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MATILDA – An Equal Space of Knowledge?

Reflections on Transnational Feminist Academia. The Example of the Joint M.A.
Programme in European Women*'s and Gender History

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i. Abstract

The present work examines the joint M.A. programme *MATILDA – European Women*’s and Gender History* in order to find out whether the community of *MATILDA* has managed to create a common space of knowledge by acting as equals or whether hegemonic relationships continue to exist. The programme, founded in 2006, consists of five universities which can be attributed either to the ‘East’ or the ‘West’. Qualitative interviews with the founders of these locations and the project assistant were conducted to answer the research question.

Within the academical field of women*’s and gender history and within academia in general powerful structures between ‘Western’/’core’ and ‘Eastern’/’semiperiphery’ still exist. Despite the awareness of differences in the individual institutionalization histories of *MATILDA*, in contents that vary due to national knowledge, economic realities or the inter-/disciplinary approach to the field according to context, patterns of ‘Western-centered’ knowledge persist. This thesis argues against the stereotypical image of a one-sided knowledge transfer from ‘West’ to ‘East’ and proves that these are constructed notions with political, cultural and/ or historical intentions.

A truly equal space of knowledge can only be assessed partially. Notably enough, the consortium achieved implementing women*’s and gender history more sustainably at all locations against harmful gender discourses, precarious circumstances and strict requirements linked to the EU funding of the programme. However, by doing so the consortium only addressed one of the three main forms of modern domination, namely patriarchy but neither capitalism nor colonialism. In order to decolonize academia and to move towards an equal space of knowledge all three domination forms must be addressed and opposed.

ii. Abstract German

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht das Joint Degree Masterstudium *MATILDA – Europäische Frauen* und Geschlechtergeschichte*, um herauszufinden, ob es gelungen ist, einen gleichberechtigten Wissensraum zu schaffen, oder ob weiterhin hegemoniale Beziehungen bestehen bleiben. Das Programm wurde 2006 gegründet und besteht aus fünf Universitäten, die entweder dem ‘Osten’ oder dem ‘Westen’ zugeordnet werden können. Um die Forschungsfrage zu beantworten, wurden qualitative Interviews mit den Gründerinnen und der Projektassistentin zur Zeit der Programmimplementierung geführt.

Innerhalb des akademischen Feldes der Frauen* und Geschlechtergeschichte und innerhalb der Wissenschaften im Allgemeinen existieren weiterhin Machtstrukturen zwischen dem ‘Westen’/‘Zentrum’ und dem ‘Osten’/‘Semiperipherie’. Trotz dem Wissen über unterschiedliche Institutionalisierungsgeschichten des Programms, der inter-/disziplinären Herangehensweise an das Fach sowie variierender Inhalte aufgrund nationaler Wissensbestände oder unterschiedlicher ökonomischer Realitäten, bleiben ‘West-zentrierte’ Denkmuster bestehen. Diese Arbeit wendet sich gegen stereotype Vorstellungen eines einseitigen Wissenstransfers von ‘West’ nach ‘Ost’ und belegt, dass es sich dabei um Konstruktionen handelt, hinter denen politische, kulturelle und/ oder historische Absichten stehen.

Ein gleichberechtigter Wissensraum kann nur teilweise festgestellt werden. Entgegen feindlicher Gender-Diskurse, prekärer Verhältnisse an den jeweiligen Standorten und strengen Auflagen gebunden an die EU-Förderung des Programms, gelang es dem Konsortium, die Frauen*- und Geschlechtergeschichte an den fünf verschiedenen Standorten nachhaltig stärker zu verankern. Dabei bearbeitete das Konsortium jedoch nur eine der drei Hauptformen moderner Herrschaft, nämlich das Patriarchat, nicht aber den Kapitalismus oder Kolonialismus. Um die Wissenschaft zu dekolonisieren und zu einem gleichberechtigten Wissensraum beizutragen, müssen aber alle genannten Herrschaftsformen bekämpft werden.

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Figure 1: Category Map

Table 1: Institutionalization of *MATILDA* in Respective Countries

Table 2: Different Motivations of the Founders

v. List of Abbreviations

CESEE – Central Eastern and Southeastern Europe

CEU – Central European University

EE – Eastern Europe

IFRWH – International Federation for Research in Women*’s History

IP – Intensive programme, also referred to as summer school

MATILDA – Short for: MATILDA - European Master in Women*’s and Gender History

WE – Western Europe

Introduction

A common space of knowledge for women's and gender history / probably if I would just dream a bit, I would like to see this kind of knowledge about East-European past within the curricula of Western universities as well. [...] AS WE TEACH the knowledge, we teach classes on Western Europe, on feminism, on modernization / on different aspects of West-European women's and gender history. Somehow this should be much more equal by introducing this kind of classes dealing with the knowledge about our past.¹ – Krassimira Daskalova, founder of MATILDA in Sofia

[T]here is no global social justice without global cognitive justice.² – Boaventura de Sousa Santos, postcolonial theorist

The statements of the founder of the M.A. programme *MATILDA* Daskalova and the postcolonial theorist de Sousa Santos precisely describe the driving force behind this work: an urge for global justice and the question whether my studies (can) make a contribution. In the manner of decolonial theory I was not afraid to question my own field of study as it is the only way to remain open to critics and to eventually decolonize the university's curricula. This criticism from the inside of the field already shows in Daskalova's statement. By using the term *dream*, she indicates that a common space of knowledge in the sense of equal knowledge distribution within the canon formation of (European) women*'s³ and gender history is not yet achieved; de Sousa Santos' statement opens up a global perspective leading us to the question of how useful it is to examine women*'s and gender history from a European perspective at all.

The present work examines the joint M.A. programme *MATILDA – European Women*'s and Gender History* (referred to as *MATILDA* in the following), especially at the time of its foundation in 2006 and the first years of its implementation, starting with the first academic year in 2008/2009 until the last summer school in 2014, as these were crucial events for the idea of the programme. Connections to the current state of the programme will only be drawn if necessary. The programme was born in a Europe that was still growing together after 1989. Alongside Vienna, the location of the founding institution, the programme was based in four

¹ Krassimira Daskalova, interview via *Viber*, 19.11.2019, pos. 73.

² Boaventura d. S. Santos, "Decolonizing the University," in *Knowledges born in the struggle: Constructing the epistemologies of the Global South*, ed. Boaventura d. S. Santos and Maria P. Meneses, 219–39, Epistemologies of the south (London, United Kingdom: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 238.

³ In the following, I will apply the gender asterisk (*) in order to indicate the constructed character of 'gender'. I will also introduce the gender asterisk (*) to the title of *MATILDA* to draw attention to this blank space within the programme. Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, "Frauen*beauftragte: Geschlechtergerechte Sprache," <https://www.ash-berlin.eu/hochschule/organisation/frauenbeauftragte/geschlechtergerechte-sprache/> (accessed September 2, 2020).

other locations, namely Budapest, Lyon, Nottingham, and Sofia.⁴ As a joint degree programme, *MATILDA* is characterized by a mandatory one-term exchange for students, an annual summer school, and the supervision of the final thesis by at least two institutions of the consortium.

The purpose of this research is to study the experience of the institutionalization and the connection of ideas and concepts of women*'s and gender history within this context. I formulate the hypothesis that even in a field that defines itself as progressive and emancipatory

- 1) a nexus of power and knowledge as well as
- 2) Despite the awareness of location-, and context dependent knowledge, 'Western-centered' thought-patterns persist.

In other words, for the latter, there is no such thing as objective universal knowledge that can be applied to every location or context. Based on this assumption, I measure the founder's efforts to institutionalize and establish an equal space of the knowledge of women*'s and gender history. It should be noted that the programme is financed by EU funding, which might compensate for material inequalities but at the same time implies political and economic interests. Certainly, the latter contributes to the abovementioned nexus of knowledge and power which itself becomes visible in global knowledge production by a powerful core, followed by semiperiphery and periphery. According to Marina Blagojevic, this means that due to their powerful position only scientists from the United States of America and Western Europe (referred to as core) are in the position to produce knowledge. In contrast to the periphery (global South), the semiperiphery (Eastern Europe⁵) only performs as 'transmitter' and 'user' of the core-knowledge.⁶

Due to the context of *MATILDA*, the focus of this work will be on the relation between core and semiperiphery, without losing sight of the global context.

Therefore, I want to test if,

- 3) networks between more and less powerful members in this continuum, such as *MATILDA*, play an important role in equalizing our academic system – and hence

⁴ Today new locations became part of the programme and Nottingham withdrew from the programme in 2014 and the location in Budapest at the CEU moved to Vienna in 2019.

⁵ For the purpose of this work semiperiphery shall be reduced to Eastern Europe, leaving aside the fact that more areas could be accounted for as such. Analogously 'Core' or Periphery.

⁶ Marina Blagojevic, "Creators, Transmitters, and Users: Women's Scientific Excellence at the Semiperiphery of Europe," *European Education* 36, no. 4 (2014).

MATILDA would most notably benefit the Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European part of the consortium.

These assumptions nurtured my main research question whether *MATILDA* indeed succeeds in establishing not only a common, but also an equal space of knowledge. Furthermore, the question arises whether this space is defined by locations perceived as equal entities within the *MATILDA* framework and whether a common idea of knowledge about women*’s and gender history is conveyed. Thereby, this research is intended to deconstruct common images of knowledge formation (as the one-way transfer of knowledge from the core to the semiperiphery and to the periphery).

The first chapter critically assesses previous studies. Unfortunately, the current state of research shows that alternative forms of knowledge transfer are still only rarely presented.

In the second chapter I introduce my methodological approach: Using open, guideline-based interviews, I consider the interviewees as experts in Meuser and Nagel’s sense⁷; in their function as founders and administrative power respectively. For the interview transcription, I used the MAXQDA software⁸, first by applying preliminary codes and later classifying the material into content-related categories. Categories and codes were created with elements of Mayring’s qualitative approach applied by Reinhoffer⁹ as well as of Strauss and Corbin’s *Grounded Theory*.¹⁰

Chapter 3 discusses the thesis’ central notions of *East* and *West* and their constructedness. That means notions are not neutral but based on political, historical or cultural intentions which is of particular interest for the present work as *MATILDA* is situated in the post-1989 context (chapter 4). Within this context, changes towards a ‘performative university’ within the European academic landscape should be acknowledged. Performativity in this context is characterized by Maria do Mar Pereira as a process of neoliberalisation of the academic system.

⁷ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “Das Experteninterview: Konzeptionelle Grundlagen und methodische Anlage,” in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft: Neue Entwicklungen und Anwendungen*, ed. Susanne Pickel et al., 1. Aufl., 465–79 (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / GWV Fachverlage GmbH Wiesbaden, 2009).

⁸ VERBI Software. Consult. Sozialforschung GmbH, *MAXQDA, Software Für Qualitative Datenanalyse* (Berlin, 1989 – 2020).

⁹ Bernd Reinhoffer, “Lehrkräfte Geben Auskunft Über Ihren Unterricht: Ein Systematisierender Vorschlag Zur Deduktiven Und Induktiven Kategorienbildung in Der Unterrichtsforschung,” in *Praxis der Qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse*, ed. Michaela Gläser-Zikuda and Philipp Mayring, 123–43 (s.l.: Beltz Verlagsgruppe, 2008).

¹⁰ Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2. ed., [Nachdr.] (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publ, 2003).

Starting from chapter 5, the main part of this thesis begins ending with the section 5.6. For the examination of the hypotheses, I refer to power-critical analysis (tools) such as the *Translational Turn* and the *Spatial Turn* (Bachmann-Medick), discourse-analytical approaches as well as post- and decolonial theories. In section 5.1, I discuss how knowledge moves in a common space of knowledge. And since the framework of *MATILDA* is constituted by an intercultural contact with five different languages, the topic of translations cannot be excluded (section 5.1.1). It should be noted that every interviewee, hence, every location, has a different understanding of how to define this space of knowledge. This will be outlined during the discussion of the content level of the programme (section 5.1.1.1). The focus on the different disciplinary approaches (section 5.1.1.2) at the individual institution and their dealing with gender (section 5.1.1.) serves as an example of translation in its broader sense. As so often, within the field of women*'s and gender history, differences are not only be acknowledged, but also valuated and hierarchized and consequently result in (perceived) inequalities (section 5.2). Here, the question arises how inequalities ideally should be dealt with; for example, how are different ideas about the European women*'s and gender history negotiated in this space of knowledge? How are economic and political differences and different knowledge systems discussed? The analysis of (perceived) inequalities in the respective locations will be followed by a section on the common meetings of the consortium during the programme implementation and the yearly summer schools (section 5.3). Outside of these joint meetings, differences occurred even within the consortium, mostly regarding the European context of the programme (section 5.4). By reference to the three categories – ‘European’ as a strategy, an additive concept (5.4.2.1), and a (Eurocentrism-)critical perspective (5.4.2.2) – I examine the highly interesting context of *MATILDA* in a common European space of knowledge. On the one hand, it is very idealistically conceived, while on the other hand, it is also part of the EU's neo-liberal Lisbon strategy to strengthen the competitiveness of the European Union. As the present work relies on criticism of Eurocentrism, in section 5.5, I comment on the language requirements within the consortium and the common lingua franca English before I re-examine the content of the programme – this time under the premise of Eurocentric patterns – and take a closer look at the myth of ‘progressive Europe’ and ‘modernity’. Examining the nexus of power and knowledge for the respective members and locations of the *MATILDA* consortium (section 5.6), I analyze previous thoughts on international networks of feminist academia taking on a meta-perspective.

Especially through the thoughts of Chandra T. Mohanty¹¹, who has been engaged in investigating collaborations in international feminist academia. Following Mohanty's ideas, younger colleagues emphasize the importance of reflecting post-colonial and postsocialist experiences and transferring these onto the women*'s and gender discourse.

In chapter 6, the findings will be critically assessed, in retrospect of thirty years of feminist academia under special consideration of possible changes within the earlier mentioned continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery'. Finally, I illustrate further directions in the conclusion.¹²

¹¹ Chandra T. Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003).

¹² A common practice in international scientific work is to cite in English, French and German, which happened to be the languages of my interviews (note that my language skills acquired up to my undergraduate degree reflect the discussed hegemonic structures). This led to the result that I could talk to all interviewees in their mother tongue, with the exception of the Bulgarian interviewee. In terms of applying a more equal approach, I translated all quotes of secondary literature as well as the interview extracts into English by myself – well aware that English is the language of the colonizers. The universal use of English arguably solidifies hegemonical structures, but in the case of the present work it appeared even more unequitable to me to use English, French and German, but not Bulgarian or Hungarian, as the current international scientific requirements do not allow it. Due to the frame of the present work, this issue will not be discussed any further.

1 Literature Review

During the last twenty, twenty-five years the western colleagues started to PAY attention to the fact that they USED to name European history while only taking into consideration WESTERN Europe. Thanks to this criticism of East-European scholars and feminists, they started to be much more careful when using the term European. Now it is much more encompassing, including at least SOME of the Eastern European countries which is a good tendency.¹³

The director's statement of the *MATILDA* programme in Sofia, Daskalova, summarizes why we are still not done rethinking (European) feminist academia: Despite criticism of 'EE' scholars and feminists, the approach still is centered on 'WE' content. The tendency that 'EE' countries were added over the last twenty-five years to this European history says at first nothing about the way they were added and whether previous voids were also critically reviewed or simply filled in. Agnieszka Graff states the following: "The key point is to avoid viewing cultures as homogenous monoliths, even—or perhaps especially—when they present themselves as such."¹⁴ Graff presents a critique to a tradition of historicization in the field that needs to change – especially regarding established anthologies of European women*'s and gender history the practice of homogenization of one European perspective and therefore concealing different local and cultural perspectives is quite established: Gisela Bock's (2000) German publication *Women in European History* and Georges Duby's and Michelle Perrot's (1990-1992) Italian publication *A History of Women in the West* are frequently mentioned by the founders of *MATILDA* as standard works in the field. Notably, the historian Natalie Zemon Davis describes the latter as 'work in process'. She states further that Duby's and Perrot's work "focuses mainly on the western European experience, with some attention to North America."¹⁵ Both Hämmerle from *MATILDA* in Vienna and de Haan, from *MATILDA* in Budapest, refer to the Western-centered perspective of Gisela Bock's book. Therefore both are acknowledging voices of women* from 'EE' countries like Maria Todorova who criticize being excluded from the concept of Europe.¹⁶ De Haan criticizes "the neglect or omission of 'Eastern Europe' [...]" in recent publications that deal with Europe before the Second World War, even by some of the

¹³ Daskalova, pos. 49.

¹⁴ Agnieszka Graff, "Necessary and Impossible: How Western Academic Feminism Has Traveled East," in *Borderlands in European gender studies: Beyond the East-West frontier*, ed. Teresa Kulawik and Zhanna Kravchenko, First edition, 41–62, Routledge advances in feminist studies and intersectionality (2020), 52.

¹⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis and Joan W. Scott, "A New Kind of History," in *From ancient goddesses to Christian saints*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel et al., 4. print, vii–viii, *A history of women in the West / Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot*, general ed; 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), viii.

¹⁶ Christa Hämmerle, face-to-face interview, Vienna, 08.07.2019, pos. 110; 118.

best and most sensitive women's historians."¹⁷ Similarly, *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe between the Two World Wars* (1998), edited by Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves, is according to de Haan "a highly valuable publication, which makes it all the more unfortunate that, despite the promise of its title, it deals with Western European countries only"¹⁸. Although the publications are criticized for being Western-centered, researchers (Zemon Davis, de Haan, Hämmerle) still speak of the authors as the best women's historians and highly valuable publications. This goes hand in hand with a discourse which positions the 'WE' and North American knowledge over knowledge from 'EE' or the global South. The discourse ignores the 'East' and the postsocialist era, because one assumes that the 'East' will naturally follow the 'West'.¹⁹ This argumentation seems especially relevant to the field of women's and gender history, because it is likewise assumed that the 'natural' transfer goes from 'West' to 'East'.

Concerning the term *gender* in the U.S. and 'WE', Joan Wallach Scott criticizes the idea of a one-sided transfer of concepts and theories from 'West' to 'East' based on the assumption that there must be a producer of knowledge, namely, the U.S. and 'WE', who transfer their knowledge to the rest of the world and 'enlighten' it.²⁰ Scott's article provoked reactions: Biljana Kašić, among others, dealt with the concept of gender, deriving a certain aversion to the concept from personal experience and her (academic) socialization in Croatia.²¹ The economic markers, which are inherent in gender not only in Croatia but also in other postsocialist countries, play a role here, as does the desire to or rather the need to adapt to the 'West'.²² Moreover, Elena Gapova in her reaction to Scott's article, stresses the very different social processes in the postsocialist region in relation to the Western region, especially for the time of the so-called feminist 'third wave'.²³ Concerning general communication (difficulties) within feminist cultural theory, Ralitsa Muharska emphasizes the reciprocal role of 'East' and

¹⁷ Francisca de Haan, "Is a European Women's History Possible?": Reflections on the "East-West" Dimensions of This Question*, (2007), <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/salon21/?p=253#more-253> (accessed April 13, 2020).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Boris Buden, *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*, Orig.-Ausg., 1. Aufl., Edition Suhrkamp 2601 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009).

²⁰ Joan W. Scott, "Fictitious Unities. "Gender," "East," and "West": Paper Presented at the 4th European Feminist Research Conference, Bologna, Italy, September 29, 2000," (2000), <http://archeologia.women.it/user/quarta/plenary/scott.htm> (accessed March 31, 2019).

²¹ Biljana Kašić, "Is Gender - Women's Destiny? A Postsocialist Perspective," *L'Homme* 13, no. 2 (2002) (accessed April 18, 2019).

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 273.

²³ Cf. Elena Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and What We Saw There* (2003), 13.

‘West’ in this relationship.²⁴ The theoretical background is provided by the *translational turn*, addressed by Bachmann-Medick, examining the concept of gender and its presumed transfer from ‘West’ to ‘East’.²⁵ Therefore, Buden’s discussion of the specific position of the ‘East’ – although part of Europe, it is not really accepted as such – is an interesting perspective on my topic.²⁶ As the different dealing with and acceptance of gender shows, it is important to acknowledge these differences instead of assuming one universal definition that could be imposed on different times and locations.

Classic works, to which recent texts and also the founders refer, are Maria Todorova’s (1997) *Imagining the Balkans* and Larry Wolff’s (1994) *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, who in turn both refer to Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism*. The authors are mainly concerned with the discursive role of terms such as ‘*EE*’, *the Balkans* or a uniform, uncritical use of the term *Europe* that conceals relevant differences. They call for a critical approach to categories such as ‘East’ and ‘West’, and Wolff in particular points out that this categorization is by no means ‘natural’ and/or ‘innocent’.²⁷ This has also been shown by Marina Blagojevic who examines the different agency and treatment of scientists from the ‘semiperiphery’ contrary to ‘core’ scientists and how this constitutes a global canon of knowledge, clearly following hegemonial power relations.²⁸ A possible solution would be applying a global perspective on women*’s and gender history, but within this perspective, the ‘semiperiphery’ mostly has been excluded, too, like Kristen Ghodsee²⁹ or Magdalena Grabowska³⁰ criticize. In this respect, anthologies such as the above-mentioned one by Gisela Bock should be critically assessed and economic and political interests behind such categories should be definitely taken into consideration. In addition to that, one could ask how meaningful a geo-political and/ or cultural restriction in the field of women*’s and gender history is, like the title of *MATILDA* suggests.

²⁴ Cf. Ralitsa Muharska, “Silences and Parodies in the East – West Feminist Dialogue,” *L’Homme* 16, no. 1 (2005): 43–4 (accessed April 4, 2019).

²⁵ Cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*, De Gruyter textbook (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 29.

²⁶ Cf. inter alia: Buden, *Zone des Übergangs*, 30–33.

²⁷ Cf. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, [Nachdr.] (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), 4.

²⁸ Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users.”

²⁹ Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity During the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=5649229>, 15.

³⁰ Magdalena Grabowska, “Bringing the Second World in: Conservative Revolution(S), Socialist Legacies, and Transnational Silences in the Trajectories of Polish Feminism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, no. 2 (2012).

In fact, a turn from a national comparative approach towards a global one can be analyzed. However, in both approaches historical voids concerning ‘EE’ become visible: A former exclusively ‘core’-led historiography opens up towards ‘peripheral’ voices as well, but as stated above, the ‘semiperiphery’ remains at its place. Whereas within a global approach, postcolonial voices were raised, postsocialist voices remained rather absent from the international feminist debate.³¹ The latter can be explained by the ambivalent relation of the ‘semiperiphery’ towards the ‘core’: “[I]t wants to be like the ‘West: part of Europe, of European structures, of European economy, and it also wants to be itself, something it was not allowed to be for almost 50 years.’”³² Consequently, Madina Tlostanova, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Redi Koobak attest a lack of collaboration between postcolonial and postsocialist women*’s and gender historians, which is hindering a genuine progress, in the sense of solidarity and equality, of the field.³³ This claim from 2019 indicates the continued practice of criticism within women*’s and gender history, and in this sense, I would like to continue this practice with the present work.

³¹ Cf. Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 75.

³² Muharska, “Silences and Parodies in the East – West Feminist Dialogue,”: 36.

³³ Cf. Madina Tlostanova, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Redi Koobak, “The Postsocialist ‘Missing Other’ of Transnational Feminism?,” *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (2019): 85.

2 Methodological Approach and Context

At this point, I need to point out my own positioning within the field: As a *white* hetero cis-woman from a middle-class family in West-Germany, studying in Vienna, I can find myself in the core area. Concerning some aspects in the following discussion, I am likely still biased even though I try to be aware precisely of these privileges and seek objectivity.

Conducting the interviews, I was not only interested in expert knowledge, but I also tried to elicit personal motivations, information regarding EU funding and the respective university policy. It should be noted that I see the interviewees as colleagues, since as a *MATILDA* student myself, I am also part of the network.

2.1 The Interview: Methodology and Circumstances

The approach of the open guideline-based interview seemed most appropriate since I did not want to conduct a purely biographical interview, nor did I want to completely exclude narrative elements. The historian Therese Garstenauer, who also conducted interviews for her dissertation dealing with international contacts and cooperation in Russia-related Gender Studies, noted that “each interview has elements of different interview types to varying degrees”³⁴ which is “quite acceptable and common in research practice”³⁵. Concerning the guideline, Meuser and Nagel argue for a thematic approach with flexible handling at the same time.³⁶ The flexible handling means having the structure of the guideline at hand, but also allows the interviewer to leave this structure if necessary. In other words, deviating from the questions and reacting to imminent demands and comprehension questions are possible and even important.³⁷ As the flexibility opens up, the possibility for narrative passages which, according to Meuser and Nagel, have proven to be key moments in the reconstruction of action-guiding orientations, especially when they come from the professional field of action.³⁸ In this way, some unconscious aspects of experts’ actions may come to light³⁹, which, in turn, may provide information about the relevance structures of expert action.⁴⁰

³⁴ Therese Garstenauer, “Wer Interessiert Sich Für Gender Studies in Russland? Internationale Kontakte Und Kooperationen in Der Russlandbezogenen Geschlechterforschung,” (Dissertation, Universität Wien, 2009), 123.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “Das Experteninterview,” in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*, 472.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 474.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 473.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 474.

During the interviews, I was hoping for expert knowledge on women's and gender history, as well as on building such a network. Regarding the term *expert*, I have to say that, like Garstenauer, I had difficulties in assigning my respondents to clear categories⁴¹. In their essay they dedicate themselves to the terminology: By stating that any person named by the researcher could be considered an expert⁴², Meuser and Nagel laid down a number of defining features to avoid an inflationary use of the term.⁴³ In addition, they are against an elitist, hierarchical use of the term and therefore oppose a "definition of the status of expert that is narrowed down to the professional role"⁴⁴. To do so, they first ask "whether there are peculiarities that provide expert action and knowledge of other forms of social action and knowledge, especially from everyday actions and knowledge."⁴⁵ I found this demarcation helpful in order to keep in mind that although I regard the interviewees as historical subjects within their specific contexts and in demarcation to myself⁴⁶, I don't consider them primarily as contemporary witnesses. Thus, I am not interested in questioning a particular event they witnessed, or in obtaining information about their everyday life, as the method of oral history might do; but – and here I follow the definition of Meuser and Nagel – my focus is much more on their "strategies of action and criteria of decision making"⁴⁷ in the context of their function, namely as founders. While Meuser and Nagel limit their analysis to the "institutionally determined framework of expert action" and thus consider "not the person of the expert in his or her biographical motivation, but the actor involved in a functional context"⁴⁸, biographical motivation is certainly relevant to my research question as well; not at least because I consider postcolonial approaches (i.e. not separating knowledge and biography from each other) very revealing. Like Grada Kilomba says: "I want academic knowledge and discourse to become more subjective and personal. Theory has to do with biography, and biography with theory. Science is produced by one

⁴¹ Cf. Garstenauer, *Wer interessiert sich für Gender Studies in Russland?*, 123.

⁴² Cf. Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, "Das Experteninterview," in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*, 466.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 468.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁴⁶ This seems important to me especially when it comes to the contents of women's and gender history or definitions within the field as the interviewees (still) defined differently or had a different context-dependent access to topics than I have today. More on this in chapter "Context".

⁴⁷ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, "Das Experteninterview: Konzeptionelle Grundlagen und methodische Anlage," in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft: Neue Entwicklungen und Anwendungen*, ed. Susanne Pickel et al., 1. Aufl., 465–79 (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / GWV Fachverlage GmbH Wiesbaden, 2009), 473.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 469.

person, written by one person. That person has a biography, a question, emotions.”⁴⁹ Especially in the field of history and more specifically women*’s and gender history, where for a long time exclusively male, *white* perspectives⁵⁰ were represented, this remark seems indispensable to me. Moreover, biographical motivation possibly provides information about inequalities within the network due to hegemonical structures in form of hopes and disappointments and/or information about biographical characteristics and therefore indicators of location dependent agency. Finally, I would like to underline the function as a role model of ‘the expert’: In terms of gender inequality it is relevant to emphasize the fact that all experts in my survey are women*. According to Meuser and Nagel, the gender aspect should not be neglected, especially in expert interviews, since in a society structured on gender hierarchies, expert competence is unequally distributed according to gender: “Despite all the upheavals in gender relations, experts are male in most fields of investigation. This is related to the development of professions.”⁵¹

When developing the questionnaire, I settled on about ten questions per person. Regarding the nature of the questions, I was careful not to ask yes-no questions and to stay objective.⁵²

To answer my research question, I conducted interviews with the founders of the five locations as well as with the project assistant of the programme implementation at the time – so, six interviews in total with an average length of 1,5 hours. I focused on one founder per location who usually work in pairs, with the exception of Nottingham counting three partners. I left it open whether I would add an additional partner in case their position became crucial to my research question in the interview situation. My interviewees are the following: Christa Hämmerle (founder) and Maria Schmidt-Dengler (project assistant) from Vienna, Susan Zimmermann (founder) from Budapest, Sylvie Schweitzer (founder) from Lyon, Krassimira Daskalova (founder) from Sofia, and Elizabeth Harvey (founder) from Nottingham. I was able

⁴⁹ Anna Mayrhauser, “Grada Kilomba: Wenn Diskurs Persönlich Wird: 'Ich Vermisse Emotionalität Und Spiritualität in Der Wissensproduktion.'”, <https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2016/04/22/grada-kilomba-wenn-diskurs-persoendlich-wird/> (accessed June 16, 2020).

⁵⁰ Cf. Eg. Maria d. G. de Oliveira, “Os Sons Do Silêncio: Interpeleções Feministas Decoloniais À História Da Historiografia,” *História da Historiografia: International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography* 11, no. 28 (2018): 104.: “The article aims to reflect upon the invisibility of the productions of female authorship in intellectual history, based on some of the challenges posed by the decolonial feminist perspective.” *ibid.* 104.

⁵¹ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “Das Experteninterview,” in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*, 475.

⁵² The blog “Oral History” of the Freie Universität Berlin gives important advices for the interview preparation. For the development of the guide cf. video no. 6, here: <https://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/oralhistory/erfahrungsberichte/>. Grotrian, Etta (Verant.), “Oral History Blog,” <https://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/oralhistory/> (accessed February 24, 2020), <https://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/oralhistory/erfahrungsberichte/>.

to talk to the founders from Vienna and Budapest as well as the project assistant face-to-face, while I conducted the remaining interviews with the founders from Sofia, Lyon, and Nottingham via Skype or Viber. When possible, we talked in the native language of the interviewees – which is the case for German, English and French. Before the actual interview, I e-mailed them a quick overview of my interest in research and the interview-guidelines. Later in the process, I sent them a consent form concerning the quotation of the transcripts. In the beginning of each interview, I asked the participants for personal data as well as their current and/ or former position at *MATILDA* and their major steps in their scientific career and at what point women*’s and gender history became important for them. At the end of the interview, I usually asked them if they wanted to add anything or if I missed anything. During the process, I slightly changed the interview questions adapting to the relevant information provided in the already conducted interview. In order to allow for a later comparison of the interviews⁵³, I followed the same guideline for all founders, except for small changes or location- or person-specific variations. For the interview with the project assistant, I adapted the guidelines to her position and her assumed (expert) knowledge. In addition, the questions, which can be found in the appendix⁵⁴, were not necessarily asked in this wording or order.

I transcribed all the interviews by myself using the MAXQDA software and the transcription conventions and practical hints for qualitative researchers of f4transcript.⁵⁵

2.2 Analysis Tools: Grounded Theory and Qualitative Analysis

To organize the interview transcripts, I read all of them at least five times applying elements of Mayring’s (1982) *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse* and Corbin and Strauss’ (1990) *Grounded Theory – Procedures and Techniques*. Both approaches work with categories assigned to the data. Following Reinhoffer’s thoughts on Mayring (2008), I differentiated between formal codes and material codes as well as meta-codes and sub-codes which are assigned to each – the formal and the material level. According to Mayring, the formal level refers to a dimension or a subject area of the object of investigation and therefore remains relatively abstract. Later it can be filled with content. This content filling consists of material codes, which can be defined by content

⁵³ Cf. Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 14.

⁵⁴ Cf. Appendix i. Interview Guidelines.

⁵⁵ Capital letters indicate emphasis. '/' denotes sentence breaks. And '(...)' was inserted for breaks longer than 3 seconds. For further regulations cf. Thorsten Dresing and Thorsten Pehl, eds., *Praxisbuch Interview, Transkription & Analyse: Anleitungen und Regelsysteme für qualitativ Forschende*, 8. Auflage (Marburg: Eigenverlag, 2018).

statements and can establish focal points of different weightings.⁵⁶ This finally results in a rough structural grid containing the following: Formal Meta Code (FMC), Formal Sub Code (FSC), Material Meta Code (MMC), Material Sub Code (MSC).⁵⁷ In concrete terms it looked like this: De facto outcome of *MATILDA* (FMC), national characteristics (FSC), university policy, national knowledge etc. (MMC) and finally something like focus on social history (MSC). With the help of the software MAXQDA, I applied these initial codes on the transcripts. While reading the transcripts several times, the coding became more focused, i.e. codes were added, adjusted or eliminated or multiple codes created one category. Later, I generally moved from codes to categories, a more concrete form of organizing the material which requires a certain distance to the rough structural grid from the beginning and becoming more concrete in addition to my question of research. I also started with my analytical memo writing – i.e. thoughts I had on passages of the interviews or concrete terms the interviewees applied which I noted as a commentary linked to the passage in the text. So, the categories shown in the category map created by MAXQDA in the following are the product of my working through the material.

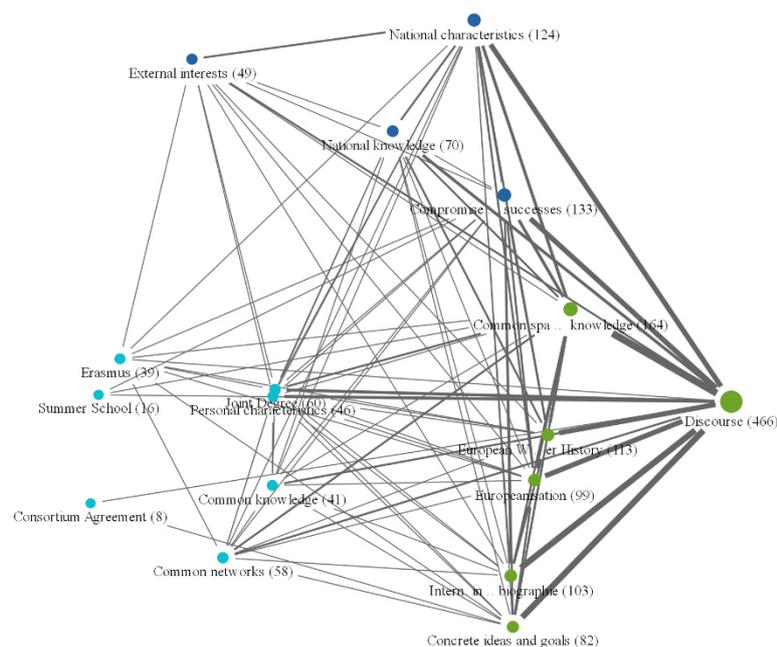


Fig. 1: Category Map

The categories result from a combination of a deductive and inductive perspective of category building. According to Reinhoffer the deductive perspective generates categories from research

⁵⁶ Bernd Reinhoffer, “Lehrkräfte geben Auskunft über ihren Unterricht,” in *Praxis der Qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse*, 131.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 133–35.

hypotheses and assumptions that can already have shown up in the guideline of the interviews; and an inductive perspective generates categories directly from the material.⁵⁸ Finally categories changed over time by going through the existing research literature.⁵⁹

The graphic shows bigger or smaller dots according to how many times a category has been applied to the whole of the material; the number next to the categories tells the exact quantity. And the connecting lines in combination with the three different colors show connections and relations between the categories. In the end these codes and categories applied on the material helped visualizing relations within the material and finally gave me a certain work structure. This is also how the map above should be rated: a working tool and an interim stage in the course of analyzing the material.⁶⁰

Whereas this work structure more or less imposes categories from outside (cf. inductive and deductive), the *Grounded Theory* on the contrary – which in its whole is too complex for the present research project – develops its categories from the spoken word. Therefore, it remains more open for interpretation. However, since it is difficult to approach material completely without categories, the abovementioned work structure provides important preparatory work: In a further step, i.e. when the spoken word is analyzed, the categories of the work structure allow the researcher to apply elements of the *Grounded Theory*; For example, it can be shown how differently the interviewees deal with the meta categories. In other words: Just because everyone talks about a category, there is not necessarily a common denominator for this category. It is interesting that people at different times, in different places, understand different things under one category, even if the category seems to be the same. While applying this element of *Grounded Theory* for the analysis, the different terms the interviewees used for my topic of research, i.e. the common space of knowledge, were the most revealing. Very soon I became aware that my work consists very much in analyzing the discourse applied by the interviewees for the common space of knowledge including the content, its frame, the common meetings to implement the programme etc. So I realized that I mainly do translational work; not only in its literal sense because the consortium members speak different languages, but also

⁵⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ MAXQDA cannot fully show the names of the categories in the graphic as the software usually is applied in an interactive way and online, where you click on the category to show the full description. Nevertheless, I found attaching the map helpful for the reader to understand my working process.

in a broader sense like applying terms differently according to location, time and other indicators; by doing so sometimes even new senses of these terms are created.

In conclusion it can be said that the categories helped to organize the material and to gain a work structure, but to analyze the spoken word it was necessary to distance myself from the rigid and schematic categories and develop meaning and thematic focuses consistent with my research question out of the coded and categorized data. The latter consists pretty much in the headings of chapter 5 and its sections.

3 Doing ‘East’ and ‘West’

Examining ‘East’ and ‘West’, Therese Garstenauer developed the concept of *Doing ‘East’ and ‘West’* via the ‘core’ vs. ‘periphery’ concept. In the sense of ‘doing gender’⁶¹, a well-known concept in gender studies, Garstenauer remarks that it is less about notions, but about something that is done and lived.⁶² As of now, the terms are put in single quotation marks to emphasize their constructiveness. This is also a way of dealing with the problematic semantics of the terms. Larry Wolff found adequate words to show that ‘East’ and ‘West’ are a man-made construct:

It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment. It was also the Enlightenment, with its intellectual centers in Western Europe, that cultivated and appropriated to itself the new notion of ‘civilization,’ an eighteenth-century neologism, and civilization discovered its complement, within the same continent, in shadowed lands of backwardness, even barbarism.⁶³

Furthermore, the use of single quotation marks is intended to draw attention to the fluidity and shifts of concepts, also in relation to another pair of concepts, namely the abovementioned ‘core’ and ‘periphery’⁶⁴. The phenomenon of fluidity and shifts does not only become evident in the fact that locations can belong to the ‘core’ and in another context or time to the ‘periphery’, but also in the fact that the pair of notions later was critically extended by a third notion, namely ‘semiperiphery’ – amongst others by the Serbian sociologist Marina Blagojevic. She sees the cause of (post-)socialist countries excluded from the pair of concepts, because ‘Eastern’ European countries, being former industrialized societies, often are related to the ‘core’.⁶⁵ Moreover, semiperipheral countries are likewise referred to as a one homogenous whole. Notably, the pair of concepts of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ tends to conceal particularities from the ‘Central, Eastern and Southeastern’ area (‘CESEE’, hereafter)⁶⁶. Therefore, Blagojevic advocates the term ‘semiperiphery’. According to her, the ‘semiperiphery’ “refers to postcommunist European societies at different stages of the enlargement process.”⁶⁷ Using the example of the Western Balkans, Blagojevic makes an analogy of the ‘Third World’ to the ‘Second World’. This ‘Second World’ positions itself between the ‘Western centers’ and the

⁶¹ Cf.: Candace West and Don Zimmermann, “Doing Gender,” *Gender & Society* 1, no. 2 (1987).

⁶² Cf.: Garstenauer, *Wer interessiert sich für Gender Studies in Russland?*, 3.

⁶³ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–5.

⁶⁵ Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 73.

⁶⁶ Another notion which is ‘done and lived’: Mostly the abbreviation is used for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, whereas *Western Europe* usually is written out. To change these continuities, I will abbreviate both terms in the present work (*Western Europe* becomes ‘WE’) and put both in single quotation marks for the abovementioned reasons. Synonymously, *Eastern Europe* is abbreviated as ‘EE’.

⁶⁷ Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 89.

‘(Southern) peripheries’ and therefore manifests itself as a ‘semiperiphery’. Furthermore, Blagojevic points to the different mechanisms and structures that must not be universalized in the so-called ‘Second World’. Therefore, I will use the three-part world system of ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’ in the following.

The special feature of *MATILDA* is that it consists of countries which in mainstream discourses are assigned to either the ‘East’ (Hungary and Bulgaria) or the ‘West’ (Great Britain, France and Austria). However, this distribution is too general like will be demonstrated in the following on the examples of Austria, Hungary and some general considerations on ‘EE’.

Starting with the coordinating location of *MATILDA*: Although Austria is generally considered to be part of the ‘West’ – especially because of its economic, political, historical and cultural ties with Germany – it cannot be clearly assigned to ‘WE’ either as it often acts as a link between the two worlds: When it comes to historical associations like the Habsburg Empire⁶⁸, Austria tends to be oriented towards the ‘East’; in addition, it is not a NATO member, and has only been in the EU since 1995. This already shows the complexity of the use of the terms, whose historical and political meanings must not be negated.

Bulgaria, for example, tends to be assigned to ‘Southeastern’ Europe and Hungary to ‘East-Central’ Europe. Kulawik emphasizes the emergence of these further subdivisions of ‘EE’: Contrary to the ‘Western core’ and its formation of single-nation empires – often accompanied by ethnic and religious cleansing –, these historical spaces were formed by multinational imperial powers and therefore show a certain diversity: “They were polyglossic and multiethnic, but precisely this hybridity, to use a [...] trope of postcolonial theorizing, was considered backward in the age of the nation-state.”⁶⁹

It is also of interest, for example, to see how Hungary defines itself as European on the one hand and how it rejects European values such as equality and freedom of speech on the other. The political scientist Ljiljana Radonić explains the concept of ‘universalisation of the Holocaust’ in the work of commemoration and/ or in Shoah museums: There one would like to show that Hungary for example is on a European level as far as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is

⁶⁸ Cf.: Mariia N. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Updated ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), <http://lib.myilibrary.com/detail.asp?ID=205401>, 149.

⁶⁹ Teresa Kulawik, “Introduction: Introduction European Borderlands and European Borderlands and Topographies of Transnational Feminism,” in *Borderlands in European gender studies: Beyond the East-West frontier*, ed. Teresa Kulawik and Zhanna Kravchenko, First edition, 1–38, Routledge advances in feminist studies and intersectionality (2020), 4.

concerned and that it is part of a united Europe, a Europe that understands itself democratically; But the memory of the Shoah actually serves to equate National Socialism and Communism in order to present the Communist crimes after 1945 as worse and ultimately to take an anti-democratic position.⁷⁰ The example shows that a country can declare its commitment to European standards, while at the same time taking anti-democratic positions. The latter likewise shows in the example of the CEU being forced out of Hungary⁷¹ which somehow creates the impression that an understanding of gender or gender equality does not belong to the idea of Europe, while on the other hand own national particularities are emphasized to legitimize this argumentation.

Since the work mainly focuses on the universities, the special position of the CEU must also be mentioned at this point: The CEU can be considered the most international institution in the *MATILDA* context. With its campus in Budapest and headquarters in New York, the CEU attracts an international audience of students and lecturers. As a private university, the CEU is mainly supported by the Open Society Foundations and the Soros Foundation – foundations of the American investor of Hungarian origin George Soros. With its foundation assets of 880 million USD in 2010, the university is one of the wealthiest in Europe.⁷² Soros' foundation, like many other, had the aim of 'stimulating democratization processes' in 'CESEE' countries.⁷³ This idea is based on the widespread stereotype of a one-sided transfer of the 'West' to the 'East' and becomes present on the homepage of the CEU, as can be seen here: "In 1989, a group of visionary intellectuals [...] conceptualized an international university that would help facilitate the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union."⁷⁴ The one-sided transfer idea is also reflected in the name of the university: the identification as 'Central European' is immanent to a certain self-image close to the 'West'. This is affirmed by investigating the notion 'Central European' further: Jan Růžička

⁷⁰ For further information cf.: Ljiljana Radonić, "Kampf Um Die „Richtige“ Erinnerung," *ORF Science* (2016), <http://science.orf.at/stories/2812168/> (accessed May 17, 2020).

⁷¹ Cf.: "“CEU has been forced out”, said CEU President and Rector Michael Ignatieff. ‘This is unprecedented. A U.S. institution has been driven out of a country that is a NATO ally. A European institution has been ousted from a member state of the EU.’ Central European University, “CEU Forced Out of Budapest: To Launch U.S. Degree Programs in Vienna in September 2019: CEU Press Release,” <https://www.ceu.edu/article/2018-12-03/ceu-forced-out-budapest-launch-us-degree-programs-vienna-september-2019?fbclid=IwAR3D5UW2GccrEyHcGOx1MjQiBt9pAMlr5ndkX1jstF6Y3GeNev7ONxIlooY> (accessed January 22, 2019).

⁷² Cf.: Aisha Labi, For President of Central European U., All Roads Have Led to Budapest; in: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 02, 2010, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/For-President-of-Central/65338/>; cited via: Wikipedia, "Central European University," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_European_University (accessed May 21, 2020).

⁷³ Cf.: Central European University, "History," <https://www.ceu.edu/about/history> (accessed May 6, 2020).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

questions the terms *Central* and *Eastern Europe* and the impact of transatlantic relations on these terms since the late 1990s. The idea of ‘Central Europe’ was born within a group of intellectuals around Milan Kundera in the mid-1980s with the aim to increase the awareness that the former Soviet Union also formed an integral part of the ‘West’. According to Růžička, this “opened up the possibility of bringing the region back to life and restoring its place in the West, where it belonged both culturally and historically, in the opinion of Kundera and others who joined the debate.”⁷⁵ In other words, Růžička refers to the recovery of ‘Central Europe’ as “the means of addressing, countering and changing a historical aberration which occurred in the period post-1945, when lands covered by countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland or Hungary became Eastern Europe.”⁷⁶ Against this rather self-empowering movement created by Kundera and his circle, Joan W. Scott emphasizes the pressure or lure of US-based foundations which had brought many gender studies programmes into existence, like the one based at the CEU. According to Scott, these curricula strongly resembled those of women*’s studies programmes at North American universities and therefore line up with the idea of ‘bringing modernization’ to the ‘CESEE’ academy.⁷⁷ With its international, westernized character and its stable material position – showing for example in the fact that the *MATILDA* programme of the CEU is able to offer two to three full stipends and five tuition waivers every year – practically manages to overcome the ‘semiperipheral’ status, which positions the CEU more on the side of the ‘core’ institutions in opposition to Sofia on the other side.⁷⁸ The clear definition of Hungary as part of ‘East’-/ ‘Central’ Europe and/ or the ‘semiperiphery’ is thus not as clear as potentially previously assumed. The understanding of the CEU as a European institution, i.e. as an outstanding institution of the Hungarian academic system, finally manifests itself in the fact that both founders of *MATILDA* are from ‘Western’ European countries, namely, Germany and the Netherlands. Furthermore, the president of the CEU, Michael Ignatieff, is Canadian and from a privileged background of politicians, statesmen and diplomats. Moreover, he held several important positions in public life including senior academic posts at the elite universities

⁷⁵ Jan Růžička, “Forum on ‘Central Europe’: From Eastern Europe to Central Europe and Back? On Regions, Transatlantic Relations, and Central Europe,” *Perspectives: Review of Central European Affairs*, no. 2 (2010): 67, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=38252>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Cf. Scott, “Fictitious Unities. “Gender,” “East,” and “West”,”.

⁷⁸ The material difference and prestige of the two universities of Sofia and Budapest manifests itself, for example, through access to scholarships: Whereas at the CEU the stipends and tuition waivers for *MATILDA* are well established (Zimmermann, pos. 92); Daskalova, on the other hand, speaks of a struggle for survival of the programme precisely because of the low number of students, which could be increased by scholarships (Daskalova, pos. 97).

Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard, worked in media (e.g. for BBC and The Observer) and was the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.⁷⁹

Finally, one can say that the ‘Doing’ in *Doing ‘East’ and ‘West’* as well as in the use of notions as ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’ must be given high priority and that political and economic interests beyond notions must be acknowledged and questioned. Moreover, the characteristics of fluidity and shifting of notions and dynamics must be acknowledged.

⁷⁹ Cf. Wikipedia, “Michael Ignatieff,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Ignatieff#Family (accessed June 24, 2020).

4 The Context of *MATILDA* and the Interviewees as Historical Subjects

MATILDA can be contextualized in an ‘opening’ after 1989. In the following, I will examine this context, starting from the two meanings of the term *opening*: Firstly, it is often used in neo-liberal arguments, mainly limited to an opening of the markets as an advantage for the capitalist system, which likewise finds expression within universities. The opening in the context of women*’s and gender history means secondly, that new contacts became possible after 1989 and that the field was confronted with the challenge to rethink its own theorems and contents together with researchers from ‘CESEE’ and, as in the case of *MATILDA*, to enter into cooperation. As the university of Vienna is the founding institution of *MATILDA*, I will examine the Viennese context in particular – including institutions of women*’s and gender history related to *MATILDA*.

In general, the European educational landscape changed in the beginning of the 21st century and with it the institution of European universities.⁸⁰ Maria Do Mar Pereira speaks of transnational changes within the academical system in the last two decades. She speaks of the rise of a ‘performative university’, which suffers from

cutbacks to higher education and research funding, increases in tuition-fees, large-scale restructuring of degree programmes, pressure for increased publishing productivity, expansion of audit and quality-control mechanisms, or extensification and casualisation of academic work⁸¹

Do Mar Pereira holds two pillars responsible, or necessary, as some might say, for this ‘academic culture of performativity’: the reconceptualization of academic work following the goal of achieving the highest levels of productivity and profitability which positions quantity over quality and secondly a tool of control to maintain high levels in productivity and to reward or punish individuals and institutions accordingly.⁸² The economic understanding of this new university therefore led other authors to associate terms such as *neoliberalism*, *capitalism* or

⁸⁰ Cf. : Edith Saurer, Li Gerhalter and Michaela Hafner, “The Research Platform “Repositioning of Women’s and Gender History” at the University of Vienna,” *Genre & Histoire*, no.7 (2010): Chapter I, Point 2, <http://journals.openedition.org/genrehistoire/1092> (accessed June 19, 2019).

⁸¹ Maria d. M. Pereira, *Power, Knowledge and Feminist Scholarship: An Ethnography of Academia*, Transformations (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), 70.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 70–72.

entrepreneurship.⁸³ Exemplarily, the university reform which took place in Austria in 2002⁸⁴ can be mentioned in this context. The reform was criticized for restricting the participation of certain university groups, notably students, lecturers, assistants and administrative staff. But on the other hand “[t]he financial autonomy imposed on, or permitted, for the universities (depending on one’s interpretation) led to a commodification of the university system; at the same time, it opened up opportunities for an autonomous allocation of research funds.”⁸⁵ In other words, research funds could now be obtained directly from the university, but were tied to conditions that played into the hands of a de facto neoliberal science system. Austria’s university reform was followed by the establishment of research platforms as organisational units at the University of Vienna in 2005. With reference to the rectorate of the University of Vienna these units were primarily intended to bring new interdisciplinary and innovative research concerns into established scientific fields⁸⁶ – an argumentation close to a neoliberal growth discourse. The process of neoliberalisation of the academic system is also evident in the time and performance pressure inherent to the Bologna Process. The reform includes the Bachelor-Master system or the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which both set limitations – like a restricted period of study and European comparability, which mainly serves the economic efficiency of the EU – for economic reasons. These are only manifestations of do Mar Pereira’s thoughts on the ‘academic culture of performativity’ as elaborated above.

In the following, let us take a closer look at Vienna’s context in the evaluation period of the present work. *MATILDA’S* foundation strongly associates with the research platform *Neuerortung der Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte im veränderten europäischen Kontext* (‘The Repositioning of Women’s and Gender History within the Changed European Context’) which was, similar to *MATILDA*, founded in 2006 and lists *MATILDA* under connected projects. Note that the contributors Edith Saurer, who came up with the idea for the programme, and Christa Hämmerle, one of the Viennese founders, are involved in both the platform and the

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁴ More on the university reform of 2002 and its effects, cf: Gabriella Hauch and Christa Hämmerle, “Auch Die Österreichische Frauenforschung Sollte Wege Der Beteiligung Finden ... Zur Institutionalisierung Der Frauen- Und Geschlechtergeschichte an Der Universität Wien,” in *Reflexive Innensichten aus der Universität*, ed. Stadler, Friedrich im Namen der "Universitären Kommission zur wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung der Universitätsgeschichte, insbesondere im Rahmen des 650-Jahr-Jubiläums" und des Forums "Zeitgeschichte der Universität Wien" (Katharina Kniefacz und Herbert Posch), 97–109 (Göttingen, 2015), 106–8.

⁸⁵ Saurer, Gerhalter and Hafner, “The Research Platform “Repositioning of Women’s and Gender History” at the University of Vienna,”: Chapter I, point 2.

⁸⁶ Cf.: Rectorate of the University of Vienna, Research Platforms: <http://rektorat.univie.ac.at/en/research-platforms/>. Cited after: *ibid.*

MATILDA programme.⁸⁷ Among others, the research platform supports the international periodical journal *L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* ('European Journal of Feminist History')⁸⁸ and the *Sammlung Frauennachlässe* ('Collection of Women's Estates'), currently counting the estates of 423 individuals.⁸⁹ Moreover, the project's goal plays a vital role in the course of the present work: The history of former socialist countries needs to be 'integrated' into the 'established European history'. The historical starting point of the collapse of the Eastern bloc 1989 is to be considered an important year as it "not only changed the European political landscape, it also had a momentous influence on the social sciences and humanities. This was also true for women*'s and gender history that found both an enlarged (European) sphere of discussion and some newly-shaped research topics."⁹⁰

This leads us to the second meaning of 'opening': a potential rethinking of theorems and contents of European women*'s and gender history together with researchers from 'CESEE'. What their integration should look like and opinions on whether the term *integration* is appropriate vary. In the virtual *Salon 21*, another branch of the research platform *The Repositioning of Women's and Gender History within the Changed European Context* in Vienna, historians discussed the topic 'Is a European Women's History possible?' between 2007 and 2012.⁹¹ In the first post in the discussion, Éliane Viennot examines the power relations between men* and women* in France. According to her, France represents an outstanding example of the oppression of women* in the European context. She identifies the latter primarily based on her study of France's Salic law, which explicitly excludes female inheritance in its succession regulations. Viennot advocates a European comparative perspective for further

⁸⁷ Cf.: "MATILDA started out in VIENNA. Originally it was an idea of Edith Saurer." (Hämmerle, pos. 37) Cf.: Institut für Geschichte der Universität Wien, "Forschungsplattform "Neuerortung Der Frauen- Und Geschlechtergeschichte",", <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Neuerortung-Geschlechtergeschichte/cms/> (accessed June 19, 2019), https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Neuerortung-Geschlechtergeschichte/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=19&Itemid=22.

⁸⁸ Cf.: Saurer, Gerhalter and Hafner, "The Research Platform "Repositioning of Women's and Gender History" at the University of Vienna,": Chapter IV.

⁸⁹ Cf.: Sammlung Frauennachlässe, "Sammlung Frauennachlässe Am Institut Für Geschichte Der Universität Wien,", <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn/> (accessed May 11, 2020), <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn/bestand>.

⁹⁰ Saurer, Gerhalter and Hafner, "The Research Platform "Repositioning of Women's and Gender History" at the University of Vienna,": Chapter I, point 1.

⁹¹ Forschungsplattform Neuerortung der Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte, "Archive for the 'Discussion_ Is a European Women's History Possible?': CategoryRoundtable Discussion at the IV National Conference of the Italian Historic Society (Società Italiana Delle Storiche) (15. - 17. February 2007,," <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/salon21/?cat=6> (accessed May 11, 2020).

research and her perspective is limited to binary gender.⁹² Luisa Passerini on the other hand supports a broader interpretation of gender and pursues ‘equal opportunities for all’. Note that the European commission named the same year 2007 as the European ‘Year of Equal Opportunities for All’. Even though it does not become entirely clear whether Passerini fully leaves the binary perspective by applying the terminus ‘all’, she emphasizes the inclusion of the perspective of homosexuals and other marginal groups, such as migrants. Despite the statement of the EU commission in the beginning of her post, Passerini’s understanding of Europe demands likewise postcolonial perspectives and “to abandon a purely territorial idea and to take seriously the call for de-territorialisation”⁹³, which is, according to Passerini, proclaimed by theory on the one hand and by migrants on the other. Concerning a rethinking together with ‘CESEE’ researchers, the debate in the virtual *Salon 21* includes a critical reflection on the term ‘Eastern’ Europe. Based on Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* and Maria Todorova’s (1997) *Imagining the Balkans*, a more sensible use of the notion *European* was claimed⁹⁴: Francisca de Haan, co-responsible for *MATILDA* CEU, focuses on inner-European inequalities, especially with regard to the inconsiderate use of the terms ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Europe. In this sense, she advocates ‘critical and comparative research’ and claims furthermore that “as long as we are stuck with names or concepts such as Europe, all ‘Europeans’ should equally claim that name – hoping that in the process we will all get used to it.”⁹⁵ De Haan also calls for the uniform publication of texts in English in order to promote mutual understanding of the realities of the respective scholars. Since these measures run the risk of concealing inequalities, I would like to take this opportunity to refer to Mohanty. Especially in relation to language, she emphasizes the importance of naming differences and inequalities “because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully.”⁹⁶ We should ask ourselves a similar question on the choice of English as lingua franca in academia: Are we counteracting global injustice if we apply a colonial language in a unifying way to the whole of

⁹² Éliane Viennot, “Statement Éliane Viennot [Fr.] É POSSIBILE UNA STORIA EUROPEA DELLE DONNE? Tavola Rotonda IV Congresso Nazionale Della Società Italiana Delle Storiche,” <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/salon21/?p=112#more-112> (accessed May 14, 2020).

⁹³ Cf.: Luisa Passerini, “Statement Luisa Passerini [Dt.] IST EINE EUROPÄISCHE FRAUENGESCHICHTE MÖGLICH? Beitrag Zur Podiumsdiskussion Am Vierten Nationalen Kongress Der Società Italiana Delle Storiche,” (accessed May 14, 2020).

⁹⁴ Saurer, Gerhalter and Hafner, “The Research Platform “Repositioning of Women’s and Gender History” at the University of Vienna,”: Chapter I, point 1.

⁹⁵ Cf.: Haan, ““Is a European Women’s History Possible?,””.

⁹⁶ Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited,”: 505.

academia, or is this once again cementing Western power structures? To conclude the discussion on the use of a European term within women*'s and gender history on the virtual platform *Salon 21*, Michael Mitterauer questions the meaning of the term and remarks critically: "But why should this field of vision [of women*'s and gender history] end at the borders of Europe, wherever you draw them?"⁹⁷ By asking so, Mitterauer criticises a common fetishization of Europe in historiography – a phenomenon that will be examined for the *MATILDA* project later in this work.

Based on the observation of inherent heterogeneity, the founders are also to be understood as historical subjects: All of them are socialized in a particular time, their positioning in terms of women*'s and gender history varies. These women* are quasi historically foreign to me, which is shown, for example, in the value of gender as a historically relevant category and a possible variance of this category as illustrated above. Moreover, the founders are all considered pioneers in the academic field of women*'s and gender history, integrated into their local and cultural context. The *MATILDA* programme was also an important means of anchoring women*'s and gender history more firmly in the respective locations at the time of its foundation. As always with historical questions, this context must be taken into consideration, especially with regard to drawing parallels to the present.

In conclusion, it can be said that the different understandings of the term *Europe* and/ or gender (binary vs. non-binary) in the context of the location Vienna and the evaluation period of the present work (foundation of *MATILDA* followed by the first years of implementation), which were briefly touched upon in this chapter, show a heterogeneity which seems inherent to international cooperation, and the field of women*'s and gender history in general (as an emancipatory field of study that aims to critically reflect on established power relations and therefore underlies an ongoing process of change). Moreover, the context of *MATILDA* is important to understand possible differentiations of researchers from one another depending on location or time (cf. the acceptance and/ or establishment of the academical field of women*'s and gender history).

⁹⁷ Cf. Michael Mitterauer, "NICHT DER RAUM, DAS PROBLEM IST DER AUSGANGSPUNKT: Ist Eine Europäische Frauengeschichte Möglich? - Diskussionsbeitrag Von Michael Mitterauer," <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/salon21/?p=390#more-390> (accessed May 14, 2020).

5 *MATILDA* – an Equal Space of Knowledge?

In this chapter, I examine to what extent the M.A. programme *MATILDA* succeeds in establishing not only a common but also an equal space of knowledge, assuming this space is defined firstly, by the fact that all locations are perceived as equal entities within the *MATILDA* framework and secondly, in which a common idea of knowledge about women*'s and gender history is conveyed. By including both 'WE' and 'CESEE' countries, the selection of the partner institutions already shows a certain attitude of the programme. To answer my research question on the emancipatory effects of *MATILDA*, internal indicators in the negotiation process of a common space of knowledge must be recognized and analyzed. Possible indicators could be the allocation of titles and tasks, canon formation or the content of the curriculum in general. Additionally, external factors such as the position of women*'s and gender history in mainstream academia on the one hand and different approaches to history, i.e. national, European comparative, global etc. – which is displayed in language usage for example; hegemonical science structures, methods and notions; (national) agency and/ or privileges, for example emerging through social, political and economic structures and/ or discourses etc. – must be included. The tension in this programme lies in the fact that, on the one hand, a European knowledge space is to be founded, which is politically and economically motivated, and, on the other hand, the existing stocks of knowledge such as gender theories must be able to withstand very different contexts. In my work, the conflictual relationship between 'East' and 'West' (expressed, for example, in hegemonic images of a one-sided transfer of knowledge from 'West' to 'East') and the question of how to overcome this conflict plays a major role. The question is whether the community of *MATILDA* has managed to create a common space of knowledge by acting as equals, or whether hegemonic relationships continue to exist.

Consequently, I placed my research within a broader context and initially evaluated the project as an experiment:⁹⁸ I attempted to construct a common project based on equal footing on women*'s and gender history in a hegemonical space – a Europe of differences, where 'WE' has a supremacy over 'CESEE' and where nationalism and national scientific cultures still play a major role. Because even though researchers affirm that the former East-West divide vanished since 1989 but continues in a modified form as "Eastern Europe has transmuted from the Second World to the second Other of Europe."⁹⁹ Therefore, Kulawik reveals a global

⁹⁸ Cf. the notions of *promise* or *attempt* as employed by Hämmerle, pos. 57; 39.

⁹⁹ Cf. Teresa Kulawik, "Introduction," in *Borderlands in European gender studies*, 1.

perspective on women*'s and gender history in which the earlier mentioned continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery' continues to exist in other, sometimes seemingly more progressive, forms (cf. 'transnationally European'). Against this background, success and valuable perspectives for the field can be expected as well as obstacles, disappointments and resistance and will be discussed by the transfer and exchange of knowledge within the consortium. The theory of translation is central to this.

5.1 Transfer and Exchange of Knowledge

The *MATILDA* programme allows for mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. Although all the members find positive words for their cooperation – they speak of an increased knowledge and a broadened horizon as well as an atmosphere of equality¹⁰⁰ when discussing the summer schools or attending common meetings – all founders perceived inequalities right from the beginning. Note that all founders agreed on the fact that difficulties in their cooperation were not so much about discussing contents of the (European) women*'s and gender history programme but about dealing with administrative questions at the different institutions. When I refer to the transfer and exchange of knowledge, *knowledge* is broadly defined in terms of academic management, traditions of thinking, knowledge in its literal sense, academic standards, the perception of historiography as well as concepts like *European*, *gender*, and *women*'s and gender history*. Therefore, the location and sometimes also personal aspects may play an important role in understanding each other and the common space of knowledge.

According to Hämmerle, the inequalities with regards to material inequality or different academic standards set boundaries and caused disappointments, especially within the phase of the programme implementation.¹⁰¹ Overcoming these inequalities is one of the main reasons for the establishment of *MATILDA*. Thus, Hämmerle considers *MATILDA* a 'great promise after 1989', where finally "these inequalities would not take this CENTRAL position"¹⁰² in an equal cooperation and network. In other words, she expresses the desire to create a common curriculum between 'WE' and 'EE' scholars and universities after the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁰³ But can this promise be actually fulfilled? Or else, to what extent can this promise be

¹⁰⁰ Cf.: "I was absolutely equal. We were not only co-workers, we are friends, we publish together." (Daskalova, pos. 49)

Cf. also: Sylvie Schweitzer, interview via *Skype*, 25.07.2019, pos. 78.

And: Elizabeth Harvey, interview via *Skype*, 28.10.2019, pos. 12.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 57.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pos. 56-57.

¹⁰³ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 57.

fulfilled? Hämmerle's extract suggests how knowledge should be organized in a Europe that is growing together, where more and less powerful members encounter each other – i.e. despite the continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery' an innovative space of knowledge should try to reveal these inequalities to finally create equality among the members. But as she states herself, the different wages for example depending on the locations where set by the EU and if the founders wanted to establish the programme, requirements by the EU had to be accepted in order to secure the funding of *MATILDA*. In other words, the setting in which *MATILDA* is constituted, i.e. on the one side within the powerful continuum putting the core atop and on the other side as being linked dependently on EU funding schemes that are based on a neoliberal agenda, it can be asked: What does the "lowest common denominator"¹⁰⁴, which the founders already take as a starting point, finally look like?

5.1.1 (Mis)understanding each other: Reflections on Translation(s)

A functioning communication between the consortium members is essential to emancipate from unequal relations. And since the framework of the *MATILDA* programme is constituted by an intercultural contact with five different languages, the issue of translation cannot be excluded.

The Czech researcher and sociologist Hana Havelková examines the situation of women* in the Czech Republic under the premise of translation from 'East' to 'West' and vice-versa. First, she underlines the differences of former socialist countries and that they all deal with different problems, although they are often described as one homogenous conglomerate. What threatened a self-determined life for women* in Poland after 1989 most was the circumcision of abortion rights; in east Germany, women* suffered of massive unemployment; and politics in Hungary forced women* back into their homes as housewives. At least regarding the Czech Republic, Havelková criticizes the absence of women* in high political positions.¹⁰⁵ In many cases, there is only one possible interpretation of this phenomenon in the Czech Republic for many 'Western' feminists: "Czech women are second-class citizens."¹⁰⁶ But this view lacks to ask the question what would be important for this specific case, notably what it meant to staff women* in high political positions under communism. According to Havelková the neglect of high political positions of women* today can be interpreted as a sign against feminist tokenism

¹⁰⁴ Hämmerle, pos. 67.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Hana Havelková, "Transitory and Persistent Differences: Feminism East and West," in *Transitions Environments Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, ed. Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan and Debra Keates, 56–62 (New York, London: Routledge, 1997), 56.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

under Communism when women* in politics, regardless of their quantity, would have no impact on their access to power or decision making.¹⁰⁷ The author's main thesis concerns ignoring transitory and persistent cultural and political differences while assuming that there is such a thing as fixed universal feminism or at least a universal understanding of women*'s issues. But that is not the case here: the issue is translation – not in the literal sense, but in the understanding of the translational turn in historiography. Bachmann-Medick examines cultural turns not only on the interdisciplinary and methodological levels, but also between life-worlds and refers to translation as “a central action perspective in a complex environment, one that can be applied to all forms of intercultural contact, the establishment of links between disciplines, and methodologically enhanced comparative approaches informed by a new view of cultural comparisons.”¹⁰⁸ It should be pointed out that we live in a globalized world and globalization does not have the same effects on all parts of the world. Consequently, the translation view should also include and “address the broad spectrum of cultural practices, institutions, as well as legal and administrative systems, viewing them as objects, units and actors in the translation of culture”.¹⁰⁹ For the example of the absence of women* in higher political positions, this means embracing differences and perceiving the individual situation of the Czech Republic. Only then can we see that for the Czech Republic the relation of women* and politics as well as their positions in politics is linked to social transformation. Therefore, a mix of established patterns and new features contrasts rather stable Western societies.¹¹⁰ Ralitsa Muharska comes to a similar analysis while dealing with the concept of identity in the ‘East’- ‘West’ feminist dialogue. She notes an ‘identity paradox’ for ‘Eastern’ Europe founded in a desire to be like the ‘West’, especially concerning economic advantages which European structures provide, on the one hand and the desire to finally express a genuine identity which was almost entirely suppressed during the Iron Curtain period on the other hand.¹¹¹ Due to this balancing act, Muharska describes the struggle of former socialist countries – often subsumed under the term *Eastern Europe* – as “a kind of schizophrenic stance, with manifestations like belligerent nationalisms and other monstrosities.”¹¹²

Both examples show a close connection between translation and location in a hegemonic structure. The connection between the translational turn and the spatial turn is advocated by

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 175–76.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Hana Havelková, “Transitory and Persistent Differences,” in *Transitions Environments Translations*, 56.

¹¹¹ Cf. Muharska, “Silences and Parodies in the East – West Feminist Dialogue,”: 36.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Bachmann-Medick. To counteract an inflationary use of the term *translation*, a “critical scholarly understanding of space”¹¹³ appears to be crucial. The binary postcolonial Eurocentric mapping of the world (center and periphery) needs to be questioned as well as its tool of legitimization: The practice of ‘Othering’. ‘Othering’ is a central concept in postcolonial studies, which, in the sense of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, positions the ‘Self’ in opposition to the ‘Other’. The arrangement is hierarchical and serves to legitimize the ‘Self’ as a higher value in relation to the ‘Other’.¹¹⁴ By questioning Eurocentrism and colonial methods of legitimization of power in the form of ‘Othering’, the theory of the spatial turn aims to shift from a policy defined by the spatial hegemony of imperialism to a policy emphasizing local cultural practice – starting from a discursive level the aim is to finally enter a pragmatic political level to be able to rely on a geographical basis.¹¹⁵

Transferred to the question of the political system – which must be considered as a question that arose within the context of the *MATILDA* programme – it can be observed in ‘Western’-oriented discourses how socialism and communism are portrayed as evil, bad and hostile to the own system: capitalism. Exemplarily, Larry Wolff mentions Winston Churchill’s famous adaptation of the notion *Iron Curtain* which, according to Wolff, mentally divided Europe in two sections: “Throughout the Cold War the iron curtain would be envisioned as a barrier of quarantine, separating the light of Christian civilization from whatever lurked in the shadows, and such a conception was all the more justification for not looking too closely at the lands behind.”¹¹⁶ Therefore, the political effects arising out of such narratives become perfectly vivid; Churchill’s argumentation is in line with Bachmann-Medick’s analysis of “the problematic practice of asserting power through acts of translation – e.g. by imperially defining as terror all forms of power deemed inimical to one’s own system.”¹¹⁷ This use of binary classifications and dichotomies directs the spotlight onto a problem that pervades the present work from the beginning: Dichotomies are often followed by stereotypes and result in misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Therefore, it is one of the challenges of translation theory to avoid dichotomies but emphasizing the reciprocity of transfers as well as the persistent practice of

¹¹³ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 203.

¹¹⁴ Cf.: Gayatri C. Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives,” *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 215.

¹¹⁶ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 1–2.

¹¹⁷ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 200.

Cf. e.g.: “‘89, that’s the Berlin Wall, that’s Wende. [...] That was the problem of Daskalova and Koleva [...] the academics of the East, in inverted commas, and to measure what totalitarian regimes could mean that prevented the circulation of individuals and knowledge.” (Schweitzer, pos. 139-142)

translation.¹¹⁸ If this is respected “translation reveals itself to be a cultural technique that is embedded in power and dependency relations as well as in discursive settings, e.g. Orientalism and colonialism”¹¹⁹. But not only the powerful position must be held accountable at this point: The misunderstanding of ‘East’ and ‘West’ is caused by both sides. Translation should neither be regarded as a one-way street, namely from ‘West’ to ‘East’, nor should the ‘East’ accept its (implemented) homogenization only in order to differentiate from the West by any means.¹²⁰ Moreover, Garstenauer makes an interesting observation regarding the perception of ‘Western’ women* scientists by ‘Eastern’ women* scientists. She describes the prejudices and dislikes that some Russian women* researchers (of their interview-based research) have towards ‘Western’ women* researchers: “American women, on the other hand, were not only described as unattractive, but also as unsuccessful - compared with Soviet women.”¹²¹ This points to another form of translation which manifests itself in mutual stereotypes – again legitimized by the practice of ‘othering’.

Consequently, locations must deal with external knowledge and prejudices towards local conditions in both directions (‘East’ and ‘West’). On top of that, the hegemonic status of ‘Western’ knowledge is still prevalent. Therefore, differences must be embraced without stereotyping cultures: If translation creates sensitivity to the practice of ‘Othering’ it should be able to overcome supposedly pure concepts such as *culture* or *identity* and finally become a threat to Eurocentric ideas and theories.¹²²

5.1.1.1 Women*’s and Gender History within *MATILDA*

When I first started my research, I expected a common space of knowledge based on the content of women*’s and gender history, only to realize after a short time that every interviewee, and therefore every location, has different definitions and understandings of the concept of the common space of knowledge. This is something the founders have equally experienced during the implementation process of the programme as demonstrated by Hämmerle: “In terms of content, of course I have often had the feeling that we have different concepts of what women’s

¹¹⁸ Cf. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 181.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 179. By mentioning orientalism and colonialism Bachmann Medick refers to Asad and Dixon, as well as Venuti: Cf.: Asad, Talal, and John Dixon, eds.: “Translating Europe’s Others.” *Europe and Its Others*. Ed. and Venuti, Lawrence: *The Scandals of Translation: Toward an Ethics of Difference*. London/New

¹²⁰ Cf. Hana Havelková, “Transitory and Persistent Differences,” in *Transitions Environments Translations*, 56.

¹²¹ Therese Garstenauer, *Russlandbezogene Gender Studies: Lokale, globale und transnationale Praxis*, 1st ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=5593531>, 201.

¹²² Cf. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 177.

and gender history is [...] and we have always tried to find the SMALLEST common denominator when it came to discussions about content.”¹²³ And further she states: “I had the illusion that we would agree on this: what are the standards, what are foundations in women’s and gender history. In other words, what should definitely be taught?”¹²⁴ Hämmerle confronts the idea of a common space of knowledge with the existing differences: For example, the foundations were bindingly laid down in the Consortium Agreement, but in a very general way, for example as *Foundations in Women*’s and Gender History*¹²⁵; the content details were not necessarily discussed among the members. So, for Vienna, Hämmerle knows the content of the introductory classes, for the other locations, she could not look so closely, she says.¹²⁶ Due to the rather precarious circumstances of the programme and the fact that there was no *MATILDA* curriculum that was unanimously agreed on¹²⁷, the content of the programme was very much dependent on the people and locations who constitute the programme – which affirms once again that for the sake of implementing the programme, the content depends on what the consortium locations could offer. For Lyon, Schweitzer reports that:

It took a couple of years until we were able to guarantee an appropriate curriculum for *MATILDA* – *Women’s and gender history*. And that was a very big difficulty, to develop [...]. So, there were spaces of COMMON courses [...] / there was a space of common knowledge as you say but [...] there were no norms / each teacher did sort of what he/she WANTED (...). I was an expert in labour history, so my focus was on women and gender and LABOUR. Marianne Thivend was an expert in education, so her focus was on women, gender and EDUCATION. And it was not at all the same thing in the other universities in the network. The content could have been women, gender and POLITICS; women, gender and sexuality. Each of them worked in their respective fields.¹²⁸

This proves that the content modules for *MATILDA* registered in the Consortium Agreement were agreed on by the founders, but they eventually had to work with what their locations and the *MATILDA* staff could offer and contribute to the programme.¹²⁹ Locational and personal

¹²³ Hämmerle, pos. 49.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pos. 59.

¹²⁵ *MATILDA* consortium, “Joint Programme Description for *MATILDA*: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008),” 7.

¹²⁶ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 57.

¹²⁷ Cf.: “We had experience at the CEU that it means a lot if there are people studying in one department who are in a completely different programme and are practically studying it [women’s and gender history] from a different perspective but are taking the same courses. It was clear to all of us that there would be hardly any resources to develop new courses.” (Susan Zimmermann, face-to-face interview, Vienna, 28.06.2019, pos. 30)

¹²⁸ Schweitzer, Pos. 54.

¹²⁹ Cf.: “We discussed these bullet points, sure, but it was more like an add-on discussion. It was clear: Each colleague wants to attract students according to her expertise; in addition, if a colleague is strongly post-structuralist, she will work in this framework, and if another one wants to make the connection between gender and class, or wants to focus on imperialism, she will do that [...] with her students. So for me, including the discussions that I have now briefly described, it was clear in the founding rounds that the programme will be the sum of its parts. No more and no less – and in this sense inclusive, but in no other sense.” (Zimmermann, pos. 20)

differences can be observed in the opinion that women*'s and gender history generally is not critical enough and that global inequalities are ignored.¹³⁰ Together the founders refer to entanglements or power relations¹³¹, which is also registered on the current websites of the different locations as part of the programme description:

MATILDA supports integrative perspectives which **go beyond local, regional, and national histories** in order to situate these histories, as well as European history as a whole, in broader contexts. With its focus on **comparative, entangled and transnational history**, *MATILDA* aims to explore the history of gender differences and similarities in European cultures and societies, investigate the role of gender in shaping European history, [and] challenge gender inequalities.¹³² [Emphasized by the author]

And still, this approach is confronted with what was actually done and taught like Zimmermann reports that many colleagues use the terms of *entanglements* or *interrelations* but that in practice most colleagues in the 'West' and also in the 'East' do not deal with these concepts.¹³³ Similarly, postcolonial theories are mentioned as part of the discussions during the implementation process of the programme¹³⁴ and are anchored within the programme description as well:

History of Nationalism and **Post-/Colonialism** and History of Post-/Socialism; History of Masculinities; History of Gender in the Sciences; History of Gender and Work; History of Gender and Education; Comparative History of Women's Movements, Women's Oral History, Gender and Religion; etc.¹³⁵ [Emphasized by the author]

In practice postcolonial theory is confronted with existing structures, which are usually preferred over the process of change as Harvey's statement shows in the following:

you suddenly got to then ADD the sort of DECOLONIZING elements. It makes the syllabus actually (...) quite difficult. [...] POLITICALLY, I think yes, you're right, global history and not just the history of the empires but history of the empires from the perspective of the colonized.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 60.

¹³¹ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 52.

¹³² Central European University, "MATILDA European Master in Women's and Gender History," <https://history.ceu.edu/matilda> (accessed August 3, 2020)

Cf. also: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" "European Master in Women's and Gender History," https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/the_university/faculties/faculty_of_philosophy/degree_programmes/master_s_degree_programmes/faculty_of_philosophy/cultural_studies/women_s_and_gender_history_matilda (accessed August 3, 2020)

And: Universität Wien, "Matilda - Schwerpunkt Frauen- Und Geschlechtergeschichte," <https://matilda-european-master.univie.ac.at/home/> (accessed August 3, 2020).

¹³³ Cf.: "Connections, entanglements, interrelations: these are concepts, terms many colleagues use today, but the inequality that has shaped the historical relations between East and West? I would say: Many see and know about this ongoing problem, but they don't make it part of their work in any substance. In other words: in theory: yes, this is relevant; in practice: most colleagues in the West and many in the East don't deal with it." (Zimmermann, pos. 20)

¹³⁴ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 39.

¹³⁵ Universität Wien, "Matilda - Schwerpunkt Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte,"

You know, that is DEFINITELY the sort of IDEAL I think that one is trying to achieve. But not necessarily always easy to realize.¹³⁶

Moreover, there are different focuses at the different locations. Like Hämmerle states a focus on biographical research in Bulgaria compared to Austria and emphasizes different traditions of the evolution of women*’s and gender history.¹³⁷ So, the French curriculum is very focused on social history and historical methods like archival work as Schweitzer states:

“[I]n Lyon, there’s a very special historical approach where even master’s students must work on archives / [...]. We’re not going to do master theses for students / at least ME / by going to look at newspapers for example, or literature; that is discourse. We don’t make students write MA theses on DISCOURSES. We do MA theses on real archives [...] with files, with a specific, reduced topic, but where students are obliged to go to the archives because it’s part of the [historical] formation. And we were the only ones to do so.”¹³⁸

The statement indirectly opens a debate on respected methods such as archival work versus less renowned methods such as studying discourses – which by the way is a very important approach for postcolonial studies. Dobrochna Kałwa, for example, is concerned with precisely this methodological closedness as she questions the strict separation of “the historical reconstruction of events and the memory of a personal experience.”¹³⁹ Kałwa claims to be more open to a coexistence of the two perspectives — the experimental and the cognitive – as this approach

“touches upon the significant issue of the influence of historians’ memory and, in a wider perspective, their cultural background in the form of the studies of recent history, as well as the question of the sense of their faith in maintaining transcendence and objectivism with regard to the subject of the research.”¹⁴⁰

In Bulgaria the oral history method plays an important role. The value of oral history as a source is known to be that it gives a voice to marginalized and underprivileged classes of society. For former socialist states, the method also has the potential to uncover a supposed homogeneity and to point out differences, as already called for above by Havelková. Daskalova underlines the importance of the method for Bulgaria and countries with a state socialist past because it

¹³⁶ Harvey, pos. 95.

¹³⁷ Cf.: “In Bulgaria, for example, it always seemed to me that biographical research is much more important than in [...] [Austria] not only because Daniela Koleva is an expert in this field / or the history of the second women’s movement has a higher priority. Also, the different traditions [...] of the evolution of women’s, gender history”, (Hämmerle, pos. 55)

¹³⁸ Schweitzer, pos. 88.

¹³⁹ Dobrochna Kalwa, “The Split Identity. The Role of a Historian’s Autobiographical Memory in the Research of Contemporary History.,” in *From mentalités to anthropological history: Theory and methods*, ed. Barbara Klich-Kluczevska and Dobrochna Kalwa, 13–32 (2012), 13.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

gives information about how people live and felt contrary to official documents which preserve actual institutional history:

ESPECIALLY when we take into consideration that women's and gender history was not developed during the communist time and that the field of recent history is predominantly MALE-oriented. In the major institutions for the production of historical knowledge in this country women's and gender history is REALLY very vaguely presented.¹⁴¹

Julia Obertreis und Anke Stephan offer further insight into the connection between oral history and (post)socialist countries.¹⁴² The contributions of the author's anthology are based on qualitative interviews focused on different historical periods, but all of them are anchored in the present time of postsocialist countries. As a collective result, it is concluded that the oral history method is very suitable for "exploring the inner life of socialist societies and dictatorships in general"¹⁴³. This is illustrated particularly vividly in Dorothee Wierling's commentary on the study of everyday life under state socialism and Alexander von Plato's research on political system schisms in the context of East and West Germany; in the latter, Plato examined the question of how to investigate earlier attitudes and orientations, reorientations and their reasons, and the biographical breaches associated with them. In her review of the superordinate anthology, Christiane Lahusen points to the special tension between these schisms, "when several systems are involved that are processed in the life story narrative."¹⁴⁴ According to Lahusen, Plato thus refers to the spiritual heritage of Ernst Bloch and his thesis of *non-simultaneity* which states that life-historical breaches are usually preceded by schisms in the system.¹⁴⁵ Sarah Scholl-Schneider, in her review of the anthology, does not only emphasize the value of oral history as a source for postsocialist societies, but emphasizes the potential of interviews to make the socialist experience pronounceable and thus integrate it

¹⁴¹ Daskalova, pos. 13.

Furthermore Daskalova states: "Oral history is a very important methodology for studying recent past and for COUNTRIES which have a state socialist past. This is especially important, because we cannot rely on the official documents which preserve actually institutional history and do not say a LOT about how people LIVED, how people felt [...]", (Ibid.)

¹⁴² Cf. Julia Obertreis and Anke Stephan, *Erinnerungen Nach Der Wende: Oral History Und (Post)Sozialistische Gesellschaften = Remembering After the Fall of Communism*, 1. Aufl. (Essen: Klartext, 2009), <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2009-4-103>.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴⁴ Christiane Lahusen, "Rezension Zu: Obertreis, Julia; Stephan, Anke (Hrsg.): *Erinnerungen Nach Der Wende / Remembering After the Fall of Communism. Oral History Und (Post)Sozialistische Gesellschaften / Oral History and (Post-)Socialist Societies.*", <https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-11914> (accessed April 30, 2020).

¹⁴⁵ Cf.: Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, Zürich 1935, quoted after: *ibid.*

into the collective memory. This allows us to complement one-sided narratives such as a romantic nostalgia for the ‘East’ on the one hand, or a pure demonization of it on the other.¹⁴⁶

Consequently, cultural, local and time-based factors play an important role concerning the elaboration of different methods. There are differences on the content level of women*’s and gender history due to personal preferences and/ or national knowledge and traditions. Through wrong translations, these differences often become hierarchical due to established power relations (cf. archival work vs. studying discourses). Moreover, the comparison of determined methods and contents by the consortium in the programme description with statements of the founders demonstrate deviations in the practice.

5.1.1.2 Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity

In the following I will examine two examples of intercultural collaboration with its characteristic translation processes. In this section I will focus on the different departments of institutionalization of the programme at the respective locations. The latter is accompanied by the question of a single-disciplinary approach to the field of women*’s and gender history or an interdisciplinary approach. In the following section gender will serve as one example of translational theory.

The table below shows how *MATILDA* is anchored in the respective departments of the locations at the time of the programme implementation.¹⁴⁷ It is noticeable that the ‘Western’ universities strongly stick to the anchoring of *MATILDA* to the history department, while in Hungary *MATILDA* is institutionalized within the department of history and gender studies and Bulgaria anchored the programme to cultural studies.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Sarah Scholl-Schneider, “Rezension Zu: Obertreis, Julia/Stephan, Anke (Hgg.): Erinnerungen Nach Der Wende. Oral History Und (Post)Sozialistische Gesellschaften/Remembering After the Fall of Communism. Oral History and (Post-)Socialist Societies: Rezensionen,” *Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder*, Bd. 50 Nr. 2 (2010): 452, <https://www.bohemia-online.de/index.php/bohemia/article/view/7594/11711> (accessed April 30, 2020).

¹⁴⁷ The assignment of the departments shown above corresponds to the first curriculum of *MATILDA*, i.e. the main study period of the present paper; today, the conditions are mostly the same, only Lyon attached the *MATILDA* programme to the gender studies programme four years ago and in Vienna, *MATILDA* has been integrated in the regular history master programme since 2017. (Cf. Universität Wien, “Matilda - Schwerpunkt Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte.”)

| Institutions | History | Gender studies | Cultural studies | Other (Political science; Development studies etc.) |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| University of Vienna | X | * | * | * |
| University of Lyon | X | | | |
| University of Nottingham | X | | | |
| Institutions | History | Gender studies | Cultural studies | Other (Political science; Development studies etc.) |
| University of Budapest | X | X | | |
| University of Sofia | | | X | |

Table 1: Institutionalization of *MATILDA* in Respective Countries

Legend: X = department where *MATILDA* is institutionalized

* = department of which students are allowed to choose classes from

Whereas history is characterized single-disciplinary, gender studies and cultural studies both pursue an interdisciplinary approach. This differentiation in the approaches of the respective departments seems to have an impact on the content of *MATILDA* at the respective locations. Notably the founders of Budapest and Sofia advocate an interdisciplinary approach for the programme, whereas the founders of Vienna, Lyon and Nottingham emphasize the importance of a purely historical approach. In the following, I collected statements concerning different opinions on sticking to the discipline of history on the one hand and an interdisciplinary approach on the other hand.

One reason to apply a purely historical approach for the programme, lies in the fact that applicants for *MATILDA* could be foreign to the discipline of history. As an undergraduate degree in history is not required for the application, students could have an undergraduate degree in literature or sociology. So, parts of the consortium feared that those students would lack the basis of the programme and therefore insisted on a strictly historical education for *MATILDA* students.¹⁴⁸ A purely historical approach sometimes leads to the fact that like in Lyon the programme offers broad historical content at the price of lacking the relation to women* and/ or gender issues in some classes. The latter is confirmed by Schweitzer who refers to changes within the curriculum of *MATILDA* in Lyon: Whereas the programme initially was attached to the history department and the focus was on historical issues, it has been linked to *ÉGALE*– an interdisciplinary Gender Studies M.A. programme – for the past four years.¹⁴⁹ According to Schweitzer, only then Lyon could offer *MATILDA* students to do a master’s degree entirely based on classes dealing with women*’s and gender issues.¹⁵⁰ This raises the question whether gender is understood as a central research perspective in historiography or rather as a branch of it; i.e. the idea of contributing a gendered perspective to a European history.

Another reason to keep *MATILDA* in the discipline of history is rather personal: as all of the founders are historians, they did not want to leave their ‘comfort zone’ – loosely put.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Cf.: “We weren’t interdisciplinary [...] Because / [...] As we REALLY do the historical methodology [...] for the master’s students [...] when we received students who came from literature, or geography or [...] SOCIOLOGY. You have NO BASIS of historical and retrospective methodology. [...] So, we were strictly HISTORY.” (Schweitzer, pos. 198)

And cf.: “I think it was a consensus that it was IMPORTANT to emphasize that this was not a women’s studies (...) programme. It was a women’s HISTORY programme and therefore it was important to be quite specific about methodological foundations. It was important to have (...) a sort of dual track: Methodological foundation that would include both specific elements of women’s and gender history but ALSO (...) broader historiographical foundations. So that students, whether they were in Vienna or in Nottingham would gain a sort of advanced / you know a propriate masters level / understanding of historiographical methodologies / and I think that was particularly important because we did ANTICIPATE with some students might come to the programme not actually having had an undergraduate degree in HISTORY.” (Harvey, pos. 24)

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Schweitzer, pos. 198.

¹⁵⁰ Cf.: “And TODAY, students who are in the *MATILDA* programme are able to choose courses from the curriculum of *ÉGALE*. This was not [administratively] possible before. [...] So, today it is possible to do a master’s degree entirely based on courses dealing with women’s and gender issues.” (Ibid, pos. 204)

¹⁵¹ “I suppose, we all feel ourselves to be HISTORIANS and that’s where we are most comfortable, and we feel our expertise lies. [O]bviously I’m [...] happy to read political science and sociology and literature studies and cultural studies and all the rest as part of my intellectual [...] investigations but I do feel that our COMMON GROUND is historical methodology, [...] the application of critical research questions to a LARGE body of DEFINETLY historical sources and that to us was where we all wanted to be. And women’s studies for us is obviously [...] a much broader field that is deliberately interdisciplinary that encourages people to be perhaps more present focused in their / I mean they’d have the elements of history but I think the [...] research inquiry in women’s studies does intent to be more present focused and contemporary in its orientation. And history is so to speak the background to the present and for us history is the MAIN point.” (Harvey, pos. 32)

As another reason, Harvey mentions the need to differentiate from other joint degree programmes. Therefore, the position of *MATILDA* in the historical field serves in demarcation to existing (interdisciplinary) programmes of women*'s and gender studies like *GEMMA* or *EGALES*.

The understanding of women*'s and gender history for the founder of Sofia is of interdisciplinary nature.¹⁵² In Sofia, Daskalova reports, classes are taught by philosophers, sociologists and literary scholars: "I think that there are people from different fields working on these gender aspects and it's much better and COMPLETE to have different approaches towards these gender issues of the past. So that is why we try to include the best researchers and teachers into our programme."¹⁵³ Moreover, both founders of Sofia and Budapest highlight another advantage of an interdisciplinary approach for their locations. In Sofia and Budapest, women*'s and gender history is more likely to be defined as a branch of historiography than a central research perspective within historiography, because gender is still not considered a central perspective within the history departments in both countries. Therefore, the interdisciplinary character of *MATILDA* appears favorable in order to apply a gendered research perspective that leads through the entire course of study. Moreover, Daskalova stresses on the positive effects *MATILDA* caused for the history department by not being institutionalized at the history department: By introducing some classes related to women*'s and gender history the established ideas within the department about what history is, namely political, diplomatic, religious and economic history, but certainly not women*'s and gender history, are challenged.¹⁵⁴

So, in Sofia *MATILDA* classes seem to have an emancipatory impact on mainstream historiography by introducing gender perspectives to the broader field of history. In Budapest, where *MATILDA* is embedded in the history and the gender studies department, Zimmermann reports a similar outcome for the history department, where *MATILDA* managed to integrate gender history more firmly.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² "I think that by its very nature women's and gender history is interdisciplinary. But this being part of the department of philosophy and social sciences: Yes, we have courses which are taught by philosophers, sociologists and literary scholars. So it is interdisciplinary. But I DON'T think that the affiliation to the faculty of philosophy gives this a more interdisciplinary aspect. Although probably maybe right if we were attached to history department, they would have been much more reluctant to include this kind of interdisciplinarity, YES." (Daskalova, pos. 39)

¹⁵³ Ibid., pos. 43.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid., pos. 71.

¹⁵⁵ Cf.: "Not against active resistance, but against active disinterest, *MATILDA* has contributed to anchoring gender history in the History Department, I would say. Of course, this development is far from being related to *MATILDA*

Generally, for the ‘CESEE’ area, interdisciplinarity within *MATILDA* seems important, mainly because historiography used to be, and partly still is, very conservative and therefore less open to women*’s and gender perspectives within the field. So, the possibility to use other disciplines seems crucial to do such a programme as *MATILDA* on the one hand, and to enter a gendered perspective to the history department on the other. Moreover, Zimmermann emphasizes another advantage resulting from this interdisciplinarity in Sofia and Budapest, namely the fact that incoming students, especially from the ‘core’ locations, were confronted with history from the ‘semiperiphery’. So, even if classes from the history department sometimes lack of gendered perspectives they serve at least in an emancipatory way as the history department in Budapest teaches Eastern European history to ‘core’ students.¹⁵⁶

In this argumentation the institution of Vienna can be considered a case in-between which shows in Hämmerle’s following statement; the founder seems disappointed that *MATILDA* actually was not purely historical at every location – including Vienna where students can, and are supposed to, choose from other departments than history, too – and at the same time she acknowledges advantages concerning the students’ perspectives. She notes that it might be interesting for them to be not only in their own network and historical thought patterns, but also to think more about the points of contact between social sciences and gender studies.¹⁵⁷ In Vienna the programme is strongly gender focused; although the programme is entrenched within the department of history, the students are allowed and even supposed to choose from other disciplines, especially the discipline of gender studies.¹⁵⁸ Concerning the courses of the programme in Vienna, Hämmerle applies the notions of a *wealthy* and *diverse* selection.¹⁵⁹ Generally, gender is integrated as a central research perspective within historiography in Vienna. Compared to Sofia and Budapest, Hämmerle and Harvey indicate partly insufficient gender affinity in mainstream historiography – as examples they mention political history or military history – but emphasize a high sensitivity for gender in their history departments in

alone. Time has passed, gender history has been ‘normalized’ in many places around the world, and in the History Department a number of colleagues are more open to include gender as one relevant perspective. Still, *MATILDA* has contributed to anchoring Gender History more firmly in the History Department. This is definitely the case.” (Zimmermann, pos. 138)

¹⁵⁶ Cf.: “it was good that they institutionally were attached to the History Department too, where, among other things, Eastern European history is taught (laughs) in its purest form. In other words, in the History Department *MATILDA* students get an excellent education in history with a focus on Eastern Europe, and this definitely is a good and important thing, whatever limitations we face here with regard to the gender perspective.” (Ibid., pos. 88)

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 53.

¹⁵⁸ This is true for the first curriculum which was valuable until 2017.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 51; 183.

general. Moreover, both name a general increase of qualified gender historians at their institutions.¹⁶⁰

In general, the interviewed founders of Nottingham, Vienna and Lyon rate the programme's attachment to the discipline of history at their locations as positive and inherent to women*'s and gender history. Also due to their own expertise in the historical field, where they feel "most comfortable"¹⁶¹. A second reason for sticking to the historical discipline is due to the need to differentiate from already existing programmes by adding a unique selling point – a common pattern in the neoliberal economy in order to remain competitive and therefore corresponds with do Mar Pereira's 'academic culture of performativity'. A strict assignment to the historical discipline is opposed to the interdisciplinary approach of the interviewed founders of Budapest and Sofia. Within this discussion, hegemonial patterns become evident: While the integration into the history department is described as 'adequate' and part of the general expertise by 'Western' researchers, other disciplines appear out of the 'core-expertise' which contains the hidden assumption that disciplines foreign to historiography cannot provide the same quality for the programme. This is in line with Hämmerle's statement concerning the content of *MATILDA* when she confronts her illusions from the beginning that the consortium would agree on certain standards or the content of the foundations in women*'s and gender history.¹⁶² Because one could ask the question who defines what these standards or essential contents are and probably would come back to the continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery' with the 'core' holding the power of decision. The interdisciplinary approach of Sofia and Budapest could be highlighted in a positive way for various reasons by the whole consortium, but it is not.

In conclusion, it can be said that there are basically two different understandings of science behind this: Firstly, a monodisciplinary approach to a field and secondly transdisciplinary differentiations and expansions to a field. With regard to research on epistemic violence,

¹⁶⁰ Cf.: "There are MORE and more colleagues who teach [...] [women's and gender history]. Of course, there is still mainstream historiography that does NOT work with the category of gender, as can be seen in political history, war history, etc. But at the University of VIENNA this has a high acceptance. I think." (Hämmerle, 199)
And cf. Harvey, pos. 71.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pos. 32.

¹⁶² Cf.: "I had the illusion that we would agree on this: what are the standards, what are foundations in women's and gender history. In other words, what should definitely be taught? [...] for example about history / I don't know, European feminisms, the history of the first, the second women's movement, concepts of women's and gender history, of entangled history [...], about oral history. And all that eventually was quite different and there was really only this minimal consensus." (Hämmerle, pos. 59)

Claudia Brunner contrasts these two approaches.¹⁶³ With the second approach, she opens up to a broad understanding of violence and thus explicitly speaks out against closed definitions. This openness makes the approach vulnerable to criticism. Brunner does not, however, interpret this surface of attack in a negative way, but rather sees potential in it. In the sense of postcolonial and decolonial theories she claims the need for critical scholarship “which must participate in these conflicts with its resources, privileges and open spaces, while at the same time admitting that it itself is deeply entangled in the coloniality of power, knowledge and being and is therefore only conditionally suited to leave it behind.”¹⁶⁴ Especially in the sense of postcolonial and decolonial theory, hegemonic knowledge systems must be opened, questioned and, if necessary, transformed. The adherence to certain structures such as the strict positioning of *MATILDA* in history must be considered in the respective context, as the example of the conservative history department in Sofia shows. Also, the evaluation of methods that follow hegemonic patterns, such as the upgrading of archival work vs. studying discourses, must therefore be considered with caution. After all, in the sense of postcolonial and decolonial theory, it is very important to question and change what is considered to be established, to work in an interdisciplinary way, to make oneself vulnerable through transparency and, if necessary, to be uncomfortable.¹⁶⁵ Finally, Brunner aptly uses the expression of “UnDoing Epistemic Violence”¹⁶⁶ which is in line with decolonial claims of UnDoing coloniality within academia, i.e. decolonizing academia.

5.1.1.3 Translational Theory: The Example of Gender

The question of mutual understanding was heralded by the previous chapter. How common concepts are applied and whether a common scientific language is possible or whether a gap remains will be examined in the following using the example of gender and different statements on the concept by the founders. From the statements below it seems that there was a mutual understanding of what gender meant among all the consortium members, or at least that understanding the concept was not declared a problem by them. However, the examples also clearly show differences, such as the acceptance of the concept at the different locations.

¹⁶³ Cf. Claudia Brunner, *Epistemische Gewalt: Wissen und Herrschaft in der kolonialen Moderne*, Edition Politik 96 (Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2020), 26.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁶⁵ This contrasts for example with Harvey’s statement concerning the need for *MATILDA* to be anchored in history: “I suppose, we all feel ourselves to be HISTORIANS and **that’s where we are most comfortable**, and we feel our expertise lies”, Harvey, Pos. 32 [Emphasized by the author].

¹⁶⁶ Brunner, *Epistemische Gewalt*, 299.

Hämmerle: “Of course, there is still mainstream historiography that does NOT work with the category of gender, as can be seen in political history, war history, etc. But at the University of VIENNA this has a high acceptance. I think.”¹⁶⁷

Harvey: “And I think those [administrational questions] were MORE difficult than reaching a consensus about what women’s history is or what gender history is.”¹⁶⁸

Schweitzer: “And in LYON (...) so in France it was a very long story, [...] historians have resisted to gender a lot. The discussion was interminable. I’m old enough to have seen them [...] When we did *MATILDA*, I think the problem of ‘gender’ was solved. We reasoned in ‘gender’. I would say.”¹⁶⁹

Daskalova: “And when I oriented my interest towards women’s and gender HISTORY, happened only at 1989 when I was actually for a short visit at École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris and I found there in the library the four volumes of [...] *History of Women in the West* [...] So after that READING at École des hautes études I decided that this is the history I would like to do, and I started to work in this direction.”¹⁷⁰

[...]

“Probably you have heard about the discussions around the Istanbul convention in Bulgaria and that the government, all ruling parties are really very much against the gender research without even knowing what it is all about. They just misinterpret and use the term gender in a very unproper and unclear way to manipulate the public opinion that gender is something wrong, something that’s jeopardizing Bulgaria’s traditional values [...] gender is something that is misinterpreted here and misused and this reflects the image of the field as well.”¹⁷¹

As pointed out by Harvey the content-level of the programme was the level that was most likely to be restricted as this was less formally binding for the EU funding than certain administrative issues. But what are the effects of such restrictions? In presenting the concept of gender as something already fought for and secured (cf. Schweitzer) and by making the appearance that all members of the five different locations would have a common understanding of the concept, the power structures within the consortium are blinded. The awareness of different starting points is important in order to set appropriate goals. And to refer to Mohanty again: “The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings

¹⁶⁷ Hämmerle, Pos. 199.

¹⁶⁸ Harvey, Pos. 55.

¹⁶⁹ Schweitzer, Pos. 86.

¹⁷⁰ Daskalova, Pos. 5.

¹⁷¹ Daskalova, Pos. 19.

better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully.”¹⁷²

One peculiarity of the theorem already stands out, namely the primary use of the English term *gender* – also showing for my interview partners with whom I spoke in German or French and who still applied the term in English. In the German context, it is common to apply English notions which becomes visible in the fact that there is no German translation for gender studies for example. Interestingly, there are languages, including the Russian language, which do not differentiate between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ – which makes it very difficult to use one’s own language for certain theories. Following her elaboration, Elena Gapova criticises that the fact of reasoning in terms of gender only by using the English language causes an “absence of ‘local’ (east-European) scholars from this intellectual debate.”¹⁷³

Moreover, according to Gapova the notion was firstly transliterated into Russian in the early 1990’s before it was introduced into the languages of other countries of the former Soviet Union. In this context, Gapova emphasizes to the class-issue as gender was mostly introduced to the elites. The introduction of gender by a group of privileged women* – contrary to the women* most oppressed in those societies – “implied incorporating ideas and theories produced within a certain social reality into a different social and political context.”¹⁷⁴ Gapova stresses to the interests behind such an ‘import’ which should be recognized while examining gender in ‘Eastern’ Europe.

We should be very careful when referring to identity concepts, for example *gender*, because of the fact that “identity is always infused with the *other*.”¹⁷⁵ As a ‘Western’ theorem, it fits into the reading of a one-sided transfer of knowledge from ‘West’ to ‘East’, where it is likewise assumed that the transferred knowledge must be applied unchanged or merely added to existing circumstances, in the sense of ‘completing’ local experiences, stories, etc. In other words: gender often is misused as a ‘Doing West’ in semiperipheral and peripheral areas. The image of a one-way-street of knowledge transfer from ‘West’ to ‘East’ is visualized by the renowned gender historian Joan Scott: She criticizes her ‘Western’ colleagues for their little sensitivity regarding the political and intellectual histories of the ‘East’. Therefore, their intention “to rush to the aid of their sisters in 1990, offering them a feminism they were presumed not to have had

¹⁷² Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited,”: 505.

¹⁷³ Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there*, 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 181.

and would now need, a feminism taken to be universal”¹⁷⁶ is revealed historically and culturally insensitive, and paternalistic. By reference to an example from the field of structuralism, Scott shows the complexity of transfer processes: Julia Kristeva is “often referred to as a ‘French feminist theorist’ but [...] began her career in Bulgaria as an interpreter of Bakhtin.”¹⁷⁷ Translational theory points to historical inaccuracy, which is represented and reproduced in mainstream discourse: Whether it is the mentioned case of speaking of ‘French theorists’ when it is actually about researchers who learned, taught and did their research in the ‘East’, then moved to ‘Western’ countries and shared their knowledge – or in the case of assumptions like knowledge could simply be adapted to given knowledge and circumstances. The latter is clearly deconstructed in the debate of the use of the term ‘gender’, a ‘Western’ import transferred and used differently in the ‘East’. Bachmann-Medick emphasizes the importance of the translation approach for a transnationalization of gender research: “Reading gender as a form of translation sheds light on the complex processes by which sexual difference is constructed while also providing new incentive to overcome the dilemma of the global transferability of Western-influenced gender discourses.”¹⁷⁸ In this context, ‘Western’ voices often complain about a certain “‘blindness’ to gender inequality”¹⁷⁹ in the ‘East’ which they try to explain with the “difference of an intellectual tradition, or absences in the tradition of civic organizing, or lack of resources per se”¹⁸⁰.

Pointing out local individualities, Elena Gapova purports that a concept or term must always be read in its context: in the “current social process in the region”¹⁸¹. She gives the example of the Soviet Union, which had to deal with other issues than the ‘West’, when the academical field of women*’s and gender history became a center of political, academical, and institutional interest at the end of 1980s and the early 1990s: In the ‘West’ the birth of ‘third wave’ feminism was mostly about weakening the class structure as it became less rigid through the redistribution of the access to resources for some social groups.¹⁸² On the other hand, the postsocialist context in the former Soviet Union was about keeping class-division up, mostly through economic inequality. So, what women* in the former Soviet Union experienced as most threatful for their own lives, but also for the lives of men*in their countries, was more about class-division than

¹⁷⁶ Scott, “Fictitious Unities. "Gender," "East," and "West",”.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 198.

¹⁷⁹ Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*

gender inequality.¹⁸³ Gapova shows two different points of departure which also mirror “the complex processes by which sexual difference is constructed,”¹⁸⁴ of which Bachmann-Medick speaks above: They might pursue similar objectives but the conditions and therefore their agency, needs and strategies are somehow even contrary to each other.

In conclusion, gender has more than one meaning and needs to be read in the context where it is applied. It would not be in its nature to use only one definition of the concept and much less if this definition is linked to maintaining power (continuum of core-semiperiphery-periphery) instead of creating equality. It is not about making inequalities and differences invisible, but of naming and contextualizing them to finally make power structures visible and solve them accordingly.

5.2 (Perceived) Inequalities

The core of inequality within academia is described by Marina Blagojevic and actually leads us once again back to the concept of ‘Doing’: Excellent science is done and lived by the ‘core’ areas.

At present, [...] different locations on this continuum [core - semiperiphery - periphery] largely determine what could be given the attribute of excellence, what could be recognized as excellent, and by whom. Excellence in science thus appears to be very context-dependent, but within the powerful configuration of the continuum.¹⁸⁵

This continuum also builds the basis of a discourse which places ‘Western’ European standards over ‘Eastern’ European standards – a narrative which roots in colonialism and therefore has been consolidated and shaped structures for decades. Blagojevic impressively analyses the power relations of this three-part continuum: According to her, the concept of ‘semiperiphery’ represents a “useful epistemological tool”¹⁸⁶ as it reveals the dynamics quite specific to both the core and periphery. Whereas the core has already achieved its status of ‘modernisation’, the semiperiphery and the periphery are devaluated by the core as slow within the process of ‘modernisation’ and therefore still placed at the beginning or in the middle of this process in which ‘modernisation’ represents the final goal. Semiperipheral countries are likewise referred to as a one homogenous whole, and being former industrialized societies not different enough to the core, which contrary is not the case for peripheral countries.¹⁸⁷ As a consequence of

¹⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*.

¹⁸⁵ Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 78.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

this discourse of ‘modernity’ as the final goal, discrepancies are caused between scientific discourses and social realities. Whereas within the peripheral context this discrepancy “was exposed to much of the criticism of postcolonial theories”¹⁸⁸, criticism in the semiperiphery was rather absent. Blagojevic gives two reasons for this: Firstly, the ‘desire for the West’ on a political level and secondly, a lack of own knowledge production due to financial dependency to the ‘West’ in terms of funding on an epistemological level. Consequently, Blagojevic describes doing social sciences at the semiperiphery metaphorically as a “laboratory without a roof”¹⁸⁹ and questions the meaning of ‘scientific excellence’.¹⁹⁰

Concerning the evaluation of inequalities within *MATILDA*, I would like to keep this analysis of power relations in mind. On a meta-level, I would like to differentiate between material inequality and inequality on a discursive level – both located on the abovementioned continuum of core - semiperiphery - periphery. Both, material and discursive inequality cannot be separately considered, as they are mutually dependent and often intertwine. Moreover, I differentiate between directly and indirectly addressed inequalities by the interviewees and therefore refer to (*perceived*) *inequalities*. Directly addressed inequalities can emerge in a statement regarding their own institution, e.g. from an intern perspective. Other inequalities appear more indirect in statements about the partner locations, e.g. from an extern perspective.

In terms of directly mentioned inequality, two institutions must be highlighted: Sofia and Nottingham, because they are the only two that speak directly of themselves as disadvantaged in one way or another, compared to the other consortium members. In the case of material inequality, Bulgaria is mentioned above all. Both, Daskalova herself and the consortium partners, are aware of the fact that Sofia is “really struggling to survive”¹⁹¹. It showed for example in the rates the EU payed for travel expenses which were made dependent on the locations: “this lower evaluation by the colleagues from Sofia was DIFFICULT. That also provoked PROTEST, but we couldn’t do anything then, because these were simply the guidelines,”¹⁹² Hämmerle reports. Daskalova emphasizes the economical difference between ‘Western’ European countries and her own country. Furthermore, she stresses on the difference

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 81.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 82.

¹⁹¹ Daskalova, pos. 85.

Cf. also: “My expectations regarding the programme is to try to keep it ALIVE! To GO ON. So, I don’t have really a lot of expectations, taking into consideration the academic and economic and everyday context in the country, which is disastrous. So, we survive still, which is GOOD. I don’t have many expectations. Just minimal in order to go on.”(Ibid. pos. 69)

¹⁹² Hämmerle, pos. 49.

between Sofia's university and the CEU: Because although residing in 'CESEE' area, the CEU enjoys the status of a private university. With Daskalova's comparison of the St. Kliment Ohridski university and the CEU, the complex relation of the consortium locations shows once again: Daskalova relates her own institution to the CEU as they both reside in 'CESEE' region as opposed to Nottingham, Lyon and Vienna. But, at the same time, the CEU is linked to the US – financially and in terms of reputation, which privileges the CEU compared to the St. Kliment Ohridski university; and positions the CEU much more on the side of the 'Westerners' than on a par with Sofia.¹⁹³

A poor economic situation facilitates hostile discourses which becomes present within Sofia's university libraries: Daskalova describes the stock of literature on women*'s and gender history in Sofia's library as "limited"¹⁹⁴ compared to the libraries of the partner universities and even refers to it as a 'vicious circle' as the demand is not high enough for the library to order these publications and therefore, the interest in this literature can hardly be promoted.¹⁹⁵ Being part of editorial boards of international journals like *Aspasia*, *L'Homme* or *Clio* allows to secure the subscription to Sofia's library – but only temporally as long as Daskalova is part of these editorial boards. Furthermore, the (international) location of reference journals also plays a role, as in the example of *Aspasia*, published by the renowned US-American scientific publisher Berghahn Books. Daskalova describes these and other joint projects, especially together with the CEU – the status of this institution has already been extensively discussed– as "important project[s] to develop and to ENCOURAGE the development of women*'s and gender history in the region."¹⁹⁶ The unequal conditions that prevail in the libraries, which should actually be places of accessible knowledge, of the respective locations show one thing quite clearly: the

¹⁹³ Cf.: "Because even in Central European University, they are a private university, they have much more funds than we do / so it's really very hard for our part of the programme in Sofia to survive, COMPARED TO other partner universities from the *MATILDA* consortium." (Daskalova, pos. 85)

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 89.

¹⁹⁵ Cf.: "We do not have this kind of journals, publications, secured by our system of subscription. So our libraries do not possess all the varieties of publications related to women's and gender history in English, French and German. For example, I was part and I am still part of the *Aspasia* team and I get *Aspasia* issues, and my library has it because of ME. But then afterwards, what will happen? After I'm not anymore part of the editorial / part of this journal? So I was part of the editorial board of *L'Homme* [...] AND up until I was part of this editorial board, we GOT the volumes of this periodical but then it stopped. [...] And this is related to the lack of funds, BUT also the lack of the willingness of those people who are in charge of the library institutions (university libraries as well) to subscribe for this kind of publications. And you can imagine because we have such a limited number of students, that they are easily / [...] they CHOOSE not to subscribe because they say that there is not a lot of interest in these subjects. But AGAIN, in order to PROMOTE the interest, you have to have the publications. So, it's a **vicious circle** actually."¹⁹⁵ [Emphasized by the author] (*Ibid.*, pos. 91)

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pos. 5.

nexus of (access to) knowledge and power. Who manages the discourse, who has access to the materials, and who fights the lack of access?

This leads us to the topic of access to funding; therefore one situation seems crucial in the *MATILDA* network, namely the decision of the consortium against the Erasmus Mundus programme. To come straight to the point, the application for Erasmus Mundus funding would have meant an immense extra effort for the already overstretched teaching staff and the founders who participate in such a joint degree programme¹⁹⁷, and it was not even clear whether they would have been able to meet the conditions for funding at all. Yet, it must be said that by deciding against the scholarship programme, the decision was also made against those who depend on the funding.

Note that this decision against Erasmus Mundus was not only a decision against Sofia with its poor economic situation but also against a well-off ‘Western’ city like Nottingham. Due to Harvey there was a “fundamental (...) MISMATCH between the UK’s framework and the other universities”¹⁹⁸ as the two-year master is a norm in all locations but in the UK, where arts and humanities master programmes are practically always one year. So they count 90 ECTS instead of 120 and the master’s dissertation is shorter. The deviation from the British standard form within the *MATILDA* consortium led to an economic problem for the British students to which the university of Nottingham did not want to accommodate¹⁹⁹ and ultimately led to their withdrawal from the *MATILDA* programme. Both, the discrepancy in Nottingham’s university system led by a neoliberal discourse based on compressed MA programmes – compared to the other locations²⁰⁰ –, and the generally poor economic situation in Sofia could have been improved or even resolved by applying for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship programme.

In terms of material inequality, it also should be mentioned that materially well-off locations have much more opportunities to make the programme more attractive and win students for *MATILDA*. For example, through advertising the programme, such as at the University of

¹⁹⁷ Cf.: “Yes, but of course it was an extra task [...] Just as the whole Erasmus is an extra effort for the teachers [...], primarily in the function of a university teacher.” (Schmidt-Dengler, pos. 174)

¹⁹⁸ Harvey, pos. 36.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Ibid., pos. 85.

²⁰⁰ Cf.: “I mean our masters programmes were constantly under revision and review. It was CONSTANTLY a question of what was viable and what’s non-viable. How many students are a minimum to run a course and it actually was good for us that we had incoming *MATILDA* students to teach this to, because it helps, because it will anchor this gender history module in our master’s programme.” (Ibid., pos. 65)

Vienna²⁰¹ or the possibility of awarding scholarships such as at the CEU²⁰². Once again, the CEU is linked to the ‘core’ in opposition to Sofia.²⁰³ The number of students is another measurable indicator of the individual locations, which seems to be more or less important. For Nottingham’s university policy, it is mainly the numbers that count, as Harvey reports²⁰⁴, and for Sofia, too, the numbers are a factor that determine the continuation of the programme.²⁰⁵ Generally, Western and well-off locations have more opportunities and better chances to maintain the programme.

This lack of opportunities can lead to pejorative evaluations of less privileged locations from an extern perspective. Also, because extern perspectives tend being insensitive to global inequalities – i.e. regarding the whole of the consortium. On a discursive level core-knowledge is opposed to semiperipheral-knowledge and indirectly stated within the *MATILDA* consortium where knowledge coming from the ‘CESEE’ locations is represented only marginally.²⁰⁶ Exemplarily, Bulgaria’s historiography is rated as behind that of the other partners as shown in Schweitzer’s assumption that the founders of the CEU asked people from the university of Sofia to participate in the *MATILDA* programme only to help them: “So it was a way for Francisca de Haan to pull the scholars out of the East so that they could go to **the West where historiography was still more advanced.**”²⁰⁷ [Emphasized by the author] Schweitzer’s statement is confronted by her own report on the acceptance of gender in France, a process she

²⁰¹ Cf.: “Then we made this poster that hangs outside, this map. We did a lot of advertising. Also in the lectures.” (Hämmerle, pos. 47)

²⁰² Cf.: “Budapest has been MUCH more active in recruiting *MATILDA* students and Budapest COULD give them a scholarship [...] This of course made it easier for the Budapest colleagues.” (Ibid.)

²⁰³ Cf.: “I think today that the given material and institutional conditions played a decisive role in making things happen. CEU has a flexible institutional outlook. Academic initiative, if feasible for the institution in principle, can be easily accommodated and brought to fruition, in particular as compared to large state universities in the European continental tradition. I believe for the original Western *MATILDA* partners *MATILDA* was feasible rather on the grounds that they had already developed many gender history courses, or even specializations, and so on, so *MATILDA* here was built more on a pre-existing profile.” (Zimmermann, pos. 32)

²⁰⁴ Cf. Harvey, Pos. 85-87.

²⁰⁵ Cf.: “So in order to be supported by the state in a good way, Bulgarian M.A. programmes have to have at least six students each year in order to pretend to get financial support from the state for the next year.” (Daskalova, pos. 59)

²⁰⁶ Cf.: “I think the knowledge about East-European modernisation process and also women’s emancipation within this particular context of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe during the 19th and 20th century, should ENTER the Western curricula as well. AS WE TEACH the knowledge, we teach courses on Western Europe, on feminism, on modernisation / on different aspects of West-European women’s and gender history. Somehow this should be much more equal by introducing this kind of courses dealing with the knowledge about our past.” (Daskalova, pos. 73.)

²⁰⁷ Schweitzer, pos. 52.

describes as “a very long story, [...] historians have resisted to gender a lot. The discussion was interminable”²⁰⁸ as well as by the fact that Daskalova states that:

I and a colleague of mine actually we established the first women’s history course within the department of cultural studies at Sofia university. TO WHICH *MATILDA* is now affiliated. Still. So we were the pioneers, not only in the development and the research about women’s and gender past but also in institutionalization of the courses related to women’s and gender history. So for almost ten years before *MATILDA* was conceived, we already had these kinds of courses.²⁰⁹

Both examples emphasize the distribution of labels like ‘excellence’ or ‘advanced’ is arbitrary and the supremacy in labelling is distributed to those who hold the power instead of those who put the most effort in offering excellent research. Concerning the agency, based on the different titles the founders had, Harvey and Schweitzer both confirm that they did not really see hierarchies.²¹⁰ But in the end, it seems to make a difference of which they are well aware: “I was titled professor (...) and when you are a professor in France, Germany, Austria and so on or in England, [...] you have more power than someone who doesn’t have the title.”²¹¹ Coming back to the most difficult task of the consortium, namely, the creation of a common curriculum, the position as head of department, as it was the case for Harvey,²¹² or a prestigious title would certainly simplify the basis for negotiation (gaining stipends etc.). Likewise, an institution that is responsive to the issue can be very helpful for maintaining the programme. Blagojevic points out that the task of being an excellent scientist even becomes harder being a woman social scientist at the semiperiphery. Even if the rare case occurs that a woman in the semiperiphery reaches this position no one would take notice of it. Again, Blagojevic attributes the latter to the unequal continuum in which science is placed. Hence, she comes to the following disillusioning conclusion: “Measuring invisibility is, indeed, difficult.”²¹³

Finally, one can say that there is inequality that is likely to be measurable like the level of the salary or how well stocked a library is. But inequalities often remain more hidden, like the rating of good or bad knowledge based on discourses that have been formed for decades: Why should French knowledge be labelled ‘core knowledge’ and knowledge from Bulgaria

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pos. 86.

²⁰⁹ Daskalova, pos. 33.

²¹⁰ Cf. “I don’t think there was much of a hierarchical order. I think the people who were most impressed with the hierarchies were Daskalova and Koleva because they didn’t have a PhD title.” (Schweitzer, pos. 78) and: “I was not particularly CONSCIOUS within the consortium of who had a full professor and who did not. It wasn’t very important for me. I DO have a full professor title [...] It possibly helped up to a POINT that I was the head of the department for three years, from 2009 to 2012.” (Harvey, pos. 12)

²¹¹ Schweitzer, Pos. 122.

²¹² Cf. Harvey, Pos. 12.

²¹³ Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 89.

‘semiperipheral knowledge’? But this conclusion requires a closer and more power-critical analysis than comparing wages. Referring again to the ‘vicious circle’ Daskalova is speaking of, one can state that discourses lead to material realities (a harmful discourse concerning gender issues hinders access to and stocks of topic-related literature) and material realities lead to discourses (the lack of funds makes it difficult to offer stipends to the students or to advertise the programme which leads to a low number of students and thus nourishes the discourse that gender issues are of no interest). Moreover, the concept of semiperiphery, Blagojevic applies, reveals that the contribution to, and the acknowledgement of ‘excellent science’ is very much dependent on the location and their underlying power structures. Consequently, the given examples clearly show that it is not enough to involve the partners on an equal footing – i.e. everyone has the same right to contribute to the programme content or its implementation (measured in the respective participation), all locations are locally represented at the implementation meetings and the summer schools – in order to eliminate inequalities. Measuring the member’s participation and the fair distribution of venues for the summer schools in the respective countries are only instruments for pointing out or rethinking inequalities but do not change continuing power relations.

5.3 The Special Role of the Summer Schools (and the Consortium Meetings)

From 2006 to 2009 the consortium received funds from Brussels to implement the programme. Afterwards only the summer school was financed by the EU. Concerning a genuine exchange between ‘East’ and ‘West’, the summer school, also called intensive programme (IP), seems to have achieved lasting success within the consortium. Unfortunately, it only took place from 2009 to 2014. During the IP the knowledge of the respective varying host location was in the foreground. Apart the fixed *MATILDA* teaching staff at the host location other local experts were invited to teach.²¹⁴ In addition, the presence of teachers from all *MATILDA* locations, as well as the exchange among the students, during the summer schools benefited the experience of the respective realities without remaining on the individual level but being part of the official programme. Note that Harvey reports a general increase in knowledge for her personal research interests through the exchange with ‘Eastern’ European colleagues through her participation in

²¹⁴ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 49.

the *MATILDA* programme.²¹⁵ However, this increase in knowledge generally remains at the individual level; i.e. it has no significant influence on the content of the Nottingham curriculum:

“I think ESSENTIALLY the contribution of the intellectual [...] input from Bulgaria it was something that we noticed above all in the intensive programmes. I think that’s where we got them up / you know British students and French students, sort of encountering LIVE what Bulgarian students and also the two tutors were bringing to the discussions.”²¹⁶

Already in the opening quotation of this work Daskalova criticizes the general predominance of Western European knowledge over Eastern European knowledge in our curricula. So, one could say that the summer school benefited the ‘CESEE’ locations in particular. The administrative manager, Schmidt-Dengler, also points out the added value of the summer school on the side of the ‘CESEE’ countries. As a long-standing Erasmus representative in the Office for International Relations at the University of Vienna²¹⁷, she knows from experience²¹⁸ that at least in the 2000s, students preferred countries where German, English, French or Spanish was spoken. According to Schmidt-Dengler, there must have been very special relations behind the interest in ‘CESEE’ languages. Therefore, the summer schools, which were held in the three business languages of the EU – English, French or German²¹⁹ – were a good way of attracting students to the ‘CESEE’ locations Sofia or Budapest.

Harvey underlines the special role of the summer schools by referring to them as “the real KIT [...] The real sort of GLUE that kept things together.”²²⁰ The latter is mainly due to the fact that the founders were aware of the fact that during the normal *MATILDA* programme, i.e. everything that took place outside the summer school, the programme could only participate in the existing range of courses at the individual locations, and that there would be inequalities

²¹⁵ Cf. “I think it was still quite an important encounter for us to witness how historians from those post-communist countries were grappling with their own institutions and with the whole sort of topic of women’s and gender history. [...] And then for my personal research and research interests. I mean I gained a great deal from talking to Krassimira in particular about history of the Bulgarian women’s movement. I was interested in women and nationalism and fascism and of course so learning from HER about the positioning of Bulgarian women’s activism in the interwar period and how that related to nationalism. That was all very important for me. So, in fact it’s my own personal research interest as well.” (Harvey, pos. 123)

²¹⁶ Ibid., pos. 125.

²¹⁷ Cf. Maria Schmidt-Dengler, face-to-face interview, Vienna, 18.11.2019, pos. 30.

²¹⁸ Cf.: “Maria Schmidt-Dengler, who was previously here in the Erasmus office and then retired and she was able to do this [*MATILDA* administrative work] marginally employed in her retirement time and that was fantastic because she knew the bureaucracy in Brussels so well.” (Hämmerle, pos. 37)

²¹⁹ Cf. Schmidt-Dengler, pos. 140.

²²⁰ Harvey, pos. 105.

and cutbacks as a result.²²¹ So, the interview partners were unanimously aware of the importance of the IPs, only their reasons differ.

On the one hand, the IP is seen as a benefit in language and cultural exchange in the sense of the Erasmus programme as a “true European community. People who kept in touch with each other [...] a way to bring cultures together.”²²² Or as an embodiment of the “European element”²²³ of the programme where the participants of the programme could work on a European comparative basis.

On the other hand, the summer school provides a platform for ‘CESEE’ knowledge to finally be adequately represented and heard. For example, Harvey remembers presentations by Krassimira Daskalova with “the idea of integrating the history of women*’s movement and feminism in South-Eastern Europe into a wider European picture.”²²⁴ This wider European picture contrasts with what is said above by the founders, namely that the European element is mainly limited to student exchanges during the summer schools. That ‘European’ can also be thought and practiced quite differently, namely critical of power structures, becomes clear in Harvey’s statement.

This means that the exchange and the initial summer schools have indeed led to a broadening of horizons, but Zimmermann emphasizes that the lack of ‘EE’ history and experience in ‘WE’ curricula cannot be compensated for by a one-time meeting during the IP or a semester in Bulgaria or Hungary. *MATILDA*’s international components can contribute to “increased awareness” of ‘Eastern’ European gender history but do not support the development of “own expertise”²²⁵ in the circles of those who do not specialize in the field. Nevertheless, she underlines the small progress made in increasing the perception of ‘CESEE’ gender history in the ‘West’ and thus broadening the horizons of ‘Western’ students and teachers.²²⁶ Here

²²¹ Cf.: “*MATILDA* could ALWAYS only NIBBLE from other courses. We could not offer our own courses for *MATILDA*, but we had to make the programme of women’s and gender history creditable here [...] ALSO for *MATILDA*. [...] And all this [inequalities and cutbacks] should be absorbed [...] in these intensive programmes, [...], where the students really work in discussions, in lectures with lecturers from the *MATILDA* programme, also on a European comparative basis / also learn to integrate their topics, their emerging master theses.” (Hämmerle, pos. 43)

²²² Schweitzer, pos. 58.

²²³ Cf. Harvey, pos. 97.

²²⁴ Ibid., pos. 137.

²²⁵ Zimmermann, pos. 20.

²²⁶ Cf. Ibid.

Zimmermann's rather disillusioned conclusion comes into its own: "The programme will be the sum of its parts, no more and no less. It is inclusive in this sense, but in no other sense."²²⁷

With regard to the summer school, there are practically two discourses: an idealistic one and a subversive one. The idealistic one tries to eliminate inequalities, but at the same time conceals exactly these inequalities, leaving aside the neoliberal aspect of such an EU project.²²⁸ The other one is subversive and aims to create a place that names the inequalities and fights them, but is at the same time aware of the limits of such a process (a one-time exchange does not change the system). In summary, the IPs represent one of the two pillars of the consortium agreement.²²⁹ Together with the second correction of the final papers by at least two institutions of the consortium, the commonality of the *MATILDA* programme was essentially ensured.²³⁰

In addition to the summer school, during the preparatory consortium meetings the founders developed the curriculum and discussed administrative things, but also content questions of the programme.²³¹ So, meetings during the summer school in combination with the preparatory consortium meetings seem to have played a very important role in cultural exchange. These meetings provided a better understanding between the different locations as indicated in the following statements:

"A [...] space of knowledge, which is fed by very different traditions of thought or even concepts of women's and gender history."²³²

"these intensive programmes also had the function that we can get to know EACH OTHER better as scientists, because I also listened to the lectures [...] from the colleagues who gave lectures there. So that was very inspiring."²³³

"a place where we got to know each other BETTER, we saw each other in action, we saw all the students getting together and getting to know each other better. Sort of overcoming any

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Cf.: "I always thought that the interest of the intensive course was not for the teachers, but for the students. We did it for the students because the idea of Erasmus / Because *MATILDA* is still in the Erasmus programme, it's the Erasmus philosophy. It's about students going to countries, being able to travel to European universities to understand / It's about building Europe. In my opinion. [...] That students go abroad to understand that there are several academic systems, several academic cultures, several ways of working, that they improve themselves in the language of the foreign country. And the hypothesis is always that afterwards they can go and work in that foreign country." (Schweitzer, pos. 58)

²²⁹ Cf. MATILDA consortium, "Joint Programme Description for MATILDA: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008)," 6–7.

²³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

²³¹ Cf.: "There were regular consortium meetings where we developed the curriculum, where we developed [...] the consortium agreement. Where we also had discussions about the content, about financial matters." (Hämmerle, pos. 45)

²³² *Ibid.*, pos. 55.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pos. 143.

isolation. And there was always [...] that you get a real sort of sense of camaraderie and solidarity and support.”²³⁴

There is an exchange about different knowledge cultures and ideas – often dependent on the specific context of the researcher. The combination of the summer school and regular consortium meetings seems to have provided enough time for a fruitful exchange also to reflect the progress of the programme. Note that joint meetings must be affordable and that after the implementation of the programme in 2009, the European commission funding for joint meetings of the consortium members ended: “I mean we got EU funding for the PREPARATION of the programme but after that, the individual universities had to fund our travel and all the rest and there was no money left for consortium meetings. So, we had to have sort of consortium meetings scheduled with the intensive programme.”²³⁵

So, after the funding for regular consortium meetings stopped, the founders often only met during the IP. And it goes without saying that these meetings did not have the same quality because they had to take place alongside the (already fully loaded) IPs. Finally, a genuine exchange on an equal footing seems to have been achieved by the consortium meetings and the summer school. During the time when both events took place and were financed by the EU there was a regular and fruitful exchange which at least had potential to come closer to a common and equal knowledge space. What is supported through EU funding and what would have supported a sustainable equal space of knowledge? This is a question that can be asked at this point.

5.4 Different ‘Doings’ of Europe within the Consortium

The question arises how ‘European’ is defined in the context of a programme that constitutes itself in a continuum of ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’. The way the interview partners refer to *Europe* or *European* women*’s and gender history happens in different ways: As a strategy (5.4.1); in an additive manner (5.4.2.1) and in a (Eurocentrism-)critical manner (5.4.2.2).

Being part of the title of the programme, the term is already ascribed a high degree of meaning. In the interviews, a relationship between the term in the title and the taught content emerges as well as the usage of the term as an important strategic means. Concerning the content, the

²³⁴ Harvey, pos. 105.

²³⁵ Ibid.

consortium “tried to incorporate as many different case studies of European history / women’s and gender history as possible in order to be much more inclusive and much more adequate to the past experience and representations of women and gender.”²³⁶ The presence of location-dependent knowledge can be seen for example in the link of gender and state socialism in Bulgaria and Hungary²³⁷. Or also in the highlighting or quasi deletion of historical events and data from your own curriculum. For example, by telling that 1989 has no big significance for France compared to Bulgaria²³⁸, whereas the date of the French Revolution is highlighted for the French division of time: “It replaces the age of modern history and heralds that of contemporary history”²³⁹, says Schweitzer. Both examples give an indication of a different perception of Europe among the consortium members and thus also show that, apart from national differences, the difference between ‘East’ and ‘West’ and a nexus of power and knowledge seems to play a major role.

5.4.1 ‘European’ as a Strategical Tool?

Europe or *European* as a strategic tool is of use to the whole consortium, only the range of relevance for this tool varies and therefore, once again, power dynamics become visible. Firstly, *European* is used as a strategy to legitimize the field of women*’s and gender history within the academical field. Secondly, the proximity to *Europeanness* and EU (funding) often is mentally linked to ‘modernity’ and economic wealth. This becomes of particular interest in countries which – added to the fight for legitimizing the scientificity of women*’s and gender history – have to deal with poor economic conditions or the fact that they are being referred to as ‘semiperiphery’. Therefore, EU funding is used as an incentive for the university or the state to support the project. However, EU funding is also linked to EU policy which is more or less appreciated within the consortium. The latter is also due to different connotations to *European* which changed over the years. In the 1990s and even in the early 2000s, *European* in terms of building a common space of knowledge was considered a much more positive label than today. This is also due to the mental association of *European* to the EU and its values of a peace bringing association after World War II and economic growth. The former idea of the

²³⁶ Daskalova, pos. 65.

²³⁷ Ibid., pos. 29.

²³⁸ Cf: “‘89 for the French is not a date [...] It’s at the time of the Wende. Indeed, [...] we were able to meet them, the academics [...] from the East, in inverted commas, and to measure what totalitarian regimes that prevented the circulation of individuals and knowledge could look like.” (Schweitzer, pos. 140-142)

Cf. Ibid, pos. 104-108.

²³⁹ Ibid., pos. 68.

emergence of a coherent knowledge space, which grows together and becomes unified through joint knowledge transfer is currently (partly) framed quite differently. Right wing-populists like Orbán use this idea to promote nationalism and to present European values such as gender equality as an ideology that comes from the ‘West’ and is said to contaminate national and/ or traditional values. The discourse which positions gender as an ideology is a recent phenomenon and appeared only in the last few years.²⁴⁰

As actors in the context of ‘antifeminist’ and ‘antigenderist’ discourses, Mayer and Sauer name the Catholic church as the initiator of defamatory statements. They claim that this has made ‘gender theory’ or ‘gender ideology’, as it is usually called in the German-speaking world, acceptable for other religious, but also non-religious contexts. As a secular example from the political context the men’s and fathers’ rights movement is cited.²⁴¹ As a common structural foundation stone, the “discourse about the loss of former certainties”²⁴², as well as an adherence to patriarchal structures could be mentioned. At this point, ideological connections can be made: Hinrich Rosenbrock warns in his analysis, on behalf of the Heinrich Böll foundation, of the antifeminist men’s rights movement that this connection should be observed particularly critically, as it could increase the acceptance of other right-wing ideologies.²⁴³ Consequently, Mayer and Sauer name right-wing populist and right-wing extremist tendencies as the last group.²⁴⁴ In the *MATILDA* context, Hungary’s government, which is currently overturning the rule of law under the pretext of the Corona crisis²⁴⁵, has attracted particular attention with regard to the latter group mentioned by Mayer and Sauer, in the past.

²⁴⁰ Cf.: “the mobilizations and campaigns against gender [...] appeared since the late 1990s in several European countries and elsewhere (particularly in Latin America).” Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, “The Anti-Gender Movement in Comparative Perspective,” in *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against equality*, ed. Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, First paperback edition, 253–76 (Lanham, New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 253.

²⁴¹ Stefanie Mayer and Birgit Sauer, “Kulturkampf 2.0. 'Anti-Genderismus' als Strategie gegen Gleichstellung und sexuelle Rechte in Europa,” in *Europe - what's left? Die Europäische Union zwischen Zerfall, Autoritarismus und demokratischer Erneuerung*, ed. Mario Candeias and Alex Demirović, 1. Auflage, 211–28 (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2017), 212–15.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁴³ Hinrich Rosenbrock, *Die antifeministische Männerrechtsbewegung: Denkweisen, Netzwerke und Online-Mobilisierung; eine Expertise für die Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*, 2. Aufl., Schriften des Gunda-Werner-Instituts 8 (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2012), http://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/antifeministische_maennerrechtsbewegung.pdf, 11.

²⁴⁴ Stefanie Mayer and Birgit Sauer, “Kulturkampf 2.0. 'Anti-Genderismus' als Strategie gegen Gleichstellung und sexuelle Rechte in Europa,” in *Europe - what's left?*, 216–17.

²⁴⁵ Cf.: “Hungary’s head of government Orbán uses the Corona crisis to override the rule of law. Parliament has been disempowered for the time being, the opposition has been put out of action, and anyone who dares to criticise as a journalist can expect up to five years in prison with immediate effect. The EU will abolish its system of values if it lets this pass.” Tagesschau.de, “Kommentar: Ungarn Ohne Rechtsstaat,” <https://www.tagesschau.de/kommentar/eu-ungarn-orban-corona-101.html> (accessed April 16, 2020).

This hostile discourse concerning gender within societies has also effects on the academical field dealing with gender. Within the consortium gender issues in Hungary are classified as “anathema to Orbán and co”²⁴⁶ as the government spares no resources in banning the issue from universities.²⁴⁷ The situation is also serious for Bulgaria. This was shown recently as Daskalova reports:

Probably you have heard about the discussions around the Istanbul convention in Bulgaria and that the government, all ruling parties are really very much against the gender research without even knowing what it is all about. They just misinterpret and use the term gender in a very unproper and unclear way to manipulate the public opinion that gender is something wrong, something that’s jeopardizing Bulgarian traditional values and things like that. I do not really want to go into details but it’s necessary to emphasize that gender is something that is misinterpreted here and misused and this reflects the image of the field, as well.²⁴⁸

Both examples show that the subject of gender is used to present it as an ideology: It is represented by the government as a threat to traditional values and that those who represent gender issues and fight for equality are evil ideologists who want to impose some sort of ‘gender ideology’ on people.²⁴⁹ This is a common pattern of traditional nationalist Right political parties, but also more and more within traditional Christian democratic parties²⁵⁰ and therefore by no means an issue that only affects ‘Eastern’ Europe:

Despite national specificities, which result from things including specific policy debates, power relations and the role of religious organizations in each country, numerous similarities can be discerned in the strategies and the rhetoric used by anti-gender activists across Europe. It is also interesting to pinpoint that the East-West divide does not offer a particularly useful lens to study these mobilizations.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Harvey, pos. 209.

²⁴⁷ Cf.: “it was simply always in the back of our minds that we had to have this programme accredited. Here in Vienna it’s done by the university. But in Hungary the state does it. That’s why Orbán was able to dissolve the Masters in Gender Studies because that’s what the government or the state does, which is outsourced from the universities.” (Hämmerle, pos. 62).

Cf. also: Anna Zsubori, “Gender Studies Banned at University – the Hungarian Government’s Latest Attack on Equality,” <https://theconversation.com/gender-studies-banned-at-university-the-hungarian-governments-latest-attack-on-equality-103150> (accessed January 22, 2019).

²⁴⁸ Daskalova, pos. 19.

²⁴⁹ For more information on the pattern of using gender as an ideology cf.: Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, eds., *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*, First paperback edition (Lanham, New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 4–8.

²⁵⁰ Cf.: Joachim Becker and Koen Smet, “The Socio-Economic Programmes and Praxis of the Nationalist Right in the EU: The Core-Periphery Divide: Paper for the 24th Annual Conference on Alternative Economic Policy in Europe “10 Years into the Crisis – What Prospects for a Popular Political Economy in Europe?”, Helsinki 27-29 September 2018,” http://www2.euromemorandum.eu/uploads/becker_smet_the_socio_economic_programmes_and_praxis_of_the_nationalist_right_in_the_eu_the_core_periphery_divide.pdf, 3.

²⁵¹ Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, “The anti-gender movement in comparative perspective,” in *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe*, 253.

While analyzing mobilizations against equality for the whole European area, Paternotte and Kuhar emphasize factors, such as having access to political institutions, a division of elites, the role of allies, but also the specific contextual elements. Still, within the context of *MATILDA*, a closer look at the respective locations shows the different conditions: For Budapest Zimmermann reports that their history department still does not do much gender, although “the fact that it co-hosts *MATILDA* has definitely contributed to develop its profile in this direction and to make gender history a fully accepted perspective in the department.”²⁵² And for Sofia’s history department Daskalova reports that gender is marginally represented due to “gatekeepers who want to preserve the old curricula in order to keep their positions”²⁵³. The situation is different for Nottingham, for example, where Harvey assesses the gender perspective in her history department more or less as “mainstream”²⁵⁴. So, despite observations of a general mobilization against equality and the phenomenon of anti-gender campaigns across Europe²⁵⁵, some factors are more favourable than others – as shown by the example of Sofia and Budapest versus Nottingham.

The abovementioned discourse might also be the reason for the rather marginally representation of the academical field of women*’s and gender research in general. For the European area and approximately for the time period when *MATILDA* was founded, Gabriele Griffin attests an “incomplete process of institutionalisation” of the field compared to other disciplines with regard to “accreditation, funding, and degree awarding rights”²⁵⁶. Therefore, Griffin states further that this “has implications for market-led university systems such as the UK where the ability to attract students on to a course is critical for the survival of the course. If the discipline is invisible, attracting students is difficult.”²⁵⁷ In addition, the field tends to be underrepresented on undergraduate level as Daskalova reports for Sofia:

Women’s and gender history is REALLY very vaguely presented. There is no course taught at BA level in the major institutions for the production of historical knowledge, i.e. the faculty of history at Sofia university. In other universities around the country there are two, three more faculties in which history is considered one of the really important fields of their teaching but STILL courses on women’s and gender past are not included in their curricula. [...] I think that apart from these really institutional problems, the students everywhere are VERY much

²⁵² Zimmermann, pos. 88.

²⁵³ Daskalova, pos. 13.

²⁵⁴ Harvey, pos. 71.

²⁵⁵ For more information cf. Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe*.

²⁵⁶ Gabriele Griffin, “The Institutionalization of Women’s Studies in Europe: Findings from an EU-Funded Research Project on Women’s Studies and Women’s Employment,” in *Women/gender studies: against all odds: Dokumentation der 7. Österreichischen Wissenschaftlerinnentagung*, ed. Eva Blimlinger, 43–54 (Innsbruck: Studien-Verl., 2005), 44.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

interested in these gender issues and women's past although their curiosity could not be answered in a proper way.²⁵⁸

Daskalova's critique that student's interests in women*'s and gender research is not adequately satisfied coincides with Griffin's critique which sets in even earlier by claiming to address changes in gender roles already at school level. According to Griffin, school level is the educational level to which all EU citizens have access, whereas the majority does not progress to tertiary education.²⁵⁹ The author stresses on the consequences of a continuous lack of programmes teaching women*'s and gender issues for our societies as these programmes contain the potential to become change agents both in our private and professional lives.²⁶⁰ It therefore seems even more important to strengthen the field and implement classes also on a school and undergraduate level.

Whereas the 'East'- 'West' divide does not represent a key function for analyzing 'anti-gender' movements or a general lack of representation of women*'s and gender research programmes, it plays a role in analyzing inequalities within the *MATILDA* consortium. Note that the abovementioned continuum of core, semiperiphery and periphery is much more likely to affect the periphery and the semiperiphery where several inequalities are coming together. And again, at this point, I will refer to the 'vicious circle' Daskalova mentioned earlier, i.e. a low number of students, due to low programme application or limited library stocks which in turn favours arguments of those who position themselves against gender issues. This in turn encourages argumentations in the style of: 'The programme has so few students because nobody is interested in it anyway.' The presented devaluating discourse concerning gender is strongly linked to an anti-European discourse which leads to the fact that *Europe* today appears in a different context than when *MATILDA* was founded. Although other, negative connotations were added with the years, positive connotations still seem to persist. In other words, *European* both functions as an enemy stereotype like specified above and also as a form of legitimization against harmful discourses against the field of women*'s and gender history.

²⁵⁸ Daskalova, pos. 13.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Gabriele Griffin, *Doing Women's Studies: Employment Opportunities, Personal Impacts and Social Consequences*, 1st ed. (London: Zed Books, 2008), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=4708571>, 108.

²⁶⁰ Cf.: "Overall, we found that for those who committed themselves to Women's Studies, the benefits were enormous and varied [...] Women's Studies remains a challenging discipline in every respect; the need for change in women's lives is as powerful as it was in the 1970s – therein lie both the opportunities and the issues for Women's Studies staff and students." *ibid.*, 109.

Concerning EU funding, the programme only came to existence through this funding in the first place. Consequently, amongst others, the term *European* in the title of the programme may also be a recognition of this funding and continues in a certain proximity to EU policies. The latter manifests itself for example in the choice of language (for example a clear preference for the three business languages of the EU²⁶¹). Moreover, the selection of partner institutions was tailored to EU requirements and was in line with the European cohesion. This was the 15 years of expertise that Maria Schmidt-Dengler, the administrative power behind the programme implementation, brought to bear²⁶²: The knowledge that “first of all, the Mediterranean countries and then the Eastern Europeans had to be involved [...] in other words, to strengthen cohesion in Europe.”²⁶³ The European commission frames this as follows: “Cohesion Policy is the EU’s main investment policy. It targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens’ quality of life.”²⁶⁴ The cohesion policy of the commission therefore seems more a means to an end of consolidating economic ties and thus economic growth and catching up with ‘Western’ standards in countries that have not yet ‘reached’ those standards. Therefore existing networks like Germany, France and Great Britain were not sufficient to promote – although the requirements by Brussels, at least three partners from at least three EU countries, for building a joint degree programme would have been fulfilled.²⁶⁵ The focus is on the inclusion of non-western countries in order to catch up with the ‘Western’ standard, for example in teaching methods.²⁶⁶ From an EU policy perspective, the establishment of these new networks is a benefit, especially on the economic level. The building of a strong European community has a primarily economical purpose as it becomes visible in the aim of the commission that the degree would be widely recognized and therefore has a positive impact on the European labor market: firstly, by creating a European educational landscape, emphasized by study programmes with *European* in the title, and secondly, by training people who possibly work in the EU afterwards. The EU also functions as a scientific space, which should be positioned as a particularly high-quality area compared to non-European locations: “The Bologna reform was of course important with the comparability of requirements. And that was

²⁶¹ For example with regard to the choice of language for writing the MA thesis. Cf. MATILDA consortium, “Joint Programme Description for MATILDA: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008),” 9.

²⁶² Cf. Schmidt-Dengler, pos. 30.

²⁶³ Ibid., pos. 76.

²⁶⁴ European Commission, “An Introduction to EU Cohesion Policy 2014--2020,” https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/basic/basic_2014_en.pdf.

²⁶⁵ Maria Schmidt-Dengler (2019): *AW: MATILDA Masterarbeit* [E-Mail vom 26.10.2019]

²⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid (Interview, 18.11.2019), pos. 112-116.

this great promise: A Master's degree that is really relatively similar at all five participating universities. That's why we also received this money from the EU to develop and implement it."²⁶⁷

The mentioned Bologna reform leads us to the aspect of a certain competitiveness, which is linked to EU policy as well and can also be found within the consortium. Like in the claim or framing of excellence, as confirmed in Hämmerle's statement:

"because I think *MATILDA* [...] should be a *SMALL* programme, definitely also one with especially *MOTIVATED* students, with especially *INTERNATIONAL* experienced students. One could also say an excellence programme. *Excellence* is on everyone's lips. And I would have developed it further in this direction, more strongly."²⁶⁸

The demand for excellence is also reflected in the selection of the partner institutions, such as the CEU, which is known for its' "excellent reputation worldwide. [With] 1400 students from more than 100 countries [...] [and] The professors also come from all over the world."²⁶⁹ Compared to the statement of Zimmermann earlier when she emphasized the material well-being and international character of the CEU: An "English-speaking university with which it is possible to work together reasonably"²⁷⁰ – Zimmermann here thinks about the already international composition and the strong representation of people from and expertise on many Eastern European countries – shows that European, 'Western' values are attributed to prestige and that these values played a role in the implementation of the programme: On the one hand, the CEU is accepted into the consortium due to the EU's eastern expansion, but at the same time this prestige, which is attached to the CEU, is also gratefully accepted and considered renowned within the consortium. Note that the 'CESEE' locations were added practically on "recommendation", as 'Eastern' Europe was considered a "plus point"²⁷¹, which was likewise known within the consortium. The accession of Hungary and Bulgaria took place in addition to personal contacts and their scientific contribution to women*'s and gender history, but also very much for EU political reasons and therefore strategically in order to have a good chance of funding:

²⁶⁷ Christa Hämmerle, preliminary talk for the interview face-to-face, Vienna, 18.06.2019.

²⁶⁸ Ibid (Interview, 08.07.2019), pos. 53.

²⁶⁹ Ralf Borchard, "Universitäten in Ungarn: "Ein Schritt Gegen Freie Bildung",", <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/ungarn-uni-ceu-101.html> (accessed May 24, 2020)

Cf. also: "in a BIG area, which the Central European University covers, you can't even just say HUNGARY, as they have students coming from Eastern, Southeastern European countries up to Iran [...] from Budapest, from Great Britain, from Scotland. So, they really do have an INTERNATIONAL profile." (Ibid., pos. 39)

²⁷⁰ Zimmermann, pos. 16.

²⁷¹ Cf. Schmidt-Dengler, pos. 74.

So, it was more like [adding] already EXISTING contacts or a KNOWING where women's and gender history is strongly represented PLUS STRATEGY. Strategy INsofar as we knew that an application would be more successful if Eastern Europe was integrated, at that time. It was also a clear programmatic LINE of the European Union [...] and we knew that Budapest was not enough, we wanted a second Eastern European University. And then we came up with Bulgaria through already existing contacts.²⁷²

Once again, a distinction seems to be made here between St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia and the CEU in Budapest: Due to material and representative privileges, the CEU is, as already mentioned, more likely to be placed closer to the 'core' institutions on the continuum. Significantly, Elizabeth Harvey denies the CEU the adjective "autochthone"²⁷³ and thus underlines its position outside of the 'semiperiphery'. Moreover, I would like to refer again to Blagojevic who stresses the importance of recognizing power structures and criticizes the arbitrary use of the notion *excellent science* within the continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery'.²⁷⁴ Consequently, *European* is also strategically used as a kind of additional qualification to justify the importance of the field of women's and gender history in university politics. Following the aspiration for excellence, internationalization and prestige most of the institutions welcomed the programme, like Nottingham: "People were very (...) interested and enthusiastic about it [MATILDA] because it was obviously a move towards internationalization and Nottingham LIKES to think of itself as pro-internationalization."²⁷⁵ Similarly, Vienna's university policy also appeared to be positively disposed towards the concept of prestige and good positioning in academic rankings.²⁷⁶

But of course, one must see how such a programme like MATILDA is perceived in the different scientific contexts and that this 'European qualification' is especially helpful if your department, or "the academic establishment"²⁷⁷, is less accessible to the subject of women's and gender history as it is explicitly the case for Sofia. Events organized by international renowned institutions, like a conference of the *International Federation for Research in Women's History* hosted under the presidency of Daskalova, show a huge impact and even have

²⁷² Hämmerle, pos. 61.

²⁷³ Cf. Harvey, pos. 121-123.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Blagojevic, "Creators, Transmitters, and Users,": 78.

²⁷⁵ Harvey, pos. 85.

²⁷⁶ Cf.: "MATILDA was initially a big promise. We had the hope, and our then Vice Rector, Mettinger, encouraged us to do so, that now, after the opening of the borders in this merging of Europe, we can really develop a European Master's programme. Where students can benefit from the fact that a large new knowledge space is being created (Bologna reform is an important indicator) with the comparability of requirements. Great promise: A Master's that really is relatively similarly equipped at all five universities and that's why we have received this money from the EU to develop and implement this." (Hämmerle [18.06.2019])

²⁷⁷ Daskalova, pos. 5.

the power to legitimate a field which is otherwise disregarded as not very scientific.²⁷⁸ So the use of the European strategical tool becomes visible when Daskalova reports about presenting *MATILDA* to her university:

It wasn't difficult because we presented *MATILDA* as a EUROPEAN degree and we presented it as something coming as a joint venture, so to say, between really several very renowned history departments and universities in Europe. In this sense it was not difficult, because we were an international consortium of good / best / one of the best universities from Europe.²⁷⁹

This positive attitude towards everything that is considered *European* and/or *Western* is due to the fact that the terms are associated with wealth and promising opportunities in formal socialist countries.²⁸⁰ Positively presented, in the sense of cultural understanding, and by involving young people, who form the foundation of our society, this track of European educational policy appears exemplary, as is made clear by Schweitzer's statement:

It's the Erasmus philosophy. It's about students going to countries, being able to travel to European universities to understand / It's about building Europe. [...] students go abroad to understand that there are several academic systems, several academic cultures, several ways of working, that they improve themselves in the language of the foreign country. And the idea is always that afterwards they can go and work in that country.²⁸¹

Schweitzer's statement reveals a similar argumentation to that of the European commission to describe and promote the Erasmus programme. The discourse is characterized by economic advantages, networking (especially regarding language skills, knowledge of cultures and the different knowledge systems and thus working methods) and the occasion to travel which preferably carries economic benefits. So, the students could work easily in the entire European area after they complete an Erasmus semester. The focus of an economic aspect of a European economy that wants to grow and remain competitive amongst others through an excellent network of universities is obvious. The argumentation joins a neoliberal discourse of what worthwhile science is. Similar to do Mar Pereira's 'performative university', de Sousa Santos speaks of 'university capitalism' which aims to turn the university into a capitalist enterprise following capitalist criteria. According to the author the university "has become a business

²⁷⁸ Cf.: "As President of the IFRWH I was responsible for organizing the regular conference of the federation in 2007. During that conference in Sofia, I think my colleagues and the academic establishment in the country started to think about this field as a properly developed and as an IMPRESSIVE scholarly field: they saw so many people coming from this conference in the Aula magna of Sofia University / This was really important and I think that in the COUNTRIES where conferences on women's and gender history were organized we had the same kind of experience (especially in those countries where women's and gender history developed recently as an academic field). The popularity and the RESPECT towards the field was much more visible and present after such kind of events." (Daskalova, pos. 5)

²⁷⁹ Ibid, pos. 63.

²⁸⁰ Cf.: Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there*, 7.

²⁸¹ Schweitzer, pos. 58.

corporation producing a commodity whose market value derives from its capacity to create other market values (e.g., diplomas that give access to highly paid jobs).”²⁸² This statement only illustrates that neoliberalism has little to do with free science. In parallel, Nancy Fraser reflects on the relationship of feminism and capitalism:

Having watched the neoliberal onslaught instrumentalize our [feminists] best ideas, we have an opening now in which to reclaim them. In seizing this moment, we might just bend the arc of the impending transformation in the direction of justice – and not only with respect to gender.²⁸³

Following Fraser’s theory, one could critically say that, the ‘integration’ of the ‘CESEE’ countries into the *MATILDA* programme is only a way of following capitalist demands in the form of EU policy. Sousa Santos puts it as follows:

The ways in which the university is submitting to the demands of capitalism (financial constraints and selective cuts, new hierarchies among disciplines and among departments, managerial changes, etc.) clearly show that its elitism and concurrent exclusions are not only economic, but also, racial, ethnocultural, epistemic, religious, and sexual. As the university becomes more and more compromised with capitalism, its compromise with colonialism and patriarchy becomes increasingly more visible as well.²⁸⁴

The compromise of the university with capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy de Sousa Santos is speaking of, shows within the consortium, for example in neoliberal patterns of the enforcement of the more powerful²⁸⁵. This becomes evident by *MATILDA* CEU’s move to Vienna (due to hostile political discourses towards gender and gender studies from the Hungarian government), Nottingham’s withdrawal from the programme (due to its neoliberal university structure), and Sofia’s struggle to survive (due to a poor material situation and hostile gender discourses). The European commission’s funding stopped when the programme implementation and the summer school ended which could be read as that there was no genuine interest of the commission to build a sustainable and equal exchange among the members of the programme.

²⁸² Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 220.

²⁸³ Nancy Fraser, “Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History,” *New Left Review*, no. 56 (2009): 117.

²⁸⁴ Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 220.

²⁸⁵ Cf.: “The decision against Erasmus Mundus was not just a decision against Sofia, it was a decision against Nottingham. The partners who were institutionally and/or materially in a better position (as opposed to Sofia and the University of Nottingham which runs its MA programs on the basis of tuition fees) prevailed, in the sense that everywhere where it was a *must* we, i.e. the consortium members working on the establishment of *MATILDA*, managed to establish a common denominator: we knew we just had to have a common curriculum, we had to have a common regulation for the languages, we had to, we had to, we had to ... - since otherwise we couldn’t have started the programme. By contrast, Erasmus Mundus was something that was not inescapably necessary, it was not a ‘we have to’. And those for whom *MATILDA* was materially feasible without Erasmus Mundus prevailed.” (Zimmermann, pos. 42)

Whereas the concept of *Europeanness* serves as a strategical tool to all the members of the consortium, it is obvious that Sofia is more dependent on the renowned predicate ‘European’ and the embeddedness in a network “of the best universities from Europe”²⁸⁶ than Nottingham for example, where gender awareness is part of the practice of historians and their history department.²⁸⁷ The existential difference between securing the existence of women*’s and gender history at one’s department and selling the programme to a department where the relevance of women*’s and gender history is not questioned in a comparable way should be noted. The more projects, programmes or events are institutionalized at one location (like a research platform on women*’s and gender history, a collection of women*’s estates, a journal of feminist historiography and a master’s programme like it is the case for Vienna), the better women*’s and gender researchers can fight direct threats to the given subject from the side of the so-called “gate keepers”²⁸⁸. Furthermore, the more a subject is presented, the more attention is paid to it – not only by students but also by institutions. This is especially important in a field that generally lacks acceptance, as can be seen in various ‘anti-gender’ movements across Europe or by the under-representation of the field in academia.

Finally, the notion ‘European’ passed through a change of meaning: From a positive connotation ten to 15 years ago, when the notion has moved and initiated an incredible amount in the educational landscape (to found such study programmes for example) and followed the intention of growing together and sharing common values etc., today is no longer on everyone’s lips. To be more precise, the idea still exists: If you look at the EU, you could provocatively say, through the above, that it is an association of neoliberal actors who follow capitalist demands in order to be able to survive in the scientific competition of the 21st century. From this point of view, Europe and/or *European* is still important within a European educational landscape, but in a completely different way. Still, the notion helps the legitimization of the field of women*’s and gender history, but if EU funds are included, EU policies behind these funds must not be negated either.

5.4.2 Patterns of Interpretation of ‘European’

The strategical potential of the terminus *European* once again shows location-dependent differences. Consequently, the ‘European strategy’ is differently applied at the different

²⁸⁶ Daskalova, pos. 63.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Harvey, pos. 71.

²⁸⁸ Daskalova, pos. 69.

institutions. This entails the following two patterns of interpretation of this space of knowledge that I would like to highlight:

- 1) **Additive:** Europe is understood as a structure of several states, to which new states are added over the years. The definition of Europe is likely to be compared with the definition of the EU. The additive approach claims that countries previously excluded must be added to the existing 'European' canon. Concerning the discipline of (European) women*'s and gender history, *European* is conceived thematically and geographically. Thematically in this sense refers to what kind of topics are negotiated, taught and researched within the discipline (for example: Is postsocialism part of the curriculum?). Geographically in this sense refers to the included countries and their perspectives.
- 2) **(Eurocentrism-)Critical:** Europe is understood as a union of unequal partners. Inequality within Europe is put into the center and questioned. The (Eurocentrism-)critical approach claims making inequalities visible and eliminating them as well as making Eurocentrism visible and criticize it. Concerning the discipline of (European) women*'s and gender history, *European* is conceived not only thematically and geographically but also conceptually, i.e. the whole discipline changes. In terms of perspectives from different locations, all these perspectives are on an equal footing; the same applies to different topics. In other words: The standard for scientific knowledge is no longer defined exclusively by the 'West', but different forms of knowledge are on an equal footing.

This dichotomy is in any case simplified and there are overlaps but the simplification helps to make existing patterns visible and illustrate my results. For example, if many topics from the 'EE' context are added to the field, also the discourse about and the content of (European) women*'s and gender history changes. In other words: A remarkable addition of 'EE' specific topics has effects on the concept of (European) women*'s and gender history. Whereas the first pattern tends to see Europe as a rather closed area that is not necessarily connected with the rest of the world, the second criticizes this demarcation. Otherwise stated, there are different ways of dealing with the inequalities mentioned above.

Firstly, the inequalities may be pushed into the background and avoided. Notably, there is a solidarity interpretation of the additive approach: Members attempt to pull along weaker members in the chain by solidarity networking to help weaker countries reach a similar standing

and agency. But the solidarity interpretation of this first variant also obscures the realities as it does not change the structures.

The second approach expresses a desire to put inequalities at the center and to fight for them to be officially resolved, without ‘semiperipheral’ countries having to rely on the aid of (European) ‘core’ networks to ‘survive’.²⁸⁹ In other words, approaches to Europe are location dependent and characterized by powerful structures like presented within the transfer and exchange of knowledge. With the help of the translation theory and with reference to discourses, the two patterns of additive and (Eurocentrism-)critical will be classified and critically assessed below. The two approaches represent two ideas of equality: First, an addition to the existing canon of power; second, the recognition of unequal power structures and the will to change and ultimately eliminate them.

5.4.2.1 Additive: Thematic and geographically

The additive concept is strongly connected with one of the major political alliances of the continent, the European Union, which in turn is linked to *MATILDA*. Based on the additive view, inequality is represented by the fact that not all countries of the European continent are part of this alliance and benefit from it. Therefore, this should be changed gradually, by enlarging the EU or more subversively, by creating networks of ‘WE’ or well-off countries and ‘EE’ or countries in marginal power positions. This illustrates the inequality and at the same time conceals it by supporting weaker members without changing the entire system, based on the knowledge of a more powerful position of the ‘WE’ countries.²⁹⁰ . For example, regarding anthologies on European women*’s and gender history, the additive perspective aims to represent all European countries equally. In other words, if a chapter is dedicated to the Austrian, French and British women*’s and gender history, this must also be guaranteed for Bulgaria and Hungary.²⁹¹ It may, however, sometimes be difficult to do justice to all European countries, since some scholars only publish in their native language, which may be unknown to

²⁸⁹ Cf.: “Unfortunately it’s very difficult to survive. And ALSO, we should take into consideration, that still in Western Europe (although all these problems that I just mentioned, exist there too) they still have much more opportunity to keep their programmes going on, COMPARED TO the situation in Bulgaria.” (Daskalova, pos. 85)

²⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁹¹ Cf.: “the almost complete neglect of ‘Eastern Europe’ in publications that claim to cover ‘Europe’. I am not referring here to the period of state socialism, when this would also be problematic but more understandable. The neglect or omission of ‘Eastern Europe’ has continued in recent publications that deal with Europe before the Second World War, even by some of the best and most sensitive women’s historians. Here I am thinking of Gisela Bock’s book from 2000 (in German) and 2002 (in English), entitled *Women in European History*. This incredibly well-researched, thorough, and much needed book only deals with Western Europe but, and that is the problem, without reflecting upon that limitation” de Haan, ““Is a European Women’s History Possible?“,”

‘Western’(-European) scholars. The lack of translations enlarges this academic gap.²⁹² But again, this only shows which countries and which languages are part of the ‘core’ and which are not within this perspective. The term *European* is often used uncritically with a pretence meaning of ‘equality’ for countries that do not have the starting conditions, i.e. the same historical, political, legal and social conditions.

The solidarity moment should be achieved by building common networks of both ‘poor’ and ‘wealthy’²⁹³ members. But the desire to finally overcome inequality through networks also conceals inequality if old patterns of power structures remain:

We [as Eastern Europeans and those who do Eastern European history] are involved and we are indeed integrated in this sense [...] and to me it was clear: ‘The programme will be the sum of its parts, no more and no less. It is inclusive in this sense, but in no other sense.’²⁹⁴

Of course the approach can be seen as a progress in the sense that formerly excluded locations are now included (thematically and geographically) and thus gain a certain visibility, but simply adding them does not change a general structure (on a conceptual level of the field) that privileges ‘WE’ countries over ‘CESEE’ countries.

5.4.2.2 (Eurocentrism-)Critical: Conceptually

The (eurocentrism-)critical perspective takes a more critical position: It does not only recognize inequality within Europe, but also asks for the reasons, aiming to visualize the embedded relationships and entanglements, for example, the question of how Europe was able to achieve global supremacy and thus establish a political alliance as important as the EU. Here, the entire global context is acknowledged. The EU is questioned as well as the progressive appearance of a Europe with ‘modern values’. Inequalities are placed at the center and power relations are questioned and criticized in the sense of decolonial voices, only to subsequently demand justice. While post- and decolonial voices mainly refer to the inequality relationship between the ‘global North’ and the ‘global South’, this concept can also be applied to the area within Europe. Europe as the idea that it is the modern center of the world is also heterogenous. The latter interestingly results in a sort of double ‘Orientalization’²⁹⁵ or, like Larry Wolff describes it, that

²⁹² Cf.: “Of course, this is also related to publications that exist or not and whether they are published in English, right? This is about the language of science and so on. As a world war historian, I would love to include HUNGARIAN historiography, but they only PUBLISH in HUNGARIAN. And then there is already a limit.” (Hämmerle, pos. 89)

²⁹³ Here: In the sense of material wealth but also scientific reputation etc.

²⁹⁴ Zimmermann, pos. 20.

²⁹⁵ *Orientalism* is a notion coined by Edward Said. With *orientalism* Said refers to a Western-centered, eurocentric perspective on the so-called ‘East’: “The ultimate goal, argued Said, was not knowledge of the

“the invention of Eastern Europe” by ‘WE’ could be defined as “an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization.”²⁹⁶ Because unlike the contrast pair of Orient and Occident, ‘EE’ was not only contrasted to ‘WE’, but also conceptualized as a mediator between Europe and the Orient.²⁹⁷ The peculiarity of ‘EE’ also lies in the fact that its borders of construction fade out like Wolff points out:

The idea of Eastern Europe was entangled with evolving Orientalism, for while Philosophic Geography casually excluded Eastern Europe from Europe, implicitly shifting it into Asia, scientific cartography seemed to contradict such fanciful construction. There was room for ambiguity. The geographical border between Europe and Asia was not unanimously fixed in the eighteenth century, located sometimes the Don, sometimes farther east at the Volga, and sometimes, as today, at the Urals. Such uncertainty encouraged the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe.²⁹⁸

With regard to the consortium, this means that despite the criticism of the terms ‘WE’, ‘EE’ or the insensitive use of *European* for such different countries like Bulgaria and France²⁹⁹, the gap within the consortium between ‘East’ and ‘West’ becomes visible. For example, by evaluating ‘Western’ standards as positive and well-developed in contrast to the ‘East’. And at the same time Sofia and Budapest are then added to the whole of Europe, which in turn seems to be the predominant one compared to the rest of the world. Transferred onto the concept of European women*’s and gender history, this criticism of Europe does not only expand the discipline geographically and thematically, but also gives the discipline a conceptual shift. The latter means to rethink the discipline as a whole and not only being more inclusive by adding topics and perspectives from formerly excluded countries. This conceptual shift within academia in general has been called for since the 1970s and operates under the name of Eurocentrism (critique). The questioning of Europe’s Western supremacy is also the first step in decolonizing the universities.³⁰⁰

The demand for an “integrative perspective”³⁰¹, i.e. the integration of ‘CESEE’ countries and also a thinking that goes beyond this, namely by reflecting on what this addition means for existing power relations, is contrasted with a position that tends to push these demands into the

East, but European self-knowledge, acquired through a fabricated counter-image. What we continue to see in almost every representation of the East today is the epistemological dichotomization that began taking shape in these early views – the strict opposition between the self and the other, between what belongs to ourselves and what is foreign, between Europe and the Orient.” Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 109.

²⁹⁶ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 7.

²⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Cf. the chapter on *Doing ‘East’ and ‘West’* of the present work.

³⁰⁰ Cf.: Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*.

³⁰¹ Zimmermann, pos. 62.

background. The additive approach also tends to emphasize the academic strategy of a meaningful network for all participants without acknowledging existing inequalities. This only underlines the advantages of *European* and the academic strategy of such a network for ‘core’ countries: The creation of a European network, the establishment of a renowned programme that positions itself as part of EU policies and which upgrades the status of the respective universities. But this perspective ignores advantages for ‘semiperipheral’ countries due to the underlying power structures. Semiperipheral countries are more likely to expand their agency through the participation in such a network only because the ‘core’ area kind of shares their privilege with the ‘semiperiphery’. Or, it is listened to knowledge from the ‘semiperiphery’ only because it is part of a renowned European network, including ‘core’ countries.

5.5 Reflections on Eurocentrism

I would like to expand on Eurocentrism within the consortium but also beyond more closely in the following. The historian Robert Marks defines the positioning of Europe in the center or core as follows:

The Eurocentric world view regards Europe as the only active creator of world history, its ‘original source’ so to speak. Europe acts while the rest of the world obeys. Europe has creative power, the rest of the world is passive. Europe makes history, the rest of the world has none until it comes into contact with Europe. Europe is the center, the rest of the world is its periphery. Only Europeans are capable of change or modernisation, the rest of the world is not.³⁰²

As a continuation of colonial practice (from the ‘global North’ to the ‘global South’) this international theory is applied on the European area. For this purpose, principles of global injustice appear within the European area when it is assumed that a transfer of knowledge in a Europe growing together after 1989 must happen through a one-sided transfer from ‘West’ to ‘East’. ‘Othering’ in Said’s sense legitimizes the superior positioning of the ‘West’ towards the ‘East’. The EU as a globally powerful institution was able to form itself primarily by positioning Europe as the ‘center’ or ‘core’. Being the financial basis of the *MATILDA* programme, the EU interests play an important role – besides political and economic interests of the respective locations. This self-elevation of the ‘West’ also gives rise to so-called translation errors. Although these are based on mutual assumptions which are incorrectly applied or translated, the firmly established hegemonic structures mean that the ‘East’ is misunderstood much more often than the ‘West’, particularly, since the ‘East’ is perceived as a homogeneous unit. This

³⁰² Robert Marks, *Die Ursprünge der modernen Welt: Eine globale Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Theiss Konrad, 2006), http://deposit.dnb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?id=2715734&prov=M&dok_var=1&dok_ext=htm, 20.

privileged perspective culminates in the notion *European*, which is used equally for ‘CESEE’ and ‘WE’ subjects, although there are differences and inequalities concealed by the uniform application of the term. Daskalova emphasizes the tendency that through the criticism of ‘CESEE’ scholars and feminists, the term *European* is used much more careful and that the discourse nowadays is “much more encompassing, including at least SOME of East European countries.”³⁰³ Daskalova’s statement represents the additive perspective in a sense that more countries which were formerly excluded are now part of a discourse, but a systemic change is yet to come. The more sensible use of the notion *European* at least in some contexts can be rated as an effort within this process. Still, ‘Western’ methods, culture, images and structures are described as positive, renowned, desirable and developed without mentioning the role of Europe in a global context. And therefore, how Europe, the ‘West’, could become this sort of aspired role model in which the European or ‘Western’ way appears as a sort of final goal which the rest of the world should sought-after. In adopting standards and norms which are described as European in form of regulations of the EU (*Acquis communautaire*) a hegemonical discourse of the civilized European high culture manifests: For example, in news reporting, scholarly standard works, school education and historiography³⁰⁴ – and also within the consortium. ‘Western’ and European standards like the “Erasmus philosophy”³⁰⁵ or institutions which, like the CEU, can position themselves as rich, English-speaking and internationally renowned are considered as renowned and worthy of cooperation. That means cohesion with the East: ‘Yes, but only in moderate measure.’ And de facto, from a ‘core’-perspective, the CEU is also considered as ‘Western’ and part of the ‘core’.³⁰⁶ Within this core-semiperiphery divide the difference between the university of Sofia and the university of Budapest emerges again. Due to its status as a private university based in New York, the CEU has a completely different position than Sofia. Not only through obvious material differences, but also through differences in reputation, which are likewise evident among the members of the consortium:

³⁰³ Daskalova, pos. 49.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 220.

³⁰⁵ Schweitzer, pos. 58.

³⁰⁶ To put it more directly: The selection of the consortium partners is very West-oriented. Actually, the ‘East’ is not really accepted, as can be seen in the primary ‘Western’ curricula and partly pejorative comments towards Sofia, while such comments are not made towards the CEU as it seems ‘Western enough’. This inevitably leads to an analogy to postcolonial theory and the following critical thought: “If African, what kind of African? One who has internalized the colonial world outlook or one attempting to break free from the inherited slave consciousness?” Thiong’o, Ngugi wa (1986), *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey, 101–102. Cited in: Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the University,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle: Constructing the epistemologies of the Global South*, ed. Boaventura d. S. Santos and Maria P. Meneses, 219–39, *Epistemologies of the south* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 233.

So the students always came back very, very satisfied from the CEU in Budapest. On the other hand, [...] the Bulgarians / [...] there weren't enough classes, well / it was awful. I think they were doing that / *MATILDA*'s classes were done in addition to their own specialities in some way.³⁰⁷

While it is presented here as if only the Bulgarian colleagues used their own specialities to fill the *MATILDA* curriculum, this was the common practice of all locations:

MATILDA is a SMALL programme. That's good and bad, but *MATILDA* could ALWAYS only 'NIBBLE' from other courses. We could not offer our own courses for *MATILDA*, but we had to make the programme of women's and gender history creditable here [...] ALSO for *MATILDA*.³⁰⁸

Whereas the 'West' is generally perceived in a positive way, the 'East', on the other hand, is associated with being 'backward'³⁰⁹ or 'awful'³¹⁰. Furthermore, scholars from Bulgaria are not highlighted for their professionalism, but are presented as those who benefit from travelling to Europe through the programme.³¹¹ According to this argumentation, historiography in 'WE' was perceived as 'more advanced'³¹² at that time and the range of classes is said to be wealthier than in the 'East'.³¹³ It can also be observed that topics, specific to former socialist countries, are partly considered less important than, for example, events specific to 'WE':

One day, we were in Sofia and there was their rector who was not at all in favor of them teaching women and gender. Yes. Because it was still VERY reactionary. It was still the Soviet spirit [...] The history of proletarian revolutions was more important than the history of feminist women. They talked about the proletarians in general, but not about the history of feminism or even the concept of gender, and that was complicated.³¹⁴

The university, or the historiography, of Sofia is presented in several places as regressive in comparison to the rest of the 'Western' part of the consortium. Different conditions of the respective locations are only partially seen: Due to different professional titles the basis for

³⁰⁷ Schweitzer, pos. 52.

³⁰⁸ Hämmerle, pos. 43.

³⁰⁹ Cf.: "So, the historiography of women was not very developed in their country [Bulgaria]." (Schweitzer, pos. 84)

³¹⁰ Cf. Ibid., pos. 52.

³¹¹ Cf.: "In the spirit of Brussels it was to bring together the research of East and West. This is the example of Daskalova and Koleva who were / who came to do their research in France, in England. They travelled a lot. In [...] *MATILDA* there was the possibility to make students and teachers travel. So, it was really an idea, we'll say a cultural mix, in fact. Trying to get the academics from the East out of their cocoon / to give them opportunities to travel." (Ibid., pos. 108)

Cf. also Ibid., pos. 50-52.

³¹² Ibid., pos. 52.

³¹³ Cf.: "We here in Vienna had a WEALTH of women's and gender history courses and in Sofia there are very few. And in Lyon they do very much social history, economic history." (Hämmerle, pos. 51)

³¹⁴ Schweitzer, pos. 122.

negotiations can be simplified or made more difficult³¹⁵; or, Bulgaria's focus on communism and the proletarian movement is criticized and said that they would not even focus on feminist aspects of socialism, while France, for example, has struggled for a long time with the acceptance of a gendered approach itself according to Schweitzer.³¹⁶ Moreover, French historiography emphasizes itself on specific national focuses such as the French Revolution³¹⁷ which is not criticized the same way as Bulgaria's focus on communism. Again, it must be acknowledged that especially in the so-called transition phase of (post)socialist countries, the above-mentioned topics were very relevant and therefore must be given a special focus in the curriculum. Although Schweitzer emphasizes that it is precisely the lack of feminist aspects of these topics, and that this is her actual criticism, the respective conditions must be considered: the conditions in Lyon's university are fundamentally different from those in Sofia (for example concerning the access to funds, international journals or the acceptance of the field within the university in general etc.).

The ignorance of the universities' varying starting points paired with 'Western' supremacy often shows in a narrative of 'othering', a familiar dichotomy is for example progressive vs. retrograde. This is known from colonial discourses and also appears in the interview transcripts: Schweitzer, one of the founders of *MATILDA* Lyon, categorizes the teachers into three groups: The first group is described rather altruistic: Their intention of building such a programme is said to be mainly in the interest of the students – so they could benefit from the content but also from the European exchange as part of the programme. The second group is said to participate in such a programme mostly for personal career reasons, i.e. being able to mention a renowned, international programme on their CV. The third group is dedicated Sofia's founders who, according to Schweitzer, wanted to go out of the 'East' into the 'West', i.e. to travel to 'WE' countries and do their research there.³¹⁸ This categorization is problematic in multiple ways: Firstly, the 'East' is limited to the Bulgarian colleagues, which reflects the above-mentioned phenomenon of homogenization of the 'East'. And furthermore, the fact that the Bulgarian university was also considered for strategic reasons, i.e. because 'CESEE' positions were

³¹⁵ Cf.: "It was [...] especially difficult for Sofia. For them, it was very hard. Because [...] when you're a professor in France, Germany, Austria and so on or in England. When you have the title of a teacher you CAN / have more power than someone who doesn't have the title." (Ibid., pos. 122)

³¹⁶ Cf.: "so in France it was a very long story, [...] historians have resisted *gender* a lot. The discussion was interminable. [...] When we established *MATILDA*, I think the problem of *gender* was solved. We reasoned in *gender* I would say." (Ibid., pos. 86)

³¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., pos. 108.

³¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., pos. 48.

desired integration partners on the part of the EU, and thus made funding by the European commission more likely, is not considered in this perspective. The statement also conceals the fact that Bulgarian colleagues are interesting partners based on their academic contribution or special position. For example, Koleva is an expert in Oral History³¹⁹, Daskalova held the presidency of the IFRWH at the time³²⁰.

Above all, the Eurocentric approach acts as if everyone had the same preconditions and as if it were just a question of ‘doing the right thing’. The term “prima inter pares”³²¹ as a designation for Vienna also fits in with this: According to the *Duden*, the term describes the following: “First among equals, without precedence”³²² – which is simply not the case if we consider the different economic, political and historical parameters within the consortium, elaborated above.

5.5.1 Commentary on the Choice of Language and Language Requirements within *MATILDA*

A common lingua franca for communication in an international network seems reasonable, but still there is no question that using English with its colonial history as lingua franca must be crucially reflected.³²³ Power structures that have been tried and tested for decades are continuing, which is also reflected in the barely questioned choice of English as lingua franca within the *MATILDA* consortium, at least from the Western perspective.³²⁴ If a colonial lingua franca is already chosen, why are the other languages of the consortium not even equally assessed? Note that according to the administrative power of the programme, “ALL languages are equal, but these [English, French and German] are the three business languages.”³²⁵ Her ‘but’ clearly reflects that de facto not all languages are equal: The requirements of the Consortium Agreement reflect Eurocentric hierarchies as the requirements for English, French and German language skills are higher than for Bulgarian. As the CEU only teaches in English

³¹⁹ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 55.

³²⁰ “No, actually the colleagues from Vienna university contacted me with the suggestion to develop this kind of Joint Degree and apply for European funding for development of the programme and I agreed. They / probably because I was at that point the president of the federation, they contacted me.” (Daskalova, pos. 9)

³²¹ Schmidt-Dengler (2019): *AW: MATILDA Masterarbeit* [E-Mail vom 26.10.2019]

³²² Wissenschaftl. Rat d. Dudenred., ed., *Fremdwörter*, 4. Aufl., Duden Band 5 (s.l.: Dudenverlag, 1992), 622.

³²³ Cf.: Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 237–38.

³²⁴ Cf.: “their language [English] is the universal language anyway” (Schweitzer, pos. 186)

Cf. also: “I mean, it was easy for all the English speakers. The common language is English. I’m afraid that is a sad reflection of the [...] LACK OF language competence in Britain, but also a sort of / **it’s the lingua franca**” [emphasized by the author] (Harvey, pos. 57)

³²⁵ Schmidt-Dengler, pos. 142.

the students are not even obliged to do a minimum of training hours in Hungarian.³²⁶ Note also, that the recent thesis guidelines of *MATILDA* include the following options concerning the thesis' language: "The thesis must be written in English, German, Italian or French."³²⁷ Whereas Italian is added as an accepted thesis language because of the newly gained *MATILDA* location Padua, Hungarian or Bulgarian are still no options – although all the countries are part of the *MATILDA* consortium. Of course, it is also a question of the language capabilities of the two supervisors, but the guidelines do not even give the option: 'If agreed with both supervisors, the students are allowed to write in Hungarian or Bulgarian'. So, how should these dynamics change? Colonial realities are clearly systematically maintained.

While the courses in Sofia are taught in English from the second semester on³²⁸ and in Budapest the language of instruction is exclusively English, courses or lectures in Lyon and Vienna are rarely held in English. Even if courses in English are offered, exceptions are made: During my semester in Lyon, I participated in the course *Critical Readings*, a compulsory course of the Lyon *MATILDA* programme, which teaches the basics for "Critical reading of basic texts in English language in gender studies, covering a wide range of disciplines."³²⁹ I quickly learned that most of the lessons were held in French and even the announced basic texts in the English language where actually most of the time translations from French.³³⁰

The fact that a certain double standard is applied in the choice of English is certainly due to the abovementioned fact that in Hungary and Bulgaria most of the courses are taught in English. This fact also speaks for itself, but the exchange does not only consist of attending courses at the university, but ideally, the students also experience the country outside the university and thus inevitably encounter the respective language. A higher valuation of German or French is also interesting in that, as Schweitzer says, German, for example, is by no means a common language choice for French students³³¹, just as French is not a common language for German-

³²⁶ Cf. *MATILDA* consortium, "Joint Programme Description for *MATILDA*: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008)," 4–5.

³²⁷ *MATILDA* consortium, "Thesis Guidelines *MATILDA* (Stand 2019),".

³²⁸ Cf. *MATILDA* consortium, "Joint Programme Description for *MATILDA*: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008)," 5.

Cf. also: "[I]n the second semester we were obliged to teach in English, because of this exchange agreement with *MATILDA* partners. During the second semester we always have had our courses taught in English BUT since this year, this 2019-2020 academic year, we started to teach all the courses, starting from the first semester, in English." (Daskalova, pos. 17)

³²⁹ Université Lumière II, "Master *MATILDA*, Contenu," <https://mastergenrelyon.univ-lyon2.fr/matilda-master-1-semester-2-657080.kjsp?RH=1447067673172> (accessed August 6, 2020).

³³⁰ For example one text of Sarah Grimké in French translation by Colette Collomb-Boureau, *Les sœurs Grimké : de l'anti-esclavagisme aux droits des femmes*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2016.

³³¹ Cf. Schweitzer, pos. 182.

speaking students³³². Both French and German are assigned to a small elite: “German in France is becoming a rare language, like Greek. And so one, it is a rare language and two, it is the language that is reserved for very good students”³³³ According to these statements, it would make no difference whether French students were learning German or Bulgarian or whether Austrian students were learning French or Bulgarian. For the English-speaking students, any foreign language seems to be difficult anyway due to their linguistic supremacy. And also the French are often less proficient in English than, for example, other Romance languages such as Italian and Spanish, due to the linguistic relationship on the one hand and culture-bound ties to the languages on the other: “English is a universal language, but there are many students who speak Spanish or Italian in France, BECAUSE they are [linguistic] descendants. [...] The culture is Hispanic or Italian in their FAMILY.”³³⁴

These power relations also manifest in a practical way, but remain invisible to those who are not affected personally: Since all partners were obliged to evaluate the M.A. theses of the students who came to their university, the common lingua franca still does not protect from the fact that Daskalova de facto supervises and corrects theses in three languages, none of which is her mother tongue as opposed to her colleagues in Vienna, who read the dissertation in either their mother tongue or in English:

[This] is really a big burden for us, because in Vienna, when they evaluate OUR students who were at the Vienna university, those students are expected to write either in German or in English. In other words, our colleagues from Vienna are expected to know TWO languages, their own and English while I am reading in three languages and all three languages are not my NATIVE languages.³³⁵

Moreover, the material aspect which is linked to the ‘core’ language English is crucial to the semiperipheral context: “To get the funding I have to speak the language (both the foreign language in which the applications are submitted, and the language of theory) that foundations understand.”³³⁶ This also has an effect on a neoliberal level: English is introduced to more and more institutions in order to stay competitive:

During the second semester we always have had our courses taught in English BUT since this year, this 2019-2020 academic year, we started to teach all the courses, starting from the first semester, in English. Because during these more than ten years, we got many inquiries from people coming from different countries around the world, asking us to admit them in our programme but they expected us to teach all the courses in English. And **in order to be**

³³² Cf. Ibid., pos. 212.

³³³ Ibid., pos. 182.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Daskalova, pos. 51.

³³⁶ Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there*, 8–9.

competitive and be able to accept such students from this academic year we started to teach everything in English.³³⁷ [Emphasized by author]

Whereas Daskalova has no doubt that Bulgarian students easily follow courses in English, Harvey on the contrary is concerned about the successful arrival of British students abroad because of their lack of language skills³³⁸. This is just another demonstration of a well-rehearsed practice of power: those who already have advantages within existing power relations ensure that these can continue to exist, leading to a comfortable life on their side. For British students, it is sufficient to speak their mother tongue, whereas students from Bulgaria speak at least English in addition to their mother tongue; and for the teachers, it becomes a requirement to teach and correct assignments in at least two more foreign languages. The fact that the choice of English as the lingua franca is not only due to Eurocentric power structures but also to neoliberal factors confirms de Sousa Santo's thesis that universities worldwide are facing many challenges due to the global domination of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.³³⁹ Language is thus ultimately just another means of cementing the 'Western' hegemony and oppressing the 'East'.

5.5.2 Content-level: Women*'s and Gender History

At the content level of women*'s and gender history, Eurocentrism is most evident in the differences in the respective curricula of the locations. 'WE' and US-American knowledge is an integral element of the 'EE' syllabus. This is why scholars from the 'CESEE' region like Daskalova demand more equality in terms of the inclusion of their particular knowledge as well in 'WE' (and US-American) curricula.³⁴⁰ Hungary and Bulgaria also teach courses on 'WE' and the U.S. for example as well as the comparison of 'EE' and 'WE' is part of their curriculum.³⁴¹ One might say that the huge impact of 'WE' and American knowledge at the 'EE' universities is also because the discipline of women*'s and gender history has its origins in the 'West'. Therefore, the 'West' must be mentioned to reflect the history of the discipline's origins like Daskalova emphasizes "the development of the field, its establishment as an academical discipline TROUGHOUT the United States and Western Europe and how it

³³⁷ Daskalova, pos. 17.

³³⁸ Cf.: "KNOWING that a lot of British students don't have the languages. So they would be restricted REALLY if they didn't have very fluent French or German. They would be pretty much restricted going to CEU, possibly to Sofia. So that was a worry." (Harvey, pos. 105)

³³⁹ Cf.: Boaventura d. S. Santos, "Decolonizing the university," in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 219.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Daskalova, pos. 73.

³⁴¹ Cf. Daskalova, Pos. 11, 73.

appeared to become a part of our curricula in Eastern Europe as well.”³⁴² Nevertheless, ‘EE’ scholars claim an equal share of their knowledge in ‘Western’ curricula not only from a Eurocentrism critical perspective or from a marginalized position, but also due to crucial differences which would broaden the field in general:

Because when we speak about Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, before the modernisation process started, [...] during the 19th and even up until mid-20th century – all those East-European countries were peasant societies with completely different contexts compared to the Western, industrial and urban societies. So, in this respect, I think the knowledge about the East-European modernisation process and also women’s emancipation within this particular context of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe during the 19th and 20th century, should ENTER the Western curricula as well.³⁴³

While ‘Western’ knowledge is at least equally represented in Bulgaria and Hungary, ‘CESEE’ knowledge is only marginally represented in the ‘Western’ locations and often remains at the personal and individual level. Harvey emphasizes, for example, that the knowledge and experience reports from ‘EE’ in particular encouraged a true-to-life form of exchange and made knowledge more tangible through the cooperation of the consortium:

That was, I think, a real revelation to see how women’s history and gender history was being institutionalised in Sofia. I remember a fantastic trip we had to the national museum in Bulgaria and the discussions we had with Krassimira [Daskalova] and Daniela [Koleva] about how Bulgaria was coming to terms, or not coming to terms with its national history and how it’s presenting it. [...] A sort of [...] reinstallation of a patriotic narrative and a very particular sort: post-communism. I mean this, all for us was a great adventure and enlightenment, if you like.³⁴⁴

The consortium seems to have accepted that *MATILDA*’s content will mainly be the sum of its parts and therefore the integration of ‘CESEE’ knowledge, i.e. leaving established ‘WE’ patterns, would not be the first claim on their agenda. This sort of suggests that there would be an option or a decision to take whether women*’s and gender history within the *MATILDA* consortium is either done from an ‘WE’ perspective – which can be linked to the additive perspective, i.e. “including” CESEE³⁴⁵ – or from a more inclusive and critical approach. Namely one that goes beyond ‘WE’ patterns by questioning these, i.e. “studying Europe from a critical global perspective”³⁴⁶ – which is close to the Eurocentrism-critical perspective.

³⁴² Daskalova, Pos. 11.

³⁴³ Daskalova, Pos. 73.

³⁴⁴ Harvey, Pos. 123.

³⁴⁵ “We [as Eastern Europeans and those who do Eastern European history] are involved and we are indeed integrated in this sense [...] and to me it was clear: ‘The programme will be the sum of its parts, no more and no less. It is inclusive in this sense, but in no other sense.’” (Zimmermann, pos. 20)

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pos. 16.

However, the latter was rather expressed as a wish or as a certain hope for the future³⁴⁷ and the criticism of the additive approach was less in the foreground, because at the same time there was an awareness that this was a coalition involving diverse scholars who each attach their own expectations and interests to the joint project *MATILDA*.³⁴⁸ It was actually clear from the beginning that above all the personal specifics of the teachers would contribute to the content, and also that at the individual locations there was hardly any room for new classes³⁴⁹, but rather that they had to be chosen from the existing syllabus and existing classes then only could be tailored to the programme in a processual way.³⁵⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that the founders rated the achieved existence of the study programme as a great success.³⁵¹ This shows that for most of the interviewees, the emancipatory progress through the *MATILDA* programme lay primarily in the anchoring of women*’s and gender history at the respective locations, but not in a more inclusive handling of contents and perspectives from ‘CESEE’³⁵² in ‘WE’ curricula. Thus, Harvey also says that the European unifying moment in the consortium was mainly based on the mandatory exchange:

It was understood that in different universities, we would offer what we could. That reflected our specialisms, the European element is almost the students’ – so-to-speak – experience [...] through their MOBILITY. [...] I don’t think for instance that in our research methods course, we felt that it was necessary to try and do, you know, an introduction to women’s and gender history in the European CONTEXT. I mean [...] we took texts that were in English or from the Anglo-American world and people, if they were writing their thesis about, you know, Vienna or Bulgaria, they **would hopefully be able** to apply those methods to whatever material they were working on.³⁵³ [Emphasized by the author]

The statement shows that the awareness for a diverse approach to women*’s and gender history within the European context would be preferable, but the reality looks different: In Nottingham key texts are from the US and Britain, and if students reflected on a specific Bulgarian or Austrian question, it was assumed that they could use those Anglophone texts for their research.

³⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 28-30.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pos. 16.

³⁴⁹ Cf.: “It was clear to all of us that there would be hardly any resources to develop new classes.” (*Ibid.*, pos. 30)

³⁵⁰ Cf.: “the courses had to be the same everywhere. And the only university that didn’t have a problem with that was the CEU because they [...] were already doing a lot of women’s and gender history. They already had a curriculum almost. And the other universities, even in Lyon [...] it was complicated. It took several years before we could guarantee a *MATILDA Histoire des femmes et du genre* (‘women’s and gender history’) curriculum.” (Schweitzer, pos. 52)

³⁵¹ Cf.: “Well. The success is, crudely put, that *MATILDA* exists [...] and I mean that very seriously and I think most people saw it that way back then too: that it is an extraordinary thing in itself that we will manage to create and run such a common programme with the obligatory exchange semester or semesters and, back then, also with the obligatory summer school. Besides that there were certainly different hopes attached to it from all sides” (Zimmermann, pos. 28-30)

³⁵² Cf. Harvey, pos. 141.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, pos. 97.

Translational theory argues how important it is to genuinely understand the specific background of cultures and locations and to acknowledge the fact that “translation largely served the practice of European representation.”³⁵⁴ In Harvey’s cautious formulation: ‘would hopefully be able’, one can already assume that she is aware of this problem, but that the academic or general structures make it difficult to do justice to all locations. Still, the statement shows as well that the limitation within the consortium (due to academical standards and differing national administrations) reproduce hegemonical structures. Assumably, the specialisms of the respective lecturers were also characterised by hegemonic structures.³⁵⁵ The statement also underlines the fact that the locations were often limited to national knowledge and that the mobility or the summer schools represented the real ‘European’ element, the space where national borders could be crossed and true exchange was possible – these places allowed for common understanding and opened up discussions on translational misunderstandings like the use of the notion *European*. There was an awareness of existing patterns of discrimination in so far as categories of analysis such as the aforementioned Eurocentrism, or inequality relations between ‘EE’ and ‘WE’ were mentioned. Moreover, the ground was prepared for expressing criticism of women*’s and gender history in practice:

Yes, we need women’s and gender history [...] and – and I deliberately use the term ‘and’ here rather than ‘but’ – [...] I always find that European women’s and gender history as a field, taken as a whole, is not critical enough, that it is too immanent, that the global South is not taken appropriately into account, that the material discrepancies and unequal relations between East and West are not appropriately considered, that the category of class deserves more attention. As far as I am concerned, I cannot identify with the term *women’s and gender history* without adding this ‘and’ [...] From this perspective *MATILDA* too is something mixed: Some are interested in what for me comes after the ‘and’, for others the issues mentioned are more or less irrelevant; some focus on class and on material inequality and unequal relationships across space, others don’t.³⁵⁶

The comment shows that European women*’s and gender history can be and is taught in different ways: For Zimmermann the overall output of studies on European women*’s and gender history is still too uncritical. Many of her colleagues talk about entanglements and relationships, she says, but very few of them do it in a way that focuses on global inequalities and hierarchies beyond gender.³⁵⁷ Zimmermann’s remarks concerning approaches within the

³⁵⁴ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural turns*, 179.

³⁵⁵ Cf.: “All over the world, the university is facing many challenges [...] due in part to the uneven and combined ways in which the three main forms of modern domination (capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy) have been operating since the sixteenth century in different regions of the world.” Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 219.

³⁵⁶ Zimmermann, pos. 60.

³⁵⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 20.

field remind of the two patterns presented in the present work: Additive and more on a thematic and geographical level on the one hand, and (Eurocentrism-)critical, questioning the concept of the field on the other hand. Hämmerle for example speaks of “the attempt [of the programme] to bring together different European universities and centers for women*’s and gender research, to develop something COMMON and to install a European comparative women*’s and gender history,”³⁵⁸ and she emphasizes the method of *entangled history*. She stresses on the interwovenness and fluctuations of different context within European women*’s and gender history: “In terms of power, this is NEVER one-sided from a more powerful producer of knowledge to a less powerful one, but fluctuations go in both directions.”³⁵⁹ However, generally, Hämmerle believes that the history of women* and gender is still partly in state-national or regional tracks, and although these tracks are left from time to time, she encounters the question of the achievement of “a truly COMMON EUROPEAN space of knowledge” with scepticism and would not say that it is achieved according to her definition.³⁶⁰ And there are other voices, like Zimmermann’s, for whom the discipline is still far too embedded in mainstream historiography and too uncritical. For example, the gender history of Bulgaria and Hungary could get their own part in an anthology on European gender history in which they were previously missing. This would be an addition of a story that had previously received no attention. Likewise, it allows for the comparison with other European countries. Note that it would be a lot harder to justify why no space was given to the history of Bulgaria and Hungary in the previous edition, turning the perspective around and making power structures transparent. Moreover, we need to ask ourselves how useful a European comparative perspective on women*’s and gender history is and if not per se the subject has to be approached from a global perspective anyways, because most of the inequalities analyzed in the present work all go back to the continuum of ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’.

Nevertheless, the consortium seemed to be contented with the fact that the demand for equality varies among members and locations. In Zimmermann’s abovementioned example, the conflict is resolved in a personal way, namely, not to identify completely with the discipline and to accept that *MATILDA* would only be ‘the sum of its parts’.³⁶¹ A further obstacle, which hindered the consortium to apply a more (Eurocentrism-)critical perspective, are the existing university

³⁵⁸ Hämmerle, pos. 95.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., pos. 39.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid., pos. 79.

³⁶¹ Cf.: “As far as I am concerned, I cannot identify with the term women’s and gender history without adding this ‘and’. In other words, for me one of the most important questions to be asked is: What kind of women’s and gender history should we do, is somebody, am I doing?” (Zimmermann, pos. 60)

structures which have been in the way of a perspective which goes beyond established 'WE' and hierarchical patterns. Apparently, this would have meant a great deal of effort:

POLITICALLY, I think yes, you're right, global history and not just the history of the empires but history of the empires from the perspective of the colonized. You know, that is DEFINITELY the sort of IDEAL I think that one is trying to achieve. But not necessarily always easy to realize. Mhm (thoughtfully) you know, a quick reform of the syllabus, that's quite a challenge.³⁶²

But, and this seems to be a very important point, not only do the institutional structures hide and reproduce patterns of discrimination, but on a personal level these patterns are also deeply rooted, as demonstrated by an anecdote from the early days of *MATILDA*: Zimmermann remembers that when the geographical focus of *MATILDA* was discussed, i.e. the question whether *MATILDA* would focus on Europe or go beyond Europe, one colleague who advocated against going beyond Europe, aiming to cut the discussion short, simply stated: "It's not my expertise,"³⁶³ The latter reminded Zimmermann of earlier discussions in the discipline of history when the perspective of women* and gender history was rejected with exactly this same sentence, she reports; and still the consortium seemed to be fine with this, if, as a consequence, this meant the programme could still take place. Although *MATILDA* or European women*'s and gender history pursues the approach of integrating 'CESEE' positions more strongly, this does not fundamentally fight (inner-European) inequality which demonstrates very clearly how deeply colonial patterns are anchored in the Eurocentric 'Western' university.³⁶⁴ The question arises whether women*'s and gender history can ignore global inequalities while being part of the powerful continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery'.

5.5.3 Thoughts on a Global History

It's a thematic and geographical expansion. There is a process of normalization I would say. I think in fact that the *MATILDA* colleagues in the West today are more open to issues related to the history of Eastern Europe. Yet this doesn't equal automatically the change in perspective, the deeper and more critical engagement I personally would love to see.³⁶⁵

Following Zimmermann there is a thematic and geographical expansion on the one hand, which for her goes hand in hand with a general process of normalization of all-European collaboration. This means that topics such as the gender perspective have been added, and geographically, more countries, regions and perspectives have been added to the existing canon over the years.

³⁶² Harvey, pos. 95.

³⁶³ Zimmermann, pos. 16.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Brunner, *Epistemische Gewalt*, 299.

³⁶⁵ Zimmermann, pos. 20.

She sees this process as multi-causal: reasons such as institutional change in the European higher education area and EU-sponsored research, and the growth of new and younger colleagues, i.e. of a new generation, contributed their part as much as a general change that has taken place in Europe in the past decades³⁶⁶: “It has become more normal that in international contexts, projects, research centers, institutes, Eastern European topics and researchers are also involved, and sometimes even on a somewhat less unequal footing.”³⁶⁷ According to Zimmermann, however, these developments should by no means be confused with a process of conceptual expansion.³⁶⁸ Zimmermann criticizes that many colleagues nowadays speak of entanglements and relations between countries, events etc. but the inequality in these entanglements remains hidden as she experiences it – still present within the use of the term *European* which is used “much more encompassing, including at least SOME of East European countries”³⁶⁹ today but still not everywhere.

Daskalova’s and Zimmermann’s observations of a lack of a conceptual shift within the field illustrate with the difference of the additive and a (Eurocentrism-)critical perspectives and simultaneously show the weakness of the additive method. This inner-European critical approach is linked to the historiographical turn of a post- and decolonial perspective. Their claim is the telling of a global history – including the perspective of the colonized and marginalized. For gender history a global and critical approach to history is more important today than it was when *MATILDA* was founded.

For the present work, this global-critical approach seems indispensable, especially because claims of decolonizing the university are still perceived as a process that is fairly recent but therefore quite established.³⁷⁰ Harvey underlines the additional effort and work it costs to tell “history of the empires from the perspective of the colonized.”³⁷¹ Even though the knowledge of the need to decolonize the curricula is present, the implementation of it still seems to be an ‘ideal’³⁷², something that is yet to come. The difficulty or ‘extra effort’, as she calls it, of transforming the curriculum and demonstrating ‘Western’ hegemony, as well as adopting a global-critical perspective on Europe, is not only due to increased workload, administrative complications or personal laziness or disinterest. The fact that this ‘change in perspective, the

³⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pos. 88.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pos. 20.

³⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ Daskalova, pos. 49.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Harvey, pos. 95.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Ibid.*

deeper and more critical engagement’, as Zimmerman puts it, does not take place, i.e. that relationships are not examined for inequalities but are simply juxtaposed, is part of a larger discourse: the discourse of a ‘Western’ superiority that separates itself from the inferior ‘East’. To start this process of decolonizing at the universities, we must take into consideration that the process of colonialism did not end with the colonies’ independence but continues by taking on new forms.³⁷³ These new forms are visible at universities, which Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls *university colonialism*:

[T]he fact that the criteria defining the curricula, the faculty, and the student body are based on an ideology that justifies the superiority of the culture upholding it on the following fallacy: the (presumed) superiority of the said culture, though based on ethnicracial and epistemic criteria, is presented as ineluctable because the culture supporting it is (supposedly) the only true one. Thus, the imposition of one culture upon another appears totally justified.³⁷⁴

Of course, the process of decolonization will not be easy, but this is not a reason why we should stop trying to implement it. Change requires discomfort and therefore leaving old patterns and structures.

Against this background, it must be emphasized once again that I am historically ‘socialized’ differently than the founders: The generational aspect should be noted here. For me, it is self-evident that women*’s and gender history must be approached from a global historical perspective in which inequalities must be centralized; therefore, the term *European* (as part of the programme title) makes sense to me only when indicating that the focus is on the European area. This differentiates *MATILDA* from other programmes which often proclaim to cover a universal global perspective, even though only a small part of the world is indeed covered, namely, North-America and ‘WE’. For the academical field of women*’s and gender history rooted in the North-American and ‘WE’ context, a global approach which considers global inequalities must be transparent concerning these roots and consider the hegemonical context of the continuum of ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’ and including perspectives from the ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’ as well as from the ‘core’ area.

5.5.4 Thoughts on ‘Modernity’

In France, the structure of the historical discipline made a break at the time of the French Revolution, so in France contemporary history begins with the French Revolution and the time

³⁷³ Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, footnote 1, 219; 238.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

period BEFORE 1789 is called modern history. But this is a break that is particular to FRANCE.³⁷⁵

This quotation shows a Eurocentric understanding of historiography as the French Revolution is centrally positioned. To clarify the terminology: The term *modern history* which Schweitzer applies is also known as the *modern era* or *modernity*, and in this sense to be understood as a historical period. *Modernity* also functions as the totality of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices, which herald the so-called Age of Reason. The latter is traditionally dated by French mainstream historians from the death of Louis XIV in 1715 until the outbreak of the French Revolution, as already indicated by Schweitzer. With slight national variations, this time division can be found in most textbooks of ‘Western’ educational institutions.³⁷⁶ On the other hand, decolonial thinkers like Enrique Dussel refer to the important date of 1492, which from a decolonial perspective actually is the forerunner of European modernity; because 1492 clearly emphasizes the violent part of the modernity notion, instead of obscuring it with laudatory achievements such as *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*:

I argue that while modernity is undoubtedly a European occurrence, it also originates in a dialectical relation with non-Europe. Modernity appears when Europe organizes the initial world-system and places itself at the center of world history over against a periphery equally constitutive of modernity. . . . When one conceives modernity as part of a center-periphery system instead of an independent European phenomenon, the meanings of modernity, its origin, development, present crisis, and its postmodern antithesis change.³⁷⁷

Hannah Franzki and Joshua Kwesi Aikins offer an overview of postcolonial Eurocentrism criticism within social sciences, according to which “modernity [appears] as a Eurocentric myth that emerged in the 18th century through the genealogical connection of historical events as an exclusively European experience”³⁷⁸. Historical events such as the German Enlightenment or the French Revolution, among others, are presented in this myth as a genuinely European history of progress.³⁷⁹ It is difficult to reconcile values such as freedom, equality and fraternity or the call for sovereign thought with tyranny and slavery – which might be the reason why the myth of an exclusively positive term of *modernity* seems to persist. But violence in form of slavery and other monstrosities were just the means to impose the highly esteemed values of

³⁷⁵ Schweitzer, pos. 68.

³⁷⁶ Cf. i.a. Hannah Franzki and Joshua Kwesi Aikins, “Postkoloniale Studien Und Kritische Sozialwissenschaft,” *PROKLA. Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft* 40, no. 158 (2010): 11–2.

³⁷⁷ Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “The Other” and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995), 9 –10, 11, cited after: Sandra Harding, “Latin American Decolonial Studies: Feminist Issues,” *Feminist Studies* 43, no. 3 (2017): 626.

³⁷⁸ Franzki and Kwesi Aikins, “Postkoloniale Studien und kritische Sozialwissenschaft,”: 12.

³⁷⁹ Cf.: Dussel, Enrique (1994): *Europa, Moderne und Eurozentrismus. Semantische Verfehlung des Europa-Begriffs*, in: *Zeitschrift Marxistische Erneuerung*, Jg. 5, H. 4, 83-94. Cited in: *ibid.*

the Enlightenment or the French Revolution: “Through teleological historiography, which ignored colonial expansion and domination, Europe has become the yardstick of development and civilisation,”³⁸⁰ the authors refer to Walter Mignolo.³⁸¹ The conditions for the establishment of Europe as a center are analyzed by Quijano and Wallerstein as the inscription of racist categories in worldwide power relations, especially the capitalist mode of production and dominant knowledge structures.³⁸² The authors’ conclusion is therefore that the elimination of economic dependence structures alone is not enough, they call for a simultaneous decolonization of the social sciences. Therefore, it is precisely the myth of a progressive Europe and its related terminology of the so-called *modernity* that needs to be demythologized in historiography in order to emancipate from established power relations.³⁸³

The previous sections demonstrate how knowledge and power are interwoven. For example, through Eurocentrism in science, which leads to the fact that only certain knowledge is included in the general canon. Scientists from locations like Bulgaria therefore denounce this imbalance and demand the equal presence of their specific knowledge in the canon. Therefore, the often-mentioned continuum of core, semiperiphery and periphery is a useful tool of analysis – especially taking into consideration that a global perspective on women*’s and gender history anyways seems to be a solution to gain more equality within the field.

5.6 The Nexus of Power and Knowledge and the Role of Networks on the Personal Level and Beyond

An interesting point to examine the nexus of power and knowledge concerns the role of networks on a personal level. Early experiences of the founders’ biographies already show the effects networks and support from institutions, tutors and fellow students can have. For example, Hämmerle describes her time as a student in Vienna, which coincides with that of her fellow student Zimmermann, as follows:

³⁸⁰Cf. Mignolo, Walter (2005): El Pensamiento Des-colonial: Desprendimiento y Apertura. Un manifiesto, in: *Tristestópicos*, online www.tristestopicos.org, letzter Zugriff am 01.02.2010. Cited in: *ibid*.

³⁸¹ Cf.: “In doing so, the fact is ignored that the colonial encounter was a precondition for, and not a consequence of modernity, which cannot be understood without colonial thinking,” Dussel, Enrique (2002): World-System and “Trans”-Modernity, in: *Neplanta: Views from South*, Jg. 3, H. 2, 221–244. Cited in: *ibid*.

³⁸² Cf.: Quijano, Anibal (2000): Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America, in: *International Sociology*, Jg. 15, H. 2, 215–232.

Quijano, Anibal; Wallerstein, Immanuel (1992): Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system, in: *International Social Science Journal*, Jg. 44, H. 4, 549–557. Cited in: *ibid*.

³⁸³ *Ibid*.

That [encounter with women's and gender history] was already in my studies because I started studying here in Vienna in '78 and that was the time when women in- and outside the universities started discussing what women's history was. If women's history has a legitimation, how it can be conceptualized? As students we also fought in a group for the acceptance of seminars and classes in women's history. [...] There were already a few female assistants at the University of Vienna, most of them were lecturers who also had a position at the university and who promoted THIS from INSIDE. That was a time, so if you were somehow studying with your eyes and ears open, you could not really overlook it.³⁸⁴

Harvey also encountered the subject at the beginning of her studies in a supportive environment:

[A]s a student, undergraduate, I was in a women's history group. [...] We wrote to our professors and [...] said: 'Why isn't there more women's history on the SYLLABUS in Oxford?' And we got some quite interesting replies. Some of them quite positive and (...) I'm not sure that much changed but the curriculum in Oxford was always very traditional and quite rigid but you know, that's something we DID but we also [...] supported each other in terms of reading and sort of exploring women's history and [...] one of my professors in my final year of undergraduate studies was Tim Mason [Timothy Wright Mason] who was a very important PIONEER of the women's history in terms of Nazi Germany [...] So, in a sense that sort of FEMINIST COMMITMENT was THERE when I was already an undergraduate and it was SUPPORTED and FOSTERED by some of my tutors, particularly by Tim Mason.³⁸⁵

While some talk about women*'s history groups and a supportive academic environment, Daskalova reports how she first had to travel abroad to experience a gender perspective on history:

And when I changed my interest towards women*'s and gender HISTORY, [it] happened only in 1989 when I actually visited the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris and I found the four volumes of *Histoire des Femmes en Occident* in the library there [...] So after READING this, I decided that this is the history I would like to make, and I started to work towards this direction.³⁸⁶

These experiences show very clearly what conditions the respective locations offer their students. While some were able to profit early on from an empowering solidarity network of students and teachers interested in women*'s and gender history, others had to find their way on their own. For Bulgaria, Daskalova literally speaks of "developing a new field"³⁸⁷, which coincides with Blagojevic's analysis of women* scientists at the semiperiphery. According to her, the dependence on funding from the 'core' and the academic 'core' agenda practically makes it impossible for researchers at the semiperiphery to do independent research or to create

³⁸⁴ Hämmerle, pos. 33.

³⁸⁵ Harvey, pos. 18.

³⁸⁶ Daskalova, pos. 5.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid., pos. 11.

own epistemic communities.³⁸⁸ Consequently, Bulgaria’s attitude towards a network like *MATILDA* must also be analyzed under the premise of hegemonic power relations. The enrichment through ‘Western’ knowledge and ‘core’ connections is emphasized by the founder from Sofia in the following quote:

[I]f I were closed just within the Bulgarian scholarly context, it would not have been POSSIBLE for me to make this kind of progress, I would say, within the field. Not only personally, but - speaking about the Bulgarian colleagues as a whole - so we really feel energized, stimulated from this collaboration and exchange with colleagues who did the *MATILDA* programme. Because it is much more than teaching, but also, it’s about research, about the common future.³⁸⁹

Whether and to what extent the founders perceive *MATILDA* as a network depends on this context and the power relations bound to it. The power dynamics clearly make *MATILDA* attractive as they allow members to advance their own research and support and foster students. At the same time, other members depend on this network in order to gain legitimacy at their own institution or to make their own research visible and heard.

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| Daskalova, pos. 49 | “I was absolutely equal. We were not only co-workers, we are friends, we published together. Especially with Francisca de Haan we had so many common projects. I already mentioned some of them but we also / Francisca was vice-president of the federation when I was president. Apart from these publications [...], we also co-edited together other materials from the conferences we organized as federation. [...] So, with the colleagues from CEU we did A LOT together. Apart from the fact that for <i>Aspasia</i> we have a lot of contributions from colleagues coming from CEU and also Hungary. Not so much from Vienna, Lyon and Nottingham because actually our field is East European history and we worked together on these issues. Hopefully in the future we will have other possibilities to bring our East-West knowledge together and to create a common European history.” |
| Harvey, pos. 20 Ibid., pos. 22 Ibid., pos. 92- 93 | “I couldn’t really consider <i>MATILDA</i> as family. I felt that this was a very important CONSORTIUM FOR ME, it was a very important [...] professional NETWORK. But I didn’t see it in terms of family relationships. CERTAINLY there were [...] relationships that were FRIENDLY and sort of COLLEGIAL and also sociable in some ways, but NOT familial.” “They were important professional relationships that were very interesting and enriching for me because of course I learned a lot from my colleagues about their specialisms, about their work, as well as about their academic institutions and how they work, so it was (...) VERY enriching for me.” “my specialism is NOT in British history, but I see myself as a historian of Europe. I TEACH European history. [...] It’s EXPECTED that European history is very, you know, that there is a SPECIALISM, really in all different areas of European history. So, that fits with our profile of emphasizing |

³⁸⁸ Cf. Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 75.

³⁸⁹ Daskalova, pos. 75.

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | European history, generally and it fitted with our profile as a [...] department with strong gender history.” |
| Hämmerle, pos. 61 | “So, it was more about already existing contacts or a KNOWING where women’s and gender history is strongly represented PLUS STRATEGY. Strategy INSOFAR as we knew that an application would be more successful if Eastern Europe was integrated, at that time. It was also a clear programmatic LINE of the European Union and [...] we knew that Budapest was not enough, we wanted a second Eastern European university. And then we came to Bulgaria through existing contacts. [...] We wanted it to be a little bit spread in Europe. England is therefore also important.” |
| Zimmermann, pos. 64 | “Of course, we are a network. Still, thinking about my own expertise, if some scholar or project would be looking for somebody to write something about the Eastern half of the Habsburg Monarchy from a gender perspective, they don’t need <i>MATILDA</i> to make them think of my name, as one possible contributor or interlocutor [...] So, there are no substantial collective activities beyond <i>MATILDA</i> that would directly emerge from <i>MATILDA</i> , or activities that would not have come into being without <i>MATILDA</i> .” |
| Schweitzer, Pos. 132. | “If I had KNOWN right away that there were several teachers who didn’t give the slightest thing about <i>MATILDA</i> , I would have left. Because I had already built Europe with the big [Erasmus] network. [...] I think I really continued / on the one hand because I like to commit myself. And two, really for the students. [...] they come back delighted. Many of them have had really EXCELLENT training.” |

Table 2: Different Motivations of the Founders

The motivations of the individual members to commit themselves to such a project differ: a desire to ‘build Europe’ (Schweitzer) or work on your personal research (cf. Harvey) might be worthwhile motivations, but they are very different to being dependent on it (cf. Daskalova); the degree of importance is also reflected in the formulations concerning the network which range from intimate and enthusiast notions (cf. Daskalova) to more distanced professional career opportunities (cf. Harvey, Hämmerle, Zimmermann and Schweitzer). Less powerful perspectives often only reveal privileges and inequalities. Networks offer the opportunity to solidarity, to share privileges, contrary to applying them just in one’s own favour, as can be seen in the example below referring to the *l’Homme* network.³⁹⁰

But I can tell you what we try to do with *L’Homme* and what is also very important to me personally, that when we have our *L’Homme* meetings, it is very clear that our editors from Bulgaria and Poland cannot afford to go to Oldenburg or Groningen for example. To pay for a hotel there for two nights, to pay for the travel expenses and that’s why it’s very important for

³⁹⁰ Besides *MATILDA*, the interviewees named other networks linked to them personally or to *MATILDA*. The statements referring to other network such as the editorial boards of *Aspasia*, *Clio* and *L’Homme* serve the purpose of comparability. The already stated example of Bulgaria and the link of being part of such an editorial board and the stocks of the university library of Sofia show the impact of networks on knowledge and power.

everyone at *L'Homme* to create a structure for the meetings where we can involve them as guest speakers, so that you can use university money for it and pay them a fee and for the travel expenses [...] that's what I mean by solidarity in the networks.³⁹¹

A similar example is the membership and later presidency of the IFRWH of Daskalova and a Bulgarian colleague, which started in the 1990s. As President of the federation Daskalova's aim was to expand the field of women*'s and gender history in 'CESEE'. This was achieved by creating new branches of the federation throughout the region. And when she organized the regular conference of the federation in 2007 in Sofia she reports of a great success for the field of women*'s and gender history due to the renowned reputation of the IFRWH: "During that conference in Sofia, I think, my colleagues and the academic establishment in the country started to think about this field as a properly developed and as an IMPRESSIVE scholarly field."³⁹² Daskalova emphasizes the "popularity and the RESPECT towards the field [which] was much more visible and present after such kind of events."³⁹³ This is reminiscent of earlier findings in this work, which emphasized the importance of the quantity and variability of projects in raising the visibility and prestige of a field.

In her renowned essay *Under Western Eyes* from 1986, Mohanty was concerned with exposing "the power-knowledge nexus of feminist cross-cultural scholarship"³⁹⁴. Here she criticizes "Western humanism and Eurocentrism and [...] white, Western feminism"³⁹⁵. The latter would take a lot of space in academia and would regardless pull over a unified perception of 'the third world woman' to a whole area which Mohanty sometimes refers to as 'the global South' contrary to 'the global North' – i.e. economically and politically marginalized nations and communities contrary to well-off and privileged ones³⁹⁶ – sometimes as the 'One-Third' contrary to the 'Two-Thirds', a categorization that incorporates an analysis of power and agency.³⁹⁷ Instead of giving a voice to those about whom they are writing, according to Mohanty, 'Western' feminists take the floor ignoring that the "experiential and analytic anchor in the lives of marginalized communities of women provides the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice."³⁹⁸ Compared to *MATILDA*, the observation of the fact that the most marginalized bring the most precise analysis to the discussion is confirmed by the example

³⁹¹ Hämmerle, pos. 93.

³⁹² Daskalova, pos. 5.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited,": 501.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 509.

³⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 505.

³⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 506.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 510.

of the notion *Europe* and the ‘Eastern’ impact on ‘Westerners’: to apply the concept in a more sensitive and power-critical way. 16 years later, Mohanty’s focus shifts to an “anticapitalist transnational feminist practice”.³⁹⁹ In other words, her perspective shifts from *under* Western Eyes to *inside* Western Eyes and therefore pursues her own claim from the first text: “Take responsibility for your own research.”⁴⁰⁰ With regard to the common knowledge space *MATILDA*, I see a *raison d’être* in both approaches: In order to create a common space of knowledge, internal hierarchies must be overcome, and the individual partners must enter a common dialogue while acknowledging privileges and inequalities due to the continuum of the ‘core’, ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’. Consequently, the exchange is not about a knowledge transfer from just one area to the others, but the national knowledge cultures must be involved on an equal footing. At the same time, national differences in the common knowledge space must not be negated if they have an impact on, or significance for, the common space of knowledge (e.g. gender and different national contexts into which this theorem sloshes). However, differences should not be used to juxtapose one knowledge space with the other, thereby creating hierarchies again. And finally, the capitalist system must be analyzed in this jointly developed space, which in turn shows different effects at the different locations. In this way, the interrelationships can be seen, and solutions based on solidarity can be found because knowledge formation and power relations are based on economic conditions.

Mohanty finds the following elements crucial to the analysis of power structures: The link of power and knowledge in a discursive sense, following the thoughts of Michel Foucault; the awareness of material and directional effects due to imperial power structures in tradition to Anour Abdel Malek; and last but not least, the “need for a materialist analysis that linked everyday life and local gendered contexts and ideologies to the larger, transnational political and economic structures and ideologies of capitalism”, following Maria Mies.⁴⁰¹

Even though Mohanty never explicitly mentions examples from the ‘East’, her theorization of international feminist cooperation is also very fruitful for the analysis of the *MATILDA* network. Her approach can be described as an analysis of the ‘typical’ in international feminist collaboration. According to Meuser and Nagel recurring structures or problems that are inherent to a particular expertise are a common phenomenon for experts to experience.⁴⁰² Particularly

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 509.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 499.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 504.

⁴⁰² Cf. Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “Das Experteninterview,” in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*, 469.

helpful is Mohanty's elaboration of the three pedagogical models used in 'internationalizing' the women's studies curriculum.⁴⁰³ Within the first model, the *Feminist-as-tourist model*, the primary Euro-American syllabus remains the same and examples from other parts of the world are used to supplement and 'add' to the hegemonic narrative.⁴⁰⁴ It also includes "the creation of monolithic images of Third World/South women."⁴⁰⁵ This perspective shows parallels to the earlier mentioned additional perspective in the present work. In the second model, the *Feminist-as-explorer model*, based in area studies, "the 'foreign' woman is the object and subject of knowledge and the larger intellectual project is entirely about countries other than the United States. Thus, here the local and the global are both defined as non-Euro-American."⁴⁰⁶ Whereas this perspective is described as deeper and more contextual than the first model and often comes along with important classes about *Women* in Latin America* or *Postcolonial Feminism*, Mohanty complains that this perspective misses global connections such as asking what effects global power relations and colonialism have.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, this model can be linked to the solidarity-based understanding of the additive perspective. To avoid that teachers and students apply perspectives which only add to an existing canon or perceive global issues as 'separate but equal'⁴⁰⁸ to their own experiences while ignoring major power relations mentioned above, Mohanty proposes a third model as solution: *The feminist solidarity or comparative feminist studies model*. This perspective aims at representing different and complex narratives of marginalized people in terms of relationality rather than separation. It therefore links a historical materialist approach of local contexts to the theorization of epistemic privilege and the construction of social identity.⁴⁰⁹ This solution therefore acts on behalf of translational theory by acknowledging differences and integrating them in a larger global context. By doing so, procedures of 'othering' are counteracted and significant steps towards a rethinking of social sciences, or academia in general, in terms of established hegemonic knowledge patterns are made.

Considering the three-part model of Mohanty, the thoughts of Bachmann-Medick concerning the translational theory and the findings from the consortium, the following similarities can be observed with regards to 'the typical' in the *MATILDA* network and international feminist

⁴⁰³ Cf. Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 516.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 518.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 519.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 521.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 524.

networks in general: Firstly, marginalized groups offer the most precise analysis of existing power structures, for example, by questioning the notion *Europe* and highlighting the privileged position of those who apply the notion in a generalised manner. Secondly, attempts are made to create the same conditions from ‘Western’/ ‘core’ countries without thinking about the specifics of individual countries which are often legitimized by the discourse of ‘othering’. Thirdly, hegemonic power structures continue and are difficult to break through. Not enough attention is paid to knowledge that has already been acquired, especially from the peripheries and semiperipheries, and in turn, this knowledge is not enough applied, even though it provides the most precise analyses (cf. point 1).⁴¹⁰ Fourthly, networks promote solidarity, although there are nuances in the nature of solidarity, and this can run the risk of obscuring power relations. Solidarity in the sense of Mohanty as a model which combines historical materialist understandings of social locations with thoughts on epistemic privilege and the resulting social identity – i.e. focusing on complexity instead of simplifications like the practice of ‘othering’⁴¹¹ – has not yet been achieved.

The role of networks such as *MATILDA* can therefore be contextualized in a process that ultimately aims to create global solidarity and equality, and to this end tries to serve those who are located in the peripheries and semiperipheries. This is Daskalova’s response to my question whether she believes *MATILDA* was necessary to establish women*’s and gender history in her institution: “Absolutely. I absolutely think that without *MATILDA*, we wouldn’t have it [women*’s and gender history] so well received, supported. (...) Even if we had this kind of difficulties that [...] we [still] have a [...] long way to go in order to be equally established.”⁴¹² So, *MATILDA* can be considered an important step in the right direction, but power relations remain as described above.

The nexus of knowledge and power appears to be crucial as a recurring moment in international networks. The *feminist solidarity or comparative feminist studies model* shows how ‘Western’

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Santo’s analysis of the challenges the modern university is facing, especially “the three main forms of modern domination (capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy) [which] have been operating since the sixteenth century in different regions of the world.” Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 219

Cf. also: “Arrogant ‘prescriptive’ behavior by core institutions imposed the speed of change, counterproductive policy measures, or even counterproductive political and military interventions, which is most evident in the most drastic cases of ethnic conflicts, but also in much of the policy making in general, increased the costs of transition, contrary to political and economic interests of the majority of the population at the semiperiphery.” Blagojevic, “Creators, Transmitters, and Users,”: 74.

⁴¹¹ Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited,”: 524.

⁴¹² Daskalova, Pos. 65.

privilege can be used in a fruitful manner without paternalizing marginalized groups or people. Mohanty deals with this question of international cooperation.⁴¹³ To the methodological approach of the acknowledgement of the nexus of knowledge and power as well as of the history and ongoing structures of imperialism or colonialism and therefore an approach based in historical materialism, Mohanty stresses on the issue of an ongoing neoliberalisation process of universities. In a decolonial manner she mentions a fruitful counterexample from the South:

There is a whole history of autonomous universities in various parts of Latin America, coming out of a Freirean model of community education, which is about decolonizing knowledge. We in the academy could really learn from it, but the conditions in the academy are so different that to really learn from it, you have to do a thorough critique of the institution we happen to be in.⁴¹⁴

There is work to do as one of her colleagues Amina Mama offers in an apt outlook on the future of international feminist collaboration, where she emphasizes the embeddedness of projects such as *MATILDA* within market-driven institutions. According to her, detached ideas and intentions from the surrounding system are practically impossible or at least limitations due to this system have to be acknowledged and worked with them.⁴¹⁵ Zimmermann, from the *MATILDA* consortium, has similar thoughts on academia when she says that:

Science is something that is part of our system, and thus it is clear that there are many differences, and of course I opt for critical thinking and scholarship that challenges the status-quo with its injustices, marginalizations, and exploitation. But I do not believe in a socio-political, transformative, revolutionary potentials of science sui generis.⁴¹⁶

The fruitful thoughts of Mohanty on international cooperation still lack a specific mentioning of ‘EE’ peculiarities, as already pointed out above. This leads us to a structural problem within transnational feminist academia that figures to be especially important within the present *MATILDA* context: First, the lack of presentation of ‘Eastern’ women*’s and gender history on an international agenda and second, the link of postcolonial and postsocialist feminist thoughts. Only few theorists think ‘EE’ and the global South together, Kristen Ghodsee is one of them. Her thoughts help us to understand why this mutual avoidance exists from a historical perspective. First: While anticommunist notions continue to be strong in the West and notably in the US, they try hard to disempower anything communist or socialist. Progressive feminists

⁴¹³ Cf. i.a. Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited,”

And: Chandra T. Mohanty, “Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013).

⁴¹⁴ Amina Mama, “Bridging Through Time: Inhabiting the Interstices of Institutions and Power,” in *Feminist freedom warriors: Genealogies, justice, politics, and hope*, ed. Chandra T. Mohanty and Linda Carty, 85–105 (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2018), 99.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 100–101.

⁴¹⁶ Zimmermann, pos. 104.

were denounced as unpatriotic, most apparently in the McCarthy time.⁴¹⁷ Second, from a ‘Western’ perspective, state socialist women*’s organizations were accused of not being strong enough and not acting as pure feminists “[s]ince they reported to male party leaders in the Politburo and considered class and racial injustice as just as egregious as sexual inequality.”⁴¹⁸ The latter sort of goes hand in hand with the last explanation Ghodsee gives us to understand the lack of ‘EE’ within international contexts. This last point originates in ‘EE’ itself, where the notion of *feminism* was considered an insult for ‘bourgeois’ women*. Socialist and communist women* worldwide referred to themselves as ‘women*’s activists’ and believed that women*’s rights were an integral part of the socialist and communist ideas. According to Ghodsee, these women* would not believe in the need of an independent women*’s movement detached from socialist and communist ideas in order to achieve sexual equality with men.⁴¹⁹

To understand the lack of exchange between postsocialist ‘Eastern’ Europe and postcolonial discourses in transnational feminism, Madina Tlostanova, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert and Redi Koobak give some interesting insights. During a workshop titled *Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues: Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorizing and Practice* in 2015, the authors observe

“that postcolonial scholars, who were mostly from the former colonies of the British Empire, found it difficult to engage with the particularities of postsocialist contexts. Postsocialist scholars, mostly of Eastern European origin, on the contrary, seemed more at ease applying concepts from postcolonial feminism to criticise their subalternisation.”⁴²⁰

The latter would mainly be because post-colonial feminism is more established than postsocialist feminism on a global feminist agenda, as amongst others Ghodsee’s remarks on the non-representation of postsocialist feminism within the academia.⁴²¹ As a first explanation Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak emphasize “discordant timelines”, in which the difference is visualized on a vertical scale of dichotomies such as inferiority/ superiority or presence/ absence instead of creating a “horizontal field of plurality in which no point has definitional advantage over the others.”⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 13.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 15.

⁴²⁰ Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak, “The Postsocialist ‘Missing Other’ of Transnational Feminism?,”: 81.

⁴²¹ Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 1.

⁴²² Cited after: Sarkar, M., 2004. Looking for feminism. *Gender and History*, 16(2), pp. 318–333., 326. In: Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak, “The Postsocialist ‘Missing Other’ of Transnational Feminism?,”: 82.

This temporal othering has been criticised in the context of postcolonial feminism, but it is persistent in the discussion of feminism in postsocialist countries (at least, those identified as European) because of these countries' desired unity with 'Western' Europe, even if they remain marginal to it.⁴²³

The authors furtherly criticize that even if the postsocialist perspective is included in recent publications, the presentations are only shown from "a strict, Western-centric frame that continues to represent itself as universal and delocalised."⁴²⁴

In this a typical approach within transnational feminist cooperation manifests: Even new approaches which promise to be free of the practice of 'othering' and applying a more critical and integrative perspective, in the end are led by this Western-US-centered gaze on topics.⁴²⁵ On the other hand, the desired unity with 'WE' of former socialist countries leads to the problematic 'doing' of

[a]ssigning race to 'others' [...] as a tool for achieving 'whiteness' [...]. Unsurprisingly, this configuration forecloses any possibility for many postsocialist feminists to recognise a shared reality between postcolonial and postsocialist subjects, while in fact being subjected to processes of Europeanisation is precisely where their common struggles could converge.⁴²⁶

Recently 'race' became more accepted as a category of analysis of their own experiences and work as postsocialist feminists, but nonetheless in an asymmetrical way as the authors point out. The focus is on the racialization of postsocialist peoples by the West/North, and never on their own possible involvement in the reproduction of modernity's racial hierarchies. Notably, in recent policies concerning the handling of refugees, migration issues and other non-European groups. The authors criticize a certain ignorance, a lack of responsibility or guilt of the mentioned issues within mainstream Eastern European societies.⁴²⁷

Seen from a global perspective, the authors arrive at the following conclusion: "Theorists of transnational feminism make the case for collaboration, but our experience has shown us that it often remains just a slogan due to the ongoing coloniality of knowledge, which divides people into knowledge producers, disseminators and passive consumers."⁴²⁸ The authors' analysis

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 84.

⁴²⁸ Cited after: Mignolo, W.D. and Tlostanova, M., 2012. Knowledge production systems. In H.K. Anheier, M. Juergensmeyer and V. Faessel, eds. *The Encyclopaedia of Global Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 1005–1010. In: *ibid.*, 85.

reminds of Blagojevic's analysis of knowledge producers, transmitters and users which she locates within the continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery'.⁴²⁹

Therefore, the solution-oriented proposal of the authors is to do science only in direct South-to-South and South-to-semiperiphery coalitions without Western mediation.⁴³⁰ In order to turn transnational feminist discourses into a truly alternative global theory and practice, free from the coloniality of knowledge, the authors claim "a refusal to start any analysis from the Western feminist blueprint and a refusal to build any position or idea into the pre-existing Western feminist template."⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Cf. Blagojevic, "Creators, Transmitters, and Users,".

⁴³⁰ Cf. Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak, "The Postsocialist 'Missing Other' of Transnational Feminism?,": 85 The CEU can be seen as an extreme example of this 'Western' mediation, in that the employed teachers and management staff come from 'core' countries and thus not only act as mediators, but explicitly determine the local scientific discourse.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

6 Bringing the Threads Together: Reflections on the Outcome

In the light of a 30 years retrospect of women's and gender history since '89s, this chapter summarizes important findings of the present work and reflects weaknesses. *MATILDA* is situated in a time frame that extends from 1989 to the present. '89 is considered a historical date in the relationship between 'EE' and 'WE'. In the field of women*'s and gender history, it was this 'opening' that made cooperation such as *MATILDA* possible in the first place. Although the time period of investigation within the present work concentrated on the years from 2006 to 2014, I would like to take this chapter as an opportunity to give an outlook on the present time.

Kulawik states that 30 years after the fall of state socialism feminist academia finds itself in a time of reorientation and reflection and explicitly points on the European East–West divide that needs to be examined from a global and transnational perspective.⁴³² The present work aims to contribute to this process.

The greatest success for the consortium was to bring the programme into existence⁴³³. Concerning the creation of an equal space of knowledge, *MATILDA* succeeded insofar, as the programme achieved to institutionalize the field of women*'s and gender history sustainably more strongly at all consortium locations.⁴³⁴ Regarding the difficult perception of gender issues within society and delegitimizations of the field of women*'s and gender history within academia the achievement of the programme appears remarkable.

Beyond that, the emergence of the master's degree *MATILDA* generally seemed to raise the academic interest of cross-disciplinary approaches. It should be pointed out that the *MATILDA* classes were not restricted to *MATILDA* students, but were also attended by students from other disciplines.⁴³⁵ This is an important aspect to make the programme sustainable and contribute to the general awareness for the field – even after the withdrawal of the programme, as it is the case for Nottingham.

⁴³² Cf. Teresa Kulawik, "Introduction," in *Borderlands in European gender studies*, 15.

⁴³³ Cf.: "Well. The success is, crudely put, that *MATILDA* exists," Zimmermann, pos. 28.
And cf. Schweitzer, pos. 208-210.

⁴³⁴ Cf.: "our masters programmes were constantly under revision and review. It was CONSTANTLY a question of what was viable and what's non-viable. How many students are a minimum to run a course and it actually was good for us that we had incoming *MATILDA* students to teach this [foundations in women's and gender history] to, because it helps, because it will anchor this gender history module in our master's programme." (Harvey, pos. 65)

⁴³⁵ Schweitzer, pos. 52.

In addition, regarding the broader time frame this chapter is situated in, since 1989 important changes took place in the academic world that influenced the field in a positive way. The founders of *MATILDA* report a categorical transposition of focus from women* to gender: “In ‘89 in Europe, we were doing some biographies of half-known or famous women and now we really work with the gender approach / in sociology and anthropology / in the hard sciences [...] and in history especially.”⁴³⁶ Hämmerle mentions the development towards queer approaches within the field of women*’s and gender history and *MATILDA*⁴³⁷. Nevertheless, in terms of what is actually taught concerning the concept of gender, *MATILDA* shows significant blanks. Therefore, one could ask the same question as for the term *European*: Is it still appropriate to include the term *woman* in a gender research programme? Especially since the notion *woman* in the title of *MATILDA* comes without any indication of the constructive character of gender. Meaning, within the mainstream, ‘woman’ refers to cis women only, whereas ‘woman*’ refers to all persons who define themselves, are defined, and/ or are made visible as ‘woman’, i.e. cis and non cis women.⁴³⁸ In this work, I have also introduced ‘women*’ to the title of *MATILDA* to draw attention to this blank space. At this place the transforming character of gender research as well as generational differences – the founders of *MATILDA* are historically foreign to me – comes into being. Likewise, Hämmerle – the managing co-editor of *L’Homme* – reports ‘different phases and facets of the self-positioning of feminist historiography’⁴³⁹ in her review of 30 years of the history of this very journal; not at least because of the international composition of the editorial board, as well as the international content of the journal. This means that the concept goes through different contexts in addition to changes over time. Within *MATILDA*, definitions of the category of gender differ both from the respective context and from the persons who introduce the category. Regarding recent perspectives on gender Shireen Hassim reflects amongst others on the category while referring to four articles which were originally presented 2014 at the Berkshire Conference on Women*’s History. Quoting Anna Krylova, the text comes to the analysis that gender binary “offers a strong undergirding that exposes the organization of identities of masculine and feminine, that reveals polarity as well as hierarchy and that entangles gender in particular heterosexual

⁴³⁶ Ibid., pos. 136.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 79.

⁴³⁸ Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, “Frauen*beauftragte: Geschlechtergerechte Sprache.”

⁴³⁹ Christa Hämmerle, “30 Jahre „L’homme. Z. F. G.“,” *L’Homme* 30, no. 2 (2019): 9.

relations of subordination.”⁴⁴⁰ Hassim’s analysis shows “categories of analysis both constitute and are constituted by what we set out to study, what relationships, phenomena and processes we deem to be worthy of scholarly attention.”⁴⁴¹ For this reason, scholars like Scott seek to reveal and destabilize the gender binary and still remain stuck to their own logic of what this gender binary defines.⁴⁴² Following these thoughts, Hassim quotes a slogan of the anti-racist student movement of Cape Town “RhodesMustFall”: “Dear History: This revolution has women, gays, queer and trans. Remember that”.⁴⁴³ I will leave this slogan largely uncommented. It only shows a further interpretation of gender in historiography. One that comes from a young, student-activist environment with which I can easily identify myself and which corresponds to my chosen research interests during my studies. Being aware that it would be important to examine the use of the concept of gender within *MATILDA*, especially for those locations that insist on the location of the programme within the discipline of history, I would like to draw attention to this research gap for possible further research.

In addition, transformations towards a more globalized world since ‘89 allowed not only the exchange between ‘EE’ and ‘WE’ researchers but also brought the enormous change of the (newly) gained digitized access to knowledge. The latter has contributed to shifting power dynamics at the individual institutions: Particularly the access to international journals allows to follow the historiographical advances.⁴⁴⁴ And Hämmerle emphasizes the immense advantage of immediate access to online journals as well as the important work done by international reviews on the way towards a “real European space of knowledge”⁴⁴⁵. Digitization allowed international educational infrastructure to become more equal, especially, with regards to examples like the already discussed restricted access to journals in the field of women*’s and gender history in Sofia’s university library.⁴⁴⁶

Multi-causal advantages as stated above also paved the way towards a general shift within the field from a national-comparative approach towards a global one. Formerly excluded countries

⁴⁴⁰ Anna Krylova, ‘Gender Binary and the Limits of Poststructuralist Method’, *Gender & History* 28 (2016), pp. 306–22, here p. 306. Cited after: Shireen Hassim, “Critical Thoughts on Keywords in Gender and History: An Introduction,” *Gender & History* 28, no. 2 (2016): 299–300.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁴⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, 300.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 302–3.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Schweitzer, Pos. 138.

⁴⁴⁵ Hämmerle, pos. 79.

⁴⁴⁶ The implications of the often corporate-led digitization however are yet to be seen but seem daunting in the light democratization and equal access to knowledge.

and cultures were added to the canon. This certainly is also a reason for the existence of *MATILDA* in the first place. The programme is financed through EU funding. During the time of the programme implementation the EU eastward expansion was an important component of EU policy. The present work showed that the latter certainly had effects on the design of the programme: The content-level of the programme was the level that was most likely to be restricted as this was less formally binding for the EU funding than certain administrative issues. Consequently, *MATILDA*'s content mainly consisted of classes from the existing syllabus, instead of introducing classes focusing on global inequality or introducing more 'EE' content to 'WE' curricula. The founders describe the programme as 'the sum of its parts'⁴⁴⁷ because it is dependent on what the locations and/ or teachers could contribute to the programme. Therefore, such contrary patterns like the additive and the (Eurocentrism-)critical approach coexisted within the consortium. Compulsory university policy, strict EU requirements both located within the continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery' prove to be an obstacle to the creation of an equal space of knowledge. This is likely to be attributed to do Mar Pereiras analysis of the 'performative university'⁴⁴⁸ and its neoliberal outcome such as cutbacks to Higher Education and research funding, a general pressure to perform in good grades or quantity of publication etc.

Whereas Kulawik takes on a global and transnational perspective in order to re-examine women*'s and gender history, the present work shows that within the *MATILDA* programme, very different ideas about the definition and implementation of a common space of knowledge and/ or the joint project *MATILDA* exist. Generally, it can be stated that before implementing the programme the ideas of the founders were more idealistically than during the process of implementation where compromises were accepted, and sights were lowered. For some members of the consortium, this space is strongly related to content. Regarding a joint European women*'s and gender history this approach aims to define this space as a unified Europe based on solidarity despite its diversity⁴⁴⁹ – Hämmerle likewise speaks of a common European space of knowledge which must permanently be negotiated and reconstructed.⁴⁵⁰ Others, on the contrary, rather see the exchange process of the *MATILDA* project in the foreground; and by generating more visibility for their specific contribution to the field (as it is the case for Bulgaria and Hungary), a fundamental criticism of the field (too much integrated into the established/

⁴⁴⁷ Zimmermann, pos. 20.

⁴⁴⁸ Pereira, *Power, knowledge and feminist scholarship*, 70.

⁴⁴⁹ Hämmerle, "30 Jahre „L'Homme. Z. F. G.“": 11.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Hämmerle, Pos. 93.

existing system and too uncritical regarding a global perspective on inequalities) recedes into the background.⁴⁵¹ This does not mean that critique was not mentioned by some of the consortium members, but as stated above, the greatest defiance for the consortium was to bring the programme into existence and therefore compromises were accepted. Also, the difference in privilege must be mentioned at this point: Whereas the ‘WE’ impact on the programme is huge, ‘EE’ institutions still claim a more equal introduction of their knowledge to ‘WE’ curricula. So, whereas ‘EE’ have to face their own absence from the field and simultaneously face global inequality within academia, the position of the ‘core’ is defined by privilege.

MATILDA partly contributed to a more equal space of knowledge in the sense of an exchange between ‘EE’ and ‘WE’ scholars and students on an equal footing: The mandatory one-term exchange as well as the yearly summer school of the programme offer a fruitful ground concerning an exchange on equal footing. In combination with the regular consortium meetings for the founders these events seem to have achieved lasting success concerning the achievement of an equal space of knowledge for teachers and students on an academical as well as personal level. During the time when both summer school and consortium meeting still took place and were financed by the EU, the opportunity was given to reflect on the achievement of the programme regularly and together. The interviewees report on a great exchange moment with their colleagues on both ‘WE’ and ‘EE’ sides during joint events like the summer school. This shows the uttermost importance of these moments. And: A common space of knowledge can only be achieved if their individual entities also actually get together in a particular way (for example it is important that financial support is provided for all members of the consortium). In a way one could say, this is what the entire space of knowledge and how it is manifested should look like.

However, concerning the contribution of ‘EE’ knowledge to the general syllabus and/ or the syllabus of ‘WE’ universities, the impact remains on the individual level – possibly showing effects on personal research and reflection but not great changes within ‘WE’ syllabi. Whereas the ‘EE’ curricula contain ‘WE’ and ‘EE’ knowledge on an equal footing, ‘WE’ curricula mostly remain within hegemonic power structures characterized by an overrepresentation of ‘core’ knowledge.⁴⁵² Obviously, having the ‘semiperiphery’ treating the ‘core’ as equal, but the ‘core’ the ‘semiperiphery’ not vice versa, the plan of a common and equal space of knowledge

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Zimmermann, pos. 30.

⁴⁵² Cf. Section 5.5.2 of the present work.

does not work out. Examining power structures, the structural power and significance of the syllabus cannot be stressed enough.

Nevertheless, it must be stated that the existence of the programme including such events as the mandatory one-term exchange and the summer school is impressive insofar as the consortium had to face many difficulties. Most of all, the founders report on the difficulty of bringing together five different university systems. As the requirements for EU funding are strict, they had to compromise. As the focus was set on a solution concerning administrative issues due to strict EU requirements the content tended to fade into the background. While it is clear that functioning administration is essential in a trans-European university programme, it is important to state, that the EU-way was not without alternatives. Other financing models are also conceivable, such as national research funds, or as a project financed at university level. Although these might have been more complicated to implement, they might offer more scope on the content level.

The content of the programme was likewise restricted due to rather precarious circumstances at the respective institutions linked to non-emancipatory university policies for example a neoliberal agenda which ultimately led to the withdrawal of Nottingham from the programme; And the fact that there was no *MATILDA* curriculum that was unanimously agreed on. What's more, the disciplines within which *MATILDA* is located differ among the locations and become effective for example in the question of how strict the content is linked to the historical (discipline) or whether an interdisciplinary approach to women*'s and gender history is applied.⁴⁵³

For this very reason, the founders speak of the consortium agreement of the programme as the “lowest common denominator”⁴⁵⁴ or of the programme itself as “the sum of its parts.”⁴⁵⁵ This leads to a situation in which some teachers and/ or curricula focus on a (Eurocentrism-)critical approach and global inequalities and others do not – also reflected in the different ideas of a common space of knowledge of the founders.

Nonetheless, it can be said that inequalities remain on a global level: A change in the approach of women*'s and gender history has taken place and Kulawik's claim of a global and transnational perspective on the field and specifically on the East-West divide has been

⁴⁵³ Cf. section 5.1.1.2 of the present work.

⁴⁵⁴ Hämmerle, pos. 67.

⁴⁵⁵ Zimmermann, pos. 20.

respected in a sense. However, this change happened on an ‘additive’ level rather than on an ‘Eurocentrism-critical’ level. In other words, Bulgaria and Hungary have been added to a ‘Eurocentric’ space of knowledge. This is confirmed by Zimmermann’s following statement concerning her perception of a common space of knowledge of women*’s and gender history since 1989:

If you want me to generalize, I don’t think that anything fundamental has changed / I think that Eastern Europe is much stronger anchored in women’s and gender history today. I also think that women’s and gender history has [...] become globalized. I don’t think, however, that this has necessarily [...] invalidated these historical hierarchies and asymmetries.⁴⁵⁶

Zimmermann refers to the different approaches regarding women*’s and gender history of which she often misses a more critical approach focusing not only on gender, but also on global inequalities. This matches my critique of the additive approach in contrast to the (Eurocentrism-)critical approach towards the field. Despite this can be stated for *MATILDA* and/ or the field of women*’s and gender history in general, Mohanty’s proposal of *The feminist solidarity or comparative feminist studies model*⁴⁵⁷ is not yet achieved, neither is Kulawik’s claim for building a sustainable collaboration between the Second and Third Worlds nor a structural change like de Sousa Santos’ claims at the very beginning of this work: Establishing global cognitive justice in order to prepare global social justice.⁴⁵⁸

Concerning the need of a global re-examination of the European East–West divide, Kulawik emphasizes the absence of ‘EE’ from transnational feminist theory as well as a lack of cooperation between the so-called ‘Second’ and ‘Third Worlds’.⁴⁵⁹ The latter adds to the findings from my literature review: Anthologies on European women*’s and gender history like Gisela Bock’s (2000) *Women in European History*, but also recent publications like Baksh and Harcourt’s (2015) *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements* and Disch and Hawkesworth’s (2016) *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* – publications that claim to provide diverse and inclusive perspectives – follow ‘West’-centered patterns by writing about postsocialist states instead of including texts from authors of the region or simply by not representing the ‘semiperiphery’, but the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’.⁴⁶⁰ And if ‘EE’ is being added to an existing canon the global interwovenness and global inequality is widely ignored. This leads to (mis)understandings like the assumption that ‘core’ perspectives would unnoticeable

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., pos. 60.

⁴⁵⁷ Mohanty, ““Under Western Eyes” Revisited,”: 524.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 238.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Teresa Kulawik, “Introduction,” in *Borderlands in European gender studies*, 15.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 21–22.

fit ‘semiperipheral’ issues. Consequently, within *MATILDA* there are ‘WE’ institutions that propose British and American texts assuming that these would likewise answer research questions concerning a Bulgarian issue.⁴⁶¹ This explains moreover the persistent image presenting ‘EE’ as a homogenous whole.

At this point I would like to reflect my own role and the weaknesses of the present work. I am clearly speaking from the privileged dominant *white* perspective, situated in the ‘core’ area but I am still actively situating myself as speaking from a point of opposition, of solidarity with the ‘semiperiphery’ and ‘periphery’. However, probably someone else would find other aspects that I might not see because of my upbringing. This also applies to answers that might differ from those given to me due to a different perspective and/ or upbringing. The fact that knowledge production and the academical system –by the way also the economy and natural resource consumption - are ‘Western-centered’ is a general issue of our society of which also shaped me in my upbringing. This features the texts I read, the languages I learned, the topics I discussed and which perspectives were focused on within these discussions. And although I challenge my learnings, my upbringing and my privileges, questioning ‘Western-centered’ knowledge and Eurocentrism will be an ongoing process for me as it will be for our societies. Especially to societies from ‘WE’ and the US. For example, regarding the present work the category of gender emerges multiple times. The present work shows also that the significance of the category is not the same for ‘EE’.⁴⁶² At the same time applying gender gives the opportunity of pointing on differences between ‘WE’ and ‘EE’ and therefore criticizing the ‘Western’-centered use of the concept.⁴⁶³ Similarly, only the use of a uniform notion of *Europe* for very different countries led to criticism of this practice and revealed the privileges behind it.

Concerning my research question, the interviews I conducted with the founders and the administrative power of the programme certainly gave interesting answers and for further reflection. Generally, it can be said that my method seems adequate to answer the present questions. However, it would have been interesting to talk to *MATILDA* students as well, especially those who participated in the summer schools. Originally, I wanted to talk to a more diverse group of interviewees also including students and administrative staff. I am aware that my findings brought to bear that explicitly the summer schools were a crucial element towards

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Harvey, pos. 97, on page 82-83 of the present work.

⁴⁶² Cf. section 5.1.1.3.

⁴⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*

the establishing of an equal space of knowledge. It would have been interesting to include the programmes of the summer school and talk to students about these events. This could have brought more depth for my argumentation of the summer school as a crucial element within knowledge transfer and exchange on an equal footing. Finally, summer schools of that kind are to be given an important role not only for a common space of knowledge, but also for further research to understand better its capabilities as well as restrictions. Further research potential for my very question might also lie in an additional qualitative approach as I have primarily conducted qualitative interviews. Also, from a democratic approach it would have been much more equal to include a broader spectrum of participants of the *MATILDA* programme, namely students but I still had to focus on one approach and respect the frame of this thesis.

Nevertheless, from a gender perspective I would like to emphasize the fact that all interviewed experts are women*. I would also like to point out that the term *expert* has a function of a role model. According to Meuser and Nagel, the gender aspect should not be neglected, especially in expert interviews, since in a society structured upon gender hierarchies, expert competence is unequally distributed according to gender: “Despite all the upheavals in gender relations, experts are male in most fields of investigation. This is related to the development of professions.”⁴⁶⁴ Consequently and especially with regard to earlier findings by Griffin about the positive effects of participating in classes on women*’s and gender issues⁴⁶⁵, I would like to emphasize the empowering fact that all members of the *MATILDA* consortium who hold decision-making positions are women*.

⁴⁶⁴ Michael Meuser and Ulrike Nagel, “Das Experteninterview,” in *Methoden der vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*, 475.

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Griffin, *Doing Women's Studies*, 109.

Conclusion

In this chapter I would like to give a quick overview of what was done in the present work, discuss my initial assumptions and finally give an outlook as well as share possible solutions.

The present work examines the joint M.A. programme *MATILDA* in European women*'s and gender history concerning its achievements in establishing not only a common, but also an equal space of knowledge within a continuum of 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery'.

What were the **contents of the work**? Before conducting the interviews my literature review (chapter 1) already reveals a 'Western' supremacy of knowledge production. Relevant textbooks or anthologies on (European) women*'s and gender history mainly contain 'core' perspectives – also if the publication is said to include diverse voices. And still, if publications announce reflecting on statesocialism this is often done from a 'Western-centered' perspective.

Persistent power structures within the academical field of women*'s and gender history strengthened my interest in finding out whether the community of *MATILDA* has managed to create a common space of knowledge by acting as equals, or whether hegemonic relationships continue to exist. I therefore conducted qualitative interviews (section 2.1) with one founder of each of the involved locations and the project assistant of the time of the foundation. Notably, Christa Hämmerle (founder) and Maria Schmidt-Dengler (project assistant) from Vienna, Susan Zimmermann (founder) from Budapest, Sylvie Schweitzer (founder) from Lyon, Krassimira Daskalova (founder) from Sofia, and Elizabeth Harvey (founder) from Nottingham. Qualitative analysis helped me to order the interview transcripts in useful categories (section 2.2) which more or less resulted in the headings of the main part of this thesis (chapter 5). In *Doing 'East' and 'West'* (chapter 3), I reflect on the constructedness of these notions. I come to show that notions are not neutral but based on political, historical and cultural intentions. Chapter 4 helps to contextualize *MATILDA* in a Europe that was still growing together after 1989 – a time that also opened discussions whether a European Women*'s History is possible. There is a focus on Vienna as the founding institution. As stated above, chapter 5 introduces the main part of the present work and focuses on my main question of research concerning the contribution to an equal space of knowledge through and within *MATILDA*. With the help of translational theory common (mis)understandings are revealed (section 5.1.1). Concerning the content of women*'s and gender history, transfer and exchange of knowledge figures in the form of differences due to personal preferences and/ or national knowledge and traditions (section 5.1.1.1). Through wrong translations, these differences often become hierarchical due to

established power relations.⁴⁶⁶ Assumptions and valuations that can be affiliated to global power structures also become visible in the comparison of a historical (disciplinary) approach and its positive connotations in contrast to an interdisciplinary approach and its negative connotations (section 5.1.1.2). The section on *(Perceived) inequalities* (5.2) reveals inequality within the consortium on the material and the discursive level. Section 5.3 reflects on the outstanding role of the yearly summer school, the initial regular consortium meetings and the mandatory one-term exchange. All three aspects show a fruitful impact concerning the construction of an equal space of knowledge. However, the contribution of these events is only small compared to the whole programme. I.e., their impact rather remains on an individual level than having an effect on the concept of (European) women*'s and gender history. In *Different Doings' of Europe within the Consortium*, I evaluate the use of 'European' as a strategical tool in terms of gaining legitimization (section 5.4.1); as well as two patterns of interpretation of 'European' (5.4.2). I found the additive approach tends to add former excluded locations to the existing European knowledge canon without reflecting on global inequalities (section 5.4.2.1). The (Eurocentrism-)critical perspective aims at revealing global inequalities and having an effect on the concept of (European) women*'s and gender history in order to install global equality and decolonize the curricula (section 5.4.2.2). As Eurocentrism is crucial to my analysis, I reflect on the practice of considering Europe and 'Western' societies at the center of historiography on different levels (section 5.5). Firstly, language requirements and dealings with language within the *MATILDA* consortium are examined and criticized (section 5.5.1). Language is thus ultimately just another means of cementing the 'Western' hegemony and oppressing the 'East'. Within the field of women*'s and gender history Eurocentrism is most evident in the curricula of the locations: While 'WE' and US-American knowledge is an integral element of the 'EE' syllabus, 'EE' knowledge remains marginal within 'WE' curricula (section 5.5.2). In section 5.6, I reflect on international networks on a personal level, i.e. regarding biographical events reported by the founders, and within a broader context, i.e. regarding publications on international cooperation within feminist academia.

Next, a 30-year retrospect of feminist academia since the fall of the Iron Curtain reveals a global perspective on women*'s and gender history in which the earlier mentioned continuum of the 'core', 'semiperiphery' and 'periphery' continues to exist in other, potentially more progressive, forms (chapter 6). A change in the approach of women*'s and gender history took place but

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. the example of archival work vs. studying discourses, page 35 within the present work.

rather on an ‘additive’ level than on an ‘Eurocentrism-critical’ level. The field has become more globalized, transformations like digitization have made the access to knowledge more equal and changes in the gender perspective also made the perspective more inclusive (intersectionality). Notably, the ‘CESEE’ area is much more present in the European history today than it was shortly after '89.

However, the question whether *MATILDA* succeeds in establishing not only a common, but also an equal space of knowledge remains. The programme definitely contributes to a stronger anchoring of women*’s and gender history at all locations – within the history departments and even beyond, the programme creates visibility and legitimization for the field. Having in mind a general rather bad acceptance towards women*’s and gender history within mainstream academia this can potentially be lifesaving. Due to this generally difficult starting position, standards referring to the content were cut back because there were already enough difficulties in implementing the programme and compromises on this administrative level were not possible due to the rigid criteria of the EU funding schemes.

The complexity of my **first assumption** of a nexus of power and knowledge already becomes visible in my literature review: Relevant textbooks or highly ranked journals about the knowledge production of women*’s and gender research still remain ‘West-centered’ – even the ones claiming to feature “feminist theorists from diverse regions of the globe”⁴⁶⁷. This mismatch between established knowledge from ‘core’ areas and the rest of the world also arises within the curricula of the consortium locations. Note that for most of the interviewees, the emancipatory progress was rather not in a more inclusive handling of contents and perspectives from ‘CESEE’ in ‘WE’ curricula, which would have been the threshold for a truly common and emancipatory space of knowledge but in bringing the programme into existence. Therefore, even within a progressive, emancipatory programme, the nexus of knowledge and power remains. In other words, *MATILDA* has managed to create a common space of knowledge by implementing and introducing the field of women*’s and gender history at five European universities. However, although trying to act as equals, hegemonic relationships continue to exist. Especially regarding the powerful threesome the university has to face – capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy⁴⁶⁸ – *MATILDA* only countered one of them, namely patriarchy. Within academia capitalism appears in the form of the ‘performative university’, including

⁴⁶⁷ Teresa Kulawik, “Introduction,” in *Borderlands in European gender studies*, 21.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 219.

cutbacks to Higher Education and research funding, a general pressure to perform in good grades or quantity of publication etc. and therefore generating an ‘academic culture of performativity.’⁴⁶⁹ With ‘university colonialism’⁴⁷⁰, de Sousa Santos refers to the phenomenon or issues that only one body of knowledge is taught and generally accepted as valid knowledge. Patriarchal structures within universities feature a scientific establishment that opposes emancipatory programmes such as *MATILDA*. Of course, the outcome of the programme was connected with different ideas and wishes, especially on the part of the founders of Sofia and Budapest, who would have liked to see their regional history more strongly included within ‘Western’ curricula as well⁴⁷¹ – but as examined in sections 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2 these have changed mainly on an additive, rather than on a (Eurocentrism-)critical, global level. Therefore, colonial and capitalist power structures need to be addressed alongside patriarchal issues, otherwise global power structures will persist.

Concerning my **second assumption** about location-dependent knowledge the present work points at local individualities and contexts. This is particularly evident in Gapova’s comments on the comparison between the Soviet Union and the ‘West’ when the academical field of women*’s and gender research became a center of political, academical, and institutional interest at the end of 1980s and the early 1990s: While for many ‘Western’ feminists gendered issues were at the center of inequality, women* in the former Soviet Union experienced class-division as most threatful for their own lives, but also for the lives of men* in their countries.⁴⁷² It seems trivial to state that there is no objective universal knowledge which could be applied to any event regardless its context – especially to experts in the field of women*’s and gender history like the founders of *MATILDA*. This becomes apparent in statements that describe the intention to build a comparative European history, so that different events and concepts from this European area can be juxtaposed.⁴⁷³ However, the programme is located in an academic system that clearly prefers ‘Western’, ‘core’ knowledge and creates images like a one-sided transfer of knowledge from ‘West’ to ‘East’. Within the consortium this is demonstrated by the fact that knowledge from the ‘CESEE’ area remains mainly on the individual level without having great impact on the curricula of ‘WE’ universities. Despite the awareness of inequalities between ‘WE’ and ‘EE’ – by the way also indicated by renowned authors: Within this thesis,

⁴⁶⁹ Pereira, *Power, knowledge and feminist scholarship*, 70.

⁴⁷⁰ Boaventura d. S. Santos, “Decolonizing the university,” in *Knowledges born in the struggle*, 220.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. Daskalova, pos. 73.

⁴⁷² Cf. Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there*, 13.

⁴⁷³ Cf. Hämmerle, pos. 39.

the picture of a one-sided transfer from ‘West’ to ‘East’ could be clearly presented and at the same time deconstructed by Scott⁴⁷⁴ and the reactions by Kašić⁴⁷⁵ and Gapova⁴⁷⁶ – hegemonic structures, and ‘Western-centered’ thought-patterns persist. While the ‘core’ knowledge is equally represented in the ‘semiperiphery’ or to bigger proportions, the reverse is not the case. By assuming ‘core’ knowledge in form of ‘Western-centered’ curricula and texts from the British and Anglo-American world would answer questions concerning the ‘semiperiphery’, the programme continues using pre-existing Western feminist templates in wide parts. Also due to the given rather precarious situation the programme is situated in (not much latitude to add specific classes but mostly having to choose from the existing syllabus) the consortium continues to maintain power asymmetries rather than designing alternative canons and drawing on re-emerging genealogies like recent voices claim.⁴⁷⁷

Let us therefore come to my **third assumption** from the beginning: Networks between more and less powerful members in this continuum, such as *MATILDA*, play an important role in equalizing our academic system. Consequently, *MATILDA* would benefit most notably the ‘CESEE’ part of the consortium. This assumption proves to be true insofar as the *MATILDA* network helped all locations to anchor the field of women*’s and gender studies more strongly at the respective institutions. Within this process of anchoring the field, the consortium used the notion *European* as a strategy to legitimize the importance of the programme before the respective universities and the EU, to legitimize the relevance of the field in general or to sell the programme to their university in order to add a new renowned joint degree programme to the existing offer of courses. Concerning the legitimization of the field, it can be stated that Bulgaria and Hungary have to face stronger rejections than Austria, France and Britain but harmful gender discourses are an all-European phenomenon in which ‘East’ and ‘West’ are no relevant categories of analysis.⁴⁷⁸ Concerning the particular relevance of *MATILDA* for the ‘CESEE’ area the response this work can give is ambivalent: On the one hand, the network seems more important to ‘CESEE’ than ‘WE’. Due to political (Hungary and Bulgaria) and/or institutional (Bulgaria) ‘gatekeepers’ who try to preserve old hierarchical patterns which are positioned against emancipatory transformations, academical programmes dealing with gender

⁴⁷⁴ Scott, “Fictitious Unities. "Gender," "East," and "West",”.

⁴⁷⁵ Kašić, “Is Gender - Women's Destiny?,”.

⁴⁷⁶ Gapova, *On "Writing Women's and Gender History in Countries in Transition" and what we saw there.*

⁴⁷⁷ Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak, “The Postsocialist ‘Missing Other’ of Transnational Feminism?,”: 85.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. section 5.4.1

are in a more precarious situation than in the ‘WE’ partner institutions.⁴⁷⁹ On the other hand, recent voices state counterproductive effects of networks between ‘core’ and ‘semiperiphery’ and therefore claim doing knowledge production exclusively in “direct South-to-South and South-to-semi-periphery coalitions [...] without Western mediation.”⁴⁸⁰ According to Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak this could be a way to escape the coloniality of knowledge with the ‘core’ as the central knowledge producer. By sticking to ‘core’ knowledge the analysis of postsocialist factual material only happens by using ‘core’ methodological tools, including the postcolonial lens.⁴⁸¹ According to the authors the postsocialist contribution to global knowledge production remains marginal, almost absent. In this sense, *MATILDA* again – consisting of ‘core’ and ‘semiperiphery’ – is not moving towards a transnational and decolonial women*’s and gender history.

Consequently, it can be stated that although the consortium faced immense difficulties in bringing together five different university systems, they still succeeded in implementing the programme and integrating women*’s and gender history into their institutions. With regard to Europe-wide hostility and attempts to delegitimize the field of women*’s and gender research, *MATILDA* has made an important contribution by anchoring the field sustainably in the respective institutions.

However, regarding the three global manifestations of power described above (capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy), it is not enough to position oneself against one of them - as in the case of *MATILDA*, mainly against patriarchy. An additive approach that ignores inequalities, notably in the field that made the intersectional approach widely known, is therefore unacceptable.

This chapter shall be finished by discussing further **solutions**. In the face of a recent analysis of previous cooperation in the feminist academia, a blank space is revealed that offers a solution to the problem: Exclusive and direct South-to-South and South-to-semiperiphery coalitions in order to emancipate from the power of sovereignty of the ‘core’ over knowledge production – an ‘undoing’ of established knowledge production: Following post- and decolonial theory, Brunner pleads for more openness regarding definitions without considering them to be

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak, “The Postsocialist ‘Missing Other’ of Transnational Feminism?,”: 85.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

imprecise or a weakness.⁴⁸² Hegemonic knowledge systems, she continues, must be consistently questioned and transformed. For *MATILDA* this could be achieved by focusing on the common exchange. During the summer school tutors from every location are present which gives the opportunity to discuss the contents on an equal footing and to learn different science cultures (cf. joint grading⁴⁸³, listening to the presentations of local scientists⁴⁸⁴ or the thesis presentations of the students). Generally, a common exchange opens the space to discuss inequalities or to experience on the ground. Not least, this was an important part of my motivation for this programme and it is also personally sad to see it scrapped. Still, the summer schools make up only a small part of the overall programme structure – 10 ECTS out of 120 ECTS;⁴⁸⁵ likewise the mandatory one term exchange might be mind-opening to some of the students as they offer the opportunity to access Bulgarian or Hungarian post-socialist history first hand⁴⁸⁶ and this is very important. Nevertheless, these experiences mainly remain on the individual level, without having a big impact on the system, e.g. the syllabus, although forming a part of the common body of knowledge in the collective mind of the participants. Therefore, the positive impact of the summer schools and the mandatory one term exchange remind of Mohanty's *Feminist-as-tourist model* – as the primary 'Western'-centered curricula remain as they are and examples from the 'East' serve as an 'addition' to it.⁴⁸⁷ To expand on the summer school maybe as an mandatory event taking place at least twice a year instead of once and promoting it with 20 or even 30 ECTS instead of 10 could form possible solutions. Also, external workshops addressing decolonial perspectives from people from the 'periphery' and 'semiperiphery' could have an important impact on the programme – especially because the content of the programme is so heavily dependent on the location and the teachers. A strict localization at the historical faculty, especially at 'WE' universities, should be reconsidered exactly for this reason. By extending *MATILDA* to several disciplines, more people and perspectives can contribute to women*'s and gender history. For the same reason it might be fruitful to include the students more democratically in the making of the programme. To serve this purpose, a transnational *MATILDA* student union should be established bottom-up, with financed meetings on a regular basis. This might be added to the summer schools, on an

⁴⁸² Brunner, *Epistemische Gewalt*, 299.

⁴⁸³ Hämmerle, Pos. 49.

⁴⁸⁴ Hämmerle, Pos. 143.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. *MATILDA* consortium, "Joint Programme Description for *MATILDA*: European Master in Women's and Gender History (Stand 2008)," 7.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Zimmermann, Pos. 88.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 518.

independent basis, but also a student led part, mandatory for all and part of the curriculum, should be integrated into these. Networks between recent students and alumni from all locations could enable a fruitful dialogue concerning underrepresented topics between ‘East’ and ‘West’ as well as possible joint publications and cooperations. These networks could be opened up to the teaching staff if required and wished by the students. To include more perspectives and diversity in the design of the programme, including the summer schools or during the mandatory exchange, the effort to initiate such a project would be worthwhile. Projects like this also could contribute to solving inequalities regarding language requirements: The exchange of literature from all respective locations and languages would make the transfer and exchange of knowledge within the programme more equal. Moreover, the community could solve the issues of untranslated texts by translating them and discuss them with each other. Therefore, translational misunderstandings in the sense of translational theory could be solved as well by entering into a direct exchange with one another and not laying a pre-existing Western feminist template over everything.

The adherence to certain structures such as the largely strict positioning of *MATILDA* in the discipline of history must be reconsidered in the respective context as well as the evaluation of methods that follow hegemonic patterns. In order to emancipate from established power structures, we must work in an interdisciplinary way, be transparent, make ourselves vulnerable and, if necessary, be uncomfortable.

So let us be uncomfortable, let us finally UnDo coloniality and decolonize academia!

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Appendix

i. Interview Guidelines

Interview Guidelines

My guideline contained the following questions:

All founders:

- When it comes to the bullet points how would you rate them? Which subjects of research or concrete methods and concepts turned out successful or difficult?

Added from half of the interviews conducted. Asked Schweitzer, Daskalova, Harvey

- At your institution what was/is the content of the introductory courses?

Added from half of the interviews conducted. Asked Schweitzer, Daskalova, Harvey

- How was MATILDA institutionally anchored at your institution? (Department of Gender Studies, History, or something quite different)?

All founders + project assistant

- Please tell me about the foundation of MATILDA: Your position within the programme and jointly developed strategies, successes and obstacles in the institutionalization process.

All founders

- What was your personal motivation in founding MATILDA?

Only asked up to half of the interviews conducted. Asked Zimmermann, Hämmerle, Schweitzer and Schmidt-Dengler

- What were the criteria for selecting the partner institutions?

All founders

- How would you describe your contribution to the curriculum/content of the teaching program?
- How did your personal and academic expectations transform from when the programme first started until now/until you left the programme?
- How would you see the common space of knowledge of women*'s and gender history since 1989?

How did you experience this process as a scientist personally?

All founders + project assistant

- In your opinion, what is 'European' about MATILDA? Can you tell why the term is part of the title?

Only asked up to half of the interviews conducted. Asked Zimmermann, Hämmerle, Schweitzer.

- How would you describe the relationship between domestic and foreign colleagues within MATILDA at your institution in terms of cooperation? - research projects, joint/collective publications, conferences etc.

All founders + project assistant

- How do you assess the role of international funds in the country of your institution for women*'s and gender history/MATILDA?

Only asked Daskalova, Sofia:

- What was the reason of your visit and presentation in Lyon last semester when we first met?

Only asked Zimmermann, Budapest:

- Can you tell me something about the process of moving the CEU from Budapest to Vienna?
- What happens concretely when CEU comes to Vienna?

Only asked the project assistant:

- How do you assess the role of the individual sites in the consortium during the foundation phase?
- What conditions had to be met when setting up the Joint Degree programme in order to be financed by Brussels?
- What was the assignment for the external reviewers and according to which criteria were they selected?
- What do you think the EU on the one hand and the University of Vienna on the other hand should aim at by creating such a course of studies/Joint Degree programme?
- Would you say that the topic of gender and/or women*'s and gender history and/or East Central Europe was at that time a subject that was considered particularly worthy of support by the EU and/or the University of Vienna?
- How were these topics discussed and evaluated within the consortium?
- How were the topics for the Summer Schools selected within the consortium?
- Was the East-West relationship between the individual locations discussed within the consortium?

ii. Joint Programme
Description *MATILDA* (as of 2008)



JOINT PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Also available electronically at
<http://www.ned.univie.ac.at/Matilda/CMS/>

THE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS:

Universität Wien (coordinating institution)
Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
Université Lumière Lyon 2
Central European University (CEU) in Budapest
University of Nottingham

Central website: <http://www.ned.univie.ac.at/Matilda/CMS/>

Important note:

This Programme Description contains exclusively the joint rules and regulations of MATILDA.

The regulation of matters not described here is left to the discretion of the individual partner universities and departments. For these matters please consult the local Program Responsible, program administrator, or relevant university regulations and offices in all cases.

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Appendix I

Information on grading systems in use nationally/at the partner universities, and the joint EU ECTS grading system

Appendix II

Sample MA thesis cover page

Appendix III

English language equivalencies for admission to Nottingham School of History taught masters programmes

A. Basic and Contact Information

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The partner institutions | Universität Wien (coordinating institution) Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski Université Lumière Lyon 2 Central European University (CEU), Budapest University of Nottingham |
| Degree to be awarded | 2 year MA MATILDA Double or Joint Degree ¹ |
| Length of study: | 4 semesters, 2 years full-time |
| Course requirements: | 120 ECTS |
| Central Contact information: | matilda.history@univie.ac.at |
| Local Programme Coordinators and Co-Coordinator: | <p><i>Vienna:</i> Carola Sachse carola.sachse@univie.ac.at Christa Ehrmann-Hämmerle christa.ehrmann-haemmerle@univie.ac.at</p> <p><i>Sofia:</i> Krassimira Daskalova krasi@scg.uni-sofia.bg Daniela Koleva daniela@scg.uni-sofia.bg</p> <p><i>Lyon:</i> Sylvie Schweitzer syschweitzer@wanadoo.fr Marianne Thivend marianne.thivend@ish-lyon.cnrs.fr</p> <p><i>Budapest:</i> Susan Zimmermann zimmerma@ceu.hu Francisca de Haan dehaanf@ceu.hu</p> <p><i>Nottingham:</i> Elizabeth Harvey Elizabeth.Harvey@nottingham.ac.uk Ross Balzaretto ross.balzaretto@nottingham.ac.uk</p> |
| General Information: | http://www.ned.univie.ac.at/Matilda/CMS/ |
| Central funding: | The EU ERASMUS programme |

¹ Accreditation by national accreditation boards/individual partner institutions pending. A system for Joint Degrees is currently being developed across the European Union. Under current regulations, graduates of the MATILDA programme will receive a Double Degree with a Diploma Supplement from the universities attended.

B. Application and Admission

I. General regulations

Students holding a BA (or a pre- or non-Bologna-type MA) in history and other disciplines in the Humanities or Social Sciences may apply for admission. If necessary, the compensatory electives in the first semester will be designed so as to ensure that students with an undergraduate degree other than history will be able to catch-up.

Prospective students apply to the partner institution where they wish to start their studies (start institution), and will be admitted to the programme by this institution.

Students are invited to select the institution/s to which they apply (start institution) and to which they intend to move (host institution/s) with reference to the specific educational and research profile of these institutions.²

Students should indicate an alternative start institution as their second choice.

An applicant refused by one partner will not be accepted by another partner.

II. Language requirements

The basic goal of the MATILDA language requirements is to ensure that all MATILDA graduates – providing they are not competent in a second language upon admission – will acquire competence in at least one second language during the programme.

Students are therefore required to demonstrate knowledge of the language of instruction of the start university (if they are not native speakers of this language) prior to being admitted to the programme – and in accordance with the entrance regulations of this university.

1st language

At the entrance level students who are not native speakers of the language of instruction at the start university (BG/EN,DE,EN,FR) have to demonstrate their knowledge of this language in accordance with the entrance regulations of the respective start university

- **EN**
 - Budapest:³ TOEFL (Computer-based) 230
 - TOEFL (Paper version) 570
 - TOEFL (Internet version) 88
 - CEU Administered TOEFL (Paper version) 570
 - International English Language Test IELTS 6.5
 - Cambridge Proficiency Examination C
 - Cambridge Advanced English Test B
 - Nottingham: IELTS 6.5-7.0 (and see APPENDIX III)
- **DE** Vienna: Österreichisches Sprachdiplom Deutsch: B2 or C1
- **FR** Lyon: B2 DELF (Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française) C1 DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française)

² http://www.ned.univie.ac.at/Matilda/CMS/Course_Overviews/dm;1/tm;Course_Overviews/

³ Dependent in all cases from the date of examination, too. For necessary additional information see <http://www.ceu.hu/admissions/requirements/language>.

- **BG/EN⁴**
(Sofia): Bulgarian: Bulgarian language certificate with a minimum of 240 training hours
English: Knowledge of English strongly recommended (Cambridge Advanced English Test B; TOEFL [see the requirements for Budapest], or Equivalent)

2nd language

MATILDA recognizes a student's sufficient knowledge of a second language if he/she fulfils *one* of the following three criteria:

- a) Is a native speaker of a language other than that of the language of instruction of the start university;
- b) Is competent in a second language other than the languages of teaching in use in the MATILDA consortium (BG,DE,EN,FR). Competence here refers to a B1 level (in reading and understanding) to be demonstrated by the end of year 1 at the latest;
- c) Is competent in a second language used in teaching at the MATILDA partner universities (BG,DE,EN,FR). Competence here refers to a B1 level (in reading and understanding) to be demonstrated by the end of year 1 at the latest.

The Intensive Programme

The working language of the IP is English, with special support provided for students and external experts whose command of English is insufficient.

III. The application material

In addition to meeting the start university's general entry requirements (a.o. language proficiency), MATILDA applicants are required to submit the following documents:

- One motivation letter in German, English or French
- Two letters of academic reference (in closed envelopes or per email)
- A recent CV
- One copy of BA certificate (History, Humanities, Social Sciences).

IV. The motivation letter

Every MATILDA application must include a 500-word typewritten Motivation Letter. This letter is of great importance when it comes to evaluating applications and, for this reason, candidates wishing to apply to MATILDA are advised to follow closely the following criteria when preparing their Motivation Letter.

The Motivation Letter should demonstrate a strong interest in European women's/gender history. MATILDA welcomes applicants from a variety of backgrounds and therefore need to find out as much as we can about the applicants' particular background and previous experience of 'doing' European women's/gender history. If the applicant has a background in, or has taken courses in, any area of women's/gender history or gender studies, she/he should mention it in the Motivation Letter. MATILDA is also interested in whether applicants are familiar with comparative or integrative perspectives which go beyond local, regional, and national histories – and/or why applicants find such perspectives interesting.

⁴ Mandatory courses in semester 1 are taught in Bulgarian, and may be offered in English too. Electives are taught in Bulgarian, English, and in German.

However, if applicants do not have any academic or professional background in women's/gender history and/or comparative approaches, then the program coordinators would like to find out why the applicant is interested in applying for this particular degree program and what academic motivations she/he has that make him/her a desirable candidate.

Applicants may already have a research proposal or area of interest in mind for a future MA thesis. They are encouraged to submit an outline of either their research interests and/or research project. Such a mini research proposal does not have to be longer than two paragraphs.

The motivation letter should display a good written style.

C. Course of Studies

1. MA Degree Requirements

Students are required to collect a total of 120 ECTS in course of their studies from studying at their start institution and (at least) one of the other partner universities (host institution[s]).

The programme is a mix of foundational modules and electives, and includes preparation and writing of the MA thesis as a third key element. Each of the five partner institutions offers courses in core subjects in Women's and Gender History (theory, methodology and practice), which are completed alongside with a few compensatory electives in the first semester. In semesters 2 and 3, specialist options (electives) are studied. (Electives in semesters 1 and 2 may, but don't have to include language courses.) Between semesters 2 and 3, all students and faculty from all partner institutions participate in the joint intensive summer programme, which is at least 10 work days in length. Thesis preparation and writing is supported in a variety of ways. Semester 4 is devoted to writing the master thesis.

Students are required to complete an overall programme evaluation sheet after year 1 (incl. intensive programme) and year 2 (in exchange for the diploma).

2. Student Mobility

Students will normally spend semesters 1 and 2 at their start university and the following one or two semesters at a partner university. The minimum time a student can stay at the start university is one semester, the maximum is three semesters. The student does not have to (but may) do his/her exams at the start university.

Student mobility in semester 2 and/or 3 and/or 4 is subject to capacity.⁵ Each partner

⁵ Mobility to CEU is restricted to semester 3 and/or 4, individual exceptions possible.

university may accept up to two mobile students per semester for up to 12 months from each of the partner institutions, i.e. 4 x 2 students.

After semester 2 all students will attend a two-week Intensive Programme together with students and teachers from all participating universities.

Mobility can be funded by the ERASMUS scheme according to regulations of the start university and the National Agency in this country.⁶

In some cases funding other than ERASMUS can be applied for.

Before participating in the MATILDA mobility scheme students have to demonstrate competence in the instructional language of the host institution, i.e. the partner university to which they intend to move.⁷ It is the responsibility of the sending university to provide the MATILDA programme coordinator of the host university with documentation about the language proficiency for mobility.

A special permission of the heads of departments confirms that the student is allowed to travel.

3. Curriculum Overview ⁸

| | Semester 1 | Semester 2 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 1 | 30 ECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10: Foundations in Women's and Gender History • 10: Foundations in Historical Methods and Theories • 10: Compensatory Electives: Historiography/Feminist Theory/Language | 30 ECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electives • Language (up to 10 ECTS) |
| Summer Intensive Programme (minimum 10 working days) | 10 ECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MATILDA students and faculty from each of the 5 universities present, as well as outside experts • Lecture sessions about the IP theme and workshop sessions focusing on students' proposed thesis topics | |

⁶ More information on <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/06/466&format=>

⁷ For a detailed description of language requirements see section B.II. above.

⁸ For course overviews and short description of the research and teaching profile of all partner institutions please see http://www.ned.univie.ac.at/Matilda/CMS/Course_Overviews/dm;1/tm;Course_Overviews/ .

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 2 | 20 ECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10: Thesis preparation/Electives • 10: Electives | 30 ECTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision/workshops • Thesis: 70-110 pages (<i>approximately 2.800 characters incl. blanks, or 420 words/page</i>) + bibliography etc. Submission: 30 June Assessment: 2 reviews by 2 faculty from different institutions |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Note: Minimal deviations in ECTS numbers/semester are possible; a minimum of 30 ECTS per semester is required.

D. Assessment and Grading

Course work grading is conducted in all partner institutions using their local grading systems or the ECTS grading system according to their choice.

Intensive Program grading is conducted according to the joint European ECTS grading system.

Thesis evaluation and grading⁹ is conducted in all partner universities according to the joint European ECTS grading system.

Course work assessment must be completed before moving to another university.

Students who have not achieved the number of credits as described in the curriculum overview for the respective semester(s) are not eligible for the MATILDA mobility structure.

In the event of failure it is possible for a student to repeat one year.

Plagiarism is considered a very serious offence.

For the *overall grade* (GPA = grade point average) all courses, the intensive program and the thesis are considered according to their weight in ECTS credits. Local grades are translated into the European grading scale.

In order to issue diploma according to national and/or local university regulations, ECTS grades are translated into national and/or local university grading systems.

The degree awarding institutions will decide on an overall *distinction* according to the local regulations

⁹ See section F.VI. below for a detailed description.

See APPENDIX I for information on national, partner university, and joint EU grading systems.

E. Abiding by Rules and Regulations

By enrolling in their start and host institutions students have agreed to abide by the Rules and Procedures outlined in this document, as well as the general rules and procedures of the partner institution in which they study.

F. MA Thesis Guidelines

The thesis is the single most important element of the Master's degree. It is a test of the student's ability both to undertake and complete a sustained piece of independent research and analysis, and to write up that research in a coherent form according to the rules and conventions of the academic community.

A satisfactory thesis should not only be adequate in its methodology, in its analysis and in its argument, and adequately demonstrate its author's familiarity with the relevant literature; it should also be written in correct, coherent language, in an appropriate style, correctly following the conventions of citation. It should, moreover, have a logical and visible structure and development that should at all times assist the reader's understanding of the argument being presented and not obscure it.

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the standard requirements of the Master's thesis, touching only tangentially on questions of methodology and content (as these are likely to be subject specific) and limited to those issues that are true across the board.

I. General Overview

All theses must identify an adequate research topic in European women's/gender history which includes a manageable field of research and a number of researchable questions to investigate. The thesis should be based on primary material (i.e. evidence).

Theses should

- (i) show a good knowledge of the relevant literature;
- (ii) contribute to the study of the field through original research and/or by relating the subject studies to the broader academic literature;
- (iii) demonstrate analytic ability through the careful and critical use of relevant concepts and approaches.

II. Thesis Language

The thesis must be written in English, German or French. Quotations should normally be

in the language of the thesis, with the original language included in a footnote where appropriate. Exceptions to this may be made when discipline specific guidelines permit (for example the use of Latin in Medieval Studies), or when issues such as the wording of the original language or the difference between different translations are under discussion. Other exceptions are short phrases in Latin or French typically used in English, such as ‘raison d’être’ or ‘inter alia’, which should be written in italics. Book titles, magazine titles, and newspaper titles may appear in their original language as long as English translations are given in parentheses or in a footnote. Cyrillic, Arabic and other non-Latin scripts should use their Latin equivalent. Where more than one transliteration style exists, a single style should be used consistently. Students should consult their academic writing instructor or advisor concerning proper transliteration procedures.

III. Thesis Format

Thesis sections should be placed in the following order:

1. Cover Page (required)
2. Abstract (max. 1 page)
3. Acknowledgements (optional)
4. Table of Contents (required)
5. List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations (where required)
6. List of Abbreviations (where required)
7. Body of the thesis (required)
8. Appendices (where required)
9. Glossary (where required)
10. Bibliography/Reference list (required)

1. Cover Page

The cover page should provide the following information in the following order:

- The full title of the thesis
- The candidate’s name
- The department and name of the university
- The statement: *“In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of European Master in Women’s and Gender History”*
- The supervisor’s name
- The place of submission
- The year of submission

See APPENDIX II for a sample cover page.

2. Abstract

The abstract of the thesis in English should be between 100 and 250 words and written in the present tense. It should normally include the following information: (1) a statement of the problem the research sets out to resolve; (2) the methodology used; (3) the major findings.

3. Acknowledgements

This is an optional page, acknowledging people who provided the author with assistance in the thesis project, notably, but not only, the thesis supervisor.

4. Table of Contents

The thesis must have a table of contents page listing chapter headings, section headings and sub-headings, Appendices and references as well as their corresponding page number. The 'Table of Contents' feature of Microsoft Word (or other word-processing software where permitted by the department) should normally be used to create a table of contents and this should be done after final editing so that pages referred to in the table of contents are correctly numbered.

5. List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations

If appropriate, a separate list of figures, tables, or illustrations should be included on a separate page immediately following the table of contents.

6. List of Abbreviations

If the thesis makes use of a large number of abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to a reader, providing a list of them can act as a useful guide.

7. Body of the Thesis

The thesis should be divided into logical chapters and include an introduction and a conclusion. Excluding the introduction and conclusion, the thesis will normally be expected to have not less than three and not more than six chapters, unless this has been agreed with the supervisor. The chapters should reflect the nature and stages of the research.

The introduction and conclusion may either be given titles and counted as the first and last chapter, or alternatively be entitled 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' and the first chapter after the introduction numbered Chapter 1.

8. Appendices

Appendices may be needed for formulae, maps, diagrams, interview protocols, or any similar data that are not contained in the body of the thesis. These should be provided after the conclusion in the logical order they are mentioned in the main body. A list of appendices should be drawn up, each being given a consecutive number or a letter, and placed in the table of contents. If there are several appendices each should receive a title.

9. Glossary

A list of special technical words or acronyms may be necessary. This is particularly true if the subject deals with a new area with a specialised vocabulary that the average reader in the discipline might not be familiar with, such as the Internet. This list should come after the appendices.

10. Bibliography/Reference List

A list of the sources used in the thesis must be supplied which complies with the same style used in the body of the thesis – this list should include only those sources cited in the thesis.

IV. Organisation of the Thesis

1. Introduction

The thesis should begin with a general introduction presenting an overview of what the thesis is about and situating it in the existing research. The introduction should show why the topic selected is worth investigating and why it is of significance in the field. This will normally be done with reference to existing research, identifying areas that have not been explored, need to be explored further, or where new research findings justify a reconsideration of established knowledge. The chosen methodology may also be introduced. The final section of the introduction should briefly outline the structure of the body of the thesis.

2. Conclusion

The introduction and conclusion are closely related to each other, thus students should take care in drafting and revising to ensure that these parts reflect and do not contradict one another. The conclusion should provide answers or solutions – to the extent this is possible – to the questions or problems raised in the introduction. The argumentation of the thesis should be summarised briefly, and the writer's main argument or findings restated clearly, without going into unnecessary detail or including additional arguments not dealt with in the body. The conclusion will normally be expected to return to the wider context from which the thesis departed in the introduction and place the findings in this context. The writer should, if appropriate, elaborate on how the research findings and results will contribute to the field in general and what sort of broader implications these may have. There is no need to hide the limitations of the thesis to the extent that these are appropriate to a work of this type (e.g. constraints of space, depth of research, etc.). Suggestions may be made for further research where appropriate, but this is not a requirement.

3. Literature Review

Depending on the discipline and the nature of the research, the existing literature may be reviewed in the introduction or part of a chapter, or a separate literature review chapter may be appropriate. The purpose of the literature review is to summarise, evaluate and where appropriate compare those main developments and current debates in the field which are specifically relevant to the research area, according to the guiding principle embodied in the thesis statement. In effect, the literature review shows that the writer is familiar with the field and simultaneously lays the ground for subsequent analysis or presentation and discussion of empirical data, as appropriate. Well-selected sources should convince the audience that research gaps have been identified correctly and that the writer has posed the right research questions, which will then be further addressed in subsequent chapters. Rather than simply summarising other authors' work, the chapter should make clear the writer's position in relation to the issues raised. The literature review should have a logical structure (whether by chronological, thematic or other criteria) and this should be made explicit to the reader. Like any other chapter, the literature review chapter should have its own introduction and conclusion.

4. Layout and appearance:

Length: The thesis should be between 70-110 pages, including footnotes (i.e. approximately 2.800 characters incl. blanks, or 420 words /page) and excluding bibliography, appendices etc.

Line Spacing: Double-spacing should be used in the abstract and text of the thesis. Single spacing should be used in long tables, block quotations separated from the text, footnotes, and bibliographical entries. Paragraphs should be indented, or an empty line left between paragraphs, depending on departmental requirements.

Font: The thesis should be computer printed on white A4 paper, single-sided, in Times New Roman, Garamond or Arial 12pt.

Margins: Margins should be one inch or 2.5 cm on all sides, and page size should be set to A4, not US letter.

Page Numbers: Pages should be numbered at the bottom in the centre, using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) starting with the first page of the thesis proper (i.e. the first page of the introduction). Pages prior to this should be numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii.). Chapters should start on a new page, but sections and subsections should not.

5. Citations and Bibliography

All theses will include footnotes and a full bibliography of sources consulted. Arguments and information drawn from books and articles consulted should be acknowledged in all cases. Direct quotations should be clearly indicated through the use of quotation marks (“ ”); repetition of other authors’ writing in the text without proper citation is plagiarism and will be penalized.

6. Headings and subheadings

Headings should be distinguished from the surrounding text by a larger point size, a different font, bolding, italics, or a combination of these. All headings of the same level should use the same style, and headings at lower levels should be less prominent than those at higher levels.

Example:

CHAPTER 2 – TITLE (Arial Bold Small caps 14 point)
2.1 Heading for section (Arial Bold Italic 12 point)
2.1.1 Heading for sub-section (Times Bold 12 point)
2.1.1.1 Heading for part of sub-section (Arial Bold 10 point)

All headings should be left-aligned, except chapter headings, which may be centred. A heading at the bottom of the page must have at least two full lines of text below it. Otherwise, the heading should begin on the next page. Captions related to visual material (graphs, tables, maps) should appear on the same page as the material itself. Chapter and section headings should be consistently numbered according to the numbering system recommended by the department. It should not normally be necessary to go beyond three levels of sections.

Examples:

Chapter I, section A, subsection 1, sub-subsection a)
 or
 Chapter 1, section 1.1, subsection 1.1.1, sub-subsection 1.1.1.1

All tables and figures should also be numbered, either sequentially within each section e.g. 1.1, 1.2 and then restarted sequentially in the next section e.g. 2.1, 2.2. Alternatively, they can be sequentially numbered from Table 1, Table 2, etc., throughout the whole work.

Headings should clearly reflect what the chapter or section is about, and should be expressed in the form of a concise noun phrase (normally less than one line), not a sentence. Information which is present in a higher level heading need not be repeated in a subordinate heading. Where possible, headings at the same level of hierarchy should have similar structure (e.g. 3.1 Common Law, 3.2 Continental Law, and not 3.1 Common Law, 3.2 The Supreme Court).

V. Thesis Preparation and Supervision

The thesis will be supervised by a person of the university attended by the student in his/her last one or two semesters. In case an oral defence is held, it will be organized and take place in the institution where the student has spent her/his last one or two semesters.

All students' thesis work will be supervised by a supervisor, who provides the student with guidance during the research and thesis writing period, and who will read at least one draft of their thesis. Students can normally expect to have three meetings of approximately one hour (or the equivalent) with their supervisors. The final thesis will be assessed by a supervisor and an external reader from another partner institution of the MATILDA consortium, who will provide a written evaluation of the student's thesis. In the case of discrepancy between the two written reports, an external reader from a third partner institution will be decisive. The final assessment of the thesis will be conducted with or without an oral defence, according to local examination procedures.

VI. Thesis Evaluation

Evaluation of the Thesis:

The final thesis will be assessed and graded in written form by the thesis supervisor and an external reader from another consortium partner institution. In case of a discrepancy between the two written reports an external reader from a third partner university will be decisive. Theses will be graded using the joint European ECTS grading scale. Thesis evaluation will be as follows:

A: This thesis contributes to the existing literature in the field of women's and gender history. It shows a complete knowledge of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material, and it demonstrates a clear analytical ability. The student has brought independent and innovative insights to the topic that go beyond the existing literature and engage the material in a creative and original way.

B: The thesis goes well beyond describing sources, evidence, or data under consideration to engage in clear analysis of them. Analysis in this case means making argumentative points and insights in the discussion of primary and supportive materials in the field of women's and gender history. These argumentative points go well beyond summary, but rather use supportive materials to develop and defend a nuanced central thesis argument. The thesis demonstrates an ability to use correct grammar, appropriate sources for support, and proper citations.

C: The thesis contributes to the existing literature in the field of women's and gender history and shows knowledge of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material. It goes in part beyond describing data or the texts under consideration to engage in clear analysis of them. The discussion has less developed analysis, tending to be somewhat more expository or less subtle than it might have been. The thesis has an argument that is distinct but not as well-developed as it could be at the MA level. The thesis demonstrates an ability to use correct English grammar, appropriate sources for support, and proper citations.

D: The thesis aims to make an argument but executes this goal inconsistently. The student's engagement with materials tends more toward exposition than analysis. Its analysis is either not developed enough or not fully convincing. While the writing is grammatically correct and sources properly documented, the command of English is perhaps not consistently smooth and/or its style is awkward.

E: This thesis suffers from the shortcomings of the D thesis but to a more noticeable extent. It is still passable, however, because the student has demonstrated an ability to do research and to synthesize her or his findings using existing literature on the subject matter and to accurately engage with relevant theories. The thesis aims at an argument but is not fully convincing because of weak analysis or incomplete support. While the writing is grammatically correct and sources properly documented, the command of English is perhaps not consistently smooth and/or its style is awkward.

F (Fail): This thesis lacks sufficient knowledge of the subject matter and it does not relate accurately to or represent accurately the broader academic literature in the field of women's and gender history. It neither applies methods properly, nor demonstrates analytic ability expected at the graduate level.

Final Thesis Assessment:

In institutions holding an oral defence:

Oral defense: The defence committee assesses the oral defence of the thesis qualitatively in terms of the student's ability to verbally analyze the key issues in the thesis; answer questions; elaborate on key points in the thesis; explicate under-developed or absent points relating to the thesis; and, if appropriate, apply the insights of the thesis to related texts, studies, issues, etc. The oral defense tests the student's ability to make analytical connections quickly, articulate ideas, and think about the issues in the thesis from various angles or perspectives.

Final thesis grade: The final thesis grade uses the same scale as the evaluation of the written thesis (see above). The final grade is determined in consideration of the grade for the written thesis along with the student's performance in the Oral Defense. It is only the final thesis grade that appears on a student's transcript and that is calculated into the GPA.

In institutions not holding an oral defence:

Final thesis grade: The final thesis grade is based on the written thesis only (see above)

APPENDIX I**Information on grading systems in use nationally/at the partner universities, and the joint EU ECTS grading system**

| EUROPEAN COMMUNITY COURSE CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEMS (ECTS) | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| CONVERSION TABLE FOR NATIONAL/UNIVERSITY GRADING SCALES ⁽¹⁾ | | | | | | | |
| ECTS GRADE | Austria (A) | Bulgaria (BG) | France (F) | CEU into/from ECTS ⁽²⁾ | CEU into/from Hungarian national grading ⁽³⁾ | UK Degree Class (BA) | UK Degree Class (MA) |
| Excellent (A) | 1 | 5.50 - 6.00 | 16: Très bien (TB) | A | 5 jeles | I (70%) | 70+ (Distinction) |
| Very Good (B) | | 4.50 - 5.49 | 15 | A - B+ | 4 jó 3 közepes | 2.i (60-69%) | 65-69 (Merit) |
| Good (C) | 2 | 3.50 - 4.49 | 14: Bien (B) | B+ B | 3 közepes 3 közepes | 2.ii (50-59%) | 60-64 (Merit) |
| Satisfactory (D) | 3 | | 12: Assez bien (AB) | B B- | 3 közepes 2 elégséges | III (45-49%) | 55-59 (Pass) |
| Sufficient (E) | 4 | 3.00 | 10: Passable (P) | C+ | 2 elégséges | | III (40-44%) |
| Insufficient/Failure (F) | 5 | 2.00 | 9: Echec (E) 8 7 | 1 elégtelen | F | Fail (below 40%) | Below 50 (Fail) |

(1) This table serves informational purposes only. Many countries and universities do not yet have formally or centrally regulated grade conversion policies. Changes on national and university levels may occur at any time.

(2) See also http://web.ceu.hu/sro/SRO_manual.pdf .

(3) See also <http://web.ceu.hu/downloads/VizsgaSzabalyzat.pdf> .

APPENDIX II:

MA thesis sample cover page

GENDERING THE JEWISH QUESTION.
CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AND ANTI-SEMITISM
IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY VIENNA

By
Anna Other

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
European Master in Women's and Gender History

Supervisor: Professor Mary Lamb

Budapest, Hungary
2007

Appendix III**English language equivalencies for admission to Nottingham School of History taught masters programmes**

| <i>Qualification</i> | | <i>Level required</i> | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| IELTS | | 6.5 with no less than 6.0 in each element | |
| TOEFL (Paper based) | | 573 (TWE minimum of 4.5) | |
| TOEFL (Computer based) | | 230 (Essay rating minimum of 4.5) | |
| TOEFL (IBT) | | 88 (minimum 19 in any element) | |
| IGCSE/GCSE/O-Level English (as a first or second language) | | Grade C | |
| Cambridge Proficiency test | | B | |
| Cambridge Advanced Test | | A | |
| International Baccalaureate English A1 or A2 (Standard or Higher Level) | | Grade 4 | |
| International Baccalaureate English B (Higher Level) | | Grade 4 | |
| International Baccalaureate English B (Standard Level) | | Grade 5 | |
| Warwick English Language Test | | BBC | |
| Warwick HE Foundation Programme (English and Study Skills element) | | 55% | |
| UETESOL | | BBBBB (above Pass) | |
| European Baccalaureate (first or second language) | | 6 | |
| Austria | Matura / Reifeprüfung | 2 (gut) in English when both written and oral exams have been taken | |
| Belgium | | 8 / 80% or Grote avec grande distinction in English | |
| Bulgaria | Secondary School Diploma | Grade 5 in English | |

| <i>Qualification</i> | | <i>Level required</i> | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IELTS | | 6.0 with no less than 5.0 in each element | 6.5 with no less than 6.0 in each element | 7.0 with no less than 6.0 in each element |
| Cameroon | O level | C | C | B |
| Denmark | Studentereksamen | 10 in English | 10 in English | 10 in English |
| Finland | Ylioppilastutkintotoistutus | 5 (magna cum laude approbatur) in English | 5 (magna cum laude approbatur) in English | 5 (magna cum laude approbatur) in English |
| France | French Baccalaureat (General) | 14 (bien) in English where the co-efficient applied to the subject is greater than 1 | 14 (bien) in English where the co-efficient applied to the subject is greater than 1 | 14 (bien) in English where the co-efficient applied to the subject is greater than 1 |
| | French Bacclaureate (OIB) | 12/20 | 12/20 | 12/20 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Germany | Abitur | 12 (gut) in English when taken as an achievement/ main/intensive course | 12 (gut) in English when taken as an achievement/ main/intensive course | 13 (sehr gut) in English when taken as an achievement/ main/intensive course |
| Iceland | Studentsprof | 8 in English when taken as a compulsory language | 8 in English when taken as a compulsory language | 8 in English when taken as a compulsory language |
| Luxembourg | Diplome de Fin d'Etudes Secondaires | 45 (bien) in English | 45 (bien) in English | 45 (bien) in English |
| Netherlands | VWO | 8 (goed) in English | 8 (goed) in English | 8 (goed) in English |
| Norway | Vitemal | Grade 5 in English | Grade 5 in English | Grade 5 in English |
| Sweden | Slutbetyg fran Komvux | VG (val godkant) in English | VG (val godkant) in English | VG (val godkant) in English |
| Switzerland | Maturita | 5 (gut/bien/bene) in English | 5 (gut/bien/bene) in English | 5 (gut/bien/bene) in English |
| Hong Kong | A-Level Use of English HKCEE | Grade C Grade B/4 | Grade C Grade B/4 | Grade B Grade 5 |
| India | Standard XII | 70% | 75% | 80% |
| Malaysia | UCLES 1119 Syllabus SPM | Grade C A1 | Grade C A1 | Grade C A1 |
| University of Reading | TEEP | 6.0 with no less than 5.0 in each element | 6.5 with no element less than 6.0 in each element | 7.0 with no less than 6.0 in each element |
| Any Country | Cambridge O-level | Grade C | Grade C | Grade B |
| West Africa | WAEC | C6 | C5 | B4 |

iii. MA Thesis Guidelines *MATILDA* (as of 2019)

F. MA Thesis Guidelines

The thesis is the single most important element of the Master's degree. It is a test of the student's ability both to undertake and complete a sustained piece of independent research and analysis, and to write up that research in a coherent form according to the rules and conventions of the academic community.

A satisfactory thesis should not only be adequate in its methodology, in its analysis and in its argument, and adequately demonstrate its author's familiarity with the relevant literature; it should also be written in correct, coherent language, in an appropriate style, correctly following the conventions of citation. It should, moreover, have a logical and visible structure and development that should at all times assist the reader's understanding of the argument being presented and not obscure it.

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the standard requirements of the Master's thesis, touching only tangentially on questions of methodology and content (as these are likely to be subject specific) and limited to those issues that are true across the board.

I. General Overview

All theses must identify an adequate research topic in European women's/gender history which includes a manageable field of research and a number of researchable questions to investigate. The thesis should be based on primary material (i.e. evidence).

Theses should

- (i) show a good knowledge of the relevant literature;
- (ii) contribute to the study of the field through original research and/or by relating the subject studies to the broader academic literature;
- (iii) demonstrate analytic ability through the careful and critical use of relevant concepts and approaches.

II. Thesis Language

The thesis must be written in English, German, Italian or French. Quotations should normally be in the language of the thesis, with the original language included in a footnote where appropriate. Exceptions to this may be made when discipline specific guidelines permit (for example the use of Latin in Medieval Studies), or when issues such as the wording of the original language or the difference between different translations are under discussion. Other exceptions are short phrases in Latin or French typically used in English, such as 'raison d'être' or 'inter alia', which should be written in italics. Book titles, magazine titles, and newspaper titles may appear in their original language as long as English translations are given in parentheses or in a footnote. Cyrillic, Arabic and other non-Latin scripts should use their Latin equivalent. Where more than one transliteration style exists, a single style should be used consistently. Students should consult their academic writing instructor or advisor concerning proper transliteration procedures.

III. Thesis Format

Thesis sections should be placed in the following order:

1. Cover Page (required)

2. Abstract (max. 1 page)
3. Acknowledgements (optional)
4. Table of Contents (required)
5. List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations (where required)
6. List of Abbreviations (where required)
7. Body of the thesis (required)
8. Appendices (where required)
9. Glossary (where required)
10. Bibliography/Reference list (required)

1. Cover Page

As a rule the cover page for a MATILDA thesis should provide the following information in the following order:

- The full title of the thesis
- The candidate's name
- The department and name of the university
- The statement: "*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of European Master in Women's and Gender History*"
- The supervisor's name
- The place of submission
- The year of submission

See APPENDIX II for a sample cover page.

Individual institutions may request alterations of the design of the cover page.

2. Abstract

The abstract of the thesis in English should be between 100 and 250 words and written in the present tense. It should normally include the following information: (1) a statement of the problem the research sets out to resolve; (2) the methodology used; (3) the major findings.

3. Acknowledgements

This is an optional page, acknowledging people who provided the author with assistance in the thesis project, notably, but not only, the thesis supervisor.

4. Table of Contents

The thesis must have a table of contents page listing chapter headings, section headings and sub-headings, Appendices and references as well as their corresponding page number. The 'Table of Contents' feature of Microsoft Word (or other word-processing software where permitted by the department) should normally be used to create a table of contents and this should be done after final editing so that pages referred to in the table of contents are correctly numbered.

5. List of Figures, Tables or Illustrations

If appropriate, a separate list of figures, tables, or illustrations should be included on a separate page immediately following the table of contents.

6. List of Abbreviations

If the thesis makes use of a large number of abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to a reader, providing a list of them can act as a useful guide.

7. Body of the Thesis

The thesis should be divided into logical chapters and include an introduction and a conclusion. Excluding the introduction and conclusion, the thesis will normally be expected to have not less than three and not more than six chapters, unless this has been agreed with the supervisor. The chapters should reflect the nature and stages of the research.

The introduction and conclusion may either be given titles and counted as the first and last chapter, or alternatively be entitled 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' and the first chapter after the introduction numbered Chapter 1.

8. Appendices

Appendices may be needed for formulae, maps, diagrams, interview protocols, or any similar data that are not contained in the body of the thesis. These should be provided after the conclusion in the logical order they are mentioned in the main body. A list of appendices should be drawn up, each being given a consecutive number or a letter, and placed in the table of contents. If there are several appendices each should receive a title.

9. Glossary

A list of special technical words or acronyms may be necessary. This is particularly true if the subject deals with a new area with a specialised vocabulary that the average reader in the discipline might not be familiar with, such as the Internet. This list should come after the appendices.

10. Bibliography/Reference List

A list of the sources used in the thesis must be supplied which complies with the same style used in the body of the thesis – this list should include only those sources cited in the thesis.

IV. Organisation of the Thesis

1. Introduction

The thesis should begin with a general introduction presenting an overview of what the thesis is about and situating it in the existing research. The introduction should show why the topic selected is worth investigating and why it is of significance in the field. This will normally be done with reference to existing research, identifying areas that have not been explored, need to be explored further, or where new research findings justify a reconsideration of established knowledge. The chosen methodology may also be introduced. The final section of the introduction should briefly outline the structure of the body of the thesis.

2. Conclusion

The introduction and conclusion are closely related to each other, thus students should take care in drafting and revising to ensure that these parts reflect and do not contradict one another. The conclusion should provide answers or solutions – to the extent this is possible – to the questions or problems raised in the introduction. The argumentation of the thesis should be summarised briefly, and the writer's main argument or findings restated clearly, without going into unnecessary detail or including additional arguments not dealt with in the body. The conclusion will normally be expected to return to the wider context from which the thesis departed in the introduction and place the findings in this context. The writer should, if appropriate, elaborate on how the research findings and results will contribute to the field in general and what sort of broader implications these may have. There is no need to hide the limitations of the thesis to the extent that these are appropriate to a work of this type (e.g.

constraints of space, depth of research, etc.). Suggestions may be made for further research where appropriate, but this is not a requirement.

3. Literature Review

Depending on the discipline and the nature of the research, the existing literature may be reviewed in the introduction or part of a chapter, or a separate literature review chapter may be appropriate. The purpose of the literature review is to summarise, evaluate and where appropriate compare those main developments and current debates in the field which are specifically relevant to the research area, according to the guiding principle embodied in the thesis statement. In effect, the literature review shows that the writer is familiar with the field and simultaneously lays the ground for subsequent analysis or presentation and discussion of empirical data, as appropriate. Well-selected sources should convince the audience that research gaps have been identified correctly and that the writer has posed the right research questions, which will then be further addressed in subsequent chapters. Rather than simply summarising other authors' work, the chapter should make clear the writer's position in relation to the issues raised. The literature review should have a logical structure (whether by chronological, thematic or other criteria) and this should be made explicit to the reader. Like any other chapter, the literature review chapter should have its own introduction and conclusion.

4. Layout and appearance:

Length: The thesis should be between 70-110 pages, including footnotes (i.e. approximately 2.800 characters incl. blanks, or 420 words/page) and excluding bibliography, appendices etc.

Line Spacing: Double-spacing should be used in the abstract and text of the thesis. Single spacing should be used in long tables, block quotations separated from the text, footnotes, and bibliographical entries. Paragraphs should be indented, or an empty line left between paragraphs, depending on departmental requirements.

Font: The thesis should be computer printed on white A4 paper, single-sided, in Times New Roman, Garamond or Arial 12pt.

Margins: Margins should be one inch or 2.5 cm on all sides, and page size should be set to A4, not US letter.

Page Numbers: Pages should be numbered at the bottom in the centre, using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) starting with the first page of the thesis proper (i.e. the first page of the introduction). Pages prior to this should be numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii). Chapters should start on a new page, but sections and subsections should not.

5. Citations and Bibliography

All theses will include footnotes and a full bibliography of sources consulted. Arguments and information drawn from books and articles consulted should be acknowledged in all cases. Direct quotations should be clearly indicated through the use of quotation marks; repetition of other authors' writing in the text without proper citation is plagiarism and will be penalized.

6. Headings and subheadings

Headings should be distinguished from the surrounding text by a larger point size, a different font, bolding, italics, or a combination of these. All headings of the same level should use the same style, and headings at lower levels should be less prominent than those at higher levels.

Example:

CHAPTER 2 – TITLE (Arial Bold Small caps 14 point)
2.1 *Heading for section* (Arial Bold Italic 12 point)
2.1.1 *Heading for sub-section* (Times Bold 12 point)
2.1.1.1 *Heading for part of sub-section* (Arial Bold 10 point)

All headings should be left-aligned, except chapter headings, which may be centred. A heading at the bottom of the page must have at least two full lines of text below it. Otherwise, the heading should begin on the next page. Captions related to visual material (graphs, tables, maps) should appear on the same page as the material itself. Chapter and section headings should be consistently numbered according to the numbering system recommended by the department. It should not normally be necessary to go beyond three levels of sections.

Examples:

Chapter I, section A, subsection 1, sub-subsection a)

or

Chapter 1, section 1.1, subsection 1.1.1, sub-subsection 1.1.1.1

All tables and figures should also be numbered, either sequentially within each section e.g. 1.1, 1.2 and then restarted sequentially in the next section e.g. 2.1, 2.2. Alternatively, they can be sequentially numbered from Table 1, Table 2, etc., throughout the whole work.

Headings should clearly reflect what the chapter or section is about, and should be expressed in the form of a concise noun phrase (normally less than one line), not a sentence. Information which is present in a higher level heading need not be repeated in a subordinate heading. Where possible, headings at the same level of hierarchy should have similar structure (e.g. 3.1 Common Law, 3.2 Continental Law, and not 3.1 Common Law, 3.2 The Supreme Court).

V. Thesis Preparation and Supervision

The thesis will be supervised by a person of the university attended by the student in his/her last one or two semesters. In case an oral defence is held, it will be organized and take place in the institution where the student has spent her/his last one or two semesters.

All students' thesis work will be supervised by a supervisor, who provides the student with guidance during the research and thesis writing period, and who will read at least one draft of their thesis. Students can normally expect to have at least three meetings of approximately one hour (or the equivalent) with their supervisors. The final thesis will be assessed by a supervisor and an external reader¹ from another partner institution of the MATILDA consortium, who will provide a written evaluation of the student's thesis. In the case of discrepancy between the two written reports, an external reader from a third partner institution will be decisive. The final assessment of the thesis will be conducted with or without an oral defence, according to local examination procedures.

VI. Thesis Evaluation

³ At the University of Vienna, the review of the external, i.e. second reader will be incorporated by the supervisor and first reader into her/his final evaluation; this document obtains a legal status.

Theses will be graded using the joint European ECTS grading scale. Thesis evaluation will be as follows:

A: This thesis contributes to the existing literature in the field of women's and gender history. It shows a complete knowledge of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material, and it demonstrates a clear analytical ability. The student has brought independent and innovative insights to the topic that go beyond the existing literature and engage the material in a creative and original way.

B: The thesis goes well beyond describing sources, evidence, or data under consideration to engage in clear analysis of them. Analysis in this case means making argumentative points and insights in the discussion of primary and supportive materials in the field of women's and gender history. These argumentative points go well beyond summary, but rather use supportive materials to develop and defend a nuanced central thesis argument. The thesis demonstrates an ability to use correct grammar, appropriate sources for support, and proper citations.

C: The thesis contributes to the existing literature in the field of women's and gender history and shows knowledge of the subject matter and relevant theoretical material. It goes in part beyond describing data or the texts under consideration to engage in clear analysis of them. The discussion has less developed analysis, tending to be somewhat more expository or less subtle than it might have been. The thesis has an argument that is distinct but not as well-developed as it could be at the MA level. The thesis demonstrates an ability to use correct grammar, appropriate sources for support, and proper citations.

D: The thesis aims to make an argument but executes this goal inconsistently. The student's engagement with materials tends more toward exposition than analysis. Its analysis is either not developed enough or not fully convincing. While the writing is grammatically correct and sources properly documented, the command of language is perhaps not consistently smooth and/or its style is awkward.

E: This thesis suffers from the shortcomings of the D thesis but to a more noticeable extent. It is still passable, however, because the student has demonstrated an ability to do research and to synthesize her or his findings using existing literature on the subject matter and to accurately engage with relevant theories. The thesis aims at an argument but is not fully convincing because of weak analysis or incomplete support. While the writing is grammatically correct and sources properly documented, the command of language is perhaps not consistently smooth and/or its style is awkward.

F (Fail): This thesis lacks sufficient knowledge of the subject matter and it does not relate accurately to or represent accurately the broader academic literature in the field of women's and gender history. It neither applies methods properly, nor demonstrates analytic ability expected at the graduate level.

Final Thesis Assessment:

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Oral defence: The defence committee assesses the oral defence of the thesis qualitatively in terms of the student's ability to verbally analyse the key issues in the thesis; answer questions;

elaborate on key points in the thesis; explicate under-developed or absent points relating to the thesis; and, if appropriate, apply the insights of the thesis to related texts, studies, issues, etc. The oral defence tests the student's ability to make analytical connections quickly, articulate ideas, and think about the issues in the thesis from various angles or perspectives.

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In institutions not holding an oral defence:

Final thesis grade: The final thesis grade is based on the written thesis only (see above)