

International Conference

Other Europes: Concepts, Histories, Narratives

Conveners:

Jan Rupp (Univ. Giessen), Bettina Severin-Barboutie (Univ. Clermont-Ferrand), Katharina Stornig (Univ. Giessen), Niels F. May (GHI Paris)

Date: November 19-21, 2025

In the wake of anti-EU movements, the return of full-blown war and growing anti-democratic tendencies on the European continent, competing concepts, histories and narratives of Europe loom large in the 21st-century present. So does, by the same token, the need for dialogue over conflicting and shared historical narratives if Europe's proverbial unity in diversity and the underlying democratic values are to unfold. This conference starts from the assumption that while—social, political, gender, ethnic or religious—diversity is often seen as a cause of problems it may also serve as a means to counter recent trends of eroding unity, democracy and societal cohesion in Europe today and in the future. Indeed, socially marginalized positions, subaltern perspectives and historically shifting peripheries can be seen as vital to critically assessing and rethinking Europe by adding more plural, polyvocal accounts of »other Europes« and »other Europeans« (e.g. El-Tayeb 2011; Fornäs 2017; Gasser 2021; Otele 2020; Polland et al. 2020). Bringing together international scholars of various disciplinary backgrounds, the conference seeks to examine Europe and European history from marginalized, peripheral and subaltern perspectives. More specifically, it asks how concepts, histories and narratives of »Europe« are changed or altered once they are retold by groups that lack access to (political, economic, social) power, or that experience societal or cultural marginalization on grounds of, e.g., nationality, race, class, gender, religion, age or sexuality. By doing so, the conference not only builds on recent works that have deconstructed linear, success-oriented or binary narratives and opened up long-term perspectives on European integration (e.g. Patel 2018 and 2022; Soutou 2022; Leucht et al. 2020; Ruppen Coutaz and Paoli 2024). We also aim to enrich these perspectives by proposing subalternity and intersectionality as promising concepts to engage with marginal(ized) voices and peripheral locations. While both concepts are well established in historical and humanities scholarship, they are still waiting to be fully explicated and put to use for transnational histories of Europe—histories that are not told from a single point-of-view or elite perspective, but rather from a geographically and socially more inclusive scope. Such histories, we argue, provide a fruitful starting point to further rethink and put into perspective mainstream accounts, as well as to deconstruct normative, hegemonic or romanticised visions of Europe and its past. Among others, they stand to include labour migrants, refugees, workers, women, youths, non-citizens and minorities, as well as people categorized or »othered« due to social constructions of ethnicity, race or sexual identity.

Bringing to bear a broad spectrum from history, sociology, literary and cultural studies, we invite papers that focus on the period from the nineteenth to the 21st-century and contribute to our understanding by addressing one or more of the following themes:

- histories of Europe or processes of Europeanization from marginalised, peripheral or subaltern perspectives and their potential to counter blind spots in mainstream historical accounts and/or to work around conflicts and conflicting memories
- historically variable concepts of »other Europes«, of envisioning Europe otherwise in relation to a given mainstream account

- alternative European imaginaries in historical perspective, past »other Europes« as a point of reference or »lesson« for the present
- conceptual approaches to studying »other Europes« in the past and present (e.g. »from below«, »from the margins«, »decentering«, »decolonizing«, »queering«, »black Europe«) and their analytical affordances and/or political implications
- »Europe« as a (positively or negatively charged) vision or point of reference in social critique or political activism in past and present
- the workings of historical narratives of Europe in present cultural contexts and their political uses
- the workings of (anti-European) discourses of anti-elitism in populist, right- or left-wing narratives of, and visions for, Europe in the past and present
- narratives of Europe and European history in different genres and media – transgeneric and intermedial perspectives

We welcome proposals of 500 words for papers in English, French or German, accompanied by a brief CV (maximum 1 page). Please send them to nmay@dhi-paris.fr by February 14, 2025.

In the event of our application for conference funding being successful we will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs.

References:

- Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others. Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, Minneapolis 2011.
- Johan Fornäs (ed.), *Europe Faces Europe. Narratives from its Eastern Half*, Chicago 2017.
- Lucy Gasser, *East and South. Mapping Other Europes*, Abingdon 2021.
- Brigitte Leucht et al. (eds.), *Reinventing Europe. The History of the European Union, 1945 to the Present*, London 2023.
- Olivette Otele, *African Europeans. An Untold History*, London 2020.
- Kiran Klaus Patel, *Projekt Europa. Eine kritische Geschichte*, München 2018.
- Kiran Klaus Patel, *Europäische Integration. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, München 2022.
- Imke Polland et al. (eds.), *Europe's Crises and Cultural Resources of Resilience. Conceptual Explorations and Literary Negotiations*, Trier 2020.
- Raphaëlle Ruppen Coutaz and Simone Paoli (eds.), *Building Europe Through Education, Building Education Through Europe Actors. Spaces and Pedagogies in a Historical Perspective*, Abingdon 2024.
- Georges-Henri Soutou, *Europa! Les projets européens de l'Allemagne nazie et de l'Italie fasciste*, Paris 2021.