Introduction: Institutional Collaboration for Multiple Border Crossings

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Institutional Collaboration for Multiple Border Crossings

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This book is to be appreciated not only based on its content but also as a process entailing multi-scalar collaborations. In 2020, the Council for European Studies (CES), then homed at Columbia University, US, and the World Society Foundation (WSF), headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, came together intending to sponsor a group of scholars from the "Global South" to attend the Annual Conference of Europeanists in Iceland. The goal of the partnership was to deliberately bring into European Studies scholars who often lack the opportunity to share their research at major international conferences because they reside outside Western Europe or North America. The program was built on the premise that the diversification of voices and the decentering of the production of knowledge about Europe could only enhance our understanding of Europe and the seeking of solutions to its problems. It was also expected that the scholars able to partake in the conference would have the opportunity to craft or strengthen their own networks with other Europeanists from all parts of Europe and the world. However, because of pandemic-related health risks and limitations on traveling, the conference, like many others around the world at the time, was postponed for an indeterminate duration. Rather than stalling the program, this impediment led us to reinvent the project and transform it into a year-long digital writing workshop, using Zoom to come together "in person." Under the leadership of Nicole Shea, then Executive Director of CES, and Christian Suter, President of the WSF since 2008, this virtualization permitted even those scholars who would not have been able to come to the conference because of timing or distance—in spite of funding from WSF being granted—to fully participate, thereby expanding the anticipated geographical reach of the program.

Model for Institutional Cooperation and Individual Collaboration

The WSF-CES Writing Lab was thus born to virtually gather fellowship recipients from the Global South—and ultimately also from those countries within Europe that have been marginalized in the field of European Studies—to participate in a joint publication project. It was envisioned that scholars selected for the program would work together on

an edited collection to be published as a book under the academic and editorial guidance of Drs. Nicole Shea and Hélène Ducros. Hundreds of applications were reviewed, and only a small group of researchers were retained, as their respective proposals for chapters seemed promising and represented an array of world regions.

Since we understood early on that an edited volume built around people rather than topics would be difficult to render coherent, the group worked in sub-groups by general affinities, whether coming from the humanities or social sciences, to create thematic convergences. Therefore, beyond the publication output and the template for successful institutional cooperation it offers, the CES-WSF Writing Lab is conceptualized as a collective knowledge production process. It is designed as a participatory space for crafting lasting bridges not only across disciplines but also across geographies and scholarly traditions that rarely intersect for reasons of distance and funding, as well as because of established exclusionary patterns and general inward-thinking in Western academia. As a result, the writing lab contributes to enhancing inclusiveness in European Studies and developing cross-continental collaborative practices in the field. As such, it expands the scope of the discipline, supporting the diffusion of research conducted by scholars at higher education institutions located outside Western Europe and North America and highlighting Europeanists who generate knowledge about Europe from without the Global North, in a reversal of established patterns of scholarly production.

"Global South" and Decentering

The first conundrum we met was how to define our purpose and scope. Although we used the term "Global South" in our call for proposals, we were fully aware of its drawback and paradoxical connotation for a project that seeks to precisely do away with the Euro-centric organization of knowledge. It also became clear to us that some of the scholars we were looking to include did not actually recognize themselves as being part of this "Global South" and, vice-versa, that some scholars we had not anticipated including attached themselves to the concept. The debate about how to name the non-Western world is not one in which we sought to directly engage, leaving it instead to the selected scholars to tackle in their discussions and writing if they wished.

In the 1950s, Alfred Sauvy (1952) used the term of "Third World" based on the idea of the French "Third Estate," describing a population with aspirations but no power—"this Third World, ignored, exploited, despised like the Third Estate, also wants to be something … Like the Third Estate, the third world has nothing and wants to be something"—and demanding a reaction from the European political class. Replaced later by a language roped into linear and Western-centric theories of development, the terminology of "development and underdevelopment" came about. Deriving from this social construction, the categorization of countries according to their level of "development," from underdeveloped to developed, emerged, further vehiculating processes of inequality that reinforced Western values and practices. Today, these terms have mostly been replaced, for example in the language used by international organizations,

by strictly economic rankings from "high income" to "low income" countries, with the consequence that these categories leave out many indicators, failing to capture key dimensions of human lives. Also to be noted is that the notion of Third World has often stuck in the linguistic habits of those very people initially represented under the term, who might use it more readily than "Global South," as we noticed in discussions with the writing lab's fellows. Some prominent scholars—among others, Patrick Bond—have further pointed to the imperfection of the "Global South" semantics and favored the term empire or periphery to designate the non-Western world, inscribing it in a historical power system. Others have refined the notion of "capitalism's peripheries," which is also recruited when explaining global power inequalities (Aalbers, Rolnik, and Krijnen 2020). Overall, the literature has highlighted that the term "Global South" "clearly fails to capture the diversity—and extreme inequality—that exists within the Global South, let alone the complexity of its links with the Global North" (Williams, Meth, and Willis 2009, 366) and increasingly with a "Global East."

What this discussion markedly demonstrates is that terms such as "Global South" or "the West" do not represent mere geographical areas but instead are intertwined with a slew of historical, political, economic, social, and spatial conditions. The terms themselves, whether "Third World," "developed/underdeveloped/developing," or "Global South" are situated within a specific approach to spatial and economic history, according to which the world has been imagined as constituted of different spheres based on particular values and ethos of modernity and democracy. In their "southern critique," Mary Lawhon and Yaffa Truelove (2020) differentiate between the South as a region and as a metaphor, while Emma Mawdsley, Elsje Fourie, and Wiebe Nauta (2019) investigate South-South relations in *Where is the South?* away from the nation-state, using instead an intersectional transversal perspective in analyzing state relations, all the while emphasizing the need to dislodge a static mode of thinking about scale. This idea has also been taken up by others promoting a multi-scalar approach and effort to decolonize postcolonial thinking, considering "ethnocentrism and sociocentrism as transideological and multiscalar phenomena" (Lopes de Souzas 2019).

Our call for proposals explicitly targeting "Global South" researchers, we were somewhat surprised to receive a good number of applications from colleagues in eastern Europe or the peripheries of Europe, which made us question our conceptualization of geographic inclusion. The fact is that scholars from these areas of the world seemed to perceive themselves as being part of a "Global South" by elimination, simply because they did not think of themselves as belonging to the "Global North," from which they found themselves excluded, as the simplistic North-South binary vision of the world has carved no space for them. Consequently, we expanded our program range to indeed include those projects emanating from what has been coined the "Global East." This "black hole" comprises "all those societies that fall somewhere between North and South – too rich to be in the South, too poor to be in the North" and "encompasses those societies that took part in what was the most momentous global experiment of the twentieth century: to create communism" (Müller 2018, 1). Hence, countries of Eastern and Central Europe offer a unique liminal context to study visions of Europe from what I would

call a European "internal outside" or an "excluded inside"—or at least discounted in many ways. Like others before, we moved beyond geographic descriptors to envisage these internal peripheries in terms of new epistemologies of marginality, rather than mere location. Thus, we extended invitations to scholars from eastern Europe to join the writing lab, based on the understanding that the "Global East" fills the void left by the all too simple Global South-Global North dichotomy and provides an additional bridge.

The discussion about what best terms are to be used to encompass and critique the unevenness in power relations and economic capacity across the world is not new. And we do not claim to bring here convincing answers in this debate. However, through our project, we have attempted to focus on enhancing inclusion where exclusion has been the norm in order to remedy some of the defects of the world order in the production of knowledge about Europe, however this world order is labeled. We also adopted the idea that to the "southern turn" in social science a necessary "eastern turn" should be embraced in Europe, as some scholars have invoked it, past economic debates and towards increasingly cultural and social concerns. For example, Oren Yiftachel, questioning European universalisms, has proposed that more emphasis be given to a "southeastern perspective," an important shift that was the topic of an event held at University College London in 2019, "TheoriSE: debating the southeastern turn in urban theories," where presenters argued that both the "'southern' and 'eastern' perspectives are crucial to challenge dominant paradigms, theories, and epistemologies that sustain global power structures of knowledge production."

The Writing Process

The Digital Writing Lab consisted in regular meetings where writing conventions were discussed and practiced in the elaboration of chapters for the present book. Along the way, we found that differences in writing (and researching) cultures could become a hurdle in the production of standard book chapters. Our challenge, as editors, was to preserve those voices we valued and wanted to hear more of in the discipline while abiding by the expectations of global academic presses. For this reason, we could not retain all the chapters that were submitted to us through the writing lab, but we hope that these scholars nonetheless benefitted from participating in the fellowship and that they ultimately found a fitting outlet for their work.

The seven chapters that comprise the book have been divided into three parts: "Constructing Europe from its Margins," "The European Union: Impact and Understanding Seen from its Outside and Periphery," and "Policy Reach: Focus on Health and Comparative Methods." Each part starts with a short text that was written collaboratively by the authors whose chapters appear in that section of the book. This exercise in collaborative writing was one more way to encourage scholars who might be located on each side of the world to work together at producing a text and to make explicit the linkages that exist between their respective research fields, in spite of linguistic

differences and professional hierarchies (some fellows were full professors, while others were PhD candidates).

Part I introduces Filiz Anlam (Turkey) and Oksana Ermolaeva (Russia, currently a scholar-at-risk outside Russia) as they delve into different ways in which the idea of Europe has been constructed from the margins of Europe. While Filiz focuses on how the Turkish media has created different versions of Europe through images and texts, Ermolaeva addresses how the very contours of Europe were locally negotiated on the ground historically at the border between Russia and Karelia, a northern region at the intersection of Russia, Finland, and Sweden. In the harsh environment of the northern frontier, borders in and out of an ill-defined "Europe" were in fact demarcated by nature, which dominated border control operations and the organization of a two-way flow of people and goods.

In Part II, "The European Union: Impact and Understanding Seen from its Outside and Periphery," Edina Paleviq (Montenegro), Sérgio Luiz Cruz Aguilar (Brazil), and Mare Ushkovska (Macedonia) zoom in on the European Union and how the shaping it has effected on different societies and political systems has been received. Paleviq's chapter on the Europeanization of Montenegro illuminates how the EU's strict rules have shaped accession to the Union in that country and the actors involved, while Ushkovska focuses on the Visegrad countries—Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary—to explain the social sources of EU-skepticism there, beyond the shortcut view that only political populism is to blame. Aguilar looks at EU military operations historically, creating a classification to explain how he sees the EU adapting to security uncertainties across the world.

Finally, in Part III, Qun Cui and Lisheng Dong (with Tom Christensen) and Jia Xu and Weidong Dai turn to solution-seeking through policy work and comparative methods. "Policy Reach: Focus on Health and Comparative Methods" offers two chapters comparing specific dimensions of health policy reform in China and two countries in Western Europe. The focus on health came naturally, as the writing lab went on at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The comparison with China was also prompted by the global public health context, at a time when the world was looking at the ways in which China was trying to curb the coronavirus rapid contagion rate. Qun Cui and Lisheng Dong (in collaboration with Tom Christensen from Norway) compared healthcare reforms in China and Norway to highlight how some features of integrated care are facilitated or hindered by the social, economic, or political context. The last chapter, by Jia Xu and Weidong Dai, both from China, compares the relationship between the risk of falling into poverty and access to healthcare in Germany and China, with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic response. Here too, the authors show that vastly different societies may yield very different prospects and health outcomes for patients but also that they may converge in unexpected ways that it can be reciprocally useful to study.

While a wide array of topics are tied together in this book, it is most important to us to dwell on the context of production, the fellows involved, the collaborative process, and the purpose of the project by which this book came about. We remain committed

to injecting European Studies with voices seldom heard and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge produced from less-represented regions and intellectual traditions in the field. The enhanced visibility of scholars from the so-called "Global South," "Global East," or generally "non Western-Europe or North America" seems key to us for the discipline to advance and to remain sensible and relevant. It is this critical engagement from Europe's outsides or margins—Europe's "beyond"—that can propel Europe into solving its many problems in the twenty-first century.

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