

**CONTESTING AND CONVERGING STORIES OF GLOBAL ORDER:
REGIONAL AND NATIONAL NARRATIVES**

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Preamble:

This application represents a next step of the joint “Global History” initiative funded by the Princeton-Humboldt program between September 2014 and August 2017. The current project focuses on the exchange between faculty and graduate students from the two universities in the field of global history with a special emphasis on bridging history and area studies. The previous grant focused on exchanges: a number of short term stays of faculty members, graduate students, as well as three joint advanced research seminars (2015: Berlin, 2016: Princeton, 2017: Berlin). Moreover, activities of the Global History project became part of the larger Global History Collaborative, a joint initiative of Princeton, HU, Free University Berlin, Tokyo University and the Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, e.g. a larger doctoral school in Tokyo (Sept. 2015) and two workshops, on the question of scale in global history (Paris, Nov. 2015) and on sources in global history (Tokyo, Jan. 2017). The Humboldt Princeton project also leveraged crucial support for the successful application for a graduate program in “Global Intellectual History”, funded by the German Research Council (DFG), launched in April 2017.

This sequel proposal on “regional and national narratives of global order” builds upon the activities and experiences of the former project. It also takes the convergence between colleagues at HU and PU in two new, important, directions. First, it deepens the institutional ties between the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) in Princeton and the new Global History PhD in Berlin. Both sides are committed to strengthening the bridges between international/global studies to area studies, and an institutionalized partnership helps accomplish this challenge by moving from exchanges to collaborations. Second, this proposal shifts our alliance from flows of students and faculty to active, vertically-integrated, research to yield joint publications and shared curriculum.

Overall objectives:

- Create a cluster of research teams of faculty and graduate students from Princeton and Humboldt University dedicated to the exploring of the nature of integration from the perspectives of peoples and places through the analysis of stories they create and tell about the rise and character of modern global order.
- Enhance interdisciplinary research capacities in both institutions by creating bridges between History, Global Studies, and Regional/Area Studies around a convergent theme.
- Produce a collaborative template with specific features, such as doctoral seminar series, team-based learning, and on-line publications, specifically creating joint webinars between the global history doctoral programs at PU and HU.
- Reassess the heuristic significance of narratives to understand how what we call globalization (but what many prefer to call global integration) gives new significance to the meaning of place and perspective of social actors trying to make sense of borders, dislocations, and opportunities.

Scientific argument:

Making sense of the “global” in a post-Western world

The “idea of the global” tends to be taken for granted, especially, and paradoxically, when preoccupation with Western-centrism and the search for non-Western views of the world are shaping much of the recent thinking in international studies. Yet we know that globalization brings together states, communities and individuals with distinctive and often sharply conflicting ways of viewing the world. Most of the Western writing on global order has been little aware of the ethnocentric character of its supposedly universal theoretical categories and its dominant political preoccupations. The response so far in order to decentralize our main repertoire of the “global” and “provincialize” the West within it, has been twofold: putting forward the perspectives of emerging (i.e. non-Western) powers, and reintroducing culture in the international by looking at national or regional (again usually non-Western) views of the world.

There is a rich theoretical debate about the character and world-historical trajectory of the modern global order. Meanwhile work within Global History has transformed our understanding of the genesis of globalization and the making of international society, highlighting, *inter alia*, the agency of the non-Western world, the richness and variety of connections across what would come to be called the global South, the depth and range of non-Western thought on ‘the world’, the need to look beyond a simple tradition/modern dichotomy and to focus instead on the multiple structural transformations *within* modernity, and the complex processes by which Western ideas of international order and capitalist modernity have been transposed into different national and regional contexts and the mutual constitution of ideas and understandings that resulted from that interaction.

Paradoxically, while scholars and public intellectuals have drawn more attention to the multiple forces and origins of globalization, the search for ‘non-Western’ ideas and for regional and cultural ‘perspectives’ on global order has carried with it certain challenges. Uncovering the culturally specific character of particular ways of understanding the world undoubtedly encourages greater pluralism and reflexivity. But it can also lead to a cultural and regional inwardness that may work to reproduce the very ethnocentricities that are being challenged. In recent years, there has been an increasingly heated debate about whether “global” narratives even exist, and whether everything must be reduced to local or regional perspectives.

Furthermore, the search to understand what is distinctive has involved a retreat from the global, or at least thin and one-dimensional characterizations of the dynamics, forces and logics at work at the global level. Given the very power of the global, there are no longer (if there ever were) any non-Western country, regional or cultural perspectives that can gather together in any straightforward or unproblematic manner. The sheer power of the global means that attempts to identify, for example, a ‘Chinese’ or ‘Indian’ perspective on global order will face severe methodological difficulties.

This project wants to juxtapose the quest for plural perspectives against our need for integrative stories. It seeks to maintain the drive for pluralism, for historicizing and for reflexivity but also to ‘bring the global back in’ by opening up a range of ‘narratives of the global’ and examining the nature of the contestation between and among them. The project brings together History and Regional/Area Studies and seeks to strike a balance between the historical and the analytical. Its core goal is to examine how different parts of the world have understood the global, the impact of western globalization/globality, and the narratives that are told about how different regions, states and societies ‘fit into’ the global. Rather than bringing differently situated scholars into a conversation about the merits or demerits of an

existing western conversation about global order, we aim to open up a far broader conversation in which authors uncover the production of differently situated accounts, narratives and stories about the global and its associated and related ideas and concepts. This will also involve asking how current frameworks for understanding global order have been shaped by, and constrained within, fundamentals of social sciences and humanities that were created in the age of the European nation-state and then globalized through the process of imperialism. To what extent does global order require new models for organizing social science and humanities research and knowledge-production?

Why narratives?

Human beings make sense of complex, contested and multi-causal phenomena through the telling of stories. Indeed the widely felt power of the ‘global’ but its unfathomable and complex nature invites narrative-like account: from *mission civilisatrice* in the late 19th century globalization to the “clash of civilizations” in the early days of our current globalization, from the “end of History” to the “end of the West”. Narratives link the past, the present and the future within some overarching explanatory, evaluative or interpretative account. Even if the focus is on what is exceptional or particular, there is necessarily an implied view of what lies outside and of the role played by the dynamics of that increasingly ‘global’ outside. Narratives are clearly sources of power, creating the taken-for-granted ways of thinking within which orthodoxies come to make sense and shaping the environment within which actors play out their interests. Narratives and the rhetorical construction of narratives are the source of immense mobilizing power, especially when translated into ‘grand strategy’ – Containment or the War on Terror. It is the explicit role of time and space and the implicit notion of purpose, of movement and of potential transformation that distinguishes narrative from ‘frames’ or ‘social imaginaries’. Narratives give meaning to connections across space and time. They suggest a rational set of

connections and a consistent pattern – although that rationality and consistency may depend far more on myth and metaphor than on evidence and logic. Storytelling, then, plays a key role in the social construction of reality, both in the search for rationality and consistency and in the way in which we arrive at historical or moral judgements.

Hence narratives matter normatively. Western political theory has explored many different routes whereby rational agents might come to agree on a-historical and universal norms, or on what a morally satisfactory global order would look like. A central goal has been to seek distance from historical situatedness and to avoid the snares of old-style historicism. And yet there is a strongly emotive element to communication and contestation about norms and values. But what about the wider-world stories of peoplehood? This project puts that question on the table. Which norms win out politically often reflects not abstract rational argument, but rather the degree to which particular values are embedded within powerful and successful narratives at a global scale. Moving down this road presses us towards a more practice-centred approach to norms, stressing the historically situated and conditioned character of all human understanding. This includes, of course, what is different and distinctive to particular national, regional and cultural histories but also how those histories inevitably inscribe some view or vision of the larger, increasingly global picture. Narratives of the global and the collective memoirs in which they are embedded may well reinforce communitarian identities and exclusionist policies. But they are also the subjects of contestation and the sites of resistance. The aim, then, is to think about the role of contested narratives of the global in the negotiation of new normative frameworks and orders.

Format and Timeline

Structure

Given the breadth of this subject, the scale of the interdisciplinarity, as well as the ambition to create deep collaborations between faculty and students across two institutions, we propose to create four teams, or clusters. Here is how we will divide labors: Each team will be responsible for a sub-theme, and the members will report back on a regular basis to the wider consortium. Each co-PI will be in charge of one of the teams. Each team will consist of three people, including two doctoral students, one from each partner institution (so, for example, Andreas Eckert will oversee a team of three: himself and one student from Princeton and one from Humboldt). These will comprise the core collaborating structure devoted to sub-themes within the general theme on narratives of the global.

What do the teams do? Our goal is to collaborate to create a series of interwoven, field-defining set of essays which we would submit to a top peer-review journal (*Journal of Global History* etc.) as a special issue theme. This will, we hope, be good for our fields and be good for our graduate students being inducted into them. The teams will be commissioned to write joint position papers based on data gathered, pooled, and analysed in internal, collaborative discussions. The position papers will be presented in workshops of the whole four-team consortium over the course of two days (with half days dedicated to extensive debate about each of the papers). Each team will then revise their papers and present them in a wider event with larger student and faculty commentary of the hosting institution (our provisional plan is to stage this event at Princeton). The last stage will be devoted to the polishing final product, in light of the wider feedback, and presenting it in another larger, showcase event in Berlin. The last gathering will also allow time for discussion on methodology and an appraisal of the project itself.

The advantages of the cluster approach are educational and epistemic: they allow for deeper and closer doctoral students and faculty/students collaboration, they enlarge our range of methodological approaches, they enable focused, transversal debate across the range of

themes. In this fashion, we can be ambitious and yet not lose focus, thereby enabling in-depth analysis of specifically relevant dimensions of the theme (rather than an attempt at comprehensiveness that might lead to dispersion or thin discussion). Finally, and vitally, the form of collaboration encourages teamwork between faculty and graduate students and between graduate students at Princeton University and Humboldt University.

Themes:

We have a set of interrelated sub-themes we propose to explore. We stress, however, that these are slightly provisional, as we are keen to work with the graduate students to frame them, thereby reflecting the strengths and interests they they bring to the collaboration. We intend to refine these thematics at the initial planning workshop. They are:

(1) a critical reflection on the concept of “development” and “backwardness” in order to analyse strategies of universalisation and boundary-making after 1945, but also to take into account the *longue durée* impact of deeper rooted normative legacies of progress and modernization in the European mould, such as the ubiquitous “standard of civilization” of the 19th century globalization; co-PI Vincent Houben.

(2) an examination of debates and narratives of world economic integration from the perspective of self-identified “peripheral” societies, especially from Latin America. Concepts of dependency forged a strong regional social identity among writers and social scientists from 1900 onwards, and fuelled nationalist and populist responses to global ordering efforts; co-PI Jeremy Adelman.

(3) a study that considers national efforts to make sense of the global circulation of people during the mass migrations of the nineteenth century, with particular attention to narratives of mobility, diaspora, borders, and exclusion. co-PI: Beth Lew Williams

(4) an enquiry about discussions and narratives of coerced, unfree and “free wage labour” as a crucial normative category in views of global hierarchies; co-PI Andreas Eckert.

All four of these lines of investigation – the sense of falling behind, becoming peripheral, displacement, and ideas of free labor – gained salience in how people (especially intellectuals, broadly defined) created a sense of stratification as the world integrated. They speak to a hypothesis that we want to consider as a wider, embracing, theme: along with global integration from the nineteenth century forward emerged a sense of hierarchy to the emerging international order. In turn, this stratification and layering became the source of disenchantments and dismay with global order, down to the present day.

Criteria for participation

The general aim is to have a cross-regional partnership of doctoral students and faculty. Therefore, careful attention will be given to a balanced representation of the various fields involved (History, Area Studies representing a variety of regions). It is important, too, not to create yet another space for presentation of individual work in progress or chapter of dissertations – more or less loosely related to the general theme - as this would miss the point of the enterprise and not create real added value. For this reason, we underscore the importance of *collaborating* within and between teams and conversation across teams, a model we adapt from the natural sciences.

We believe this participatory model also addresses the challenges of doing work in an cross-regional way. Instead of a melange of area studies voices, we propose to confront the challenges of juxtaposing and cross-hatching them. This, we feel, is important for our graduate students to develop a wide-angle view of their own areas or fields of expertise. This will not only produce a unique and important intervention in our fields, it will buoy them as they seek new pathways to thinking about world (dis)order in our global times. We also hope that developing skills of collaboration at an early career stage will also help young scholars learn by doing, and thus equip them for teamwork that will be important to the global human sciences as our century unfolds. Especially at doctoral level, the workshops and other discussion venues will be designed to compel students in History and Area studies to develop a proficiency in dialogue and collaboration across the boundaries. Accordingly, we will select our doctoral student collaborators for their capability and commitment to exploring these frontiers.

We will have an eye out for graduate students who are past their generals or field examinations but who are not yet at an advanced stage of writing their dissertations. Participants will be selected based on the coursework they have done, their interest in crossing global, regional, and local histories, and their ability to commit to this project without taxing their time to completing their dissertations.

Calendar

There will be three stages of the project: a short, initial, exploratory stage, focused on refining (as there is already a fair amount of coordination among the lead applicants) the sub-themes and including the doctoral students into our discussions (event 1); a longer research-intensive collaborative stage that will include presentation of preliminary results (events 2-4);

and a finalization stage comprising evaluation/comments by external participants and that will yield to at least one academic publication, paper or/and on-line (anthology or special issue of journal) as well as a report on the initiative that records its various proceedings and could be used for future research (event 5).

The timeline is:

October 2017, Berlin: A planning workshop on regional narratives of the global.

March 2018, Princeton: workshop to discuss the preliminary findings, problems, and prospects for each theme.

October 2018, Berlin: First drafts of position papers in a semi-closed workshop (it will be open to participation for some interested scholars in the Berlin area but not widely advertised).

March 2019, Princeton: Second drafts of teamwork with invited external commentators.

June/July 2019, Berlin: Showcase Symposium to wider public, followed by assessment and plans for follow-up projects

We should add several clarifications to this time line. First, the PI's would be responsible for ensuring that their teams caucus regularly for data gathering and discussions (live and on-line), the production of position papers, and preparation for all the workshops. We would propose to create an online site for the whole consortium, with Googledocs dedicated space for collecting data, sharing drafts, and staging online hangouts. To that end, we are also proposing short-term, up to one week, faculty residencies. These will be occasions for visitors to collaborate with the team members from the other institution, offer seminars and talks to hosts, and participate in the intellectual life of the partner institution. This enables us not only to deepen the collaboration but to enhance the bridge-building between across the institutions.

Follow up

While our teams would be meeting and working, we propose to create more intervisible seminars between Princeton and Berlin. Both institutions have a core set of “global history” seminars to anchor their graduate programs. We want to use new video capabilities to explore occasional joint seminars where the readings overlap, and so find opportunities for collaborative teaching across video walls. Since this is costless, and we would use existing technological capabilities, we have not elaborated on this idea in this proposal.

It is still an important dimension of our proposal because we would like to probe the possibility of “global” graduate training in the human sciences. It clears the ground for a new direction in training graduate students (that includes advanced Master students in Berlin) by being bi-locational. To that end, in the second year of our collaboration, as the experience of collaboration accumulates and as we finalize our papers, we propose to start discussions about the prospects of co-joined programs. This may include the creation of a more standing joint training program or standing curriculum, thus going beyond the particulars of this project to anchor a new model of inter-institutional graduate education and collaborative research in global history more generally. In this context, we plan to coordinate core courses in global history that are taught in Princeton and Berlin and to design 2 – 3 sessions with common readings and to set up a two-way seminar on screen for students on both sides. The idea is to have a bi-national monthly seminar as a starting point to develop more lasting joint curricula in global history.

As we move from exchange to collaboration, and from collaboration to joint programming, we will explore our contacts with the Mellon Foundation, which is committed

to long-term support for new initiatives in the global humanities, to create a new model of global learning and research for graduate students in the still precariously global age.

Provisional timeline / milestones

October 2017, Berlin: A planning workshop on regional narratives of the global, final decision about cluster themes. Setup of online site

March 2018, Princeton: workshop to discuss the preliminary findings, problems, and prospects for each theme.

October 2018, Berlin: First drafts of position papers in a semi-closed workshop (it will be open to participation for some interested scholars in the Berlin area but not widely advertised).

March 2019, Princeton: Second drafts of teamwork with invited external commentators.
Discussion about curricula

June/July 2019, Berlin: Showcase Symposium to wider public, followed by assessment and plans for follow-up projects