Global History
as Polycentric History

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ABSTRACTS

Der Artikel diagnostiziert ein Ungleichgewicht hinsichtlich der beiden grundlegenden Anliegen der Globalgeschichte: Der Fokus hat sich bisher ungleich stärker auf die Untersuchung grenzüberschreitender Verbindungen gerichtet als auf den Anspruch, geschichtswissenschaftliche Perspektiven zu dezentrieren. Am Beispiel der modernen Geschichte des Gefängnisses zeigt der Beitrag grundlegende Probleme globalgeschichtlicher Bestrebungen auf, grenzüberschreitende Übertragungsvorgänge zu rekonstruieren und deren Bedeutung für lokale, nationale oder regionale Entwicklungen zu analysieren. Sein Plädoyer für eine stärkere Dezentrierung historiographischer Betrachtungsweisen verbindet er zum einen exemplarisch mit dem Nachweis, dass die Globalisierung des Gefängnisses, entgegen den etablierten Narrativen, als Entwicklung mit zahlreichen, sich wandelnden Zentren zu beschreiben ist. Zur analytischen Erfassung solcher globalen Prozesse schlägt er das Konzept eines Referenzrahmens vor. Zum anderen unterstreicht der Artikel neben dem Blick auf Transferleistungen die Bedeutung vergleichender Ansätze für die globalgeschichtliche Forschung. Entlang der Unterscheidung von „harten" und „weichen" Versionen von Globalgeschichte wird eine polyzentrische Globalgeschichte einer von den Kompetenzen und Erkenntnisinteressen der *area histories* aus geschriebenen Globalgeschichte gegenübergestellt und argumentiert, dass die Beschäftigung mit der Frage der Globalität von historischen Phänomenen über erstere zu erfolgen hat.

The article identifies an imbalance in the attention given to global history's two fundamental objectives, the focus hitherto having fallen more on the study of cross-border connections than on the vaunted decentring of historiographical perspective. The example of the modern history of the prison serves to illustrate some basic problems faced by efforts to identify cross-border transfers and assess their historical significance for local, national or regional developments. The need for a decentring of historiographical perspectives is illustrated firstly by reference to the fact that, contrary to the established narrative, the globalization of the prison was a

process characterized by a multiplicity of shifting centres. To help grasp such global processes it proposes the concept of a multiple "frame of references". Secondly, the article emphasizes the importance to global historical research, alongside attention to transfers, of the comparative approach. Deploying the distinction between "hard" and "soft" versions of global history, it finally distinguishes between polycentric global history and global history still written from the standpoint of area history, only the former properly engaging with the globality of historical phenomena.

In the entrance area of the museum created within the gloomy walls of Philadelphia's former Eastern State Penitentiary, visitors come upon a huge wall chart entitled "The Most Influential Prison Ever Built". The graphic shows how the architectural layout of the institution "inspired the design of most prisons built in Europe, Asia, South America, and Australia during the 1800s". A myriad red asterisks on a world map and a series of accompanying photographs establish a connection between the first radial prison building in the United States, which received its first convicts in 1829, and the subsequent construction of hundreds of penal institutions on the "hub and spoke" plan, from Canada to Argentina, from Finland to South Africa, and from Mexico to Malta and New Zealand. Evidently based on the work of Norman Bruce Johnston, author of the most important historical study of prison architecture and a sociologist who spent much of his career in Pennsylvanian universities,[1] the chart tells a global history very much in line with the prevailing narrative regarding the worldwide career of the modern prison. Although the "most" can be attributed to the language of museum marketing, and "influence" itself is a notion that professional historians today handle with caution, the map can serve as an illustrative starting point for some general reflections on the problems and potentials of global historical approaches.

1. Connections

The present state of the field offers a number of different ways of understanding global history's goal of fundamentally reframing the scholarly study of the past. There are good reasons to treat "global history" as a rather loose label, rather than get bogged down in fruitless efforts to define as precisely as possible what it is and does. On this, most scholars seem to agree, Dominic Sachsenmaier even speaking of the "necessary impossibility of defining global history".[2] Ultimately, global history shares with other proposed conceptualizations, such as "transnational", "entangled", "connected" or "world" history,

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1   N.B. Johnston, Forms of Constraint. A History of Prison Architecture, Urbana 2000; N.B. Johnston, Cherry Hill: Model for the World, in: Idem et al., Eastern State Penitentiary: Crucible of Good Intentions, Philadelphia 1994, pp. 69–79.
2   D. Sachsenmaier, Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World, Cambridge, UK 2011, pp. 70–78. See also, among others, S. Beckert and D. Sachsenmaier, Introduction, in: Idem (eds.), Global History, Globally: Research and Practice around the World, London 2018, pp. 1–18, at p. 1; A. Eckert, Globalgeschichte und Zeitgeschichte, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 62 (2012) 1–3, pp. 28–32, at p. 28; P. O'Brien,

an overall concern to broaden historiographical perspectives and to overcome a compartmentalisation believed to be limiting and even harmful to an adequate understanding of the past. Just the same, lack of debate about global history's basic goals and approaches is equally a threat to the field. One example might be the widespread and sometimes forceful reservations that global history has encountered among scholars in Latin America, Africa and Asia, who suspect that behind global history's agenda may lurk not only a teleological vision of a western-dominated process of globalization but an attempt at intellectual neo-colonialism.[3] Another is the fact that the institutionalisation of global history within European universities has until now mainly taken the form – notably at the decisive level of professorial chairs – of an extension to European history (with designations such as "Europe and the world", "European history in global perspective", "European history in its transnational and global entanglements", etc.) and has consequently not been devoid of Eurocentric continuities. A British variant has been the combination of "global and imperial history", which, despite the differences, ultimately raises the same question. Without a sufficiently precise notion of the analytical value said to be added, the claim to effect a fundamental re-orientation of historiographical perspectives also feeds the – often not unjustified – scepticism of global history shared by many academic historians in Europe and the United States, and plays into the hands of those representatives of the discipline who – for reasons not so good – are eagerly awaiting the end of what they consider to be another ephemeral "turn" in historiography or simply an unwelcome questioning of the established ways of historical scholarship. Much of the problem arises from a remarkable lack of clarity about, or even reflection on, what the "global" in the notion of global history actually designates. This is a shortcoming that marks not only the majority of empirical studies undertaken under the label but even conceptual discussion of the subject.

When they come to define the field, practitioners of global history routinely stress the difference between their approaches and the macro perspectives – both spatial and temporal – of a traditionally conceived world history, in the vein of William McNeill, Marshall Hodgson, or Philip D. Curtin – or even of Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee.[4] But this characterization – again *ex negativo* – is problematic on a number of

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Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 1 (2006) 1, pp. 3–39, at p. 3.

3   See, for example, V. Lal, Provincializing the West: World History from the Perspective of Indian History, in: B. Stuchtey and E. Fuchs (eds.), Writing World History, 1800–2000, Oxford 2003, pp. 270–289, at p. 289; M. Perez Garcia, Introduction: Current Challenges of Global History in East Asian Historiographies, in: M. Perez Garcia and L. de Sousa (eds.), Global History and New Polycentric Approaches. Europe, Asia and the Americas in a World Network System, Basingstoke 2018, pp. 1–17, at pp. 6–7.

4   W.H. McNeill, The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community, Chicago 1963; Idem, A World History, Oxford 1967; Idem, Plagues and Peoples, New York 1976; M. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam. Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Chicago 1974; Idem, Rethinking World History. Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History, Cambridge, MA 1993; P.D. Curtin, Cross-Cultural Trade in World History, Cambridge, MA 1984; O. Spengler, Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschiche, 2 vols, Wien 1918 / München 1922; A. Toynbee, A Study of History, 12 vols, London 1934–1961. For the argument see, for example, S. Conrad, Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung, München 2013, pp. 13–19, 46–52; S. Conrad and A. Eckert, Globalgeschichte,

grounds. On the one hand, as Jerry Bentley has observed, "the term world history has never been a clear signifier with a stable referent".[5] And on the other, it is undoubtedly correct that for a global historian "the aim is not to write a total history of the planet",[6] although this does not do much to clarify our understanding of the "global" as an alternative concept. What does it actually mean to write the history of a family or a village with a "global consciousness", as Natalie Zemon Davis has proposed?[7] What does "the condition of globality that characterizes our age" imply, exactly, for global history's task, as Michael Geyer and Charles Bright would have it, of recovering "the multiplicity of the world's past"?[8] What do historians do when they "situate […] particular cases in their global contexts" under the historical condition of "some form of global integration" – which is what Sebastian Conrad, in his typology, described as the most sophisticated and promising version of global history?[9]

There are no absolute answers to these questions. But to fail to reflect on the notion of the global as it relates to the subjects under study does nothing to substantiate the claim to produce a distinctive kind of knowledge that is supposed to legitimate global history. Overlaps with other historiographical concepts and fields are inevitable and in themselves unproblematic. Yet while it is impossible to draw a precise line between global and transregional or transnational history, the non-congruencies are as relevant as they are evident. Most research in transnational history would hardly be considered to represent a form of global history by anyone but those who adhere to an "all-in" version of the notion. Study of the transnational linkages between "1968" in the German Federal Republic and in the German Democratic Republic is obviously not driven by the same kind of interest as an exploration of what was actually global about the Sixties.[10] Or, to

Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt, in: S. Conrad, A. Eckert, and U. Freitag (eds.), Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen, Frankfurt a. M. 2007, pp. 7–49, at pp. 24–25; B. Mazlish, Comparing Global History to World History, in: The Journal for Interdisciplinary History 28 (1998), pp. 385–395; J. Osterhammel, "Weltgeschichte": Ein Propädeutikum, in: Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 56 (2005) 9, pp. 452–479, at pp. 458–462. See also, for example, J.H. Bentley, Theories of World History since the Enlightenment, in: Idem (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of World History, Oxford 2011, pp. 19–35; Sachsenmaier, Global Perspectives on Global History, pp. 18–58.

5   J.H. Bentley, The Task of World History, in: Idem (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of World History, Oxford 2011, p. 1.

6   S. Conrad, What Is Global History?, Princeton 2016, p. 12.

7   N.Z. Davis, Global History, Many Stories, in: M. Kerner (ed.), Eine Welt – Eine Geschichte? Berichtsband 43. Deutscher Historikertag, München 2001, pp. 373–380.

8   M. Geyer and Ch. Bright, World History in a Global Age, in: American Historical Review 100 (1995) 4, pp. 1034–1060, at p. 1042.

9   Conrad, What Is Global History?, pp. 9, 10.

10   T.S. Brown, "1968" East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History, in: American Historical Review 114 (2009) 1, pp. 69–96. For relevant publications on the "global sixties" see, among many others, H. Righart, Moderate Versions of the "Global Sixties": A Comparison of Great Britain and the Netherlands, in: Journal of Area Studies 6 (1998) 13, pp. 82–96; K. Dubinsky et al. (eds.), New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness, Toronto 2009; S. Christiansen and Z.A. Scarlett (eds.), The Third World in the Global 1960s, New York 2013; T.S. Brown and A. Lison (eds.), The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision. Media, Counterculture, Revolt, New York 2014; E. Zolov, Introduction: Latin America in the Global Sixties, in: The Americas 70 (2014) 3, pp. 349–362. For a critical discussion of the idea of the "global sixties", see, for example, S. Scheuzger, La historia contemporánea de México y la historia global: reflexiones acerca de los "sesenta globales", in: Historia Mexicana 68 (2018) 1, pp. 313–358.

take another example, identification and analysis of the cross-border networks of state terrorism that existed between the South American military dictatorships of the 1970s by no means invokes the global entanglements of Cold War repression.[11] Things become less clear-cut, however, when the relations under study extend between continents. A work on the connections between student protest in West Germany and the United States in the 1960s may claim to be written "in the spirit of a global history".[12] Likewise, the tracking of "African practices of divination, detection, and healing, as they crossed the Atlantic Ocean [as a result of the eighteenth-century slave trade] and were used or transformed in the mixed communities of slaves in the Americas, especially in the Dutch colony of Suriname" has been presented as a "way to enhance the historian's global consciousness".[13] However, the research perspectives of transregional approaches – from world to subnational level – frequently adhere to the same "bilateral logic" as characterizes many studies in transnational history.[14] The repeated appeals for pragmatism as regards the distinctions between "transregional", "transcultural" and "global" histories notwithstanding, scholars who understand their research as a part of the project of global history need to explicitly define their concept of the global as it relates to the phenomena under study. Otherwise, it would be better to speak of "connected history" as Frederick Cooper, among others, has suggested.[15]

Despite the many different ways in which the concept is understood, there does seem to exist a minimal consensus regarding the chief purposes of research in global history, representing something to build upon: on the one hand, the overcoming of "internalist" perspectives on nation-states and other allegedly well-circumscribed territorial entities, and on the other the decentring of perspectives on a past that has habitually been analysed and interpreted taking the "West" as the master reference. In the empirical work done under the name of global history, however, an imbalance between these two major programmatic concerns is apparent. "Connection was in; networks were hot", as Jeremy Adelman put it in recently summarizing developments in the field.[16] And there is a flipside to this diagnosis: a focus on cross-border, long-distance encounters, interac-

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11   J. Dinges, The Condor Years. How Pinochet and his Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents, New York 2004; J.P. McSherry, Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor, in: Latin American Perspectives 29 (2002) 1, pp. 38–60; Idem, Predatory States. Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America, Lanham 2005.

12   M. Klimke, The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties, Princeton 2010, p. xiii.

13   N.Z. Davis, Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World, in: History and Theory 50 (2011), pp. 188–202, at p. 197.

14   "All Things Transregional?" in conversation with… Sebastian Conrad, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 26.06.2015, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/2456 (accessed 10 January 2018).

15   F. Cooper, How Global Do We Want Our Intellectual History to Be?, in: S. Moyn and A. Sartori (eds.), Global Intellectual History, New York 2013, pp. 283–294, at p. 284. A similar argument has been made by S.J. Potter and J. Saha, Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire, in: Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 16 (2015) 1, https://doi.org./10.1353/cch.2015.0009 (accessed 24 October 2017). For a basic contribution to the concept of "connected history" see S. Subrahmanyam, Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia, in: Modern Asian Studies 31 (1997) 3, pp. 735–762.

16   J. Adelman, What Is Global History Now?, in: Aeon, 26 March 2017, p. 3.

tions, and entanglements has been much more prominent in global historical studies than any effort to systematically decentre historiographical perspectives – let alone to "provincialize Europe" as so many, after Dipesh Chakrabarty, have theoretically claimed to be necessary.[17] But it is precisely this second aspect that offers the more promising way of giving substance to the idea of the global in global history's claim to reframe historical study. Put another way, it can be argued that focus on the study of connections has been accompanied by relative neglect of theoretical elaboration and above all practical analysis of the "global".

Roland Wenzlhuemer was not at all wrong, in his recent contribution to the debate on the writing of global history, to call the focus on connections a kind of shibboleth for global historians.[18] That same book, however, subscribes to the widely accepted idea that connections are precisely what global history is chiefly about.[19] His main argument is undeniable, in face of the often still rather diffuse talk of "flows", "circulations" or "entanglements" as defining the distinctive interest of global historians: the ways in which connections are analysed and the benefits these offer do indeed call for further clarification. Wenzlhuemer thus elaborates on the notion of "connection" through six case studies. This very welcome labour of differentiation and illustration notwithstanding, it is worthy of remark that this work, which untangles different ideas of connection, is much less thorough when it comes to considering what exactly is global in the events under consideration, and why the historical relations presented as examples – all of which link Western Europe to a context elsewhere in the world – are to be understood as global connections, and not just as connections over a long geographical distance.

At the same time, a number of conceptually oriented contributions to the debate on global history and the history of globalization have pointed out a widespread lack of clarity in the use of the idea of connection. In many cases, this imprecision has reflected a lack of terminological rigour and a disregard of the substantial efforts already made to conceptualise at least some of these notions. However, it is also the result of the way that the meaning of such central concepts as "transfer", "diffusion", or "circulation" has both developed and varied in the scholarly debate of recent decades. For many authors who situate their work in the field of global history, the notion of "diffusion", for instance, is the very opposite of an adequate conceptual basis for examining and understanding cross-border connections and entanglements. It has therefore been more or less banned from their analytical repertoire. While there are good historical reasons for this, it is worth noting that over the last fifteen or twenty years the concept has developed – above all in the social sciences, where it came from – in such a way that it no longer has much in common with its deployment in Eurocentric argument, from late-nineteenth-century sociology to the modernization theory of the second half of the twentieth century, such

17   D. Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, Princeton 2008 (2000).

18   R. Wenzlhuemer, Globalgeschichte schreiben. Eine Einführung in sechs Episoden, Konstanz 2017, p. 17; shortly to be available in English as R. Wenzlhuemer, Doing Global History: An Introduction in Six Concepts, London 2019.

19   "Globale Verbindungen sind die Grundbeobachtungselemente der Globalgeschichte". Ibid., p. 221.

as was once exemplified by George Basalla, chief representative of a diffusionism vehemently criticized by global historians for its unilateralism.[20] In the fields of policy research or research on social movements, for example, "diffusion" has for quite some time been used to analyse relatively small-scale processes much as the notion of "transfer" has been employed in the humanities, bringing with it the idea of multidirectionality.[21] The notion of "circulation", for its part, has enjoyed a boom in global historical research. One of the chief consequences of this, however, has been to further compound the frequent lack of precision in the use of the term. Despite certain attempts to provide a precise understanding of "circulation",[22] the term has often signalled no more than a recognition of the need to take account of movements between historical entities in the analysis of the past. While it seems to be clear, in fact, that a conceptually aware use of involves, as Kapil Raj has indicated, the idea of "a strong counterpoint to the unidirectionality of 'diffusion' or even of 'dissemination' or 'transmission', of binaries such as […] centre / periphery",[23] it is still a matter of debate to what degree the notion implies, in accordance with the metaphor's organic origin, the necessary identity of the start and end points of a continuous movement in a closed system, whether this is to be taken as part of the world (the "British world", the "Atlantic world", etc.) or the whole (the "world system"), or, on the contrary, how much it connotes a sense of openness.[24] However, most authors who have discussed the concept of "circulation" agree in stressing the inextricable link between the translocation and production of "information, knowledge, ideas, techniques, skills, cultural productions (texts, songs), religious practices, even gods".[25] Insight into the intimate interconnection of displacement and transformation not only brings locality into analytic focus but also helps avoid misunderstanding circulation as a movement basically unconstrained by resistances, detours, and blockages – a problem the term shares with other metaphors of liquidity, such as "flow".[26]

20   G. Basalla, The Spread of Western Science, in: Science 156 (1967) 3775, pp. 611–622.
21   For example, Z. Elkins and B. Simmons, On Waves, Clusters, and Diffusion: A Conceptual Framework, in: Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 598 (2005) 1, pp. 33–51; D. della Porta, "1968" – Zwischennationale Diffusion und transnationale Strukturen. Eine Forschungsagenda, in: I. Gilcher-Holtey (ed.), 1968. Vom Ereignis zum Mythos, Frankfurt a. M. 2008, pp. 173–198.
22   C. Markovits, J. Pouchepadass, and S. Subrahmanyam, Introduction, in: Idem (eds.), Society and Circulation. Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750–1950, London 2006 (2003), pp. 1–22; K. Raj, Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900, Basingstoke 2007; Idem, Beyond Postcolonialism … and Postpositivism: Circulation and the Global History of Science, in: Isis 104 (2013) 2, pp. 337–347; S.T. Lowry, The Archaeology of the Circulation Concept in Economic Theory, in: Journal of the History of Ideas 35 (1974) 3, pp. 429–444; S. Gänger, Circulation: Reflections on Circularity, Entity, and Liquidity in the Language of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 12 (2017) 3, pp. 303–318.
23   Raj, Beyond Postcolonialism … and Postpositivism, p. 344.
24   For the former position, see Gänger, Circulation, pp. 307–309, for the latter, Raj, Beyond Postcolonialism … and Postpositivism, p. 344.
25   Markovits, Pouchepadass and Subrahmanyam, Introduction, p. 2.
26   Raj, Relocating Modern Science, pp. 20–21; P. Sarasin and A. Kilcher, Editorial, in: Nach Feierabend. Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte 7 (2011), pp. 7–11; S.A. Rockefeller, Flow, in: Current Anthropology 52 (2011) 4, pp. 557–578.

The existence of such semantic ambiguities is only one argument for the great theoretical and practical importance of a closer examination of the idea of connection. More is required than the clarification of central analytical categories. Too much work generated in the early enthusiasm for the field has hardly gone beyond the identification of cross-border, long-distance relations and observation of the entangled nature of historical developments, though global history's focus on connections and its claim to produce new understandings of the past are both ultimately based on the ability to specify the role these connections played in local events and processes.[27] The move beyond the identification of connections to analysis of their significance, however, is still too often not convincingly made. "Significance" here has to be understood in both senses of the term, the hermeneutic and the causal-analytical. It implies the need to understand the transformation of meaning that occurs with transfer, and also refers to the question of its importance for historical developments, its "influence", to use the word of the organisers of the Eastern State Penitentiary exhibition. A claim to this kind of explanatory capacity is implied by global history's emphasis on connections.

Given the prominence of connections in the conceptual discussion of global history, as also in empirical work, it is worth pointing out that the obstacles to analysis of the historical significance of transfers and exchanges are frequently underestimated. The history of modern penal reform may serve to illustrate the point. The movement for reform began in the 1770s, most notably in England, the United States and France. Debate revolved around the prison, which subsequently grew into the central institution of punishment worldwide. Over the decades, more and more regions became caught up in the process, such that the globalization of the modern prison can be considered to have been completed in the 1920s, with the European powers' establishment of a more-or-less organised network of central and local prisons in their African colonies. The impulse to reform, however, was not exhausted by the introduction of modern prison systems, and continued where such systems had been established, becoming a permanent feature of the penal world. Given that the handling of delinquency has been, at all times and in all places, not only one of the most controversial aspects of social life but also one of the most important fields of state activity, and that debate on the most appropriate and effective ways of punishing criminals has never ended, prison historians are relatively well-catered-for in terms of sources, compared to those working on other topics. This is true even of those who study penal regimes outside Europe and the United States. Yet the availability of sources still represents a major constraint on any attempt to analyse the significance of long-distance, cross-border connections in the process of penal reform.

One notorious lacuna concerns those who were subjected to punishment: domestic prisoners, convicts transported to penal colonies, those who suffered corporal punishment inside or outside penal institutions. Attributable to a variety of factors, this lack of sources means not only that we know little about the effects of punishment on those

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27   See for this crucial argument, among others, Conrad, Globalgeschichte, p. 28.

members of society judged to have violated its norms. Like other institutions forming part of the penal system, prisons were not just places where penological knowledge was applied, they were also major sites for the production of such knowledge. Prisoners themselves contributed in important ways to penal developments, and to the generation and transformation of knowledge concerning the effective and adequate organisation of penal confinement that circulated within and across borders. The well-known deficiency of sources documenting subaltern agency is therefore a factor of crucial importance to transnational or global approaches to penal reform. To read the available sources "against the grain" is, of course, indispensable (and this not only with respect to the role of the prisoners in reform but more generally for the study of this highly hierarchically organised sphere of state activity in which almost every group of actors had an interest in representing the situation in the prisons in a certain light, not at all necessarily corresponding to what they took the reality to be). However, such critical reading of the sources does not solve the fundamental problem, which goes far beyond this particular lacuna. The records of penal regimes and institutions in general survive in only a highly fragmentary form, being in many instances too incomplete to allow for a reconstruction of developments in penal theory and practice sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to determine the precise significance in them of the cross-border interactions identified. The problem is so fundamental that it extends beyond the question of the integration of "peripheral" spaces into the overall picture of modern punishment to decisively affect the historiography of the commonly recognised "centres" of penal reform as well. While researchers studying the history of Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary can count on archival material that enables them to cover at least a variety of important aspects of prison life and the transformation of the institution over time, a reasonably reliable reconstruction of the history of London's Pentonville Prison is almost impossible. Intended as a state-of-the-art prison that would serve as a model for the rest of England, Pentonville was built in the early 1840s, with little regard for expense: it was at the time the most costly building in the British capital with the exception of the Houses of Parliament.[28] Until the early twentieth century it enjoyed an international reputation as the epitome of modern imprisonment, as important a reference as the Eastern State Penitentiary.[29] While historians know of the prison's international importance, attested by a broad array of sources generated by a variety of penal actors in different countries and colonies, and also, again thanks to the availability of sources, about the prison's early role in the transportation of convicts from Britain to the Australian colonies, they are precluded from studying much of Pentonville's cross-border, entangled history in these same decades as records are almost completely lacking.

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28 F. Dikötter, Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China, London 2002, p. 6.
29 For the history of the construction of Pentonville Prison, see R. Evans, The Fabrication of Virtue. English Prison Architecture, 1750–1840, Cambridge, UK 1982; M. Ignatieff, A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850, New York 1978.

More than movement of people and flows of goods, it was transfers of knowledge – in the broad sense of the term – that connected historical processes across long geographical distances. To a large extent, histories of global entanglements are histories of knowledge. However, any attempt to determine the influence of transfers on the bodies of knowledge on which historical actors relied in understanding the world, formulating their agendas and taking their decisions is a very thorny business even where one can count on excellent sources. In very many cases the inaliminable lacunae in our knowledge of transfers are too large to be able to assess the importance of these connections for the transformations under consideration. Too many relevant transfers are not identifiable, having left no trace in the documents. What texts did actors actually read? What did they talk about when they met? What first-hand experiences beyond the texts were significant for the ideas they developed and supported? While the nature of the lack may vary as modes of communication change over time, it is a problem that confronts historians dealing with knowledge transfers in any period. The inaccessibility of important aspects of these transfers cannot but affect assessment of the role played by documented cross-border connections in any particular historical development. In addition to these difficulties related to the non-availability of sources, there is a third, more methodological challenge that must be addressed by any attempt to determine the "influence" exerted by any connection identified.

In too many cases, historical research follows the same logic as the wall chart at Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary: the existence of causal relations is inferred from the observation of similarities. There is no doubt that the Eastern State Penitentiary represented an important step in a process that assigned architectural form a central function in the distinctive task of modern prison regimes: to reform the delinquent, compelling him or her to become a useful member of society. Solitary confinement in individual cells – the central technological innovation of the modern prison – was intended to force convicts to confront themselves and what they had done. Complete control, over communication in particular, was supposed to underwrite the reformative effect of the process, intended to make prisoners receptive to the disciplinary virtues of religious instruction and forced labour. One well-known proposal for the constant surveillance of inmates by way of the architectural organization of space is represented by the panopticon conceived by Jeremy Bentham and his brother Samuel: a multi-storey circular prison that provides a view into every single cell on the circumference from an "inspector's lodge" in the middle of the inner yard.[30] This elaborate design however failed to satisfy the government's economic interest in confining a larger number of convicts in one building than a panoptical structure allowed. A compromise was the radial layout that served as the basic model for nineteenth and early-twentieth-century prisons. This allowed centrally-positioned wardens to monitor all movements in the corridors, though not beyond cell doors, while also enabling the allocation of different classes of inmates to different sections of the building.

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30   J. Bentham, Panopticon; or, The Inspection House (1787), in: The Works of Jeremy Bentham, vol. 4, Edinburgh 1843, pp. 37–172, at p. 40.

Radial ground plans enabling the surveillance of those confined to institutions had been known in Europe, from Italy to Ireland, since the eighteenth century. The actual models drawn on by John Haviland, the young English architect of Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, cannot be identified, not even from his personal records. However, as no radial prison building had ever existed in United States before, and as it is possible, at least in part, to identify the publications and the architectural drawings Haviland had most probably encountered when training in London,[31] it is plausible to assume some kind of transatlantic transfer. What is much more difficult, on the other hand, is to determine the "influence" of the Eastern State Penitentiary on subsequent developments elsewhere. The British case offers perhaps the best illustration of the essential problem.

It is well known that many European penal experts visited the Eastern State Penitentiary even in the earliest years of its existence. In retrospect, the most prominent among them were Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, who travelled the United States on behalf of the French government to observe the country's prison systems – a journey that yielded not only what is probably the nineteenth-century's most widely read text on prison reform, the report *Du Système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis et de son application en France*, but also Tocqueville's classic *De la démocratie en Amérique*.[32] Britain's Home Office likewise commissioned William Crawford to inspect "the several Penitentiaries of the United States, with a view to ascertain the practicability and expediency of applying the respective systems on which they are governed, or any parts thereof, to the prisons of this country".[33] On his return, Crawford used his first-hand knowledge of US prison systems and his influential position as one of England's few national inspectors of prisons in a campaign he launched with a colleague, Whitworth Russell, to promote the introduction to Britain, at both local and national level, of the regime of solitary confinement practised in Philadelphia. Under this, inmates would be held alone in their cells for twenty-four hours a day. Crawford's very positive report on what he had seen in Philadelphia was beyond doubt a powerful contribution to the English debates that finally led to the endorsement of this regime by the Home Office and the prescription of separate confinement in the Prisons Act of 1839, a major consequence of which was the construction of the model prison to be known as Pentonville. But contrary to the narratives that depict this development as the outcome of a literal circulation of knowledge from England to the United States and back,[34] it is indeed almost impossible to assess the precise influence of Crawford's transfer on this change of English penal policy. The discussion of solitary confinement in England in fact went back to the very start of the

31   Johnston, Forms of Constraint, p. 56; Idem, The Human Cage: A Brief History of Prison Architecture, Philadelphia 1973, p. 30.

32   G. de Beaumont and A. de Tocqueville, Système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis et son application en France, Paris 1833; A. de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique (1835/1840), in: Oeuvres II, Paris 1992. For de Tocqueville's journey in the United States, see G.W. Pierson, Tocqueville in America, Baltimore 1996.

33   W. Crawford, Penitentiaries (United States). Report of William Crawford, Esq., on the Penitentiaries of the United States, Addressed to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, London 1834, p. 3.

34   R.W. England, John Howard and His Influence in America, in: J.C. Freeman (ed.), Prisons Past and Future, London 1978, pp. 25–33, at p. 32.

prison reform movement in the 1770s and 1780s, and to prominent publications by authors such as John Howard, Jonas Hanway, John Jebb, and Jeremy Bentham, widely read beyond the British Isles as well.[35] Debate thereafter continued in England over the decades, varying in intensity but never isolated from discussion in other countries. Consequently, the discussions of the 1830s drew on many entangled layers and strands of knowledge, ideas, and belief regarding the confinement of convicts in individual cells. This has to be a serious obstacle to any attempt to determine the actual "influence" on a significant transformation of the English penal system of a particular, doubtlessly prominent transfer of know-how from the United States. To complicate things even further, Crawford and other British supporters of systematic individual segregation chose for tactical reasons to distance themselves terminologically from their model. They deliberately spoke of "separate" rather than "solitary" confinement, as it was referred to in Philadelphia. For they were aware that the reports of severe mental illness among prisoners in the Eastern State Penitentiary had crossed the Atlantic to become well-known in Europe.[36]

In addition to the problem of sources, there are methodological difficulties that limit the possibility of generating reliable findings regarding the significance for local developments of cross-border transfers, circulations, and entanglements, a limitation hardly reflected in the emphasis placed on the study of connections in the debate on global history's capacity to produce a distinctive form of knowledge. Difficulty in solidly substantiating through empirical evidence how it is that connections "influenced" the historical course of events in a particular context is not restricted to research on the history of such an over-determined social phenomenon as punishment.[37] Generally speaking, the problem is less acute when the object of study is a moment of marked innovation and pronounced transformation, such as the building of the Eastern State Penitentiary represented for the development of prison architecture in the United States. But even when one is dealing with such caesura-like moments – never mind the larger, multi-layered and multiply entangled historical processes much more commonly analysed, in which different temporalities coalesce, such as penal reform in Britain or elsewhere, developing over decades or even centuries – the methodological difficulties present a serious challenge to global history's central claim to provide useful insights into the effects of wide-ranging, cross-border connections. This is not at all an argument against the attempt to identify and analyse what transpired between different, distanced contexts of historical development; but it is substantial evidence, drawn from thorough empirical work, in support of the argument for greater emphasis on global history's other constitutive concern: the decentring of historiographical perspectives.

35   J. Hanway, Solitude in Imprisonment, with Proper Profitable Labour and a Spare Diet, London1776; J. Howard, The State of the Prisons in England and Wales, with Preliminary Observations and an Account of Some Foreign Prisons, Warrington 1777; J. Jebb, Thoughts on the Construction and Polity of Prisons with Hints for Their Improvement, London 1785; Bentham, Panopticon.

36   Evans, The Fabrication of Virtue, p. 326; U. Henriques, The Rise and Decline of the Separate System of Prison Discipline, in: Past and Present 54 (1972), pp. 61–93, at pp. 76–77.

37   D. Garland, Punishment and Modern Society: A Study in Social Theory, Chicago 1990, p. 209.

2. Centre and Periphery

The wall chart at the Eastern State Penitentiary gives one reason for the institution's "influence" on prison buildings elsewhere in the world. A special box with the aptly chosen title "A Tourist Attraction, Even Then" briefly explains to today's sightseers that the penitentiary "once attracted as many visitors as Independence Hall. Tourists roamed these hallways, separated by just a few inches of stone from prisoners labouring in strict isolation and silence. Most visitors were simply curious". But "[d]ignitaries and foreign officials visited too", who "were here to study this ambitious new prison and copy it across the globe (see map, right)." Based on the postulated causal relation between the many missions that came from abroad to visit the institution and the worldwide spread of radial prison buildings, the graphic and its caption, already quoted earlier – "Eastern State Penitentiary inspired the design of most prisons built in Europe, Asia, South America and Australia during the 1800s" – reproduce the established narrative of the global career of the modern prison as a process of diffusion.

The prison reform movement of the late nineteenth century and its quest to collect and systematize available penological knowledge saw the publication of a number of books that claimed to consider the development of prison regimes in global perspective, though they actually extended the focus of Western scholars only a little beyond Europe and the United States to selected spaces in Asia and Oceania.[38] In the mid-twentieth century, a volume on *World Penal Systems* by the prolific Negley K. Teeters – another sociologist who worked for many decades at a Philadephia university – included Latin American countries and a number of Britain's African colonies in its picture of penal reform.[39] Both in these older encyclopaedic efforts and in more recent scholarly presentations of national, colonial, or regional developments, the transformation of penal systems in the "long" nineteenth century and beyond is understood in terms of a more or less explicit conception of centre and periphery. As in the case of many other modern institutions, historical scholarship has consistently localized the origins of modern prison regimes in the "West" and represented their globalization as a basically unilateral propagation to the "rest of the world". This persistent interpretative scheme can be traced back to a Whig history of the prison, with its roots in the penal reform movement itself.[40] And historians continue to locate the centre of global penal reform in a North Atlantic area constituted first and foremost by Great Britain, the United States, and France – including those who have dealt with the history of the prison in Latin America, Asia, or Africa.[41]

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38   E.C. Wines, The State of Prisons and of Child-Saving Institutions in the Civilized World, Cambridge, MA 1880; A.G.F. Griffiths, Secrets of the Prison-House or Gaol Studies and Sketches, 2 vols, London 1894; Idem, The History and Romance of Crime from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, vol. 12: Oriental Prisons, London 1900.

39   N.K. Teeters, World Penal Systems: A Survey, Philadelphia 1944.

40   S. Scheuzger, Contre une vision diffusioniste de la "naissance de la prison": perspectives sur les débuts de l'histoire mondiale des régimes pénitentiaires modernes, in: Socio. La Nouvelle Revue des Sciences Sociales (forthcoming).

41   The work of all scholars who have dealt with the history of the prison in Latin America, Asia, and Africa has been based in more or less explicit ways on the idea that the modern prison developed first in Europe and the United

The cogent response to diffusionist models of explanation – in the sense of a basically unidirectional and sequential movement from "the West" to "the rest" – is to treat the centrality of Western developments not as a premise but as itself a subject of historical examination. This should obviously not lead to the replacement of one unexamined premise by another that assumes multidirectional transfers between different world regions, more or less similar in their significance for all sides. Speaking of the decentring of perspectives, one might note too that discussion of global history's contribution to historical knowledge would greatly benefit from more consideration of empirical research rather than merely theoretical reflection. In the case of the history of the prison, this kind of decentred approach does not turn the established picture of worldwide penal developments on its head, but definitely provides a more nuanced understanding.

Pre-modern societies outside Europe and untouched by European colonialism also had prisons, used there much as they had been in Europe before the late eighteenth century, that is, primarily as places of detention and much less as institutions of punishment. These almost universal antecedents notwithstanding, the prison, as it became the predominant form of punishment around the globe during the "long" nineteenth century, did emerge in the "Western" world. This statement, however, needs to be clarified. From its very beginnings in the 1770s, modern prison reform was characterized by a variety of centres that interacted with each other. The processes that attracted most international attention did indeed take place in England, the United States, and France. But reformers in these countries also drew on older architectural models and carceral regimes and contemporary developments, notably in Italy and the Netherlands. John Howard, for example – thought of as "the founding father of penal reform" in Britain and beyond – based his seminal book *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* not only on his inspection of every English and Welsh prison but also on lengthy visits to France, Flanders, the Netherlands and Germany.[42] At the same time, the progress of reform within national contexts was uneven, every country having its own centres and peripheries in penal matters. Philadelphia was one of the most important of these centres, within the United States and beyond – not just after the construction of the Eastern State Penitentiary in the late 1820s, but from the very start of the debate on changing the penal system following the country's independence and the foundation in 1787 of the Society for

States and then in the other world regions. Since these regions have almost exclusively been treated as contexts of reception but not of production of globally circulating knowledge of penal reform, studies on the history of punishment outside the "West" have above all reproduced and not questioned established notions of centres and peripheries. This sequential, ultimately diffusionist understanding of developments has found its expression also in the five major works reviewed by Mary Gibson for her preliminary programmatic reflections on a global perspective on the history of the prison as well as in her own considerations. M. Gibson, Global Perspectives on the Birth of the Prison, in: The American Historical Review 116 (2011) 4, pp. 1040–1063. The books have been: C. Aguirre, The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850–1935, Durham 2005; F. Bernault (ed.), A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa, Portsmouth 2003; D. Botsman, Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan, Princeton 2005; Dikötter, Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China; P. Zinoman, The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940, Berkeley 2001.

42   Howard, The State of the Prisons in England and Wales. For the quotation see W.J. Forsythe, The Reform of Prisoners: 1830–1900, London 1987, p. 18.

Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, the first prison reform society in the world.[43] London's status as another centre of not only national but international importance was due to several factors. Not only was it capital of a country with a long tradition of debate on penal affairs, home to authors whose publications circulated around the globe, from John Howard and Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century to William Crawford in the mid-nineteenth and Evelyn Ruggles-Brise in the early twentieth century,[44] and also metropolitan seat of government of the world's largest empire, but from the 1840s onwards the existence of Pentonville Prison would draw the attention of prison reformers all over the world.

Pentonville, considered by many historians to be the most important institution of reference in prison history – rather than the Eastern State Penitentiary – was only the second national penitentiary in England, and had originally been planned and built to serve, as already noted, as a model prison for the country. While in the 1840s, when the penitentiary was constructed, most of England – not to mention other European countries – remained a vast penological periphery, new centres of prison reform were emerging outside Europe and the United States. In 1833, almost a decade before Pentonville started to operate, the Brazilian authorities had begun the construction of a *casa de correção* on the radial plan in Rio de Janeiro.[45] And more or less at the same time as Pentonville received its first convicts, the Chilean parliament decided to build a modern *cárcel penitenciaria* in the nation's capital.[46] Around the mid-century, the governor of Agra's Central Prison, in India's North Western Provinces, could claim to run "by far the largest prison in the world", remodelled and enlarged in the 1840s in the context of early prison reform in British India.[47] The history of the globalization of the modern prison

43 N.G. Teeters, They Were in Prison. A History of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, 1787–1937, Philadelphia 1937. See also, for example, Idem, The Cradle of the Penitentiary. The Walnut Street Jail of Philadelphia, 1773–1835, Philadelphia 1955; M. Meranze, Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835, Chapel Hill 1996.

44 Howard, The State of the Prisons in England and Wales; Idem, An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe; with Various Papers Relative to the Plague: Together with Further Observations on Some Foreign Prisons and Hospitals; and Additional Remarks on the Present State of Those in Great Britain and Ireland, Warrington 1789; Bentham, Panopticon, pp. 37–172; Idem, Panopticon versus New South Wales, or, The Panopticon Penitentiary System, and The Penal Colonization System, compared (1802), in: The Works of Jeremy Bentham, vol. 4, Edinburgh 1843, pp. 173–248; Idem, The Rationale of Punishment, London 1830; Crawford, Penitentiaries; E. Ruggles-Brise, The English Prison System, London 1921; Idem, Prison Reform at Home and Abroad. A Short History of the International Movement since the London Congress, 1872, London 1924.

45 M. Antunes Sant'Anna, A imaginação do castigo: discursos e práticas sobre a Casa de Correção do Rio de Janeiro, Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro 2010; M.L. Bretas, What the Eyes Can't See: Stories from Rio de Janeiro's Prisons, in: R. D. Salvatore and C. Aguirre (eds.), The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830–1940, Austin 1996, pp. 101–122; M. Jean, "A storehouse of prisoners": Rio de Janeiro's Correction House (Casa de Correção) and the Birth of the Penitentiary in Brazil, 1830–1906, in: Atlantic Studies 14 (2016) 2, pp. 216–242; C.E. Moreira de Araújo, Cárceres imperiais: A Casa de Correção do Rio de Janeiro. Sues detentos e o sistema prisional no Império, 1830–1861, Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2009.

46 Cámara de Diputados, Sesión 9a, en 26 de junio de 1843, in: Sesiones de los Cuerpos Legislativos de la República de Chile 1811 a 1845, tomo XXXII, Santiago de Chile 1908, pp. 169–171; M. Bulnes, Cárcel penitenciaria, Santiago, Julio 19 de 1843, in: Boletín de las Leyes y de las Órdenes y Decretos del Gobierno 11 (1843) 7, pp. 103–104.

47 James Pattison Walker, Letter to James Melville, Secretary to Court of Directors [of the East India Company], 30

cannot be properly told through a diffusionist narrative, which is based on the notion of a stable relation between centres and peripheries and a unidirectional movement of knowledge, ideas, and norms. The centres of prison reform were numerous from the start, and actors' ascriptions of status as centre or periphery varied over time and with viewpoint. Penological know-how was transferred in many directions. A closer study of interconnections on a global scale reveals the existence of what should rather be conceptualised as an increasingly global and multiple frame of reference, what one might well call a frame of references: actors in penal reform in ever more places around the world were looking at more and more other places around the world – by no means always the same in each case – in their quest for models for the building and operation of a prison according to modern standards.[48] The crucial argument against diffusionist narratives is that the prison regimes of Europe and the United States too developed within this *global* frame of reference. This was the case for developments, when they came, in the broad penal hinterlands still largely untouched by reform in the middle of the nineteenth century, just as much as for the metropoles of New York, Philadelphia, London, Paris or Berlin, and the other cities, like Geneva, that were early to build institutions to which reference was made in the global debate.[49]

The notion of a frame of references can usefully be applied to the study of any social practice that was connected across borders in the eyes of the historical actors and consequently related to circulations of knowledge in a broad sense.[50] Analytically, this actor-centred perspective depends on a specific understanding of the global and the local as indissolubly bound together. Thus, the global always took place locally. There was no global idea of the modern prison that diffused to become localized in different contexts. Ideas of penal confinement circulated between different contexts and were negotiated and transformed with each displacement. Since the production of knowledge, ideas, and norms was intrinsically linked to their movement, centres of penal reform multiplied. Ideas as to what was a civilised and efficient manner of punishing delinquents

April 1856, letterbook including diary of visits to prisons in Britain, Ireland and France, April–November 1855 and memorandum on service in India relating to prison discipline and education and an account of the Indian Mutiny at Agra, 1855–1866, London Metropolitan Archives, H1/ST/MC/17/1. On the history of the prison reform in nineteenth-century British India, see D. Arnold, The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India, in: D. Arnold and D. Hardiman (eds.), Subaltern Studies VIII. Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha, Delhi 1994, pp. 148–187; D. Arnold, India: The Contested Prison, in: F. Dikötter and I. Brown (eds.), Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America, London 2007, pp. 147–184; M. Offermann, Gefängnisse in der Kolonie, koloniale Gefängnisse. Eine Verflechtungsgeschichte der britisch-indischen Haftanstalten von den 1820er bis in die 1880er Jahre, PhD thesis, University of Bern, 2018.

48   Scheuzger, Contre une vision diffusioniste de la "naissance de la prison".

49   For the case of Geneva, see L. Maugué, L'introduction du système carcéral dans le département du Léman, 1798–1813. Entre utopie pénale des lumières, logique économique et impératifs sécuritaires, in: Traverse 21 (2014) 1, pp. 49–60; R. Roth, Pratiques pénitentiaires et théorie sociale. L'exemple de la prison de Genève, Genève 1981; Idem, La réalisation pénitentiaire du rêve pénal à Genève, in: J.G. Petit (ed.), La prison, le bagne et l'histoire, Genève 1984, pp. 189–200; W. Zurbuchen, Prisons de Genève, Genève 1977; Johnston, Forms of Constraint, p. 60.

50   For an application on the discussion on the "global sixties", see, for example, Scheuzger, La historia contemporánea de México y la historia global.

by imprisonment varied, as did the resources available for their implementation. While the "strange sameness about prisons" identified by late-twentieth-century scholar-activist visitors to penal institutions "all over the world"[51] was equally to be found during the "long" nineteenth century, even institutions designated as "penitentiaries" could differ greatly between the East Coast of the United States, British India, or French West Africa.[52] The meaning of "prison" has varied too greatly around the world for historians to be able to agree on a generally shared understanding of the notion for the purpose of analysis, even for the period since the late eighteenth century. A careful assessment of what was actually global about prisons is thus imperative – and the same is true of many other globalized phenomena, even for so codified a universal norm as human rights.[53]

Detailed examinations of this kind must take into account the full extent of the frame of references operative at the time, which does not mean delving into the history of the prison systems of every country and colony. Given the worldwide prevalence of confinement as a technology of punishment and the fact that the relevant interactions involved places all around the globe, however, a substantive global-historical approach to the history of the prison has to consider an appropriate sample of cases covering developments in a variety of social, political, economic, cultural and climatic contexts on most of the continents. On the other hand, empirically grounded findings about the globality of prison regimes require that the effects of cross-border circulations and the similarities and differences between regimes of confinement have in the end to be studied at the scale of the individual penal institution. There is no alternative to this micro-level scrutiny if one is to gain insight into the precise meaning and significance of the processes and events under consideration and thus an understanding of the global aspect of the phenomena concerned. This also implies, incidentally, that the concept of global microhistory that has been increasingly promoted in recent years can be criticized for a certain redundancy.[54]

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51   A. Davis and G. Dent, Conversations: Prison as a Border: A Conversation on Gender, Globalization, and Punishment, in: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 26 (2001), pp. 1235–1241, at p. 1237.

52   For the *pénitencier* of Fotoba on the Îles de Loos near Conakry in French Guinea, see M.D.C. Diallo, Répression et enfermement en Guinée. Le pénitencier de Fotoba et la prison centrale de Conakry de 1900 à 1958, Paris 2005.

53   For the argument that human rights were not free-standing and did not speak for themselves, that they always carried meanings given to them by concrete historical actors who referred to them in specific contexts and that human rights came into being only in the interdependence of the universality of their claim of validity and the particularity of their invocation, see S.J. Stern and S. Scott (eds.), The Human Rights Paradox: Universality and Its Discontents, Madison 2014; S. Scheuzger, Wahrheitskommissionen: Der Umgang mit historischem Unrecht im Kontext des Menschenrechtsdiskurses, Göttingen (forthcoming).

54   For the concept of a global microhistory, see, for example, T. Andrade, A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord. Towards a Global Microhistory, in: Journal of World History 21 (2010), pp. 573–591; F. Trivellato, Is there a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?, in: California Italian Studies 2 (2011), http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq (accessed 22 March 2017); A. Epple, Globale Mikrogeschichte. Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte der Relationen, in: E. Hiebl and E. Langthaler (eds.), Im Kleinen das Große suchen. Mikrogeschichte in Theorie und Praxis, Innsbruck 2012, pp. 37–47; J.-P.A. Ghobrial, The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory, in: Past & Present 222 (2014) 1, pp. 51–93; H. Medick, Turning Global? Microhistory in Extension, in: Historische Anthropologie 24 (2016), pp. 241–252; G. Levi, Microhistoria e Historia Global, in: Historia Crítica 69 (2018), pp. 21–35; R. Bertrand and G. Calafat, La microhistoire globale: affaire(s) à

Conceptual contributions have reminded us time and again that global history is based on a combination of comparison and study of transfer.[55] However, there are many possible ways of relating the two operations, from the use of comparison as a heuristic tool for the study of transfers at the one end of the spectrum to the identification of transfers exclusively as a means to deal with "Galton's problem" at the other, with a series of more evenly balanced possibilities between.[56] Given the prevailing focus on connections, comparison has remained rather underdeveloped in much global historical research, not uncommonly on the basis of the problematic argument that comparative perspectives would reintroduce into the analysis the master concepts that transnational, entangled and ultimately global histories have set out to overcome.[57] Approaches that tackle the question of the global character of historical phenomena must deploy, however, a more balanced synergy of connection and comparison. The argument is not merely theoretical: consideration of the practical limitations on the identification of transfers and the analysis of their historical significance also suggests a greater role for systematic comparison in global historical research. Moreover, the expansion and further complication of the frame of references makes the production of an integrated picture of the global history of the prison just by focussing on connections nearly impossible, in simply practical terms. The frame of references that informed the circulation of knowledge about modern penal confinement became increasingly global. While zones of greater density of exchange can be identified, transfers of knowledge were multidirectional and the networks that structured and were in turn structured by these transfers were polycentric. Actors around the world did not all look at the same places and institutions to gain the knowledge they thought would help them refine their concepts, norms, and practices. Penologists in England, for example, came into contact with important texts relating to the Prussian penal reform of the 1830s only via the United States and William Crawford's visit to Philadelphia.[58] When in the 1870s prominent American prison reformers seeking to transform the established penitentiary system, which they believed had done nothing

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suivre, in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 73 (2018) 1, pp. 1–18. For a discussion on the potential and limits of global microhistory, see in this issue also the contribution of Harald Fischer-Tiné.

55   See, for example, Beckert and Sachsenmaier, Introduction, p. 4; R. Drayton and D. Motadel, The Futures of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 13 (2018) 1, pp. 1–21, at p. 3; P. O'Brien, Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 1 (2006) 1, pp. 3–39, at pp. 3–7; J. Osterhammel, Transferanalyse und Vergleich im Fernverhältnis, in: H. Kaelble and J. Schriewer (eds.), Vergleich und Transfer. Komparatistik in den Sozial-, Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt a. M. 2003, pp. 439–466.

56   See, among many others, M. Bloch, Für eine vergleichende Geschichtsbetrachtung der europäischen Gesellschaften, in: M. Middell and S. Sammler (eds.), Alles Gewordene hat Geschichte: Die Schule der Annales in ihren Texten 1929–1992, Leipzig 1994, pp. 121–167; H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka (eds.), Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt a. M. 1996; Kaelble and Schriewer (eds.), Vergleich und Transfer.

57   For a prominent early example of this reasoning, see M. Espagne, Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle, in: Genèses 17 (1994), pp. 112–121.

58   W. Crawford, William, [Letter to Roberts Vaux], New York, 2 July, 1833, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Archives, Vaux Family Papers, 1739–1836, Collection 684: Series 1a: Roberts Vaux, Incoming Correspondence, Box 4: 1832–1836, Folder 4.

to curb crime, began to experiment with a flexible period of imprisonment at the state of New York's Elmira Reformatory, they were particularly guided by their consideration of Walter Crofton's "Irish prison system", which was based in turn on the "mark system", a staged progression to release introduced by Alexander Maconochie in the penal colony of Norfolk Island in the South Pacific in 1840.[59] Chilean penal reformers attended not only to prison regimes in the United States, England, and France but also to penal experience in Spain, Belgium, and Bosnia, while the authorities of the national penitentiary in neighbouring Argentina – in order to bolster their own national reputation – published in the early twentieth century a booklet reprinting a series of reports in European newspapers that favourably contrasted the experience of the *penitenciaría* in Buenos Aires with European countries' continuing failure to reduce criminality.[60] The notion of a frame of references is intended precisely to grasp analytically this plurality of perspectives, which yielded manifold, multidirectional transfers between a wide variety of places. Using it to analyse the interconnectedness of developments in different parts of the world necessarily means attending to the extent, interruption or indeed absence of cross-border circulations. While the construction of a series of new central prisons in British India in the 1840s was guided in great part by reports about penitentiary regimes in England and the United States, cross-border transfers of knowledge became relatively less important for developments in the second half of the century, which depended much more on the circulation of know-how within India itself.[61] Similarly, when the authorities of the Grand Duchy of Hesse planned the building of a new penitentiary at Butzbach in the 1880s, they took hardly any account of contemporary penal developments outside Germany. They based their ideas on the architecture and organisation of the prison almost exclusively on expertise gained in the model institutions of Berlin-Moabit (whose builders and operators had for their part closely followed the example of Pentonville Prison), Bruchsal in Baden (for which, among others, Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary served as a model), and Freiburg im Breisgau.[62] Given the extensive, complex, decentred, and uneven nature of the frame of references, a global historical

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59   A. Maconochie, Crime and Punishment. The Mark System, Framed to Mix Persuasion with Punishment, and Make Their Effect Improving, Yet Their Operation Severe, London 1846; Idem, Norfolk Island, London 1847; Idem, Secondary Punishment. The Mark System, London 1848; W. Crofton, Remarks on Sundry Topics Considered in the International Penitentiary Congress of London, in: E.C. Wines, Report on the International Penitentiary Congress of London, held July 3–13, 1872, Washington 1873, pp. 354–358; T. Carey, Mountjoy: The Story of a Prison, Cork 2000; F.B. Sanborn, The Elmira Reformatory, in: S.J. Barrows (ed.), Reports Prepared for the International Prison Commission, Washington 1900, pp. 28–47; R.G. Waite, From Penitentiary to Reformatory: Alexander Maconochie, Walter Crofton, Zebulon Brockway and the Opening of the Elmira Reformatory, in: Criminal Justice History 12 (1991), pp. 85–106.

60   España – Proyecto de ley de prisiones, in: Revista de Prisiones (Santiago de Chile) 1 (1889) 3, pp. 225–242; E. Pages, Los establecimientos penales en Bélgica, in: Ibid. 1 (1889) 7, pp. 647–652; 2 (1890) 1, pp. 3–7; 2 (1890) 2 y 3, pp. 87–91; 2 (1890) 4 y 5, pp. 203–209; F.J. Herboso, Estudios penitenciarios, in: Ibid. 2 (1890) 2 y 3, pp. 100–117; 2 (1890) 4 y 5, pp. 218–242; 2 (1890) 6 y 7, pp. 335–346; 2 (1890) 8 y 9, pp. 463–476; La Penitenciaría Nacional de Buenos Aires juzgada en el extranjero, Buenos Aires 1908.

61   Offermann, Gefängnisse in der Kolonie, koloniale Gefängnisse, pp. 156–179, 286–287.

62   Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt, G21A, 2275–2280.

approach to the history of the prison – and not to that history alone – has certainly to complement the focus on connections with systematic comparison.

Comparison is in fact already involved in any attempt to differentiate centres and peripheries in historical processes. Generally speaking, the identification of similarities and differences is crucial to determining what relationship may exist between developments that seem to share a global dimension, to identify what is actually global in the phenomena under consideration. The history of the prison again illustrates the point. Comparison in this case generates essential insights, revealing, among other things, that the global evolution of the modern prison through the "long" nineteenth century was informed by a shared set of ends and means – which is not to say a unitary idea of what the modern prison actually was. As a central institution of punishment, the prison was always intended to serve the four main goals that over time came to constitute, to put it oxymoronically, the classic catalogue of modern correctional goals: retribution, incapacitation, deterrence and rehabilitation. These four ends were served by a number of practices, among them solitary confinement, corporal punishment, compulsory labour and progressive reward. Ends and means could be combined in manifold ways, but while prison regimes around the world might vary considerably in the importance they assigned to any element – in their emphasis, for example, on deterrence or on rehabilitation, or how much use might be made of solitary confinement or corporal punishment – systematic comparison reveals that they shared all of them. All these goals and all these practices played a role everywhere a prison was built and operated in accordance with modern ideas. Such insights put into question the interpretations and explanations offered by dominant narratives of the history of the modern prison. One consequence among many is that it can be argued that rather than employing the widely used term, "colonial prison" – implying a categorial difference between the prisons of the colonial world and their counterparts in the metropoles – it would be more appropriate to speak of "prisons in the colonies", given the differences of degree rather than of fundamental character.[63] What is more, a comparative approach generates findings that are at least as important to explaining the global proliferation of the prison across nearly every cultural, economic, religious, political, and climatic context as those obtained by the identification and analysis of connections: a crucial factor in the worldwide career of the prison was precisely its multifunctional character.

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63   For the notion of the "colonial prison" see, among many others, Arnold, The Colonial Prison; S. Hynd, "Insufficiently Cruel" or "Simply Inefficient"? Discipline, Punishment and Reform in the Gold Coast Prison System, c. 1850–1957, in: V. Miller and J. Campbell (eds.), Transnational Penal Cultures. New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance, London 2015, pp. 19–35; D. Paton, No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Foundation, 1780–1870, Durham 2004; T.C. Sherman, Tensions of Colonial Punishment: Perspectives on Recent Developments in the Study of Coercive Networks in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, in: History Compass 7 (2009) 2, pp. 659–677.

3. Polycentric Histories

By calling the conventional metageographical categorizations of historiography into question, global historical approaches touch conceptions not only of national but also of area history in a fundamental way.[64] However, in the latter case, the possible effects are far from unambiguous. An answer to the question whether area history finds itself affirmed by the boom in global history – given its ability to provide expertise for a non-Eurocentric history of entanglements and interdependencies – or, on the contrary, contested in its essence – based as it is on notions of bounded spatial entities that global history aspires to do away with as constitutive frames for the production of historical knowledge – depends not least on the concept of global history upon which the judgement is based. Although more differentiated typologies of global historical approaches have been proposed,[65] for the argument to be made here, one very basic distinction is sufficient: that between "soft" and "hard" versions of global history, as drawn, for example, by Frederic Cooper.[66] It concerns the difference in the role of the global in the framing of knowledge. On the "soft" side of the spectrum are efforts to escape the boundedness of historical analysis in terms of nations, continents, cultures, civilizations or areas in which the focus of interest ultimately remains the history of a nation, region or area. In such a case, the global can be characterized as a distant horizon denoting the ultimate container of processes and structures that cross spatial boundaries of all kinds. In the "hard" variant, the global moves from the unexamined background to be the centre of theoretical interest. Historical phenomena are studied in their global dimension: it is their globality that is examined, by way of analysing their local meanings and significances in a sufficient number of case studies around the world. In other words, in the second version, global history is not merely a perspective but also an object of study. Contributions to global history written from an area point of view are "soft" global history. There have been very many such, given that the majority of the historians who have most notably shaped the field have come from a background of a specialization in the history of a non-European region. These studies help advance our understanding of historical structures and processes in decisive ways, both by making geographically far-reaching connections visible and by decentring historiographical perspectives. Ultimately, however, they remain limited in their capacity to decentre. Eurocentric views are destabilized, but research interests continue to be centred on a single historical space that is examined in its entanglement with other world regions, and the production of historical knowledge takes place along these lines. When such area-centred versions of

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64 For the concept of area histories and their historical development, see, for example, B. Schäbler, Einleitung. Das Studium der Weltregionen (Area Studies) zwischen Fachdisziplinen und der Öffnung zum Globalen: Eine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Annäherung, in: Idem (ed.), Area Studies und die Welt. Weltregionen und neue Globalgeschichte, Wien 2007, pp. 11–44.

65 For example, Conrad, Globalgeschichte, pp. 10–12; A. Dirlik, Performing the World. Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histor(ies), in: Journal of World History 16 (2005), pp. 391–410.

66 Cooper, How Global Do We Want Our Intellectual History to Be?, pp. 283–285.

global historical studies have provided deeper insights into the history of other regions of the world, those regions have mainly been in the "West". The historical origins of area studies, the roots that global history shares with post-colonial studies, and global history's goal of historicizing modern "Western" self-descriptions by demonstrating their dependence on (Western) Europe's and the United States' external "others" explain much of this tendency.

Area historians have indeed been less susceptible to "internalist" analytical perspectives than historians of the nation state. This is one reason why area histories are not challenged by global historical approaches in the same way as are national histories. As the contributions to this issue of the journal make clear, there has been a long tradition of area historians treating their topics as entangled histories – *avant la lettre* – extending beyond their regions' borders. Area historians have also worked with a greater awareness of the constructed nature of the spatial frameworks they employ. And they have been far more obliged to take account of the internal diversity of their geographical fields of study than have scholars concerned with national histories. They have thus been less prone to essentialism. Area histories are important to the project of global history not just for the indispensable knowledge they provide about the past of non-Western regions, but also for their familiarity with the switch between different levels of observation, from micro to macro, from local to world region and beyond, along what Jacques Revel famously called the "jeux d'échelles", the scale shifts between research perspectives.[67]

It is obvious and has repeatedly been emphasized that it makes no sense to think the relationship of global and area or national histories as alternatives or competitors.[68] Although discussed by some scholars, the death of area history as a result of the "global turn" is neither imminent nor even foreseeable.[69] In theory, at least, global history, area history, regional history, national history and local history complement each other. There are many histories that can be meaningfully analysed at different scales, the history of the prison again providing an illustrative example. But research at any one scale has to take account of the insights gained at others. It is impossible to construct an adequate history of national prison systems in the "long" nineteenth century while ignoring the cross-border circulation of penological knowledge and more generally the global career of the modern prison since historical actors began assessing their own prison systems in the light of developments elsewhere.[70] National histories of the prison likewise have to address the often very marked differences at the subnational or local levels.[71] A global

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67 For the concept of the "jeux d'échelles", see J. Revel, Micro-analyse et construction du social, in: Idem (ed.), Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience, Paris 1996, pp. 15–36.

68 Among others, S. Subrahmanyam, Aux origines de l'histoire globale, Paris 2014, p. 63.

69 Such a passing away has been diagnosed, for example, by G. Franzinetti, The Strange Death of Area Studies and the Normative Turn, in: Quaderni storici 150 (2015), pp. 835–847.

70 For the argument to historicize comparison, see, for example, A.L. Stoler, Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies, in: The Journal of American History 88 (2001), pp. 829–865.

71 See, for example, for the case of England M. DeLacy, Prison Reform in Lancashire, 1700–1850: A Study in Local Administration, Stanford 1986; S. McConville, English Local Prisons 1860–1900: Next Only to Death, London

history of the prison, on the other hand, will be unable to produce a convincing account without integrating the results of research on penal regimes at the national and local levels – which implies, and this needs to be emphasized, not just reading a now extensive body of secondary literature but also conducting original research on a reasonable range of cases. This is even necessary in matters that have already been extensively treated, such as the history of the prison in the United States or Great Britain, or in Philadelphia or London more particularly. There are, of course, many topics that are best studied at the regional, national or local rather than global level. But the appropriateness of a specific perspective cannot be judged from an "internalist" point of view: the decision requires a certain openness of perspective. It is in this sense, of an "alertness to global or international connections and comparisons", that we should understand Christopher Bayly's widely quoted dictum that all historians are – or should be – global historians now.[72]

"Soft" versions of global history, however, ultimately operate in the mode of extension.[73] This is most evident in the case of the many studies in which historians of Europe endeavour to connect with global history, enlarging their perspectives first and foremost along the lines of colonial expansion. Even much of the work done under the rubric of the new imperial history – for some considerable time, at least – can be said to have done little to decentre perspectives.[74] The same may be said of global historical approaches from an area history standpoint, even though they do indeed effect a decisive shift of historiographical perspective away from Eurocentric narratives. The focus of interest in "hard" versions of global history, however, is different – another reason why they do not compete with area histories. In taking the globality of historical phenomena as one of its chief objects of research, this type of global history involves a much more fundamental shift of perspective. In this stricter sense, by no means all historians are – or should be – global historians.

"Hard" global history is not to be mistaken for the exclusive practise of "macro-history" or the writing of historical syntheses. In order to draw conclusions regarding the significance of cross-border connections for local developments and to establish the similarities and differences between such developments across the world, "hard" global historical approaches have to combine macro and micro perspectives on the past – in the case of the history of the prison, the analysis of the global career of the modern prison in the "long" nineteenth century, on the one hand, and the study of the basis on which individual carceral institutions were built, organised and operated on the other. Far from subsuming or passing over local particularities in a bird's-eye view, "hard" versions of global history

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1995; E. Stockdale, A Study of Bedford Prison, 1660–1877, London 1977; S. Webb and B. Webb, English Prisons under Local Government, London 1922; J.R.S. Whiting, Prison Reform in Gloucestershire, 1776–1820: A Study of the Work of Sir George Onesiphorus Paul, London 1975.

72   C.A. Bayly, The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons, Oxford 2004, p. 469.

73   On extension as a mode of operation in the humanities and social sciences, see J. Osterhammel, Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 27 (2001) 3, pp. 464–479.

74   M. Pernau and H. Jordheim, Global History Meets Area Studies. Ein Werkstattbericht, in: H-Soz-Kult, 14 November 2017, <www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4229> (accessed 12 April 2018).

have to shift along the whole range of scales if they are to answer the question of what was actually global about the phenomena under study. But rather than deploying a concentrically structured perspective in the manner of their "soft" counterparts, they create polycentric histories. Much more interested in the global dimension of their objects of study than in the global context and the wider entanglement of developments in a specific village, country or area, they consider historical processes and structures from a variety of angles. Aiming for a better understanding of the interdependent processes of the universalisation and particularisation of penal confinement, and thus equally concerned, for example, with the histories of the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, Pentonville Prison in London, the *cárcel penitenciaria* in Santiago de Chile, the Central Prison in Agra, the *penitenciaría nacional* in Buenos Aires, the *Zuchthaus* of Butzbach in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, or the *pénitencier* in Conakry, a "hard" global perspective on the history of the prison produces what has been called a history "à parts égales".[75] Contrary to the vocal critique of certain area historians, it can be argued that "hard" versions of global history are ultimately more effective in moving beyond the West-rest axis than are global histories written from an area standpoint – the frequently made but infrequently substantiated claim that they further the study of South-South entanglements notwithstanding. From a "hard" global historical perspective, Western Europe and the United States can more easily be conceived as two "areas" among others. Or, depending on the meaning the term is given, the qualifier "area" can be replaced with less difficulty by a probably more productive, since more flexible, concept of "regional" histories: "Latin American", "Asian" and "African" history are in any event generally divided, in practice, into different regional sub-fields, while other regional approaches, such as Atlantic or Mediterranean history or the history of the Indian Ocean, cut across the spatialization of "area" histories. Moreover, "hard" versions of global history are at worst not less suited to deal with the limitations of connections than are the "soft", area-focused variants, since the scope of historical phenomena is one of their central research interests. They probably even tend to be more attentive to ruptures of relations, blockages of circulation, and the thinning-out or even absence of entanglements.[76]

Although histories of globalization are a speciality of "hard" global history, not even in this variant should global history be equated with the historiography of globalization.[77] A concept such as the frame of references, which maps transfers of knowledge and ideas from the historical actors' point of view, is indeed suited to identify and analyse processes of globalization. But like a network approach, the study of historical developments in

75   B. Romain, L'histoire à parts égales. Récits d'une rencontre Orient-Occident (XVIe-XVIIe siècles), Paris 2011.

76   A prominent argument for a thorough examination of the limits of interconnections in the context of global studies has been made by an area historian: F. Cooper, What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective, in: African Affairs 100 (2001), pp. 189–213.

77   This equation has been made by a series of prominent contributions to the literature on global history. For example, M. Geyer and C. Bright, World History in a Global Age, in: American Historical Review 100 (1995) 4, 1995, pp. 1034–1060; Osterhammel, "Weltgeschichte", pp. 460–461; L. Hunt, Writing History in the Global Era, New York 2014, pp. 44–77. In later texts, Jürgen Osterhammel has differentiated the history of globalization and global history. See, for example, Globalizations, in: Bentley (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of World History, pp. 89–104.

terms of their frame of references does not just produce knowledge of the concrete connections between them and of the density and direction of transfers – or the distribution of centres and peripheries, if one likes; it also reveals the fragmentary character of exchange and the limits of entanglement. Since the concept focuses attention, even more than do many network approaches, on what was moved along the connections, on what actors actually referred to and on what finally resulted from the relationship, it brings with it a great capacity for the identification of difference and the understanding of particularities. This corresponds to "hard" global history's interest in going beyond the identification of connections, entanglements and world-systems – and thereby also beyond the history of globalization – to determine what was actually global about the phenomena under study.[78] Recognition of the importance of understanding local developments not only in their interdependence across long distances and their similarities across different political, cultural, economic, religious or climatic contexts, but also in their specificity and singularity, entails a re-equilibration of what Jeremy Adelman has called global history's privileging of motion over space.[79] The more general recourse to systematic comparison that is called for by this also has the potential to undo euro- and other centrisms and so support an *histoire générale*.[80]

We have seen that "hard" versions of global history are immune to many of the fundamental criticisms levelled against the field. There is no teleological vision underlying their production of historical knowledge; they certainly do not imply rejection of smaller scales of historical experience in favour of a more-or-less exclusive interest in macro structures and processes; they are not at all blind to ruptures in the web of interconnection, to obstructions to circulation, or to the unentangled; and they are at far less risk of reproducing Western or other "centrist" mind-sets in their explanation and interpretation of the past than are "soft" versions of global history. At the same time, the practice of global history as polycentric undeniably faces a number of important challenges that concentric perspectives are spared, at least to some degree. But although such concerns have to be taken seriously, "hard" versions of global history do not necessarily produce "history light".[81] Given the ambition to marshal together a significant variety of local processes in different parts of the world and examine their similarities, entan-

78   For differentiated discussions of the relationship between global history and the history of globalization see, among others, B. Mazlish, Comparing Global History to World History; B.K. Gills and W.R. Thompson (eds.), Globalization and Global History, London 2006; M. Rempe, Jenseits der Globalisierung: Musikermobilität und Musikaustausch im 20. Jahrhundert, in: B. Barth, S. Gänger and N.P. Petersson (eds.), Globalgeschichten. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven, Frankfurt a. M. 2014, pp. 205–227.

79   Adelman, What Is Global History Now?

80   See, for example, H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka, Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung, in: Idem (eds.), Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt a. M. 1996, pp. 9–45, at p. 26; R. Grew, The Case for Comparing Histories, in: The American Historical Review 85 (1980) 4, pp. 763–778, at p. 777.

81   Margrit Pernau has warned against the danger that global history could turn into a "history light" due to an abandonment of the discipline's minimal professional standards: Global history. Wegbereiter für einen neuen Kolonialismus?, in: Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists, 17.12.2004, www.connections. clio-online.net/article/id/artikel-572 (accessed 12 February 2015).

glements, and differences on a global scale, the effort called for is substantial. But since "hard" global histories must take their examination of historical phenomena down to the micro-level in order to assess their globality, the risk of such broad approaches flattening out the complexity of developments is ultimately limited. Sound knowledge of regional and local particularities is indispensable for this kind of research, which cannot rely on secondary literature alone. It rather calls for thorough source-based explorations and the work in the archives that they involve.

This does, however, highlight the problem of feasibility. Scholars adopting "hard" global historical approaches are not only obliged to acquire specialized knowledge of more places than do their colleagues practising "soft" versions: the cultural, political, social, economic and environmental differences between the places they consider will generally be considerably wider. The research effort entailed by the practise of global history as polycentric history is very high – in sharp contrast to the not uncommon picture of global historians as monolingual consumers of studies conducted by others, with little if any interest in painstaking archival work. To stay with the same illustrative example, considerable resources, of time, above all, but also financial, are required to study in detail penal systems in the United States, the United Kingdom, Chile, Norfolk Island, British India, Argentina, Hesse-Darmstadt, and French Guinea – down to the construction and operation of particular prisons in all their cross-border entanglements – as well as penal developments more generally elsewhere in the world, over a period such as the "long" nineteenth century.[82] However, the difference of effort as compared to other approaches is ultimately only one of degree. The crucial question about the scope and scale of global history research projects in their "hard" version concerns neither the quality nor the practicability of the work. It concerns rather the willingness of historians to engage in this kind of research, especially in an academic culture that often does not reward very wide-ranging projects that require great deal of input over a longer period of time before generating publishable output – which preferably has to take the form of journal articles rather than monographs or collective volumes. And it also concerns the willingness of the scholarly community to support such time- and money-consuming research through its systems of funding.

This is not to deny the existence of qualitative challenges with the potential to seriously limit the ambitions of global historical research. Linguistic skills, in particular, determine the potential scope of global historians' work. They are hardly ever so adequate as not to affect the way scholars frame their perspectives on the global dimension of their topic, their preparedness to learn new languages notwithstanding. As in response to other fundamental questions regarding the expertise necessary to deal with a broad array of contexts and coping with quantity of empirical work involved in global historical studies, the most common reaction to the problem has been to champion collaborative forms of research. In recently asserting that "the edited volume and the work of translation are the

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82   S. Scheuzger, The Global History of the Prison in the Long Nineteenth Century (in preparation).

natural media of global history", Richard Drayton and David Motadel spoke for many.[83] It is true that the volume of material to be dealt with is potentially overwhelming for the individual historian, just as it is a fact that the language requirements for studies that aim to cover developments in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa in their cross-border entanglement can hardly ever be met by a single scholar. But it is also true that teamwork cannot compensate for all that is lost without the benefit of a single historian's approach to a subject. The problem of coherence is considerable. In too many instances, even collective volumes claiming to embody a comparative perspective have hardly got beyond what Ernst Troeltsch characterised a century ago as a "bookbinder's synthesis".[84] There can be no doubt of the value of intelligently conceived edited volumes that meaningfully interrelate the individual contributions and do not leave all the effort of comparison to the reader. But the limitations of this format are also obvious, particularly when a global history approach aims not just to compare but also to identify and analyse wide-ranging connections between different world regions. Very worthwhile in themselves, a series of recently published collective volumes, first steps in the treatment of punishment in global historical perspective, testifies to anthologies' tendency to the aggregation of case studies,[85] only marginally contributing to the study of the global interconnectedness of penal developments across the world.

Collaborative research is not a *sine qua non* of global history. Hasty dismissal of the single-author monograph and promotion of the edited volume as the only feasible and adequate format for the study of historical phenomena in their global dimension risks the loss of important potentials for the production of knowledge. The single-author study's capacity to propose coherent interpretations, trace cross-border circulations, shift smoothly between macro and the micro levels of analysis and compare cases within a consistent framework – in sum, to think things together – is unrivalled by other modes of historiographical representation. No inevitable falling back into new "master narratives" is entailed by the study of globality of historical phenomena from the point of view of a single scholar.[86] And argument regarding the single historian's practical inability to marshal the sources required to study events and developments in their global dimension is sometimes not much more than a rejection of the undeniably demanding workload

83   Drayton and Motadel, The Futures of Global History, p. 15.

84   E. Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme. Erstes Buch: Das logische Problem der Geschichtsphilosophie (1922), Berlin 2008 (Ernst Troeltsch: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, vol. 16/2), p. 1029. For a small typology of collaboratively organized forms of comparative work, see M. van der Linden, Transnational Labour History: Explorations, Aldershot 2003, pp. 189–190.

85   C. Anderson (ed.), A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies, London 2018; Ch. de Vito and A. Lichtenstein (eds.), Global Convict Labour, Leiden 2015; F. Dikötter and I. Brown (eds.), Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America, London 2007; V. Miller and J. Campbell (eds.), Transnational Penal Cultures. New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance, London 2015.

86   The argument for such a regression has been made, for example, by C. Douki and Ph. Minard, Histoire globale, histoires connectées: Un changement d'échelle historiographique? Introduction, in: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 54 (2007) 5, pp. 7–21, at p. 18.

implied by this kind of research. In the end, the appropriate research design and publication format are essentially dictated by the object of study.

I would maintain, for instance, that my ability to read English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Italian fits me to write a worthwhile global history of the prison in the "long" nineteenth century. This is the case, however, only because the idea of the modern prison as an institution of punishment for the most part has its roots in Western Europe and the United States, and because the globalization of the institution was closely associated with the history of European expansion. Furthermore, these language skills equally have qualified me for the study of the global history of the prison with a specific focus on the global career of the prison, and on the cross-border, far-reaching circulation of knowledge, ideas and norms, and the role of these in the development of prison regimes in different contexts around the world, as well the ways in which experiences with penal regimes transformed the bodies of knowledge transferred. However forceful these arguments based on historical circumstance and the particular focus of research, it cannot be denied that penal developments in vast and important territories, from the Ottoman and the Russian Empires to China and Japan, remain beyond the scope of a historian with these linguistic skills. He or she is thus compelled to cover them through the literature available in the languages possessed – which does indeed exist for relevant aspects of the history of the prison.[87] For the study of other parts of the world, he or she will depend on "colonial archives", another serious limitation on the perspectives that can be taken into account, the ability to read the sources "against the grain" notwithstanding. Yet specialists in the history of punishment in colonial contexts frequently do not have any broader a basis in terms of sources. Furthermore, the challenge of integrating subaltern agency into the picture – not only of that of prisoners, but of wardens, prisoners' families, the wider public – is a notorious problem for any historian dealing with penal regimes, not just in contexts of colonial domination but also in Europe and the United States.

There is, of course, global historical research that calls for a range of language skills hardly achievable by a single scholar. The proliferation of the prison through the "long" nineteenth century was constantly legitimized in terms of its civilizing mission, in Europe and the United States as in the "rest of the world". Study of the notion of "civiliza-

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87   See, for example, K.F. Schull, Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity, Edinburgh 2014; U. Adak, Central Prisons (Hapishane-I Umumi) in Istanbul and Izmir in the Late Ottoman Empire: In-between Ideal and Reality, in: Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association 4 (2017) 1, pp. 73–94; Idem, On the Margins of the City: Izmir Prison in the Late Ottoman Empire, in: A. Chappatte, U. Freitag and N. Lafi (eds.), Understanding the City through Its Margins. Pluridisciplinary Perspectives from Case Studies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Abingdon 2018, pp. 77–93; B.F. Adams, The Politics of Punishment: Prison Reform in Russia, 1863–1917, DeKalb 1996; E. Kaczynska, Sibérie: La plus grande prison du monde, 1850–1914, in: J.G. Petit (ed.) : La prison, le bagne et l'histoire, Genève 1984, pp. 213–224; Dikötter, Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China; B. Bakken (ed.), Crime, Punishment, and Policing in China, Lanham 2005; K. Mühlhahn, Criminal Justice in China. A History, Cambridge, MA 2009; M. Tsien, Overlapping Histories: Writing Prison and Penal Practices in Late Imperial and Early Republican China, in: Journal of World History 20 (2009) 1, pp. 69–97; D. Botsman, Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan, Princeton 2005.

tion" or "civility" in a global perspective, to take just this obvious example, makes very different demands in terms of the variety and depth of linguistic expertise required. A recent project on this theme – adopting a rather "soft" global historical perspective, with its focus on Europe and Asia – thus draws on the combined skills of a carefully considered team.[88] Their work has shown that, lying between the edited volume and the single-author monograph, the collectively written monograph has a great though as yet little explored potential as a form for the presentation of the results of global historical studies.[89] Despite this innovative approach, the volume is still marked by a clear division of labour in the writing of the chapters. And although the project brought together scholars who were able, between them, to deal with sources in thirteen languages, the book was written in English. In this, it offers yet another illustration of the fact that collaborative publications – monographs even more than edited volumes – are ultimately more prone than single-author works to reproduce and reinforce what is probably the most problematic trend in global history: the dominance of English and the academic hierarchization of languages even in a field of historical scholarship committed to the decentring of perspectives.

Emphatically and justifiably rejecting the idea that global history is a field dominated by works of synthesis rather than by research based on archives and primary sources, Sanjay Subrahmanyam declared "qu'il est impossible d'écrire une histoire globale de nulle part" – that no extra-terrestrial point of view is available to writers of global history.[90] It is possible, however, to write global history from a variety of places. For its "hard" version, this is even indispensable. The alternation of perspectives – each, for Subrahmanyam, "fonction directe d'une formation à la lecture de textes, d'archives et d'images"[91] – implies, so to speak, a polyphony of historical actors under study.[92] Going further than this, many advocates of collaborative forms for the writing of global history seem also to argue a need for the multiplication of historians' voices within particular projects and publications as a structural consequence of the challenges encountered by the practice of polycentric history. However, merely aggregating the contributions of specialists in different national, regional, or area histories does not result in good global history. Not only does their collaboration have to be carefully conceived, in "hard", polycentric versions of global historical research, they also have to be able to shift scale beyond their specialist geographical sphere, connecting it with other contexts by way of comparison as well as by identifying and analysing transfers and entanglements. This implies a break with the centricity of regional specialists' perspectives that goes beyond the critique of Eurocentrism. Ultimately, the difference between collaborative or individual global historical re-

88   Pernau and Jordheim, Global History Meets Area Studies.
89   M. Pernau et al., Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe, Oxford 2015.
90   Subrahmanyam, Aux origines de l'histoire globale, pp. 62–63.
91   Ibid., p. 63.
92   For the argument that a crucial potential of global history exists in new ways of framing, sequencing and juxtaposing the sources of historical actors, see, for example, M. Dusinberre, Japan, Global History, and the Great Silence, in: History Workshop Journal 83 (2017) 1, pp. 130–150.

search is again a matter of degree rather than of quality. The decentring of perspectives is in great part a matter of historians' ability and inclination to change their sites of study.[93] An individual historian of penal regimes can become an expert in the history of as many sites in Europe, the Americas, Asia, African, and Oceania – "muddying [her or his] boots in the bogs of 'micro-history'"[94] – as is necessary to be able to write a global history of the prison, for example.

However great the effort made, the number of relevant contexts omitted by an individual historian's source-based research will nonetheless most likely be greater than in the case of a team. The gain, on the other hand, is the capacity of the single author to produce a coherent account of complex developments. While the workload involved in multiplying sites of historical knowledge production is definitely lower for members of a research group, as compared to the historian working alone on a "hard" global historical project, the effort required for teams to analyse and present their material they have gathered so that the result is more than the sum of the parts should not be underestimated.

There is no royal road to writing "hard", polycentric global history. The advantages and disadvantages of research designs and publication formats must be weighed in every case, and will depend on the topic, the research question, or the period under consideration. It would, for example, be not only possible but also well worthwhile to examine the pre-modern history of the prison – of places of confinement, rather – in global perspective.[95] Such a project, however, would more insistently call for collaborative research than does the global history of the modern prison. Research on phenomena in pre-modern contexts also raises the question of the meaning of the "global" in particularly emphatic form. This question is, as has been shown here, central to the distinctive concern of global history in its "hard" version – which also enables it, incidentally, to span the divides between historical epochs still strongly evident in both the theory and practice of global history. "Soft" versions treat the globality of the historical phenomenon under study as a premise or contribute to the research on the question by focussing on a specific spatial context, yet without being primarily interested in examining the question. This does not mean however, that area or national histories' smaller-scale examinations may not raise substantive questions about the globality of phenomena.

There are two final observations to be made regarding the central issue of globality. First, there cannot be clear and absolute criteria that determine whether a historical phenomenon qualifies as global or not. The inability to provide a simple, quantitative, *a priori* index – in how many countries, across how many continents? – is however no argument against the validity of the concept. The globality of any historical event or process has

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93   N.Z. Davis, Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World, in: History and Theory 50 (2011), pp. 188–202, at p. 194.

94   S. Subrahmanyam, Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia, in: Modern Asian Studies 31 (1997) 3, pp. 735–762, at p. 750.

95   For a first approach, see, F. Bretschneider and N. Muchnik, The Transformations of Confinement in a Global Perspective (c. 1650–1800), in: X. Rousseaux (ed.), A Cultural History of Crime and Punishment in the Age of Enlightenment, London (forthcoming).

to be determined in each individual case, made convincing on the basis of meticulous inquiry. In the case of the modern prison, it can be argued that in certain regions of the world – in some parts of Africa, for example – the process of its establishment as a central institution of punishment took almost the whole of the twentieth century. Just the same, there are strong reasons, as outlined above, to treat the modern prison as a truly global phenomenon from the 1920s onwards. By way of anecdote, one may note that as early as the turn of the century a penitentiary had been established at the very end of the world, though the radial building of the Ushuaia penitentiary in Argentinian Patagonia, which came into operation in 1904 and became famous as "la cárcel del fin del mundo",[96] is not even marked on the map at the Eastern State Penitentiary.

The question of the geographic extent of a phenomenon, of course – and this is the second point to be made – is not an end in itself. Any answer requires the exploration of its meaning and historical significance in a wide variety of localities. Such an analysis thus produces important insights that contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon in general. To what is still the central question of all research in prison history – "Why prison?"[97] – it brings, for example, new and fundamentally important explanatory elements: a global perspective can show that the prison's multifunctionality has been a crucial factor in the global career of an institution that has never met the high expectations of it as a supposedly effective means of reducing crime. It was the multiplicity of goals motivating contemporary actors that saw prison reform become a continuous, world-embracing process extending from the eighteenth century to the present day. While "soft" versions of the global historical approach may be able to overcome "internalist" explanations of prison reform, "hard" versions also decentre historiographical perspectives on this institution so central to the way modern societies deal with norm-breaking and delinquency. In doing so, they are able to challenge long-established narratives about the global spread and development of the prison – diffusionist and generally one-dimensional in their analysis, in terms of either a Whiggish history of progress, a history of social control and discipline, or a history of colonial oppression and domination. In a certainly controversial contribution to the debate on global history, David A. Bell has claimed, with polemical but justified acerbity, that "the hope of taking part in a powerful and exciting intellectual trend (coupled, perhaps, with the prospect of winter research trips to Barbados or Goa) has drawn in many scholars with little concern for the original political stakes".[98] Central to those was the endeavour to decentre scholarly vision. Area histories have contributed in decisive ways to this through their fundamental research on the "others" of Eurocentric worldviews.[99] But to comprehend the world as

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96   C.P. Vairo, El presidio de Ushuaia, 2 vols, Buenos Aires 1997/2006; L. Caimari, Apenas un delincuente: Crimen, castigo y cultura en la Argentina, 1880–1955, Buenos Aires 2012 (2004), pp. 62–73.

97   D. Scott (ed.), Why Prison?, Cambridge, UK 2015.

98   D. A. Bell, This Is What Happens When Historians Overuse the Idea of the Network, in: New Republic, 26 October 2013, https://newrepublic.com/article/114709/world-connecting-reviewed-historians-overuse-network-metaphor (accessed 10 November 2018).

99   Schäbler, Einleitung, p. 40.

a place of diversity and unity, to explore the interdependent processes of particularization and universalization produced by globalizations, and to study fragmentations and interconnections, differences and similarities between peoples' histories from the local to the global level, global history has to be thought and practised as a polycentric history.