Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe

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1. Introduction

THE process of European integration is posing a challenge to scholars in the humanities and the social sciences to rethink their frames of analysis. The once dominant nation-state has lost relevance while transnational processes and exchanges are receiving greater attention. This is not only true for the social sciences and economics, but also for history. The closer the European states are integrated, the more questions about Europe's past are asked. But what is European history, and upon which methods and units of analysis can it be built? Is it the sum of national histories, just as the EU is a union of nation-states, or is it something more?[1] Since no one subject of European history can possibly encompass all countries on the continent, it is clear that independent of the general topic there needs to be a certain selection of studies about more than one local or national case. If those studies, no matter whether they cover political, social, or cultural history, are to be synthesized on a European level, comparisons need to be made at a certain stage of any given work. The same holds true for the history of Central Europe, an area with a particularly high degree of internal differentiation.

But is the comparative method adequately developed as a tool for researching and writing the many histories of Europe?[2] Aside from an ongoing debate

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1. For a discussion of this question see Mary Fulbrook, "Introduction: States, Nations and the Development of Europe," in *National Histories and European History*, ed. idem (London, 1993), 1–20.

2. Whether there is something like *a* comparative method is disputed. The leading American theoretician discussing about comparisons, Raymond Grew, prefers to talk about comparative studies. See his, "The Case for Comparing Histories," in *American Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (1980): 763–78. In contrast to Grew, the Dutch historian Chris Lorenz has shown convincingly that there is a distinctive core of a comparative method, which is used by historians independently of their choice of topic. See Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie* (Cologne, 1997), 231–84 [in Dutch: *De constructie van het verleden: Een inleiding in de theorie van de geschiednis* (Amsterdam, 1987)].

in France[3] there have been few theoretical discussions about the comparative method in recent years.[4] This article aspires to provoke a debate in other countries and thus contribute to the development of the method. The key theoretical problems dealt with here are the implications and consequences of the choice of units of analysis on the results of a comparison. Until now nations and nation-states are the prevalent points of reference and units of analysis for comparative historians.[5] The article addresses the question whether this predilection is tenable on theoretical grounds in view of a deconstruction of national histories, as shown in part three below. A second methodological problem of comparison is closely related to the preference of nations and nation-states as units of analysis. Both have often been treated as relatively closed entities, which one can first isolate and then compare in a way similar to an experimental field study in the social sciences or in a natural science laboratory.[6]

The main thesis of this article holds that the national framing of history and of historical comparisons is highly contestable on an empirical and theoretical

3. This article refers to an ongoing theoretical debate about the comparative method in France. It was launched in a provocative essay by Marcel Detienne, *Comparer l'incomparable* (Paris, 2000), 29–30, in which he particularly criticized the uncritical stance toward the work of Marc Bloch. Several comparatists responded to this challenge in a recent volume of the *Annales*. See the five articles collected in the chapter "L'exercise de la comparaison," in *Annales* HSS 57, no. 1 (janvier-février, 2002): 27–146. On the theoretical level the articles concentrate on the question of the proximity between the author and the compared objects, whether to study close or distant objects, and, on the negative sides, of constructing comparisons. The issue of national framing, however, does not play a major role. In Germany problems of the comparative method have been addressed in an ongoing debate, about transnational approaches launched by Jürgen Kocka in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* in the fall of 2001. Some of the contributions will be cited in the course of this article.

4. Among the most important publications (in addition to the already cited works and journals) about the comparative method in the English and German languages in the past two decades are: Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984); A.A. v. d. Braembussche, "Historical Explanation and Comparative Method: Towards a Theory of the History of Society," *History and Theory* 28 (1989): 1–24; Thomas Welskopp, "Stolperstein auf dem Königsweg: Methodenkritische Anmerkungen zum internationalen Vergleich in der Gesellschaftsgeschichte," in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 35 (1995): 339–67; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt und Jürgen Kocka, "Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung," in *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 9–46; Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich: Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999).

5. Raymond Grew made a short remark in an article ten years ago that "national states" are frequently used as objects of comparison "despite their complexity and their possible artificiality in relation to the subject at hand." See Raymond Grew, "On the Current State of Comparative Studies," in *Marc Bloch aujourd'hui: Histoire comparée & sciences sociales*, ed. Hartmut Atsma et André Burguière (Paris, 1990), 323–36, here 331. Perhaps because this criticism was not further developed it did not have a major impact on the volume, the Annales School, or comparative history in other European countries.

6. The British historian John Breuilly has been the most outspoken advocate of an experimental setup of comparisons. See John Breuilly, "Introduction: Making Comparisons in History," in idem, *Labour and Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Europe: Essays in Comparative History* (Manchester, 1992), 1–25, here 3.

level. The second thesis is that comparisons, but also a future history of Europe, need to be put on a *relational basis*, where mutual influences between compared cases are taken into account. This is substantiated by showing the entangled character of German, Austrian, Czech, and Polish history in the third and main part of this article. Although the argumentation is based on modern East Central Europe, which, by a structural definition, encompasses the area between the lower Elbe in the west, the eastern border of prepartition Poland in the east and the military frontier of the Habsburg Empire in the south,[7] it could also be expanded to other parts of Europe. It is therefore hoped that specialists of Western, Eastern, or South-Eastern European history might find the following methodological considerations relevant for their work as well. The fourth part presents some methodological conclusions on how to develop comparative studies and a transnational history of Europe, which is different from the nation-building efforts of historians in the past.

2. The Problem of National Framing in Historiography

The use of nations or nation-states as given units of analysis and frequent points of reference is not limited to comparative historians. Ronald Suny wrote pointedly about the institutionalization of history in the nineteenth century: "History as a discipline helped to constitute the nation, even as the nation determined the categories in which history was written and the purposes it was to serve."[8] Since the postwar period the proclivity of historians to think like nation-builders has been reduced in view of the general normative criticism of nationalism. Although values may have changed, until the end of the twentieth century history has remained very national in its orientation. This is reflected by the structures of most history departments in the Western world, which as an optimum have been neatly divided into American, British, German, French and other national histories within Europe. Usually "ones own" national history clearly dominates the departments.[9] The situation is slightly different in the major universities of the United States, where a greater share of faculties is not dedicated to American, but to European and increasingly Asian and African history.

7. For the structural characteristics of "Ostmitteleuropa" see Jenö Szücs, *Die drei historischen Regionen Europas* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 13–18; Klaus Zernack, *Osteuropa: Eine Einführung in seine Geschichte* (Munich, 1977), 33–41.

8. Ronald Grigor Suny, "History and the Making of Nations" in *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, ed. Zvy Gitelman, Lubomyr Hajda, John-Paul Himka, Roman Solchanyk (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 569–89, here 589. Suny's article provides a condensed overview of the legitimizing function of history in nineteenth-century Germany, Russia, France, Central Europe, and the United States.

9. See for a valid criticism of this orientation Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, 2d. ed. (Oxford, 1996), 32–33.

In Germany and East Central Europe, the breakdown of communism has led to a certain refocusing on national history.[10] What the Germans call *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, i.e., dealing with the remnants and crimes of the communist regime in the GDR, was primarily discussed within the framework of national history. Since 1989, the history of the GDR was studied frequently by itself, sometimes in comparison with the Nazi regime or with West Germany, but less often put into a comparative European framework, let alone explicitly compared with other socialist countries. This is a shortcoming if one considers the similarities of the GDR with other countries east of the Iron Curtain and the important influence of the Soviet Union. A similar renationalization can be observed in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and all newly formed nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe, where the history under communism was interpreted in decidedly national frames. Moreover, some of the most popular research themes in Germany in the 1990s, such as the multitude of studies about "memory," also implicitly strengthened a national framework. Stefan Berger's fear that an uncritical stance toward German history is used to construct a new national identity or nationalism of the Germans is probably overstated,[11] but the appearance of yet another national master narrative by Heinrich August Winkler shows the strength of the national paradigm as frame of analysis. European integration and globalization might paradoxically strengthen this trend toward a renationalization. Since the nation-state is put into question and politically disempowered, belonging to a nation and hence having a national history seems to be of increasing relevance.[12]

Although the national framing of research appears to be primarily a problem of traditional historiography, it also affects social and comparative history. Social historians have understood their work as a critique of a narrow political history centered on the nation and nation-states. They were equally susceptible to these frames of analysis for the practical and theoretical reason that modern nation-states provided many of the statistics needed in the heydays of quantitative approaches. Furthermore, similar to traditional social science, most social historians implicitly equated societies with nations, for example Hans-Ulrich Wehler in his multivolume *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. Wehler fails to define where his Germany and his German society are located in general and in the particu-

10. This trend has been criticized by Sebastian Conrad, "Doppelte Marginalisierung: Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 145–69, here 145; Konrad Jarausch, "Normalisierung oder Re-Nationalisierung? Zur Umdeutung der deutschen Vergangenheit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 21 (1995): 559–78, here 577.

11. See Stefan Berger, "Historians and Nation-Building in Germany after Reunification," in *Past and Present* 148 (August 1995): 187–222.

12. A notable signal for this are recent attempts to renationalize history in the United States and Canada. See Chris Lorenz, "Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999): 25–39, here 26. Chris Lorenz's article is the first contribution to a forum on the problems and perspectives of comparative history in *History and Theory* 38, 25–99.

lar periods he covers. He does not remind the reader whether he includes the German-speaking inhabitants in Austria or the German diasporas in Eastern Europe. If they are excluded, which follows from the logic of his prusso-centric history, what can one say about the non-German-speaking populations in the Holy Roman Empire and the German Confederation? Were they part of this German society, were they in- or excluded at various points of time?

Wehler's work, in particular the first volume of his *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, reveals the author's understanding of the term society. Although the inclusion of a large Polish population into Prussia and then into the German Empire was one of the single most important factors influencing first Prussian and then German history since 1700, the Poles or the partitions of Poland are mentioned only in a handful of subordinate sentences.[13] The picture is very similar in the second volume. All one can find about Poland and the Poles are some scant paragraphs. Only in the third volume did Wehler dedicate several pages to Poles in chapters that are dealing with the German policy toward nationalities and the radicalization of nationalism.[14]

Yet it would be unfair to limit criticism to Hans-Ulrich Wehler only. His great competitor Thomas Nipperdey stated in the very beginning of his book concerning the period between 1866 and 1918, that "German history is the history of Germans, of the German people."[15] Many Central Europeans, especially those ruled, partitioned, or occupied by Germans, would probably have a different opinion. In view of his strong opening statement, one also wonders about Nipperdey's thesis that the "Polish understanding of the nation is an emphatic one."[16] Similar to Wehler, when it could hardly be avoided he dedicated a couple of pages to the "Polish question" in the section of his book dealing with problems of national minorities.[17] As in Wehler's work, Poles are only objects, not subjects of a history of Germany. Yet, in comparison with a recent

13. Even the first European constitution passed by the Polish parliament in 1791 is left out entirely. The question why the Poles are so underrepresented will be discussed in part two of this paper. The absence of the eastern parts of Central Europe or "Ostmitteleuropa" is also characteristic for the journal established by the Bielefeld School of Social History, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. See Lutz Raphael, "Nationalzentrierte Sozialgeschichte in programmatischer Absicht: Die Zeitschrift 'Geschichte und Gesellschaft' in den ersten 25 Jahren ihres Bestehens," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25 (1999): 5–37.

14. See Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 2, *Von der Reformära bis zur industriellen und politischen "Deutschen Doppelrevolution" 1815–1845/49*; Wehler, 3:961–65, 1068–71 and 1075–77. Yet on pp. 1250–95 Poland is again out of the conclusion about the causes of the "*Sonderweg*."

15. Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 1, *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich, 1991), 9.

16. Nipperdey speaks about an "*emphatischen Nationsbegriff*" of the Poles. See ibid., 266.

17. See Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 2, *Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (Munich, 1992), 266–81. His earlier monograph *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich, 1983) is stronger on this account. Nipperdey mentions the "long shadow of the partition" as a problem of nationalism and state formation in Germany. See Ibid., 769.

master narrative by Heinrich August Winkler, both Nipperdey and Wehler appear to be very receptive to possible eastern influences on German history.[18] In his first volume of "Germany's long way to the West," Winkler managed to allow the Poles one and a half consecutive pages and some scant sentences. The Western telos seems to have blinded him to the fact that unfortunately, until 1945, Germany had a "Drang nach Osten" not only in military ambitions. In general, one can observe that in the last two decades of the twentieth century the impulse to put German history explicitly into a European context beyond the Iron Curtain has come from East Europeanists like William Hagen, John Connelly, or Norman Naimark, rather than from well established chairs for German history.[19]

While a long tradition of marginalizing the Slavic components of German history exists, in the case of Wehler the near absence of Polish history is surprising. He wrote his dissertation on the stance of Social Democrats toward the various nationalities in the German Empire and in the 1970s published an article about Polish-German relations.[20] Hence, Wehler had excellent empirical knowledge to represent Poles more adequately in his history of German society. The explanation for their near absence lies in the one-sided understanding of the term society among the first two generations of social historians in Germany active after World War II. Werner Conze and his followers understood society as a social configuration that transcended class and social differences, but they did not think about cultural and linguistic boundaries of and within modern societies.[21] Most recently, Paul Nolte made the national understanding of the term society among the Bielefeld School of social history

18. See Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2000).

19. As always exemptions confirm the rule, but should be mentioned here. James Sheehan has been an ardent advocate for the inclusion of Austria in nineteenth-century German history. Younger historians like Helmut W. Smith have dedicated a considerable part of their work to the eastern parts and connections of Germany.

20. Wehler's most important publications on the Poles are "Deutsch-Polnische Beziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Krisenherde des Kaiserreichs 1871–1918: Studien zur deutschen Sozial- und Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 2d. ed. (Göttingen, 1979), 203–19. His dissertation was *Sozialdemokratie und Nationalstaat: Nationalitätenfragen in Deutschland 1840–1914* (Göttingen, 1971). With these works Wehler left behind the anti-Polish attitudes of the generation of his advisor Theodor Schieder, the author of the infamous *Polendenkschrift* of 1939. Open German nationalism was absent in Schieder's postwar writings. Nevertheless, he still perpetuated the traditional view on the partition of Poland and preserved the idea of cultural superiority of Germans vs. the Poles. This is shown in his widely distributed biography of Frederick II of Prussia: Theodor Schieder, *Friedrich der Grosse: Ein Königtum der Widersprüche* (Berlin, 1983). In his book about the expulsion of Germans from East Central Europe, Schieder downplayed the fate of the Jews and in particular Poles in Nazi occupied Poland. See Theodor Schieder, ed., *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ostmitteleuropa*, vol. 1, part 1, *Die Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse* (Bonn, 1953). See as especially disturbing examples on pp. 32E and 137E.

21. See Werner Conze, "Sozialgeschichte," in *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 2d. ed. (Cologne, 1968), 19–26. This volume is of special interest because it laid the foundation and set the paradigms for much of social history in Germany in the 1960s and 1970s.

explicit. He stated that "as a rule" modern societies have been formed as national societies. According to this national telos of history, the formation of modern societies is more or less the same as nation-building, and as long as a society remains multinational or multiethnic, it cannot be regarded as modern.[22]

By equating the terms society and nation, Nolte follows none less than the French historian Marc Bloch, who was as pivotal for the establishment of comparative history in France as the Bielefeld School was in Germany. In his article "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes," Bloch used the term society as if it were interchangeable with the term nation.[23] The article, which has become something of a Talmud for comparative historians in the United States and in Germany, contains little reflection on the changing territorial shape or the internal cultural differences of the societies being compared.[24] Although Bloch dealt with these complications in various studies and advocated regional studies, his article was perceived as a call to juxtapose national cases. The reason for this interpretation is Bloch's contention that the purpose of the comparisons is to discover the "originality" of the societies being compared and then to analyze the "differences between the single national milieus."[25]

One drawback of contrasting comparisons is that they have a tendency to confirm differences between cases or to create new stereotypes.[26] A more fundamental problem of this comparative design is the further entrenchment of the traditional national framing of history; the *Sonderweg* thesis and its impact on comparative history in Germany is an example. Since the 1960s Hans-Ulrich Wehler and other German historians were asking the fundamental question: when and why did Germany depart on its special path of history that led to a weak democracy and eventually ended in National Socialism.[27] Their proposed method for finding answers to this question was to compare Germany with

22. Paul Nolte, "Gesellschaftstheorie und Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Umrisse einer Ideengeschichte der modernen Gesellschaft," in *Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zur Theoriedebatte*, ed. Thomas Mergel und Thomas Welskopp (Munich, 1997), 275–98, here 278.

23. The article was reprinted in Marc Bloch, *Histoire et historiens, textes reunis par Etienne Bloch* (Paris, 1995), 94–123. The analysis in this article is based on the German translation of his article in Peter Schöttler, ed., *Marc Bloch: Aus der Werkstatt des Historikers* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 122–59.

24. Bloch made these differentiations in other writings, but not in his programmatic text about the comparison.

25. See Schöttler, ed., *Marc Bloch: Aus der Werkstatt*, 139.

26. See Alan Macfarlane, *Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1979).

27. For a condensed overview of the *Sonderweg* thesis and its main proponents see Jürgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German *Sonderweg*," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999): 40–51, here 41–43. Kocka's article can be viewed as an attempt to salvage a reduced core of the *Sonderweg* thesis. However, key elements of his argumentation such as bureaucratization and the simultaneity of deep structural changes in politics, society, and the economy look rather weak if the Austrian Empire and in particular Bohemia are integrated into the comparative scheme.

various Western countries.[28] On the one hand, this greatly contributed to the internationalization of the field of history in Germany, on the other hand most comparative studies initiated by the Bielefeld school in the 1980s and the early 1990s remained within national frames.[29] The same is true for most of comparative labor history.[30] Although it is widely accepted that industrialization occurred in certain regions and often transcended state boundaries, the points of reference are usually the *German*, the *English*, or other national working classes. In 1996, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka have theoretically endorsed this focus on the nation in the introduction to their widely distributed book about historical comparison. Already in the foreword the editors speak about "national realities." They claim that the purpose of comparison is to analyze "national differences," which sounds like a late echo of Marc Bloch.[31]

European history, therefore, "general" history as well as comparative history, is confronted with a similar challenge: should national societies and nation-states continue to be the prevalent units of analysis? The next section will show how difficult it is to define German or any other national history in Europe and to isolate them from each other. This is primarily a problem of "general" history, particularly for scholars working within the boundaries of one nation.[32] However, it is also of high relevance for the development of comparative history and its ability to provide a methodological basis for a European history, which aspires to be different from the nation-building efforts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians.

28. It is worth noting that around the same time the Hungarian historian Jenö Szücs chose a similar pattern to analyze the supposed deviation or distortion of Hungarian history. See Szücs, *Die drei historischen Regionen Europas.* The Hungarian original of the book appeared in 1983. This Hungarian Sonderweg model of East Central European History is continued by Ivan Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the "Long" Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 2002). Similar to the Bielefeld School, Szücz and Berend compared their "own" history with that of "the West" or some particular Western countries. This indicates that West German historians kept employing research strategies similar to those in East Central Europe. This does not quite confirm the strong auto-stereotype of a deep Westernization of West Germany.

29. See as examples the three volume series by Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (Munich, 1988), which is built on many single and some comparative national case studies. However, Kocka's *Bürgertumsforschung* was pioneering on a different level, since before the changes of 1989 it included several authors from and articles about Eastern Europe.

30. See as an example the studies published in John Breuilly, *Labour and Liberalism.*

31. See Haupt, Kocka, eds., *Geschichte und Vergleich*, Vorwort.

32. In Germany, the label "general history" can be misleading. Many chairs of "*Allgemeine Geschichte*" focus on national history. In contrast to this, in Russia and other Slavic speaking countries the *istoria obéa* explicitly deals with nonnational history.

3. The Entangled Character of German and East Central European History

The continuous fascination of historians with the French Revolution has often obscured the fact that in the 1790s Poland was a second center of constitutionalism and democracy on the European continent. Like France it faced a similar threat and was attacked by its conservative neighbors. In contrast to the French, the Poles lost the revolutionary wars and their own state in 1794/95. From then on, the territorial cohesion and great power status of Prussia and then of Germany depended on Poland's continuous partition, which was confirmed in moments of crisis in 1815, 1831, 1848, and 1863. The forced inclusion of several million Poles also had an impact on Prussian attitudes toward democracy throughout the nineteenth century. The principles of popular sovereignty and democracy potentially endangered not only Prussia's political system, but also its great power status. Hence, the partition of Poland did not only change the map of Europe, but was also a prerequisite for the perseverance of the *ancien régime* in Germany and Eastern Europe until 1917/18.

The foundation of the German Empire in 1871 is usually considered as a unification and treated on the same level as the foundation of Italy in 1859. However, in contrast to Italy, which, upon its unification, ceded territory to neighboring France, the German Empire was built upon the continuous partition of one of its largest neighbors, a potentially explosive basis in an age of nationalism. Viewed from Breslau, Poznan or Warsaw, the so-called unification looked more like a continuous expansion. In 1818 the Prussian province of Silesia became formally part of the German Confederation,[33] because Prussia realized that its power within the confederation would increase with the integration of this important province. In 1848 there was a long debate in the national assembly in Frankfurt whether to include the Grand Duchy of Poznan in the German Confederation and in the elections. The liberal nationalists pressed hard for an expansion and argued that the Germans had a right to govern Posen because of their supposed cultural superiority and Germany's national interest.[34] In 1866 the entire Prussian partition of Poland became part of the North German Federation and in 1871 was included in the German Empire. First Prussia and then Germany contained ever-larger areas that were inhabited by people who clearly did not consider themselves as Germans. The point here is not to accuse Prussia or Germany of continuous imperialism. The expansion in the late eighteenth century, in 1818, 1848, and in 1866/71 had different motives and actors. However, it needs to be stressed that Germany in its

33. See Matthias Weber, *Das Verhältnis Schlesiens zum Alten Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne, 1992), 396. Most textbooks falsely claim that this already happened in 1815.

34. For the entire debate see Michael G. Müller and Bernd Schönemann, *Die "Polen-Debatte" in der Frankfurter Paulskirche* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991).

different territorial configurations became an increasingly less German state. In ethno-linguistic terms, the empire of 1871 was not as German as the confederation of 1815. Millions of Poles and Polish-speaking people were included and thus became participants in the history of Germany, while an even higher number of Germans living in Austria were excluded.

The exclusion of the Austro-Germans and the inclusion of the Poles also raise some questions about the contemporary characterization of the empire as a nation-state. None of the Western European nation-states established in the nineteenth century stretched over adjacent territories that had been acquired by imperial expansion only two or three generations before. Neither were Italy or Denmark inhabited by a large group of speakers of an entirely different language, who had their own old tradition of independent statehood as did the Poles. The purpose of this argument is not to build up a new kind of German exceptionalism vis-à-vis Western Europe, but to draw conclusions for comparative history. Especially for the entire nineteenth century, it might be revealing to compare Germany with other continental empires such as Russia and Austria. In the late nineteenth century Austria-Hungary would be a particularly fitting case for a comparison, because it also contained large minorities in its borderlands that it attempted to assimilate. In all European empires east of the Rhine, democratic reforms would have endangered their very existence. This also explains in part why the liberals and the bourgeoisie in the east of the German Empire and in Russia and Hungary were so different from their counterparts in France and England.[35] It was not because they were corrupted by reforms from above and somehow more state-oriented, but partially due to their precarious position as members of imperial nations. If representative democracies would have been established in the eastern half of Europe, the elites in large areas of the German, Habsburg, and Russian Empires would have been made up not merely of political, but also of ethnic minorities. These thoughts about democratization and liberalism hopefully have shown that, while comparing the German Empire with the structurally different nation-states in Western Europe may have answered many questions in the past, now a pluralization of perspectives and, hence, comparisons with Eastern Europe are necessary to develop an understanding of Germany's position within European history.

The same is true for the development of a German national identity. According to Hans Kohn's or Theodor Schieder's models, nationalism wandered from the west to the east of Europe, from France to Germany and further to the east.[36] During this journey it supposedly changed from civic to cultural and ethnic nationalism. One of the many drawbacks of this model is

35. The Polish historian Maciej Janowski deals specifically with the transfer and differentiation of liberalism in Europe in his book *Inteligencja wobec wyzwa nowoczesnoœci: Dylematy ideowe polskiej demokracji liberalnej w Galicji w latach 1889–1914* (Warsaw, 1996), 11–37.

36. See Theodor Schieder, "Typologie und Erscheinungsformen des Nationalstaats in Europa," in *Nationalismus und Nationalstaat: Studien zum nationalen Problem im modernen Europa*, ed. Otto Dann

that it overlooks the parallels of constitutionalism and revolution in both France and Poland.[37] Although Poland was defeated in the revolutionary wars, it helped to lay the foundation for a modern nation. Like its early modern predecessor, this nation had a limited social reach and was still mostly an elite project, which is also true in the French case, Prussia was bordering on Poland and partially contained a Polish population, which, despite its ethnic heterogeneity, became nationally conscious early and remained so as a result of mobilization for various uprisings.

The relative advancement of the Polish national movement in the first half of the nineteenth century also helps to explain the great fascination with the Poles among German national activists in the 1830s. The Polish national movement gave itself a clear political and civilizational mission as a "bulwark" of the West and Western Christianity against a demonized East, a strong and binding vision for the future borders of its state, universally agreed upon symbols such as a flag and an unquestioned capital city; in short, it encompassed all the ideologies, myths, and symbols necessary for a modern national movement. At this same time, the German national activists had yet to decide on the future size of the Germany they hoped to create, were about to agree on symbols such as a flag, and had yet to agree on its capital.

However, the German enthusiasm for the Polish movement soon changed into rivalry. During the 1848 revolution, the German liberals denied the Prussian Poles their own national ambitions and confirmed the imperial rule over the Grand Duchy of Poznan. This anticipated the future coalition of German nationalists with the Prussian state. From then on, German and Polish nationalism were connected because of their contrasting interests. If the German movement wanted to erect a nation-state that included Polish territories, it was destined to support Prussia and its policy in the Prussian east. There were other and more important reasons why a large part of the German national movement began looking toward Prussia. Bad experience and disillusionment with the stronghold of conservatism, Austria, played a more important role. However, the juxtaposition of the Polish movement fighting against the state, and the German movement forming an alliance with it, remained in place until 1918.

Although the Czech national movement came into being much later than its Polish neighbor, it also considerably influenced the mobilization and

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and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen, 1991), 65–86. Schieder's model, which he presented originally in 1965, is very similar to Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton, 1955). In contrast to Schieder, the late Kohn took back the West-East evolutionism in his later writings. Schieder's model of nation-state building can also be considered as anti-Polish, because it portrays the Polish movement as separatist and as a sole recipient of influences from a more advanced West. This fits well with the colonizing identification of Germans as *Kulturträger* in the East.

37. Norman Davies shows the parallels and the connections between France and Poland in his book *Europe: A History*, on 691–92, 699–701, 715–22.

nationalization of German speakers living in the mixed areas. Palácky's refusal to send Czech delegates to Frankfurt provoked the borderland areas of Bohemia to set up election committees for their own delegates.[38] In other words, first came the agitation for the Czech national movement and then the reaction of German speakers. In 1848 a similar situation evolved in Posen. The Polish movement mobilized supporters, and only then did the German speakers in Posen reluctantly organize themselves. The political constellation in Bohemia also bore some resemblance to that in the eastern half of Prussia. Like the Poles, the Czechs were demanding democratic reforms in Austria in order to be represented according to their share of the population and to govern over Bohemia, whereas the Germans defended their position with the help of the Austrian government.[39] From then on a mixture of conservatism, dependence on the state, and antidemocratism became a common feature of the German national movement in much of the German lands and in the Austrian Empire. The Polish and Czech national movements juxtaposed themselves against the ruling ethnic group and presented a national ideology that was much more democratic and plebeian. These connections between Germans, Poles, and Czechs and their respective national movements did not only exist in the form of deliberate distinction, but also in adaptation and imitation. After the Germans had unified in 1871, for example, the foundation of a nation-state had even more appeal for stateless nations in the eastern half of Europe.

The relational character of German history also influenced the social composition of the German national movement. Because of its increasing orientation toward the state, it held the strongest appeal for the higher strata of society. In the east of the German Empire, a Prussian-German identity was mostly spread by state civil servants and parts of the bourgeoisie. Workers and peasants often remained in the distance. While this is a phenomenon also common to France at that time,[40] these social limits of German nationalism were reinforced by cultural and denominational boundaries. Catholics in general, and slavophone Catholics in particular, found it hard to identify with a Germany that seemed not to be theirs. Some of this alienation was reversed around the turn of the century, but one still needs to be careful to regard the inhabitants of the German Empire simply as Germans. The nation-building process in Germany was not completed in 1871. In many areas it just took off around that time, or was reversed during the *Kulturkampf*. Hence, characterizing a person or a group

38. See Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861–1914* (Princeton, 1981), 26.

39. See Jan Kren, *Konfliktgemeinschaft: Tschechen und Deutsche 1780–1918* (Munich, 1996). Køen's book is also one of the few publications that mastered the task of writing a history of relations between two polities that cannot be understood in isolation from each other.

40. See Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, 1976).

as German or attaching any other national label can be misleading, especially in rural areas, the suburbs of industrial cities, the eastern half of Prussia, the Polish partition, Silesia, or Masuria, where nationally conscious Germans were a minority for a long time. At least until 1914 "the Germans" were a "nation in formation" with blurred and volatile ethnic boundaries in the east.[41]

If a retrospective ethnicization or nationalization of history is to be avoided, any national labeling needs to be treated with great care. Even more caution than in the east of Germany is required in the eastern and southern borderlands of Poland, where linguistic boundaries between Polish, Ukrainian, and Belorussian were also fluid and language not a clear marker of national identity.[42] This also holds for areas of transition between closely related languages in Western Europe, for example the eastern Pyrenees and the Roussillon. As Peter Sahlins has shown in his pioneering study, until the twentieth century it was not clear who would become French, Spanish, or Catalan.[43] France, with its republican ideals and a relatively early arrival of a homogenizing modern state, had the greatest appeal. Although German and Polish or Czech belong to different language groups, continuous dialects such as the one spoken in Upper Silesia were unique mixtures that were not easily comprehensible to outsiders.[44] In view of the above, delineating the boundaries of a social entity which one can call a *German* society is more difficult than has been acknowledged by postwar historiography. One can also conclude that the boundaries of the German state and of the German nation are not the same. Although there was a trend toward their concurrence in the modern period, the relevance of Germany's eastern border for setting the boundaries of a German nation was limited. While some groups living in the empire did not identify themselves as Germans or as members of a German society, parts of the German diaspora in Eastern Europe and the Austro-Germans kept close ties. Reassessing these ties is politically very sensitive because they were so fatally misused by the Nazis; nevertheless they are part of the history of such imperial nations in continental Europe as Germany. Thinking in terms of space beyond state boundaries is an equally important ingredient for writing Jewish and Polish history.

The presence of a Polish minority in the German Empire also played a major role in the conflict between the state and the Catholic Church. Like France and other countries in the nineteenth century, the German Empire attempted to curtail the power of the church in legal affairs and in education. A law passed

41. See Philipp Ther, "Die Grenzen des Nationalismus: Der Wandel von Identitäten in Oberschlesien von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1939," in *Nationalismen in Europa: West und Osteuropa im Vergleich*, ed. Ulrike v. Hirschhausen and Jörn Leonhard (Göttingen, 2001), 322–46.

42. In Alsace, language and national identity did not concurr for a long time, See Alfred Wahl and Jean-Claude Richez, *L'Alsace entre France et Allemagne 1850–1950* (Paris, 1994).

43. See Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1991).

44. See Ladislav Pallas, *Jázyková otazka a podminky vytvaoení narodního vìdomi ve Slezsku* (Ostrava, 1970); Tomasz Kamusella, *Schlonsko: Horní Slezsko, Oberschlesien, Górny Śląsk* (Elbl1g, 2001), 30–72.

in 1872 also explicitly forbade any language other than German for religious education. The goal was to facilitate the assimilation of Slavic speakers and to reduce the influence of Polish culture and nationalism in Germany. While the *Kulturkampf* was officially finished in 1886, its anti-Polish and anti-Slavic measures remained in place.[45] In the same year, the government passed the "law of settlement" according to which ethnic Germans were to be settled in the Polish partition in order to Germanize the area also based on ethnic structures. As Rogers Brubaker has termed it, the empire increasingly developed into a *nationalizing* nation-state.[46] This combination of religious persecution and national suppression eventually backfired, because especially Catholics with a mixed or non-German ethnic background stubbornly resisted. Since the liberal and Protestant elite that fought against the church also claimed to pursue the national interest, a gap opened between this elite and the population that was the object of the former's policy.[47] The narrowing definition of Germanness in the nineteenth century, and in particular during the *Kulturkampf* period, reduced the attractiveness of Germany as an object of identification. Still a lot of integration happened through the social advancement of slavophone citizens of the empire, but in particular in Upper Silesia a Polish and a regional Silesian identity were viable alternatives to the contradictory mixture of imperial and ethnic German nationalism.[48] The various calls and popular movements for secession after World War I in Upper Silesia, in Lusatia, and in other areas on the fringe of the empire indicate that the spread and depth of German national identity still had limits.

The suppression of the Polish and other slavophone minorities — for

45. The particular anti-Polish brunt of the *Kulturkampf* is comprehensively analyzed by Lech Trzeciakowski, *Kulturkampf w zaborze pruskim* (Poznan, 1970) and by Helmut W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, 1995). Nipperdey also recognized the anti-Polish component of the *Kulturkampf*. Cf. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918, 2:* 270–71.

46. See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 63–66. The most important book in the German language about this topic is Theodor Schieder, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat*, 2d. ed. (Göttingen, 1992). However, Schieder's analysis is weakened by his idealization of a supposedly a-national Prussian state and his characterization of the empire's policy toward Poles as "defensive," 19–20 and 35.

47. Mainstream German historiography, however, still follows the assumption that there was a linear process of assimilation of the Slavophone population except for the Poles. As an example of these views see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 3, *Von der "Deutschen Doppelrevolution" bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich, 1995), 962. Recent cooperation between Polish and German historians has produced different results. See the articles about the Sorbs, Kashubs, and Upper Silesians in Hans Henning Hahn und Peter Kunze, eds., *Nationale Minderheiten und Minderheitenpolitik in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1999).

48. The issue will be dealt with extensively on the example of Upper Silesia in a fortcoming volume: Philipp Ther and Kai Struve, eds, *Die Grenzen der Nationen: Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit* (Marburg, forthcoming 2002). The forces and limits of integration are much better researched for the Poles who migrated to the industrial Ruhr district in West Germany. See Christoph Klessmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870–1945* (Göttingen, 1978).

instance in Lusatia, West Prussia, and Upper Silesia — also triggered and enforced the spread of racism and colonialism. Long before Germany acquired overseas colonies, it developed a colonial attitude toward the Polish people. In Gustav Freytag's novel *Soll und Haben*, published in 1855, the author states that Poles "have no culture," are unable to create "civilization and progress," or to run their own state. Although some of these stereotypes are still in line with the enlightened legitimization for the partition of Poland, there are new elements in Freytag's portrayal of Poles. According to him, only the Germans could educate Poles to become proper human beings and therefore should rule and "colonize" them. Freytag also contrasted the "healthy" bourgeois character of German society with the domination of Polish society by its nobles. This demonstrates the function of the Polish nobility as a "constituting other" for the German bourgeoisie.[49] New in the novel was the blatant racism toward Slavs in general and toward Poles in particular. As one of the main heroes of the novel states, "there is no race that is as unable to move forward and to acquire humanity and education as the Slavic one."[50] Freytag's book, a bestseller and probably the most widely read novel in the German Empire, set an example for a body of colonial literature about the "eastern marches."[51] Evidently, the internal colonialism[52] and racism were not restricted to the east, but became popularized throughout the entire country. When Germany acquired its overseas colonies, the already established colonial and racist attitudes just needed to be extended to black Africans and Asians, a task undertaken by Freytag himself as one of the main activists of the "Kolonialverein" (Colonial Association). The main difference between the Polish territories and the external colonies was that, for a long time, Poles and Slavic speakers were regarded as possible objects of assimilation. According to Freytag, they still could be lifted to the higher level of German civilization if they would only give up their language and culture. One can conclude that the further development of postcolonial studies in Germany requires the inclusion of internal colonialism in East Central Europe.[53] Again, the more revealing objects of comparison might be located in the east. Russia's policy in the Caucasus and in Central Asia and the Austrian rule over Bosnia offer sufficient similarities for a potentially productive comparative setup.[54]

49. Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben.* Roman in Sechs Büchern, part 1, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Neue wohlfeile Ausgabe, Berlin u. Leipzig: E. Hirzel u. H. Klemm, n. d.), 395–96, where the domination of nobles and the weak position of burghers are made responsible for the ills of Poland.

50. Ibid., 394.

51. For the portrayal of Poles in nineteenth-century German literature see Arno Will, *Polska i polacy w niemieckiej prozie literackiej XIX wieku* (Łódz, 1970).

52. See for this term Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966* (Berkeley, 1977).

53. Until now the Prussian partition of Poland is absent in German publication on colonialism. An interesting model — but without the Poles — is offered by Jürgen Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus: Geschichte — Formen — Folgen* (Munich, 1997), 7–18.

54. There also exists a monograph about Russia as a multinational empire that might serve as an example for writing a multinational history of Germany. See Andreas Kappeler, *Russland als*

A prominent witness for the relevance of Poles as subjects of German history is one of the fathers of the comparative method, Max Weber. In his inaugural speech at the University of Freiburg about "The Nation-state and National Economic Policy," Weber analyzed why German farm workers were increasingly replaced by Poles. He concluded "that physical and psychological racial differences" were the most important factors. According to him, "the Slavic races" and Poles were by their nature content with lower living standards because "they eat the grass off the floor."[55] The purpose of these quotes is not to expose Max Weber as a particularly nasty nationalist or a racist. He was a man of his time, and in his later years he was driven by a genuine interest in foreign cultures ranging from China to India.[56] His attitudes were common among the elites and the government of the German Empire. In order to reverse the "victory" of Polish farm workers over their German counterparts, Weber demanded a "systematic colonization" of the Polish territories, the division of large landed estates into medium size farmsteads that were to be handed over to ethnic Germans. Weber also pleaded to protect these farmers from economic pressure by adjusting market rules, and to close the border in order to stem "the Polish flood." The German government put these demands into practice, and in 1908 it even passed a law that allowed the expropriation of Polish landowners, a clear violation of the constitution.[57] Germany's excessively brutal occupation of Poland during World War II demonstrates the lasting impact of colonial and racist attitudes against so-called *Untermenschen*.

Another tool to protect Germany from eastern "intruders" was citizenship. Keeping out Poles and Polish Jews was a major motivation for building the law of citizenship of 1913 on the principle of descent. Simultaneously the government attempted to assimilate the Polish and other Slavic minorities who already lived in the country. For this purpose education and language rights, the rights of assembly, of forming associations, and of employment in the state service

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Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall, 2d. ed. (Munich, 1993). For the quasi-colonial rule see pp. 141–55, 191–95, 218–19. For the Austrian case Moritz Csáky, Johannes Feichtinger, and Ursula Prutsch have organized a conference on "Die Habsburgermonarchie: Ein Ort der inneren Kolonisierung." A future work on the subject would be groundbreaking.

55. "Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik: Akademische Antrittrede von Dr. Max Weber o. ö. Professor der Staatswissenschaften in Freiburg im Breisgau," in *Max Weber, Landarbeiterfrage, Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik: Schriften und Reden 1892–1899*, 2. Halbband, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen (Freiburg, 1895), 535–74. Translated quotes are from 545, 551 and 553. For a wider picture of German attitudes toward Poland see Hubert Orłowski, *"Polnische Wirtschaft": Zum deutschen Polendiskurs in der Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1996).

56. While Weber can be accused of using these non-European cases for the purpose of "othering" and to confirm a West European exceptionalism, he clearly was not driven by racism in his later perception of China and India. For a positive view on Weber's study of foreign cultures see Wolfgang Mommsen, "Max Webers Begriff der Universalgeschichte," in *Max Weber, der Historiker*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Göttingen, 1986), 51–73, here 62. For a critical view see Surendra Munshi, "Max Weber über Indien," in Kocka, *Max Weber*, 221–41.

57. See Martin Broszat, *200 Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Munich, 1963), 114.

were curtailed. Non-German speakers were by law prohibited from using their language at school, at court, or in business. In a recent monograph on citizenship Dieter Gosewinkel has concluded that the Poles were made second-class citizens.[58] The effects of this policy were to be felt throughout the entire empire and also by ethnic Germans. According to William W. Hagen, the policy against the Poles "was one of the monarchy's defenses against social and political modernization."[59] Hence, the Polish factor (if we think in terms of causal explanations) is of central relevance for explaining why the German Empire became unable to reform itself, unable to democratize, and why the "*Rechtsstaat*" and the constitution were weakened in the two decades before World War I.

The anti-Polonism was also closely connected with the rise of anti-Semitism. In his aforementioned novel, Gustav Freytag not only portrayed German Jews as evil capitalists, but he also had them speak German with a Polish syntax,[60] thereby making vile Easterners out of German Jews who were in fact already highly assimilated.[61] At the turn of the century, a portrayal of German Jews as oriental, impossible to integrate, and potentially dangerous, was already commonplace in Prussia. Both Jews and Poles were defined as "undesired elements," and between 1883–1885 the empire even resorted to the expulsion of 32,000 people to the Russian and Austrian partitions of Poland.[62] The anti-Semitic riots in the eastern parts of Prussia around the turn of the century have to be seen in this context as anti-Polonism and anti-Semitism.[63]

In the "long" nineteenth century, Polish and German histories were not only connected within Prussia and Germany, but also reached beyond state boundaries. The Poles in the Russian and Austrian partitions constantly followed the

58. The legal discrimination of the Polish population is explained in detail by Dieter Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2001), 211–18. See also Wehler, *Sozialdemokratie und Nationalstaat*, 213–18.

59. William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago, 1980), 199. See also Brigitte Balzer, *Die preussische Polenpolitik 1894–1908 und die Haltung der deutschen konservativen und liberalen Parteien (unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Provinz Posen)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 290.

60. Unfortunately the connection between anti-Polishness and anti-Semitism has hardly been researched. For a recent reassessment of anti-Semitism and German nationalism see Shulamit Volkov, "Nationalismus, Anti-Semitismus und die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung," in *Nation und Gesellschaft in Deutschland: Historische Essays*, ed. Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte (Munich, 1996), 208–19, here 214–17.

61. An impressive study about the Jews based on the example of the Silesian capital Breslau has been written by Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Grossstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen, 2000).

62. Quoted from Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen*, 265. According to Gosewinkel, the restrictions on immigrations were even more directed against Jews than against Poles. Ibid., 270–77.

63. See two recent case studies about anti-Jewish violence: Christhard Hoffmann, "Political Culture and Violence against Minorities: The Anti-Semitic Riots in Pomerania and West Prussia," in *Exclusionary Violence: Anti-Semitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (Ann Arbor, 2002), 67–92; Helmut Walser Smith, "Konitz 1900: Ritual Murder and Anti-Semitic Violence," in ibid., 93–122.

fate of their conationals in Prussia, and sent money and people to support them. Because of the increasing personal communication and exchange of information, the political histories of the Poles in the three partitions remained intertwined. This is shown, for example, by the strong repercussions in Prussia, when autonomy was granted by Austria to the Galician Poles. The far-reaching rights the Austrian Poles had gained in 1872 coincided with the increasing suppression of the Poles in Germany. This discrepancy made their plight even more unbearable. The case of the partitioned Poles also demonstrates that modern societies can be formed across state borders.

A similar argument could be made for Austrian and German histories into World War II. After the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and of postwar Austria in 1955, German and Austrian historians respectively took great care not to touch the modern history of the other country, and to avoid a *grossdeutsches* framework that had been discredited by the Nazis. As a result, Austria was marginalized in the master narratives of Nipperdey, Wehler, and most recently Heinrich August Winkler. Already two decades ago James Sheehan developed powerful arguments against the exclusion of Austria.[64] However, with the exception of Dieter Langewiesche, not many of the prominent German historians took up his argument.[65] While Sheehan and Langewiesche concentrate on the relevance of Austria up to 1866, one could make similar arguments for later periods. The societies and the cultures of both countries remained in close contact after 1866. Especially the development of all spheres of culture in the German Empire was deeply connected with Austria. In theater and music Vienna retained its position as the capital of German culture. A key event was the half year-long Internationale Theater und Musikausstellung in Vienna in 1892, which was designed like a world exhibition. Various French, German, Czech, Polish, and many other theater companies traveled to Vienna and staged plays and operas. There also was a permanent part of the exhibition in a set of national pavilions that showed the cultural history of the participating countries.[66] In contrast to other countries, Austria allowed its various nationalities to have their own sections and shows and thus displayed an unmatched plurality, while legitimizing the Habsburg dynasty as its political master. Vienna thus celebrated itself as a multinational, i.e., European capital of modernity. It also played an important role in the development of modern styles in architecture and literature. Its art deco products were exported

64. See James Sheehan, "What is German History? Reflection on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography," in *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981): 1–23; James Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford, 1989), 908–9.

65. See Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalstaat, Nationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 174–75 and 204–8.

66. Presently Martina Nussbaumer at the Spezialforschungsbereich "Moderne—Wien und Zentraleuropa um 1900" at the Karl-Franzens-University in Graz is pursuing a promising Ph.D. project about the reinvention of Vienna as a cultural capital in the late nineteenth century.

to the German Empire and further to the west.[67] The name of Sigmund Freud alone points to Austria's position in the history of medicine and psychology. Throughout the nineteenth century the axis of Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Berlin, or Leipzig and Hamburg kept its importance for the transport and exchange of political, cultural, and intellectual goods in Europe.

The mutual influences between the German Empire and Austria were sometimes less than benign. The anti-Semitism of the Austro-Germans Schoenerer and Lueger was partially transferred across the border, and influenced especially Bavaria, but also Saxony and Silesia. Radical Pan-Germanism spilled from the German East to the Habsburg Empire and severely hampered the relations between Germans and Austro-Slavs, in particular in Bohemia.[68] Summing up, the history of the German Empire cannot be understood without taking into consideration the separation from, and the continuous closeness to Austria and its society. As Austria's plea for an *Anschluss* in 1919 and its fateful realization in 1938 demonstrate, it did not drop from German history in 1866.[69] The purpose of this argument is not to reestablish a *grossdeutsche* frame for German history, but to point out how difficult it is to isolate German history from that of Austria.

It would go beyond the scope of this article to show in detail the entangled character of French and German history. Michel Espagne and Michael Werner have established a historical school in Paris that has produced numerous publications about cultural transfers between Germany and France, in particular the German influence on the political, social, and above all cultural history of modern France.[70] On the German side, historians like Matthias Middell and Hartmut Kaelble followed similar interests and showed the influence of France on Germany.[71] Their research has shown, for example, that the development of welfare systems in both countries was connected,[72] and that the import of

67. Although Carl Schorske was rather preoccupied with showing the internal forces of destruction in Vienna before World War I and thus created his own Austrian version of the "*Sonderweg*" thesis, his book *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1979) stimulated numerous authors who have shown the blossoming of Viennese culture and its influence on Central Europe and Germany.

68. For a condensed compilation of the political relations between Austria and Germany see Schieder, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Cologne, 1961), 44–52.

69. For a counterbalance of the previous criticism it should be added that Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866*, 791, recognized this fateful legacy of the war of 1866.

70. Some of the most important publications of this school are Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris, 1999); Michel Espagne, Michael Werner, *Transfert: Relations interculturelles franco-allemandes (XVIII^{e}–XIX^{e} siècle)* (Paris, 1988); Bénédicte Zimmermann, Claude Didry et Peter Wagner, *Le travail et la nation: Histoire croisée de la France et de l'Allemagne* (Paris, 1999). In Germany the main proponent of transfer history is Matthias Middell in Leipzig, who coedited the volumn Michel Espagne and Matthias Middell, ed., *Von der Elbe bis an die Seine: Kulturtransfer zwischen Sachsen und Frankreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1999).

71. See Hartmut Kaelble, *Nachbarn am Rhein: Entfremdung und Annäherung der französischen und deutschen Gesellschaft seit 1880* (Munich, 1991).

72. See Sandrine Kott, "Gemeinschaft oder Solidarität: Unterschiedliche Modelle der französi-

elements of the German Humboldtian university was very important for the reform of French universities in the nineteenth century. The influences in the realm of high culture are even more obvious for both countries. After several decades of rejection between the 1850s and the 1880s, French audiences came to adore the music of Richard Wagner. After its premiere *Lohengrin* was played at the Opera Garnier on average every third evening for more than half a year.[73] Yet the obsession with Wagner was based on previous cultural transfers from France to Germany. The most important stage for German operas in the nineteenth century was the court theater in Dresden.

If one takes a closer look at the famous German opera department directed by Carl Maria von Weber in the early nineteenth century, most operas staged by him in the German language were in fact translated French operas.[74] One generation later Richard Wagner's operas were heavily influenced by the example of the French *grand opéra*. One could summarize that the international success of German opera was based on French influences and their modernizing impact several decades earlier. The French obsession with Wagner was paradigmatic for that country's entire relationship with Germany, which became even closer, and at last based on peace, with the formation of the European Union. Throughout modern history the French closely observed their neighbor, partly copied and used, but also rejected elements of German culture as broadly defined. Pointing to the paramount influence of the French on German history is to repeat the obvious. Nipperdey summarized the situation in the very first sentence of his history of nineteenth-century Germany, where he states: "Am Anfang war Napoleon" (in the beginning was Napoleon). But why did postwar "general" historians in the Federal Republic almost entirely restrict their observations to the West? The Cold War and the ensuing Western orientation of the Federal Republic obviously played a certain role, but the main explanation lies in the theoretical paradigms of social history. If one accepts that modernity in Europe indeed traveled exclusively from west to east, as Schieder claimed in his model of nationalism, then it is hard to imagine that modernity might sometimes move the opposite way. Because of the view of the East as backward, almost nobody was interested in possible Polish or Czech influences on German history or comparisons with the Eastern neighbors of Germany.

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schen und deutschen Sozialpolitik am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996): 311–30; Christoph Conrad, "Wohlfahrtsstaaten im Vergleich: Historische und sozialwissenschaftliche Ansätze," in *Geschichte und Vergleich*, ed. Haupt and Kocka, 155–80. Conrad criticizes, however, that this comparative research was hampered by the traditional national approaches. Ibid., 162–63.

73. Stéphane Wolff, *L'opéra au Palais Garnier (1875–1962)* (Paris, 1962), 135. For the perception of Wagner in France see Martine Kahane et Nicole Wildt, *Wagner et la France* (Paris, 1983).

74. For the French influence on the German opera in Dresden and the birth of German opera see Anno Mungen, "Morlacchi, Weber und die Dresdner Oper," in *Die Dresdner Oper im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Heinemann and Hans John (Laaber, 1995), 85–106, here 92–94.

Comparisons across the eastern border of the empire also facilitate an understanding of its internal diversity.[75] The social and economic structures, the political landscape, or the level of anti-Semitism, for instance in Pomerania, were more similar to the Russian partition of Poland than to those of Baden or the Palatinate, mostly due to the structural specificity of East Central Europe or "Ostmitteleuropa" including the East-Elbian areas of Prussia. Studies in the history of Central Europe that transcend state borders can well make more sense than choosing a state or nation-state as a unit or frame of analysis. The theoretical problems arising from internal differentiation are more urgent for comparative historians than for others who write about one particular state or nation. National historians have always synthesized and homogenized the multiple histories of one country to accommodate their master narratives. This deliberate construction might not satisfy academic standards, but can work as a form of emplotment.[76] Comparatists use their case studies to analyze commonalities and differences and then to come to generalizing conclusions. If only one case is misrepresented, the results of the entire comparison can be distorted. Consequently, comparatists need to be aware of the problematic side of national cases instead of taking them as a normal or granted unit of analysis.

The creation of independent Poland in 1918 changed the character of Germany from a multinational empire with internal and overseas colonies to a relatively homogenous nation-state like the independent Italy of 1866. Mostly to the detriment of the first German democracy, the Weimar Republic, Poles, and now a Polish state occupied again a prominent position in international relations and in domestic policy. The ugly nationalist side of the Weimar Republic first became apparent in its foreign policy toward Poland. Hitler came to power not only because of the world economic crisis, but also due to his anti-Semitic and anti-Slavic nationalism, and his promise to revise the supposedly unjust borders in the east. By partitioning Poland once again in 1939, the Nazis revived the tradition of German-Russian rapprochement to the disadvantage of Poland. The government then attempted to destroy the joint existence of Germans and Poles by moving almost one million Poles out of the annexed western provinces of Poland and replacing them with German settlers. These expulsions, however, and the ruthless exploitation of Poles in the General Government were accompanied by attempts to include Poles and speakers of Slavic dialects in the German *Volksgemeinschaft*. One way of integration was the so-called *Volksliste* that categorized the population in annexed and occupied

75. For a short, but good overview of the economic, cultural, and political differentiation of imperial Germany see Dieter Langewiesche, "Föderativer Nationalismus als Erbe der deutschen Reichsnation: Über Föderalismus und Zentralismus in der deutschen Nationalgeschichte," in *Föderative Nation: Deutschlandkonzepte von der Reformation bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Dieter Langewiesche and Georg Schmidt (Munich, 2000), 215–44, here 227–41.

76. For this term see Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore, 1973).

territories according to their nationality. Although officially the purpose of the *Volksliste* was to keep the German nation "clean" from being "polluted" by inferior nations and races, millions of Slavophone people were to be transformed into Germans.[77] The Nazis were convinced that they could assimilate these populations and that their "racial qualities" were high enough to include them in the German nation. Apparently even the most radical proponents of an ethnically and racially cleansed German nation were not able to draw clear borders between Germans and their eastern neighbors. This was paralleled by the inclusion of Polish forced laborers into the German social security system during World War II. They paid contributions to pension funds and for health insurance, and were even insured against unemployment. To be sure the major motivation of the Nazis was material. They wanted to extract social security contributions from the forced laborers.[78] And yet, less complicated ways of exploitation would have existed than including Poles in the German welfare system.

In the postwar period the policy of the Nazis against Poland resulted in the almost complete separation of Germans and Poles. More than eight million Germans fled from or were forced to leave the postwar territory of Poland. For the first time in history, a clear ethnic border was established between Germans and Poles and Germans and Czechs. In spite of this ethnic cleansing and the gap between the nations created by the German occupation during World War II, the westward shift of Poland meant that it became more similar to Germany in its social and economic structures, human geography, and culture. Half of the Poles today live in areas ruled by Germany until 1918, a third in regions that were a part of Germany until 1945. This and the loss of the Polish east to the Soviet Union, which had functioned as a bridge to eastern Slavic cultures, had a big impact especially on Poland's cultural closeness to Germany. At the same time, postwar Germany became more Eastern European. Not only the many exiles from Communist Czechoslovakia and Poland, but also millions of German expellees and repatriates immigrated from the east to Germany.[79] Initially West Germans and Poles stood on opposite sides of the Cold War, but later were among the first attempting to bring it to an end.

Hopefully these sketches from the political, social, cultural, and legal history of modern Germany have demonstrated that its history cannot be understood

77. See Michael Esch, *"Gesunde Verhältnisse": Deutsche und polnische Bevölkerungspolitik in Ostmitteleuropa 1938–1950* (Marburg, 1998), 233–37; Czesław Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen 1939–1945* (Berlin, 1987), 500–7.

78. Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Bonn, 1985), 92ff.; Ulrich Herbert, "Nicht entschädigungsfähig? Die Wiedergutmachungsansprüche der Ausländer," in *Wiedergutmachung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Ludolf Herbst and Constantin Goschler (Munich, 1989), 273–302.

79. For this chapter of Polish-German history see Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen, 1998).

without taking into consideration the relations with its eastern neighbors. The German national movement, the formation and change of national identities, the state formation in areas inhabited by German speakers, the political, social, and legal history of the empire all were influenced or shaped by its eastern parts or neighbors, in particular Poland and Austria, but also by Bohemia. These relations were external, across state boundaries, as with Austria and its various nationalities after 1866, or internal as with the Prussian Poles since the partitions. It is therefore insufficient to treat Poles as minor players in German history. To the contrary, they need to be studied as subjects of German history at least until 1945.[80] One may conclude that nation-states and nationally homogenous societies should not be taken as "normal" or given units of analysis. Moreover, it should be recognized that it is far more difficult to isolate them sufficiently in order to mark commonalities or differences and to permit generalizations than is presently acknowledged among comparative historians.

The master narratives of German history written after 1945 in West Germany were constructed with a focus on Prussia and by relying mostly on an empirical basis. The "history of society" was conceptualized with concentration on German speakers within the borders of the empire established in 1871. This twofold reduction may have been useful for practical and political purposes, but it is ahistorical. If the changing territorial configurations of the German lands since 1772 and the various internal and external relations with non-German populations in Central and Eastern Europe are taken into account, it complicates what one may call German history. Yet it would be worth making this effort since it opens up the possibility to write a German history that is transnational and, after all, truly European.[81]

4. Consequences for the Comparative Method

The entangled character of German and East Central European history can be assessed in many different areas and by a large variety of phenomena, and it can be illustrated with a metaphor. If a front door is slammed in an old house, a trembling, a noise, or a pull of wind is likely to be felt even in its attic. This house may be called Europe. In modern history, the various populations that came to define themselves as Germans and their neighbors occupied adjacent

80. A useful example of such a widened perspective of German history might be the *Four Nations Approach*, which has been increasingly used in British history since the 1980s. See Raphael Samuel, "Editorial: British Dimensions: Four Nations History," in *History Workshop Journal* 40 (Autumn, 1995): iii–xxii. Samual advertises this approach in particular as a possibility to Europeanize and internationalize British history. A possible danger overlooked by him is a retrospective nationalization or ethnicization of the past. This can be avoided by the presumption that nations, like other social groups, are always subject to changes in the level and kind of identification.

81. For an attempt to define transnationality and to use this concept for German history see Jürgen Osterhammel, "Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001): 464–79, here 471–76.

rooms separated by thin, movable cardboard walls. At times the cardboard walls within the "German room" were far thicker than the ones separating it from what one may consider Poland or France. Even if these neighbors would have wanted to, they could not live in isolation. Hence, the inhabitants of these rooms saw each other talking and acting, and they reacted. At times, some of the cardboard walls were removed and the neighbor had to live in the same room. Examples are the Poles in the Prussian partition. One can study these rooms separately in a comparative analysis, but the movement of their boundaries, their mutual perception and interaction is a prerequisite for understanding their history. A formal cooperation between Poles and Germans or Poland and Germany in the modern period was rare. However, a mutual influence can also occur through repulsion or partial adaptation.[82] The *relational basis* mentioned in the beginning of this article is not understood in the Rankean sense, where several great powers relate to each other, but conceptualized as an entanglement of systems, and the mutual conditionality of their development.

Several processes that were a part of modernity contributed to the increasing connectedness and mutual influences within Europe, and beyond the geographical boundaries of the continent. The first and most important was the increased flow of information. For example, in the late nineteenth century, hardly any important political or cultural event happened in the German Empire that Polish papers in Galicia and in the Russian partition would not cover. Although analphabetism still existed and many rural areas were hardly connected to the modern world, ever more people in Europe knew what was happening across the borders of their state, country, or region. Modern means of communication greatly facilitated mutual perceptions and contacts. The various peoples and social groups in Europe increasingly compared themselves to each other. Sometimes they tried to imitate more advanced social groups, towns, or countries, sometimes they repelled foreign models. The quantity and depth of these mutual perceptions significantly rose in the modern period, in particular since the inventions of railways and steamboats. Independently of the individual or collective reaction, comparing oneself to somebody or something became a very frequent practice and fueled processes all over Europe such as industrialization, democratization, or the establishment of cultural institutions like theaters. It is astonishing that comparatists in history or the social sciences hardly reflected upon this *historicity of the comparison*. Although the reactions to mutual comparisons or looking across borders have varied and did not always comply with the demands of a scientific comparison, they constitute a relationship. By comparing themselves, the various societies of Europe became connected. One could argue with Karl Deutsch that the increasing communication

82. See Peter Burke's model of possible reactions to a cultural exchange in Peter Burke, *Kultureller Austausch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 9–40, here 35–40.

turned the various social, linguistic, and cultural groups in Europe into nations.

Not only perceptions or printed information like newspapers, brochures, and books traveled across Europe, but so did large numbers of people. The histories of Europe became connected by political and work migration and diasporas.[83] Whether emigrée Poles in France or Polish migrant workers in the Ruhr area, they brought new cultural elements into the areas of arrival and connected them to their regions of departure. Whereas models of how to build a state or an economy moved more frequently from west to east, people more often wandered from east to west. No matter where the transferred ideas or people came from, modern Europe was a continent on the move, and state borders hardly blocked these movements for any length of time. Therefore, the history of Europe and its single states, regions, and cities, and its peoples should not be written as artificially national, but as transnational histories.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Germany has been the one European country bordering on the largest number of states and nations, and its borders have moved forward and backward several times. Will this eventually have an impact on the historiography covering Germany? Similar questions could be addressed regarding almost all histories of continental Europe. Polish history cannot be written without considering the influence of Germany and Russia and the blurred ethnic borders with Belarus, Ukraine, and Silesia. The Russian Empire as well was deeply changed by the forced inclusion of Poles.[84] Quite obviously Russia had a tremendous impact on Polish, but also on German history. One could argue that Western Europe was less deeply embedded in this continental "histoire croisée." However, the Paris school of transfer history demonstrated how much the development of France was influenced by Germany, and even more so vice versa. One may conclude that a relational basis should be integrated into all the histories of Europe. This approach is not necessarily Eurocentric. As postcolonial studies have shown, European politics, societies, and cultures were also influenced by their possession of colonies and their transatlantic connections.

While historians of "large" nations such as Germany and France have usually artificially isolated the past of their countries, their colleagues from "small" nations have been more sensitive to the relational basis of their history. Already in 1928 Josef Pekař stated in his programmatic book about the *Sense of Czech*

83. Klaus J. Bade, *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2000).

84. Klaus Zernack's book about Poland and Russia in the past millennium is one of the few attempts to combine the history of two countries and societies. See Klaus Zernack, *Polen und Russland: Zwei Wege in der europäischen Geschichte* (Berlin, 1994). It is especially interesting for its combination of comparative history and a history of relations. Andrzej Walicki has written several works about continuous exchanges between Russia and Poland in the area of intellectual history. For the romantic period see Andrzej Walicki, *Russia, Poland, and Universal Regeneration: Studies on Russian and Polish Thought of the Romantic Epoch* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991).

History, that foreign, Byzantine, Western, German, and Hungarian influences were of paramount importance for Czech history. He even put these influences above internal forces shaping the history of the Czechs.[85] There were also a few notable exceptions in the historiography of "large" nations. As Lucien Febvre showed in his famous book about the Rhine more than sixty-five years ago, there was not a sharp cultural, economic, or ethnic border between France and Germany, but an intermediary space that bound the countries together.[86]

Since the 1980s the heritage of Le Febvre has been taken up by the aforementioned Paris school of "transfer history." In addition to numerous empirical studies, this school also came to some theoretical conclusions derived from the study of cultural transfers. In particular Michel Espagne has ardently criticized comparatists for isolating their units of analysis as is done in a laboratory and overlooking mutual influences between them.[87] Comparative historians like Hartmut Kaelble have partially accepted this criticism and admitted that mutual influences between the compared objects should be studied.[88] However, Kaelble left open at what stage of a given study these transfers should be included. According to the empirical findings presented in this article, they need to be integrated at the very beginning of any comparative study.[89]

In spite of its inspiring input to the debate on comparative method, it is questionable whether a history of cultural transfers as propagated by Espagne really does overcome the traditional national framing of historiography. The first problem might be the term "transfer" itself. Originally Espagne and Werner used it for analyzing and describing movements of culture from one point to another in one direction. Thus, it matched the general meaning of the word. If transfers in both directions are to be comprised in one term, as the proponents of this approach have demanded, the old-fashioned term "relations" might better serve the purpose. A problem shared by the comparative method and transfer history is their rootedness in national history. Similar to older comparisons, Michel Espagne's recent monograph about cultural transfers between France and Germany is built upon two national cases. The author did not make the effort to reflect on the changing territorial shape of what he considers as Germany in

85. Josef Pekař, "Smysl českých dějin," in *O smyslu českých dějin*, Josef Pekař, third edition (Prague, 1990), 383–405, here: 394–401.

86. See Lucien Febvre, *Le Rhin: Problemes d'histoire et d'economie* (Paris, 1935) (in German: Der Rhein und seine Geschichte, Frankfurt am Main, 1994).

87. See Espagne, *Les transferts*, 35–37.

88. Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich*, 19–21. A critical viewpoint of the comparative method is offered by Johannes Paulmann, "Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer: Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts," *Historische Zeitschrift* 3 (1998): 649–85.

89. This is also what Tilly's concept of an "encompassing comparison" implies, in which he argues for taking into account external influences on and the interaction between compared cases. See Tilly, *Big Structures*, 123–43. However, the problem is that Tilly is proposing units of analysis that are too large to be studied thoroughly.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[90] Again, Austria is almost entirely absent from this Franco-German history or even explicitly externalized. The Germany Espagne talks about is ahistorical, taken from a particular period, and then imposed on a much longer time span when the territorial configurations in Central Europe were quite different. A more convincing example of a history of transfers is Daniel Rodgers's book *Atlantic Crossings*.[91] It is dealing with intellectual goods such as models of social policy and their transfer over the Atlantic. The focus rests initially upon the influence of these goods and their carriers on American history, but Rodgers is also interested in crossings in the other direction, that is, how progressivism swept back from America to Europe.

Yet both examples show that the study of cultural transfers has more limited consequences than the presupposition concerning the relational character or *Beziehungshaftigkeit* of European histories.[92] Transfer history and related approaches concentrate on contacts between two analyzed objects and the influence of transferred goods on the places of arrival. A history of relations as it is proposed here goes one step further. It is not only interested in contacts and exchanges, but in structural connectedness. The multiple histories of Europe are not only connected by transfers over distance, but they are also entangled. Their development is mutually correlated and sometimes structurally dependent. According to this vision of relatedness, it does not suffice to ask how the Polish national movement influenced the German one and vice versa, but to analyze how the development of the German movement depended on the development of its Polish counterpart. This can be conceived in agency or structure. The approach propagated in this article could be applied to any field of history, for instance the political or social sciences, and is not necessarily bound to culture as the transfer approach has been so far. It is of particular relevance for the study of East Central Europe, a space with a particularly high degree of internal differentiation, where state borders and ethnic boundaries have remained fluid throughout the modern period.

An awareness of the entangled character of the histories of Europe further complicates the study of nation-states and national societies. If this additional complication is taken into account, it creates the risk that comparisons will be further overburdened, which will severely weaken their potential for deduction. The relational basis of the histories of Europe might ultimately even lead to the

90. See Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels*, 12. Although Espagne's explicitly denies that he follows a teleological model of history, he also excluded Austria from his Franco-German history starting in the eighteenth century. Quite revealing about the hidden teleology in his book is also his portrayal of transfer from or to a region as "prenational." Ibid. 14.

91. See Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

92. See Michel Espagne/Michel Werner, "La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France — Génèse et Histoire (1750–1914)," in *Annales* E.S.C. (juillet–aout 1987): 969–92 and Michel Espagne, *Les transferts*.

destruction of the argument as it is presented here, because encompassing concepts like "German history" or "Polish history" would become questionable. The best way out of this dilemma is to choose units of analysis beneath the level of the nation and the nation-state.[93] So far, the subdiscipline of urban history has offered very impressive comparisons on a meso level.[94] A stronger focus on regions, cities, or sub-national groups could emancipate comparative history from its roots in national history and take the edge off some well-founded criticism, which claims that the projects taken on by comparatists have been much too large for them to be able to say anything meaningful about them.[95] The choice of smaller units of analysis can also be recommended on practical grounds. The relational basis of history is usually well integrated into the literature about smaller territorial units and the groups inhabiting them. While the history books about nation-states and national societies have artificially isolated their objects of study, historians specializing in regions or cities have been much more ready to acknowledge that their objects of analysis are part of larger structures. No serious regional or urban historian would dare to write a history of Brandenburg, Berlin, or Charlottenburg without taking into account the history of Prussia or Germany. Since relations are usually much better integrated in regional and urban than in national history, it would be relatively easy to take the contextual knowledge from there and use it for comparative projects.[96]

By including a relational basis in their research, comparative historians would have a unique chance to develop a field of European or Central European history that is substantially different from the nation-building attempts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians. Although Norman Davies's attempt to write "A history" of Europe is not explicitly comparative and one may doubt the singular in the title, his book serves as an example on how one may synthesize the history of the continent without writing an artificially homogenized

93. See the respective demands in Fulbrook, *National Histories*, 14.

94. Because of space constraints this literature cannot be cited extensively, but a particularly sophisticated and international comparative project is Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).

95. This is one reason why a comparison between "civilizations," as it has been proposed in Germany by Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Osterhammel (see his book *Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Nationalstaats: Studien zu Beziehungsgeschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich* [Göttingen, 2001]) deserves some skepticism. It is also problematic that the term civilization, its evolutionary connotations and its misuse in the age of colonialism has not been adequately addressed. Furthermore, the position of Russia within a "European Civilization" is not clear. Kaelble simply excludes it from Europe, Osterhammel includes parts of it in his vision of an Asian civilization. Osterhammel's book is, however, interesting on a theoretical level for it strongly advocates the combination of comparisons with the approach of transfer history.

96. Convincing arguments for comparisons on a meso level are brought forward by Nancy Green, "The Comparative Method and Post-Structuralist Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies," in *Migration, Migration History, History*, ed. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, 2d. ed. (New York, 1999), 57–72.

"Euro-history."[97] As Mary Fulbrook has stated, Europe is not just a history of nations and nation-states,[98] but of its particular urban culture, regions, and of many more languages and cultures than exist today. Only if the multiple contacts and influences between the histories of Europe are taken into account will there also be a transnational and comparative history of Europe distinct from the national tradition of history.

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97. See the scathing comments about this in Davies, *Europe*, 42–45.
98. See Fulbrook, Introduction, 14–15.