

The French Revolution as a Moment of Respatialization

Dialectics of the Global

Edited by
Matthias Middell

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The French Revolution as a Moment of Respatialization

Edited by
Megan Maruschke and Matthias Middell

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Preface

Ever since the 1990s, “globalization” has been a dominant idea and, indeed, ideology. The metanarratives of Cold War victory by the West, the expansion of the market economy, and the boost in productivity through internationalization, digitization (this should be changed for the whole series description, not done book by book) and the increasing dominance of the finance industry became associated with the promise of a global trickle-down effect that would lead to greater prosperity for ever more people worldwide. Any criticism of this viewpoint was countered with the argument that there was no alternative; globalization was too powerful and thus irreversible. Today, the ideology of “globalization” meets with growing scepticism. An era of exaggerated optimism for global integration has been replaced by an era of doubt and a quest for a return to particularistic sovereignty. However, processes of global integration have not dissipated and the rejection of “globalization” as ideology has not diminished the need to make sense both of the actually existing high level of interdependence and the ideology that gave meaning and justification to it.

The following three dialectics of the global are in the focus of this series:

Multiplicity and Co-Presence: “Globalization” is neither a natural occurrence nor a singular process; on the contrary, there are competing projects of globalization, which must be explained in their own right and compared in order to examine their layering and their interactive composition.

Integration and Fragmentation: Global processes result in de- as well as re-territorialization. They go hand in hand with the dissolution of boundaries, while also producing a respatialization of the world.

Universalism and Particularism: Globalization projects are justified and legitimized through universal claims of validity; however, at the same time they reflect the worldview and/or interest of particular actors.

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Megan Maruschke and Matthias Middell

1 Explaining Revolutionary Upheaval: From Internal Societal Developments to Global Processes of Respatialization

For generations, historians, fascinated by the French Revolution, have added new depth to our understanding of this historical moment. To be more precise, each generation of historians has uncovered new facets by pushing aside the dimensions prioritized by their predecessors. This process of renewal sustains a long and controversial history of historiography of the events between the meeting of the Estates General in 1789 and Napoleon's seizure of power (and beyond).¹ Even before the 200th anniversary of the revolution, the multitude of books was insurmountable. The boom around the bicentennial enabled a considerable number of historians to continue tirelessly to publish on the topic.² However, by the end of the twentieth century, those who had predicted that interest in the revolution would fade soon found their fears dispelled.³ Not only were minor details clarified, but also completely new narratives of the French Revolution were tested. Why is this well-trodden historical topic still fascinating?

The answer probably lies in the event itself. The revolutionary decade left historians with extensive material, which was also organized in an exemplary fashion in a new archival system. These archives have remained enticing to

1 J.N. Ducange, *La Révolution française et l'histoire du monde. Deux siècles de débats historiques et politiques 1815–1991*, Paris: Armand Colin, 2014; S. Desan, "What's after Political Culture? Recent French Revolutionary Historiography", *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000) 1, pp. 163–196; R.L. Spang, "Paradigms and Paranoia: How Modern is the French Revolution?", *American Historical Review* 108 (2003) 1, pp. 119–147; G. Kates (ed.), *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, (1997) 2005; P. Davies, *The Debate on the French Revolution*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006; J.B. Shank, "Is it Really Over? The French Revolution Twenty Years after the Bicentennial", *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009) 4, pp. 527–530; P.R. Hanson, "Political History of the French Revolution since 1989", *Journal of Social History* 52 (2019) 3, pp. 584–592.

2 D. Le Monnier and M. Vovelle (eds.), *Les Colloques du Bicentenaire: répertoire des rencontres scientifiques nationales et internationales*, Paris: Société des Etudes Robespierristes, 1991; S.L. Kaplan, *Adieu 89*, Paris: Fayard, 1993; M. Vovelle, *La bataille du Bicentenaire de la Révolution française*, Paris: La Découverte, 2017.

3 J.R. Censer, "Commencing the Third Century of Debate", *American Historical Review* 94 (1989) 5, pp. 1309–1325.

each generation of historians. They do not need to fear that there will be nothing new to discover. At the same time, the upheaval invited contemporaries of all political stripes to comment on the course of events. In turn, we witness how generation after generation use these events to reflexively evaluate their society, followed accordingly by diachronic comparisons. However, seemingly new proposals trace their origins back to one question: how can we best organize society and its participatory structure? This question has sustained a continuous discourse since the first eighteenth-century proposals and attempts to base state sovereignty on popular will.

Consequently, as each new generation in society reinterprets the challenge of popular sovereignty, historians also are inspired to reflect on the French Revolution and its interpretation. This is true for the discovery of “the people” as a central historical actor in the mid-nineteenth century, reflected in the historiography of Jules Michelet, which became the basis for the shift towards the social history of revolutionary transformation. This approach can be traced back to Jean Jaurès and his *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française* – if we cannot already see its origins with Antoine Barnave, who argued as early as 1792 that social tensions caused the revolution.⁴ At almost the same moment, Alphonse Aulard stimulated historical interest in the cooperation of the political institutions in a republican state system. In the first decades of the twentieth century, however, an entire school of Russian historians, from Nikolai Kareev to Nikolai Lukin, were occupied with the question of how to integrate peasants into a society still in the early stages of industrialization. Anatolij Ado later employed these perspectives to reconstruct a prehistory of the Revolution of 1848.⁵ Calling Russian Bolsheviks the “Jacobins of the twentieth century” reformulated old questions in a new context about the relationship between elites and lower classes as well as between political and social revolutions, all of which had already been posed by François Noël Babeuf in 1796.⁶ This was followed by a productive research phase that closely examined the *sans-culottes* and their political representatives.⁷

This “history from below” turned away from a historiography focused primarily on “great men” and instead examined the concerns and needs, the

4 A. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three Narrative Histories of the French Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

5 A. Ado, *Paysans en révolution: Terre, pouvoir et jacquerie 1789–1794*, Paris: Société des Etudes Robespierriennes, 1996.

6 T. Kondratieva, *Bolcheviks et Jacobins: Itinéraire des analogies*, Paris: Payot, 1989.

7 A. Soboul, *Les sans-culottes parisiens en l’an II. – Mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire (2 juin 1793–9 thermidor an II)*, Paris: Librairie Clavreuil, 1958; W. Markov, Jacques Roux. *Le curé rouge*, Paris: Libertia, 2017 (German original in 4 vols, 1967–1970).

hopes and goals, as well as the behaviour and the environment of the ordinary people.⁸ These studies also picked up on older ideas from a history of emotions and mass panic and paved the way for the history of mentalities.⁹ In addition to these more cultural-historical studies of the *journée révolutionnaire* (the insurrection of 10 August 1792), social history also played an important role. Using mass sources, historians more systematically studied property distribution and the weight of feudal burdens in different regions of France.¹⁰ Scholars drew different conclusions from this material, ranging from a perspective inspired by anarchism/Trotskyism, which traced the highly anticipated class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie back to the epoch of the revolution,¹¹ to a historicization of the conflicts between egalitarians and liberals.¹²

In a constructivist turn in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the overly linear arc from the French Revolution to the present day became itself the subject of the historiography of the revolution. At that time, the master narratives of Marxism and modernization theory were also in crisis and eroded under post-modernism's lens. In his essay collection *Penser la Révolution française*, François Furet asked, was the revolution, instead of being the product of stark social contradictions, rather the result of an increasingly excessive "Manichaeism cursing of opponents" by the revolutionaries who came successively to power?¹³ However, a conclusive

8 F. Krantz (ed.), *History From Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé*, Montréal: Concordia University, 1985.

9 G. Lefebvre, *La Grande Peur de 1789*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1932; G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848*, New York: Wiley & Sons, 1964; M. Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris: Seuil, 1978.

10 A. Soboul, *La Civilisation et la Révolution française. vol. 1: La crise de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris: Arthaud, 1978; for a well-informed summary of the debates since the 1960s on the crisis of the Ancien Régime and the economy during the revolution, see G. Lemarchand, *L'économie en France de 1770 à 1830. De la crise de l'Ancien Régime à la révolution industrielle*, Paris: Armand Colin, 2008.

11 D. Guérin, *La lutte des classes sous la Première République, 1793–1797*, 2 vols, Paris: Gallimard, (1946) 1968. See also the shorter second edition under the title *Bourgeois et bras-armés, 1793–1795*, Paris: Gallimard, 1973.

12 A. Cobban, *The Debate on the French Revolution, 1789–1800*, London: Nicholas Kaye, 1950; A. Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964; E. Le Roy Ladurie, H. Neveux, and J. Jacquart, *Histoire de la France rurale, Vol. II: L'âge classique des paysans. De 1340 à 1789*, Paris: Seuil, 1975.

13 F. Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, Paris: Gallimard, 1978. On the autobiographical background of his turn away from Marxist perspectives, see F. Furet, *Le Passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XX^e siècle*, Paris: Robert Laffont and Calmann-Lévy, 1995, and M. S. Christofferson, "François Furet between History and Journalism, 1958–1965", *French History* 15 (2001) 4, pp. 421–447. On the potential of the constructivist approach, see

narrative of the chain of events did not follow from this thoroughly inspiring question on its own.¹⁴ A subsequent attempt to narrate this thesis of how the revolution derailed (*dérapiage*) under the Jacobins also did not lead anywhere because the political and intellectual context had again begun to change.¹⁵ Furet's thesis – being that France had taken a 200-year detour from the North American “normal” path due to the Jacobins' interventions and was just beginning to revert back – proved to be less than convincing. A revival of French self-assertiveness and global ambition may have played a role here. Furthermore, at the moment of the West's triumph at the end of the Cold War by a single remaining superpower, Shmuel Eisenstadt's counter thesis of multiple modernities gained recognition in international social sciences.¹⁶

Finally, in the context of the bicentennial, historical comparative analysis entered a new phase. Comparative studies focused less on the deviance of a case from an underlying norm (which often led to a comparison of real and “ideal types”, to express this in Max Weber's terminology) and more on the empirical study of two or more cases, that is, two real types without detouring through a normatively charged ideal type.¹⁷ The results of this comparative research made it much more plausible to begin from very different paths of social transformation at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ These questions were barely dealt with in the important accounts published for the occasion of the bicentennial, which instead focused overwhelmingly on what was happening inside the “natural boundaries” of the Hexagon.¹⁹ The effort to better integrate the international dimension of the revolution remained, for the time being, reserved for the major conference at the Sorbonne in July 1989 and for numerous

K.M. Baker and D. Edelstein (eds.), *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

¹⁴ For a conventional (liberal-conservatively oriented) narrative, see F. Furet and D. Richet, *La Révolution*, Paris: Fayard, 1965.

¹⁵ F. Furet, *La Révolution française. Vol. II: Terminer la Révolution: De Louis XVIII à Jules Ferry, 1814–1880*, Paris: Hachette 1982.

¹⁶ S.N. Eisenstadt. “Multiple Modernities”, *Daedalus* 129 (2000) 1, pp. 1–29.

¹⁷ M. Middell, “Kulturtransfer und Historische Komparatistik. Thesen zu ihrem Verhältnis”, *Comparativ. Leipziger Beiträge zur Universalgeschichte und vergleichenden Gesellschaftsforschung* 10 (2000) 1, pp. 7–41.

¹⁸ M. Kossok, *Ausgewählte Schriften, Bd. 3: Zwischen Reform und Revolution. Übergänge von der Universal- zur Globalgeschichte*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009.

¹⁹ For a strong emphasis on the international impact of the revolution, see M. Vovelle, *La Révolution française. Images et récit*, 5 vols, Paris: Messidor, 1986.

conference proceedings initiated in different countries of the world.²⁰ At the same time, there had already been an energetic push for a more consistent international interpretation of the revolution.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Robert Palmer and Jacques Godechot (though with different emphases) argued that the idea of an Atlantic revolution was not just a response to the rise of comparative Jacobin research in Europe's East.²¹ They wanted to make clear that the epochal context of the revolution was not limited to a single country. However, their ideas were, at that time, not very successful. They riled up both Gaullists and communists in France as their thesis downplayed the central importance of France and constructed, potentially, a pre-history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These accusations were not relevant in the early 1990s and so their thesis returned without any major objections.²² However, this was only a prelude to the fundamental reorientation of the historiography of the revolutions of circa 1770–1830. These

20 M. Vovelle (ed.), *L'Image de la Révolution française*, 4 vols, Paris et al.: Pergamon Press, 1989; M. Kossok and E. Kroß (eds.), *1789 – Weltwirkungen einer großen Revolution*, 2 vols, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1988.

21 J. Godechot and R.R. Palmer, “Le problème de l’Atlantique du XVIII^{ème} au XXI^{ème} siècle”, in: Comitato internazionale di scienze storiche (ed.), *Congresso internazionale di scienze storiche*, Rome, 4–11 September 1955. Relazioni 5 (Storia contemporanea), Florence 1955, pp. 175–239; R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, (2 vols 1959–1964) 2014; J. Godechot, *La grande nation: l’expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799*, Paris: PUF, 1956; J. Godechot, *L’Europe et l’Amérique à l’époque napoléonienne (1800–1815)*, Paris: PUF, 1967; J. Godechot, *Les Révolutions, 1770–1799*, Paris: PUF, 1963 (English: *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770–1799*, New York: Free Press, 1965). Parallel to the idea of an Atlantic revolution as the origin of modern Western democracy, the idea of radical democracy emerged, which was the origin of the phalanx of Jacobins across the world. Among others, see K. Benda, *A magyar jakobinusok iratai*, 3 vols, Budapest, 1952–1957; B. Lesnodorski, *Polscy Jakobini*, Warsaw, 1960; W. Markov, “I giacobini dei paesi absburgici”, *Studi Storici* 3 (1962), pp. 493–525; W. Grab, *Norddeutsche Jakobiner. Demokratische Bestrebungen zur Zeit der Französischen Revolution*, Frankfurt a. M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1967; M. Kossok, “Das Salz der Revolution. Jakobinismus in Lateinamerika. Versuch einer Positionsbestimmung”, *Universalhistorische Aspekte und Dimensionen des Jakobinismus*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1976, pp. 124–159; H. Scheel, *Süddeutsche Jakobiner Klassenkämpfe und republikanische Bestrebungen im deutschen Süden Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980.

22 W. Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History*, New York: New York University Press, 2009; P. Serna (ed.) *Républiques soeurs. Le Directoire et la révolution atlantique*, Rennes: PUR, 2009; M. Albertone and A. de Francesco (eds.), *Rethinking the Atlantic World. Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolution*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; T. Bender and L. Dubois, *Revolution! The Atlantic World Reborn*, New York: New York Historical Society, 2011.

revolutions, which seemed to criss-cross the Americas and Western Europe, appeared to be interrelated and integrated in a larger scheme of multiple revolutionary cycles.²³ Until that time, this perspective had only been common in comparative research stemming from the interdisciplinary dialogue between history and historical sociology.²⁴

A dramatic shift in the study of the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries developed. This fundamental transformation, in turn, had different causes and contexts. This shift was a consequence of the general social interpretations that resulted from the new centrality of the concept of globalization. By understanding the world after the Cold War as a globalizing world, historians' search for the causes of social change shifted from a focus on the internal factors that had hitherto been at the forefront of both Marxist and modernization theory to an interest in the relations between societies and their inevitable global integration. Immanuel Wallerstein had, of course, already done substantial preliminary work on such a viewpoint in his volumes on the capitalist world-system.²⁵ Notwithstanding, his conclusion that, in this world-system, various regions of the world were irrevocably assigned to the centre or periphery proved, by the 1990s, to be too static to explain China's unexpected rise.²⁶ However, the decisive influence on the development potential of individual societies, derived from their position (as well as their positioning strategies) in the world economy and in the international system, found more and more followers.

With regard to the French Revolution, several authors argued that the expropriation of church property and the elimination of feudal burdens were

²³ In contrast to the arguments made by Palmer and Godechot, more recent versions of the Atlantic history thesis also integrate the Southern Atlantic: J. Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions", *American Historical Review* 113 (2008) 2, pp. 319–340; J. Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; D. Armitage and S. Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

²⁴ J.A. Goldstone, "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory", *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), pp. 139–187; M. Kossok, *In Tyrannos. Revolutionen der Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1989.

²⁵ I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1: *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York and London: Academic Press, 1974, vol. 2: *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, New York: Academic Press, 1979, vol. 3: *The Second Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s*, San Diego: Academic Press, 1989.

²⁶ A.G. Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

a reaction to the relative losses of the French crown in its competition with the British Empire since the Seven Years' War, which was followed by national bankruptcy.²⁷ These gains allowed France to continue this competition and resume military conflict through to 1815. The major changes in social relations, political institutions, and the cultural basis of legitimacy appear, in this perspective, to be a result of the French elites' strategy to restore their (ultimately financial) competitive edge in the race for global hegemony. In his analysis of the National Assembly, Jeremy Whiteman empirically comes closest to reconstructing how an awareness of the global condition – that is to say, the primacy of integration in global contexts compared to local, regional, and (proto-)national frameworks – emerged among revolutionary actors.²⁸

A second context, which is quite connected to the developments outlined above, also played an important role: France was no longer the centre of historiographical innovation. Since the 1920s, various generations of the *Annales* school had repeatedly set new methodological and theoretical trends, and in doing so they effectively positioned themselves as trendsetters. American historians, in contrast, very explicitly demarcated themselves from Eurocentric traditions and promoted a global historiography that incorporated the momentum of post-colonialism as well as the diverse expertise derived from area studies.²⁹ That this “turn” was neither as new nor as radically post-colonial as claimed does not matter here.³⁰ Rather, it is precisely this conceptual shift in general historiography that has been linked with a crucial reassessment of the events that took place outside the Hexagon in the history of the revolutions of the late eighteenth century.

In the context of the bicentennial, French “overseas possessions” were indeed examined in more detail than before, but they remained in the background and only played a minor role in explaining the dynamics of the revolution. More or less, it was the French revolutionary message that sometimes reached the

²⁷ B. Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution: A Global Historical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

²⁸ J. Whiteman, *Reform, Revolution and French Global Policy, 1789–1791*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.

²⁹ P. Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; for the historiography focusing on the revolutionary era, see K.M. Baker and J. Zizek, “The American Historiography of the French Revolution”, in: A. Molho and G.S. Wood (eds.), *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 349–392.

³⁰ K. Naumann, *Laboratorien der Weltgeschichtsschreibung. Lehre und Forschung an den Universitäten Chicago, Columbia und Harvard 1918 bis 1968*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018.

colonies, but not the other way around. However, this kind of historical consideration found itself on the defensive in comparison to entangled or connected history approaches.³¹ It was still more focused on French influence than on understanding how these ideas were actually taken up in other contexts. In contrast, entangled history suggested that the different places in a network deserved equal consideration and interdependent analysis.

This also inspired a new search for relevant sources to tell the history of the whole French Empire. Saint-Domingue stood out for two reasons. First, it was the economic powerhouse of the French Empire during the second half of the eighteenth century. Second, the liberation of slaves – first on the island, followed by empire-wide emancipation – radically raised the question of agency beyond the metropole. Today, library shelves are filled with literature about the events in Saint-Domingue, their resonance in France, including their impact on the other French colonies and even across North and South America.³² This study of the upheaval in the colony, decisive for France's trading elites, has sparked new ideas and questions in the comparative history of empires.³³ On the one hand, the teleological narrative "from empire to nation-state" was called into question and along with it the confusion (or rather oversimplification) between early modern empires (composite states) with the empires of the

31 M. Espagne, "Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle", *Genèses* (1994) 17, pp. 112–121; S. Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia", *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (1997) 3, pp. 735–762.

32 G. Bonacci and D. Béchacq (eds.), *La Révolution haïtienne au-delà de ses frontières*, Paris: Karthala, 2006; P. Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017; L. Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804*, Chapel Hill NC and Williamsburg VA: University of North Carolina Press, 2004; L. Dubois and J. D. Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789–1804: A Brief History with Documents*, Boston MA: St. Martins Press, 2006; D.L. Garraway, *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2008; D.P. Geggus and N. Fiering (eds.), *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009; P.P. Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801–1804*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011; J. Popkin, "Saint-Domingue, Slavery, and the Origins of the French Revolution", in: T.E. Kaiser and D.K. van Kley (eds.), *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 220–248.

33 J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010; U. von Hirschhausen and J. Leonhard, "Zwischen Historisierung und Globalisierung. Titel, Themen und Trends der neueren Empire-Forschung", *Neue Politische Literatur* 56 (2011) 3, pp. 390–402.

later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁴ On the other hand, the French Revolution as the historical moment in world history in which the nation-state was born was severely called into question. These studies reminded us that the revolution had set in motion parallel processes of nationalization and imperialism, which can also be observed in many other parts of the world beyond France.

The open question is now how these processes can be reset analytically if the old categories of empire and nation-state – which have moved from concrete historical descriptions as real types to elements of theory formation in the social sciences – seem increasingly unconvincing and problematic. In this volume, we argue, by means of a heuristic model to reinterpret modern history through the lens of processes of respatialization, that the revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century represented a fundamental process in the development of new spatial formats for societal organization as well as in the modification of existing spatial formats. Thus, these revolutions paved the way to a new spatial order.³⁵

It is already well known that the reorganization of space was one of the central concerns of French legislation from 1789 onwards. The National Assembly introduced departments and cantons in the Hexagon as one of its first priorities to rework administrative space. Yet, soon they also dealt with the reorganization of the French Empire as well as the organization of the many areas occupied by France since the start of the revolutionary wars. This demonstrates the direct relationship between political change – based on the newly established legitimacy of popular sovereignty – and social transformation, on the one hand, and processes of spatialization, on the other hand. Two hitherto unexplained questions are, first, what knowledge did French revolutionaries reference in their fundamental transformation of social relations, the redesign of spatial formats, and the transformation of the entire spatial order, and, second, how was this repertoire adopted in other revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic through the 1820s.

³⁴ J. Esherick, H. Kayali, and E. van Young (eds.), *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006; U. von Hirschhausen and J. Leonhard (eds.), *Empires. Die Krise der Vielfalt im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015; J.M. Fradera, *The Imperial Nation: Citizens and Subjects in the British, French, Spanish, and American Empires*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

³⁵ S. Marung and M. Middell (eds.), *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

The breadth of experiences to which contemporaries of 1789 referred date back to the beginning of the eighteenth century and included various attempts to reform traditional empires in India, in the Americas, and in France itself. These experiences and observations were collected, arranged, and circulated through the various media of the Enlightenment.³⁶ It is undoubtedly worth rethinking the usual view of the French Enlightenment, often regarded as the origin of modern political thought, by reversing this perspective and examining to what extent the French Enlightenment reflected and processed experiences drawn from other imperial contexts.³⁷

At the same time, a synchronic comparative perspective that incorporates the many revolutionary shocks of this period on both sides of the Atlantic – but also observes shifts in the Indian Ocean and sub-Saharan Africa – brings to light the emergence of at least one new spatial format. This new format involved a mix of nationalization and territorialization in the metropole with modernized imperial structures at the colonized fringes of such states, which we would call a “nation-state with imperial extensions”, or a nation-state cum empire.³⁸ Domestic dynamics were undoubtedly important in the development of this format, but global interdependencies were equally important, which indicates the beginning of a global condition still in statu nascendi.³⁹ The reorganization of the (now) national space with an imperial space of extension represented an adaptation to a crucial structural change of the world economy while at the same time offered the empire a more suitable framework than the old imperial format did. The year 1789, in this perspective, no longer represents the beginning of an often teleological history of the nation-state’s triumph as

36 D. Bégot (ed.), *Guide de la recherche en histoire antillaise et guyanaise*, Paris: CTHS, 2011; F. Régent, *La France et ses esclaves. De la colonisation aux abolitions, 1620–1848*, Paris: Grasset, 2007; F. Régent, J.-F. Niort, and P. Serna (eds.), *Les colonies, la Révolution française, la loi*, Rennes: PUR, 2014.

37 H.-J. Lüsebrink, “Discrediting Slavery: From the Société des Amis des Noirs to the Haitian Revolution – Ideological Patterns and Anthropological Discourses”, in: H.-E. Bödeker, C. Donato, and P.H. Reill (eds.), *Discourses of Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Enlightenment*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009, pp. 153–169; N. Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2008; D. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

38 M. Middell, *Raumformate – Bausteine in Prozessen der Neuverräumlichung*, SFB 1199 Working Paper (2019) 14, https://research.uni-leipzig.de/~sfb1199/publication/workingpaper_14/, (accessed 2 May 2019).

39 C. Bright and M. Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization. The Global Condition 1850–2010”, in: D. Northrop (ed.), *A Companion to World History*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, pp. 285–302.

the most efficient and legitimate form of societal organization. This narrative has further lost importance in recent years. While previous historiography explained societal circumstances by looking at internal conditions and contradictions, recent historiography is more interested in the interconnections and interdependencies between different societies. In short, we have transitioned from methodological nationalism to a transnational or global-historical perspective.

International research on the French Revolution has been slow to adapt to this change. Neither the older Marxist-inspired social-historical interpretation nor the revisionist school of François Furet, who dominated the field during the bicentennial in 1989, found an answer to the challenge posed by global history. It was only about a decade ago that the connection between revolution in the metropole and the slave emancipation on Saint-Domingue became the starting point for a renewed historiography that sought to anchor the French Revolution in global historical debates. This transition has not been without objections, as evidenced by two different articles from David Bell and Jeremy Adelman.⁴⁰ After reading their works, one may have the impression that the short heyday of global historical optimism is over for the French Revolution⁴¹; historiography will once again take up the boundaries of the nation-state.⁴² But, of course, the story will not be so simple. The sceptics are also convinced that what we need is to adopt a more dialectical perspective: “In short, we need narratives of global life that reckon with disintegration as well as integration, the costs and not just the bounty of interdependence.”⁴³

This raises the question of what place the French Revolution of 1789 has in a renewed global history. In addition to a long-standing discussion of the manifold worldwide effects of 1789 and 1793 and the rich source material documenting the failures, enthusiasm, or disillusionment with revolution, historians are searching for new ways to position the revolution in global history. One focus is on the multiplication of independent states around the turn of the century, representing the first expansion of peoples’ right to self-determination. David Armitage holds the United States Declaration of Independence up as a document

⁴⁰ D.A. Bell, “Questioning the Global Turn. The Case of the French Revolution”, *French Historical Studies* 37 (2014) 1, pp. 1–24; J. Adelman, “Is Global History Still Possible, or Has it Had its Moment?” *Aeon*, 2017, online: <https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment> (accessed 24 April 2019).

⁴¹ S. Desan, L. Hunt, and W.M. Nelson (eds.), *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2013.

⁴² For an analysis of the circumstances under which a global perspective became attractive in North America and now faces growing resistance, see: P. Cheney, “The French Revolution’s Global Turn and Capitalism’s Spatial Fixes”, *Journal of Social History* 52 (2019) 3, pp. 575–583.

⁴³ Adelman, “Is Global History Still Possible?”

that inspired future constitutions adopted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁴ In this perspective, 1789 continues to represent the long historical transformation from empire to nation-state. The French revolutionary historian, Pierre Serna, formulated a counterproposal that emphasized the birth of anti-colonial republicanism, which, however, was only gradually able to free itself from its internal contradictions.⁴⁵ Accordingly, this perspective brings the emancipation of slaves to the foreground, which accordingly rereads the independence of France's peripheries. However, a reversal of perspectives seems necessary in two respects.

First, the dominance of methodological nationalism in French historiography has led to empirical and theoretical interest in the effects of the ideas produced as well as events in France. This perspective remains diffusionist, in that it is less interested in the reception of non-French experiences, thereby systematically denying the possibility that ideas and actions in France are themselves influenced by external developments. There are, however, many convincing accounts of how France acted as a European hegemonic power. These include descriptions of France's participation in the increasingly global conflicts of the eighteenth century. Yet, there is no doubt that further research is needed on where France's elites found inspiration for reforming their empire and for the subsequent solution revolution provided to the problems of empire that could not be dealt with by reform alone. Early modern empires – as composite states managing very different traditions and access to resources and power – had been faced with the problem of how to deal with increasingly territorial forms of organization.⁴⁶ On the one hand, they profited from the concentration of power and the professionalization of governance that went hand in hand with this process. On the other hand, the homogenization of statehood and administration undermined the principle of composite states, since local elites as well as ordinary people became aware of the enormous differences in rights and the resulting distribution of resources.

Territorialization has not led directly to the nation-state, as older historiography has often postulated.⁴⁷ Rather, it was possible to combine a nationalizing

44 D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

45 P. Serna, "Toute révolution est guerre d'indépendance", in: J.-L. Chappey (ed.), *Pour quoi faire la Révolution*, Marseille: Agone, 2012, pp. 19–49.

46 C.S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

47 A good example that demonstrates this contradictory connection between territorialization and imperial reform is the Habsburg Empire: F. Hadler and M. Middell (eds.), *Handbuch einer*

and territorializing metropole and (albeit reformed) imperial tendencies into a spatial format in which the formation of the nation in the metropole was combined with an imperial space of expansion. At a first glance, we can recognize the interplay of these two processes and their progression. However, we still know too little about the different underlying political, constitutional, administrative, economic, and social conditions in these societies and how principal ideologies legitimated these processes.⁴⁸ Stuart Elden shows how the relatively young concept of territoriality was formulated only at the turn of the seventeenth century. It was only then slowly transferred, in a contradictory manner, into legal and state practices.⁴⁹ This resulted in growing tensions with traditional forms of imperial rule, characterized by different privileges for individual populations and hierarchical access to resources (particularly evident in the overseas territories).

The impetus to adjust imperial forms of rule accordingly stemmed from the Mughal Empire's reforms at the turn of the eighteenth century and the attempts at "enlightened absolutism" in the 1770s. These reforms were not only about creating a new internal balance of power but also about maintaining and/or regaining (trans)regional or, more generally, global competitiveness.⁵⁰ States involved in this competition had to reorganize their resource management in order to free the necessary bullion to assemble armies and navies, to secure outposts, and to support alliances with Native populations, even during periods of peace. The fiscal-military state was probably the inescapable consequence of this hunger for resources, but it required the societal reorganization of resources.⁵¹ If one considers the revolution in France (and the previous French reform

transnationalen Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas, Vol. I. Von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.

48 Of course, the historical literature on empire is growing (see footnotes 33 and 34), but it is often focused on the question of how and why certain imperial features survived and continued as imperialist strategies until today, while most other disciplines remain under the impact of the idea that states are nation-states (failing ones included). To move the debate from a historical account of examples to a theoretical level is obviously not that easy, in particular because the transformation took shape differently in various world regions.

49 S. Elden *The Birth of Territory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

50 D. Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754–1763*, Harlow: Pearson Press, 2011; S. Externbrink (ed.), *Der Siebenjährige Krieg (1756–1763). Ein europäischer Weltkrieg im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008; M. Füssel, *Der Siebenjährige Krieg. Ein Weltkrieg im 18. Jahrhundert*, München: C. H. Beck, 2010.

51 P.K. O'Brien, "Fiscal and Financial Preconditions for the Rise of British Naval Hegemony 1485–1815", Working Paper LSE Department of Economic History (2005) 91/05, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/22326/> (accessed 2 May 2019).

attempts from Maupeou via Turgot to Calonne) in this context, then the question is not whether there have been variants of enlightenment outside of Europe but how the Enlightenment in different parts of Europe mobilized, filtered, or ignored non-European knowledge regarding the need to reform of empire in the face of territorialization.⁵²

Second, another need to shift perspectives concerns the fact that research on France as an empire, despite recent progress, is still masked by the idea of France as an early territorial state comprising an advanced political system and a nationalized population. However, France was undoubtedly becoming a global player in international affairs only because, in addition to its hegemonic claims on mainland Europe, it also had an extensive colonial empire. Even after the revolution and Napoleon's (ultimately) failed expansionist policy, France remained an empire, surrounded by other empires with strong nationalization tendencies. Empire persisted despite the fundamental changes in France's state organization and its legitimacy as well as the (temporary) abolition of slavery in the Constitution of 1793. It remained an empire even though nationalization in the metropole created new tensions with the colonies, which lasted until decolonization and beyond. It is only the recent revival of comparative research on empire that has demonstrated this fact productively, even if it remains partially overshadowed by the overwhelming research stemming from the renewal of British imperial history as part of the general movement towards global history.⁵³ This, in turn, raises the question of the revolution's exceptionalism in France: how does revolutionary upheaval fit into the broader spectrum of transformation processes triggered by the military destabilization of at least the entire Atlantic Ocean region and parts of the Indian Ocean? In other words, what effects did the solutions found in France reveal regarding the connection between spatialization and global processes?

In relation to both shifts in perspective, we find many paths forward in the current methodological discussion and a lot of material in the recently renewed

52 H.-J. Lüsebrink (ed.), *Das Europa der Aufklärung und die außereuropäische koloniale Welt*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006; D. Tricoire (ed.), *Enlightened Colonialism: Civilization Narratives and Imperial Politics in the Age of Reason*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

53 J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire*, London: Allen Lane, 2007; J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. On the French case in particular: K. Margerison, "French Visions of Empire: Contesting British Power in India after the Seven Years War", *English Historical Review* 130 (2015) 544, pp. 583–612; M. Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind*, 2 vols, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

handbook literature on the Ancien Régime and the French Revolution.⁵⁴ There is, however, a research gap in terms of analysing the revolutionary period from the perspective of a spatial order within which these events occurred – a spatial order that the revolution changed so dramatically. This volume is a first attempt to collect different perspectives in order to begin to tackle this research gap. We do so from a specific point of departure, that is the hypothesis that the French Revolution was a decisive moment in the transformation of the Atlantic spatial order.⁵⁵ We are very grateful to the participants of a workshop held in Leipzig and a panel at the European Congress of World and Global History in Budapest, both in the fall of 2017, for the discussions that ensued. Together, we discussed the diversity of events and experiences across the boundaries of imperial and regional studies. These discussions continued and resulted in the contributions to this volume, which we hope will inspire us and others to produce future publications representing the multitude of changes to the Atlantic spatial order.

The first section of this volume shows the value of widening the scope of the French Revolution by incorporating both topics and actors not previously part of the study of the French Revolution. The section also investigates respatialization in shifting geopolitical contexts and therefore moves beyond a pure French imperial focus to include transregional and transimperial perspectives. In this vein, Manuel Covo's chapter opens this volume by asking why France wanted Louisiana back. He considers the shifting imaginations and strategies of French imperialism over the course of the French Revolution and early years of Napoleonic rule, focusing specifically on reterritorialization strategies as imperial administrators began to rethink France's "no territory" policy in its colonial endeavours. His chapter not only examines the shifting Franco-American relationship, but also includes a wider view of inter-imperial competition with Britain, Spain, and relations with Indigenous nations and actors. Actors operating on multiple scales reconsidered the relationship between France's shifting governing regimes and the organization of its Caribbean empire, its foreign policy in Europe, and the challenge of new independent states in the Americas.

⁵⁴ W. Doyle (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; P. McPhee (ed.), *A Companion to the French Revolution*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2012; J. Swann and J. Félix (eds.), *The Crisis of the Absolute Monarchy: France from Old Regime to Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; D. Andress, *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015; A. Forrest and M. Middell (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the French Revolution in World History*, London: Routledge, 2015; P. McPhee, *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

⁵⁵ As an overview, see N.P. Canny, "Atlantic History and Global History", in: J.P. Greene and P.D. Morgan (eds.), *Atlantic History. A Critical Appraisal*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 317–336.

His chapter shows how actors on the ground reacted to and influenced shifting French imperial strategies, culminating in a plan to get the Louisiana territory back.

In a different ocean basin, Damien Tricoire argues that projections of French colonial rule in Madagascar can hardly be characterized by the territorialization projects evident elsewhere in the French Empire during the 1790s, most notable in the departmentalization of the Hexagon and the subsequent inclusion of French colonies as departments. From the perspective of the Indian Ocean, this respatialization emanating from the Hexagon looked quite different, if even non-existent. Plans and proposals often failed to take into account the political context on the island. Furthermore, these plans referenced British imperial tactics and, even then, failed to materialize. Respatialization, then, did not occur in relation to the shifting French elites' ideas developed in the metropole but instead to the changing geopolitical considerations following conquests.

In her contribution, Jane Landers expands the scope of the French Revolution not only in content but also in terms of archival sources. Using Spanish sources, she examines how the rebels on the entire island of Hispaniola shaped the changing geopolitical spaces they inhabited before, during, and following the Haitian Revolution. Together, these chapters show the value in widening the scope of questions, sources, actors, and places from which to study the French Revolution.

Through the lens of respatialization, the following section of this volume explores the impact of the French Revolution in contexts and perspectives not typically associated with the revolution's effects. Christian Ayne Crouch questions the circulation of knowledge of the French Revolution in Indian Country in North America. In revolutionary history, Indigenous peoples have long been neglected or portrayed as passive actors affected by the American Revolution. Yet, they were active participants in the Atlantic world's economy and politics. Crouch therefore situates respatialization as a "conceptual rearrangement" that poses new questions about the contours of the French and Haitian revolutions and their reception in Indian Country. This chapter, moreover, illustrates the shape of French imperialism in the 1790s and its problematic remembrance today.

Ernesto Bassi takes this volume to the Caribbean region, which he understands as a space connected by sailors who transcended imperial claims. In doing so, they bring with them news, evidenced in this chapter by the dissemination of the Haitian Revolution's key events and ideas. Subsequently, Bassi analyses plans in Spanish New Granada to reconfigure the Caribbean and Atlantic plantation economy by shifting the loss of Haiti's sugar production as a local opportunity for planters, statesmen, and reformers. Together, they envision a different position for New Granada in the Atlantic economy. He therefore looks at respatialization not only as the social production of space through the

lived geographies of sailors but also as a project to alter economic geographies and imagine new realities. Bassi's chapter considers, therefore, the Haitian Revolution's impact on the polycentric emergence of capitalism.

José Damião Rodrigues' contribution examines the Azores in the Portuguese Empire. When the Portuguese royal court moved to Brazil to escape Napoleonic invasion in 1807/08, other forms of imperial organization were altered, too. Amidst the political turmoil, local political and social actors in the Azores retained and gained local authority, evading intended reforms for tighter central controls over the islands.

Antonis Hadjikyriacou examines another island context, Cyprus, during the Age of Revolutions and asks how perceptions of insularity and its connection to larger economic, social, and political structures shifted, particularly in relation to the Napoleonic occupation. Prior to this occupation, the Ottomans attributed little value to the island, which shifted during the Napoleonic period as the political economy of insularity transformed. Moreover, Hadjikyriacou shows how this moment of respatialization is only one of several similar moments, including other occupations, that constitute a longer process of shifting Ottoman perceptions of Cyprus and its role in Ottoman political, economic, and social structures.

These contributions illustrate the larger impact of the French Revolution in terms of immediate geopolitical and economic consequences. They also highlight the role of actors as well as projects and shifting imaginations about how to organize the politics and economies of societies. They further question the centrality of the French Revolution as a singular moment in the respatialization processes they describe; indeed, it is one of several moments that led contemporaries to reassess the spatial organization of their societies.

The third section of this volume focuses closely on the respatialization of societies. Alan Forrest illustrates the spatial reorganization of French society over the course of the French Revolution. He notably discusses the intricacies of the new administrative space enacted in 1790, which divided and unified France through the creation of departments. This demarcation, along with the new principles of citizenship, shaped the lives of French men and women for generations to come, but locals – peasants, hunters (poachers), colonial traders, colonists, (former) slaves, and lawyers, for example – all shaped the contours and meanings of the departments and their use overtime. These revolutionary structures of local government and justice shifted from democratic administrative divisions to instruments of Napoleonic imperialism. Yet, these structures have continued to sustain French society today.

Andreas Fahrmeir continues the discussion on the spatial transformation of France by identifying the spatial elements of French citizenship during the French Revolution. He first recounts the state of citizenship regulations in

Ancien Régime France and then discusses to what extent citizenship has been respatialized. He argues that while new ideals regarding the rational spatial organization of citizenship were prevalent in revolutionary thought and policy, there were limits in implementing these reforms consistently, such that local affiliations maintained their significance for many European societies, including France, through the nineteenth century. Importantly, his chapter does not stop there but considers the continued influence of French revolutionary reforms of citizenship in relation to space in later conceptions and implementations of citizenship, concluding, “many issues related to the revolutionary respatialization of citizenship are still with us.” The transformation of administrative space and its impact on society and citizenship did not only occur in metropolitan France but in France’s empire, as Forrest shows in his aforementioned chapter in relation to France’s colonies in the 1790s.

Laura di Fiore further explores the departmentalization and transformation of institutions and citizenship in Napoleonic Europe through the example of Italy, a topic that has only recently become a point of interest to scholars of Italy’s “French decade”. She shows that the departmentalization process in Italy, though it borrowed from many of the same French principles implemented in 1790 in the Hexagon, was not only dictated from above but involved the complex input from many local social actors. The French respatialization of the Italian peninsula had to take into consideration the prior multiple efforts to reform the various and fragmented political territories on the peninsula. Local actors were not passive recipients of the new reforms and demarcations; they sought not only to generate compromised, hybrid solutions but also to appropriate some of the new ideals of societal organization for their own aims. This chapter is therefore useful to understand the place of Italy in the French Empire as well as to understand the foundations of spatial knowledge and practices that underpinned the empire’s organization as it expanded.

Federica Morelli grapples with the respatialization of (independent) Spanish America, which developed at least indirectly as a result of Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and the ensuing crisis of sovereignty in Spanish America. Furthermore, this impact – Spanish American independence – took place after the experience and ideas of the American, French, and Haitian revolutions had spread throughout the Atlantic and after the constitutional reforms of the Cortes of Cádiz. Filling the power vacuum left by the Spanish king’s abdication meant local communities were left to deal with how to bring citizenship meaningfully together with administrative, political, and economic spaces – in short, the same issues that the aforementioned chapters on France and Italy had to grapple with. Morelli argues that examining respatialization during the Age of Revolutions is much more complicated than

searching for the dissemination of a French model. In the Spanish American context, citizenship and national belonging were articulated in local communities and municipalities, which were, at least until the mid- to late nineteenth century, given room to determine who belonged to the nation. Citizenship, therefore, was not imposed top-down but stemmed from local affiliations. Local communities remained the key political actors in independent Spanish America.

Of course, these selected case studies only highlight a few of the ways in which the Atlantic spatial order was altered by the French Revolution. More research should amend and enrich what we have demonstrated in this volume. Taken together, the combination of these chapters highlights the careful interplay between the dynamics of the French Revolution and other causes of this shift or endurance of spatial formats. This volume includes an overview of how actors imagined space, how they implemented new ideas of societal organization, and how they mobilized older practices and concepts. In doing so, it also brings more actors and societies into the discussion than is usually the case. Moreover, this volume looks at the unintended consequences of the French Revolution and the way in which distant societies were, or were not, impacted. We hope that the perspectives elaborated here can be read as the latest contributions to the generational re-evaluation of the French Revolution and its significance and, more specifically, to the impact that the French Revolution has had on the spatial order of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and its enduring consequences.