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Ángel Alcalde

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Spatializing transnational history: European spaces and territories

Ángel Alcalde

LMU Munich, Munich, Germany / Center for the History of Global Development, Shanghai University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

ABSTRACT

This article introduces the dossier 'Spatializing Transnational History: European spaces and territories.' It examines the intersections between transnational history and the so-called 'spatial turn' in social sciences, and points at future directions in historical research. It reviews two main different methodological approaches to the problem of space in transnational, comparative and global history and examines recent contributions on the history of territory. Finally, it introduces the contributions to this dossier, which approach the history of modern Europe from a number of transnational *and* spatial perspectives. The dossier argues that incorporating a combination of spatial approaches, ranging from the examination of transnational spaces, to the interplay between different scales of analysis, and to the historicization of territoriality, into the practice of transnational, comparative and global history may contribute to a deeper, wider and more complex understanding of 'Europe.'

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Introducing 'Spatializing Transnational History'

History takes place in time *and* space, and space has its own history.¹ However, historical narratives have traditionally tended to emphasize the temporal over the spatial dimension of history. In modern historiography, for example, alternative periodizations have more often been proposed than different configurations of historical space.² Thus, conventional notions of space have remained largely unquestioned by an international historiography that, for many decades, most commonly clung to well-established 'containers' of historical events such as the nation-state, regions and continents, all of which were perceived as natural and self-evident frameworks for historical research. The reasons for this uncritical allegiance to the conventional use of the nation-state as research framework have been discussed many times before, and include the fact that the profession of the historian emerged in close relation to the nation-state in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, in the last three decades, this established historiographical practice has been partially reversed through the fields of transnational and global history.

Partially rooted in comparative history, transnational history transcends the nation-state as a unit of analysis.³ Transnational and global history are closely interrelated; they 'look beyond national boundaries and seek to explore interconnections across borders'.⁴ Flows, transfers and other processes operating 'over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between polities and societies' form the key focus of transnational historical analysis.⁵ There is an overall agreement that transnational history is a *perspective*, rather than a research field in itself. Today, one might speak about an inflationary use of transnational history, as works appear in more and more sub-fields of research that introduce transnational perspectives.⁶ Yet this scholarship forces us to reformulate not only historical chronologies but also geographies.⁷

The emergence of transnational and global history must be understood in correlation with the so-called *spatial turn* in the social sciences.⁸ Speaking about a spatial 'turn' should not allow us to ignore highly relevant precedents in the examination and discussion of space in history, contributions that opened the way for a more complex understanding of historical phenomena transcending the nation-state.⁹ For instance, historians from the *Annales* School, from Marc Bloch and his comparative method to Fernand Braudel and Lucien Febvre and their historical studies on the Mediterranean and the Rhine (respectively), are key milestones in this intellectual development.¹⁰ Furthermore, many historians have made use of theories and concepts of space developed by sociologists such as Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, to name but three. What is still true is that in the last decades we have been witnessing a return to space as a crucial dimension of history. Momentous historical events since the fall of the Soviet bloc in 1989 and of the Twin Towers in 2001 certainly had a responsibility in the rising awareness of spatiality.¹¹ Historians contested both the 'end of history' and the 'vanishing of space'. Recently, the multilayered crises of the European Union, the unstoppable cross-border flows of refugees and migrants,¹² and nationalist challenges to long-established nation-state spatial configurations such as in the cases of Scotland and Catalonia have made contemporaries reconsider conceptions of space and territory.

Among historians, there is increasing interest in the relations between space and the transnational perspective.¹³ Nevertheless, the *spatialization* of transnational history largely remains a task to be done. In this introduction, I will first survey the variety of methodological approaches proposed by scholars interested in analysing space within the framework of transnational and global history. I will argue that two main methodological approaches coexist, one based on the investigation of transnational space in itself, the other on the combination of different scales of analysis. To this historiographical overview, I will juxtapose recent contributions to the historicization of 'territory', understood as constructed space. The task of spatializing transnational history should, where possible, embrace these different yet interrelated approaches. Finally, I will present the different research contributions gathered in this dossier, highlighting the added value they contain for historians interested in spatializing transnational research.

The empirically based research articles of this dossier examine a set of historical spaces and territories within the framework of a transnational, global and comparative history of Europe. The contributions illuminate the potential of a spatial approach to transnational history, and advance further towards a non-essentialist understanding of historical space. In this theme issue, therefore, the spatial dimension does not simply play the role of a given, passive 'container' for historical events and processes. Explaining historical space after the transnational and the spatial 'turn' is one of the tasks undertaken by the authors through

their different case studies. In addition, this dossier contributes to ongoing historiographical discussions over notions of 'territory' in modern times. In this sense, *spatializing transnational history* seems to us an important research agenda that may contribute to weaving the achievements of transnational history together with wider historiographical narratives on European history.¹⁴ In a recent assessment of transnational history after 25 years of debate, Kiran Klaus Patel has stressed the potential of transnational history to reach a deeper understanding of Europe as 'a space where transnational ties have become particularly strong and one itself formed by these bonds in the first place'.¹⁵ Moreover, the transnational approach permits to 'identify Europe's place in the world'.¹⁶ At the same time, recognizing the vagueness involved in the inflationary use of transnational history, Patel sees the need to help transnational history 'to make itself superfluous'.¹⁷ This ultimate success would mean the full integration of the transnational perspective into other ways of doing history. This dossier advances toward this goal by combining the practice of transnational, comparative and global approaches with a critical use of space as a historically constructed dimension.

A methodological repertory

In recent years, historians have proposed a range of transnational-spatial concepts and approaches. From an epistemological point of view, a close examination of recent scholarship reveals two main options to approach the problem of space in transnational history. On the one hand, there are historians who adopt a highly flexible and constructivist notion of *space*, substantially detached from geographical determinism. On the other hand, there are historians who recur to the combination of different *scales* of analysis, ranging from the local to the global, an approach that does not directly challenge established definitions of space. The focus on alternative conceptions of space or on different scales of analysis responds to different research approaches and necessities.

The first approach entails acknowledging the existence of 'transnational spaces'. This notion has been relatively recently introduced in historiography following the previous use of this expression in other social sciences. Since the early 2000s, sociologists dealing with a number of contemporary issues, particularly transnational migration and multinational business companies, have found the conceptualization of 'transnational social spaces' enlightening. The 'mutual embeddedness of geographic space and social space' implicit in the setting up of international systems based on nation-states no longer fully reflects contemporary reality. Our lives, for example, are marked by the pluri-local character of millions of migrants' everyday lives. According to these sociological perspectives, transnational social spaces are 'dense, stable, pluri-local and institutionalized frameworks composed of material artefacts, the social practices of everyday life, as well as systems of symbolic representation that are structured by and structure human life'.¹⁸ In addition, in disentangling the notion of 'space' from pre-defined nation-state 'territories', groups and actors, other authors have proposed the concept of 'transnational political space', understood as a political sphere that is mainly constructed through communication processes.¹⁹ Political scientist Thomas Faist has defined transnational spaces as 'relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states. They consist of combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organisations, and networks of organisations that cut across the borders of at least two nation-states'.²⁰ Yet such spatial configurations are far from being homogeneous units. Some analysts have challenged the 'global city hypothesis'

by arguing that supposedly 'global', 'cosmopolitan' agents are also circumscribed to localities and everyday life geographies. Transnational *actors* are also locally *rooted*,²¹ they always act within a space. Such studies have provided us with an image of 'transnational spaces' that rescues their own locality and internal diversity.²² Transnational spaces exist, but they interact and overlap with many other spatial configurations.

What about 'transnational spaces' in history? Following sociologists' analyses, attention to the 'space of the flows' has been an existing concern among historians since the emergence of the transnational approach.²³ Transnational actors constructing different spatial configurations with their everyday practices existed in earlier epochs as well. For instance, members of international organizations and humanitarian activists during the twentieth century, who can be understood as 'internationalists',²⁴ also acted in a specific space of practices situated beyond and between nation-states. Transnational actors, whether institutions, individuals or communities, cannot be understood in detachment from their spaces of activity.²⁵ The introduction and contributions to the dossier on transnational actors in this same *European Review of History* issue have thoroughly argued that transnational actors were always embedded in a multiplicity of spatial configurations, local, national, regional and imperial contexts, while being at the same time producers of various types of spaces.

Yet locating and grasping the space where transnational transfers, flows, exchanges and entanglements take place remains an epistemological problem. Shifting our viewpoint from the 'situated' historical actors to the historical scenario where these actors act requires more closely examining and giving prominence to space in itself. In this sense, a number of recent contributions by researchers on space should be taken into account. For instance, specialists on borderlands have set forth a differentiation between 'borders' and 'frontiers'. 'Borders stand for man-made lines that divide the world into specific places, territories and categories, to which legal, mobility and social norms apply. Such borders are typically formal demarcations of ownership or state authority', while frontiers are 'zones where two social systems (non-state societies, states, even world systems) come in contact, interact and overlap'.²⁶ This duality reflects the necessity of spatializing our understanding of transnational history, for while it is a truism to say that transnational history focuses on cross-border connections, transnational history rarely examines critically *which kind* of 'border' spaces are transnational-processes crossing.

In 2009, Michael G. Müller and Cornelius Torp proposed a pragmatic approach to the issue of space in transnational history. They define 'transnational spaces' as 'historical realities and perceptions of space that, in geographical terms, did not necessarily coincide with the territorial demarcations of given political entities'. But they also make clear that a neat differentiation between territorial notions of space – such as the nation-state – and other 'outer' spaces of interactions would be artificial as well: 'people always acted in multiple geographical realms, and experienced and perceived space accordingly'.²⁷ By adopting space as a functional category, it becomes clear that 'all space is constructed through economic, social, cultural or political movements and interactions', and that space becomes 'meaningful for historical actors only in relation to a specific set of perceptions, interests and strategies, and in a given temporal context'.²⁸ This constructivist understanding of space is far from new, but it allows researchers to render the historical interaction of different conceptions of space visible. Spatial notions are always constructed.

Roland Wenzlhuemer, a specialist on the history of global communication technologies, has gone further in reflecting on space in global history. He agrees that 'our set of research

questions defines the space of observation.²⁹ However, space may not only be the *field* of study, but also the *object* of study. How can we analyse space when investigating issues such as communication, transfers and interactions? Wenzlhuemer argues that 'we will have to employ an abstract, multi-layered and strictly relativistic concept of space.'³⁰ There exist a plurality of spaces and geographic space is only one possible form. Wenzlhuemer proposes 'thinking of space as a theoretically infinite number of spaces defined by our research questions and scientific interest. The nature of relations between the individual objects defines the nature of space – and there are as many possible spaces as there are potential sorts of relationships.'³¹ By reminding us that technologies such as the telegraph or the telephone transformed people's everyday perceptions of distance, he proposes the concept of 'communication space' as a distinctive spatial configuration; other spaces might be 'transport space', 'telephone cost space' and 'transport cost space.'³² Overcoming historians' 'fixation on geographic space' may allow for a deeper understanding of crucial processes such as globalization.

Globalization, as argued by Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, is a 'dialectical process of de- and re-territorialization.'³³ These authors have proposed three new research categories to investigate such processes of spatialization: 'portals of globalization,' 'regimes of territorialisation,' and 'critical junctures of globalization.' What is most interesting here is the first of these categories, 'portals of globalization,' because it directly relates to the problem of space in transnational history. According to Middell and Naumann, 'portals of globalization' are 'those places that have been centres of world trade or global communication, have served as entrance points for cultural transfer, and where institutions and practices for dealing with global connectedness have been developed.'³⁴ The authors suggest that 'research on ports, cities, international trade, handling of exotica (in a variety of places, from museums to restaurants), and immigrant experience offers an approach to "portals of globalization".'³⁵ Yet further exploration and explanation of this interesting conceptual offer is needed.

In another contribution to the ongoing debate on transnational history and space, Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck and Jakob Vogel have advanced the concept of the 'transnational sphere'. Drawing on research on intellectual, professional and philanthropic networks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the authors have argued that the rise of the nation-state came with the emergence of a transnational sphere 'as the space where encounters across national borders took place.'³⁶ 'The transnational sphere materialized in a number of forms [...] international organizations, gatherings of experts, international congresses, publications and journals. International congresses perfectly embody the transnational space.'³⁷ This spatial configuration was distinct from earlier forms of interaction, and it went through different historical phases. The emergence of the transnational sphere took place between the 1840s and the 1870s; the 'heyday of internationalism' marked a second phase until 1914. The third phase was influenced by the League of Nations, which fostered interconnections until the 1930s.³⁸ The transnational sphere can also spatially expand and transform itself into more specific spatial configurations. For instance, historians Esther Möller and Johannes Wishmeyer, focusing on the exchange of information, transfers and communications in the educational sector, have fleshed out the existence of 'transnational educational spaces' that, including educative policies and practices, transcended the nation-state borders.³⁹

Looking at the so-called 'transnational sphere' raises our awareness of transnational *networks* that can also be understood as spaces. In a recent contribution in the field of global

history, Roland Wenzlhuemer has explored the hypothesis that connections may have ‘a time and a space of their own’. In a sense, he *spatializes* the analysis of global connections by taking seriously the analysis of what happens ‘in between’, ‘between the endpoints’. Thus, for example, long-distance ship passages emerge in his analysis as different spatial configurations, ‘as places and times of history-making that had a formative impact on the lives of those on board’.⁴⁰ In this perspective, there is not only a relativistic and constructivist approach to space, but also a change in the scale of analysis, which brings us closer to the other strategy for tackling the problem of space in transnational and global history.

The second approach to the problem of space in transnational history draws on a combination of various scales of analysis (*jeux d'échelles*).⁴¹ Yet the two main approaches to the problem of space in transnational and global history sometimes overlap. Scale in general, both geographical and chronological, is not a new theme in history, but has been recently brought under methodological scrutiny, especially by global and world historians. The shift in scales, from micro-history to supranational units such as continents and oceans, even to very big spatial configurations such as ‘the world’, has contributed to transcending the nation-state as a unit of analysis.⁴²

Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel have carefully reflected on the use of scales in transnational history. Realizing that ‘there is no clear-cut, predefined space in which transnational history takes place’, they propose to rethink spatial relations and dynamics, differentiating different spatial levels. One such level would be, ‘of course, the nation’, but there are more, ranging from a ‘small-scale local or individual level’ to ‘macro regions’, some of which must be considered as ‘polycentric’.⁴³ Although questions of scale are far from new, they maintain that ‘a reflection about the appropriate level and scale of analysis of research in transnational history’ is needed.⁴⁴ In the end, these authors advocate a focus on micro-scales in transnational research, because ‘macro-’ and transnational processes can best be felt at the small, local or individual level.

In his authoritative synthesis of the theory, methodology and practice of transnational history, Pierre-Yves Saunier also deals with the issue of space, and reviews the different methodological options available. He asks: ‘Where is transnational history?’. Saunier explains that the notion of *translocality*, proposed by some historians,⁴⁵ allows us ‘to identify entanglements that do not involve countries, especially in regions where the national state was a latecomer’. Furthermore, borderland studies and the research on oceans as areas of interactions have revealed formations that do not match conventional notions of geographical areas. Despite the prominence of nation-states during the last two centuries, the transnational perspective reveals other configurations of space that shaped human activity. As Saunier reminds us, these formations were also framed by the nation-state. However, we might also study how such transnational formations, in turn, contributed to shaping and transforming the space of the nation-state. Finally, Saunier also locates transnational history in the combination of ‘the big picture view with the study of short- or medium-range circulations, of small and singular places’.⁴⁶ In terms of historiographical practice, Saunier recommends us not only ‘stretching our spatial imagination’ to include ‘small countries’ in our accounts, but also descending to the local level. This means combining different scales of analysis. In addition, Saunier asserts that we ‘need to be alert to other types of spatiality than the kind of continuous, territorial and lasting spatiality we are used to’. These other spatial formations should be built from our research questions: they may be ‘areas’, ‘lines’ or ‘dots’ ‘where we retrace the movement of things or people’.⁴⁷

Similarly to Saunier, in a recent examination of the different strategies to rethinking global space, Sebastian Conrad has argued that 'as important as the quest for alternative spatial units may be, the real challenge consists in shifting between, and articulating, different scales of analysis, rather than sticking to fixed territories.'⁴⁸ There are different options that may be combined in the practice of global history: researching macro-regions and transnational spaces such as oceans; drawing on the methodology of 'following' 'people, ideas and processes wherever they lead'; carrying out network analysis; and paying attention to the local level. However, Conrad reminds us that no unity of analysis is inherently superior, and that the adequate spatial framework varies according to the questions asked.⁴⁹ Different spatial units are complementary, and we ought to be aware of the constructed nature of every territorial configuration. In the quest for new spatial units, we should not reify alternative spaces into another kind of given and self-contained framework: 'The geography of a research project – its spatial units – cannot be the point of departure,⁵⁰ but rather an object of inquiry. Shifting scales between the local and the global becomes crucial if we want to make visible different dimensions of the past, but such different scales of analysis should not be treated as a given either.'⁵¹

Whatever the particularities of the different approaches to space in transnational history, the dominant question that historians want to resolve is: *Where?* However, historical research of space should not be limited to this question. Recently, Susanne Rau has proposed a research agenda on this field that might be also adopted for the transnational perspective. A critical history of space should not be limited to understanding spaces as framework or containers for historical events, even if such frameworks or spatial containers transcend the conventional borders of the nation-state and the mere territorial dimension. Thus, historical research on transnational space should consist of: (a) illuminating the processes of production and construction of spaces; (b) examining cultural practices; (c) identifying differences and relations of co-existence of spatial representations; (d) observing the spatialization and localization of social relations; (e) analysing the spatial self-representations and configurations of groups and societies as well as their consequences; and (f) rendering visible the spatial-temporal transformations of social processes.⁵² Historians, therefore, should not only identify types of spaces and spatial formations, but also study spatial dynamics (emergence, change and dissolution of spaces), spatial perceptions (including memories, representations and mental maps), and spatial practices and uses.⁵³

On the history of territory and territories

Most recently, the spatial category of 'territory' has re-entered historiographical debate with new impetus. Far from just re-territorializing history with nation-state frameworks, scholars have become more aware of the constructed nature of territorial notions. Even territories were constructed transnationally. Jürgen Osterhammel's mammoth book on the nineteenth century has skilfully described the profound spatial transformations of the epoch of the first globalization.⁵⁴ At the time of the last European discoveries, notions of continents and geographical regions – such as 'Eurasia' – were 'invented'. Eurasia was, therefore, a 'space shaped by complex historical processes forming a geocultural context.'⁵⁵ Europe was no exception to the relativity of spatial visions and mental maps of the time. Different visions of Europe emerged and competed during the nineteenth century. At the same time, modern states endeavoured to construct territories as homogeneous and continuous spaces,

dramatically reducing the number of independent political spatial units throughout the world. Borders were reinforced; border *zones* were reduced to border *lines*. Yet there also existed discontinuous social spaces formed by diasporas and mass migrations. In a recent research article, historian Laura Di Fiore, spatializing her analysis of transnational social and cultural practices in nineteenth-century Europe, has demonstrated how borderlands were transnationally constructed: European borderlands can be conceived as ‘trans-state and trans-national regions, mainly linked to the space’s well-established social practices, familial and economic networks and religious experience.’⁵⁶

According to Charles S. Maier, the period between around 1870 and the end of the Cold War was marked by territoriality.⁵⁷ All the articles in this dossier deal with this era, in which new technologies such as telegraphs and railroads facilitated conquest, domination and administration of lands.⁵⁸ Continents and nation-states became coherent units, while European powers drew the borders of their colonial possessions in intense negotiations: ‘The late nineteenth century was obsessed by lines and borders in many realms of life.’⁵⁹ As Sven Beckert has recently demonstrated, the rise of the United States to world-power status, perceived as a danger by the territorially smaller European nation-states, motivated a profound rethinking of the Old Continent’s territoriality, which included visions of ‘Eurafica’ as a desirable territorial unit, and aspirations to pan-European territorial integration.⁶⁰ Later on, the twentieth century saw the rise of geopolitics (a notion coined in 1899) and geopolitical ambition.⁶¹ The different great powers’ spatial practices underpinned world politics during the era of the World Wars and Cold War. History as a discipline in the twentieth century was shaped by this preponderance of power and politics in the contemporaries’ understanding of space. However, in this era, ‘Europe’, in a quasi-territorial sense, was also produced through the development of transnational infrastructure projects.⁶² Transnational phenomena were crucial to the emergence of territorial notions of space.⁶³ Spatializing transnational history allows us to take a more critical and imaginative view, first, on ‘territory’ as a notion, and second, on specific *territories* that have traditionally formed the conventional framework for historical research.

Contributions to spatializing transnational history

By keeping in mind this research agenda, as well as the above described methodological options, the authors of this dossier have taken space into consideration as a crucial category in the fields of transnational, comparative, global and European history. Far from restricting or narrowing their historical perspective on space, the four contributions here assembled showcase the great diversity of approaches available to the task of spatializing transnational history, and the potential of this research line.

Romain Bonnet’s article on the ‘solid Mediterranean’ (*Méditerranée solide*), a notion proposed by Lucien Febvre in the mid-1940s, employs a comparative method to show the dual nature of this spatial configuration. The *Méditerranée solide* is both a contextual and a conceptual space. The notion primarily refers to the so-called ‘Southern question’ in modern Italy and Spain, regions marked by the persistence of great landowners, strong social hierarchies based on land ownership, corruption and political violence. Yet the notion of ‘solid Mediterranean’ is not strictly limited to any fixed geographical demarcation. It offers the lens to observe other spaces and historical phenomena. Moreover, as a historical spatial configuration, it invites historians to unify their methodologies of analysis. The

'solid Mediterranean' must also be understood as a space of observation and as a space of historiographical praxis. Two spatial layers, therefore, the contextual and the conceptual, converge in the notion of 'solid Mediterranean'.

As a heuristic tool, the *Méditerranée solide* allows us to discern key transnational spatial configurations in Southern Europe in the modern era. It demonstrates that profound social and economic structures shared in relatively distant geographical regions within different nation-states, sometimes linked by the space of interaction of the sea and united by common pasts, shape meaningful historical spaces that can be analysed and conceptualized as such. The *Méditerranée solide* was (and is) a historical spatial configuration that included different nation-states and different social and political spaces. However, the *Méditerranée solide* is at the same time a conceptual, intellectual space whose contours cannot easily be defined geographically: the innovations of the French *Annales* School are the best lens to observe the Spanish and Italian (if not also Greek and – by virtue of the relative and flexible nature of space – Portuguese) realities.

Vedran Duancic's article deals with the highly problematic space of the interwar Yugoslav nation-state. By analysing the works of contemporary geographers, Duancic shows the geographic arguments put forward during the interwar period to either legitimize the rise of Yugoslavia as a political entity or challenge such a political spatial configuration. Geography also played a role in justifying different spatial units in the Balkans such as an independent Croatia. Geographers in interwar Yugoslavia, oscillating between the determinism of the German geographical school and the possibilism of French scholars, tried to make sense of the role of mountains, rivers and plains, as well as of position, shape and size, in producing a coherent and homogeneous – or not – nation-state in the Balkans. Especially in the 1930s, Yugoslav geographers were receptive to German geopolitics. Furthermore, Duancic shows how transnational spatial configurations, such as frontier regions, were studied by geographers in their quest for a spatial understanding of Yugoslavia. Comparisons with other countries such as France, and transnational encounters with Polish and Czechoslovak realities, were also crucial in shaping the geographers' discourses.

Nowhere in Europe was the versatility of geography for the construction and legitimation of modern nation-states more apparent than in the case of interwar Yugoslavia. Duancic's article captures the utility of geographical discourse to redrawing borders within the European continent during the twentieth century. The article reminds us that physical realities such as mountains and rivers can operate as dividing lines and borders only if historical actors ascribe such function to them. Social and political spaces, such as the nation-state, are disembedded from geographical space while at the same time being highly dependant on geography. Furthermore, the perception of foreign spatial configurations may play a key role in devising and shaping the political space of new units such as nation-states, autonomous regions and provinces.

Toshiki Kawashima's article analyses a transnational economic space: the Conventional Tariff Network that developed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, not only connecting different European countries between themselves, but also – as Kawashima demonstrates – linking the European continent with far away parts of the world, such as Japan. Combining the perspectives of global history with those of political science and economics, Kawashima challenges the Western-centred common views on European tariff networks. Although Germany became the nodal centre of the European commercial network, Japan's access to the European treaty network during the decade of

1900 constituted a substantial transformation of this economic space. The multiple connections established by Japan in this economic space ensured that Japan kept its commercial contacts with European countries intact even when Germany and Austria-Hungary broke their treaties with Japan on the eve of the First World War.

Eurasia was a geographic notion that gained relevance during the nineteenth century. Kawashima's article reveals the interrelations between the mental map of Eurasia and the realities of a globalizing economic system at the turn of the nineteenth century. The volatility and relativity of spatial notions of centre and periphery in international economic relations becomes most clear in this article. Furthermore, Kawashima's article highlights the constructed and flexible nature of an ideal European space marked by modernity. Japan, the emerging Asian power at the beginning of the twentieth century, was closely connected to mainly European transnational networks for the production of knowledge and trade. Political-economic transnational spaces, such as tariff networks linking Europe with Japan, spanned wide territories and connected countries in a manner that could not be disrupted by changing balances of territorial power. Thanks to a greater awareness of these historical spaces, the role of extra-European countries such as Japan in modern European history may be reassessed.

Abril Liberatori's article on the transnational spaces of Italian Campani migrants shows how many different spatial configurations overlap and interact in the lives of migrants, thereby forming new historical-transnational spaces. Focusing on the experiences of Italian migrants from Campania since 1945, Liberatori traces the connections established between this region of origin and the migrants' destination places in Argentina and Canada. The geographic and social spaces of this community are disembedded, yet at the same time the cultural and social practices of migrants, and especially the factors of language, family, gender practices and memories, contribute to constructing a solid and meaningful transnational space in which migrants live and enact their identities. Thus, the far distant cities of Ontario, Buenos Aires and Naples became nodal points in a transnational spatial configuration, which emerged after the Second World War with the historical process of Italian migration to the Americas.

While today's new technologies clearly contribute to their expansion, the transnational spaces of migrant communities are not a twenty-first century phenomenon. Migrants during the mid-twentieth century, like those Italian Campani who settled in distant places such as Toronto and Buenos Aires, lived their lives in a transnational social and cultural space. This space simultaneously was independent from, and could not exist without, conventional geographies. The culturally and socially meaningful European space of Italian Campania stretched widely beyond borders through mass migration, in a process of interaction between different social and political spatial configurations (Campania and its provinces, and the Italian, Canadian and Argentinean nation-states). Yet laws and regulations issued by both the sending and receiving nation-states decisively shaped the contours of the transnational space of Campani in the Americas. Liberatori's article, by shifting the scales of her analysis and assuming a constructed notion of 'transnational space', makes us aware of the malleability of lived space through the crucial case of migrants, a key historical actor for transnational history.

The four contributions have the common characteristic of proposing different spatial configurations as their objects of study from a transnational, comparative and global perspective on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, while defining the contours and

dimensions of their spaces of analysis, they also take a multiplicity of spatial configurations and scales into account. In this dossier, transnational, comparative and global history are *spatialized* by showing the relativity of space as a historical category: spaces are historically – and transnationally – constructed. A research agenda based on the combination of different scales of analysis, on the adoption of a constructivist and relativist notion of ‘transnational space’, and on the historicization of ‘territory’ allows historians to approach the history of Europe and other regions of the world in a refreshing manner. History not only takes place in a given space; it also *makes* both place and space. Thus, ‘*Méditerranée solide*’, a variety of versions of ‘Yugoslavia’, the transcontinental economic Euro-Japanese space, the fluid Italian Campania of migrants, historically emerged. From time to time, new chronologies proposed by historians may challenge our way of explaining processes of human change over time, but why not be more radical and use our analytical tools to discover historical spaces that in some sense existed, but might still be hidden to our eyes?

Notes

1. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, 78–96.
2. See, for example, Bentley, “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization.” Refocusing historical interpretations from the chronological to the spatial dimension has proved rewarding on some occasions. For instance, the success of Timothy Snyder’s book *Bloodlands* partially lies on its innovative yet controversial redefinition of the geographical space between Germany and Russia. See Diner, “Topography of Interpretation.”
3. For a general introduction see Saunier, *Transnational History*.
4. Iriye, *Global and Transnational History*, 11.
5. Iriye and Saunier, “Introduction,” in Iriye and Saunier, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, xviii.
6. A few recent examples are: García, “Transnational History,” Yun Casalilla, “Transnational History;” The editors, “Across and Beyond.”
7. Patel, “An Emperor without Clothes?,” Hilton and Mitter, “Introduction” to “Transnationalism.”
8. Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn;” Doring and Thielmann, *Spatial Turn*; Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn*.
9. For a retrospective examination, see Campbell, “Space, Place and Scale.”
10. Bloch, “Pour une histoire comparée;” Braudel, *La Méditerranée; Fevre, Le Rhin*. Today, further research on the Mediterranean as a spatial unit is being conducted from new methodological perspectives, as in the ERC-funded project “Mediterranean Reconfigurations: Intercultural Trade, Commercial Litigation, and Legal Pluralism (15th–19th Centuries),” directed by Wolfgang Kaiser (University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne). See also Petri, “The Baltic Sea: A Space of Changing Expectations.”
11. Schlögel, *In Räume lesen wir die Zeit*, 17–78; Middell, “Die konstruktivistische Wende.”
12. See Ben-Nun and Caestecker, “Modern Refugees as Challengers of Nation-State Sovereignty.”
13. It is significant that the Centre for Transnational History (launched in 2009 at the University of St Andrews), one of the several academic institutions devoted to researching and teaching transnational history which emerged during the last few years in Europe, changed its name in September 2014 to become the “Institute for Transnational & Spatial History”; see <http://standrewstransnational.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/home/> (accessed February 20, 2017).
14. For an introduction to historical debates on the idea of Europe see Pagden, *The Idea of Europe*.
15. Patel, “An Emperor without Clothes?” 14.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 15.
18. Pries, *New Transnational Social Spaces*, 4, 8.
19. Albert et al., *Transnational Political Spaces*.

20. Faist and Özveren, *Transnational Social Spaces*, 3–4.
21. Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates*, 181–99.
22. Ley, “Transnational Spaces and Everyday Lives.”
23. Bayly et al., “AHR Conversation,” 1145.
24. Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*; Reinisch, “Introduction: Agents of Internationalism.”
25. Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism;” Saunier, “Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux.”
26. Van der Vleuten and Feys, “Borders and Frontiers in Global and Transnational History,” 31.
27. Müller and Torp, “Conceptualising Transnational Spaces in History,” 612.
28. Müller and Torp, “Conceptualising Transnational Spaces in History,” 613.
29. Wenzlhuemer, “Globalization,” 43.
30. Wenzlhuemer, “Globalization,” 25.
31. Wenzlhuemer, “Globalization,” 27.
32. Wenzlhuemer, “Globalization,” 27.
33. Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 152. Matthias Middell is one of the Principal Investigators of the Collaborative Research Centre ‘Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition’, based at the University of Leipzig.
34. Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 162.
35. Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn,” 162.
36. Rodogno, Struck, and Vogel, *Shaping the Transnational Sphere*, 2.
37. Ibid.
38. Rodogno, Struck, and Vogel, *Shaping the Transnational Sphere*, 7–11.
39. Möller and Wischmeyer, *Transnationale Bildungsräume*.
40. Wenzlhuemer, “The Ship, the Media, and the World,” 165 and 185.
41. Revel, *Jeux d'échelles*.
42. Aslanian, Chaplin, McGrath, and Mann, “AHR Conversation.”
43. Struck, Ferris, and Revel, “Introduction,” 576–7.
44. Struck, Ferris, and Revel, “Introduction,” 579.
45. See Freitag and Oppen, *Translocality*.
46. Saunier, *Transnational History*, 9–11.
47. Saunier, *Transnational History*, 118–21.
48. Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 118.
49. Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 133.
50. Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, 136.
51. Ibid.
52. Rau, *Räume*, 11.
53. Rau, *Räume*, 134.
54. Osterhammel, *Verwandlung*, 129–80.
55. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*, 5.
56. Di Fiore, “The Production of Borders.”
57. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History;” see also Goswami et al., “AHR Conversation.”
58. Maier, *Once within Borders*, 185–232.
59. Maier, *Once within Borders*, 232.
60. Beckert, “American Danger?”
61. Maier, *Once within Borders*, 233–76.
62. Van der Vleuten et al., “Europe’s System Builders.”
63. On the case of Latin America see Gobat, “The Invention of Latin America.”

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Notes on contributor

Ángel Alcalde holds a PhD from the European University Institute (Florence, Italy). He has recently been a Fellow at the Center for the History of Global Development at Shanghai University and a Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellow at LMU Munich. He has been a visiting scholar at the European Institute, Columbia University (New York) and a postdoctoral researcher at the Leibniz Institute for European History (Mainz, Germany). He specializes in the social and cultural history of war in the twentieth century, the history of fascism and transnational history. He has published widely on the history of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. His latest book, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2017.

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