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Knowledge Societies and Expert Cultures in Europe

The idea of the knowledge society has become central to the self-conception of the European Union and also of Europe in a wider sense. Whereas in the 19th century, scientific and technical superiority stood as the reason and justification for Europe's global hegemony, a more modest version of Europe as a knowledge society dominates today's political discourse. Although a common cultural and intellectual heritage is perceived as the foundation of European integration, the formation of a European knowledge society serves as a *raison d'être* for the European Union itself. The "Lisbon Agenda" of March 2000, which defined Europe as a single research area, and its recently updated version "Europe 2020" call for a European-wide push in fostering science and technology. They serve as largely uncontroversial master plans for the future of the continent.

The book in preparation will be jointly written with Martin Kohlrausch (University of Louvain) and published with Palgrave Macmillan in 2013. It seeks a deeper historical understanding of the role of technological and scientific knowledge during Europe's last 150 years. Rather than taking the knowledge society for granted, it will highlight the contested and ambivalent character of European knowledge regimes, in part by focusing on networks of persons, particularly experts, as highly ambivalent figures at the interfaces of techno-science, state, and society. Focusing on expert networks illuminates the variety of different factors, beyond knowledge in a narrower sense, on which the complex rise of multiple knowledge societies in Europe has depended. Case studies, focusing on significant examples from the education of technical experts to the rise of European 'big science,' will outline the organizational patterns and communication cultures of experts, as well as the institutional systems that produced and used knowledge for social ends. These case studies will also map the multiple geographies of 'knowledge Europe' between Greenland and Antarctica as well as between the US and (Soviet) Russia, advocating a de-centered perspective on European history. Particular emphasis will be paid to experts in the 'age of extremes,' i.e. the manifold entanglement of experts with the Europe's twentieth century history of violence and destruction.

Moreover, the book will integrate an environmental history perspective by tackling the crucial question of how, in approximately the last four decades, Europe has been staged as a "Green Europe" and as a global forerunner in sustainable technologies and climate research.