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**SPACES OF KNOWLEDGE AND GENDER REGIMES:  
FROM DOUBLE MARGINALIZATION  
TO A GENDERED HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE  
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

**Abstract**

The article explores the heuristic potential of gender studies and area studies (especially those concerned with Central and Eastern Europe) and appeals for a decentring of research units such as ‘general history’ and ‘Europe’ within historiography. It criticises the often mechanical use of spatial categories that ignores the fabrication of spaces by area specialists, and the reification of gender identities within women’s and gender studies. It argues for a combination of gender and area sensitive research in order to evade the juxtaposition of constructivism vs. essentialism. History of knowledge and feminist theory of science are described as useful tools for such an approach.

**Keywords:** area studies, decentring Europe, gender studies, history of knowledge, partial perspective

I  
INTRODUCTION

Although it is as of yet uncommon in historical scholarship to decidedly include one’s own scientific position in the analysis of research subjects and methods, I would like to do so in the case of this text.<sup>1</sup> In the act of researching, how one executes historical historical scholarship, how one chooses which goals to pursue, and which methods one chooses

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<sup>1</sup> The following article arose from the keynote I delivered at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw in April 2017, during a conference themed ‘*Homo Academica?* Geschlecht und Geschlechterordnung in mittel- und osteuropäischen akademischen Kulturen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts’. I have retained the presentation format due to the intertwining of the position of the researcher and the scientific approach, as addressed in the text.

are closely linked to one's own position in a scientific field, which is in turn naturally determined not only by scientific experiences, but also by socialized patterns of perception. Just like the objects of scientific interest aren't static and considered *researched*, i.e. completed after a certain point, the position of the researcher in relationship to these objects is not fixed, but changes, since the apparatus of perception is subject to constant change and accumulates within itself new research experiences which are always stimulating new horizons of inquiry and new methods of approach. As such my text is divided into two parts, which reflect two time periods of my scientific socialization. The first part is a source text – so to speak – from the year 2006, in which I fiercely presented the renewal potential of gender history and Eastern European history for the so-called general history.<sup>2</sup> The second part critically grapples with the source text after 12 years, and by this method, produces a new source. It consists of an attempt at a positioning of the (Eastern)European and gender historian in the year 2018 against the backdrop of transforming scientific and political spaces.

As such, part 1 as well as part 2, much like all texts that deal with historical works, are simultaneously source material and part of the body of research literature. Building on the title of the conference for which this text was written, I could go back yet another twelve-year period: In 1994, in preparation for my master's degree exams, I read the lecture 'Homo. Academica. Gender Contracts, Institution and the Distribution of Knowledge', the published inaugural lecture by Viennese scholar of Romance language and literature Friederike Hassauer. My oral defence took place amongst a group of exclusively male colleagues, and in its course confirmed Hassauer's observation:

Science as profession has remained the domain of men. Science as profession equips the homo academicus with Habitus, with education capital, with university clout, with symbolic capital – all bound together with “the effective property in the field”, to the strongest power potential: the male gender. What has changed? Only the question of the etiquette. Conversational usage. The rules of language.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Claudia Kraft, 'Die Geschlechtergeschichte Osteuropas als doppelte Herausforderung für die "allgemeine" Geschichte', in Stefan Troebst (ed.), *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2006), <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/artikel-3308> [Accessed: 12 Feb. 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Friederike Hassauer, *Homo. Academica. Geschlechterkontrakte, Institution und die Verteilung des Wissens* (Wien, 1994), 32.

Barely a quarter-century later, more than just conversational usage and language rules have changed. But the beautiful thing about the engagement with gender history is that it does not come to an end, i.e. it is not ‘researched’, but continuously raises new horizons of inquiry.

## II

### ‘DOUBLE MARGINALIZATION’: EASTERN EUROPE’S GENDER HISTORY AS A DOUBLE CHALLENGE FOR ‘GENERAL’ HISTORY

Through the observation that the break-up of the ‘Eastern Bloc’ resulted in the loss of the clearly outlined research subject, in recent years the discipline of Eastern European history in the German-speaking realm has been challenged to hold an internal self-understanding debate.

The question of the significance and analytical power of historical spatial categories is more directly relevant to a discipline that since its emergence has understood itself as a regional science with different rationales, than for disciplines in which the category ‘space’ does not play an explicit role. The ostensible crisis, into which the discipline of Eastern European history had drawn into through the change of the geopolitical, which once had contributed significantly to the establishment of ‘area studies’,<sup>4</sup> brought about a fruitful engagement with the category of space or historical region(s). This serves as proof that the discipline is not an outdated regional science with questionable historical research roots that lost its research subject after the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> Eastern European history, with its own particular patterns and sensitivities towards its own space and history, does not lend itself to the constructed character of spatial categories like the “correlations of the imagined and the found”,<sup>6</sup> and calls into question historical regional

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<sup>4</sup> David L. Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge. Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley, 2004); David Engerman, *Know your enemy: The rise and fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Creuzberger (ed.), *Wohin steuert die Osteuropaforschung? Eine Diskussion* (Köln, 2000); the debate continues, see for example Wolf Schäfer, ‘Zur Rekonfiguration von *area studies* für das globale Zeitalter’, *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte*, xvi, 1 (2015), 149–83; or Gareth Dale, Katalin Miklóssy and Dieter Segert (eds.), *The Politics of East European Area Studies* (London, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> According to Stefan Troebst, ‘Region und Epoche statt Raum und Zeit – “Ostmitteleuropa” als prototypische geschichtsregionale Konzeption’, in *idem* (ed.), *Zur Europäizität des östlichen Europa* (2006), <https://www.hsozkult.de/article/id/artikel-731?title=region-und-epoche-statt-raum-und-zeit-ostmitteleuropa-als-prototypische>

attributes which are oftentimes taken as unquestionable. Through its appreciation of the domain of its research subject - which is based on and interconnected with its relationship to a rarely-questioned specific imagination of 'general' European history - Eastern European history can contribute significantly to decentralizing this 'general history' and demonstrating that 'Europe' has apparently not been sufficiently reflected upon, as a result of which exceptionally rich, historical-regional constructions are burdened somewhat by value-based assumptions, which in their impact and power to define goes far beyond a geographically defined "Europe".<sup>7</sup>

In the following, I would like to insist on the linking of this potential - which is inherent in a critical reflection of implicit spatial concepts - with the category of gender, which is also suitable for decentralizing 'general history' in order to reveal its unquestioned research-guiding premises. Gender history researches gender relationships and constructions and thereby emphasizes the relationality of specific gender attributions, without assuming that gender identities exist a priori, without the interference of historic actors and attribution through historically changeable discourses. In its revelation potential, gender history resembles the thoughtful use of the category space: spaces are created discursively, impacting the social praxis and thereby create historically significant spheres of action - but they don't exist a priori.<sup>8</sup>

In the debate over the Europeanness of Central and Eastern Europe, it has been repeatedly pointed out that Europe was and is thought of above all as a relational category.<sup>9</sup> It depends on the more or less

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geschichtsregionale-konzeption&recno=37&q=&sort=&fq=&page=2&total=40  
[Accessed: 12 Feb. 2018].

<sup>7</sup> Maria Todorova, 'Nostalgia - the reverse side of Balkanism?', in Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.), *Europa und sein Osten. Geschichtskulturelle Herausforderungen* (München, 2012), 61-74, here 74; generally on the epistemological dominance of a "hyper-real Europe" see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Béatrice v. Hirschhausen, Hannes Grandits, Claudia Kraft, Dietmar Müller and Thomas Serier, 'Phantomgrenzen im östlichen Europa. Eine wissenschaftliche Positionierung', in *idem* (eds.), *Phantomgrenzen: Räume und Akteure in der Zeit neu denken* (Göttingen, 2015), 13-55.

<sup>9</sup> Reinhold Viehoff and Rien T. Segers (eds.), *Kultur, Identität, Europa. Über die Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten einer Konstruktion* (Frankfurt M., 1999); Wolfgang Schmale, 'Die Europäizität Ostmitteleuropas', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte*, iv (2003), 189-214.

explicitly questioned conceptions of Europe, which regions are in- or rather excluded. It becomes apparent that the European centre is essentialised, whereas the debate over Eastern Europe or rather Central and Eastern Europe as imagined space, structure or sphere of action excellently proves to the astute, how spaces are first created through discourse. Here a parallel in the relationship between 'general' and gender history emerges: only through the analysis of relationships through which the so-called universal is established, can an essentialist view – in which unreflected attributions are perpetuated by gender dichotomies – be counteracted. In the same way as Eastern Europe can be understood as posing a challenge to the comparative history of Europe,<sup>10</sup> so-called general history is challenged by gender history.<sup>11</sup>

Research that has embraced the concept of *mental mapping* has determined that Europe needs 'the Other' in order to describe itself as a 'civilisation'.<sup>12</sup> Particularly problematic here is the position of Central and Eastern Europe. In a certain way one is dealing with semi-peripheries, that is, with regions that are throughout – even if marginalized and with restrictions – counted as part of the (Western) European/North Atlantic centre and emphatically define themselves in relationship to this centre.<sup>13</sup> Through this the category of relationality becomes especially important: the region is not essentially different, but

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<sup>10</sup> According to Jürgen Kocka, 'Das östliche Mitteleuropa als Herausforderung für eine vergleichende Geschichte Europas', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, xlix, 2 (2000), 159–74.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Medick and Karin Hausen (eds.), *Geschlechtergeschichte und allgemeine Geschichte. Herausforderungen und Perspektiven* (Göttingen, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, 1997); Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The "East" in European Identity Formation* (Manchester, 1999); Gunther Gebhard, Oliver Geisler and Steffen Schröter (eds.) *Das Prinzip "Osten": Geschichte und Gegenwart eines symbolischen Raums* (Bielefeld, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Manuela Boatcă, 'Semiperipheries in the World-System: Reflecting Eastern European and Latin American Experiences', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, vii, 2 (2006), 321–46; Tomasz Zarycki, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (London, 2014); *idem* (ed.), *Polska jako Peryferie*, (Warszawa, 2016). The concept of "inbetween periphery" is especially relevant for Central and Eastern Europe "that this region is seen reference to a centre in two sides: on the one, Western Europe, on the other, the great eastern neighbour Russia, or the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation", Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, 'Configurations of Postcoloniality and National Identity: Inbetween Peripherality and Narratives of Change', *The Comparatist: Journal of the Southern Comparative Literature Association*, xxiii (1999), 89–110.

can (and only needs to) align itself in order to achieve the pleasure of the golden seal of Europeanness. That's without saying anything about the historical origin and specifics of the centre, however the literary conventions of describing the backwardness of the semi-periphery is certainly enshrined. A parallel to male actors independent of the context, that embody the universal, and female actors, whose otherness makes the imaginary universal possible for the former, is quickly made: historical emancipation concepts that presume the otherness of woman, and make otherness seem at least partially conquerable through approximation to the universal, show that in addition to the category of space and gender, a further category dominates our historical perception horizon. Historical actors are organized into a linear process, which takes place in the collective singular of history; in this singular history, the centre and its actors are agreed upon. The relationality between the centre and the periphery, i.e. the abstract actor and the Other are extremely persistent: the reference to the norm, which is embodied in 'Europe', remains even then, when Eastern Europe tries to separate itself from 'Europe', for example in the case of Polish intellectuals, who were looking for modernisation concepts for the divided state in the nineteenth century,<sup>14</sup> or in the case of Russian thinkers, who in the beginning of the twentieth century engaged in criticism of Eurocentrism.<sup>15</sup> A similar claim can be made about alternative concepts of femininity, whose contents are generated in reference to imagined templates of masculinity.<sup>16</sup>

The following will briefly illuminate to what extent a gender perspective in Central and Eastern European history research can contribute to the double decentralisation of the European centre, in the context of some fields of research in modern history of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main focus will be on examining the degree to which (non-scientific) normativity and

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<sup>14</sup> Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest, 1999); Maciej Janowski, 'Europa an der Weichsel', in Claudia Kraft and Katrin Steffen (eds.), *Europas Platz in Polen. Polnischen Europa-Konzeptionen vom Mittelalter bis zum EU-Beitritt* (Osnabrück, 2007), 131–55.

<sup>15</sup> For the relationship between Russia and Europe, see for example Nikolaj S. Trubetzkoy, 'Europa und die Menschheit' (1920), in *idem, Russland, Europa, Eurasien. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Kulturwissenschaft* (Wien, 2005), 35–44.

<sup>16</sup> Claudia Honegger, *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib, 1750–1850* (Frankfurt am Main et al., 1991).

unreflected assumptions are brought into universal history concepts, and how these can be made visible through paying attention to the analysis categories of space and gender. Next we'll consider the Western European-originating Enlightenment. While on the one hand, the Enlightenment formulated a universal picture of humankind and a universal concept of freedom, on the other hand, this universality was broken apart through excluding Eastern Europe or any regions outside of Europe, and through this exclusion first contributed to the conception of 'Europe' as 'civilisation'.<sup>17</sup> In similar fashion, the exclusion of women from a political public that was establishing itself against the state was a prerequisite for the construction of the political citizen who negotiated topics in the public sphere, which were not welcome in the private – clearly relegated to women – sphere.<sup>18</sup> In both cases one can observe how the interpretation of the 'Other' receives integral meaning in the formulation of the universal or general. Here the category of gender demonstrates its analytical precision, since it is not least of all directed towards the disclosure of social power relationships, through which hierarchisations are created by means of gender role attributions.<sup>19</sup> The creation of these power relations can be just as frequently observed inter-societally as transnationally through the fabrication of feminine or masculine connoted spheres of action, if we cast our view towards post-Enlightenment Eastern European discourse.

A gender history of Eastern Europe can more accurately document this finding through the analysis of the categories of public and private, and thereby call into question the constructed nature of an apparently universal concept of an enlightened political public. Thus it becomes necessary to write the history of Eastern Europe not only as an assimilation or deficit history, nor to see the role of the Western European *citoyens*, who perform their role in the political public, as the only

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<sup>17</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, 'Mental Maps. Die Konstruktion von geographischen Räumen in Europa seit der Aufklärung', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, xxviii, 3 (2002), 493–514; Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism: Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (c. 1740–1880)* (Oxford et al., 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Claudia Opitz-Belakhal, *Aufklärung der Geschlechter, Revolution der Geschlechterordnung. Studien zur Politik- und Kulturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münster et al., 2002); Sarah Knott (ed.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke et al., 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Fundamental here is still Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender. A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, xci, 5 (1986), 1053–75.

possibility for the development of the political public. Here we should ask which actors are attributed which roles in which realms, and how gender roles are assigned to certain realms.<sup>20</sup> From a gender-historical perspective the actors and public forums of the Central and Eastern European nobility differed considerably from those of the emerging bourgeois society of Western Europe. There, the ideal citizen seemed to be abstractly defined, but clearly oriented towards male attributes through the pairing of political rights to military service or through the emerging bourgeois codes of law with inscribed gender codes. Thus, a part of the female population who had only a few years earlier belonged to the political public (that is, those that were members of the aristocracy) was now excluded.<sup>21</sup>

But how did these spheres develop, if like in the case of Poland, before the foreign national domination that followed the partitions, a strong central state did not exist, so that a bourgeois public would not have had to construct itself against a centralized state? Thus after the loss of independence the juxtapositions state vs. society or public space vs. privacy were conceptualized in a different way than in countries with an unfractured nation state tradition. Which spheres of interaction were open to women in a community, which late into the eighteenth century still did not have a strict separation between the political public and familial private, since the noble family and the noble court were greatly significant places of political negotiation?<sup>22</sup> The development of the citizen concept through the perspective of gender history deviated completely from the western template; deficit

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<sup>20</sup> For a fundamental critique of the concept of the (bourgeois) public from a gender-aware perspective, see Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56–80; Susan Moller Okin, 'Gender, the Public, and the Private', in David Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today* (Stanford, 1991), 67–90.

<sup>21</sup> Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988); eadem (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (New York, 1998); Opitz, *Aufklärung der Geschlechter*.

<sup>22</sup> Claudia Kraft, *Die Polin als Staatsbürgerin: Reformdebatten in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 2009); eadem, 'Das "Staatlich-Administrative" als Feld von Aushandlungsprozessen zwischen alten und neuen polnischen Eliten am Ende des 18. und zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts', in Karsten Holste, Dietlind Hüchtker and Michael G. Müller (eds.), *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure – Arenen – Aushandlungsprozesse* (Berlin, 2009), 21–48.



can only be agreed upon, if one assumes the norm of the citizen as defined by Western European standards.

However, it can be determined that certain strategies of assigning roles developed similarly in the East and in the West during the nation building process: In the nineteenth century, one encounters in every region of Europe women identified in the role of the biological or cultural ‘reproducer’ of the nation, and that attributed to her apparently ‘natural’ bond to home and family.<sup>23</sup> These attributions were confirmed not least of all through supposedly universal, gender-neutral codes of law, which were used in the process of centralising and legitimising during the modern state building process throughout Europe (and beyond), and thus initiated a transfer of gender roles.<sup>24</sup> This attribution proved to be extremely powerful. Taking a look at the emerging pan-European women’s movement of the nineteenth century, it becomes clear that the solidarity of women who entered with the same goals – for example voting rights or educational opportunities – was often prevented through ethnic and other types of fragmentation.<sup>25</sup> The superimposition of gender identity templates through the Eastern European nationalist movement’s overruling of the women’s movement reveals the context dependency and changeable nature of such identity templates. Thus Eastern European history in particular provides further indication that nothing could be more incorrect than to

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine Hall, Karen Hagemann and Ida Blume (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long 19th Century* (Oxford et al., 2000); Sophia Kemlein (ed.), *Geschlecht und Nationalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1848–1918* (Osna-brück, 2000); Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, ‘Die Rolle der Geschlechterpolitik bei der Erschaffung von Nationen und Staaten’, in Karl Kaser (ed.), *Wieser Enzyklopädie des europäischen Ostens*. Band 11: *Europa und die Grenze im Kopf* (Klagenfurt 2003), 331–64.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara Dölemeyer, ‘Frau und Familie im Privatrecht des 19. Jahrhunderts’, in Ute Gerhard (ed.), *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts. Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1997), 633–58; Iwona Dadej, ‘“The Napoleonic civil code is to blame for my decision to study law”. Female Polish law students and lawyers in the first half of the twentieth century’, in Sara Kimble and Marion Röwekamp (eds.) *New Perspectives on European Women’s Legal History* (London, 2016), 217–46.

<sup>25</sup> Susan Zimmermann, ‘The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women’s Movement’, *Journal of Women’s History*, xvii, 2 (2005), 87–117; Dietlind Hüchtker, ‘Cross-mapping. Lokale Verankerungen und transnationale Netzwerke in den Narrativen ostmitteleuropäischer Frauenbewegungen um 1900’ in Steffi Marung and Katja Naumann (eds.), *Vergessene Vielfalt. Territorialität und Internationalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 2014), 164–91.

use the category of gender to essentialise the identity of the respective actor(s), and instead research must weigh categories of class, gender and ethnicity based on the situation, in other words, research should proceed intersectionally.<sup>26</sup> The need to consider the ethnically, culturally and confessionally fragmented landscape of Central and Eastern Europe from the outset appears to be a further heuristic advantage in comparison to a much more homogenous imagined 'general' history.

### III

#### A GENDER HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN EASTERN EUROPE

What type of argumentation did I use in the first part of my text? I advocated that the centre needs its periphery (in Europe, its Eastern part) and the general needs the specific (the human, or rather, man needs woman) to preserve the status of the universal or the unlabelled. By working out relationality, I was able to understand the processes by which hegemonic relationships are repeatedly stabilized and thus become real. While I pointed out the constructed character of spaces or gender imaginations, and also the agency or performance of (female) actors, my commentary remained embedded in a matrix of periphery/centre, male/female and my decentralising attempts, even with an emancipatory intention, appear to strengthen the discursive and real power of the centre.<sup>27</sup> Against the backdrop of current political developments I could even be accused of contributing to a harmful linking of constructivist approaches to a new 'identity politics'.<sup>28</sup> By emphasising the constructed nature of any (historical) reality and the ideological nature of alleged universal values, I strengthen, for example, the re-nationalising efforts of Poland and Hungary, who are turning against the alleged omnipotence of Brussels,<sup>29</sup> or perhaps I'm

<sup>26</sup> Gabriele Winker and Nina Degele, *Intersektionalität. Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten* (Bielefeld, 2009); Vera Kallenberg, Jennifer Meyer and Johanna M. Müller (eds.), *Intersectionality und Kritik* (Wiesbaden, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> This recent critique with regard to the institutionalisation of research on 'Central and Eastern Europe' from Markus Krzoska, Kolja Lichy and Konstantin Rometsch, 'Jenseits von Ostmitteleuropa? Zur Aporie einer deutschen Nischenforschung', *Journal of Modern European History*, xvi (2018), 40–63.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Meyer, *Identitätspolitik. Vom Missbrauch kultureller Unterschiede* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Reinhold Vetter, *Nationalismus im Osten Europas. Was Kaczyński und Orbán mit Le Pen und Wilders verbindet* (Bonn, 2017); Karolina Wigura and Jarosław Kuisz,

feeding the questionable identity politics of women's movement à la Alice Schwarzer or the now in crisis (white) masculinity – embodied through the election of Donald Trump.<sup>30</sup>

Generally, you can say that I remained stuck in a conventional historical narrative model: I may have pointed out the problematic character of the semi-periphery and criticised the historical narrative of 'catching up', for the 'not yet arrived'. Perhaps through this I made plausible the reality constructing impact of historical narratives, without changing anything in the form of my telling (and through this set myself apart from the well-founded feminist critique that accuses science of creating those systems that appear 'natural' to us<sup>31</sup>). By indicating that the shift in gender roles and spatial references in other historical contexts (other forms of public, different functions of societal categories) I've only added another facet to 'general' history (such as the nobility as a functional equivalent of the bourgeoisie or the noble court as a space of freedom for female agency) but have not truly decentralised it.

I do believe, however, that a renewed reflection on gender history and history of knowledge could make it possible to justify the value of an area related historiography, thereby finding a way out of the constructivism vs. essentialism dilemma. This is what I would like to attempt in the second section of my text. An exceptionally helpful instrument for avoiding the above mentioned dead-end, through which seemingly natural orders are created through the historical scientific production of knowledge, appears to be the new history of knowledge, whose representatives such as for example Philip Sarasin, make the case for using 'knowledge' in place of (political) 'power' or (social) 'inequality' (which up until now were considered main elements of

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'Autodafés in Zeiten der Polarisierung. Postkommunistischer Populismus in Polen', in Andreas Rostek (ed.), *Polaka First. Über die polnische Krise* (Berlin, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa, *Unterscheiden und Herrschen. Ein Essay zu den ambivalenten Verflechtungen von Rassismus, Sexismus und Feminismus in der Gegenwart* (Bielefeld, 2017); To the question of the left's 'identity politics' and its apparent contribution to the triumph of populism in the US presidential election, see Joan C. William, Mark Lilla and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 'Trumps Amerika: Lehren für die Linke', in *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 62 (2017), 41–55.

<sup>31</sup> Sabine Höhler and Bettina Wahrig, 'Geschlechterforschung ist Wissenschaftsforschung. Wissenschaftsforschung ist Geschlechterforschung', *N.T.M. Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin*, xiv, 4 (2006), 201–11, here 202.

difference producing relationships) and to inquire what are respective thinking and speaking possibilities of an era. Sarasin identifies following fields of inquiry in knowledge history: i) the systematizing and ordering of knowledge: that is asking how knowledge is stabilised and why something is recognised as true. ii) the representation and mediality of knowledge, since it is assumed that knowledge is decisively shaped through transport and representation. iii) the actors who handle knowledge, since knowledge contributes to the positioning of the actors, so knowledge means discursive power, whereby it is emphasised that knowledge is transformed by the recipients; and iv) the genealogy: here the focus is how an enforced truth claim can be historically explained.<sup>32</sup>

The claim of this new history of knowledge is not modest at all: in place of political history or social history, ‘knowledge history’ is recommended as the approach to comprehend the ‘whole’ or rather the historical ‘context’ (and so to achieve what is understood as the genuine aim of historical research, which does not merely analyse texts and place them in relationship to one another, but seeks to create a narrative that goes beyond the single text). In order to grasp the ‘whole’, one must understand the production and circulation of knowledge, and take into account that knowledge is mobile and transformable and that its validity is historically contingent. The starting point is the observation that knowledge systems create difference and have power implications (which was previously attributed to political power and social inequality).<sup>33</sup> Thereby knowledge could – or rather must – become dominant, but it is always unstable and situated, never neutral or objective.

Good, one is tempted to say – that sounds very convincing and maybe it is possible to break apart the rigid framework of a political and social history that contributed to telling narratives of the periphery as a history of various shortcomings, deficits, or even backwardness, and to submit the inventory of historical and contemporary knowledge to continuous critical scrutiny. However, it’s worth noting that with Sarasin, gender as a category is not explicitly discussed; in general, it seems to me that this category is rather underrepresented in the field

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<sup>32</sup> Philipp Sarasin, ‘Was ist Wissensgeschichte?’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, xxxvi, 1 (2011), 159–72.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

of history of knowledge. Yet it is precisely gender history research that has revealed within the history of science that both in the to-be-researched knowledge inventories as well as the knowledge collectives and institutions that research them, gender hierarchy is always already inscribed. An example is the study from Heike Berger, on German female historians in the decades between 1920 and 1970, in which the author illuminates how historical narratives repeatedly refer to state and national patterns of order, in which gender is inscribed as a category. Thus, historical science, just like all areas of social life, is structured through the category of gender. It is therefore reasonable to view science as the consequence of social and collective activity, and to pay attention not just to the research results, but also to the production of cognitive knowledge and the forms of representation of knowledge inventory, and thereby to always reflect the meaning of the category of gender.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently the focus is on the feminist critique of science, which has begun to undermine any claims of totality,<sup>35</sup> which appears again in Sarasin's perspective, in which historians are responsible for the 'whole' or for the 'overall context'.

Can this claim of totality be persuasively countered by feminist scientific theory and its plea for the 'partial perspective' or rather with the concept of 'situated knowledge'? Yes and no. The establishment of a feminist science, or in our case more precisely said – gender history, was given from the beginning the assignment that Sabine Hark put this way: "The goal is not to become a new canonised discipline, but to develop new forms and modes of knowledge production".<sup>36</sup> While gender history has succeeded in becoming such a new discipline, its proponents should however ask themselves whether, with its fixation on the critique of the heteronormative order, it is not reifying dichotomies of gender concepts, and through its emphasis on the power

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<sup>34</sup> Heike Berger, *Deutsche Historikerinnen 1920–1970. Geschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main et al., 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1988), 575–99; Mona Singer, 'Feministische Wissenschaftskritik und Epistemologie: Voraussetzungen, Positionen, Perspektiven', in Ruth Becker and Beata Kortendiek (eds.) *Handbuch Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung. Theorie, Methoden, Empirie* (Wiesbaden, 2010<sup>3</sup>), 292–301.

<sup>36</sup> Sabine Hark, *Dissidente Partizipation. Eine Diskursgeschichte des Feminismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 395.

of discursively-produced gender hierarchies has not lost sight of other axes of inequality. Judith Butler is surely just the most prominent of many critics,<sup>37</sup> who warn against essentialising the 'collective subject' of woman through the institutionalisation of women's and gender studies, and warn us about reifying gender attributes, pointing to the meaning of discursive and performative practices within the production of (fluid) gender identities. Such a critique of a genuinely successful gender research in recent decades seems entirely appropriate when viewed in the context of the subversive potential inherent in this field of research and in the questioning of existing knowledge systems, which was present from the outset. And yet some gender scholars have taken great offense at this type of (self)critical perspective. In this way feminist social philosopher Nancy Fraser reproaches Judith Butler, claiming that in addition to heteronormative sexism and its hegemonic knowledge hierarchy, other reasons for social inequality need to be considered, and that, in addition to discourse rules, the institutional order should also be critically examined.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, one can't ignore the fact that the fight for sexuality and its regulation is closely bound with the genesis and reproduction of modern social institutions.<sup>39</sup> Thus discourse and institutional order appear inextricably interconnected, though each also a bit different according to historical and regional context. And if one wants to trace this interconnectedness, one should examine these contexts, or to say it more concretely, to consider the actors' spaces of experience.

This dimension of experience brings me back to the Eastern Europe specific *area studies*. It was naturally a mere coincidence that the appearance of Judith Butler's tremendously influential book *Gender Trouble*,<sup>40</sup> in which she describes the consequences of a discursive order created by heteronormative premises, coincided with the first substantial contact between Western and Eastern feminists at the end of the Cold War in the beginning of the 1990s. A coincidence indeed, but a very consequential one, as this contact between East and West was not particularly promising, with many Eastern European researchers

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<sup>37</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York et al., 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler', *New Left Review*, 228 (1998), 140–9.

<sup>39</sup> Sabine Hark, 'Queer Interventionen', *Feministische Studien*, ii (1993), 103–9.

<sup>40</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

criticising that their historical and current realities were used solely as ‘examples’, to substantiate theses about ‘sexism’ and ‘patriarchy’.<sup>41</sup> And these theses were, of course, bound to Western concepts which were especially powerful at that time: on the one hand, the notion of discursive production not only of the social, but also of the biological sex; on the other hand, the role of discourse as the place of generating social reality. In 2000 the gender historian Joan Scott criticised the idea of ‘Western methods’ on the one hand and ‘Eastern particularities’ on the other and insisted, that theory appropriation, or better said theory development should always be context-dependent and that it wouldn’t hurt to recognise theory transfers in the East-to-West direction: after all, argues Scott, linguistic structuralism that lies at the foundation of Foucault’s or Butler’s post-structuralism, was developed primarily in Eastern Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Generally speaking discourse without the dimension of experience is anaemic, or more specifically: the view of the category of gender as a product of a unilateral West-to-East transfer, through which the local context is hidden, causes that the transformative power inherent to such a category gets lost.<sup>43</sup> And so we turn our view not only to discourse analysis, but to institutional settings, and thereby return to Nancy Fraser: she accuses Butler of essentializing discourse analysis and that she therefore is unable to perceive the historical transformation or the agency of (female) actors. At the same time, Fraser herself ignores spatially situated differences, if she believes she can tell the story of the post-socialist welfare state in neoliberalism solely based on the

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<sup>41</sup> This argument is made by Yvanka B. Raynova, ‘Theorie und Rezeptionseinflüsse der Gender Studies in Osteuropa im Bereich Philosophie’, in Alice Pechriggl and Marlen Bidwell-Steiner (eds.) *Brüche, Geschlecht. Gesellschaft. Gender Studies zwischen Ost und West* (Wien, 2003), 17–86, here 39–41; more generally on the communication difficulties between Eastern and Western feminists, Mihaela Frunza and Theodora-Eliza Vacarescu (eds.), *Gender and the (Post)East/West Divide* (Cluj-Napoca, 2004); Nanette Funk, ‘Fifteen Years of the East-West Women’s Dialogue’, in Janet Elise Johnson and Jean C. Robinson (eds.), *Living Gender After Communism* (Bloomington, 2007), 203–26.

<sup>42</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Fictitious Unities. “Gender”, “East”, and “West”’. Paper presented at the 4th European Feminist Research Conference, Bologna, Italy, 29 Sept., 2000, <http://archeologia.women.it/user/cyberarchive/files/scott.htm> [Accessed: 12 Feb. 2018].

<sup>43</sup> Biljana Kašić, ‘Is Gender – Women’s Destiny? A Postsocialist Perspective. In response to Joan W. Scott’s article: “Millennial Fantasies – The Future of ‘Gender’ in the 21st Century”’, *L’Homme Z.F.G.*, xiii, 2 (2002), 271–5.

analysis of the knowledge system and institutional orders of the West.<sup>44</sup> She is successful in her critique of the essentializing of designation practices in identity-specific feminism, which she sets in opposition to institutional orders as the pillar of social inequality. However, her general neglect of Eastern European living conditions obstructs her view of the fact that discourse analysis and institutional order are always being newly configured. One can only recognise this, if one first takes seriously the experiential reality of other contexts and consistently considers the East-West conflict as well as ‘post-Socialism’ in a historically interwoven perspective.<sup>45</sup> Is it possible, that after 1989 the eastern part of Europe no longer represented the ‘discursive Other’ for the Western imagination, because it found itself (in the eyes of the research) in a quasi-natural process of assimilation towards the ‘centre’ and consequently – due to the respectively one-sided fixation on discourse analysis or institutional order – the spaces of experience of the local (female) actors are ignored?<sup>46</sup> And, perhaps, precisely the knowledge-based and gender-historical positioning of Eastern Europe in postcolonial and feminist frameworks could erase binary narratives of periphery and centre, or Global South and North, and still provide space for Eastern Europe?<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For example, in her examination of feminist thought at the beginning of the twenty-first century, she uses notions like ‘state-organized capitalism’ of the ‘First’ and ‘Third World’ and the ‘late capitalism’ or ‘post-socialism’ (meaning those Western welfare states which landed in crisis) as an analytical framework, but thereby almost completely excludes communist and the post-communist Eastern Europe or the ‘Second World’, see the contributions in Part III (‘Feminism Resurgent? Confronting Capitalist Crisis in the Neoliberal Era’) in Fraser’s book, *Fortunes of Feminism. From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London, New York, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Alison Stenning and Kathrin Hörschelmann, ‘History, Geography and Difference in the Post-Socialist World: Or, Do We Still Need Post-Socialism?’ *Antipode*, 40 (2008), 312–35; Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, ‘Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, li, 1 (2009), 6–34.

<sup>46</sup> Jennifer Suchland, ‘Is Postsocialism Transnational?’ *Signs*, xxxvi, 4 (2011), 837–62, here: 839.

<sup>47</sup> Magdalena Grabowska, ‘Bringing the Second Word in: Conservative Revolution(s), Socialist Legacies, and Transnational Silences in the Trajectories of Polish Feminism’, *Signs*, 37 (2012), 385–411; Claudia Kraft, ‘Phantomgrenzen und Zeitschichten im Postsozialismus. Ist der Postsozialismus postkolonial?’, in von Hirschhausen, *et al.*, *Phantomgrenzen*, 166–90.



Localisation and positionality strike me as two elementary concepts, which have to do with the way in which we employ the categories of space and time in our knowledge acquisition. Spaces are created, but history and its exploration always takes place in spaces whose existence we simultaneously analyse and create. With this in mind, the abolishment of the subject-object relationship demanded by Donna Haraway (as well as further binary relationships like man vs. machine or culture vs. nature) seems worthwhile.<sup>48</sup> In light of this, a separation from our research subjects is artificial and only seemingly objective as would be ignoring the agency inherent to space. The geographer Doreen Massey made the point in the following way: “Spatial form can alter the future course of the very histories that have produced it”.<sup>49</sup> We research in spaces and we research about spaces which we partially create through our research, while at the same time we are also bound to the spaces of experience of our spheres of knowledge that only allow us limited perspectives of the ‘Other’. In brief: in order to be able to do any research, to grasp the ‘whole’, the ‘overall context’, to speak with Sarasin, or to make historical transformation comprehensible, as Fraser demands in her differentiation from Butler, we have no choice but to be perpetually aware of our situatedness and thus regional competence, but also of our regional limitations resulting from our scientific and other socialization. Here the linking of gender research with self-reflective area studies seems to present an immense heuristic potential. The advancement of gender studies and queer studies in recent years, critically opposed to any kind of binary models, encourages researchers to permanent reflection on relations to their research subjects. Its counterpart is space and time – sensitive writing of history, which is conscious that certain concepts of space and time can create a hierarchical relationship of research objects. For concepts of time, Johannes Fabian pointed to “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse”.<sup>50</sup> In the same way as it’s necessary to

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<sup>48</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s’, *Socialist Review*, 80 (1985), 65–108.

<sup>49</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘Politics and Space/Time’, *New Left Review*, 196 (1992), 65–84, here 84.

<sup>50</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Objects* (New York, 1983), 31.

break up hegemonic concepts of time, rigid periphery-centre relationships should be reconsidered, and we rather should speak of “multiple Europes”.<sup>51</sup> To bring it back to gender and queer studies: space and time concepts should be ‘queered’, in order to clarify that we are contributing to their permanent creation.<sup>52</sup>

#### IV CONCLUSION

What then could be the goal of a gender history of knowledge in Eastern Europe? It would be less interested in the canon formation and institutionalisation (which resonates a bit with the plea of Sarasin, and was also seen as a desirable goal of early gender research). Rather, the permanent working-through of one’s own foundations should be sought in order to ensure (and I might add, endure) a reflection about the “entanglement within the respective scientific field”.<sup>53</sup> Here we can return to an ‘icon’ of the feminist theory of science, Donna Haraway, (and do a little canonical education), who argues in favour of questioning traditional demarcations which promote the juxtaposition of subject/object, man/machine, culture/nature. Instead, she proposes to understand this “being wrapped up in the scientific field” as “embodiment” instead of “alienating distance”<sup>54</sup> – and to be aware of one’s own situatedness, I’d like to add. For if we assume, that gender is a historically and locally situated category of knowledge, then the transformation of categories of knowledge can best be traced in transfer and appropriation processes, because only in such processes – which are often characterized by intellectual misunderstandings – the transformative power of (new) categories becomes visible in the first place, then there is much to be said for

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<sup>51</sup> Manuela Boatcă, ‘Multiple Europes and the Politics of Difference Within’, in Hauke Brunkhorst and Gerd Grözinger (eds.), *The Study of Europe* (Baden-Baden, 2010), 51–66.

<sup>52</sup> Beatrice Michaelis, Elahe Haschemi Yekani and Gabriele Dietze, ‘The Queerness of Things Not Queer. Entgrenzungen – Affekte und Materialitäten – Interventionen’, *Feministische Studien*, xxx (2012), 184–97.

<sup>53</sup> Hark, *Dissidente Partizipation*, 396.

<sup>54</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’, in *eadem*, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991), 183–201, here 190.

continuing to conduct regional sciences. For perhaps it is such that we only become aware of asynchronous developments in discourse and institutional order, when these developments are perceived by knowledge collectives, which are as heterogeneous as possible.

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