



Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte

Begriffe, Methoden und Debatten der zeithistorischen Forschung

Global History

by Dominic Sachsenmaier

Introduction

"Global history" refers to a wide range of research approaches that are typically characterized by a rising interest in alternative conceptions of space beyond methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism. It builds on a multitude of detailed research projects in all branches of historiography, ranging from economic history to cultural history and from gender history to environmental history. Unlike in the case of intellectual movements such as subaltern studies or world systems theory, global history did not emerge from a core political agenda or societal commitment. Rather, it rose to significance as a rather diffuse – and initially often unnoticed – research trend across a wide variety of research communities.

Since this trend is thus inherently connected with local history, it would be tempting to conclude that "most historians are global historians. The problem is that they don't know it yet."¹ Yet when identifying an intellectual trend, it would be hardly convincing to equate global history with the state of the art of historiography at large. The days in which representatives of a *histoire totale* could claim their field to be the integrative queen of the social sciences,² are gone. Global history as a larger trend is far away from aspiring to become a great synthesis, even though individual scholars may indeed see it as the final edifice built by masses of historians' labor. As an academic transformation, it is far less and thus at the same time far more than the sum of historiography in its current state of the art. For instance, global history excludes the wide range of studies that stay confined to more established conceptions of space, even though many of these may well indirectly contribute to expanding the frontiers of border-crossing research.

The term "global history" has spread across many different world regions and languages. For example, in Chinese the rather recently coined term *quanqiu lishi* has become more common, and the same has been the case with the Japanese *gurobaru reikishi*,

1 Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World. Global Connections and Comparisons, 1780-1914*, Oxford 2004.

2 About *histoire totale* see the "classic" study by Traian Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm*, Ithaca 1976. It should be mentioned that the *histoire totale* operated with flexible conceptions of space and dimensions of reality that were commonly applied to the same object of study, see Roger Chartier, *Le monde comme représentation*, in: *Annales E.S.C.* 44 (1989), 6, pp. 1505-1520.

the Spanish *historia global*, as well as the German *Globalgeschichte*. In many countries, academic historiography has witnessed an increasing number of academic scholarly awards, conferences, and other professional activities devoted to "global history". For example, universities ranging from the Chinese University of Hong Kong to Tufts University and Jacobs University in Bremen/Germany have begun to establish graduate programs in the field of "global history". Other campuses, for instance in Osaka, Vienna, or Stony Brook, have established research centers or lecture series that are specifically dedicated to global history. Several book series and journals have been launched that focus either entirely on global history or certain aspects of it.³ In addition, scholarly associations have been founded that refer prominently to the term "global history". This is for example, the case with *New Global History*, which was founded at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology during the late 1990s, and the European Network in Universal and Global History (ENIUGH), which came into being a few years later. Furthermore, major scholarly associations have begun to operate with the expression "global history" or closely related terminological derivatives. For instance, in 2009 the American Historical Association's annual convention met under the guiding theme "Globalizing History", and a few years before the proceedings of the quinquennial "International Congress of Historical Sciences" were published under the title "Making Sense of Global History".⁴ In March 2009, "global history" generated about 700.000 hits in a regular Google search and thus already more than 20 percent of the entire amount of entries found for a term such as "cultural history", which entered mainstream historiography at least two decades before.

Particularly during the past one or two decades, many fields of historical inquiry have witnessed a growing momentum towards exploring largely uncharted territories across and beyond "nations", "continents", and other specifically modern ways of framing the past. This has been, for example, the case with the spectrum of research subsumable under "cultural history" as well as with the equally complex landscapes of "political history". Some aspects of these changes can be seen as structurally or conceptually "new", whereas others clearly continue earlier forms of scholarship. The diversity of this research environment is reflected in the fact that "global history" as an addition to the historian's vocabulary carries a wealth of meanings and contents both within and across different linguistic communities.

The matter is greatly complicated by the divergent approaches to global history in different parts of the world. Despite global flows of knowledge, exchanges of concepts, and the rising importance of transnational cooperation, local particularities continue to condition the fields of scholarly activities subsumed under "global history". The spe-

3 Cf. for example the "Journal of Global History" published by Cambridge University Press since 2006; "Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung" published in Leipzig, Germany since 1991, and the journal „Quanqiu lishi [5168?][7403?][5386?][53F2?]" [Global History] published in Beijing since 2007. An example for a book series is the American Historical Association's series "Essays on Global and Comparative History" and the German book series "Globalgeschichte" (Campus publishers).

4 Solvi Sogner (ed.), *Making Sense of Global History*, Oslo 2001. The International Committee of Historical Sciences is an umbrella organization for national history associations, and it was founded by Woodrow Wilson in 1926. See <http://www.cish.org> (01.02.2010).

cific facets and patterns of the field are contingent upon peculiar modes of historical memory, disciplinary traditions, political factors as well as its surrounding intellectual environments. In addition, the main thrust of global historical research within a specific academic community needs to be also understood from its institutional settings. For example, in China a new generation of historians often associates "global history" with attempts to break through academic traditions of separating the study of Chinese history categorically from world history.⁵ And in Germany the interest in "Globalgeschichte" rose together with a growing consciousness about non-Western history being utterly underrepresented in history departments.⁶ Since it is not possible to simultaneously cover the worldwide extent of global history and its intricate patterns within single languages and academic systems, this entry will focus primarily on Anglophone scholarship.

"Global History": Terminology and research fields

In the English-speaking world, the term "global history" seems to have first appeared in publication titles in 1962.⁷ The first usages of the term "global history" need to be understood in the context of the academic debates on new, less Eurocentric forms of world history. Yet the key terms in these intellectual conflicts remained expressions such as "world history" or "Western civilization".⁸ The situation only changed around the time of the end of the Cold War when a number of scholars started promoting the expression "global history" as a particular approach to studying the past.⁹ As the popularity of the term "global history" grew during the early 1990s, there were first attempts to narrow down the meaning of "global history" to a clearly designated area of inquiry.¹⁰ For example, in the eyes of scholars like Bruce Mazlish and Raymond Grew the term was supposed to demarcate a new research field focusing on processes of globalization (as well as their historical antecedents) after the end of the Second World War.¹¹ Yet,

5 See Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Debates on World History and Global History. The Neglected Parameters of Chinese Approaches*, in: *Traverse. Zeitschrift für Geschichte – Revue d'histoire* 40 (2007), 3, pp. 67-84.

6 Readers and essay collections published in German are Margarete Grandner/Dietmar Rothermund/Wolfgang Schwentker (eds.), *Globalisierung und Globalgeschichte*, Vienna 2005, and Sebastian Conrad/Andreas Eckert/Ulrike Freitag (eds.), *Globalgeschichte. Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*, Frankfurt a. M. 2007 (containing a high proportion of English articles translated into German). A milestone in global historical scholarship published in Germany is: Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 2009.

7 Hans Kohn, *Age of Nationalism. The First Era of Global History*, New York 1962, and Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *A Global History of Man*, Boston 1962. Kohn's work expounds on an alleged dichotomy between Western/secular and Eastern/mythical forms of nationalism whereas Stavrianos wrote a textbook narrative depicting the entire past of human kind.

8 See Katja Naumann/Matthias Middell, *Institutionalisierung der Lehre in Welt- und Globalgeschichte in Deutschland und den USA – ein Vergleich*, in: *Comparativ* 16 (2006), 1, pp. 78-121.

9 Many positions are being articulated in Bruce Mazlish/Ralph Buultjens (eds.), *Conceptualizing Global History*, Boulder 1993.

10 See for example Bruce Mazlish/Ralph Buultjens (eds.), *Conceptualizing Global History*, Boulder 1993.

11 A good overview of this position is presented in Bruce Mazlish/Akira Iriye, *Introduction*, in: idem (eds.), *The Global History Reader*, New York 2005, pp. 1-15.

the usage of the term "global history" quickly outgrew this and any other attempt to link it to a specific research agenda. It might be tempting to try alternative definitions of "global history" but a look at the current literature reveals that the commonalities between publications referring to "global history" are rather thin. For example, there is no consensus about the time periods the field is supposed to cover: while some scholars would be adamantly opposed to applying the term to the 19th century or even the period before the Second World War, other works entitled "global history" refer exclusively to the ancient world.¹² There is equally little consensus about the amounts of space and time global history should be dealing with. Whereas some scholars opine that the macroscopic spatial category of the "globe" can only aptly be filled with the entire human past as an equally large frame of historical time, others investigate much shorter time periods and regional sample cases under the guise of "global history".

Due to such complex research landscapes, it is also not possible to categorically distinguish global history from field designations such as [transnational history](#), international history, or world history, particularly since these fields have undergone significant pluralization processes and reform movements. As a consequence, many influential scholars and journals use "global history" interchangeably with other terms. It may make sense to stick to distinctions between various field designations, but this is only possible without claiming any kind of disciplinary exclusivity.

Some scholars like Patrick O'Brien conclude that "comparisons and connections are the dominant styles of global history".¹³ In fact, changes in the comparative method have led to a greater rapprochement between comparative history and transfer studies, and this impact could also be felt in global historical work. For example, in a groundbreaking study Kenneth Pomeranz demonstrated that the bulk of literature on European economic history frequently refers to the continent *in toto* even though these studies are usually based upon relatively small, privileged regions.¹⁴ The latter were usually single areas with high economic productivity, most notably – for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – England, the Netherlands, and some other limited parts of Northwestern Europe. While it may be accurate to understand these areas as the centers and nodes of larger economic flows, it certainly does not match reality to depict regions such as England as typical for the entire continent. In many regards it is also not quite adequate to treat them as the center of a European nexus. Pomeranz' and other scholars' arguments injected new perspectives into long intellectual traditions of

12 Using the new keyword, histories of human kind at large, long-term developments, single centuries, decades, or even single years have been written. For example, Jerry Bentley/Herbert F. Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters: A Brief Global History*, New York 2008; Felicity Nussbaum (ed.), *The Global 18th Century*, Baltimore 2003; Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*; Gerald L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms. A Global History of World War II*, Cambridge 1995; David Reynolds, *One World Divisible. A Global History since 1945*, New York 2000; and John E. Wills, *1688: A Global History*, London 2002.

13 Patrick O'Brien, *Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History*, in: *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006), 1, pp. 3-39.

14 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton 2000. *Deconstructing "Europe" and "Asia" as geographical entities in order to break with myths of Western exceptionalism: Robert Allen/Tommy Bengtsson/Martin Dribe (eds.), Living Standards in the Past. New Perspectives on Well-Being in Asia and Europe*, Oxford 2005.

explaining the origins of the industrial revolution which emerged or at least unfolded within much wider, trans-continental economic contexts.¹⁵ As a result of such new and daring conceptions of historical space that are partly emanating from new comparative perspectives, European economic history starts to look more like an amalgam of spatial configurations than a solid geohistorical entity.

Generally speaking, in the field of economic history, the word "global" has become one of the main terms to connote scholarly efforts to conceptualize macroscopic economic transformations with visions transcending nation- or Western-centered biases. Compared with the status quo of economic history a generation ago, single explanatory frameworks into which allegedly all local cases can be fitted, have become less influential.¹⁶ A wealth of new translocal case studies contributed to challenging the belief in the possibility of holistic approaches to global economic history. This ate into the influence of single macroscopic theories such as world systems theory and derivative approaches. For instance, detailed research has shed new light on the highly divergent ways in which economies outside the West were positioned within translocal networks of exchanges.¹⁷ Furthermore, many studies pointed to the limited scope of the European system by highlighting large economic formations that did not involve the "West".¹⁸ Most notably, there has been a growing presence of the idea that the combined effects of regional and global factors can unfold economic patterns in various parts of the world which are significantly different from each other.¹⁹ As part of a reinvigorated criticism of Eurocentric and state-centered preconceptions, the field of economic history has seen a growing presence of studies operating in alternative dimensions of space – for example by putting groups or processes operating across political boundaries into the spotlight. For instance, recent years have witnessed a flourishing of studies on merchant networks as well as, more generally, on the social and political formations underlying transregional trade.²⁰ Furthermore, there have been efforts to investigate multinational corporations and earlier trans-local trade organizations not only in terms of their economic impact, but also with regard to their social and cultural entangle-

15 For instance: Patrick O'Brien, *The Foundations of European Industrialization: From the Perspective of the World*, in: José Casas Pardo (ed.), *Economic Effects of the European Expansion, 1492-1824*, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 463-502.

16 See for example Michael D. Bordo/Allan M. Taylor/Jeffrey G. Williamson (eds.), *Globalization in Historical Perspective*, Chicago 2003.

17 See for example Kenneth Pomeranz, *Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China, and the Global Conjecture*, in: *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), pp. 425-446; and Paul Bairoch, *Victoires et déboires. Histoire économique et sociale du monde de XVI^e siècle à nos jours*, vol. 3, Paris 1997.

18 The most important study in this context has been Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: the World System, 1250-1350*, Oxford 1989. See also Takeshi Hamashita, *The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia*, in *Memoirs of the Research Department Toyo Bunko* 46 (1988), pp. 7-25.

19 For example, Kaoru Sugihara, *The East Asian Path of Economic Development. A Long-Term Perspective* in: Giovanni Arrighi/Mark Selden (eds.), *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Years Perspectives*, London 2003, pp. 78-123.

20 Examples are: Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1759-1947. Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge 2000 and James Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, Cambridge 1990.

ments.²¹

Another research field discussing how geographically distant communities came to be involved in economic networks, is the history of commodities. By analyzing the changing locations, modes of production, trade routes as well as markets for commodities, historians offer insights into the social and cultural consequences triggered by the globalization of trade. For example, in a study on the global dynamics and implications of sugar trade, Sidney Mintz discusses the interconnections between several seemingly distant historical arenas, ranging from the forced migration of Africans to the New World and its socio-cultural consequences to the effects of cheaply available sugar in parts of Europe since the 18th century.²² Additional studies have added a wealth of new insights into the effects of globalizing sugar trade on regional markets and local societies.²³ Other global commodities have equally been researched from global and translocal perspectives – examples are salt, cod, spices, and cotton which all connected the social, economic and cultural histories of different locales into a nexus of entanglements and crossed influences.²⁴

As evidenced by these examples, the global trend in historiography helped encourage stronger levels of cooperation between economic and other historians. This was facilitated by the fact that many other branches of historiography had also experienced increasing levels of interest in spatial configurations, which a generation ago had still been quite unusual. A case in point is the wide spectrum of research that is often subsumed under "social history". For instance, in recent decades scholars moved the study of migrant communities closer to the spirit of global and transnational studies and hence to research agendas that no longer took nation states as central units of analysis.²⁵ Many researchers from a variety of fields have come to regard transnational migrant communities as distinct social spaces characterized by particular identities, public spheres, and patterns of citizenship.²⁶ Yet as Nina Glick Schiller points out, such new perspectives on transnational communities carry the danger of replacing methodological nationalism with methodological transnationalism, i.e. research perspectives

21 See for example Bruce Mazlish/Alfred Chandler (eds.), *The New Leviathans. Multinational Corporations and the New Global History*, Cambridge 2005 and Shigeru Akita (ed.), *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History*, New York 2002.

22 Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, London 1985.

23 Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology and the World Market*, Cambridge 1998.

24 For example Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*, New York 2002; Sven Beckert, *Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War*, in: *American Historical Review* 109 (2004), 5, in: <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/109.5/beckert.html> (01.02.2010); Andrew Dalby, *Dangerous Taste: The Story of Spices*, UC Press 2001 and Steven Topik/Carlos Marichal/Zephyr Frank (eds.), *From Silver to Cocaine. Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000*, Durham 2006.

25 See for example Nina Glick Schiller, *Transnationality*, in: David Nugent/Joan Vincent (eds.), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, Malden 2004, pp. 448-467; Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Durham 1999.

26 This often changes national tropes significantly – see for example Robin Kelley, *But a Local Phase of a World Problem: Black History's Global Vision*, in: *Journal of American History* 86 (1999), 3, pp.1045-1077.

that focus on single diasporic communities while neglecting a wide range of entanglements with other societies.²⁷ It is for such reasons that an increasing number of scholars now conceptualize diasporic formations less as seemingly autochthonous social spaces but rather as communities that are tightly intertwined with other groups, ranging from their home countries and host societies to other transnational communities.²⁸

Reaching beyond the study of diasporic structures in a narrower sense, some social historians have also come to study other migration patterns like forced relocation and temporal migration such as in the case of workers. A specific case is the study of labor movements which had its origins in the 19th century and, centered on the study of Western industrial labor, had long been characterized by strong Eurocentric biases.²⁹ During the past few decades, the conceptual geographies in the study of labor have greatly changed from the nation- and Europe-centered visions that had dominated it during the past. In this context, it is neither possible nor necessary to map out all the intricacies of this rapidly evolving research field; it is sufficient to shed light on some general tendencies that were all relevant for the rising importance of new kinds of global historical perspectives. Firstly, there has been a strong tendency to relativize the Western experience in the history of labor and no longer regard it as the core of more universal paths and patterns. Generally speaking, the field had long only paid scant attention to agricultural labor, unfree labor, and other forms of work that did not seem to fit neatly into the supposed standard frame of the industrial workforce.³⁰ Influenced by a variety of intellectual currents like subaltern studies, movements such as the New Labor History³¹ have become much more attentive to the multifaceted and often locally specific forms of free and forced labor, remuneration, contractual work, or mass recruitment.³² The field came to be characterized by a stronger cooperation with other areas of research ranging from colonial history and the history of slavery to Third World Studies. Moreover, since the study of labor history became more prominent outside of Western societies in the aftermath of the decolonization period, the field has seen a large number of international research projects involving scholars from different parts of the world.³³

Similar or even closely related efforts can also be observed in other fields of study that can be grouped under the umbrella of social history. Perhaps most significantly,

27 Nina Glick Schiller, *Transnational Social Fields and Imperialism: Bringing a Theory of Power to Transnational Studies*, in: *Anthropological Theory* 5 (2005), 4, pp. 439-461, p. 442.

28 A good overview of the field is provided by Adam McKeown, *Global Migration, 1846-1940*, in: *Journal of World History* 15 (2004), 2, pp. 155-189, and Gungwu Wang (ed.), *Global History and Migrations*, New Haven 1997. See also Ian Skoggard/Carol R. Ember/Melvin Ember (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, New York 2004.

29 Jan Lucassen, *Writing Global Labor History, c. 1800-1940. A Historiography of Concepts, Periods and Geographical Scope*, in: idem. (ed.), *Global Labor History. A State of the Art*, Bern 2006, pp. 39-89.

30 See for example Chris A. Bayly, *Writing World History*, in: *History Today* 54 (2004), 2, pp. 36-40.

31 See David Brody, *Reconciling the Old Labor History and the New*, in: *Pacific Historical Review* 62 (1993), pp. 1-18.

32 See Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, Leiden 2008 and Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labor History*.

33 Marcel van der Linden, *The "Globalization" of Labour and Working Class History and its Consequences*, in: Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labor History*, pp. 13-36.

this is the case with women's and gender history that for a long time was an endeavor with only few transnational historical activities. Yet in recent years, this situation has changed, and several textbooks, trade books, and academic series discussing gender-related issues from global historical perspectives have appeared on the market.³⁴ As in the case of economic history and labor history, also in gender studies the search for new spatial parameters was tied to a growing distrust in the idea that historians could apply allegedly "universal" concepts to a wide variety of contexts. Most importantly, many scholars increasingly abandoned the idea of gender as a fixed category and instead conceptualized it as a product of constructs and interferences from a large array of social, political, and cultural forces operating at both a local and a translocal level. As part of this shift towards greater conceptual complexity, the number of historians interested in thinking about gender issues in spaces across and beyond national or regional boundaries grew significantly larger.³⁵ This trend has opened up a plethora of fascinating and important questions that gender history needed to address as it granted more attention to the diversity of local experiences. Postcolonial and other criticism heightened sensitivities to such questions as whether the categories used by gender and feminist historians in the West are often characterized by hegemonic assumptions about the Third World and do not pay due attention to the heterogeneity of sociocultural experiences and modes of societal interaction.³⁶ There has been growing pressure to abandon stereotyped visions of women in many non-Western societies as oppressed and passive victims awaiting liberation through supposedly more advanced societies.³⁷ Generally speaking, scholarship in the field of gender history has become far more cautious about the discursive functions and contexts of power surrounding knowledge, academic pursuits, and more generally, claims to liberation.³⁸

Another area of study with political connotations is the study of nations and nationalism, which as a field initially stood close to the core of modern academic historiography. Here also, there have been significant transformations in spatial thinking, the most important of which is the fact that an increasing number of historians no longer conceptualize nationalism and national cultures from endogenous perspectives. As the outcome of a wide variety of scholarly activities, the history of nationalism today looks distinctly less national and far more global now than a generation ago. Some prominent historians have even started treating the nation state as one of the most transnational phenomena of recent history,³⁹ as the product and not primarily as the arena of histor-

34 See for example Bonnie Smith (ed.), *Women's History in Global Perspective*, vols. 1-3, Urbana-Champaign 2005; and Peter Stearns, *Gender in World History*, New York 2006.

35 See for example Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality*, in: *Journal of World History* 88 (2001), 3, pp. 829-865.

36 See for example Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, in: *Feminist Review* 30 (1988), pp. 61-88.

37 Ida Blom, *Gender as an Analytical Tool in Global History*, in: Solvi Sogner (ed.), *Making Sense of Global History. The 19th International Congress of the Historical Sciences, Oslo 2000*, pp. 71-86.

38 An example for transnational research on women's movements is Bonnie Smith, *Global Feminism Since 1945*, London 2000.

39 See for example Charles Maier, *Nation State*, in: Pierre-Yves Saunier/Akira Iriye (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, London 2009.

ical transformations. Secondly, there have been attempts to analyze the global spread of specific state institutions and policies, ranging from protectionism to the history of passports. In this context it has been convincingly argued that nation building and internationalism, universalization and differentiation, went hand in hand with each other.⁴⁰ Thirdly, new global perspectives and alternative geographies have come to put significant pressure on tropes of national cultures and societies. For instance, scholars have shown how supposed national traditions ranging from specific cuisines to savings cultures and discourses of belonging were being constructed under the influence of international discourses and their supporting networks.⁴¹ Another example is the scholarship that has begun to show that even important facets of modern English civil society originated in a far more trans-continental dynamics than had been commonly assumed.⁴² Fourthly, scholarship has again become more sensitive to the global frames, colonial, anti-colonial and other, that were essential for the worldwide spread of nation states and the dominance of some states over others.⁴³ Many historians have come to point to the fact that the growing spread of imperial and national order needs to be seen as having co-evolved with globalization processes since they were partly being produced by many co-dependent forces and constituted enabling frames of dealing with growing global integration.⁴⁴

Many additional research fields such as environmental history, the history of science, or colonial history have experienced similar global and translocal trends characterized by new conceptions of space and – in many cases – new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation. Particularly the collaboration between scholars in different area studies has been a remarkable trend that opened the way to both decentering historical research and globalizing its spaces of analysis at the same time.

Conclusion and future challenges

Global and other spatial questions are often normative questions. The shifts towards alternative conceptions of space in historical thinking were often accompanied by greater levels of concern about universalizing tropes and Eurocentrism. Needless to say, not

40 See for example Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order. Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders, 1834-1929*, New York 2007.

41 See for example Arjun Appadurai, *How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1997), 1, pp. 3-24; and Sheldon Garon, *Luxury in the Enemy: Mobilizing Savings and Popularizing Thrift in Wartime Japan*, in: *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26 (Winter 2000), 1, pp.41-78.

42 See for example Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Global Civil Society and the Forces of Empire: The Salvation Army, British Imperialism and the 'Pre-history' of NGOs (ca. 1880-1920)*, in: Sebastian Conrad/ Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds.), *Competing Visions of World Order*, New York 2007, pp. 29-67.

43 For new literature on this topic see Laurent Dubois, *La République métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History*, in: *Cultural Studies* 14 (2000), 1, pp.15-34; Emile Hafner-Burton/Kiyoteru Tsutsui, *Human Rights in a Global World. The Paradox of Empty Promises*, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (2005), 5, pp. 1373-1411.

44 Charles Bright/Michael Geyer, *World History in a Global Age*, in: *Journal of World History* 100 (1995), 4, pp. 1034-1060; and Charles Maier, *Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era*, in: *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), 3, pp. 807-831.

all recent global thinking about the past has sought to reverse the spatial categories and normative lenses that had characterized much of academic history-writing for so long.⁴⁵ Still, the main currents in the recent discussions surrounding terms such as global history, translocal history, and even world history have led into very different directions. Attacking theories of convergence, narratives of Western-led progress, and challenge-response models has become common to a degree that the great contestations of global historical research are no longer situated along the linear trajectories of these theories. Even though there are significant exceptions, as an academic trend, global history is certainly very far from fostering deterministic and homogenizing interpretations of globalization that continue to enjoy a strong position in academic fields like economics. However, one should be cautious to overemphasize the departure from Eurocentrism and universalism. The declared aim to "let others speak" may have been applied to the study of the past, but there are strong indications that our international academic communities remain as hierarchical, Western-centric, and imbalanced as one hundred years ago.

The close connection between global history and a research landscape which has been pluralizing while at the same time finding new modes of cooperation begs the question about the future trajectories of this trend. Since it is tied to significant intellectual and structural transformations within and beyond the field, it is highly unlikely that the spatial trends underlying global history will prove to be another fad in an academic setting that is certainly not free from fashions and intellectual bubbles. Terms such as "global history" or "translocal" history may perhaps eventually fall out of use, but it seems hardly possible that historiography will revert back to a state in which many of its spatial categories remained largely unchallenged. Needless to say, it would be equally naïve to assume that this trend will monopolize historiography as an entire academic discipline.

This still leaves several possible scenarios for the future of global history. Is it in the process of becoming a solipsistic community of *aficionados* or likeminded scholars, another research community in an increasingly fragmented field? In this case, the global turn in historiography would evolve into a specialized sub-discipline such as economic history or the history of gender which after periods of maturation developed their own field-specific infrastructures, career-paths, and methodological debates, even though they remain in close relationships with other parts of historiography. Or will global history play an integrative rather than an aspectual role in the future? After, all disciplinary insularity does not seem suitable to a field that emerged from multiple sources and research branches.

Quote as:

Dominic Sachsenmaier, Global History, Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 11. 2.2010, URL: http://docupedia.de/zg/Global_History

⁴⁵ See for example Niall Ferguson, *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World*, New York 2003; David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, New York 1998; John Headley, *The Europeanization of the World*, Princeton 2008.

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