged in a complex Atlantic nexus, and they actually spread to Japan, parts of Latin America and other soci-
eties before transforming political order in much of Central and Eastern Europe. In this context one should not forget that during the Age of Enlightenment and the nineteenth century, much of Eastern and Southern Europe was excluded from tropes of civilization and modernity.\textsuperscript{36}

2. The Concept of «Europe» in Comparative History

Macroscopic comparisons may indeed be a way to reflect upon Europe-wide commonalities and specificities,\textsuperscript{37} but in many comparative projects the category of «Europe» is unfortunately often reified as historically given rather than systematically explored. Many studies apply comparative methods not in order to explore whether the European past was truly unique but rather to accentuate further a previously existing assumptions about European exceptionalism in a global context.\textsuperscript{38}

For example, in a widely acclaimed work, the Vienna historian Michael Mitterauer professes to explain the Medieval foundations of the allegedly special path of European history.\textsuperscript{39} Furthermore, he places his work explicitly in the tradition of the Weberian quest to explain why only the West generated a universally applicable civilization. Mitterauer does so by unfolding a European master narrative in which he compares single elements of the European past such as family patterns or aspects of the Medieval legal system with their alleged equivalents in other cultures.\textsuperscript{40} Such selective and partial comparisons become even more questionable because different aspects of the European past are not matched with the same array of cultures but rather contrasted with a changing selection ranging from Judaism to East Asian civilizations.\textsuperscript{41} These differences are then aggregated into the notion of European uniqueness.


\textsuperscript{38} This reduced comparative agenda has a long tradition in European scholarship, of which Max Weber was an important part. See S. Kalberg, \textit{Max Weber’s Comparative Historical Sociology} (Cambridge, 1994).

\textsuperscript{39} Mitterauer actually uses the highly charged German term «Sonderweg». This concept was mainly used during the 1970s and 1980s to illustrate the idea that German history had taken a special, fateful path to modernity. See J. Kocka, «Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: the Case of the German Sonderweg», \textit{History and Theory} 38 (1999) 1, 40–50. M. Mitterauer, \textit{Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs} (Munich, 2004), particularly 8–16. Mitterauer acknowledges that also other cultures had special experiences. He distances his book from the project of constructing European history and holds that his work stands in the tradition of scholarship seeking to understand the parameters of European history. Arguing that many premodern family patterns characterized large parts of the Eurasian continent rather than Europe alone; J. Goody, \textit{The Oriental, the Ancient, and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia} (Cambridge, 1990).

\textsuperscript{40} A similar argument is made by H. G. Haupt, «Auf der Suche nach der europäischen Geschichte – Einige Neuerscheinungen», \textit{Archiv für Sozialgeschichte} 42 (2002), 544–556.
In such methodological frameworks, which posit Europe as a holistic standard system, the non-Western world can only appear as an amalgam of fragmented lesser possibilities. Approaches of this kind disregard the possibility that other world regions were characterized by a specific contingency of local factors carrying their own potentials – even when measured by the highly problematic categories of «modernization» and «development.» An important corrective in this context is, for example, the predominantly sociological literature on early modernities, which no longer treats Europe as the only viable path to modernity and rather tries to show that many other world regions were in crucial ways not lagging «behind» Europe prior to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{42} In addition, comparisons operating at the elevated level of «civilizations» cannot afford to ignore the above-mentioned problem of inter-continental dynamics, especially not for the past five centuries. As many theoretical schools have long argued, the rise of certain parts of Europe and the decline of other parts of the world did not follow an inner civilizational logic but were connected to the same global process.\textsuperscript{43}

More systematic and holistic comparisons between Europe and other historical realms also cast great shadows of doubt on another allegedly distinctive feature of the European experience: its «unity in diversity», which in the eyes of many authors is unique in world history.\textsuperscript{44} A closer and thus more comprehensive look at other world regions quickly reveals the idea of an exceptional diversity characterizing European history as a chimera, if not an ideology. Allegedly homogenous cultural entities such as China, India, or the Arab World were characterized by immense local differences in such crucial aspects as living standards, socio-cultural institutions, languages, and economic nexuses. A closer look at Europe and other historical experiences would not only call the alleged unique diversity of Europe into question but also force researchers to define the notion of «unity» in more nuanced ways. Unlike in cases such as China, no single institution, be it religious, economic or political in nature, spanned the main areas of Europe.

\textsuperscript{42} A good overview of these theories is provided by the special issue of the journal \textit{Daedalus} entitled \textit{Early Modernities: Daedalus 127} (1998) 3. See also R. Collins, «An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan», \textit{American Sociological Review} 62 (1997) 6, 841–865.

\textsuperscript{43} This was, for example, one of the key agendas of world systems theory and its central work: I. Wallerstein, \textit{The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century}, 3 volumes (New York, 1976).

The prominence of concepts such as «unity in diversity» in European historiography primarily reflects the fact that European observers are more familiar with the diversity of their own continent: objects always appear more homogenous in the distance than when seen from close up. In many regards, the trend to contrast a detailed knowledge of Europe with some vague images of the rest of the world continues older Eurocentric conceptions that juxtaposed an alleged polyphone European dynamism with a supposed monotonous stasis of other cultures. Such long-unquestioned tropes about Europe have been subject to intensive global critiques and discussions, as was the case, in the debates following the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.45

3. Contexts of the Introverted European Historiography

The unwillingness of many European historians to consider sufficiently the outside world could be interpreted as an indirect consequence of their continent’s losing its central position in a geopolitical context. Yet the introverted perspectives of many scholars do not emanate from monolithic Zeitgeist or intellectual outlook. In fact, there is a whole cascade of reasons for the continued marginalization of the world in many recent histories of Europe. Several intellectual, academic and political contacts contribute to the fact that Europe is still often portrayed as a self-sufficient historical space.

An important factor for the lasting prominence of Eurocentric visions lies in the continuity of historiographical approaches. Given the widespread reluctance to consider entanglements with the outside world as formative for the European continent, there are some basic similarities between the more recent literature on European history and a dominant tradition of world historical writing in the West.46 The latter emerged as a break with the cosmopolitanism of Enlightenment historiography and tended to be based on the assumption of worldwide hierarchies and European supremacy. One should not forget that in many world historical texts written during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, «Europe» was already a well-established historical concept, and in many cases it was often used more systematically than the category of the nation-state. A large number of world histories tended to depict the rise of Europe as a development *sui generis*. Consequently, they tended to portray the history of the European continent as an experience that could and ought to be understood as a past with an independent inner logic.47 By contrast, China, India, Africa and other world regions were often

only included in the picture once they had been in contact with Europe. Discourses of exceptionality or historical uniqueness loomed behind the idea that only the history of Europe constituted a dynamic process that was so independent that it could be studied without considering its interconnections with the rest of the world.

Today, the openly triumphalist overtones of the European past have largely gone, and contemporary literature certainly contains no parallels to notions of European racial and cultural superiority which still characterized much world historical writing less than a century ago. Nevertheless, European histories surrounded by mirrored walls have remained intellectually and academically acceptable. For example, in the recent literature on European history, one still frequently encounters references to the great contributions of European culture to the rest of the world but much less interest in acknowledging reverse influences. Such historiographical traditions have not been sincerely challenged in an overall intellectual climate that generally paid scant attention to the non-Western world. Unlike in the United States, in most European societies there are hardly any public intellectuals with a personal or professional background in a region outside of the Atlantic World.

The structural conditions of academic historiographies in Europe make it hard to abandon Eurocentric mentalities and turn towards more globally aware forms of history writing. In Germany, for example, only about five percent of historians are experts on either trans-continental history or the history of regions outside of Europe. In most cases, research on East Asia, South Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East or North America is institutionally based in separate fields such as Oriental or African Studies. Even though interdisciplinary cooperation is on the rise, these fields have traditionally focused on philological research and only rarely cooperated with historians. Due to the relatively small number of historians working on other parts of the world, it is little wonder that there is no strong tradition of actively exploring the levels of interconnections between Europe and the rest of the world. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the spectrum of regional expertise as it is institutionalized in most European societies is far from common from a global perspective. In the United States, for example, only about sixty-six percent of the faculty at all universities and colleges are experts on North


American or European history, and this proportion is even lower in the case of research universities. In non-Western societies such as China or India, the history of the West has had strong institutional groundings ever since the beginnings of modern academic historiography. Only in European academia is history still largely equated with the history of one’s own region.

Adding gravity to the same problem is the fact that most history departments are not only centred on European but on national history. The preponderance of national historical outlooks may not have directly shaped recent publications on European history, but it is an academic and public context in which they ought to be situated. Many critics have likened the new literature on European history to the elite-driven production of national myths during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Others have argued that the project of Europeanizing history relies on the deconstruction of national narratives while at the same time it seeks to manufacture Europe as a new historical entity within a politically defined space. Yet such political motivations are certainly not evenly distributed across the European Union. Many scholars point out that the enthusiasm for European history is mainly concentrated on European countries such as Germany, France and the Benelux countries whereas in societies such as the United Kingdom, Euro-scepticism is still dominant. Furthermore, a particularly large proportion of intellectuals in Eastern Europe have addressed the new European historical narratives with highly ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, these narratives promise inclusion of their societies into European history while on the other hand, they conflict with tropes of newly gained sovereignty and national history.

Partly in response to concerns that much of the recent European historiography is too similar to national history, most protagonists of the field take great lengths to distance themselves from the role of their predecessors in nation-building projects during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, a fair number of scholars still see a role for historical scholarship – albeit less proactive – in an emerging European identity. Some suggest that a European historical consciousness could build on European self-understandings that evolved during

the past few centuries parallel to forms of national identity. In their eyes, European history would most certainly aim not at replacing national narratives but rather at adding another layer of understanding the past—a layer that would do justice to the great interconnections and transfers characterizing the continent’s past from its very beginning. Furthermore, many scholars express the hope that a new, transnational European historical consciousness will continue to differ from national historical identities by not relying on triumphalist visions, antagonistic images, and hegemonic claims. Indeed, even the most essentializing new works on European history stand far apart from older tropes of European nationalism, which were often racially defined and at least latent violent.

Still, it is important to note that parts of the new literature on European history are either implicitly or explicitly entangled with political efforts to generate more public support for the European project. Many political and intellectual circles have observed with great concern that the European Union has so far remained largely an elite-driven project devoid of a concomitant force majeur. The current democratic deficit of the European Union is increasingly seen as closely linked to an identity deficit. In this context, some academic observers have argued that the future European Union cannot remain a bureaucratic creation but needs to co-evolve with a European demos. For these and other reasons, a distinct European identity and a matching notion of historical consciousness are often portrayed as potential cornerstones of a Europe-wide political culture—a culture, that would create a solid frame for a deepening and widening union.

Driven by concerns of this kind, the European Union has launched several campaigns aimed at fostering commonly accepted symbols, documents and other measures that are deemed important milestones on the way towards a European identity. Efforts to promote specifically European imaginaries include, for example, projects for museums of Europe and debates on European sites of memory.

Regarding the study of history, the European Union has started to create transnational institutions and funding structures allowing historians to cooperate with

59 For example L. Passerini, «The Last Identification: Why some of Us Would Like to Call Ourselves Europeans and what We Mean by this,» in Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other, ed. B. Strath, Brussels, 2000, 45–65.
60 See for example W. Schmale, Scheitert Europa an seinem Mythendefizit? (Bochum, 1997).
each other across national boundaries. Among those institutions is, for example, the European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO). One can also point to the EU-sponsored European University Institute in Florence whose faculty is almost exclusively recruited from EU member states and usually puts a strong emphasis on graduate education in European history. Of growing importance is also the European Science Foundation’s support for research and textbook projects as well as transnational networks and exchange programmes related to European history. Furthermore, many national and private foundations have become increasingly active in promoting projects heading in similar directions.

Apart from institutional efforts, titles of historical book series such as Building Europe are very telling in that the project of writing European history is presented as a direct part of the Union’s political and economic integration process. In his preface, the series editor Jacques LeGoff points out that one purpose of this project lies in creating a past conducive to the future of the European endeavor. Taking a slightly different approach, some scholars have related their visions for a future European Union directly to historical reflections on «European civilization.» For example, in the introduction to his history of Europe, the German historian Michael Salewski expresses the hope that during the third millennium a certain pride in European history will underlie the statement «I am a citizen of Europe.»

Similarly, some of the newly published European histories even simplify, standardize, and idealize the past to a degree that begins to smack of a renewed invention of tradition. Certain textbooks, for example, depict the alleged values of European civilization during the period of humanism and other epochs but treat the age of imperialism and the nation-state as an aberration rather than an outcome of the European past. In many cases Europe is represented as a historically conditioned cultural unity, which suffered from its own divisions during the age of modernity. Many narratives not only belittle the utterly problematic global dimension of European history since the fifteenth century but also identify the con-

64 Among the many activities dedicated to exploring the parameters of European history are – in addition to conferences and graduate education – also summer schools for students on new forms of European history.

65 For the European Science Foundation see http://www.esf.org. More examples are provided by Schmale, «Europäische Geschichte als historische Disziplin». For textbooks see M. Stobart, «Fifty Years of European Co-Operation on History Textbooks: The Role and Contribution of the Council of Europe», Internationale Schulbuchforschung 21 (1999), 147–161.


67 Salewski, Geschichte Europas, 9.


tenant as the victim rather than the epicentre of national, colonial, and imperialist rivalries. There are historians who at least implicitly depict the current state of Europe as a partial return to a system of closely entangled polities that existed before the modern age.\textsuperscript{70} Even the preamble to the proposed European constitution contained a reference to Europe being reunited after bitter experiences.\textsuperscript{71}

In spite of such conscious identity building, a new invention of tradition is unlikely to garner widespread support among academics and the general public. A closer look at the historical context of the nineteenth century confirms the extremely low likelihood of history repeating itself by allowing a European consciousness to be nurtured in the same cradle in which national mythologies had grown more than a century ago. The political structure of the European Union differs profoundly from the emerging nation-states of the past. Even though great efforts are being made to Europeanize the education system, create European symbols and foster a European historical consciousness, no political and intellectual centre will be in the position to help one interpretation of history dominate other schools. In the case of national histories, there were clear political borders that demarcated the historical space to be filled with a matching past – which made it easier to marginalize or suppress alternative visions of the past.\textsuperscript{72}

Due to the more complex and decentred political and intellectual system of the European Union, no Ranke and no Bismarck, no Garibaldi and no Mazzini will be able to arise and unify the continent under the banners of a constructed past. Since the opinion climate towards the future boundaries of the European Union continue to differ profoundly between individual member states, visions of European history will remain locally contingent and tied to separate public spheres. In the future, the structure of European history will be as complex, embattled, multi-layered, and subject to different opinions as the political union itself. As the future shapes of the European Union remain uncertain, it will not even be possible to reach a consensus on the basic, spatial parameters of European history. Different scenarios for the future union such as a federal state or a loose, largely economic union will require very different understandings of what constituted Europe in the past.

For these reasons, historians will most probably be unable to avoid becoming engaged in debates over such crucial issues as the future boundaries of Europe or the meaning of «European values», which both remain as ill-defined as they are frequently used in political declarations about Europe. For instance, the question of Turkey joining the Union not only shakes a still rather murky consensus over the future of the European Union; it also evokes debates ad fontes, reaching to the very

\textsuperscript{70} For example: Schulze, Phoenix Europa.

\textsuperscript{71} The paragraph reads «Believing that Europe, reunited after bitter experiences, intends to continue along the path of civilization. [...]» The preamble also refers to the «cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe.»

\textsuperscript{72} A still valid overview of theories of German and other forms of nationalism is: D. Langewiesche, «Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven», \textit{Neue Politische Literatur} \textbf{40} (1995), 190–236.
definitions of Europe and its boundaries. While some prominent historians categorically exclude Turkey from Europe on cultural grounds, others argue that the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic are an essential part of the European experience. Furthermore, some point to the pro-European stance and concomitant historical interpretations among many Turkish scholars and conclude that the current EU-members have no right to monopolize the understanding of Europe.

4. Widening the Parameters of European History

The debates surrounding the status of Turkey show that any effort to define strictly the historical space of Europe will remain open to contestation not only as a scholarly paradigm but also as a political project. They also point to the need for European scholars to take some debates and viewpoints generated outside the current parameters of the European Union into account. Thus far, there is a strong intellectual presence of North American scholarship in the historiography of Europe while studies emanating from other world regions are largely being ignored, even though they raise important new questions about the European past. On a more general level, an important source of innovation lies in comparing European historiography with scholarship either on other world regions or in other world regions. The Eurocentric outlooks in many recently published studies about European history become particularly blatant if one realizes that no serious scholar in East Asia or South Asia, the Islamic World, Sub-Saharan Africa, let alone Latin America would ever be able to approach their modern history without referring to the massive impact of the outside world.

The example of Chinese history, which often figured as an exoticized «other» in European literature, can illustrate this point. Particularly starting from the late nineteenth or the first decades of the twentieth century, Chinese culture, society, economics, and politics were involved in such tight international networks of exchange that it would be absurd to write a strictly endogenous history of China suggesting unbroken patterns of longue durée reaching from pre-modern centuries to the present. In addition, recent scholarship on China has become increasingly attentive to the fact that the former Middle Kingdom’s regions were connected to the outside world in very different ways, which has encouraged many scholars all the more to abandon the notion of a monolithic China. Even in the case of the patriotic May Fourth Movement which older scholarship often treated as the well-
spring of a home-grown Chinese nationalism, recent scholarship has become much more attentive to the international networks through which Chinese patriotism was shaped and formulated.\textsuperscript{76} In many regards, Chinese urban intellectuals were more closely entangled with their peers in Japan and other, mostly Western, societies than with the Chinese hinterland.

As part of the internationalization of Chinese history, much scholarship in the West has come to see Chinese society and tradition in the context of its transcultural and global entanglements.\textsuperscript{77} For example, there are attempts to analyze Chinese forms of capitalism by paying due attention to the decisive role of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia in the genesis of economic patterns in parts of the mainland.\textsuperscript{78} In addition, Chinese coastal cities are now being investigated as spaces of hybridization that were closely connected culturally to other urban centres in East Asia and the world beyond.\textsuperscript{79} Heading in the same direction are academic endeavors seeking to understand the modern cultural history of China as a dynamic interplay across continental boundaries by paying attention to the crucial role of the Chinese diaspora and, more generally, international flows and exchange processes.\textsuperscript{80} Some scholars have even gone further and widened the notion of Chineseness by conceptualizing the Sinophone World as a complex conglomerate of spaces related but not confined to China.\textsuperscript{81} Although many scholars remain highly critical of such deconstructions of national tropes, even the most nationalistic historical accounts do not suggest an autonomous Chinese development but rather refer to discourses such as exploitation and humiliation by international powers.\textsuperscript{82}

Neither does scholarship on other areas outside of Europe operate with hermetic conceptions of space. In research on India, for example, the Subaltern Studies movement has long problematized the fact that Western influence has become


\textsuperscript{80} For example, Wei-ming Tu, «Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center», \textit{Daedalus} 134(2005), 4, 145–167.

\textsuperscript{81} S.-M. Shih, \textit{Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific} (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2007).

\textsuperscript{82} A general overview is provided by H. Zhang, «2000 nian zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu xueshu dongsai gaishu [Research Report on Modern Chinese History in the Year 2000]», \textit{Jindaishi yanjiu} (2002) 1, 200–244. About the rise of nativist theories in China see, for example, A. Schneider, «Bridging the Gap: Attempts at Constructing a ‘New’ Historical-Cultural Identity in the People’s Republic of China», \textit{East Asian History} 22 (2001), 133–143.
an inseparable part of the local intellectual, cultural, social, and political fabric.\footnote{G. Prakash, «Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism», \textit{American Historical Review} 99 (1994), 1475–1490.} There is a strong awareness that even ways of conceptualizing national or regional history in India have been decisively shaped by colonialism and derivative global interactions.\footnote{D. Chakrabarty, \textit{Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference} (Princeton, 2000).} The same is even more blatant in the study of macro-regions such as «Africa» or «Latin America,» which even as geographical or cultural unities are not historically rooted and have their origins in European projections, interventions, and inventions.\footnote{For example see F. Cooper, «Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History», \textit{American Historical Review} 99 (1994) 4, 1516–1545; and W. Mignolo, \textit{The Idea of Latin America} (Oxford, 2005).} Even in the case of the United States, historians have launched significant efforts to centre tropes of national history by adding transcultural perspectives. For instance, many scholars have started to investigate the history of minorities like the African-American, Asian, or Latino communities as segments of wider, transnational social and cultural formations.\footnote{On the general development of diaspora research see D. Schnapper, «From the Nation-state to the Transnational World: On the Meaning and Usefulness of Diaspora as a Concept», \textit{Diaspora} 8 (1999) 3, 225–254; and A. Ong, \textit{Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality} (Durham and London, 1999).} An increasing number of scholars have come to argue that such crucial issues as US race and gender relations, political cultures, public spheres, and identities cannot be properly understood without placing interactions with the outside world at the very forefront of historical analysis.\footnote{See for example T. Bender, \textit{Rethinking American History in a Global Age}, Berkeley, 2002; and D. Thelen, «The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History», \textit{Journal of American History} 86 (1999) 3, 965–975; and J. Gienow-Hecht, ed., \textit{Decentering American History} (New York, 2007).}

5. Historiography for a New Europe

Introverted historical perspectives not only fail to consider many important new currents in international scholarship but may also not succeed in formulating timely visions of Europe’s past, present, and future. It may be possible to define the European Union as a new political model based on peaceful integration, a postnational constellation, and abandonment of global power politics.\footnote{For this reason Hartmut Kaelble relates the more recent European self-understanding to the concept of multiple modernities: idem, «European Self-Understanding in the Twentieth Century,» in \textit{Reflections on Multiple Modernities}, ed. Sachsenmaier et al, 167–193.} The European Union has come to stand for a remarkable project of giving up national sovereignty in favor of mutual cooperation and rapprochement across the battle lines of a traumatic past; this is a project, that has been acknowledged by intellectuals in many parts of the world.\footnote{For example, for the United States: J. Rifkin, \textit{The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream} (Cambridge, 2004).} The initial energies behind the European project were partly generated by the very personal memories of the generations who suffered from the catastrophic events before 1945. Even after postwar generations took over
the project of Europe, the wounds of history have continued to play an important role in political and intellectual discourse. There are significant efforts to integrate traumas such as World War II or the Holocaust into a new common European vision which would no longer be characterized by polarizing memories but by the search for shared understandings across political borders. Yet it is remarkable that the debates on responsible, ecumenical forms of European historical consciousness focus almost exclusively on traumatic experiences that occurred in Europe and affected Europeans. In the envisioned European memory, there seems to be hardly any space for the traumas caused by the subjugation of large parts of the world by European powers.

The tendency to juxtapose the European unification project primarily with its own suffering and to exclude the torn memories of Europe elsewhere is bound to remain unconvincing for many observers inside and particularly outside of Europe. One should recognize that the concept of « Europe» and a «European model» long ago acquired a meaning much larger than its commonly defined geographical or political boundaries, and in that way it is at least partly connoted with colonial dominance, exploitation, and epistemicide. Of course, historically the image of « Europe» in societies such as China and India not only stood for traumatic memories but also for tropes of liberty and development. Yet the rift produced by these contradictory facets of the same concept has cut through the intellectual landscapes of many societies and characterizes them up to the present, albeit in different forms. Even today, intellectuals in many parts of the world struggle with ways of coming to terms with the legacy of European influence.

In many societies the term «Europe» is therefore still not primarily associated with efforts to overcome a traumatic past but rather with this traumatic past itself. Many histories of the idea of Europe completely neglect these non-Western historical memories and experiences tied to Europe. However, new historical visions of Europe can ultimately only be convincing if they are debated, formulated, and reconsidered as part of wider dialogues with those plentiful societies and regions in which Europe has played more than questionable roles. If European political culture wants to stand for a plural, non-hegemonic world, its intellectuals have to acknowledge the problematic historical legacy of their continent. Since many of


the darkest spots of the European past are actually part of global and not only European memory,\textsuperscript{92} the advocates of a new European history and future need to engage in stronger dialogues with alternative perspectives, which are equally historically rooted.

Wider and deeper dialogues are particularly important because the new European model is supposed to stand for values such as tolerance, multi-perspectivity and openness. Excluding the global memory of Europe would make it extremely difficult to include the rising proportion of non-European immigrants into a potentially new historical consciousness. Furthermore, intensifying dialogues between European and non-European scholars would shed more light on the plain but often neglected truism that concepts such as «Europe» never carried an unambiguous connotation but unfolded various, context-specific meanings. Depending on context, the word «Europe» always takes different forms and breaks along alternate lines. The multi-faceted visions of Europe which can be gained through dialogues with scholars in the non-Western world, would also open up new possibilities for the debates within Europe. They would certainly create more room for alternative positions and interpretations. As in other parts of the world, Euroscepticism remains strong in many EU-countries, and it is often grounded in forms of historical consciousness that place a strong emphasis on national victimization, the experience of foreign invasion, occupation, and the lack of sovereignty.\textsuperscript{93} For example, in many Eastern European societies, a sense of being marginalized in the new Europe and its evolving historical identities is no longer a quantité négligeable.\textsuperscript{94}

In summation, paying more attention to the multi-faceted ways in which European history is interwoven with that of the rest of the world can open up important new directions for academic debates and discussions within the wider public. Advocates of a deepening European integration and the growth of a European historical consciousness may be concerned that further loosening the spaces of European history may erode the possibilities of an identity supporting the Union. Yet monolithic or monadic conceptions of history will not make an apt fundament for the future of Europe and its global entanglements. Historiographical experimentation with alternative conceptions of space, on the other hand, seems to be particularly well suited to a whole range of challenging questions that Europe will need to face in the future.

\textsuperscript{92} A. Margalit, \textit{The Ethics of Memory} (Cambridge, 2003).
Aktuelle Trends europäischer Geschichte:
Die Welt jenseits Europas und alternative historische Räume


Tendances récentes en histoire européenne:
le monde au-delà de l'Europe et les espaces historiques alternatifs

Différentes conceptions de l'espace sont à l'origine d'une partie signifiante de l'historiographie européenne récente. Cet article engage une évaluation critique de celles-ci en interrogeant cette tendance largement répandue de considérer l'Europe comme une unité finie et repliée sur elle-même. Pour ce faire, l'auteur confronte cette conception aux connaissances scientifiques issues de la recherche en histoire atlantique mais aussi de l'histoire globale en les contrastant les unes et les autres. Partant du constat que les études historiques consacrées à l'Europe négligent toujours les conséquences et les répercussions du véritable entrelacement mondial du continent européen, l'article vise à éclaircir les raisons intellectuelles et institutionnelles de ce phénomène. L'enjeu étant l'ouverture de l'histoire de l'Europe à des conceptions de l'espace plus flexibles, la dernière partie de l'article scrute les possibilités académiques et politiques pour un tel changement.

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