

# *Making Europe:* An Introduction to the Series

In a typical conversation about twentieth-century European history, the subject of war will almost certainly arise—whether it is the Great War, the Second World War, or the Cold War. Similarly, historians who write about contemporary European history often view war as the twentieth century’s iconic event. In fact, many scholars rely on Europe’s political history, rife as it is with military conflict, to set the timeframe for their work. The influential historian Eric Hobsbawn, for example, defined the twentieth century as beginning with the First World War and ending with the collapse of the Soviet Union; Hobsbawn named this period—1914 to 1991—The Short Twentieth Century. Indeed, the topic of war and rupture has dominated the discourse on Europe in the twentieth century—and understandably so.

We, the editors and authors of the *Making Europe* series, however, have taken an alternative approach to our subject. We offer a European history viewed through the lens of technology rather than war. We believe that a European history with technology at its core can help to understand the continuities that have endured despite the rupture of wars. *Making Europe* places continuities—from the rise of institutions like CERN to the evolution of hacker networks—in a longer-term perspective. The *Making Europe* narrative suggests that

recent European history is as much about building connections across national borders as it is about playing out conflicts between nation-states. This view of technology from a transnational perspective has proven to be felicitous. As a phenomenon, technology has always been particularly mobile; this mobility has allowed new technologies to help shape international relations between countries, companies, organizations, and people.

To understand the role of technology in this history, we required ourselves to rethink the very meaning of technology: referencing far more than machines alone, technology also embraces people and values; ideas, skills, and knowledge. Technological change, in our view, is a deeply human process. Technology was—and still is—central to the creation of Europe. And given its centrality, technology has been hotly contested—politically, economically, and culturally—in the making of Europe.

Technology's role in shaping Europe coalesced around 1850, when a new era began, an era from 1850 to 2000 that we refer to as The Long Twentieth Century. It was during the mid-nineteenth century that a newly globalizing world began to emerge. This was a world in which the many new transportation and communication technologies played a decisive part. At this time, technology became a reference point for European superiority—both within and beyond Europe. Cross-border connections and institutions thrived; the knowledge-sharing practices that fostered these connections were widely circulated and adopted. This circulation of knowledge led to a worldwide imagining, negotiating, and experiencing of Europe that exists today. This was also the foundation for the formal process of European integration that gained traction in the 1950s. Our perspective simultaneously decenters the European Union and its direct predecessors—which, after all, comprised only one force of Europeanization—and places the process of European integration in long-term historical context. Acknowledging that this dynamic of integration continues today, *Making Europe* presents and interprets a history that is still in the making.

That said, it is clear to us as historians that the decade 1990–2000 marks another watershed: it was in this period that the digital revolution gained new momentum, as did shifting power relationships at the global level. This spurred the European Union to become a hegemonic force of Europeanization, and it helped globalization to enter a new phase. Simultaneously, however, the processes of

integration and globalization in this apparent new phase have proven to be fragile: in light of the global economic crisis, Europe's future, called into doubt, has become a pressing issue, and one with a sharp political edge. Accordingly, Europe's past has also come under fresh scrutiny. We contend that technology will continue to play a central role in defining Europe; that the politics of Europe is the politics of technology as much as anything else; and that now is the opportune time to explore technology's historical role in the creation of Europe.

*Making Europe* provides a perspective on European history that transcends borders. The volumes in the series examine the linking—and, in some cases, the disruption—of infrastructures and knowledge networks that operate beyond nations and states. Also mapped here is the transnational circulation—and appropriation—of people, products, and ideas. The people and organizations featured in this series employed particular notions of Europe in building their cross-border connections. Indeed, they imagined and invented new Europes, often making clear distinctions between which people and places belonged and which were alien to the concept and the reality of Europe. *Making Europe* asks: Who projected their ideas of Europe? When did these projections take place—how, and why? The series looks at the people and the organizations that perceived themselves as central—and peripheral—to Europe, its colonies, and the transatlantic crossings that were part of the European imagination. Examined here are migrants and experts, foods and inventions, markets and regulations—virtually everything that was identified, experienced, and communicated as “European.” This Europeanization, we find, had significant—and sometimes unintended—consequences: some connections between people and institutions were lasting, others broken, these continuities and ruptures shaping Europe as both an imagined place and a living community. *Making Europe* explores the stability and fragility of these European connections, communities, and institutions.

The majority of existing studies of Europe have been based on either of two approaches. First is the, often massive, single-author narrative. Second is the essay collection, which presents many voices, in some cases edited to align the authors' themes. In the field of European history, single-author volumes have tended to be broad-ranging and to address different timeframes and regions.

Often, single-author volumes are a compilation of national stories; at their best, compilations transcend their individual stories to posit a complete European picture. Essay collections, for their part, have generally assumed a sharper focus—on particular communities, ethnicities, and empires, for example. These usual approaches point to a distinctive feature of *Making Europe*: in this series, five of the six volumes have two authors; one book has three writers. These voices, thirteen in all, create multiple narratives. The six sets of *Making Europe*'s co-authors have worked as a team to draft a series of volumes with coordinated yet individual themes (see [www.makingeurope.eu](http://www.makingeurope.eu)). These six volumes contain six distinct points of view; as editors, we have imposed neither uniformity nor the pressure to harmonize narratives. In our opinion, the most informative new contributions to European history embrace diverse actors and diverse meanings, a range of purposes and understandings. *Making Europe* captures this diversity, reflecting a dynamic European history that continues to unfold.

All of the authors in the series have drawn on the European Science Foundation's "Inventing Europe" collaborative research initiatives as well as the Foundation for the History of Technology's "Tensions of Europe" project, begun in 1998 (see [www.tensionsofeurope.eu](http://www.tensionsofeurope.eu)). They have profited from an intensive period of discussion and joint research and writing at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Wassenaar dunes in 2010–11. The fruits of these initiatives include the *Making Europe* book series as well as a web-based exhibit "Inventing Europe, European Digital Museum for Science and Technology" that encompasses a dozen of Europe's technology and science museums (see [www.inventingeurope.eu](http://www.inventingeurope.eu)) and scores of scholarly publications. All aim to promote creativity in fostering a more inclusive understanding of technology's role in refashioning Europe—an ongoing process that is as fascinating as it is contentious. The authors of *Making Europe* have asked themselves what shape an open-ended European history of technology would take. They provide their answers in the form of this book series.

The first volume in the *Making Europe* series, entitled *Consumers, Tinkerers, Rebels: The People who Shaped Europe*, is written by Ruth Oldenziel and Mikael Hård. This volume spotlights the people

who “made” Europe by appropriating and consuming a wide range of technologies—from the sewing machine to the bicycle, the Barbie doll to the personal computer. What emerges is a fascinating portrait of how Europeans lived during The Long Twentieth Century. Explored here are the questions of who, exactly, decided how Europeans dressed and dwelled? Traveled and dined? Worked and played? Who, in fact, can be credited with shaping the daily lives of Europeans? The authors argue that, while inventors, engineers, and politicians played their parts, it was consumers, tinkers, and rebels who have been the unrecognized force in the making of Europe.

The second volume in the series, entitled *Building Europe on Expertise: Innovators, Organizers, Networkers*, is written by Martin Kohlrausch and Helmuth Trischler. Here the focus shifts from consumers of technology to a new breed of professionals: the technical and scientific experts whose influence soared from around 1850 onward. The authors show how these experts created, organized, and spread knowledge—enabling them to shape societies, create cross-border connections, and set political agendas. During Europe’s Long Twentieth Century, technoscientific experts became a strategic resource for serving national, international, and transnational interests, the authors argue. They revisit experts’ visions of Europe, showing how these visions manifested in the dictatorships of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia—as well as helping to build Europe’s vast research networks during the Cold War. *Building Europe on Expertise* ends with today’s efforts to reinvent the European Union—as a knowledge-based society defined by experts.

The third volume in the series, *Europe’s Infrastructure Transition: Economy, War, Nature*, is written by Per Högselius, Arne Kaijser, and Erik van der Vleuten. This book elaborates on the first two volumes by introducing a new cast of historical actors: system-builders. These individuals and organizations helped to transform Europe by envisioning, constructing, and manipulating large-scale transport, communications, and energy systems. Their efforts reshaped Europe as a geographical entity by forming massive new material interconnections—and divisions—between places. This had far-reaching implications for European integration; for peaceful economic exchange; for military planning and logistics. System-builders challenged Europe’s natural barriers, from the Alps to northern Europe’s forests and the vast marshlands to the east. But

Europe's water, air, and land were not only connected, they were transformed radically, sometimes destroyed. In response, system-builders eventually turned much of Europe's environment itself into infrastructure, interlinking isolated ecosystems via human-made corridors and networks.

The fourth volume, *Making the Rules for Europe: Experts, Cartels, International Organizations* is written by Wolfram Kaiser and Johan Schot. Here, the focus becomes the norms and standards of technological innovation—discussed in depth for transport and heavy industry. Featured are the people and organizations that debated, negotiated, and regulated the cross-border issues raised by innovation. Presented here are individuals with special—and often interdisciplinary—expertise in technology, business, and law. Often, these experts sought to de-politicize issues by deeming them technical; this yielded workable solutions to shared problems. It also paved experts' way in rule-making for multiple, distinct yet overlapping, and frequently competing "Europes." In the pursuit of finding technological solutions, many institutions' transnational practices survived ruptures, including the two World Wars. After the Second World War, the European Union was obliged to accommodate—and to compete with—other institutions' established practices in order for the EU to gain greater influence in shaping Europe.

The fifth volume, *Communicating Europe: Technologies, Information, Events*, analyzes Europe's information and communication systems from roughly 1850 onward. Authors Andreas Fickers and Pascal Griset place these technologies at the very heart of European society. Presented here is a global vision of media, telecommunications, and computers that reveals the tensions inherent in designing and appropriating electrical and electronic devices. The authors argue that the control in the material realm by research and entrepreneurship and the emergence of new forms of creativity and new ways of life are two sides of the same coin, mostly driven by political and cultural forces. Examined in this volume are the political, economic, and cultural realities and meanings of information and communication technologies on a European level. This perspective, which extends over the long term, provides the tools for a new critical understanding of the digital revolution.

How did today's globalized, thoroughly mapped-out world emerge? What part did technology play in Europe's international

encounters, colonial and otherwise? *Europeans Globalizing*, written by Maria Paula Diogo and Dirk van Laak, concludes the *Making Europe* series with a study of how Europe interacted with the rest of the world from 1850 until the close of the twentieth century. The volume details how technologies were applied and creatively adopted—from India to Argentina, South Africa to the Arctic. From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, we witness assumptions about Europe's technologically-based superiority being continuously challenged. And we discover that globalized Europe in its present form looks quite different from what Europeans once imagined.

Consumers and tinkerers; engineers and scientists; system-builders and inventors. Experts in technology, law, and business; communicators and entrepreneurs; politicians and ambassadors. This is a cross-section of the actors represented on *Making Europe's* pages. These actors, through the institutions and organizations they cultivated, the connections they created, the rules and practices they fostered, co-created Europe. Narrated from contrasting as well as complementary viewpoints, the six volumes in the series create a collage of co-existent portraits that depict Europe's Long Twentieth Century; its technologies; and its meanings. Together, these histories form the view of modern Europe that we and the authors wish to contribute to the historical record at this time.

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