Introduction: Transimperial Webs of Knowledge at the Margins of Imperial Europe*

Claire Louise Blaser / Monique Ligtenberg / Josephine Selander

In recent years, a large and growing body of literature has pointed to the fact that European countries with seemingly little affiliation to colonialism such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Austria, or Switzerland were invested in the projects of European imperial powers. This scholarship speaks of "colonialism at the margins" or "colonialism without colonies" to refer to how nations with no, scattered, short-lived, or intra-European Empires were implicated in and shaped by imperial culture.[1] A major contribution of this approach has been to further illuminate the limitations of the nation state as the central category of analysis in studying European imperialism. Scholars of "colonialism at the margins" understand imperialism beyond direct political rule and highlight its economic, cultural, and scientific dimensions. In doing so, they take Ann Laura Stoler and Frederik Cooper's oft-quoted plea to understand the "metropole and colony in a

* The publication of this thematic issue would not have been possible without the generous support and guidance of Harald Fischer-Tiné from the Chair for History of the Modern World at ETH Zurich and Monika Wulz from the Centre for History of Knowledge Zurich (ZGW). For numerous critical comments on earlier versions of the manuscripts, we thank Bernhard Schär, Nadin Heé, Christa Wirth, Andreas Eckert, Nikolay Kamenov, Philippe Bornet, Christoph Landolt, Staffan Bergwik, Elife Biçer-Deveci, Alexa Stiller, and Philipp Krauer.

1 The literature is discussed in more detail below. For outlines of the concepts and overviews of the field, see J. Höglund/L.A. Burnett, Introduction: Nordic Colonialisms and Scandinavian Studies, in: Scandinavian Studies 91 (2019) 1–2, p. 1; B. Lüthi/F. Falk/P. Purtschert, Colonialism without colonies: examining blank spaces in colonial studies, in: National Identities 18 (2016) 1, pp. 1–9; P. Purtschert/H. Fischer-Tiné, Introduction: The End of Innocence. Debating Colonialism in Switzerland, in: P. Purtschert/H. Fischer-Tiné (eds.), Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series, Basingstoke 2015, pp. 1–25.

Comparativ | Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung 31 (2021) Heft 5 / 6, S. 527–539.
DOI: 10.26014/j.comp.2021.05-06.01

single analytic field"[2] further than previous research. Numerous studies in what is today known as "New Imperial History" have made important contributions in "provincializing Europe" and overcoming the Eurocentrism that has haunted history writing since the nineteenth century by stressing the significance of Asian, African, Pacific, and American actors, environments, and institutions in the co-construction of seemingly "European" values such as modernity.[3] Yet, as has previously been pointed out, these studies have also had two major limitations: First, there is a dominant focus on the British Empire, especially on "the Raj", which has turned into somewhat of a standard against which other colonial histories are viewed.[4] Second, as historian Sebastian Conrad reminds us in the case of the German Empire, many of them are "wedded to a national-history paradigm, hardly cognisant of other empires and of the broader world around them".[5] Doing New Imperial History from the margins entails broadening the perspective to include those countries whose forms of colonialism were "marginal" to hegemonic European colonialisms in the past but also in the present, e.g. by having been relegated to the historiographical margins.

More recently, a number of studies and academic conferences have started to investigate colonialism without colonies from a transimperial perspective, revealing European colonialisms as "shared" projects built on "common basic assumptions as well as patterns of thought and techniques".[6] The methodological approach of transimperial history, as proposed by Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, brings not only metropole and colony, but also "different kinds of empires 'into one analytic field'" and thus puts the spotlight on

2 F. Cooper / A. L. Stoler, Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda, in: F. Cooper / A. L. Stoler (eds.), Tensions of Empire, Berkeley, CA 1997, pp. 1–56, at 4.

3 The famous formulation goes back to D. Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, Princeton 2000; influential works include M. Sinha, Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly' Englishman and the 'Effeminate' Bengali, Manchester 1995; A. Burton, At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain, Berkeley, CA ; Los Angeles, CA 1998; C. Hall, Civilising subjects: colony and metropole in the English imagination, 1830–1867, Chicago, IL 2002; B. Kundrus, Moderne Imperialisten: das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien, Köln 2003; K. Raj, Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900, New York, NY 2007; good discussions of the field can be found in S. Conrad/S. Randeria, Geteilte Geschichten – Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt, in: S. Conrad / S. Randeria (eds.), Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main 2002, pp. 9–49; and in G. K. Bhambra, Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination, Basingstoke 2007.

4 Antoinette Burton drew attention to this by speaking of "the doubly imperial character of a British imperial history in which the Raj is the presumed center"; see the Introduction in A. M. Burton, Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism, Durham 2011, p. 16.

5 S. Conrad, Rethinking German Colonialism in a Global Age, in: The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 41 (2013) 4, pp. 543–566, at 544.

6 C. Kamissek / J. Kreienbaum, An Imperial Cloud? Conceptualising Interimperial Connections and Transimperial Knowledge, in: Journal of Modern European History 14 (2016) 2, pp. 164–182, at p. 165; see, for example J. Lahti / L. Vuorio, Researching Nordic Colonialism – Past, Present, Futures, in: H-Soz-Kult. Kommunikation und Fachinformation für die Geschichtswissenschaften (2021); B. C. Schär, From Batticaloa via Basel to Berlin. Transimperial Science in Ceylon and Beyond around 1900, in: The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 48 (2020) 2, pp. 230–262; R. Palmer, Trans-imperial Cooperation and Transfers in the Age of Colonial Globalization: Towards a Triangular History of Colonialism?, in: H-Soz-Kult. Kommunikation und Fachinformation für die Geschichtswissenschaften (2018).

imperial alliances across the borders of individual empires and/or nation states. Through such an approach, Hedinger and Heé hope to "not only give non-European empires – such as the Ottoman, the Chinese, or Japanese more space, it would also incorporate those European empires that have been marginalized, like the Italian or Portuguese empires during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[7]
This thematic issue will take up these historiographical interventions by asking how allegedly "marginal" actors and institutions from Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, various German states, and later the German Empire were invested in the colonial enterprises of "foreign" imperial powers and how, in turn, these investments shaped bourgeois culture in countries situated "at the margins" of Imperial Europe. The contributions will illuminate these historical connections through the lens of the history of knowledge, a field that has proven to be particularly well-suited to trace the connections of people, materials, and ideas beyond the clear-cut boundaries of political entities. The thematic issue thus takes as its central focus the investigation of the potential of a "transimperial history of knowledge" in accounting for colonial entanglements of actors or institutions from and in countries that have remained marginal in historiographies of empire so far. By asking *how* and *why* colonial knowledge shaped "Bourgeois Worlds" beyond the "hegemonic" modern European imperial powers such as Britain, France, or the Netherlands, it adds new perspectives to the framing of imperialism as a shared European project rather than the result of the ambitions of individual nation states or monarchies.

1. Collaborating from and at the Margins of European Colonialism

Building on the impetus from cultural history and postcolonial studies to rethink colonialism beyond its political dimensions, a strong case has been made in recent years for the need to interrogate colonial entanglements in Scandinavian and Swiss histories. This scholarship explicitly questions the "colonial innocence" that many of the countries under consideration display in their national cultures of remembrance until today. The terms "colonial amnesia" or "colonial aphasia" are used to refer to the "public and historiographic evasion of colonial history" or the "occlusion" of this knowledge, respectively.[8] The most drastic effects of such an erasure of colonial entanglements in national histories can be felt by migrant and racialized populations living in these countries today.[9]

7 D. Hedinger / N. Heé, Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition, in: Journal of Modern European History 16 (2018) 4, pp. 429–452, at 430.

8 See A. L. Stoler, Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France, in: Public Culture 23 (2011) 1, pp. 121–156; for a discussion of 'colonial amnesia' in the context of Swiss history, see P. Purtschert, Kolonialität und Geschlecht im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Geschichte der Weißen Schweiz, Bielefeld / Boston 2019, pp. 31–35. For a comparative perspective on national cultures of remembrance after the loss of overseas empires, see D. Rothermund (ed.), Memories of Post-Imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonization, 1945–2013, Cambridge 2015.

9 For the connection between 'colonial amnesia' and the contemporary denial of racism and/or xenophobia in European societies, see G. Wekker, White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race, Durham London 2016; F. Falk, Marignano da, Migration dort, Südafrika nirgends: Über eine gewollte Entkoppelung von Diskursen, in:

Recent efforts to unearth the entanglements of Swiss and Scandinavian histories with colonial history therefore use the concepts of "colonialism at the margins" or "colonialism without colonies" to "make unambiguously clear that those European countries without formal attachment to colonialism struggle with their own colonial legacies".[10] A number of research foci have emerged in this scholarship, some of which are taken up in the contributions to this thematic issue: early modern Swedish and Danish colonial projects (Røge);[11] internal or northern/arctic colonizing efforts;[12] the circulation of discourses and imaginaries of colonial culture in "non-colonial" European countries (Blaser, Selander);[13] as well as these countries' missionary, military, scholarly, and/or trading activities in European colonies, often in close collaboration with the ruling powers (Ligtenberg, Brescius / Dejung).[14]

Two contributions in this thematic issue focus on German actors and sites; these differ from the aforementioned ones in that the German Empire indeed exercised direct colonial rule over vast territories in East Africa and the South Pacific in the late nineteenth

Traverse (2015) 3, pp. 155–166; F. El-Tayeb, European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe, Minneapolis 2011.

10 Purtschert / Fischer-Tiné, The End of Innocence, p. 6.

11 See the contributions by Lill-Ann Körber and Linda Andersson Burnett in the Special Issue on "Nordic Colonialisms" in: Scandinavian Studies 91 (2019) 1–2, as well as the contributions by Jorge Simón Izquierdo Díaz, Ray Kea, Gunvor Simonsen, Meredith Reifschneider, and Victor Wilson in the Special Issue on "Colonial Entanglements: Crossroads, Contact Zones and Flows in Scandinavian Global History" in: Itinerario 43 (2019) 2. Also M. Naum / J. Monié Nordin (eds.), Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena, New York/Heidelberg 2013; M. Jónsson, Denmark-Norway as a Potential World Power in the Early Seventeenth Century, in: Itinerario 33 (2009) 2, pp. 17–27; G. Fur, Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland, Leiden 2006.

12 L. Pfäffli, Arktisches Wissen: Schweizer Expeditionen und dänischer Kolonialhandel in Grönland (1908–1913), Frankfurt am Main 2021; R. Meriverta / L. Koivunen / T. Särkkä (eds.), Finnish Colonial Encounters: From Anti-Imperialism to Cultural Colonialism and Complicity, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series, Cham 2021; S. Reeploeg, Women in the Arctic: Gendering Coloniality in Travel Narratives from the Far North, 1907–1930, in: Scandinavian Studies 91 (2019) 1–2, p. 182; C.-G. Ojala / J. M. Nordin, Mapping Land and People in the North: Early Modern Colonial Expansion, Exploitation, and Knowledge, in: Scandinavian Studies 91 (2019) 1–2, p. 98; K. Loftsdóttir, Crisis and Coloniality at Europe's Margins: Creating Exotic Iceland, New York 2019; S. Rud, A Correct Admixture: The Ambiguous Project of Civilising in Nineteenth-Century Greenland, in: Itinerario 33 (2009) 2, pp. 29–44.

13 Purtschert, Kolonialität und Geschlecht Im 20. Jahrhundert; K. Loftsdóttir / L. Jensen (eds.), Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities, London 2016; P. Purtschert / B. Lüthi / F. Falk (eds.), Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien, Bielefeld 2012; S. Keskinen et al. (eds.), Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region, Farnham 2009; P. Minder, La Suisse coloniale? Les représentations de l'Afrique et des Africains en Suisse au temps des colonies (1880–1939), Bern 2009; E. Oxfeldt, Nordic Orientalism: Paris and the Cosmopolitan Imagination 1800–1900, Copenhagen 2005.

14 Meriverta / Koivunen / Särkkä (eds.), Finnish Colonial Encounters; P. Högselius / Y. Song, Extractive visions: Sweden's quest for China's natural resources, 1913–1917, in: Scandinavian Economic History Review 69 (2021) 2, pp. 158–176; C. Skott, Human Taxonomies: Carl Linnaeus, Swedish Travel in Asia and the Classification of Man, in: Itinerario 43 (2019) 02, pp. 218–242; K. A. Kjerland / B. E. Bertelsen (eds.), Navigating Colonial Orders: Norwegian Entrepreneurship in Africa and Oceania, New York / Oxford 2015; Purtschert / Fischer-Tiné (eds.), Colonial Switzerland; C. Koller, Die Fremdenlegion: Kolonialismus, Söldnertum, Gewalt, 1831–1962, Paderborn 2013; P. Harries, Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa, Oxford 2007; P. Krauer, Zwischen Geld, Gewalt und Rassismus: Neue Perspektiven auf die koloniale Schweizer Söldnermigration nach Südostasien, 1848–1914, in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte 71 (2021) 2, pp. 229–250.

and early twentieth centuries. However, as many studies – including the two featured in this issue – make clear, the involvement of Germany and its historical predecessors in colonial culture, exploitation, and enterprise extends to long periods both before and after the German Empire officially entered/exited the imperial race.[15] The need to view German colonial pasts beyond the relatively short period of direct political rule in overseas territories has been explicitly asserted by German historians.[16] Conrad's contention that "the formal colonies were only one part of a much more encompassing global arena [of imperial activity]"[17] also guides efforts to "rethink colonialism from the margins", which is why we believe there is a lot of potential in bringing the two strands together.

The inclusion of German actors and regions into our conceptualization of the "margins of Imperial Europe" also allows us to raise two important points about how we understand said "margins": First, many of the regions under consideration in this thematic issue can be considered "marginal" because they have remained outside the purview of contemporary imperial historiography. This holds true for the history of German overseas colonies as much as its continental colonialism in Eastern Europe.[18] Similarly, before the rise of Global History, German history largely ignored the impact and influence of colonial entanglements on developments "back home".[19] As with other regions treated in this issue, German national history therefore also had and continues to grapple with its own forms of "colonial aphasia".[20]

Second, we are not speaking of margins to connote proximity to the "colonial peripheries", but rather of margins that were considered a subsidiary or "minor" part of the "colonial core" in modern Europe.[21] Just like the traditional "imperial centres" towards which

15 A. Weber, Collecting Colonial Nature: European Naturalists and the Netherlands Indies in the Early Nineteenth Century, in: BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review 134 (2019) 3, p. 72; P. Panayi, The Germans in India: Elite European Migrants in the British Empire, Manchester 2017; C. Kamissek, German Imperialism before the German Empire. Russo-Prussian Military Expeditions to the Caucasus before 1871 and the Continuity of German Colonialism, in: Journal of Modern European History 14 (2016) 2, pp. 183–201; K. Manjapra, Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire, Cambridge, MA 2014, chap. 1; C. Tzoref-Ashkenazi, German Soldiers in Colonial India, London / Brookfield 2014; B. Kundrus (ed.), Phantasiereiche: zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus, Frankfurt am Main 2003; S. Zantop, Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870, Durham 1997.

16 Conrad, Rethinking German Colonialism; E. Ames / M. Klotz / L. Wildenthal (eds.), Germany's Colonial Pasts, Lincoln 2005; A. Eckert / A. Wirz, Wir nicht, die Anderen auch. Deutschland und der Kolonialismus, in: S. Conrad / S. Randeria (eds.), Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main 2002, pp. 372–392.

17 Conrad, Rethinking German Colonialism, p. 545.

18 Ibid.; Kamissek, German Imperialism.

19 For a historiographical overview, see B. Naranch, Introduction: German Colonialism Made Simple, in: B. Naranch / G. Eley (eds.), German Colonialism in a Global Age, Durham 2014, pp. 2–18.

20 M. Perraudin / J. Zimmerer, Introduction: German Colonialism and National Identity, in: M. Perraudin / J. Zimmerer (eds.), German colonialism and national identity, New York 2011, pp. 1–6; Z. Samudzi, In Absentia of Black Study, in: The New Fascism Syllabus (2021); Z. Ahmad, On Colonial Aphasia in the Study of German Orientalism, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research (2020).

21 This stands in contrast to other formulations of "margins" where they refer to regions constituting a "grey zone" between "colonizer" and "colonized" as well as to theorizations of historical intra-European hierarchies that speak of e.g. Southern and Eastern European regions as "semiperipheral" or constituted as "margins of modernity". See M. Boatcă, Multiple Europes and the Politics of Difference Within, in: H. Brunkhorst/G. Grözinger (eds.), The Study

they are oriented, these margins are not static, neatly delineated entities. Rather, they are a dynamic and constitutive part of "Imperial Europe", which we understand as a particular "imperial formation" made up of "multiple configurations and structures of imperial rule".[22] Thus, it is important to remember the various ways in which German countries and/or speakers often were excluded from the Enlightenment idea of Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that even at the height of German colonial expansion, they grappled with their status as a "'minor' imperialist European state".[23]
An important methodological challenge that is addressed in the scholarship on colonialism at the margins regards the question as to how to grasp the roles, (self-)perceptions and identity-formation of actors from or in countries with no or seemingly marginal empires in the *situation coloniale*. Finnish historian Ulla Vuorela uses the concept of "colonial complicities" to tackle this challenge and "to theorise a situation in which a country […] has neither been historically situated as one of the colonial centres in Europe nor has it been an 'innocent victim' or mere outsider of the colonial projects". She defines "complicity" as "participation in the hegemonic discourses" as well as "involvement in the promotion of universal thinking and practices of domination".[24] Complicity, however, implies a one-sided transaction with the actors "complying" having little agency.
We understand the contributions to the production and dissemination of knowledge in colonial contexts by the actors in this thematic issue as acts of *collaboration*. First, we believe that collaboration grasps the situation of "colonial outsiders" who, in many instances, actively negotiated their social or geopolitical status through such collaborations in order to achieve goals that would primarily benefit themselves. More specifically, in all of the case studies, actors "negotiated" labour relationships in the broadest sense, be it in terms of transnational entrepreneurship (Selander) or of employments with colonial institutions (Røge, Ligtenberg, von Brescius / Dejung) and European universities (Blaser). The term "collaboration", etymologically derived from "labour", therefore seems like a suitable choice. Second, and in contrast to the term "cooperation" – implying a top-down act of structured "operation" with someone – collaboration better captures a) the idea of the often oppressive nature of such partnerships, which could come to constitute a joint "enemy" from the vantage point of colonized and subaltern populations; and b) the at times unstable, arbitrary, and messy nature of situations in which actors from different backgrounds and with different goals worked together.

of Europe, Baden-Baden 2010, pp. 51–66; C. Dejung / M. Lengwiler (eds.), Ränder der Moderne : Neue Perspektiven auf die Europäische Geschichte (1800–1930), Köln 2015.

22 For the concept of 'imperial formation', see U. Lindner / D. Lerp, Introduction: Gendered Imperial Formations, in: U. Lindner / D. Lerp (eds.), New Perspectives on the History of Gender and Empire: Comparative and Global Approaches, London 2018, pp. 1–27, at p. 4; A. L. Stoler / C. McGranahan, Introduction: Refiguring Imperial Terrains, in: A. L. Stoler / C. McGranahan / P. C. Perdue (eds.), Imperial Formations, Santa Fe 2007, pp. 3–42.

23 K. Manjapra, Transnational Approaches to Global History: A View from the Study of German-Indian Entanglement, in: German History 32 (2014) 2, pp. 274–293, at 285.

24 U. Vuorela, Colonial Complicity: The 'Postcolonial' in a Nordic Context, in: S. Keskinen et al., Complying with Colonialism. Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region, London 2016, pp. 19–33, at 19–20.

2. Transimperial "Webs of Empire"

Another methodological aspect that needs to be addressed concerns the appropriate tools and frameworks to account for movements of people, goods, and ideas among and beyond the boundaries of individual nation states and empires. Numerous studies have looked at global connections in the Age of Empire, often in terms of transnational networks.[25] "What is potentially useful about a networked conception of empire", to put it in the words of Joseph Hodge, "is the view of colonial relations spanning across space in contingent, nondeterministic and unstable ways".[26] Rather than speaking about networks, however, we want to take up Tony Ballantyne's proposal to understand "the empire as a web-like structure"[27] in order to make clear the particular ambitions of this thematic issue. Ballantyne imagines the connections within empires as a web comprised of horizontal and vertical linkages: "[h]orizontal linkages were the networks and exchanges that fashioned new forms of interdependence *between* colonies" while vertical connections aim at accounting for links between the imperial metropoles (in Ballantyne's case Britain) and their colonies.[28] Ballantyne's image of a web has expanded our understanding of how different colonial "peripheries" were connected amongst themselves without the intermediary of a "centre", yet his exclusive focus on intra-imperial linkages within the British Empire unwillingly reproduced both the Anglo- and nation-centric tendencies of imperial history. Building on the conceptual language of his work, one major aim of this thematic issue is to analyse not only linkages that *horizontally* connected different overseas colonies and their *vertical* connections to the European metropoles, but also *diagonal* linkages that connect different European Empires – both their "metropoles" and "colonies" – with each other *and* with countries at the margins of imperial Europe. The imaginary "transimperial web of empire" that emerges from the approach we take in this thematic issue thus has more "hubs" and a higher density of strings, i.e. connections.

With this approach, we follow Hedinger and Heé in foregrounding "the movement of people, knowledge and goods across empires" and nations as well as in "stretching the narrative of imperial formations […] to include a new view of spaces in-between

25 See, for example, S. Mukherjee, Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks, New Delhi 2018; C. Antunes / J. Gommans (eds.), Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600–2000, London 2015; Manjapra, Age of Entanglement; D. J. Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine: Internationalism, Colonialism, and the Rise of a Medical Specialty, 1890–1930, Stanford 2012; S. Conrad / J. Osterhammel (eds.), Das Kaiserreich Transnational, Göttingen 2006; for historiographical overviews, see M. Middell, Empires in Current Global Historiography, in: Comparativ 29 (2019) 3, pp. 9–22; S. Ward, Transcending the Nation: A Global Imperial History?, in: A. Burton (ed.), After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation, 2003, pp. 44–56.

26 J. M. Hodge, Science and Empire: An Overview of the Historical Scholarship, in: B. M. Bennett / J. M. Hodge (eds.), Science and Empire, London 2011, pp. 3–29, p. 16.

27 T. Ballantyne, Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past, Wellington 2012, p. 14.

28 Ballantyne, Webs of Empire; see also T. Ballantyne, Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire, Basingstoke / New York 2002, pp. 1–17.

empires",[29] which, in our case, would be the margins of European colonial power. These were – quite literally in the case of Switzerland – located in-between imperial states and their spheres of influence, which not seldom accorded them or their inhabitants special privileges in using select imperial infrastructures strategically to their advantage or moving through different imperial settings relatively undisturbed. Transimperial history positions itself in contrast to, on the one hand, transnational approaches in imperial history, which often end up "nationalizing empires" by viewing the latter as "the nation state's extension beyond its borders",[30] and, on the other hand, to histories of *inter-imperial* cooperation or competition, a term that tends to obscure non-state relations and perpetuates "conceptions of empires as official unities that interact with each other only as such".[31] Lastly, the prefix "trans", as Satoshi Mizutani remarked, has a temporal dimension, which can be taken to refer both to non-synchronous connections between empires[32] as well as the idea that empires are not static "things".[33] When conceived of as imperial formations, they are characterized more by a "subjective sense of self […] constantly reshaped by the anticipation of, and anxieties about, the unpredictable future as well as by a sense of continuity and tradition inherited from the past".[34] Precisely because our "marginal" actors and sites do not neatly fit into imperial "containers" despite the manifold ways in which they transformed and were transformed by imperial formations, we believe that transimperial approaches can be used to view not just different empires, but also *differently imperial* settings in their connectedness, including those practising colonialism from or at the margins.

The individual articles share a common strategy of focusing on biographies and individual actors from the European middle class to address such "webs" empirically. The use of "colonial", "transnational", or "global lives" to make visible "the complex spatiality of empire, as well as of imperial subjectivities" has been widely recognized.[35] By making

29 Hedinger / Heé, Transimperial History, p. 439; for earlier comparative approaches to imperial history, see T. Ballantyne / A. M. Burton, Empires and the Reach of the Global, 1870–1945, Cambridge, MA 2012; V. Barth / R. Cvetkovski (eds.), Imperial co-operation and Transfer, 1870–1930: Empires and Encounters, London et al. 2015; S. Subrahmanyam, Par-delà l'incommensurabilité: pour une histoire connectée des empires aux temps modernes, in: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 54 (2007) 5, pp. 34–53; B. Stuchtey (ed.), Science across the European Empires, 1800–1950, Studies of the German Historical Institute London, Oxford 2005.

30 Hedinger / Heé, Transimperial History, p. 440.

31 For the quote as well as an overview of the field of 'transimperial' studies, see K. L. Hoganson / J. Sexton, Introduction, in: K. L. Hoganson / J. Sexton (eds.), Crossing Empires: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain, Durham 2020, pp. 1–22, at p. 6.

32 As in, for example, P. A. Kramer, Historias transimperiales: Raíces españolas del estado colonial estadounidense en Filipinas, in: M. D. Elizalde / J. M. Delgado (eds.), Filipinas, un país entre dos imperios, Barcelona 2011, pp. 125–144.

33 S. Mizutani, Introduction to "Beyond Comparison: Japan and Its Colonial Empire in Transimperial Relations", in: Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review (2019) 32, pp. 1–21.

34 Ibid., p. 7; see also Stoler/McGranahan, Introduction.

35 D. Lambert / A. Lester, Introduction: Imperial spaces, imperial subjects, in: D. Lambert / A. Lester (eds.), Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century, Cambridge 2006, pp. 1–31, at p. 3; M. Rolf, Einführung: Imperiale Biographien. Lebenswege imperialer Akteure in Groß- und Kolonialreichen (1850–1918), in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 40 (2014) 1, pp. 5–21; D. Deacon / P. Russell / A. Woollacott (eds.), Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present, London 2010; M. Ogborn (ed.), Global Lives:

explicit how the issue of class affects the trajectories, interests and possibilities of the actors studied, the thematic issue also addresses the role social stratification in Europe played in shaping transimperial webs, and vice-versa.[36] As recent research and some of the studies in this issue demonstrate, an increased mobility of the European bourgeoisie was enabled, beginning in the early modern period, by an expanding global labour market that followed the logic of demands of colonial institutions and trading companies for both skilled and unskilled labour and know-how, on the one hand, and opportunities for upward social mobility that awaited in the colonies, on the other.[37] While all of the protagonists in this thematic issue could be considered "imperial subjects" in the sense that their biographies are intertwined with the structural context of empire,[38] only some were "imperial careerists"[39] moving across different colonial sites to increase their status, make profit, and / or fulfil a sense of duty (Røge, Ligtenberg, Brescius / Dejung). Others were limited in their physical mobility, but could profit from being on the "receiving end" of these imperial circuits of knowledge transfer to build their careers in Europe (Blaser, Selander). All of them in some way "transferred" certain modes of thought by introducing them (whether physically or ideologically) to new contexts, some explicitly building a career on their role as "go-betweens" "carr[ying] and broker[ing] specialized knowledges between communities".[40] Taken together, the actor-centred contributions in this thematic issue give strong support to the assertion that "many of the mercantile, scientific and political networks that came into being during the long nineteenth century were established by members of the middle classes such as businessmen, scholars, and intellectuals".[41] They reveal how imperial culture and knowledge not only moved between colonies and metropoles, but rather are to be considered part of a "pan-European bourgeois vision".[42]

Britain and the World, 1550–1800, Cambridge 2008; B. Hausberger, Globale Lebensläufe: Menschen als Akteure im weltgeschichtlichen Geschehen, Wien 2006.

36 On this interdependence, albeit not from an explicitly transimperial perspective, see the contributions by Kris Manjapra, Christof Dejung, and Richard Drayton in: C. Dejung / D. Motadel / J. Osterhammel (eds.), The Global Bourgeoisie, Princeton 2019; and T. Buchen / M. Rolf (eds.), Eliten im Vielvölkerreich. Imperiale Biographien in Russland und Österreich-Ungarn (1850–1918) = Elites and Empire. Imperial Biographies in Russia and Austria-Hungary (1850–1918), Berlin / Boston 2015.

37 B. C. Schär, Introduction: The Dutch East Indies and Europe, ca. 1800–1930. An Empire of Demands and Opportunities, in: BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review 134 (2019) 3, pp. 4–20; M. van Rossum et al., National and International Labour Markets for Sailors in European, Atlantic and Asian Waters, 1600–1850, in: M. Fusaro / A. Polónia (eds.), Maritime History as Global History, Liverpool 2018, pp. 47–72.

38 Rolf, Einführung, p. 5.

39 Lambert / Lester, Introduction, pp. 21–24.

40 K. Raj, Go-Betweens, Travelers, and Cultural Translators, in: B. Lightman (ed.), A Companion to the History of Science, Chichester 2016, pp. 39–57, at pp. 41–2.

41 C. Dejung / D. Motadel / J. Osterhammel, Worlds of the Bourgeoisie, in: C. Dejung et al., The Global Bourgeoisie, pp. 1–39, at p. 6.

42 Cooper / Stoler, Between Metropole and Colony, p. 31.

3. Knowledge

Actor-centred microhistorical approaches have also gained much traction in the history of knowledge. Scholarship in this field as well as in the history of science, its older relative, has long placed a central emphasis on "knowledge in transit", i.e. on the "processes of movement, translation and transmission" that cross the "boundaries of nation, period, and discipline".[43] Many historians of empire took up this preoccupation with transfer, "hybridization", and/or "mediation" of scientific knowledge, with Hodge asserting that "[c]olonial knowledge was inherently mobile, moving through institutional webs that brought disparate places, people, and activities together at a given moment in time".[44] Knowledge, or more specifically "colonial knowledge/science", was indeed a ubiquitous "tool of empire", not just in the sense that empires depended on it to implement colonial rule, but also "as a means of conceptualizing and bringing into being the colonial project itself".[45] Following the paradigms of imperial and postcolonial history in acknowledging "the imperial impact at home", Science and Empire studies also paid increasing attention to the ways in which "objective science as an ideal type" was constructed in the process of engaging with "the colonial world"[46] and "that important parts of what has been passed off as European, or Western, science were actually made elsewhere".[47] This trend has further fuelled the interest in go-betweens, cultural brokers, intermediaries, translators, or interpreters, as actors "who were familiar with, if not at home in, at least two knowledge cultures" are variably called.[48]

Acknowledging these newer lines of inquiry by scholars of colonial and imperial history, Simone Lässig has observed that "'colonial knowledge' is no longer associated solely with (former) colonies and colonial powers but has taken on a symbolic sense as well".[49] And, just as the history of science and imperial history could profit from one another while also challenging each other,[50] so the younger discipline of history of knowledge with its more multifaceted understanding of knowledge can broaden the perspective of global, transnational, or transimperial historians "on the interplay of knowledge and other social

43 J. A. Secord, Knowledge in Transit, in: Isis 95 (2004) 4, pp. 654–672, at p. 654.

44 Hodge, Science and Empire, p. 17.

45 S. Seth, Putting Knowledge in its Place: Science, Colonialism, and the Postcolonial, in: Postcolonial Studies 12 (2009) 4, pp. 373–388, at p. 375; see also L. Schiebinger, Forum Introduction: The European Colonial Science Complex, in: Isis 96 (2005) 1, pp. 52–55; for an important and potent critique of 'colonial science', see S. Sivasundaram, Sciences and the Global: On Methods, Questions, and Theory, in: Isis 101 (2010) 1, pp. 146–158.

46 B. Stuchtey, Introduction: Towards a Comparative History of Science and Tropical Medicine in Imperial Cultures since 1800, in: B. Stuchtey (ed.), Science across the European Empires, 1800–1950, Oxford / New York 2005, pp. 1–45, at pp. 13–6.

47 Raj, Relocating Modern Science, p. 11. See also H. Fischer-Tiné, Pidgin-Knowledge: Wissen und Kolonialismus, Zurich 2013.

48 S. Lässig, The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda, in: Bulletin of the GHI Washington (2016) 59, pp. 29–58, at pp. 36–37; see also Raj, Go-Betweens; S. Dorsch, Translokale Wissensakteure. Ein Debattenvorschlag zu Wissens- und Globalgeschichtsschreibung, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 64 (2016) 9, pp. 778–795.

49 Lässig, The History of Knowledge, p. 37.

50 Stuchtey, Introduction, pp. 15–26.

phenomena beyond power".[51] Some of the ways in which history of knowledge expands the horizon of the tradition it emerged out of are reflected in this special issue: It explicitly makes room for the history of humanities,[52] whose disciplines were often implicitly excluded or pushed into the field of "culture" in the history of (colonial) science even as they shared much of their conceptual and physical spaces with the "exact" sciences (Blaser). Insofar as it allows for "knowledge" to include everything that people "understood by the idea of knowledge and what they defined or accepted as knowledge",[53] the history of knowledge also holds a potential to study and "re-read" forms of knowledge that fall outside of Eurocentric systems of classification – such as "spiritual" knowledge – on their own terms (Selander).[54]

Confronted with these open and flexible demarcations of knowledge, Lorraine Daston asks wryly: "What doesn't it cover?" and suggests that the category of knowledge would benefit from undergoing a conceptual analysis just like "science" did.[55] In an effort to define knowledge, Philip Sarasin proposes that it should be characterized by "at least a basic, 'garden variety' form of rationality, evidence and arguments".[56] In this thematic issue, however, our aim is to study transimperial connections through the lens of history of knowledge in a way that applies "knowledge" as an analytical tool, rather than posit it as an *a priori* shared object of study. Thus, for our purposes, "knowledge" serves as an investigative instrument to raise questions about the interplay of situatedness and relocation in transimperial meaning-making in various fields (agriculture, trade, medicine, philology and spirituality).

The idea of knowledge as fundamentally "situated", and therefore shaped as much by "external" interactions and practices as by the "internal" world of "pure science" and theories, was powerfully posited by Donna Haraway.[57] With it, she contests the idea of

51 Lässig, The History of Knowledge, p. 38.

52 R. Bod, How to Open Pandora's Box: A Tractable Notion of the History of Knowledge, in: Journal for the History of Knowledge 1 (2020) 1, pp. 1–7.

53 Lässig, The History of Knowledge, p. 39.

54 M. Elshakry, Beyond a Singular History of Knowledge, in: Journal for the History of Knowledge 1 (2020) 1, pp. 1–4; for a discussion of the Eurocentrism of 'modern knowledge' from a decolonial perspective, see A. Quijano, Coloniality and Modernity / Rationality, in: Cultural Studies 21 (2007) 2/3, pp. 168–178; S. Harding, Latin American Decolonial Social Studies of Scientific Knowledge: Alliances and Tensions, in: Science, Technology, & Human Values 41 (2016) 6, pp. 1063–1087; for an early elaboration of Eurocentrism from within the history/philosophy of science, also S. Harding, After Eurocentrism: Challenges for the Philosophy of Science, in: PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association 2 (1992), pp. 311–319.

55 L. Daston, The History of Science and the History of Knowledge, in: KNOW: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge 1 (2017) 1, pp. 131–154.

56 P. Sarasin, More Than Just Another Specialty: On the Prospects for the History of Knowledge, in: Journal for the History of Knowledge 1 (2020) 1, pp. 1–5. This echoes the definition Sarasin proposed in his now-canonical essay on history of knowledge, where he distinguished knowledge from other systems of signification like 'religion or belief systems' and 'art'; see P. Sarasin, Was ist Wissensgeschichte?, in: Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur 36 (2011) 1, pp. 159–172. For a counter-perspective from the field of history of religious knowledge, see e.g. E. Asprem, The problem of disenchantment: scientific naturalism and esoteric discourse, 1900–1939, Leiden / Boston 2014.

57 D. Haraway, Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective, in: Feminist Studies 14 (1988) 3, pp. 575–599.

"objective knowledge" from within a feminist tradition of standpoint epistemology and argues that there are *only* "partial perspectives" in science; to acknowledge one's own "partial view" is "to become answerable for what we learn how to see".[58] While this certainly holds true for the editors and contributors of this thematic issue, it is not hard to equally see the usefulness of transposing Haraway's concept into the histories of knowledge and onto the historical actors we consider in our studies. Most of the contributions address, if not explicitly, then implicitly, the role of social, (trans-)national, local, and cultural contexts in shaping the view and method(s) that the actors approach knowledge production with. Only such attention to situatedness allows us to foreground how speaking, working, or hailing from a location on the margins of Imperial Europe influenced the specific ways in which knowledges were produced, but also how they were communicated, what audiences they reached and what type of mediations had to be performed. It is not the mere fact of circulation, but the study of *how and why* knowledge circulated that is "of real analytical significance".[59]

Regrettably, one aspect of the processes of knowledge production studied in this thematic issue that is conspicuous only by its absence are the knowledges, experts, and intermediaries from within the colonized, racialized, exotified, and/or otherwise "othered" communities and regions without whom none of the knowledge-making discussed in this issue would be possible.[60] The expansion of history of science/knowledge towards the methodologies and scopes of vision of global history has made evident that modern European knowledge came into being only through the global circulation (rather than diffusion) of materials, media, or people and that it was usually co-constructed by many more actors than those who were considered the "scholars" and received credit for "producing" the knowledge.[61] The "mediators" and "go-betweens" of the articles in this thematic issue are primarily – albeit not exclusively – white, European, bourgeois, and male. This means that they benefited, to various degrees, from the power structures of the "Bourgeois World" regardless of the particular standing of their home countries in imperial geopolitics. By asking about how middle-class actors from Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland functioned as a "third element" (which often came with a pre-

58 Ibid., p. 583.

59 Secord, Knowledge in Transit, p. 655.

60 Two recent articles do include this perspective while discusisng actors from the 'margins of colonialism': Schär, From Batticaloa via Basel to Berlin; J. Feichtinger, Interactive Knowledge-Making: How and Why Nineteenth-Century Austrian Scientific Travellers in Asia and Africa Overcame Cultural Differences, in: J. Feichtinger / A. Bhatti / C. Hülmbauer (eds.), How to Write the Global History of Knowledge-Making, Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, Cham 2020, pp. 45–69; a similar approach taking the 'marginality' of Italian scholars of Orientalism as starting point can be found in F.L. Vicente, Other Orientalisms. India between Florence and Bombay (1860–1900), New Delhi 2012.

61 For the development of the field, see, amongst others, L. Roberts, Situating Science in Global History: Local Exchanges and Networks of Circulation, in: Itinerario 33 (2009) 1, pp. 9–30; Sivasundaram, Sciences and the Global; H. Tilley, Global Histories, Vernacular Science, and African Genealogies; or, Is the History of Science Ready for the World?, in: Isis 101 (2010) 1, pp. 110–119; K. Raj, Beyond Postcolonialism … and Postpositivism: Circulation and the Global History of Science, in: Isis 104 (2013) 2, pp. 337–347; R. Habermas / A. Przyrembel (eds.), Von Käfern, Märkten und Menschen: Kolonialismus und Wissen in der Moderne, Göttingen 2013; Fischer-Tiné, Pidgin-Knowledge; Lässig, The History of Knowledge.

rogative of interpretation), we hope to show the influence of colonial entanglements on the kinds of knowledge being transferred to, and made in, regions that seemingly played no or only minor parts in European imperialism.

To explore the potential of transimperial history through the webs of knowledge that connected the margins of Imperial Europe with European overseas colonies as well as other European metropoles, certainly entails making ourselves vulnerable to Eurocentric bias. Yet, thinking with Gurminder Bhambra, we consider the "writing out" of colonial history from most narratives of European modernization – especially, as addressed above, from the histories of those nations that consider themselves "innocent" or only "minor" perpetrators of colonialism – as an integral part of Eurocentric historiography.[62] Consequently, to contest Eurocentrism also entails to recognize how the colonial encounter was crucial to the production of "modern knowledge" and the formation of its normative analytical categories beyond Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, Belgium, or the Netherlands. Moreover, we see the margins of hegemonic European power as a privileged position from which to recognize the "constructedness" of modern Europe as well as the centrality and importance of European imperialism in shaping its self-understanding as representing the world at large, and to offer "more adequate explanation[s] of the interconnections that came to constitute it as such".[63]

62 Bhambra, Rethinking Modernity.
63 Ibid., p. 146.