

Constructing *Homo Europaeus* from Inside and Outside the European Continent

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This collection of articles are part of a larger project on the invention of the European run by four German institutes. At the initiative of Kiran Klaus Patel and Veronika Lipphardt (at the time both at Humboldt University in Berlin but in the meantime moved to Maastricht and Freiburg respectively), a research network of cultural historians, anthropologists, and historians of science and technology came together with the aim of exploring the many arenas where the European had been invented – a still ongoing process – and of identifying the many actors involved in that process.¹ In contrast to the rich research on the invention of Europe, which already has a long-standing tradition that functions like an exceptional list of keywords,² the interest in the European has rather recently grown. While there is literature on mythological figures representing Europe, the network that was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for a period of four years was intended to examine more recent processes of how the European was conceived. The University of Leipzig's Centre for Advanced Study, at the time a place for interdisciplinary research on transregional processes,³ was invited by the project leaders to contribute with its expertise on global history and to discuss in particular how the European was invented in non-European areas. Since it is rather difficult to separate

1 As the main publication, see L. Bluche, V. Lipphardt and K. K. Patel (eds), *Der Europäer – ein Konstrukt. Wissensbestände, Diskurse, Praktiken*, Göttingen 2009.

2 This is the idea expressed by Rolf Petri in an article where he inspiringly interprets "Europe" as a file-card box from which keywords and narrative patterns are taken time again and again for recombination: R. Petri, *Europa? Ein Zitatensystem*, in: *Comparativ* 14 (2004) 3, pp. 15-49.

3 The centre was dismantled by the Rectorate of the University of Leipzig at the end of 2008 and the research team had to move to the newly founded Global and European Studies Institute. This resulted in a longer period of uncertainty and institutional fragility, which is one of the reasons for the very late publication of the results from this project.

European and non-European history – at least for the last centuries, given the ever-increasing entanglements between Europe on the one hand and Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania on the other, together with the often brutal interventions of Europeans into the development of other areas as well as the influence on and mobility towards Europe from outside – it seems evident that this construction of the European has to be analysed as an entangled coproduction by many actors from almost everywhere in the world.

Two case studies were selected to address the overall aims of the project on *Homo Europaeus*: Mandy Kretzschmar investigated twentieth-century Australia and its struggle for an identity that was both geographically far away from and mentally very close to Europe.⁴ Klaas Dykmann focused on international organizations as a place where people from many origins come together and form specific organizational cultures but may also weaken the distinction between their origins and characteristics. Focusing on the World Health Organization, he examined an example where Western medicine met the global challenges of stymieing epidemics of all kinds and the lack of resources in many countries to deal with such diseases in a European way – the ideal precondition for a permanent debate on what makes the European unique.⁵

Besides these two case studies, our aim was also to not only bring the participants of all the four groups⁶ a part of the collaborative network together for a workshop but to confront their findings with those from various area studies – ranging from East and South Asian studies to African as well as North and Latin American studies. This workshop was held in late 2009 at the then just inaugurated Centre for Area Studies of the University of Leipzig. Similar to the overall project, the workshop focused on a detailed analysis of the processes that have led to the construction of the European. To insist on such constructedness seems particularly relevant at times when essentialism – which was formerly characteristic of the representation of citizens from individual nations – is somehow transferred onto the European. The more European integration advances and people populating the European Union (EU) identify with Europe instead of or complementary to their nation, the more a legacy of Europeaness is being mobilized to make more or less clear distinctions with any “Other,” which is vaguely defined as the “non-European” and associated with a wide range of connotations. This becomes especially important with increasing mobility – for touristic and professional reasons as well as migration in general – and the resulting multiplication of cultural encounters with that “Other.”

4 Her PhD was defended under the title “Narrating the Other. Cultural Constructions of the European in the Australian Press” (cotutelle between the University of Leipzig and Macquarie University in Sydney, 2012).

5 Following his article in this issue, Klaas Dykmann prepares a monograph on the global health organization in its capacity to negotiate different concepts of medical treatment and to adjust to the manifold preconditions for its application when confronted with pandemics.

6 The two groups at Humboldt University’s History Department (Kiran Klaus Patel, Veronika Lipphardt) and its Institute of European Ethnology under the leadership of Stefan Beck, whose premature death during a visit to Australia in 2015 was a shock for all the participants of the project, and Leonore Scholze-Irritz – also comprising Susanne Bauer, Stephan Gabriel Haufe, and Christine Kleiber-Bischof – were complemented by a group based at Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich led by Hellmuth Trischler and consisting of Paul Erker, Nikola Schmidt and Markus Speidel, as well as the above-mentioned people in Leipzig.

While contacts within Europe often mobilize the remains of former nationalisms, contact in the global arena strengthens the self-identification of the “European.” Historical investigation helps us to understand the legacies that are mobilized in these past and current processes. Identification processes contain many of these overlapping legacies and it is through their advancement that legacies that are still alive and seem useful to certain actors for their present purposes become visible.

When reading contributions to the workshop on today’s nutrition and biopolitical regimes – which was the focus area of the Berlin Institute of European Ethnology together with those on colonial medicine by Manuela Bauche, who defended her PhD on malaria control both in Germany and German colonies in Central and East Africa recently at the University of Leipzig – we become aware of (obviously politically incorrect) continuities as well as of the rearrangement of arguments for new contexts and users. Global commodity and value chains are quite different from colonial imperialism, but they are nevertheless characterized by hierarchical relations and patterns of massive exploitation often legitimized by discourses about the difference between the European and the “Other.”

Considering the construction of the European, it is not easy to say when it began. One could argue that ancient Greeks already used the figure of Europe to distinguish themselves from their opponents in Asia Minor; however, we should avoid any linear story from there to the current discourses about the European as there were too many phases of complete disinterest in a distinct Europeaness, especially at times of Christian Universalism emerging slowly at the end of the Roman Empire and lasting for more than eight centuries.⁷ What followed were two periods of particular importance with regard to the construction of the European: during the Enlightenment, the idea of civilization – and the corresponding topos of the non-civilized populating areas outside Europe – became a defining element,⁸ with the then introduced historicism⁹ making civilization a product of progressing human development, thus the perfectibility of man as the ultimate goal of that development. But this partial redefinition of the European in Europe itself happened at times of very intensified contact with people from other continents. Global conflicts and expanding communication¹⁰ went hand in hand with a re-evaluation of Asia and especially China,¹¹ which a century before was undisputed as being relevant for European elites, as Timothy Brook has shown with regard to the taste of Dutch merchants for Chinese products.¹²

7 Petri, *Europa?* (note 2), p. 19–21.

8 H.-J. Lüsebrink (ed.), *Das Europa der Aufklärung und die außereuropäische koloniale Welt*, Göttingen 2006.

9 For a well argued redefinition of historicism as the product of enlightened philosophy: R. Blänkner, *Geschichte und Geschehen. Zur Historizität der „Geschichte“ als Wissensform*, in: F.W. Graf/E. Hanke/B. Picht (eds), *Geschichte intellektuell. Theoriegeschichtliche Perspektiven*, Tübingen 2015, S. 38–55.

10 M. Middell (ed.), *Cultural Transfers, Encounters and Connections in the Global 18th Century*, Leipzig 2014.

11 J. Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert*, München 1998.

12 T. Brook, *Vermeer’s hat. The seventeenth century and the dawn of the global world*, London 2009.

The second period, starting in the early nineteenth century but reaching its apogee only at the end of the same century, was even more characterized by the idea of a huge difference between the European – undisputed in a historically exceptional world superiority – and the “Others.” That period had for a long list of interpreters its material basis in the “European miracle” (Eric Jones),¹³ which gave rise to the idea of a civilizing mission that was attributed to Europeans.¹⁴ The experience of Europeans travelling to all corners of the world was one of military superiority due to the mastering of an industrial process of arms production. It was an experience that resulted in genocidal wars and the phantasm of Europeans settling in empty spaces like the American West or Australia and New Zealand. Overseas colonial domination and the new patterns of mass society – and the emerging welfare state – went hand in hand, thereby deepening the impression of a substantial difference not only in the living conditions in Europe and in other parts of the world but in the essence of what Europeans are and what the “Others” are.

This period ended definitively with World War I,¹⁵ with the Europeans having to reorient themselves in a world that became increasingly dominated by the US and challenged by its opponent: the Soviet Union. The identification with a larger West, seen as fundamentally European (at least European in origin), and the distinction from an East, whose population was more and more excluded from a core understanding of the European, worked pretty well during the Cold War and has most recently seen some trends of renewal with the crisis around the question of Ukraine’s future position towards “Europe.” This will for sure not be the last chapter of a redefinition of the European, which we can already conclude from the current debate about the refugees coming to Europe from Syria, Afghanistan, and other places of conflicts that were products of Western intervention. This encounter with global mobility makes the strong identification between space and people more and more problematic. It is no longer the Europeans primarily reaching out to various parts of the world but it is now at least to the same degree the world’s population coming to Europe. This introduces again new conditions for the construction of the European while new chapters in that ongoing process of writing the identity of the “European” have just been opened and we can look forward to – or even participate in – that debate.

All in all, what made our predecessors European was an immense collection of practices – starting with migration to the small continent at the northwestern end of Asia already in prehistorical times and evidently not ending with very recent claims for European citi-

13 E. L. Jones, *The European miracle. Environments, economies, and geopolitics in the history of Europe and Asia*, Cambridge, New York 1981. More recent research, however, disputes more and more openly the uniqueness of such a miracle and uses the metaphor against its original meaning to insist on the path dependency of what is by some ironically called “the great divergence”: J. Goody, *The Eurasian miracle*, Cambridge, Malden 2010; K. Sugihara, *The European Miracle and the East Asian Miracle: Towards a New Global Economic History*, in: K. Pomeranz (ed.), *The Pacific in the Age of Early Industrialization*, Farnham 2009, pp. 1–22.

14 B. Barth/J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz 2005.

15 For the reasons of that decline, see with a focus on American hegemony in global finance specifically J. A. Tooze, *The deluge. The Great War and the remaking of global order 1916–1931*, London, New York 2014.

zenship and a common passport for all Europeans. Kiran Klaus Patel examined the fact, and the associated consequences, that people inhabiting “Europe” have been addressed as “Europeans” only for a relatively short period of time, at least much shorter than the term Europe has been in use. Are the “Europeans” a product of very recent political integration processes aiming at the production of EU citizens, or do we have to go back to the times when Frankish and Burgundian forces – called “Europenses” by some contemporaries – fought Islamic expansion into Europe during the Battle of Tours in 732, an event that was interpreted later as a turning point in the history of the continent’s identification with Christianity.

Patel argues that even in early modern times – a period of discovery and intensified encounters – Europeaness did not become a central reference point. The slow introduction of the term “European” was an effect of related processes of territorialization at home, invasion of the territories of the “Others,” and identification of people with territory instead of religion or culture. Attributes like race or ethnic origin, civilization, and language became territorialized, which was the decisive precondition for the semantic stabilization of a terminology that allowed for a distinction of Europeans from other people. This stabilization met with attempts to systematize the descriptive outcome of travel and observation during the period of Enlightenment (as did Linné with the term *Homo Europaeus*). Even so, according to Patel it is only since the nineteenth century that the “European” became a category meaningful for more than a few educated people interested in taxonomies.

What is interesting in the subsequent processes of social construction of Europeans is, however, not their assumed ubiquity but, on the contrary, the concrete circumstances, the actors, their motivations and interests, the implications and effects, as well as the persistence of such constructions. And since the term “European” covers many such constructions, it may also be of interest to look behind the surface and to reconstruct which encounter or perception was at the origin of the specific European imagined under certain circumstances – did they come from the Balkans or from the British Isles, did they have military uniforms or have they shown up first as prisoners, etc. While this will not help to overcome the vagueness that is characteristic of the category of the European, it may support efforts to distinguish historically different types of Europeans intervening in the lives of others and making their careers in different corners of the world.

What becomes visible in this manner is the coalescence of Europeaness with other characteristics – be it social, geographic, religious, or ethnic – which makes the European plural and polyvalent. All this flexibility in the use of the term is taken for granted, which Patel alluded to in the end of his article with a question that became ever more relevant over the recent years with increasing migration to the EU: “Is it possible for a person of a completely different ethnic, cultural, or geographical background to ‘become’ European?” The answer – as provisional as it can be right now with the current crisis around the topic of refugees still ongoing – reads rather sceptically. There is obviously enormous resistance already to open up to the “new Europeans” from states having joined the EU more the ten years ago while exclusionist patterns towards Eastern Europeans, Turks, or

people from the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea are on the rise to such a degree that even second- or third-generation immigrants see their Europeaness disputed at times of political crisis as reactions to the recent terrorist attacks in France have shown. Debora Gerstenberger opens the series of case studies with the very special case of the Portuguese court being transferred from what was the centre of one of the most powerful European empires to its Brazilian outpost in Rio de Janeiro at the moment when Napoleon's troops invaded the Iberian Peninsula. What happened to the 15,000 Europeans (aristocratic elites, bureaucrats, and servants) on the other side of the Atlantic? How much Europeaness was still possible in the tropics? And how was the other perceived when it no longer lived "overseas" but was very close by? These questions were not only of relevance to the community of unfortunate travellers fleeing the revolutionary ghost of militarized Jacobinism at the beginning of the nineteenth century but also for subsequent national histories in both Portugal and Brazil, which interpreted the court in Rio as a "huge laboratory of civilization" where constructing and policing the difference between European and non-Europeans became a challenge of so far unknown complexity and in the end not accepted as being successful by the Portuguese elites who asked the king to return to Lisbon after the liberal revolution in 1821.¹⁶

Michael Mann joins Debora Gerstenberger in analysing the colonial context and investigates the British civilizing mission in South Asia as one of the most powerful sources of inspiration for the invention of the European and its counterparts. These examples demonstrate that social constructions are discursive practices but are not only limited to speech acts. Processes of standardization concerning certain characteristics of the "average European" result in models as highlighted by the contributions to this thematic issue by Manuela Bauche (comparing German and African places in the fight against malaria), Veronika Lipphardt (discussing the role of life sciences in the invention of the European), and Mathias Mesenhöller (with regard to racist concepts or biomedical indicators), or as Paul Erker shows in his article when looking at crash test dummies used in the car industry. Situations are as different as the German colonial empire in parts of Africa before 1918, the classificatory power of migratory regimes that gave (among many other effects) birth to the European as a particular category of migrant, and modern technologies that help to reduce the risk of illness or accident.

Mandy Kretzschmar visits Australia as a former settler colony where negotiations of the future of the white Australians' European past go hand in hand with the debate over the role of Aborigines in Australian nation-building. Dominic Sachsenmaier, in contrast, looks at China and evaluates the standards by which Chinese intellectuals measured their experiences with Europeans between the seventeenth and the early twentieth century. The diachronic comparison in his case shows that in the beginning there was a situation where even those Chinese authors who accepted Europeans as being of similar or even superior character than Chinese were able to stay within the framework of a Confucian

16 See also D. Gerstenberger, *Gouvernementalität im Zeichen der globalen Krise. Der Transfer des portugiesischen Königshofes nach Brasilien*, Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau 2013.

language. Two centuries later, an intense debate confronted those who argued in favour of “adapting modernity” by following European standards and the Japanese model with those who advocated profound reform on the basis of traditional moral standards. What was at stake in this discussion is the role of universalism as the basis for cultural learning and what the author can demonstrate is the dissolution of such universal standards already long before the European was replaced by the American in Chinese imaginaries as the role model for the particularly successful actor in world history.

Europe has often been presented as the place where international agreements and international organizations first came into existence and then expanded into the global sphere they organize today. But this underestimates the role of competing agreements elsewhere that express a different understanding of the matter to be regulated as Isabella Löhr demonstrates with regard to the difficulties Europeans faced when trying to universalize their idea of authorship as a global standard. Developed and expanded since the eighteenth century against the background of the idea of individual creativity to be protected by copyright, it turned into a binding international agreement with the Berne Convention in 1886. Efforts were made to spread the European regime to other world regions, which they were successful in doing with the exception of North and South America, refusing for various reasons to grant European authors far-reaching rights. It came to the fore that the European solution reflected not only a particular European philosophical and legislative tradition but also a particular advantage of its cultural industries over (especially the South) American ones. The idea of the writing genius being the proper owner of the cultural product gained further importance in the development of different models of capitalism when applied to inventions made by engineers. Despite global agreements after World War II, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization founded in 1967, the writing genius, focused upon and protected by specific copyright regulations, remained a European and this had long-lasting consequences on his self-perception and relationship to concepts of creativity.

This leads directly to the problematic addressed by Klaas Dykmann in his contribution, asking whether an idealized European man was at the origin of concepts of international organizations (IO). He analyses the consequences of such a hypothesis with regard to the norms and values set for bureaucracies such as the international civil service, to the conceptualization of people targeted by IOs such as the World Health Organization, and to the ideological foundations such as those expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In all three cases briefly introduced, he comes to the conclusion that the European is of the utmost importance in creating a benchmark for IOs, making the Western *Homo bureaucraticus* the role model for all their employees and making the European feel at home more than other people in these organizations. This is not to say that non-Europeans are not recruited; rather, it is quite the contrary. Nevertheless, they are more accepted the more they follow the role model dominating the organization. This has substantial consequences not only for the internal functioning of the organizations but also for their perception of the challenges they have been created to address,

be it health or development, famine or labour conditions, or statistics or environmental issues.

Susanne Bauer and Christine Kleiber-Bischof take a closer look at another production site where the European is conceived: research centres on nutrition and health. First, these centres produce the European – often implicitly – as a statistical figure within their thousands of studies and compare the knowledge generated with data about other people around the world. As a consequence, they then address him or her as an object of intervention. The European organization of research (funding) facilitates both processes; however, the creation of global consortia funded by institutions inside and outside the EU reintroduces confusion, which is observable in Mathias Mesenhöller's discussion of categories applied to immigrants since the late nineteenth century. As a result, the striving for ever bigger data sets conflicts with the argument that pooling all data into one global mega-study would destroy any possibility of falsifying the results from competing studies – difference is presented as a resource and the European with his/her regionally specific dietary habits seem to be exactly different enough for these purposes. This is also confirmed with Paul Erker's analysis of crash test dummies in the automotive industry – European standardization replaces step by step traditional national models. Additionally, in car production we observe that with computer simulation there is a countertrend of re-individualization as well. Europeanization here remains a side effect due to doubts in the universal liability of data provided by US companies. For the needs of an industry that produces at a global scale and for very individual users, the European, however, is not of primary importance.

As we can see from these examples, the debate about the European has a history – even when not as long as Europe – and it is still ongoing. Its importance stems from the fact that it helps to introduce distinctions from other people in the world for various purposes and to open an umbrella of a heterogeneity-characterizing people across the European continent. It can therefore be used as an indicator for further integration or disintegration at home and for repositioning in global contexts.