

# The Dark Side of Transnationalism Social Engineering and Nazism, 1930s–40s

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## Abstract

This article introduces the special section on the history of social engineering and Nazism during the 1930s and 1940s. It sketches the object of social engineering, the historiographical debates surrounding it, the place of Nazism in this discussion and the role of transnationality. Moreover, it introduces the contributions and discusses questions for further research.

## Keywords

social engineering, Third Reich, transnational history

In the summer of 1936, 32 delegations comprising 1500 individuals travelled to Hamburg to attend the World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation. The Nazi regime used the event to propagate the organization *Strength through Joy* (Kraft durch Freude) and its leisure policy more generally.<sup>1</sup> Ernst Schuster, for instance, explained on behalf of the German delegation that in Nazi Germany, ‘organizing leisure and recreation’ was about ‘the human being as a whole, and not merely the individual person, but humanity as a totality’. That, he said, distinguished the National Socialist approach from other forms of

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1 D. Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit. Zur internationalen Freizeit- und Sozialpolitik des faschistischen Italien und des NS-Regimes* (Cologne 2009), 476–85.

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organizing leisure.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the head of the German Labour Front, Robert Ley, stressed that Italy had been the first country ‘to adopt our aims’.<sup>3</sup> Under the chairmanship of an American and with major support from Italy, the congress ultimately resolved to establish an International Central Bureau ‘Joy and Work’ in Berlin, which would include an international research institute.

These efforts by the Third Reich to internationalize its social policy show, first of all, that in the 1930s, social policy and sociopolitical ideas and programs were integrated into international networks, debates and exchange relationships. Despite the Great Depression, nationalism and the notion of autarchy, social engineers and other experts across the globe continued to exchange views on how to overcome the challenges of the time. Nazi Germany participated in these conversations, which crisscrossed the bounds between democracy and dictatorship. The internationalization of social policy constituted a significant aspect of German foreign propaganda and its imperial program, and it relativizes the idea that Germany had been excluded from scientific and other networks after the First World War.<sup>4</sup> For some years, such linkages contributed to the international prestige of the Third Reich and the attention it attracted internationally.<sup>5</sup>

Schuster’s contribution and the founding of the Central Bureau illustrate, secondly, that Germany was trying to outstrip Italy’s central role in the organization of leisure time as a vehicle for social policy. *Strength through Joy*, founded in 1933 as a flagship of the regime, was inspired by the fascist *dopolavoro*; neither Schuster nor Ley mentioned this. Fascism and Nazism, normally seen as close allies, were also rivals in international social policy discussions, despite often emulating each other. The dominant focus on diplomatic relations between the two states tends to gloss over these dynamics, which complicate our understanding of the relationship between the two regimes.

The World Congress points, thirdly and more broadly, to the role of experts in the social policy of the 1930s and 1940s: Schuster, professor of economics at the venerable University of Heidelberg, would soon be supervising a dissertation exploring the organization of leisure time with particular attention to international efforts.<sup>6</sup> During the Second World War he published research on ‘The Military Spirit in the National Economy’ and regional cooperation in Europe, among other topics, followed by a successful postwar career as executive secretary of the Federation of Large Landowners and a member of the board of the Institute of

2 E. Schuster, ‘Weltanschauung und Freizeitgestaltung’, in Internationales Zentralbüro ‘Freude und Arbeit’ (ed.), *Bericht über den Weltkongreß für Freizeit und Erholung, vom 23.–30. Juli 1936* (Berlin and Hamburg 1937), 169–71.

3 Ley is quoted in ‘Völkerfriede durch Freude’, *Westdeutscher Beobachter* (morning edition) (27 June 1936), cited in Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit*, 482.

4 See, for example, R. Lettevall, G. Somsen and S. Widmalm (eds), *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe: Intersections of Science, Culture, and Politics after the First World War* (New York, NY 2012).

5 See also K.K. Patel, ‘Welfare in the Warfare State: Nazi Social Policy on the International Stage’, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London*, XXXVII (2015), 3–38.

6 B. Struck, *Die Freizeitgestaltung des Arbeiters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der internationalen Bestrebungen zur Freizeitgestaltung* (Düsseldorf 1938).

German Industry in Cologne. While Schuster had been close to the SPD during the Weimar Republic, after 1933 he served as an expert for the regime, whether on seemingly harmless topics such as the organization of leisure time or on the economic penetration and domination of Europe under Nazi rule. Men such as Schuster served many masters, and political systems of very different ilk were interested in their expertise.<sup>7</sup>

Only some of these issues have been addressed by research so far. This *JCH* special section is devoted to the transnational dimensions of social engineering in the 1930s and 1940s as a problem that has remained on the margins of historiography. As an introduction to the theme, we will first introduce the key concerns we address. We then sketch the object of social engineering, the historiographical debates surrounding it, the place of Nazism in this discussion, and the role of transnationality. We also introduce the contributions and discuss questions for further research.

Scholars in contemporary history have paid a good deal of attention to the history of social engineering – from ergonomists and national planners to demographers, community physicians and arms researchers. Such work has highlighted the optimism about targeted change and missions of progress that characterize this group, which eventually came to influence modern ideas on social planning and ‘creative destruction’. The kind of comprehensive, scientifically guided social planning that began in the second half of the nineteenth century and gained traction from the 1880s reached a highpoint of practical application and political influence in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>8</sup>

Existing research on this development primarily addresses national scholarly organizations, networks and cultures as well as the processes of communication, innovation and implementation that occurred within these frameworks. Only more recently have the transnational relations of exchange between these groups drawn greater interest. A closer analysis of the literature also reveals that research into the transnational exchange, circulation and implementation of scientifically generated expert knowledge has largely skated round the twentieth-century dictatorships.<sup>9</sup> Nazi Germany in particular appears strikingly absent in this context: To be sure,

7 ‘Ernst Albert Karl Heinrich Schuster’, in H. Marcon and H. Strecker (eds), *200 Jahre Wirtschafts- und Staatswissenschaften an der Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen: Leben und Werk der Professoren*, 2 vols (Stuttgart 2004), vol. 1, 475–9; S.P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA 2002), 104.

8 J. Alexander and J.K.H.W. Schmidt, ‘Social Engineering: Genealogy of a Concept’, in A. Podgórecki, J. Alexander and R. Shields (eds), *Social Engineering: The Techniques of Change* (Montreal 1996), 1–19; D. van Laak, ‘Planung. Geschichte und Gegenwart des Vorgriffs auf die Zukunft’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 34 (2008), 305–26; D. van Laak, *Weißer Elefant. Anspruch und Scheitern technischer Großprojekte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1999).

9 See, for example, G. Alchon, *The Invisible Hand of Planning: Capitalism, Social Science, and the State in the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ 1985); J.M. Jordan, *Machine-Age Ideology: Social Engineering and American Liberalism, 1911–1939* (Chapel Hill, NC 1994); R. Fishman (ed.), *The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Policy* (Baltimore, MD 2000); P. Rutland, *The Myth of the Plan: Lessons from Soviet Planning Experience* (London 1985); J. Baberowski, *Der Feind ist überall. Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Stuttgart 2003).

experts, their networks, institutions and universities, as well as their roles in the Nazi regime have been quite well explored. Following the intensification of research on these issues in the 1980s, there has been a veritable explosion of studies over the past 15 years.<sup>10</sup> But transnational processes of exchange and adaptation that began in or led to Nazi Germany have been largely neglected. Transnationalism and Nazism seem incompatible, and transnational history continues to concentrate on peaceful forms of exchange between similarly structured societies.<sup>11</sup>

The absence of the Third Reich is apparent not just in the area of social engineering, but also in many other transnational questions. The recent growth in interest in questions of mutual perception and the radicalization of the Nazi regime through international exchange and contacts constitutes a certain exception. The analysis of social engineers does not play much of a role in this work, however.<sup>12</sup> Only in the field of Nazi eugenics do important studies cast comparative and transnational perspectives on the broad interwar biopolitical debate about sterilization, pro-natalism and fertility in the United States of America, various parts

10 See, among the older studies, G. Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen 1986); P.J. Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism 1870–1945* (Cambridge 1989); H.-W. Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie. Von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung 'lebensunwerten Lebens', 1890–1945* (Göttingen 1992); M. Renneberg and M. Walker (eds), *Science, Technology and National Socialism* (Cambridge 1994). For more recent studies, see the following overviews: R. Rürup and W. Schieder (eds), *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, 17 vols (Göttingen 2000–7); R. vom Bruch and U. Herbert (eds), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*, 6 vols (Stuttgart 2006–13); M. Grüttner, *Biographisches Lexikon zur nationalsozialistischen Wissenschaftspolitik* (Heidelberg 2004); R. Hachtmann, *Wissenschaftsmanagement im Dritten Reich. Geschichte der Generalverwaltung der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft*, 2 vols (Göttingen 2007); I. Haar and M. Fahlbusch (eds), *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften 1918–1960. Personen—Institutionen—Forschungsprogramme—Stiftungen* (Munich 2008); R. Jütte et al., *Medizin und Nationalsozialismus: Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung* (Göttingen 2011); U. Jureit, *Das Ordnen von Räumen: Territorium und Lebensraum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg 2012); R. Hachtmann, *Das Wirtschaftsimperium der Deutschen Arbeitsfront 1933–1945* (Göttingen 2012); D. Hoffmann and M. Walker (eds), *The German Physical Society in the Third Reich: Physicists between Autonomy and Accommodation* (Cambridge 2012).

11 K.K. Patel, 'In Search for a Transnational Historicization: National Socialism and its Place in History', in K.H. Jarausch and T. Lindenberger (eds), *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York, NY 2007), 96–116.

12 See, e.g., B. Musial, 'Konterrevolutionäre Elemente sind zu erschießen'. *Die Brutalisierung des deutsch- sowjetischen Kriegs im Sommer 1941* (Berlin 2001); S. Reichardt and A. Nolzen (eds), *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland. Studien zu Vergleich und Transfer* (Göttingen 2005); J. Baberowski and A. Doering-Manteuffel, *Ordnung durch Terror. Gewaltexzesse und Vernichtung im nationalsozialistischen und im stalinistischen Imperium* (Göttingen 2006); W. Schieder, *Faschistische Diktaturen. Studien zu Italien und Deutschland* (Göttingen 2008); M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (New York, NY and Toronto 2008); M. Geyer and S. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (New York, NY 2009); T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Stalin and Hitler* (New York, NY 2010); M. Gutmann, 'Fighting for the Nazi New Order: Himmler's Swiss, Swedish and Danish Volunteers and the Germanic Project of the SS', unpublished PhD thesis, Syracuse University (2011). For the older literature, see F. Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL 1999, French original: Paris 1995); F. Furet and E. Nolte, *Fascism and Communism* (Lincoln, NE 2001). For both, see D. Schönplflug, 'Histoires croisées: François Furet and Ernst Nolte on Ideology and Violence', *European History Quarterly*, 36 (2006), 265–90.

of Europe, Brazil, China and Japan.<sup>13</sup> Most other questions have remained unexplored. Building on the existing literature, this special section seeks to forge empirical and analytical paths through a little studied field and seeks, using the example of Nazi Germany, to show the possibilities of a transnational analysis of social engineering that includes the dictatorships of the twentieth century.

This collection of articles is concerned with those mutual perceptions, transfers and interconnections between expert knowledge in the area of social engineering in the 1930s and 1940s that began in Nazi Germany, but also with those that led there. More important still: the contributions both analyse relationships with other dictatorships and democracies and discuss the peacetime and wartime phases of the Third Reich. The focus of interest is thus a dual one – on the one hand, the attempt to understand the history of the Nazi regime by enriching it with transnational perspectives, and on the other a call to pay greater attention to the rather neglected ‘dark sides’ of transnational processes of perception and exchange in contemporary history.

Although social engineering was a highly influential phenomenon in Nazi Germany, the interwar period, and the twentieth century more generally, it is hard to grasp conceptually. William Tolman is often cited as the first to use the term. In 1909, Tolman proposed an ideal relationship between capital and labour, where scientific expertise would help workers learn to educate themselves, which he believed would help to overcome the traditional paternalism in relations between employers and their workers.<sup>14</sup> There are, however, important antecedents to this debate, for instance in the ideas of French engineers and sociologists such as Frédéric Le Play and Emile Cheysson during the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as in other strands of social reform.<sup>15</sup> During the twentieth century, methods for the labour market, social policy, and research and educational policy were refined with Taylorism, rationalization and scientific management and, more

13 M.B. Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia* (Oxford 1990); S. Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York, NY and Oxford 1994); E. Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York, NY and London 2003); F. Cassata, *Molti, sani e forti: L'eugenetica in Italia* (Turin 2006); A. Bashford and P. Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford 2010); C. Promitzer, S. Trubeta and M. Turda (eds), *Health, Hygiene, and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945* (Budapest 2011); J. Tanner, 'Eugenics before 1945', *Journal of Modern European History*, 10 (2012), 458–79; E.A. Noren, 'Nothing Natural: Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism and Eugenics in America', *Social Sciences Directory*, 2 (2013), 12–32; E. Klautke, *The Mind of the Nation: Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851–1955* (New York, NY 2013); A. Weiss-Wendt and R. Yeomans (eds), *Racial Science in Hitler's New Europe, 1938–1945* (Lincoln, NE 2013).

14 W.H. Tolman, *Social Engineering: A Record of Things Done by American Industrialists Employing Upwards of One and One-Half Million People* (New York, NY 1909); as reference to Tolman, see, e.g., T. Etzemüller, 'Social Engineering als Verhaltenslehre des kühlen Kopfes. Eine einleitende Skizze', in T. Etzemüller (ed.), *Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld 2009), 11–39.

15 A. Savoye and F. Audren (eds), *Naissance de l'ingénieur social. Frédéric Le Play et ses élèves* (Paris 2008); A. Savoye and F. Cardoni (eds), *Frédéric Le Play. Parcours, audience, héritage* (Paris 2007); S. Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880–1914* (Baton Rouge, LA 1986), 51–84.

comprehensively, with Keynesianism.<sup>16</sup> With the rise of technology and engineering and improved possibilities for gathering and processing information, the comprehensive planning of society and infrastructure was heralded as a vision of the future. During the Second World War, in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper reflected critically on the debate. According to Popper, the social engineer 'believes that man is the master of his own destiny'; for him, the foundation of policy was thus 'a social technology'. Moreover, he distinguished between 'good' 'piecemeal social engineering' and 'bad' 'utopian social engineering'.<sup>17</sup> And Popper's model is only one of many. Against the background of postcolonial and poststructuralist thinking, more recent reflections by James C. Scott, Lutz Raphael, Thomas Etzemüller, Dirk van Laak and others have critiqued Popper's ideas – as ultimately superficial. The understanding of social engineering has become more complex and plural.

Building on this decades-long debate on social engineering as a historical phenomenon characteristic of modernity, we understand it as a specific scholarly-informed mode of problematizing society, formulating responses to the crises of the present and linking them with a future-led developmental imperative.<sup>18</sup> Social engineering is action assisted by experts that intervenes in societal processes. These experts suggest empirically grounded, seemingly transparent and analytically reasoned instrumental solutions intended to shape the present and future. Social engineers themselves make the claim that their approaches interpret and organize the world better than alternative hypotheses and practices. They do not merely place their faith in decrees from above, but also endeavour to provide knowledge that individuals can use to optimize themselves. Their approach is therefore not primarily committed to an authoritarian, hierarchical model, but rather to the notion of 'self-government', as described and analysed by Michel Foucault.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, social engineers do not stop at diagnosing and analysing societal problems, but seek connection with power. They present their 'sound planning' as an especially dignified form of 'objective' expertocracy and technocracy and attempt to inject their ideas into political decision-making processes by giving them the corresponding ideological flavour. When their ideas and concepts shape policy, such social technologies assume a top-down dimension: In order to form the 'new human being', the Nazis (like many other twentieth-century dictatorships and, to a lesser extent, also certain democracies) did not rely on self-appropriation by individuals, but rather coupled their social planning with incentives and terror. And although biopolitical and social engineering techniques frequently began with the individual, they ultimately targeted the entire population, which was to be classified, organized and optimized.

16 See, e.g., M. von Bergen, *Vor dem Keynesianismus. Planwirtschaftsdebatte der frühen dreißiger Jahre im Kontext der 'organisierten Moderne'* (Berlin 1995).

17 K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols (Abingdon 2002), vol. 1, 21.

18 Etzemüller, 'Social Engineering'.

19 M. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983* (New York, NY 2010).

In analysing Nazi research policy, we need to look not just at the social engineers as such, but also at the complex interplay between social technologies, experts, politics and the business world. The multidisciplinary, expensive, long-term projects of twentieth-century big science in particular would have been unimaginable without the intersection of science, the state and the economy. Not infrequently, wartime accelerated these developments and expanded the circle of actors to include the military.<sup>20</sup>

Crises, and perceived crises in particular, mark the moments at which politics and social engineering coalesced. In keeping with their self-image, social engineers view fundamental societal challenges not just as appeals but as veritable obligations to take action. Paradoxically, in such decisive situations they frequently claim that massive interventions create a 'natural' order of society. Since the nineteenth century, the nation-state had become the most important political point of reference for social engineers; there was a tight intersection with respect not just to concrete content, programs, and their legitimation, but also to the genesis of expertise and state competencies. Pierre Bourdieu would speak in this context of the emergence of distinct fields, which encompass political spheres of action as well as the expansion of specific forms of knowledge and reasoning, including the academic institutions that foster them. It is this form of co-construction that made social engineering so effective in the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> To put it another way, the rise of social engineering beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century coincided with the incremental creation of the modern interventionist and welfare state. Expertise and the state frequently served as resources for one another; in modern knowledge societies they have reciprocally determined and promoted one another.<sup>22</sup>

The 1930s and 1940s saw the creation of extensive social engineering programs in which politics and socio-technological action by experts entered into a symbiosis – in Germany notoriously, but also, for instance, in Sweden and the United States

20 H. Trischler, 'Wachstum—Systemnähe—Ausdifferenzierung. Großforschung im Nationalsozialismus', in R. vom Bruch and B. Kaderas (eds), *Wissenschaft und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart 2002), 241–52.

21 See P. Bourdieu, 'La force du droit. Élément pour une sociologie du champ juridique', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 64 (1986), 3–19; in English: 'The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field', *Hastings Law Journal*, 38 (1987), 805–53; P. Bourdieu, *La Noblesse d'état: Grandes écoles et esprit de corps* (Paris 1989); in English: *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Oxford 1996).

22 M.G. Ash, 'Wissenschaft und Politik als Ressourcen für einander', in vom Bruch and Kaderas, *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik*, 32–51; M. Szöllösi-Janze, 'Wissengesellschaft in Deutschland: Überlegungen zur Neubestimmung der deutschen Zeitgeschichte über Verwissenschaftlichungsprozesse', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 30 (2004), 275–311; M. Szöllösi-Janze, 'Politisierung der Wissenschaften—Verwissenschaftlichung der Politik. Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus', in S. Fisch and W. Rudloff (eds), *Experten und Politik. Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung in geschichtlicher Perspektive* (Berlin 2004), 79–100; P. Weingart, 'Verwissenschaftlichung der Gesellschaft—Politisierung der Wissenschaft', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 12 (1983), 225–41; P. Weingart, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit? Zum Verhältnis der Wissenschaft zu Politik, Wirtschaft und Medien in der Wissensgesellschaft* (Weilerswist 2001).

of America. Both sides reciprocally legitimated their claims, just as the rhetoric of crisis and hopes of feasibility proved mutually reinforcing. Although this always involved the regulation of life practices, the concrete measures by no means had to be totalitarian. Instead, effects largely depended on the specific form of interplay between politics and expertise.<sup>23</sup> The political system, but also the existing traditions in academic culture and the understanding of politics, were central factors that determined the extent and content of social engineering.<sup>24</sup>

Social engineers played a central role in the history of the Third Reich. They were more than mere providers of instruments, or opportunistic and naïve actors who simply did the groundwork for the Nazi project and processed technical knowledge for ideological ends. Rather, social engineers served as pioneers of radical political projects. They were the first to make it clear to those in power that their aims were feasible, and to guide them onto administratively and scientifically 'orderly' paths. Sometimes they also set the agenda for the development of society on their own initiative. To that extent the relationship between social engineering and power tended to be 'mutually energizing'.<sup>25</sup> The social engineers took a sober, factual approach to the control of demographic development, racist health policy, and community and settlement policy. As Lutz Raphael has shown, they were able to concretize the diffuse character of Nazi racism and its vague action objectives. Many experts perceived politics after 1933 as a 'continuation of their own efforts and an opportunity to realize their own recommendations'. The 'racial hygiene or eugenic explanatory model formed a bridge of understanding between bureaucracy and science'.<sup>26</sup>

Social engineers were operating on familiar territory during the Third Reich. They capitalized on the increasing professionalization of demographers, spatial planners, ergonomists and community physicians since the nineteenth century, as well as on earlier interventions in policy and public administration. The planning and design of social spaces had long gained these social engineers a place in the relevant committees, planning staffs, expert commissions and ministries.<sup>27</sup> In Germany and many other societies in Europe and the world at large, the mission of progress and optimism about shaping the world set the tone. Despite the Great

23 See also, L. Raphael, 'Sozialexperten in Deutschland zwischen konservativem Ordnungsdenken und rassistischer Utopie (1918–1945)', in W. Hardtwig (ed.), *Utopie und politische Herrschaft im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich 2003), 327–46; L. Raphael, 'Radikales Ordnungsdenken und die Organisation totalitärer Herrschaft: Weltanschauungseliten und Humanwissenschaftler im NS-Regime', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 21 (2001), 5–40; Etzemüller, 'Social Engineering'; K. Brückweh, D. Schumann, R.F. Wetzell and B. Ziemann (eds), *Engineering Society: The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880–1980* (Houndmills 2012).

24 See, for example, C. Reinecke and T. Mergel (eds), *Das Soziale ordnen. Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main 2012).

25 G. Aly and S. Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*, trans. A. G. Blunden (London 2003), 95; more generally, see also Raphael, 'Sozialexperten'.

26 L. Raphael, 'Experten im Sozialstaat', in H.G. Hockerts (ed.), *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit. NS-Diktatur, Bundesrepublik und DDR im Vergleich* (Munich 1998), 231–58, quote 245; see also Raphael, 'Radikales Ordnungsdenken'.

27 Raphael, 'Sozialexperten', 327–8, 336–40.

Depression, which initially halted the expansion of the welfare state in many countries, ‘social engineering’ had become largely entrenched as a form of political consultancy.

The deployment of social engineering in Nazism shows how the regime sought to bring together destructive and organizational elements. The conjunction of feasibility mania and a belief in destiny, of energetic social engineering and mythic-sacral glorification, of the invocation of seemingly timeless laws of nature and action-driven imperatives, was part of a regime in which extermination, war and *völkisch* reconstruction were tightly intertwined. In an order that was to be created through destruction, a regime arose that sought on the one hand to attain a heroic, vitalist cult of the will by means of purportedly scientific racism, and on the other to achieve precarious stability *through* radicality.<sup>28</sup> Marriage loans, job creation schemes and medals for the mothers of large families, among other programs, stand for efforts rooted in social engineering that aimed to build the ‘folk community’ (*Volksgemeinschaft*). For the Nazis, this inclusion was always linked with the exclusion and ‘eradication’ of those deemed ‘alien to the community’. Only through killing people or letting others die could one create life and order. The road to a ‘folk community’ – a society homogenized, purified and standardized by social technologies – necessarily led through eradication, extermination and violence. The power over death presented itself as the ‘complement to a positive “life power”’. The Nazi regime took the fate of the entire population in hand and claimed to enhance it. In the words of Foucault, it formulated its claim to total control and regulation:

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone . . . . If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population.<sup>29</sup>

The Nazis’ modern mania for feasibility and (re)organization was potentially unlimited and anti-individualist. Decisions on the means to be deployed helped to specify the objectives. Expert knowledge, plans and technical rationality then

28 S. Reichardt, ‘Faschistische Tatgemeinschaften. Anmerkungen zu einer praxeologischen Analyse’, in T. Schlemmer and H. Woller (eds), *Der Faschismus in Europa. Wege der Forschung* (Munich 2014), 73–89; F. Esposito and S. Reichardt, ‘Revolution and Eternity. Introductory Remarks on Fascist Temporalities’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 13 (2015), 24–43.

29 M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (London 1984), 137. See also D.J.K. Peukert, ‘Die Genesis der “Endlösung” aus dem Geist der Wissenschaft’, in Peukert, *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen 1989), 112, and Peukert, ‘Rassismus und “Endlösungs”-Utopie. Thesen zur Entwicklung und Struktur der nationalsozialistischen Vernichtungspolitik’, in C. Kleßmann (ed.), *Nicht nur Hitlers Krieg. Der Zweite Weltkrieg und die Deutschen* (Düsseldorf 1989), 71–81; A. Doering-Manteuffel, ‘Konturen von “Ordnung” in den Zeitschichten des 20. Jahrhunderts’, in Etzemüller, *Ordnung*, 41–64.

expanded the scope of possible targets and social planning.<sup>30</sup> During the Third Reich, racial hygiene and eugenics established themselves as leading sciences alongside demography and spatial planning. As Lutz Raphael rightly emphasizes, there was an ‘affinity between the perspectives of social engineering and biologicistic patterns of interpretation’.<sup>31</sup> The technocrats committed to this point of view had gained particularly extensive influence in the economy and the military, social and health policy, and spatial and demographic policy. The Master Plan East is only the best-known and most extreme example of a development that regarded the racially ‘purified’ national body as an efficient machine, which it sought to realize above all on the supposed *tabula rasa* of the newly conquered eastern territories.<sup>32</sup>

The social engineers’ plans to refashion society and reorganize the world became more sweeping as time went on, and steadily gained in influence at the political level. Their ideas filled the empty Nazi catchphrases of folk community, leader state, national body and living space with content, and thereby helped to design and implement concrete policy measures. The Great Depression had already increased the need for social and biopolitical knowledge. Later, the military demand for scientific know-how in the areas of weapons technology, military medicine and biological domination techniques increased significantly. The major power apparatuses, such as the Nazi People’s Welfare, the German Labor Front, and the SS/SD complex, began in 1938 to activate their own expert staffs in order to enforce power claims, design ideas and plan requirements. The aims of the political advisors became ever more radical after 1939, expanding with the regime’s foreign policy and military successes into a veritable planning euphoria that culminated in master plans for social reorganization.<sup>33</sup>

In the jungle of Nazi science policy, a plethora of institutes employed a growing number of social engineers. Contrary to the older research, scholars now agree that a ‘large number of scientists from all disciplines were prepared to participate in arms research and racist crimes’.<sup>34</sup> After the expulsion of nearly one-fifth of

30 H. Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main 1996), 227; S.B. Ortner, ‘Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties’, in N. Dirks, G. Eley and S.B. Ortner (eds), *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton, NJ 1994), 372–411, here 395.

31 Raphael, ‘Experten im Sozialstaat’, 245.

32 See, for example, C. Madajczyk (ed.), *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan* (Munich 1994); M. Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge 2002); I. Heinemann and P. Wagner (eds), *Wissenschaft—Planung—Vertreibung. Neuordnungskonzepte und Umsiedlungspolitik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2006); Jureit, *Das Ordnen von Räumen*, 287–385.

33 See, for example, S. Heim, *Kalorien, Kautschuk und Karrieren. Pflanzenzüchtung und landwirtschaftliche Forschung in Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten 1933–1945* (Göttingen 2003); A. Tooze, *Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London and New York, NY 2006); G. Botsch, ‘Politische Wissenschaft’ im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die ‘Deutschen Auslandswissenschaften’ im Einsatz 1940–1945 (Paderborn 2006); S. Flachowsky, *Von der Notgemeinschaft zum Reichsforschungsrat. Wissenschaftspolitik im Kontext von Autarkie, Aufrüstung und Krieg* (Stuttgart 2008); G. Nagel, *Wissenschaft für den Krieg. Die geheimen Arbeiten der Abteilung Forschung des Heereswaffenamtes* (Stuttgart 2012).

34 M. Grüttnet et al., ‘Wissenschaftskulturen zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie. Vorüberlegungen zu einer kritischen Universitätsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts’, in M. Grüttnet et al. (eds), *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen. Universität und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 2010), 11–19, 17 (quote).

German university instructors at the beginning of the regime, mainly for antisemitic reasons, it was above all medical doctors and natural scientists of the generation born around 1900 who became involved in the various political projects of Nazism.<sup>35</sup> Many scientific institutions arose outside the universities, affording a range of new employment opportunities for young scientists. In 1940, there were 418 ‘highly qualified staff members’ working on social and economic policy at the German Labor Front’s Institute of Ergonomics alone. The Institute employed another 450 social scientists and economists on freelance contracts in Germany and abroad. In 1937, the Reichskuratorium für Wirtschaftlichkeit (Economic Efficiency Board) counted 100 members, 60 of them university graduates, on its rapidly expanding panels of experts. The Deutsche Auslands-Institut (German Foreign Institute) in Stuttgart, which dealt with issues relating to German minorities abroad, colonial strategies, and ‘repopulation’ plans (*Umvolkung*), had a permanent staff of 130 in 1938. The Berlin Institute for Cyclical Analysis (Konjunkturforschung; known from 1941 as the German Institute of Economic Research) tripled its personnel between 1933 and 1939 from 50 to 150, and by the end of the war employed 200 people.<sup>36</sup> Job opportunities abounded for these kinds of experts.

The expanded role of social engineers and other academics had important effects on the regime’s performance. The doubling of state and party that occurred as the regime developed and the inter-agency rivalries and party intervention in state administration led to a politicized environment that produced almost postmodern organizational forms: personal networking, the informalization of decision-making processes, and para-institutional communication and coordination forums. Rivalry and competition among subordinate agencies obstructed but in some cases also mobilized reserve capacities. The informalization of decision-making and coordination mechanisms frequently led to accelerated – well-nigh unbureaucratic – courses of action.<sup>37</sup> Institutions such as the Reich Research Council installed in 1937, in cooperation with the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes, performed essential networking and coordinating tasks for those areas of technology and the natural sciences that were relevant for the military, autarchy and resource substitution.<sup>38</sup> By 1936 at the latest there were numerous personnel links between university and non-university research, for example via the Four-Year Plan institutes founded in the 1930s. Proceeding from the

35 M. Grüttner, ‘Nationalsozialistische Wissenschaftler: ein Kollektivporträt’, in Grüttner et al., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen*, 149–65; P. Wagner, ‘Forschungsförderung auf der Basis eines nationalistischen Konsenses. Die deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft am Ende der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus’, in Grüttner et al., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen*, 183–205.

36 K.-H. Roth, *Intelligenz und Sozialpolitik im “Dritten Reich”. Eine methodisch-historische Studie am Beispiel des Arbeitswissenschaftlichen Instituts der Deutschen Arbeitsfront* (Munich 1993), 133–4, 185.

37 See (with references to the older literature) S. Reichardt and W. Seibel (eds), *Der prekäre Staat. Herrschen und Verwalten im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt 2011); Hachtmann, *Wissenschaftsmanagement*; and, with a partially different assessment, N. Hammerstein, *Die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich. Wissenschaftspolitik in Republik und Diktatur* (Munich 1999).

38 Hachtmann, *Wissenschaftsmanagement*, vol. 1, 270–85, 576–97.

experiences of World War One, a large number of de-centrally organized and innovative forms of networking and coordinating research and the exchange of political information emerged.<sup>39</sup>

Social engineers and other experts, we argue, were part of polycratic power struggles, working towards the Führer while also pursuing their own, specific interests. Focusing on this group reveals dimensions of the Third Reich that have been glossed over in most of the existing literature: next to inefficiency, fragmentation and self-destructive dynamics, they also point at some of the characteristics that stabilized the regime and enhanced its efficiency. Social engineers thus contributed to creating new structures of governance. Without these, the Third Reich would not have been able to unleash such destructive dynamics and temporarily subjugate large parts of Europe.

Social engineering is constitutively tied to the modern thinking about order, and thus essentially international. As much as the fields of action of social engineers and other experts concentrated primarily on the nation-state, they were by no means limited to it. Many social engineers drew their prestige from recognition in international contexts. The fact that very few academics and experts of the interwar period – at least among those central for the Third Reich – had spent longer periods doing research and teaching abroad did little to change this. International conferences and scholarly journals, the citation of leading researchers from other countries, references to models or negative experiences elsewhere all belonged to the toolbox with which social engineers generated their knowledge and secured their validity claims.<sup>40</sup> Alongside the many binational diplomatic and civil society channels, some of which had developed since the advent of social engineering in the nineteenth century and rested on even earlier contacts, a number of international organizations arose, especially in the interwar period, that were dedicated to knowledge exchange in the realm of social engineering. The League of Nations and its sub-organizations played a prominent role here. The International Labour Organization founded in 1919 was particularly significant.<sup>41</sup> Lesser-known League agencies such as the Economic and Financial Organization, however, also sometimes dealt with matters that fell within the realm of social engineering.<sup>42</sup>

39 M. Grüttner and R. Hachtmann, 'Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler unter dem Nationalsozialismus', in Grüttner et al., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen*, 143–7.

40 R.E. Doel et al., 'National States and International Science: A Comparative History of International Science Congresses in Hitler's Germany', in C. Sachse and M. Walker (eds), *Politics and Science in Wartime: Comparative International Perspectives on the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute* (Chicago, IL 2005), 49–76.

41 See, for example, J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez Garcia, G. van Goethem and M. van der Linden (eds), *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and its Impact on the World during the Twentieth Century* (Brussels 2010); S. Kott (ed.), 'Une autre approche de la globalisation: Socio-histoire des organisations internationales (1900–1940)', *Critique internationale*, 52 (2011); R. Jessen and J. Vogel (eds.), *Wissenschaft und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main 2003); Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit*.

42 P. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford 2013).

Although the Great Depression fuelled economic and political nationalism and the search for homegrown solutions, most of these informal links, networks and organizations continued to exist until at least the late 1930s. In fact, the number of international organizations grew between 1930 and 1940 from 31 to 38, and that of international non-governmental organizations from 375 to 477.<sup>43</sup> As a dual crisis of capitalism and the existing political orders, the Great Depression further increased interest in the paths taken by other societies. While in the 1920s, under slogans like Fordism, Taylorism and prosperity, the United States of America had represented the most important transnational point of reference in Europe and elsewhere, the focus of attention and references multiplied with the crisis of the US model, even if the degree of perception, entanglement and appropriation remained consistently asymmetrical.

The interwar years, long seen as a phase when international contacts withered away, thus witnessed intense and on some issues intensifying forms of exchange, and these interconnections were central for the work of social engineers. The search in such differently structured societies as Sweden, Italy, Nazi Germany and the United States of America for a 'third way' beyond liberal democracy and socialism spurred their efforts to study and learn from the models of other states. They saw themselves as part of an international development and regarded the *transnational* exchange of knowledge as an essential contribution to the search for the best solution in their respective *national* frameworks.<sup>44</sup>

Germany played an important role in this. And especially in the realm of social engineering, many of its international contacts survived the handover of power to the Nazis in January 1933. Since the late nineteenth century, the Reich had played a pioneering role in areas such as social insurance and town planning. German social policy had enjoyed great international prestige since the days of Bismarck and had long served as a transnational point of reference – as Daniel T. Rodgers reminded us recently.<sup>45</sup> Nazism capitalized on this reputation. The Third Reich claimed a model function for its social planning projects and programs, as is evident in the organization of leisure time, spatial planning and eugenic measures. In fact the German measures met with great interest internationally and were intensely discussed in societies as diverse as Britain, India and Japan. Experts as well as political elites in other countries were compelled to take a position on developments in Nazi Germany, whether in the form of disassociation, adaptation, or the search for

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43 J. Galtung, 'Nonterritorial Actors and the Problem of Peace', in S. Mendlovitz (ed.), *On the Creation of a Just World Order* (New York, NY 1975), 151–88, here 161; see also A. Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA 2002), 18–36; P. Clavin, 'Interwar Internationalism: Conceptualising Transnational Thought and Action, 1919–1939', in D. Laqua (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars* (London 2011), 1–14.

44 C.S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War II* (Princeton, NJ 1975); C.S. Maier, *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy* (Cambridge 1987).

45 D.T. Rodgers, 'Bearing Tales: Networks and Narratives in Social Policy Transfer', *Journal of Global History*, 9 (2014), 301–13; more generally D.T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA 1998).

alternatives. At the same time, German experts and bureaucrats drew the scientific legitimation and sometimes also inspiration for their measures from studies and political practice in other societies, whether fascist Italy or New Deal America.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, the set of tools social engineers applied to the problems of their time remained remarkably circumscribed. This can be explained in part by the parallel nature of the problems, stemming both generally from modernity and specifically from the Great Slump: industrialization, urbanization, increasing social differentiation, mass unemployment and growing ethnic diversity seemed to virtually cry out for social control. At the same time, especially since the First World War and the accompanying increase in the state's intervention and steering roles, responses had emerged that were considered particularly 'modern', for instance social welfare models influenced by eugenics. The fantasies evoked by planning for war led to the development of ideas and political practices designed for a total and state-controlled reshaping of society.<sup>47</sup> The analysis of instrumental reason and the moral indifference of the modern 'gardening state' (Bauman) opens our eyes to the intention to erase societal ambivalence, and thus to the ordering thought of modernity.<sup>48</sup> More than the Great Depression, preparations for war and the Second World War itself created new opportunities and contexts for professional political consulting. Now, in particular, administration and planning looked to the experiences of the years 1914 to 1918, while fantasies and practices grew increasingly radical. Experts in the United States of America were every bit as willing to coordinate their own research with the needs of the military as their counterparts in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup>

There are many reasons why scholars have not thus far devoted closer attention to the transnational dimensions of Nazism and social engineering during the 1930s. At least the most important deserve mention. First of all, in the case of the Nazi regime there are very strong continuities of national history, and German historiography in particular has emphasized this especially in the context of the *Sonderweg* thesis. In fact, any attempt to explain the conditions under which Nazism emerged that ignores the persistent dominance of old elites or the

46 See, for example, A. Schwarz, *Die Reise ins Dritte Reich. Britische Augenzeugen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland (1933–39)* (Göttingen 1993); M. Framke, *Delhi—Rom—Berlin. Die indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus, 1922–1939* (Darmstadt 2013); R. Hofmann, *The Fascist Effect: Japan and Italy, 1915–1952* (Ithaca, NY 2015); K.K. Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, NJ 2016, forthcoming). See also the contributions to the following conferences: 'Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945', (19–21 June 2014, Free University Berlin); 'Fascism as a global phenomenon: Transnational trajectories and cultural encounters', (Fourth European Congress on World and Global History, 4–7 September 2014 at the École normale supérieure in Paris).

47 K. Passmore, *Fascism* (Oxford 2002), 49, 90.

48 Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY 1991), 26–35, and Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge 1989), 92–3.

49 See, for example, C. Sachse and M. Walker, 'Naturwissenschaften, Krieg und Systemverbrechen. Die Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im internationalen Vergleich 1933–1945', in Grüttner et al., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen*, 167–82; H. Trischler and M. Walker (eds), *Physics and Politics: Research and Research Support in Twentieth Century Germany in International Perspective* (Stuttgart 2010).

continuity of bureaucratic traditions overlooks key dimensions. For that reason, one cannot explain Nazism without an intense study of German national history. At the same time, those who take a transnational perspective are sometimes accused of adopting a strategy of political exculpation. The historians' dispute (*Historikerstreit*) of the late 1980s cut off interesting possibilities and, for primarily political reasons, turned an entire thematic field into a scholarly taboo for many years to come. The methodological and conceptual debates on transnational history, on comparison and transfer, of the past twenty to 25 years, however, have created an extensive set of tools for exploring perceptions and exchange processes in a way that runs no risk of ending in an apologia for Nazism and its social engineers.<sup>50</sup>

It must be remembered that after 1945 any openness towards Nazism (still less adaptation of any of its measures) by the elites of other societies was inevitably politically inopportune.<sup>51</sup> Finally, it is also often methodologically very difficult to trace processes of perception and even more of exchange and learning between societies with empirical precision. This also holds true since the classification systems of archives tend to stress national perspectives and frameworks. The sources are therefore frequently lacking, and the influence of a (transnational) factor is often difficult to define in comparison to other often inner-societal ones. The reverse could also be argued with some justification, and to that extent we should also not overestimate this problem.

This special section brings together contributions that reflect the range of transnational exchange, from awareness to direct adaptation, from exchange with democratic to that with dictatorial regimes, from relational structures in western, eastern, northern and southern Europe to the United States of America, and it covers both the pre-war and the war years.

David Kuchenbuch shows in his contribution on urban planning and architecture before and after 1933 that mutual observation and transfer was a central and permanent feature in political systems as fundamentally opposed as Nazi Germany and democratic Sweden. These interconnections were possible because social engineering was not primarily understood as political; instead, experts in both societies felt there was a technical and apolitical level allowing and necessitating such links, while disregarding the ideological and political contexts in which the ideas and plans grew in the respective other country. Kuchenbuch focuses on transnational aspects, regional differences, and processes of change. Transfers always remained highly selective, but in both societies many social engineers agreed that

50 K.K. Patel, 'Der Nationalsozialismus in transnationalen Perspektive', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 49 (2004), 1123–34. See also P.-Y. Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York, NY 2013); S. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Munich 2013).

51 See, for example, S. Berger and C. Lorenz (eds), *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe* (Basingstoke 2010); A. Nützenadel and W. Schieder (eds), *Zeitgeschichte als Problem. Nationale Traditionen und Perspektiven der Forschung in Europa* (Göttingen 2004); C. Conrad and S. Conrad (eds), *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen 2002).

architecture and urban planning should transcend political boundaries by creating national unity.

Martin Gutmann discusses the case of the Swiss social engineer Alfred Zander, a participant in the 1936 World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation mentioned above. Initially a member of the democratic, humanist Swiss 'New Education' movement, Zander turned to National Socialism during the 1930s and forged close links to social engineers and other experts in the Third Reich. The ideology of the *Volksgemeinschaft* had a particular transnational ring to Zander, who considered social engineering as the best tool to achieve a Greater Germanic Empire in Europe.

Patrick Bernhard focuses on an unexplored chapter of transnational transfer and circulation between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. His starting point is Italian colonialism in North Africa during the pre-war and war years, where he demonstrates that the Nazis closely analysed Fascist settlement policies, particularly in Libya. These observations instigated several changes in the German *Lebensraum* plans for Eastern Europe. Most importantly, the spatial setup of new towns in the east of Hitler's empire was inspired by Italian design with a central piazza concentrating all official buildings. German social engineers thus learned from Italian Fascism in an area in which they felt they lagged behind: the realm of social and ideological support of the settlers.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these three articles. Firstly, and quite fundamentally, transnational social engineering was a permanent and important feature of the Third Reich and many other societies during the 1930s and 1940s. Such exchanges impacted on policy decisions and outcomes in various ways, however loath experts and politicians would have been to admit this at the time. As well as the cases presented here, several other studies support this claim, for instance on Nazism's relationship to fascist Italy. Besides the settlement and leisure time policies analysed here, the Nazi regime established various networks extending to Italy, mostly beyond or outside traditional diplomatic channels. Transnational exchange was formative for fascist politics of repression: the two regimes and other fascist countries exchanged and cooperated on police procedures, investigations, registrations and other areas.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, fascist youth organizations from both countries met regularly to discuss matters of education, organization, as well as their generational experience. While leaders and members of the two fascist parties observed each other intensely, this did not lead to any political convergence. And while military cooperation between the

52 Reichardt and Nolzen (eds), *Faschismus*; W. Schieder, *Mythos Mussolini. Deutsche in Audienz beim Duce* (Munich 2013); E. Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza: Politica estera 1922–1939* (Milan 2000); P. Bernhard, 'Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis. Die Polizei im Dritten Reich und im faschistischen Italien 1933–1943', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 59 (2011), 229–62; M. Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo. Collaborazione di polizia e diplomazia culturale tra Italia fascista e Portogallo di Salazar (1928–1945)* (Bologna 2008); F. Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham and London 2010).

two Axis powers remained difficult, their intense contact radicalized the German as well as the Italian ways of waging war.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, Croatian nationalist scholars cooperated closely with their German counterparts and emulated some of their work in designing grand schemes of a new territorial and ethnic order.<sup>54</sup> Another example would be Japanese debates about emulating Nazi leisure policies, fluctuating between outright fascination, piecemeal adaptation and rejection as contravening the genuine ‘Japanese way’.<sup>55</sup> Finally, there is growing interest in the international cooperation of European antisemitic and *völkisch* movements, which also led to transnational transfer processes.<sup>56</sup>

Quite generally, the connections and interrelationships in this field varied and ranged from awareness of, and interest in, social planning in other countries, sometimes with the express intention of disassociating oneself from them, to knowledge transfer, adaptive learning processes, and even entanglement. The reasons for these different forms of reference were manifold. Some countries perceived themselves as backward or sought to exercise power-political dominance in the societal planning sector. The expert relationships in question here were less voluntary and self-initiated and more likely to occur under political pressure and duress. Imperial relations of dependency expanded particularly during the Second World War, and naturally above all in occupied territories. Having said this, a transnational history of social engineering might also help to overcome the simplistic binary between collaboration and resistance.<sup>57</sup> Instead, social engineers and their vernacular of societal expertise often formed bridges between administrative and political elites of various societies – links that were often carefully hidden from the wider public and sometimes even from the administrative chain of command. Even if some of them extended into the postwar period, they left comparably little in the way of a paper trail due to their compromising nature.

Secondly, particularly the article by Patrick Bernhard demonstrates that exchanges often spanned more than two societies. Most research with a

53 U. Schleimer, *Die Opera Nazionale Balilla bzw. Gioventù Italiana del Littorio und die Hitlerjugend. Eine vergleichende Darstellung* (Münster 2004); L. Klinkhammer, A. Osti Guerrazzi and T. Schlemmer (eds), *Die ‘Achse’ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegsführung 1939–1945* (Paderborn 2010); A.L. Kocks, PhD project on the transfers between British and Italian youth organizations (Free University Berlin).

54 A. Korb, ‘Dissimilation, Assimilation and the Unmixing of Peoples: German and Croatian Scholars Working Towards a New Ethno-Political Order, 1919–1945’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 24 (2014), 183–203; R. Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: The Ustasha Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941–1945* (Pittsburgh, PA 2012).

55 D. Tano, ‘“Achse der Freizeit”: Der Weltkongress für Freizeit und Erholung 1936 und Japans Blick auf Deutschland’, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 58 (2010), 709–29; more generally, see also S. Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA 1987).

56 See the recent conference “Das völkische Europa”. Europakonzepte und transnationale Netzwerke im nationalsozialistischen Einflussbereich (1933–1945)’, organized by Dieter Pohl in July 2013 at the University of Klagenfurt: <http://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-5027> (accessed 15 September 2015).

57 See, as evidence for the related field of technocratic engineering, C. Denton, ‘“Récupérez!” The German Origins of French Wartime Salvage Drives, 1939–1945’, *Contemporary European History*, 22 (2013), 399–430.

transnational perspective has so far adopted a focus on two loci – be it links and flows between national elites (in their respective capitals) or other bilateral trans-border interconnections. In some cases, however, it does make sense to adopt a more actor-centred approach, which then might open the door to a much more complex and multilocal geography. This might include giving more weight to international organizations such as the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, where Nazi and other visions of ordering society were debated and negotiated.<sup>58</sup>

Thirdly, such exchanges even transcended the boundaries between democracy and dictatorship, and in these cases, research faces particular challenges at the normative, the empirical, and the conceptual level. Beyond the cases presented here, there is further evidence that contemporaries did not restrict their search for solutions to societies with a similar political system. Recent work has shown that Nazi social policy also impacted on British debates about national fitness as well as on the setup of labour services in both Sweden and the United States of America, and that in the latter case, it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself who looked to the Third Reich for political inspiration.<sup>59</sup> Such politicians and experts displayed a remarkable intellectual openness, which in some cases led to piecemeal transfer. Still, democratic politicians always made sure to distance themselves from highly ideologized policies in Nazi Germany. Transfers focused on the more technical elements of social engineering, less on their political and ideological implications. Moreover, Nazi examples were often cited for purposes of distancing. Even in this case, transnational exchange played a crucial role in defining the eventual course of political action.

A transnational perspective on social engineering in and around the Third Reich thus renders important results. Doing this work is not easy, however. There is no single archival file or even full record group that is labelled ‘transnational social engineering’. The relative significance of transnational exchange as compared to other motives and factors is not always clear, neither at the level of agendas, policy decisions, or implementations. Moreover, we lack a clear-cut understanding of the geographies and chronologies involved, as well as the varying importance of topics,

58 See, e.g., M. Herren, “‘Outwardly... an Innocuous Conference Authority’: National Socialism and the Logistics of International Information Management”, *German History*, 20 (2002), 67–92; R. Tosstorff, *Workers’ Resistance against Nazi Germany at the International Labour Conference 1933* (Geneva 2013); Laqua, *Internationalism Reconfigured*.

59 A.M. Lemcke, “‘Proving the Superiority of Democracy’: Die “National Fitness Campaign” der britischen Regierung (1937–1939) im transnationalen Zusammenhang”, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 57 (2009), 543–70; N. Götz and K.K. Patel, ‘Facing the Fascist Model: Discourse and the Construction of Labor Services in the United States of America and Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41 (2006), 57–73; T. Etzemüller, ‘Rationalizing the Individual—Engineering Society: The Case of Sweden’, in Brückweh, Schumann, Wetzell and Ziemann, *Engineering Society*, 97–118; on Roosevelt, K.K. Patel, *Soldiers of Labor: Labor Service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933–1945* (New York, NY 2005), 277–91; and, as an example for a debate of a democratic model in Nazi Germany, K. Linne, “‘Die Utopie des Herren Beveridge’. Zur Rezeption des Beveridge-Plans im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland’, 1999. *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 4 (1993), 62–82.

actors, actor networks and institutions. What can be said at this point is that debates and practices neither began in 1933 nor ended in 1945, that they covered a broad range of topics and institutions, and that they geographically far transcended Europe. While putting down deeper roots in the global North than the global South, they certainly included societies such as the United States of America, in Latin America and Japan, as well as their transnational networks.

In sum, therefore, this special section demonstrates the importance of the transnational dimension for the history of the Third Reich, as well as for the history of social engineering during the interwar years more broadly. Our work is only a step to understanding this particularly dark side of transnationalism.

### **Biographical Notes**

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