

Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des modernen Europa
Economic and Social History of Modern Europe

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**Perspectives on European
Economic and Social History
Perspektiven der
Europäischen Wirtschafts-
und Sozialgeschichte**



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Introduction: European Economic and Social History as an Object of Research

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Alfred Reckendrees, Ray Stokes*

In light of the triumph of "global history" and "transnational history", a book series on the economic and social history of modern Europe may evoke in some the impression of being somewhat old-fashioned, perhaps even "Eurocentric", and of not doing justice to the complexity of the modern world. Historians in general, and to some extent economic and social historians in particular, have liberated themselves over the course of the past few decades with breathtaking speed from the far too narrow focus on national history that existed previously. Increasingly, as part of this trend, the global interconnections between economy and society are being brought into the picture, and it is especially pleasing with regard to Europe in particular that extra-European influences on European history that were generally neglected in the past are being highlighted to an ever increasing extent in scholarship. Nevertheless, in the space between historiography focused on the nation-state and that dealing with the British Empire and global perspectives, in the aftermath of the European political euphoria of the late 1980s and 1990s "Europe" has seemed almost to disappear from view without its economic and social history ever being systematically investigated. For this reason, we believe that one of the greatest challenges for historical scholarship today is to develop a European economic and social historiography that goes beyond the national level and which integrates consideration of global developments into the story.

There are many positive tendencies in modern economic history. Although early economic histories of Europe consisted for the most part of country studies (Borchardt/Cippolla), more recent overviews seek to portray European economic history in narrative forms that go beyond the level of the nation-state. This is especially true for Karl Gunnar Persson's *Economic History of Europe*, Stephen Broadberry's and Kevin O'Rourke's *Economic History of Modern Europe* and the *Economic History of the Western World* book series edited by Joel Mokyr and published by Princeton Uni-