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Introduction

About six years ago, Princeton historian Jeremy Adelman published a short essay to remind global historians to critically reflect on their own positionality in the broader context of researching processes of globalization.[1] Adelman wrote the piece in response to developments such as the 2016

1. J. Adelman, 'What Is Global History Now?', in: *Aeon* (blog), March 2, 2017. https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment.

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presidential elections in the US or the Brexit vote on the other side of the Atlantic. He was concerned that due to the liberal, cosmopolitan background of most academics in the field, global history 'favoured stories about curiosity towards distant neighbours' and 'preferred a scale that reflected its cosmopolitan self-yearnings'. Hence, Adelman took the re-nationalising tendencies of the time as a cue to remind us not to 'overlook nearby neighbourhoods dissolved by transnational supply chains' and not to forget 'the left behind, the ones who cannot move, and those who become immobilized because the light no longer shines on them'.

Soon after its publication, Adelman's essay was intensively and also critically debated in the field.[2] Quite obviously, his points had hit global history in a weak spot. Today, five years on, however, the piece's principal reminders seem rather tame. Too much has happened in the past half-decade. The Trump administration left a trail of destruction in America's democracy. Brexit has been done – with severe repercussions for Britain's democracy, its supermarket shelves, and the European Union's political stability. In early 2020, a global pandemic of hitherto-unimaginable magnitude brought about travel bans, supply chain break-downs and mass lay-offs that are still crippling numerous sections of the economy. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Months of brutal warfare not only brought death and suffering to countless people, but also stopped a good part of the global trade in wheat and put a massive question mark behind the current global energy regime. While coal-fired power stations are reactivated, Californian and Southern European forests are ablaze.

In short, the global political, economic and social developments that had prompted Adelman to write his piece in the first place have tremendously intensified over the last years. Consequently, historians as well as other contemporary observes have duly adjusted their perspectives: after the outbreak of the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one set of questions seems particularly ripe for consideration: Has globalization come to an end? Will the 'shrinking of the world' be reversed? Will global entanglements be disentangled? Are we entering an era of deglobalization? Indeed, it seems that the previous paradigm of globalization and ever-increasing global connectivity is currently being substituted with a new focus on deglobalization and global disentanglement.

However, as timely as such an adjustment of perspective might seem, it does not really help us to better understand past and/or current processes of globalization. Rather, it reinforces a much too simple, binary understanding of globalization, in which disconnectivity is simply treated as the opposite of connectivity. This tendency is already present in Adelman's original call. When Adelman warns that focusing attention on the connected simultaneously leaves the unconnected in the dark, he is practically reinforcing a dichotomy of the connected versus the unconnected.

In reality, though, connective and disconnective processes are deeply interwoven and they interact intensively, which becomes immediately apparent in relation to Adelman's argument. There is an interdependency between the connected and the unconnected in inverse proportions. As places, regions and people around the globe integrate, the corollary is that others cannot (or don't want to) participate in those integrative processes to the same degree, and they will be left behind, relatively speaking. Global networks are lumpy; some branches are especially dense. The denser they are, the more conspicuous the patchy and empty areas become. To invoke another beloved metaphor of globalization research, the world has not been 'shrinking' as a whole; it has been warping.

2. R. Drayton / D. Motadel, 'Discussion. The Futures of Global History', in: *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018) 1, 1–21.

The same applies to the assumption that we are entering a phase of globalization. Historians – often from the field of economic history – have already been toying with this concept for a while.[3] They have used the interwar period as an example to claim that, in comparison to the late 19th century, the diminished flows of goods and capital during the interwar years constituted a period of deglobalization. This is but a small part of the bigger picture and one sorely lacking context. The fact that the global economic crisis of the late 1920s and the 1930s propagated outward from the US to soon grip the entire world is in itself a strong indication of the degree of global integration at the time. The global history of crisis management techniques,[4] the simultaneous proliferation of international organizations[5] and the global dissemination of fascist thought[6] are further examples. Similarly using the example of the interwar years, Jörn Leonhard flagged precisely this simultaneity of integration and disintegration. He wrote that 'Historically speaking, structural globalization has often coincided with sectoral deglobalization, with the two often reinforcing each other'.[7] This applies to processes of global integration in general. Globalization is not a ratchet mechanism, nor is it a reversible macro process. It consists, rather, of many small, interrelated, complementary processes.

The actors and places of globalization are themselves always simultaneously embedded in connective and disconnective circumstances,[8] and they must be studied in that state of tension. Connections and non-connections converge in particular places and in the lived experiences of historical actors, revealing their significance in their interrelations. In the article cited above, Leonhard mentions the 'tension between globality and deglobalization',[9] touching on one of the most important points of an adequate conception of globalization. The tension that derives from the simultaneity and mutual constitution of connective and disconnective elements exerts a crucial influence on how processes of globalization develop and are shaped, experienced and categorized. Its importance for the study of global history can hardly be overstated. From this perspective, the term dis:connectivity is invaluable because it captures precisely this mutually constitutive, tense relationship of global integration, disintegration and the absence of connections whose relevance is only apparent in the context that they collectively build. The term privileges neither connective nor disconnective processes, but focuses instead on their turbulent interplay, which becomes the decisive factor in grasping the social force of globalization.

This is a new approach to global history and to more present-minded studies of globalization. In this forum, we seek to apply it in order to better understand some of the substantial challenges that we are all currently facing. All contributors are historians who work on subjects that have an immediate bearing on the pressing issues of today. They use their historiographical expertise together

3. E.g. J. G. Williamson, 'Globalization, Convergence, and History', in: The *Journal of Economic History* 56 (1996) 2, 277–306; H. James, *The End of Globalization. Lessons from the Great Depression*, Cambridge, MA, London 2001; M. Obstfeld / A. M. Taylor, 'The Great Depression as a Watershed. International Capital Mobility over the Long Run', in: M. D. Bordo et al. (eds.), *The Defining Moment. The Great Depression and the American Economy in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago, London 1998, 353–402.
4. K. K. Patel, *The New Deal. A Global History*, Princeton, Oxford 2016.
5. M. Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der Internationalen Ordnung*, Darmstadt 2009; G. Sluga / P. Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History*, Cambridge 2017.
6. D. Hedinger, *Die Achse. Berlin-Rom-Tokio 1919–1946*, München 2021; M. Framke, *Delhi-Rom-Berlin. Die Indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus Und Nationalsozialismus 1922–1939*, Darmstadt 2013.
7. J. Leonhard, 'Keine Dichotomie. Zum Verhältnis von Nationalstaat und Globalisierung', in: *Forschung & Lehre* 27 (2020) 5, 412–413, 413.
8. Z. Biedermann, '(Dis)Connected History and the Multiple Narratives of Global Early Modernity', in: *Modern Philology* 119 (2021) 1, 13–32, 25.
9. Leonhard, 'Keine Dichotomie', 413.

with the idea of dis:connectivity to provide fresh perspective on current phenomena of globalization.

Tom Menger (Munich) traces the origins of Europe's current energy crisis back to a fossil fuel shift that occurred in the early 20th century. He shows that the decline of coal as the principal carrier of fossil energy had a direct impact on Europe's position in an increasingly global network of energy distribution, and this led to the emergence of an energy infrastructure that connects just as much as it disconnects.

From the perspective of the early 2020s, **Valeska Huber** (Vienna) takes a fresh look at the role of the Suez Canal in global trade and shipping. In light of the Suez Canal blockade by the container ship Ever Given and its massive repercussions on the carefully-balanced global supply chains, Huber highlights both the connective as well as the disconnective qualities of the canal, which is at the same time both an artery and a chokepoint of global trade.

Heidi Tworek (Vancouver) raises a number of crucial questions regarding the role of global communication technologies, both in a historical context as well as in present times. She shows how tightening global communication networks can create new forms of connectivity at times when other forms of connectivity come to a halt. Building on this, Tworek emphasizes how access to global communications itself is unequally distributed regionally and socially, and how this creates a dis:connective tension in itself.

Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge) examines another particular sort of place that has only been viewed through the lens of global connectivity: the global South port city. Sivasundaram uses the example of the port of Colombo and the Galle Face Green to highlight the much more complicated role that ports and port cities in the global South play beyond shipping nodes and migration hotspots. In doing so, he directly connects the port of Colombo and Galle Face Green to the anti-government protests in Sri Lanka in the summer of 2022.

Simone Müller (Augsburg) stays on the topic of ports and uses the example of the Honduran port of Puerto Castilla to discuss the relationship of the environment and processes of globalization in history. She shows how a once-central trading and shipping hub fell into disuse in the middle of the 20th century and was then rediscovered as a potential dumping site for imported toxic waste. The story of Puerto Castilla exhibits a specific form of global trade that thrives more on the 'getting rid of…' than on the 'getting hold of…', and thus highlights yet another quality of disconnection.

Callie Wilkinson (Munich) studies 19th-century practices of war reporting in terms of the need for military secrecy and the right of public disclosure. She uses examples from the British Empire to highlight how notions of what was appropriate to report changed over time – not least due to new technologies of global communication becoming available. Wilkinson relates her findings to the role of social media in current war reporting.

In her contribution, **Madeleine Herren** (Basle) brings the history of international organizations, and thus the level of the supranational, in direct touch with the lives of common people with very local problems (or assumed problems). She emphasizes the afterlife and unexpected impacts that such supposedly place-less organizations can develop even after their actual dissolution. In doing so, Herren provides a very personal example for power that international organizations can wield in times of crisis, when they might appear at first sight to be mere paper tigers.

In the closing piece of this forum, **Martin Dusinberre** (Zurich) ponders the significance of an archival find – the 'N.Y.K. Line: Map Showing the Routes and Ports of Call of N.Y.K. Steamers'. Initially, the map seems to be yet another convincing testimony to early 20th-century global connectivity. Dusinberre, however, takes a step back and allows the map to disorient him. Might there be more to the map than immediately meets the eye of the connectivity-trained global historian? Might it be more than yet another depiction of global entanglements? And might the profession of history eventually turn out to be a 'disconnection discipline?'

Tom Menger

Energy Dis:connectivity in Europe's Oil and Gas Supply

If there is one disconnect particularly haunting Europe at the moment, it is that of an energy disconnect. Ever since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, European states have scrambled to find ways to wean themselves off as quickly as possible from Russian sources of energy, while at the same time fearing an abrupt disconnect from the Russian side – a fear that is becoming increasingly real for more and more states. These disconnections are regularly being framed as a further aspect of a supposed de-globalization or 'end of globalization'.[10] Are we indeed witnessing a breakdown of energy connectivity? In this essay, I want to question this view from the perspective of dis:connectivity. Placing the history of European oil and gas supply in the centre, I make two main points. First, energy connectivity and disconnectivity are strongly entangled with geopolitical power shifts and the consolidation or loss of power of empires or great powers. Secondly, energy connectivity relies on heavily material and territorial infrastructures, which tend to solidify connectivity over time and make disconnectivity a rather rare occurrence, even though, in their *emergence*, these infrastructures are often marked by a particular conjunction of connectivity and disconnectivity. Yet, when energy disconnectivity does occur, it is highly costly and generally does not lead to an overall reduction of connectivity but rather to a re-routing of connections – it is this, and not de-globalization, which we are also seeing in our current moment.

To an extent, our current crisis plays out against the backdrop of a fossil fuel shift that took place in the early 20th century and which had important geopolitical implications. With the reliance on coal as an energy source gradually declining, and that of oil rising, the great powers of (overall oil-poor) Europe increasingly relied on global connections to cover essential energy needs. As Anand Toprani has recently shown, their efforts to establish national control over oil flows after World War I proved a failure and contributed to their geopolitical decline. After World War II, they would acquiesce to depending on the new superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union (the rise of which had both been fuelled by large domestic oil reserves) for the security of their oil supply.[11]

Against this changed geopolitical backdrop, significant demand for natural gas started to emerge in Europe only in the 1960s. Initially, Europe seemed able to cover its own gas needs, but rapidly-rising consumption soon made a recourse to imports appear necessary again. Supply, however, was less easy to globalize, not least because large-scale natural gas transport is grid-based and therefore necessitates an expensive physical infrastructure of pipelines and pumping stations, among others. Over the next decades, such an infrastructure would be implemented between Western Europe and – rather surprising on first sight – the Cold War adversary of the Soviet Union. What prompted this was precisely the Soviet *lack* of such connective infrastructure. While natural gas had been found in ever-increasing quantities in Siberia since the 1950s, Soviet industry proved unable to provide the large-diameter pipes and high-performance pumping stations that were needed to *domestically* transport this gas. The Soviet government decided to turn to Western Europe to try to procure these pipelines, offering to export gas in return. The ensuing

10. See for instance: A. S. Posen, 'The End of Globalization? What Russia's War in Ukraine Means for the World Economy', 17 March 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-03-17/end-globalization.
11. A. Toprani, *Oil and the Great Powers: Britain and Germany, 1914-1945*, Oxford 2019.

negotiations with different countries proved difficult, but in 1968 a first export contract was agreed between the USSR and Austria, while in the 1970s Italy, Germany and France would also be linked up to Soviet gas.[12] Another big push of connectivity (and in export volumes) would follow in the 1980s. Political decision-makers in Western Europe were not oblivious at the time to the risk of weaponized Soviet gas disruptions. However, precisely because of the early connections to Soviet gas and the fear of cut-offs, the intra-European gas grids had meanwhile been made increasingly interconnected, something that now appeared to actually mitigate the risks as countries could easily help out one another if needed. The fact that Europe had also been connected to Algerian and Norwegian gas by then further seemed to reduce the risks. In retrospect, European fears of a gas disconnect seem unfounded: as Per Högselius has found, there are no indications that the USSR ever seriously considered gas cut-offs for political reasons; rather, it was obsessed with proving its reliability as a supplier to Western Europe.[13]

The gas pipeline system was one of the many 'hidden' connections that coexisted with the overall *dis*connect of the Iron Curtain.[14] *Within* the Soviet sphere of influence, oil and gas connections had also been created and used specifically as a mode of integrating the empire. The now much-publicized 'Druzhba' ('Friendship') oil pipeline was constructed by the Soviet leadership to bind the new 'friends' of its Central European sphere of influence more tightly to the USSR. Similar rationales were applied within the Soviet Union itself: the Baltic States, which had been annexed by the Soviets in the 1940s, were connected to the Ukrainian gas fields in the 1950s, so that they would think twice before trying to break away from the union and look towards the west. Similarly, the rather antagonistic Caucasus republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were all linked by one pipeline from the Azeri gas fields.[15]

Some of these then-created connections now inform our current-day energy crises. It was no coincidence that it was the land-locked 'Druzhba' countries of Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary that were most opposed to an EU oil embargo.[16] Conversely, the again-independent Baltic republic of Lithuania was the first state to completely cut itself off from Russian gas after February 2022, having invested heavily in the early 2010s in a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal on its seaboard exactly in order to cut the former 'imperial' connections to Russia.[17]

Politically-motivated cut-offs of the East–West gas connections came about only after the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Russian Federation, and they initially largely targeted states that had formerly been in the Soviet orbit.[18] While these events are generally highly disruptive, I would argue that, in accordance with the concept of dis:connect, they do not simply cut and reduce connections, but rather lead to re-orientation of connections and an accelerated search for new ones. Historically, for instance, much of the oil flow to the West has passed through the Suez Canal. The three wars between Egypt and Israel of 1956, 1967 and 1973 prompted the

12. P. Högselius, *Red Gas: Russia and the Origins of European Energy Dependence*, New York 2013.
13. Ibid, 6–7, 167–202, 231–232.
14. The surprising number of infrastructural connections that arose across the Iron Curtain have been characterised as a form of 'hidden integration': T. Misa / J. Schot, 'Inventing Europe: Technology and the Hidden Integration of Europe', in: *History and Technology* 21 (2005) 1, 1–19.
15. Högselius, *Red Gas*, 21–22, 35.
16. B. Brinkmann / B. Finke, 'Ölembargo: Worüber die EU und Ungarn streiten', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 May 2022, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/oelembargo-ungarn-eu-bruegel-reeder-orban-1.5582310.
17. 'How Lithuania Cut Its Ties to 'Toxic' Russian Gas', *POLITICO*, 18 April 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/how-lithuania-cut-its-ties-to-toxic-russian-gas/.
18. Högselius, *Red Gas*, 204–209.

closure of the Suez Canal in 1956/1957 and between 1967 and 1975. These events led to some important *reconfigurations* of global connections rather than cutting them. For instance, ships were simply re-routed along the Cape of Good Hope. This, in turn, prompted the development of the oil supertankers that became the *sine qua non* of the oil industry. Furthermore, Iranian oil was increasingly re-routed towards the rising economic powers in East Asia, particularly Japan.[19]

In our current moment, we are seeing similar developments. While gas and oil flows from Russia to Europe are to be reduced, the alternative gas connections to Algeria, Norway and Qatar are already being intensified. Wholly new connections are also planned between Europe and Israeli offshore gas fields, fields whose connection via pipelines was long considered too expensive. At the same time, Russian oil and gas are already being redirected from Europe to Asia, even though the absence of connections between the pipeline systems in the Russian West and East is complicating a simple overland (instead of overseas) re-routing of these flows.[20] More unexpectedly, the import of Russian oil into Europe first actually increased after the invasion of Ukraine, as lower prices pushed refineries in Central Europe to larger buy-ups. The EU sanctions package on Russian oil also represents a peculiar mix of connection and disconnection: while maritime delivery of oil will cease, pipeline delivery has been temporarily exempted and will continue for much longer.[21]

Inevitably, new connectivities are also giving rise to new connective infrastructures. New pipelines will almost certainly be laid through Europe, for instance, to connect Hungary to Croatian ports and their terminals for oil and LNG.[22] As it is, LNG has already been shaping new energy networks in Europe for a while.[23] Germany will now also build several LNG terminals, which, supposedly, can later house climate-friendly hydrogen. If that indeed proves to be true, it would underline the often-palimpsestic character of energy infrastructures.[24]

This character is indicative of a bigger point relating to questions of dis:connectivity. Energy infrastructures tend to solidify connectivity. That large infrastructures create certain path dependencies has been duly noted. They have also generally proven surprisingly resilient to shocks and are often rebuilt after their destruction. If they grow bigger, they also gain more and more of what historians of so-called Large Technical Systems have dubbed 'momentum'. It then becomes increasingly costly to cease their operation or even halt their expansion.[25]

It is thus particularly during the *emergence* of such large infrastructures that we find a specific dynamic interplay between connection and disconnection. Returning to the example of 'red' gas, it

19. L. Khalili, 'How the (Closure of the) Suez Canal Changed the World', *The Gamming* (blog), 31 August 2014, https://thegamming.org/2014/08/31/how-the-closure-of-the-suez-canal-changed-the-world/.
20. S. Dabringhaus, 'Der Krieg in der Ukraine und China', in: *Journal of Modern European History* 20 (2022) 2, 150–152, here 151; V. Kim / C. Krauss, 'Asia Is Buying Discounted Russian Oil, Making up for Europe's Cutbacks', *The New York Times*, 21 June 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/21/world/asia/asia-is-buying-discounted-russian-oil-making-up-for-europes-cutbacks.html.
21. 'Russia Is Pumping More Oil to Europe than It Was before the War', *The Economist*, 7 June 2022, https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/06/07/russia-is-pumping-more-oil-to-europe-than-it-was-before-the-war.
22. Brinkmann / Finke, 'Ölembargo'.
23. S. Lotysz, 'The Future of Gas Is Fluid', Inventing Europe, n.d., http://www.inventingeurope.eu/infrastructures/the-future-of-gas-is-fluid.
24. Here, Stephen J. Ramos reiterates a concept coined by Carola Hein: S. J. Ramos, 'Mapping the Persian Gulf Petroleumscape: The Production of Territory, Territoriality, and Sovereignty', in: C. Hein (ed.), *Oil Spaces*, New York 2022, 66–83, here 68.
25. For instance: C. Hein, 'Space, Time, and Oil: The Global Petroleumscape', in: Ibid (ed.), *Oil Spaces*, New York 2022, 3–18, here 8–9; Högselius, *Red Gas*, 6.

is remarkable how much the Soviet effort to connect Europe to its gas fields was marked by manifold disconnections. The building of the pipelines was frequently delayed and disrupted in the chaos of the Soviet planned economy. At its most dramatic moment, a lack of pipeline capacity led the Soviet leadership to prioritize gas supplies to Europe, leaving Soviet citizens in Ukraine with insufficient gas and suffering in the extremely cold winter of 1971/1972 (even schools and municipal institutions had to be closed due to a lack of heating). In a way, the whole Soviet-European gas connection was built on an information disconnect: had Europeans known of the chaos and suffering that resulted on the other side, they might have never embarked on the project. Technical failures often also led to shortfalls in the amount of gas flowing to Europe, but as these were always temporary, the companies there were able to compensate through their carefully built-up reserves each time.[26]

All these examples testify to the enduring importance of territoriality and materiality in energy infrastructures. Territorial control and access to the oceans are generally vital for energy connectivity, while their lack threatens disconnectivity.[27] The power of materiality is already evident in the fact that it was actually the simple lack of physical components (large-diameter steel pipes) that first pushed the Soviet Union to become a gas exporter to Europe. In our times, Russian oil and gas production will be increasingly threatened by the inaccessibility of spare parts due to Western sanctions. As it happened, the United States already tried in the 1980s to use sanctions (against the Europeans, that is!) on such parts to put a brake on the European-Soviet gas flow but failed back then as the Europeans were already too committed to the system and pushed ahead nonetheless.[28]

Taking into account the durability of the East–West gas connection, Högselius has written of the pipeline grid that it should almost be seen as part of Europe's nature as it defines a *longue durée* in the Braudelian sense. It might, now, be slowly coming to an end. What its anticipated replacement, a new system of sustainable energy sources, will bring is uncertain. While some expect a more localized energy production with less geopolitical dependencies, experts have recently warned that such a new system is likely to bring about its own disruptions and new geopolitical vulnerabilities.[29]

Valeska Huber

A Global Choke Point. Revisiting the Suez Canal in the Early 2020s

Between 23 and 29 March 2021, the Ever Given, an ultra-large container vessel measuring almost 400 metres and with a capacity of over 20,000 containers, became jammed in the Suez Canal, the Egyptian waterway connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. For six days, many global

26. Högselius, *Red Gas*, 100–103, 164, 178, 197–98.
27. Hein, 'Space, Time, and Oil', 4, 10; V. Huber, *Channelling Mobilities: Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and beyond, 1869-1914*, Cambridge 2013, 1.
28. Högselius, *Red Gas*, 184–195.
29. 'The World's First Energy Crisis: A Conversation with Jason Bordoff and Meghan O'Sullivan', n.d., in: *The Foreign Affairs Interview*, podcast, 45:48, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/podcasts/worlds-first-energy-crisis. See also: S. Beckert et al., 'Commodity Frontiers and Global Histories: The Tasks Ahead', in: *Journal of Global History* 16 (2021) 3, 466–469, here 468.

supply chains were brought to a standstill.[30] At the same time, on Twitter and other social media platforms, reactions to the blockage proliferated. Quickly, the incident was used to create viral memes for all kinds of conundrums, and images depicting the tiny digger next to the huge container ship went around the world at lightning speed.[31]

While the Suez Canal blockage only lasted a number of days, it vividly illustrated a broader phenomenon, namely the vulnerabilities of our current global age. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many harbours around the world faced congestion and backlogs, which resulted in global supply bottlenecks.[32] Other current crises such as climate change and military conflict are equally global in scope, yet they likewise engender inequalities and ruptures rather than leading to standardization and homogeneity. The curious incident of the Ever Given can therefore hardly be interpreted as a moment of deglobalization. What it instead makes us aware of is the overstretch of large-scale infrastructures that is at the heart of both the history and the present of modern globalization.

Ten years after first publishing my book on the Suez Canal as a global connection and boundary, this forum provides a wonderful opportunity to rethink some of its findings in light of more recent scholarship on the Eastern Mediterranean and global microhistory.[33] As Frederick Cooper wrote in relation to the Ever Given blockage: 'The episode – and the anxieties it unleashed – were a splendid illustration of the point that Valeska Huber made in her book […] that the canal was not just a link that enhanced connectivity around the globe, but a choke point'.[34] Taking up the metaphor of the choke point, I will reexamine the Suez Canal to highlight how multiple processes of globalization are interlaced in a single locality and thereby provide a more differentiated image of global connections and disconnections.[35]

In the last decade, many authors have been attracted by the seascapes of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea.[36] More specifically, scholars have revealed deeper and more grounded social histories of Egyptian cities, including the canal towns of Port Said and Port Tawfiq and their transient populations.[37] Others have related the history of the canal to environmental changes (most famously visualized in the Lessepsian migration of fish species between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and vice versa) and to global energy markets (focusing on the

30. M. Berger/ J. Ledur / A. Taylor, 'How did a ship get stuck in the Suez Canal, and what happened afterward?', *Washington Post*, 31 March 2021.
31. S. Peçanha, 'Why the ship that got stuck in the Suez Canal is like the long journey to a Covid shot', *Washington Post*, 30 March 2021; S. Raghavan, 'A Suez Canal village, like the world, grapples with the giant ship stuck in its backyard', *Washington Post*, 28 March 2021; E. Braw, 'What the Ever Given taught the World', *Foreign Policy*, 10 November 2021; F. Medunic, 'A glimpse of the future. The Ever Given and the weaponisation of choke-points', *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 23 April 2021.
32. M. Safi, 'Stranding of Ever Given in Suez Canal was foreseen by many', *The Guardian*, 28 March 2021.
33. V. Huber, *Channelling Mobilities. Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914*, Cambridge, New York 2013.
34. F. Cooper, 'Afterword: Nations and Empires in a Connected and Unequal World', in: B. Curli (ed.), *Italy and the Suez Canal, from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Cold War*, Cham 2022, 381–391, 382.
35. J. Osterhammel, 'Globalizations', in: J. H. Bentley (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, Oxford 2011, 89–104; V. Huber, 'Multiple Mobilities, Multiple Sovereignties, Multiple Speeds. Exploring Maritime Connections in the Age of Empire', in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48 (2016) 4, 763–766.
36. J. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900*, Berkeley 2012; A. Wick, *The Red Sea. In Search of Lost Space*, Oakland 2016.
37. L. Carminati, 'Alexandria 1898. Nodes, Networks, and Scales in Nineteenth-Century Egypt and the Mediterranean', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59 (2017) 1, 127–153; L. Carminati, "She Will Eat Your Shirt". Foreign Migrant Women as Brothel Keepers in Port Said and Along the Suez Canal, 1880-1914', in: *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 30 (2021) 2, 161–194.

canal as a transshipment point for coal).[38] On a conceptual level, global microhistory has solidified into a go-to approach for many historians interested in understanding various global phenomena.[39] In line with such microhistorical approaches, in this short piece, I focus on even smaller spaces than the canal zone itself, namely steamers, dredgers, quarantine stations and refugee camps. These localities reveal the canal's function as a choke point where global mobilities were sorted and channelled but could also be disrupted and sabotaged.

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Ever since its opening in 1869, the Suez Canal has been a space that underscored the juxtaposition of different and often contradictory global processes within a single location. After a long and complicated construction period and a pompous opening ceremony in 1869, the canal served as a shortcut between Europe and Asia, reducing the distance between Britain and India by around 40% compared to the Cape of Good Hope route. This rerouting led to the newly built canal cities of Port Said and Port Tawfiq becoming intensely connected to far-away spaces and turned them into relay stations where many different mobilities converged. At the same time, the cities were less integrated with inland infrastructures and therefore came to be somewhat disconnected from Egypt itself. The rerouting also meant that other port cities, such as Durban in South Africa, declined in size and importance.[40] Within the canal zone itself, disconnection and decoupling found striking expression. Caravans that had been crossing the desert for centuries were interrupted by the canal, thus requiring them to be transported on barges. For them, the canal became an obstacle rather than a connection.

Even those on board the newly built steamers often experienced the journey through the canal itself as a moment of slowing down. Contemporaries reflected on the sluggishness of the passage. The Indian social reformer Behramji Malabari, who travelled through the canal in the 1890s, stated: 'The Suez Canal is a splendid piece of work; but the passage through it is dreadfully slow. It becomes too monotonous as we drag our way painfully along. The wild and weird-looking country beyond, on both sides, interests me more than the immense feat of engineering before me'.[41] This experience of deceleration rather than acceleration, which is reminiscent of some present-day airport experiences, was provoked by the difficult passage, which required the assistance of pilots, and the various checks and provisioning stops in the canal zone. Consequently, the canal became not only a shortcut, but also a checkpoint and a choke point.

Malabari's more general experience of slowness found concrete expression in specific control practices. As an imperial infrastructure, the canal around 1900 acted as a relay station in the transfer of imperial troops and armaments, a point where empires observed one another nervously. Consuls had to provide weekly reports about the movement of soldiers and weapons through the canal, which illustrates how a single location could turn into a barometer of imperial competition and mutual observation. At other times in history, this border function could also serve to speed up certain movements: In his recently published autobiography, economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has evoked the contradictory features of these sorting and channelling procedures in relation to his own journey through the canal in 1953, shortly after the Egyptian revolution of 1952, when he, as a fellow postcolonial citizen, could pass more quickly than the British passengers on board: 'I told him, I was from India, he took me straight down off

38. O. Barak, *Powering Empire: How Coal Made the Middle East and Sparked Global Carbonization*, Berkeley 2020.
39. F. Trivellato, 'Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?' in: *California Italian Studies* 2 (2011) 1; J. Ghobrial, 'Introduction. Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', in: *Past & Present* 242 (2019) 14, 1–11; T. Andrade, 'A Chinese Farmer, two African Boys, and a Warlord. Toward a Global Microhistory', in: *Journal of World History* 21 (2010) 4, 573–592.
40. J. Hyslop, 'Oceanic Mobility and Settler-Colonial Power. Policing the Global Maritime Labour Force in Durban Harbour C., 1890–1910', in: *Journal of Transport History* 36 (2015) 2, 248–267, 250.
41. B. M. Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life or Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer*, Bombay 1895, 18.

the ship to the line of waiting buses to join a cluster of people of colour […] This was the only occasion of my whole life when my Indian citizenship resulted in a favourable treatment at the border'.[42]

The canal zone was also closely related to global labour movements. It featured a particularly unruly mobile workforce, which consisted of seamen who were changing ship and looking for entertainment, coal heavers from upper Egypt, and canal workers from around the Mediterranean basin. In the late 1890s, the workers on the dredgers, who toiled ceaselessly to prevent the desert sand from blocking the global artery of travel and trade, called a strike. Their representatives, who travelled to Paris to petition for their cause, were well aware of the global impact that their actions (including the threat to push the dredgers into the canal) might have.[43]

The most compelling canal microhistories relate to spaces of confinement rather than mobility, such as quarantine stations and refugee camps. When global epidemics such as cholera and plague loomed, the canal became a filter where European powers aimed to erect a cordon sanitaire based on elaborate measures of disinfection and control.[44] In an effort to establish an international health regime, different quarantine stations were set up at the Red Sea entrance, where specific types of travellers, such as pilgrims journeying from North Africa to Mecca, were singled out. Such facilities were purpose-built, and their operators lauded their factory-like arrangements when it came to disinfection and isolation. During World War I, the Suez Canal not only became a major arena of war but also the site of refugee camps on the banks of the canal that sheltered Armenians who were fleeing the Ottoman Empire. The camp has often been interpreted as a global locality par excellence and once again illustrates how the canal concentrated and compressed various global processes in a single location, serving as a passageway for some and as a terminus for others.[45]

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This quick tour through the various canal micro-localities, such as the caravan barges, troopships, dredgers, quarantine stations, and refugee camps, demonstrates that contemporaries perceived and experienced the canal as a choke point as much as a new global lynchpin. Certainly, the Suez Canal served as a global portal and link, and European travellers frequently dubbed it as an artery, backbone, or highway connecting far-away parts of the world. However, at the same time, by epitomizing slowdown on multiple levels, it revealed the complexities of global processes and exhibited how connection and disconnection were interwoven into complicated fabrics and related to power and difference on the global scale. Therefore, the canal did not just become a place of control but also a site of congestion and possible sabotage that demonstrated how disruptive elements were part and parcel of global processes and did not stand in opposition to them. Hence, the example of the canal not only points to the diversity of global processes within a single location but also how these processes concomitantly produced inclusion as well as exclusion.

In its role as a global choke point, the canal illustrates how border control and the attempt to create a 'bulwark Europe' was an essential feature of turn-of-the-century globalization. To be

42. A. Sen, *Home in the World. A Memoir*, London 2021, 249.
43. Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*, 114.
44. V. Huber, 'Pandemics and the Politics of Difference. Rewriting the History of Internationalism through Nineteenth-century Cholera', in: *Journal of Global History* 15 (2020) 3, 394–407.
45. K. McConnachie, 'Camps of Containment: A Genealogy of the Refugee Camp', in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7 (2016) 3, 397–412; L. Banko / K. Nowak/ P. Gatrell, 'What is Refugee History, now?', in: *Journal of Global History* 17 (2022) 1, 1–19; G. Anderl/ L. Erker/ C. Reinprecht (eds.), *Internment Refugee Camps. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Bielefeld 2022.

sure, such borders were never hermetically sealed but exhibited varying degrees of permeability and porosity.[46] Fittingly for a canal, the process of channelling, which would become a feature of modern border controls around the world – sorting different mobilities and thereby establishing social boundaries as well as territorial ones – became particularly visible in the Suez Canal region.

Intertwining different global processes with their own dynamics, such as labour movements, militarization, epidemic diseases and refugee movements, the canal shows how various facets of globalization, each related to both openness and closure, were tightly bound up and co-constitutive. It invites us to paint a picture of globality beyond simplistic narratives of connection and integration and to, instead, uncover conflicting elements that pull in different directions but are at the same time tightly enmeshed with one another. As the image of the container ship jammed in the canal reveals, our current moment is equally not about decoupling, disconnection or even 'deglobalization' – globalization, past and present, always produces connection and disconnection in a dialectical relation. The canal and its micro-spaces therefore provide a bridge between past and present analyses of globalization.

Heidi J. S. Tworek

Global Dis:connections and Communications

In March 2021, I logged on to my computer in Vancouver, Canada, to start a Zoom conference at 5 a.m. Hundreds of people joined from around the world to listen to a keynote from Hong Kong at what was 8 p.m. for the presenter. As a co-organizer, I was gratified to see the interest and engagement from participants located on every continent but Antarctica. The Zoom era provided new chances for interaction in a world determined more by internet access than visa permits. The conference was a cherished chance to connect during Covid.

Just a few days earlier, though, I'd experienced a very intimate form of disconnection. A personal medical emergency had forced me to visit the hospital. Covid regulations forbade my husband from accompanying me into the emergency room. He paced around the hospital for hours, waiting to hear my prognosis. Moreover, travel restrictions meant that my parents could not fly in from the UK. In fact, they were waiting out the phased exit from another lockdown. The disconnection was physical and painful.

Over the course of a week, I had been connected virtually to a global research community and disconnected from my own family. It was a jarring juxtaposition. And yet, it served as a reminder that connection and disconnection can happen simultaneously. Rather than talk of eras of connection or disconnection, globalization or deglobalization, it may be more productive to disaggregate the elements of global connection and disconnection. I could be connected by communication just as I was physically disconnected from others. This is not just a contemporary experience, but a historical one as well.

In my work, I have considered how communications do and do not follow the patterns of other facets of globalization. In a 2019 article, for instance, I explored interwar health communications to argue that 'information flows could increase at a time when the flows of people and goods

46. For a present-day oriented analysis of such processes, see S. Mau, *Sortiermaschinen. Die Neuerfindung der Grenze im 21. Jahrhundert,* Munich 2021.

decreased'.[47] The League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) had created an epidemiological information system that covered two-thirds of the globe and used the comparatively new technology of wireless to reach ships out at sea for the first time. With the emergence of spoken radio as well, the 1920s and the 1930s arguably saw a broader exchange and reception of information than ever before at a moment when the flow of people and goods seemed to have slowed down.

The spaces of information also shifted: the League focused on Asia, partly due to long-standing prejudices of that continent as a progenitor of diseases such as cholera. Trade patterns shifted too, leading Adam Tooze and Ted Fertig to characterize this period as 'not so much a deglobalization as a decentering of Europe'.[48]

Indeed, any broad theories of globalization or deglobalization in the interwar period seem far more brittle upon closer inspection because different facets changed in different ways at different times in different places. As Frederick Cooper has noted, globalization theories are problematic just like modernization theory was in the past, because '[t]he key variables of transition did not vary together'.[49] The task for historians is to be attentive to the myriad variables, to disaggregate them and to produce a more complex picture of who was connected or disconnected, when, where, and why.

Thinking about global connection and disconnection, then, raises some crucial structural questions around the history of communications. Here, I briefly enumerate four as food for thought.

First, there is the question of who is connected and who is disconnected. While most people might remember March 2020 to early 2022 as a Zoom era characterized by disconnection, others might see it as a time of greater connection. The disabled and the immunocompromised could attend talks more easily, those living far from urban centres could access talks, and visas were no longer a barrier to participation. However, many people simply do not have internet access. In April 2022, there were around 5 billion internet users. That is a staggering number, given that, only back in 2005, the world crossed the threshold of one billion users. Yet, even 5 billion is only 63% of the global population. Many have remained disconnected, even in rich countries. In Canada, for example, rural and particularly Indigenous communities often lack broadband or pay exorbitant fees for mobile phone access online.[50]

To date, historical investigations of communications are generally careful to steer clear of sweeping statements around access to new technologies; instead, they take the time to consider who actually used new technologies and how factors such as gender, race and class shaped usage. This connects with the broader question of how states did and did not enable access to communications. Journalists and policy-makers today worry about a splInternet between Europe/North America versus China and other authoritarian states who block access to a range of websites and platforms. Radio jamming echoed many of these concerns, even though it seems to be wholly forgotten by many in power today.

Secondly, there is the question of who controls underlying communications infrastructures. Infrastructures are 'big, durable, well-functioning systems and services, from railroads and highways to telephone, electric power, and the Internet'.[51] Communications infrastructure is highly

47. H. Tworek, 'Communicable Disease. Information, Health, and Globalization in the Interwar Period', in: *American Historical Review* 124 (2019) 3, 813–842, 814.
48. A. Tooze / T. Fertik, 'The World Economy and the Great War', in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 (2014) 2, 214–238, 235.
49. F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley, CA 2005, 97.
50. A. Weeden / W. Kelly, 'Canada's (Dis)connected Rural Broadband Policies. Dealing with the Digital Divide and Building 'Digital Capitals' to Address the Impacts of COVID-19 in Rural Canada', in: *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 16 (2021) 4, 208–224.
51. P. N. Edwards et al., 'Introduction. An Agenda for Infrastructure Studies', in: *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* 10 (2009) 5, 364–374, 365.

path-dependent. Until very recently, telephone and internet fibre-optic cables were generally laid on the same paths as submarine telegraph cables from the 19th century. This meant that imperial centres like London remained the best-connected.[52] Imperial priorities resonate down to the present. The latest fibre-optic cables are now following new routes but they still depend upon investment from major corporations such as Google or states like China.

Thirdly, there is the question of who owns the communications companies that distribute information. Whether newspapers, radio, TV or social media platforms, ownership structures have influenced how information is conveyed and exchanged. Some eras, like the interwar period, saw the state take a leading role in places such as the United Kingdom to create the BBC. Other eras, including the late 20th century, saw a neoliberal approach enable the rise of Silicon Valley and private social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.[53] What can matter more than content is who controls the companies behind that content. The political economy of communications often determined who received what communications and where.

The fourth point concerns the question of beliefs in the power of communications. Why, in the end, should historians care about communications? Is it because communications networks illuminate a certain type of global connection? Or because historians are ascribing causality to communications? Or is it because elites believed that communications could change history? When humans are shaped by so many factors, it can be nearly impossible to tease out when news items or particular communications changed the course of events. The history of reception and global publics reminds historians not to over-generalize about the effects of communications and not to fall into the trap of some contemporary elites who held overinflated beliefs about what communications could achieve.[54] It is possible to be far more nuanced and exacting around effects than claiming X communications technology 'changed the world' or 'created globalization'.[55]

Perhaps more so than for migration, trade or pandemics, the rise of social media has inspired breathless assertions of a unique rise in global connectivity. Historians can push back against the reflex to see our current communications era as unprecedented. It is always hard to put our own era into historical context, but that task is as crucial for communications as any other domain. Conversely, this moment can also inspire new questions about the past, about the intertwined simultaneity of connection and disconnection and about the role of communications in that interplay.

Sujit Sivasundaram

Colombo's Ungreen Green: Between Connection and Disconnection in the Global South Port City

The global South port city is often imagined and experienced as a mass of people. For historians, the stereotype of such an urban space that immediately comes to mind is that of cosmopolitan exchange. It is here that communities from various parts of the world met and mingled. Indeed, such ports may

52. R. Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World. The Telegraph and Globalization*, Cambridge, UK 2012.
53. M. O'Mara, *The Code. Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America*, New York, NY 2019.
54. V. Huber / J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Global Publics. Their Powers and Limits, 1870–1990*, Oxford 2020.
55. For an attempt to think through and categorize the historical effects of communications, see H. Tworek, 'The Impact of Communications in Global History', in: M. Albert / T. Werron (eds.), *What in the World? An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Global Social Change*, Bristol 2021, 195–210.

be cast as an exemplifiers of historic connection, which were linked to capitalism, empire and new technologies of sea-borne travel.[56] Yet, beneath these often-romanticized histories of comings and goings is also a history of coerced labour. That history is now coming to attention as never before, and it is analysed together with histories of enslavement, indenture and convicthood among other modes of extraction.[57] Returning to the present-day, the global South port city is also a site to watch for the climate emergency, given that many such cities are low-lying and face the wrath of the winds, the sea and the weather, which are taking shape in new patterns.[58] If this is so, historically, too, these cities had to be constructed and made stable in aqueous geographies, where lines of shore kept changing or where shipwrecks dotted the beach. Just as with the social and labour relations, so also with the environmental context, the trick of connection in the global South city should not be misread to indicate an easy practice. Connection had to be produced in challenging geographies and material conditions, to make commodities, people and things of all kinds, move from port to port.

As a way of testing this view of the global South port city as one of disconnection lying cheek by jowl with connection, the following comments focus on the city of Colombo, which lies at the centre of the Indian Ocean.[59] Sri Lanka is not a nation that many in the West contemplate often; yet, in the last few months, since March 2022, it has sporadically appeared on television screens and newsreel because Colombo has seen the most sustained post-pandemic protests in the world. The country has faced an economic crisis generated by a series of inter-locking problems: a default on foreign loans; a loss of foreign exchange due to a downturn in tourism earnings; the loss of returns from foreign workers, especially domestic labour in the Middle East; poor and corrupt governance, including a populist tax cut and an ill-devised plan to drop artificial fertilizer for agriculture without any planning or lead-time to going organic. As fuel supplies ran short and as the country went into power blackout, protesters started to gather in the centre of the city. They built a village, or *gama*, calling for the dynastic governing family of brothers and particularly the ruling head, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, to resign. They occupied some key buildings, the President's official residence and the Prime Minister's office. The video of protesters swimming in the pool of the President's official residence went viral on Western media channels.[60] Gotabhaya Rajapaksa first fled to a naval ship offshore before flying to the Maldives and on to Singapore. He later returned to the country. Aerial footage of protesters surrounding the Old Parliament, set against the waves of the Indian Ocean behind them, also circulated widely on social media. The sheer number of protesters at this site, when viewed in formation from above, was pretty astounding.[61]

56. This essay develops ideas in: S. Sivasundaram, 'Towards a Critical History of Connection: The Port of Colombo, the Geographical 'Circuit,' and the Visual Politics of New Imperialism, ca. 1880–1914', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59 (2017) 2, 346–384.
57. For some starting points on the history of the port city, see A. Mah, *Port Cities and Global Legacies: Urban Identity, Waterfront Work, and Radicalism*, London 2014; and J. Darwin, *Unlocking the World: Port Cities and Globalization in the Age of Steam, 1830-1930*, London 2020. For the history of slavery in Sri Lanka, see N. Wickramasinghe, *Slave in a Palanquin: Colonial Servitude and Resistance in Sri Lanka*, New York 2021.
58. For a recent account of the environmental history of the city, see J. H. Nightingale, *Earthopolis: A Biography of our Urban Planet*, Cambridge 2022.
59. There are two starting points for the history of Colombo: One that is now very dated, and the other a digest that forms a large 'coffee-table book': R. L. Brohier, *The Changing Face of Colombo, 1505-1972, Covering the Portuguese, Dutch and British Periods*, Colombo 1984 and A. Hussein, *The Great Days of Colombo: A Journey through Time as Never Seen Before*, Colombo 2021.
60. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ii4×61b_-eE (accessed 24 July 2022).
61. https://www.youtube.com/shorts/lOa1OoIxxfA (accessed 24 July 2022) and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEfzEmYzi0I (accessed 24 July 2022).

Questions are raised about whether the events in Colombo are the first of a sequence of such movements that we are to witness in the global South as 'developing economies' struggle to come to terms with the aftershocks of the pandemic. In the Western press, however, there were others who compared these events to those that unfolded at Capitol Hill. There were others who blamed the fallout in Sri Lanka on 'eco-tyranny', in reference to the green policies against artificial fertilizer.[62] However, both of these interpretations set this global South protest movement within the frame of right-wing media, especially in the United States, and without an understanding of both the democratic sentiment of the protesters and the minimal hold of environmental policies among the governing elite of the island. The embrace of organic fertilizer was in fact a glorification of the soil in nationalist idiom. However, this protest movement is not purely a leftist one, for it is a coalition of forces, some of which were socialist while others were simply incensed by the inequalities of the present moment. Approaching this movement through a historical lens, it is necessary to put it into its locality. It is important to ponder the site where the protesters congregated and what it reveals about the deeper logics that feed into these events. What Western commentators forgot is that even though this is a movement inflected by the pandemic's economic tight-fist, it is also a movement with a long context. That context can be interrogated as a tangle between connection and disconnection. It comes from a very longdrawn history of things that have been done to the land that constitutes this global South city and its people, as well as what subsequently occurs in response to this interventionism.

It was on Galle Face Green that the movement set up a protest village. Galle Face Green is an unique public space at the heart of Colombo. Here, people of many different backgrounds, by way of class, ethnicity or gender, normally congregate for a walk in the evening to take in the sea breeze, to savour food from the street vendors who park here and to watch the waves form and foam. The green is within reach of the harbour; it is ringed by luxury tourist hotels and faces a statue of SWRD Bandaranaike, who served as Prime Minister between 1956 and 1959. He is often credited, simplistically, with the origins of a Sinhala nationalist politics that fed the island's long-running civil war. More recently in July 2022, after the protest camps on the green was dismantled by the military, the Colombo Fort Magistrate gave the order that it was illegal for people to assemble within a 50-metre radius of this statue. Yet, if these are the contemporary lineaments of Galle Face Green, it has a long history.

It was first a colonial green, second a nationalist green, and then only a place of post-pandemic protest. It was levelled flat by the Dutch and one oral tradition is that the length of the green was necessary for military purposes as it enabled the Portuguese and Dutch to aim their cannon at each other. It was formally laid out by a British governor, Henry Ward, in 1856, who cast it as an esplanade, a place for walking, especially for women and children. It also became a place for horse-riding in the early British period of the 1820s and was used for colonial sports. In keeping with the views of healthfulness in the 19th-century, the air was seen to be especially agreeable on the green since it was by the shore. The holy mountain of Adam's Peak (Sri Pada), which sits in the interior of the island, could at times be seen from here. The 'vantages' that were open to the colonial eye, in a place like Galle Face Green, were said to be incomparable when placed next to others in cities in South Asia.[63] Yet, despite the mutation of a military site into one of public use, this green still kept up an interventionist inheritance.

British colonial military parades continued here.[64] Military music was performed here.[65] At one stage, the Ceylonese press erupted in debate about whether a military battery should be built on

62. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-62149554 (accesssed 24 July 2022).
63. *Ceylon Observer*, 29 January 1886.
64. *Ceylon Observer*, 30 December 1864.
65. *Ceylon Observer*, 13 May 1867.

Galle Face Green.[66] Military offenders were on occasion executed on this green.[67] Meanwhile, the notion of the public was itself severely tested here. Even though the green was cast as an open space for wandering, it generated conflicts of interest when less-elite or non-white people congregated here, especially after the steamer lines made Colombo a point of transit and saw an expansion in its population. There were complaints when less desirable people, 'great hulking, dirty-looking fellows', occupied the benches on the green.[68]

At the same time, the very greenness of the site was always difficult to maintain, which was perhaps an unsurprising fact given that this was a marshy stretch of terrain. In the event of torrential rain, it was said that the red cabook soil was converted into the 'hue of blood'.[69] On another occasion, in 1865, the green was said to have changed to its 'primitive appearance as a bed of sand' due to the lack of rain.[70] These British colonial dilemmas of what constituted order, gentility and natural beauty, fed into Sri Lankan nationalist engagement with this iconic urban space. As a result, throughout the late 20th-century, there were attempts to maintain this green with elaborate plans of watering because the nature of green was seen as a showcase of governmental efficiency. More recently, after the violent end of the civil war, which is still open to cries of human rights abuse and war crimes, there was a victory parade on this very green on 3 June 2009. Weapons seized from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam were displayed.[71] Galle Face Green is also the site of the annual Independence Day parade on the 4th of February.

This green is not just a place where people congregate, but also a site open to manipulation by interventionist forces, imperial and national, and a site that is environmentally manufactured to serve as a public space. Its story is a microcosm for the history of the whole of Colombo. It may stand for the plight of the global South port city as a whole. Colombo does not have a significant natural harbour; instead, it was a multiply-colonized and repeatedly engineered city, built by the Portuguese, Dutch and British and now by the Chinese. Each set of outsiders desired this city for its place on shipping routes and on routes of strategic access. Yet, if so, a great deal of work was necessary to make the environment habitable, and that work has generated modes of inequality and protest. This has happened through time in Colombo's history, for instance with the rise of mass political meetings, strikes and leftist movements, and it has happened once again in the protest movement that we are now witnessing. In other words, if Colombo is a vital node of connectivity, the fact that this connectivity needed to be made stable has generated modes of political opposition. The political opposition is an indicator of the fragmentations of connection and its inability to reach its full result. However, it is also an indicator of the material realities of that connection in terms of its susceptibility to being overcome by an environment. Greening a green requires the weather to cooperate.

For the future of the global South city as well as for the human future, it is vital then that we are able to assess a way forward beyond the romance of connection and unlimited mobility. It is also imperative that we are able to take the ground of a place like Galle Face Green seriously; ecologies give rise to repetitive histories not out of accident, but because they are particular contours in which human work and imagination operate. The green has, for this reason, been for so long a stage of power and resistance. In other words, it is no surprise that it has become the site of the world's most sustained pandemic-age protest movement. This is an indicator of the

66. *Ceylon Observer*, 14 February 1888.
67. *Ceylon Observer*, 17 August 1865.
68. *Ceylon Observer*, 6 November 1902.
69. *Ceylon Observer*, 30 November 1866.
70. *Ceylon Observer*, 17 March 1865.
71. 'National Victory Parade', https://www.army.lk/news/national-victory-parade-june-3 (accessed 24 July 2022).

underside of connection in a territory that has so often been prone to being co-opted into global schemes of capital, power and scheming.

Sitting on the green today, it is possible to look out to sea and see another development, the massive Chinese port development project in Colombo, which is seeing land rise in the sea as a new district of the city.[72] It is a telling place from which to ponder whether there is a way of breaking out of this dance of development and the dream of connectivity before time runs out.

Simone M. Müller

Waking Sleeping Beauty. On Planetary Dis:connects

In 1987, Puerto Castilla had the air of a community that – similarly to the Grimm Brothers' story of Sleeping Beauty – had fallen asleep decades ago and had just not yet been kissed awake again. First famous as the place where Christopher Columbus had allegedly set foot on Central American mainland, the small, Honduran fishing village had become the location of Spanish fortifications during the colonial period.[73] In the early 20th century, Puerto Castilla turned into a nodal point of the United Fruit Company empire and its far-flung trade infrastructure.[74] Alongside the banana plantation, the US-based company built a railway connection further inland, cleared land and expanded the port of Puerto Castillo. Completed in 1921, the 96-kilometer-long railway connected Olanchito, the capital city of Honduras' Yoro Department, with Puerto Castilla. For the wealthy citizens of Honduras, it symbolized a gateway to the modern world, as ships at the Port of Puerto Castilla became connected with the United States and beyond.[75]

Connectivity shifted in the 1930s. United Fruit closed its facilities as a result of the Panama disease, a blight on the roots of the banana tree, and abandoned the plantation, its workers, the port and the trainline. Left to deal with a deteriorating infrastructure, the Hondurans eventually dismantled the tracks. After 1952, the port of Puerto Castilla also stood largely abandoned.[76] In the 1940s, the Honduran government had moved the village east on the peninsula to allow American forces to establish a naval base by the port to support the Allies in their fight against Nazi Germany. Allied forces believed that Nazi Germany planned an attack on the Panama Canal and included Puerto Castilla in a defence ring system around the Caribbean and Central America.[77] For the community, the forced move signified a substantial deterioration of their lives. The Honduran National Port Authority, which took over the port from the

72. For an introduction to the Chinese project, see K. Ruwanpura et al., '(Dis)connecting Colombo: Situating the Megapolis in Postwar Sri Lanka', in: *Professional Geographer*, 72 (2020) 1, 165–179.
73. L. Lemus, 'Castilla, historico pueblo hondureno sumido en el abandon', *Laprensa,* 24 May 2014), https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/regionales/712393-98/castilla-hist%C3%B3rico-pueblo-hondure%C3%B1o-sumido-en-el-abandono (Last accessed 27 November 2021); Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 'Puerto Castilla', in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/place/Puerto-Castilla (Last accessed 27 November 2021).
74. J. Colby, *The Business of Empire*, Ithaca, NY 2019.
75. Colby, *Business,* 124; La Era de la Ferrocarril, 'Rutas del ferrocarril de la Truxillo Railroad Company', http://ferrocarrilhonduras.synthasite.com/truxillo-railroad-company.php (last accessed 27 November 2021).
76. La Era de la Ferrocarill, http://ferrocarrilhonduras.synthasite.com/truxillo-railroad-company.php (last accessed 27 November 2021); US Hydrographic Office, *Sailing Directions for the East Coasts of Central America and Mexico*, Washington, DC 1957.
77. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Castilla,_Honduras (Last accessed 27 November 2021)

villagers, had promised that it would build houses and give villagers work. Four decades later, people were still waiting on a modern sewage system.[78]

In 1987, then, an opportunity to awaken Sleeping Beauty appeared to be within reach. An American waste trader approached a Honduran businessman from San Pedro Sula, Honduras' commercial capital and second largest city. Their idea was to reconnect Puerto Castilla with the world through an import scheme that would foresee the dumping of 200,000 tons of incinerator ash from Philadelphia in a swamp and mangrove area surrounding the port of the small fishing village. The newly-created land would then be used for commercial expansion to revive the port by bringing revenues and jobs. Additional road construction as part of the deal would allow locals to reach cut-off communities further inland on the peninsula.[79] At first sight, the import of US waste appeared a deal too good to pass. Yet, conversations treaded lightly on the fact that the incinerator ash was contaminated with dioxins, furans and heavy metals: problematic materials to be dumped in a wetland area.[80] Exposure to dioxins and furans is hazardous to human health due to the substances' toxic and teratogenic characteristics as endocrine disruptors. Similarly to heavy metals, they accumulate in the food chain, easily moving from the shrimp to the fishermen of Puerto Castilla.[81]

Puerto Castilla, with its ebbs and flows of global dis:connectivity, is the perfect place to think through Globalization (with a capital G) as a web of many small, interrelated, complementary processes rather than a teleological, singular and possibly unique megaglobalization.[82] The village and its history illustrate how processes of globalizations (with a lowercase g) combine various forms and articulations of connectivity with interruptions, absent integrations, or cumbersome and circuitous exchanges, or dis:connections in the words of Roland Wenzlhuemer.[83] In the case of Puerto Castilla, social status and standing mattered tremendously, for instance, in relation to who had access to and benefitted (financially) from international networks of trade and travel at the height of global connectivity during the era of United Fruit. Similarly, the fate of the railroad tracks between Olanchito and Puerto Castilla, their construction and demolition, illustrate the ebbs and flows of dis:connections in relation to economic and political settings. Yet, dis:connections need to be read, not only in their respective historical and social context,[84] but also in their environmental interconnectedness. Through the environmental perspective, we learn more about the quality of dis:connections, and, through that, about globalization as an analytical concept.

For my work on global environments, the specificity of place – often wildly gestured to as 'the ecosystem', but then comprising both the atmospheric, geological and biological premises of an environment and the social and cultural construction of it as 'nature' – is one of the basic premises of my historical research. In the context of dis:connections, these specificities of place at Puerto Castilla – its ecosystem and how the environment at Puerto Castilla has been constructed – help

78. M. Holleman, 'The Americas. Puerto Castilla', in: *Peace Corps Times. Focus Honduras*, July/August 1988, 9; Lemus, 'Castilla', 2014.
79. Translation of letter from Edgardo A. Pascall to Jorge E. Cramiotis, General Manager, National Port Authority (Honduras), March 1987, Jim Vallette Private Archive.
80. Environmental Protection Agency, 'EPA Flash Report,' Radio Haiti Papers, 1968-2003, Duke University Library, 5 October, 1987.
81. N. Langston, 'New Chemical Bodies: Synthetic Chemicals, Regulation, and Human Health', in: A. C. Isenberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, Oxford 2014, 271.
82. J. Osterhammel, *Die Flughöhe der Adler. Historische Essays zur globalen Gegenwart*, München 2017.
83. R. Wenzlhuemer, 'Connections in Global History', in: *Comparativ* 29 (2019) 2, 106–121.
84. B. Barth et al. (eds.), *Globalgeschichten. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 2014.

to explain the continued attractiveness of particular nodal points to be considered for (re-)connections and the co-construction of connect and disconnect.

Puerto Castilla is approximately 20 kilometres north of Trujillo, the capital of the Colón Department of Honduras in the North of the country, and some 400 kilometres from San Pedro Sula, Honduras' commercial centre. During the colonial period, the Caribbean coastal lowlands, where Puerto Castilla is located, have been Honduras' most exploited region because of its richness in tropical fruit, forest and seafood.[85] The village itself sits on the inland side of a peninsula that forms the Bay of Trujillo and shelters the small shrimp fishing community from the big Atlantic waves and winds. The peninsula also encloses a deep-water port, which distinguishes this settlement from other Honduran coastal villages. At Puerto Castilla, the water immediately drops to 20 feet depth allowing the port to harbour bigger ships. Strategically located on the northern Atlantic shore of Honduras, almost vis-à-vis Havana, Puerto Castilla appeared as a place that could swiftly and inexpensively be re-connected with larger, global networks of commerce, travel and trade while serving more generally as an important entrance port for foreign goods and investments coming to Honduras.[86]

The environmental history of Puerto Castilla also sheds light on the co-construction and co-dependency of connect and disconnect. It is the 1987 waste deal between the United States and Honduras that brings this co-construction to light. The scheme to export incinerator ash from the US to Puerto Castilla not only represented an attempt to disconnect the US society from hazardous waste material while building upon older, commercial connections between the two countries. It also built the scheme upon an obvious disconnect concerning how each trading partner looked at wetland spaces. For centuries, urban and agricultural growth in the Western world (and its colonies) had depended on the conversion of wetlands into cultivated and commercial lands through draining and filling it with dirt. Commencing in the 1970s, this practice had come under critique in most of the industrial countries, and it eventually culminated in the 1971 UN Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands. By 1987, Hondurans and Americans looked differently at wastes and wetlands. In the United States, waste had become rigorously governed and controlled, and wetlands were increasingly protected from environmental pollution, land degradation and commercial usages. In Honduras, wastes were amassed irrespective of a differentiation between non-hazardous and hazardous materials, while wetlands were still considered wastelands. Not only this, but hundreds of waste trade schemes between countries in the Global North and those in the Global South were made possible in the 1980s through such a dis:connect that represented nature as being worthy of protection and ultimately what constituted a life worth living.

Today, this planetary dis:connect between different countries of the world on what constitutes nature that is worth protection or what role 'protected nature' plays in schemes of economic growth, still feeds various externalization practices from North to South. These range from the supply of Germany with coal from El Cerrejon, Columbia to the recycling of European plastics in Southeast Asia. It is part of the unequal schemes of CO_2 emissions and trading or the application of certain chemicals in agricultures in some parts of the world and not in others. In the end, the planetary dis:connect represents the key tension of resolving global planetary issues in an increasingly unequal world.

85. E. Echeverri-Gent, 'Geography', in: T. Merrill (ed.), *Honduras: Aa Country Study, Washington, DC* 1995, 66–74.
86. Holleman, 'Americas', 9.

Callie Wilkinson

News From the Front: Military Secrecy, Eyewitness Testimony and Global Dis:connections in Wartime

From the 'YouTube War' in Iraq to the 'TikTok War' in Ukraine, social media has transformed modern war reporting. Using handheld devices, local actors with internet access can now communicate to global audiences from the frontlines. For Ukrainians, in particular, social media has provided opportunities for capturing international attention, documenting war crimes and combatting Russian disinformation. Yet, social media also poses unique challenges of verification and authentication, which create conditions conducive for the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Where the witnesses in question are combatants, their participation in these online discussions has stoked disagreement about how best to negotiate the competing demands of transparency and operational security. These questions first emerged in the aftermath of the Iraq War. The development of new digital platforms for user-generated content in the early 2000s provoked official policies that prohibited soldiers and other military personnel from blogging, commenting online or accessing popular social media sites.[87] While many of these bans on social media use have since been moderated or revoked, the issue remains; American and European military personnel who publicize information without permission are subject to increasingly harsh disciplinary measures.[88] A 2019 E.U. Directive designed to augment whistle-blower protection emphasized the importance of reporting and disclosure to public welfare but identified the defence and security sectors as exceptions to the rule.[89] In a world where transparency is increasingly identified as a 'pan-ideological good', the military has emerged as a realm of exception.[90] Yet, this process has not gone uncontested. In the face of government crackdowns, critics have emphasized the importance of openness within the military, arguing that whistle-blowers play an important part in exposing wrongdoing and enabling informed public debate.

A historical perspective can help us to identify and critically engage with some of the assumptions that underlie discussions about what kind of information about military operations is communicated to international audiences, and by whom. Too often, a strong correlation between secrecy and security is taken for granted, and military personnel are assumed to occupy an entirely distinct category separate from other citizens. Taking a longer view reminds us that ideas and practices of military secrecy are historically contingent and culturally conditioned, and that the boundary between army and society has not always been so rigid. At the same time, the idea that more information leads ineluctably to better outcomes is not always borne out; whether eyewitness testimony can fulfil this radical potential remains uncertain. Social media might promise to bring us closer to the combat zone than ever before, but other limits to human empathy remain. Using the example of the expanding British empire, this essay illustrates some of these complexities via a brief history of the dynamic dis:connections between the army and society, the home front and the imperial frontier.

87. W. Merrin, *Digital War: A Critical Introduction*, London 2019, 112–115.
88. R. Aldrich / C. Moran, ''Delayed Disclosure': National Security, Whistle-Blowers and the Nature of Secrecy', in: *Political Studies* (2018) 2.
89. Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law PE/78/2019/REV/1 OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, 22.
90. C. Birchall, 'Radical Transparency?', in: *Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies* 14 (2014) 1, 77.

In the 18th and early 19th century, growing calls for political accountability and parliamentary reform coincided with the expansion of the newspaper press in Britain. Political theorists have identified this as a key moment in the development of modern ideals of open government.[91] Simultaneously, Britain was also emerging as a dominant imperial power fighting wars on a global scale. Although newspapers had become the primary vector through which news of these international developments reached the public, war correspondents did not yet exist and would not become a permanent media fixture until the mid-19th century. In their absence, editors relied on a variety of sources, including government gazettes, foreign newspapers, word of mouth and private letters authored by eyewitnesses, many of whom were military personnel on active service.

These different sources of information were necessary given the tenuous and occasionally fragmented nature of global communications in the 18th century. In a context where the transmission of intelligence was subject to significant delays and disruptions, many different connections were mobilized, particularly when it came to tracking the fortunes of the East India Company's growing empire in South Asia. Compared to the four to six weeks required to make the Atlantic crossing, in the 18th century, it took six months for news to travel from India, and the passage was not easy. To ensure that messages reached their destination, the East India Company would send dispatches by different routes, including round the Cape of Good Hope or overland via Syria or Egypt. The risk of shipwreck, which was always significant in the 18th century, was compounded by recurring naval warfare with France. To mitigate these uncertainties, editors and their readers seized on all available evidence, including rumours circulated by ship's captains, and letters forwarded by agents across Europe, from Amsterdam to Cadiz. Most valuable of all, however, were letters produced by eyewitnesses on the ground.

Britons contributed letters to the newspapers in such large numbers because they viewed newsgathering as a collaborative, participatory endeavour. This aspect of 18th-century news comes particularly to the fore in discussions around imperial military campaigns. Where news furnished through institutional channels was lacking, unsatisfactory or intermittent, readers pooled their resources to make sense of ambiguous situations, either by transmitting letters from informants of their own or by commenting on those that appeared in the press. Suspicious that war news might be distorted by partisans or stockjobbers, readers applied their own geographical and military knowledge to determine what was plausible and triangulated between reports to arrive at their own version of events.[92] These interpretations were then published as letters to the editor. Editors devoted significant space to this correspondence, on the assumption that readers had a stake in public events, and a right to debate them.

Soldiers participated enthusiastically in this process as well. Whether passed on by friends and family or written directly to the editor, thousands of their letters appeared in the 18th- and 19th-century press. Neil Ramsey has argued that, in the late 18th century, 'a modern culture of war was taking shape in which the personal story of the soldier was increasingly coming to prominence and circulating as a mode for reflecting upon war', a development that he sees reflected in the growing market for military memoirs.[93] The press was another arena in which officers were able to assert their claim to 'ground truth'.[94] Given that soldiers' letters were often significantly out of date

91. C. Hood, 'Transparency in Historical Perspective', in: idem / D. Heald (eds.), *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?* Oxford 2006, 2–23.
92. For the Anglo-American context, see W. Slauter, 'Forward-Looking Statements: News and Speculation in the Age of the American Revolution', in: *Journal of Modern History* 81 (2009) 4, 759–792.
93. N. Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780-1835*, Farnham 2011, 10.
94. For this term, see J. Tidy, 'The Gender Politics of "Ground Truth" in the Military Dissent Movement: The Power and Limits of Authenticity Claims Regarding War', in: *International Political Sociology* 10 (2016). 99–114.

by the time they reached their destinations in Britain, their publication was not seen as hazardous; the far greater risk was that dispatches would be captured by French privateers near the scene. Instead, officers' letters helped readers at home to map the changing contours of their empire abroad and gave them resources with which to speculate about what might be taking shape on the horizon.

The growing importance of the press as a venue for daily news, and the practice of publishing officers' letters in it, became more of a problem when war erupted in Europe. Where the distances were less, and the routes well-established, British newspapers could more quickly make their way into enemy hands. This pattern first became material for comment during the Peninsular War. In 19th-century manuals of military law, the general orders of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, issued in 1810, are usually cited as creating a precedent for the military offence of 'injurious disclosures'. Wellington grumbled that the enemy had profited by military intelligence, printed in English newspapers, that had clearly been communicated to the press in private letters authored by British officers.[95] The possibility of soldiers' letters informing enemy strategy would become even more widely discussed during the Crimean War (1853–1856), as military personnel wrote in unprecedented numbers, and as critics invoked the image of Czar Nicholas I sitting down in the evening to read that morning's *Times.*[96]

Still, controls were slow to be introduced, suggesting that contemporary perceptions of the impact of connection were shaped as much by assumptions about whose words were being circulated, as by the speed at which they were circulating. As long as it was predominantly officers and not rank-and-file soldiers writing the letters, military officials believed that the problem could be controlled through informal modes of reprimand and reproof. Wellington might have complained about the press, but he did not forbid officers from communicating key military intelligence to their correspondents. As interpreted in manuals of military law, 'the liberality of the order, leaves officers in their discretion to communicate intelligence from the army'.[97] Officers were entrusted to make decisions about what to reveal, what to conceal and when to do which. Articles of War were introduced to punish soldiers in the event that their disclosures produced ill consequences, but the consequences had to be shown beyond a doubt to be caused by the letter in question.[98] Authoring a letter for publication, then, was, in itself, not an offence. This was the framework that regulated (or failed to regulate) soldiers writing to the press during the Crimean War. The logic was that the military personnel who had the knowledge and the wherewithal to write to the press were more likely to be officers, and that officers were gentlemen, who could be trusted to adhere to a gentlemanly code of honour. The same principles were seen to apply to the emerging cohort of special correspondents, many of whom were former officers themselves.

To the extent that officers were tried at court martial for publishing letters in the press in the first half of the 19th century, the issue was not operational security, but military insubordination. Officers were reprimanded, not for disclosing information, but for their temerity in publicly commenting on the conduct of their superiors or on their own conditions of service.[99] In India, where the issue of military discipline was given added priority because of the Company's reliance on Indian military labour, officers were repeatedly reminded in general orders not to submit anonymous grievances to

95. T. F. Simmons, *The Constitution and Practice of Courts Martial with a Summary of the Law of Evidence,* 6th ed., London 1873, 67–68.
96. W. Hough, *Precedents in Military Law*, London 1855, 188.
97. Simmons, *Courts Martial,* 68.
98. Hough, *Precedents,* 188–189.
99. C. James, *A Collection of the Charges, Opinions, and Sentences of General Courts Martial, as Published by Authority, from the Year 1795 to the Present Time*, London 1820, 278; 357; 402–403.

the press.[100] The fear was that newspapers, which were widely read in mess halls, would spread disaffection and discontent within the army. Soldiers who published letters in the newspapers were punished proportionately to those who circulated libels or posted placards within the cantonment.

Social and technological changes from the mid-nineteenth century resulted in changing attitudes to the practice of soldiers writing letters. The telegraph, the railway and the steamship accelerated the transmission of information and expanded the market for news, while the repeal of the stamp duty in 1855, coupled with the introduction of steam-powered printing machines and other technological advances, contributed to the emergence of cheap print and an increase in the number of newspapers in circulation. Whereas *The Times,* as the leading paper in the first half of the 19th century, had a circulation between 9,800 and 38,000 from 1837 to 1850 and cost the prospective reader roughly 7d an issue, the halfpenny *Daily Mail* had achieved a circulation of almost a million copies by the end of the century.[101] As unauthorized disclosures circulated more widely and more quickly, the risks to operational security were concomitantly greater.

At the same time, the change in the profile of letter-writers was as important as developments in print and communication technologies. Rising literacy rates meant that more soldiers were writing to the press than ever before. The 1870 Education Act accelerated this trend, which commanding officers had been urged to curtail as early as 1859.[102] Though literacy is notoriously difficult to quantify, army reports suggest that, by the end of the century, at least 39.2% of rank-and-file soldiers were formally educated.[103] After the abolition of the purchase system in 1871, the composition of the officer corps was also starting to change, with officers no longer necessarily belonging to the same narrow elite. Historians of modern Britain have shown that, prior to the Official Secrets Act of 1889, government secrecy operated according to a gentlemanly code; they argue, however, that this consensus broke down because the emergence of a system of competitive examinations increased the number of non-elite civil servants who, by virtue of their outsider status, were seen to require control via the mechanism of formal legislation.[104] Similar patterns appear to have been at work within the army, too. Just as the conditions that would give rise to the Official Secrets Act were taking shape, more stringent prohibitions were introduced within the army in the 1880s to forbid officers and soldiers from communicating with the press.[105]

This history of news from the 19th-century front demonstrates the inseparability of connection and disconnection. As the exchange of news intensified, so too did attempts to circumscribe it. In this analysis, connection breeds disconnection; as improvements to communication and transport technologies and the development of mass media bound the home front and the combat zone together more intimately than ever before, the concept of 'injurious disclosures' began to take shape as a category of military offence, and the military began to devise new ways to impede the circulation of news or to prohibit it altogether. Still, the development of these controls was gradual and uneven, and they were focused more on who used these connections than on their scale or speed. Ideals of gentlemanly honour proved incredibly resilient in the face of technological change.

Taking a longer perspective therefore reminds us to be wary of the technological determinism that is apt to creep into contemporary evaluations of the role of social media in modern war. The

100. G. R. Cochrane, *Regulations Applicable to the European Officer in India,* 2nd ed. London 1867, 784–791.
101. D. McKitterick (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain,* 7 vols., Cambridge 2009, VI, 65; 69.
102. War Office, *The Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Army*, London 1859, 420.
103. A. R. Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899*, London 1977, 89.
104. D. Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain 1832-1998*, Oxford 1999; C. Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain*, Cambridge 2012, 25.
105. See, for example, Queen's Regulations, 1881, sec. VI, para. 10.

emergence of digital platforms like Facebook and Twitter is often described as having given rise to a new kind of participatory warfare whereby individuals engage in the production, circulation and analysis of news in ways that promise to radically subvert the top-down narratives previously promulgated through newspapers and television broadcasts. To be sure, the ability of bystanders to capture and almost instantaneously transmit high-resolution videos of invading tanks has no historical precedent, to say nothing of the algorithms that shape how these videos are shared and experienced. Still, the phenomenon of participatory warfare is not unique to our modern, 'connected' world. In the 18th century, eyewitnesses were given free rein to generate and comment on news from the front precisely because of the disconnections that obstructed the circulation of reliable information. Both the volume and content of information that passed between the imperial frontier and the home front were conditioned by ideas as well as by communication infrastructures; soldiers who wrote letters for publication were behaving in accordance with contemporary perceptions of newsgathering as a collaborative endeavour requiring public participation. As the army introduced greater regulations to constrain soldiers writing to the press, soldiers, in turn, asserted their duty, as citizens, to contribute to and participate in the debates of the day. Soldiers' letters continued to be published in the newspapers even after formal prohibitions were introduced, a pattern that would endure until the Official Secrets Act of 1911 and the more rigid censorship of World War I targeted the press as well as its informants.[106] Understanding the role of unauthorized disclosures in mediating popular experiences of distant wars thus requires us to think about how communication technologies, regulatory frameworks and political imaginaries mutually inform one another.

Equally, the history of 'injurious disclosures' reminds us to think critically about whose voices are heard, and why. For British military authorities, letters only began to seem threatening when they were no longer the monopoly of a narrow elite. The predominance of officers' letters in newspapers of the 18th and early 19th century was partly a product of higher literacy rates, but it was also, at least to some extent, because editors and readers invested officers' letters with special authority. Even after the European rank and file had begun to figure more prominently in public discourse, the testimony of Indian soldiers, by contrast, rarely featured in media debate, to say nothing of the experience of non-European civilians or enemy combatants. Though letters from the front represented one important medium of connection between army and society, between the home front and the imperial frontier, they were nevertheless composed and circulated in a world where some voices were valued more than others. Non-European subjects whose stories went untold were unlikely to be grieved; as Judith Butler observed, 'specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living'.[107] Modern social media platforms are not insulated from wider structural inequalities either. As one recent study has observed, 'social media sites are not egalitarian platforms where attention is distributed equally among users'.[108] While social media is often celebrated for enabling a greater diversity of opinions and perspectives to be aired, access to these platforms is far from uniform, and language barriers remain a problem. There is not much evidence to support the existence of informational 'echo chambers', but we still have much to learn about how personalization and recommendation algorithms shape our engagement with the news.[109] What is clear is that some messages resonate more loudly than others. The contrast between the relative attention accorded to

106. Moran, *Classified,* 50–51.

107. J. Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London 2010, 1.

108. Y. Golovchenko / M. Hartmann / R. Adler-Nissen, 'State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare over Ukraine: Citizen Curators of Digital Disinformation', in: *International Affairs* 94 (2018) 5, 981.

109. A. Bruns, 'Filter Bubble', in: *Internet Policy Review: Journal on Internet Regulation* 8 (2019) 4, https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1426.

human interest stories emanating from Ukraine, versus those from Yemen or Afghanistan, for example, remains stark.[110]

Perhaps the greatest lesson that we can learn from this longer history of participatory warfare is that transparency, in and of itself, does not produce change. Reflecting on the use of social media in Ukraine, Rita Konaev, a research fellow at the Center for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University, remarked to the *Washington Post* that 'we've always lived with this assumption in many previous disasters and wars that if people only knew, they would do something, they would help. […] Well, we can never say we didn't know about this'.[111] Redirecting our attention to the history of the British Empire in the news, however, reminds us that knowing about an injustice is not the same as acknowledging or recognising it as such. There is some evidence that soldiers' letters enabled more informed debate about Britain's military operations overseas. During the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1781–1784), soldiers' letters provoked opposition to the East India Company's conduct in India in the media. A century later, when unfriendly reporters were expelled from the front during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880), soldiers' letters provided a crucial vector through which domestic audiences learned about the extent of summary executions at Kabul. Still, the radical potential of soldiers' letters mostly went unfulfilled. At a time when their role in the public domain was unregulated, individual officers were sometimes able to reach a wide audience, but with limited impact. If public apathy persists, it is not always due to a lack of information. Even in 18th-century Britain, details of distant conflicts were widely disseminated in newspapers read aloud in pubs and coffee houses. The point, then, is not so much about how emerging classification regimes shaped how war was reported, but how, in the absence of them, so many people in the 18th and 19th centuries remained so disconnected from the often-brutal acts of slaughter that had been so vividly described in their daily papers. This is a question that is as pertinent for our understanding of the present as it is for the making sense of our imperial past.

Madeleine Herren

Grandma Klara's Big Stick – A Plea to Investigate the Dissolution of International Organizations

My resolute grandma Klara had her own idea about the world. As a cheesemaker's wife who was born in 1898 in rural Switzerland, her life was ruled by the certainty that fate could strike at any moment. Therefore, she held the strong belief that she needed to prepare manifold solutions for all kinds of possible disasters. Since she assumed the real danger lurks in her immediate local surroundings, she had developed evasive strategies. In her understanding, transnational religiosity protected her from local clerical control, and the extraterritorial power of gold from social decline. Global connectivity as local distancing in the heart of an agrarian society? Precisely because Klara's worldview in no way fits the perspective on global history described as 'world connecting'

110. P. Galey, 'Crises beyond Russia's War: Drought and Famine Lose Attention as Ukraine Drains Focus and Funds', *NBC News,* 22 May 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-war-ukraine-drains-aid-crisis-afghanistan-yemen-horn-africa-rcna29169.

111. H. Allam, 'In Ukraine, Civilians Shape Narrative of War', *Washington Post,* 8 April 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/04/08/ukraine-war-civilians-witness-narrative/.

in the book of the same title,[112] her biography offers an opportunity to look at the changing objectives of the history of international organizations from an unexpected perspective – resuming at least some of the historiographical fights with which this field of research was originally associated. The history of international organizations had challenged the system of diplomacy, where old white men interpreted and shaped international relations as a system of great powers. With its further development, the history of international organizations now includes non-governmental networks, the role of epistemic communities and the discussion of asymmetrical power relations in a colonial context. The first monograph analyzing the League of Nations from a decidedly East Asian perspective will soon be published, and investigations into the role of international civil servants have added a new perspective to the actor-driven history of liberal internationalism.[113] All these new perspectives are more than worthy for further investigation. However, the juncture between international organizations and global history still has unexplored potential. We may learn more about international organizations by following the 'traces of use' left by ordinary people. In doing so, and with the interplay of connections and disconnections as epistemological premise, an unquestioned presupposition becomes suspicious: international organizations obviously did not just enhance across borders that the connectivity civil associations had reached in a local context.

Grandma Klara had all the reasons to mistrust the social fabric of her local environment – when her sister died in childbirth, the hospital simply entrusted the infant in Klara's care, and Klara, unmarried at the time, immediately needed social and financial security. She married a cheesemaker who was willing to accept both her and the infant, and she started building her own specific form of a long-distance security net, which resulted in a rather peculiar behaviour: she believed in ghosts and medicinal herbs, but in the late 1920s, she insisted on giving birth to her two sons in the university hospital in Bern, far away from the cheesemaker's factory. Family rumour had it that her regular visits to Bern also included a visit to the Christian Science reading room, which had been newly established in Bern in 1927 in front of the monument dedicated to the International Telegraph Union. The idea of a Bernese cheesemaker's wife reading the *Christian Science Monitor*, one of the leading global newspapers, is, at the very least, unexpected. Founded in 1879 in Boston with connections worldwide including China, the Christian Science movement left traces in the Switzerland that are only vaguely known. On a personal level, evidence of reading room experiences is hard to find – however, Klara certainly had a well-hidden collection of novels telling the story of how religious young English women had to be rescued from human traffickers from East Asia. Transnationally organized Christians who rushed to the rescue played a major role in these novels. Just a coincidence? If she had been concerned with religious fulfilment alone, she certainly could have joined one of the flourishing regional sects, for example one of the Bible reading circles that were widespread in her area. She did not.

The cornerstone of her financial security net was cheesemaking, which proved to be a source of considerable wealth. Wheels of cheese, the size of which far exceeded Klara's weight and size, were made for export and not for the local market. If the local threats of

112. E. S. Rosenberg (ed.), *A World Connecting, 1870-1945*, Cambridge 2012.

113. For the history of international organizations, see, among others, B. Auberer / T. Holste / C. Liebisch (eds.), 'Editor's Note: Situating Internationalism 1919-1940s', in: *New Global Studies* 10 (2016) 3, 201–216.; G. Sluga / P. Clavin (eds.), *Internationalisms. A Twentieth Century History*, Cambridge 2016; E. Muschik, 'Towards a Global History of International Organizations and Decolonization', in: *Journal of Global History* 17 (2022) 2, 173–190; C. R. Hughes / H. Shinohara (eds.), *East Asians in the League of Nations: Actors, Empires and Regions in Early Global Politics* in New Directions in East Asian History (2023).

contaminated milk and fraudulent farmers diluting the milk was not a problem, the production process of cheese transformed milk, a highly instable and perishable product, into a durable deposit of fat with a long shelf-life that was consumable almost everywhere in the world. Although cheese traders handled distribution as far as Shanghai, the financial risks for the local cheesemaker as a small business owner were considerable, and Klara had to ensure that cash was always available to pay the farmers. Although she used money bills, her historically well-founded mistrust in banks led her to prefer the materiality of gold and silver and to entrust her savings to the coins that were valid beyond national borders due to the guarantee of the Latin Monetary Union (LMU). Stored under Klara's bed, a dark green metal box contained Swiss gold coins mixed with the French *Napoleon d'or* as well as silver coins, all accepted as means of payment in the area of the Union. The presence of the treasure during Klara's whole lifetime raises questions. Founded in 1865, the poorly-studied LMU offered at least an area that used the European currency, which included Switzerland, France, Belgium, Italy and, later on, Greece. However, shaped as an international currency organization and not as an international banking system, the LMU was dissolved in 1926, since the divergence of metal and monetary value gave rise to smuggling and speculation. Interestingly, ordinary people cared little about the states' dissolution of the LMU. Obviously, the organization had a considerable afterlife as it was remembered as a forward-looking materialization of a currency area that was not identical with national borders. In addition, the preservation of the coins seems to suggest that ordinary people at least presumed crossing borders as everyday life experience with no exchange mechanisms involved. Moreover, with Klara's treasure, a long-known methodological problem surfaces: In 1970, Wallace and Singer published a key article about intergovernmental organizations in the global system.[114] They already mentioned a disturbing characteristic of international organizations – namely the very fact that the beginning and the end of an organization is often unclear. At the time, this finding mainly disturbed the statistical evidence of a continuous increase of international organizations. Today, the epistemology of disconnectivity launches a historiography of transformation and dissolution, hidden continuities and historiographical marginalization, from which the history of international organizations can greatly benefit.

Klara was ready to protect her LMU treasure continuously – and consistently confirmed her fear of local threats on which her appreciation of the global was based. She therefore believed her treasure to be secure against global economic crises and was prepared for the local attack. She had stored a massive metal pipe next to the treasure box and planned to smash the skull of whoever wanted to take her coins.

My grandmother is a historically verifiable person – not a metaphor. However, Klara is scientifically replaceable with Jean and Antoinette, with Kamaladevi and Elif, with Tsitsi and Guo. In analyzing their understanding of transboundary connections, we gain insights into the traces that the unplanned messiness of everyday life left with international organizations, and how ordinary people not belonging to cosmopolitan elites contribute in very specific ways to a history of international organizations that has not yet been written. Connections and disconnections invite engagement with dynamic interferences, and they offer an intellectual pleasure of marvelling at unexpected insights. No one would associate the LMU with a solid metal pipe – but at the end, Klara's weapon survived and preserved the story, while the gold coins have long since disappeared.

114. M. Wallace / D. J. Singer, 'Intergovernmental Organization in the Global System, 1815–1964. A Quantitative Description', in: *International Organization* 24 (1970) 2, 239–287.

Martin Dusinberre

Casting Off History?

In my view, the most exciting part of historical fieldwork is not the discovery – a term that awkwardly posits the archives as virgin lands – but rather the *disorientation*: the growing sense that you are tacking wrong, that sources are not what they seem, that your analytical compass may be compromised.

One such moment of disorientation hit me a decade ago, on a spring morning in late October. The visual power of the map in my hands suggested I'd seen it before – perhaps on the cover of a book called *Connected Worlds*, or *A World Connecting*. Entitled, 'N.Y.K. Line: Map Showing the Routes and Ports of Call of N.Y.K. Steamers', (Figure 1) it refers to the Nippon Yūsen Kaisha, which was founded in 1885 and remains one of the world's biggest shipping companies. Unfolding (at least in my memory) to a sheet approximately A2 in size, the map positions Japan almost at the centre point of the folds, with both the metropole and the surrounding colonies – Taiwan, Korea, southern Sakhalin, and parts of Micronesia – marked in deep red. This colour scheme, set against a list of sailings on the sheet's reverse, suggests a date-range of 1923–1925: the years when, the map's bold arc across the northern Pacific from Yokohama to Seattle notwithstanding, the United States was enacting anti-immigration legislation targeted particularly against Japan. This, then, constituted a first point of dissonance, a first sense of unease: the 'N.Y.K. Line' presents an unimpeded material connection – a line from Asia and a US port of call – which, legislatively and in terms of popular anti-Japanese rhetoric at the time, was in fact highly contested.

Of course, scholars expect nothing less of maps: our job is to decipher the arguments they project. Moreover, even if smooth transpacific routes from Japan outwards were as much a discursive claim as a physical reality in the mid-1920s, this tension does not render 'connection' an unhelpful framework for historical analysis. Compared to its 19th-century Tokugawa predecessor, the early-20th-century Japanese polity *was* extraordinarily well-connected to the outside world according to almost every indicator: trade, international diplomacy, overseas migration, colonial acquisitions, intellectual and artistic interchange and much more. Not for nothing is the *steamship-in-Japanese-woodblock-print* a favourite visual trope for historians writing about world history, or about Japan's engagement with the modern world.[115]

The challenge is therefore to read against such cartographic claims, to posit the counter-argument that the 'N.Y.K. Line' map in fact epitomises *dis*connections – which, in turn, raise uncomfortable questions about the discipline of history in the modern world. I have developed these ideas elsewhere,[116] so for this forum on 'dis:connections' two aspects will suffice, both arising from my having first encountered the map in Australia.

At one level, the source's Australian provenance undergirds its central iconographic proposition, which concerned not the mid-1920s per se but rather the mid-1890s – in particular, the Meiji state's

115. See, for example, the front covers of M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *A Concise History of the World*, Cambridge 2015; J. Carter / R. Warren, *Forging the Modern World: A History*, New York 2016; and M. Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World: Japan's Meiji Restoration in World History*, New York 2017. These books reprint, respectively, Utagawa Sadahide's 'Picture of Western Traders at Yokohama Transporting Merchandise and Westerners' (1861); Utagawa Hiroshige III's 'Picture of a Steam Locomotive Railway at Yokohama' (1874); and Utagawa Hiroshige II's 'Of the Foreigners' Ships: Steamship' (1861).

116. M. Dusinberre, *Mooring the Global Archive: A Japanese Ship and its Migrant Histories*, Cambridge, forthcoming 2023, chapter 4.

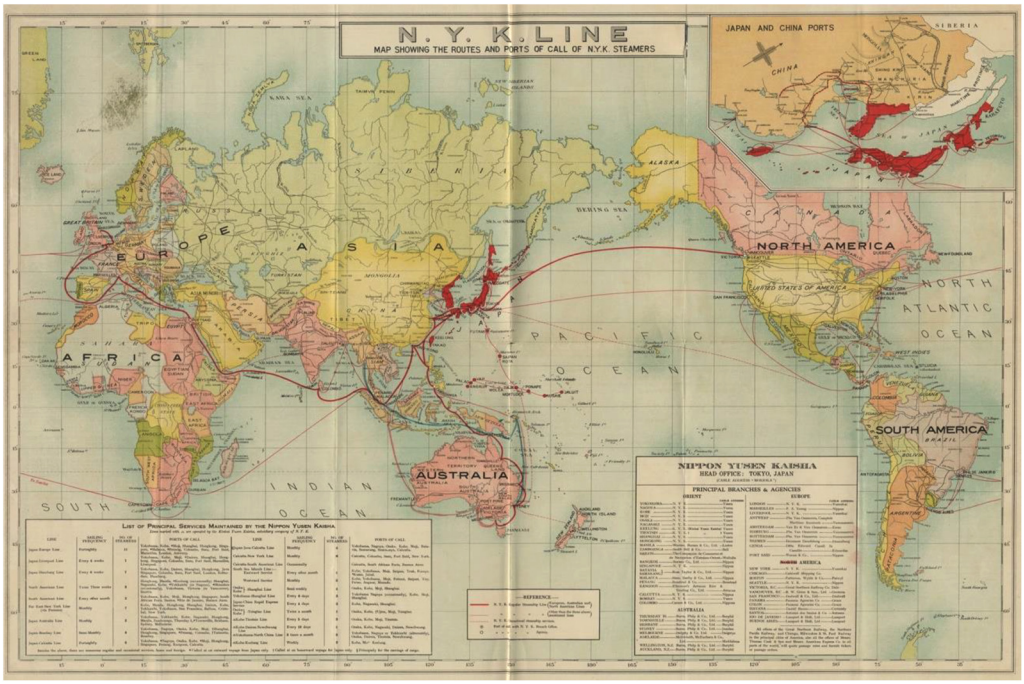

Figure 1. 'N.Y.K. Line: Map Showing the Routes and Ports of Call of N.Y.K. Steamers', c. 1923.
(*Burns Philp Misc. Printed Material, N115/662, courtesy of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australia National University Archives*).

defeat of the Qing Empire in the first Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895). The war had been the logical conclusion to a strain of intellectual thought emerging in Japan prior to the 1868 Meiji revolution, one which intensified in the 1870s and 1880s: namely, the idea that 'Western' notions of law, society or political economy necessitated a new conceptual vocabulary. This could be created partly by stripping the semantic history from classical Chinese characters and layering them with new meanings. Thus, in one famous example, the characters *bunmei* 文明 were repurposed in Japanese hands no longer to refer to the moral and spatial overtones of (Chinese) 'civilization' but rather to denote a Buckle- or Guizot-inflected concept of 'Western civilization'.[117] I have tiptoed around the political radicalism of this intellectual agenda by talking of *stripping* and *repurposing*, but let's call a spade a spade: these projects of 'translation' could also be acts of profound linguistic disconnection.

The move to distance Japan from 'China' – the terminology for which varied among Japanese actors – found its most radical articulation in the mid-1880s rhetoric of Japan 'casting off Asia' (*Datsu-A-ron* 脱亜論). The anonymously-authored essay of this title, which was published in March 1885, constituted a discursive claim rather than a specific call to arms.[118] Nevertheless, the claim became a material reality a decade later through the Sino-Japanese war. Indeed, Japan's victory in that conflict marked not just the military humiliation of East Asia's hitherto preeminent polity; by also colonising Taiwan and subsequently expanding its influence into Korea, the Meiji state undermined the intellectual edifice of a political-cultural

117. D. Howland, *Translating the West: Language and Political Reason in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, Honolulu 2002.
118. P. Korhonen, 'Leaving Asia? The Meaning of *Datsu-A* and Japan's Modern History', in: *Asia-Pacific Journal* 12 (2014) 9.

sphere in which power radiated out from the Middle Kingdom. True, there was no historical teleology inevitably leading from the Meiji revolution to the Sino-Japanese war; and the abstract ideal of imperial China – if not its political manifestation in the Qing – remained a lodestar for many Japanese intellectuals in the late-19th century.[119] However, if historians want to find an actorly term for *dis*connection as the defining project of revolutionary Meiji Japan, then we could do worse than consider *datsu* 脱, or 'casting off'.

Though it might seem a visual stretch, the 'N.Y.K. Line' map made exactly this dis-orienting claim. Its colour scheme in East Asia rendered the Japanese empire separate from the yellow rump of what was, by the 1920s, Republican China. By contrast, the map's blood-red lines bound Japan to Australia, Great Britain and the United States (an AUKUS *avant la lettre*). The very NYK ships which steamed these new arteries, all established in 1896, had themselves been requisitioned by the Imperial Navy for frontline duties or for supply-support during the war – diverted from previous service on domestic routes or as occasional charter-ships for Japanese labour-migrants to Hawai'i. Thus, in projecting Japan as primarily connected to the post-1896 imperial 'Anglosphere', the 'N.Y.K. Line' map – itself preserved *in* the Anglosphere – signalled a disconnection, not only cultural-intellectual but now also geopolitical, from the historical 'Sinosphere'. To borrow from Sujit Sivasundaram, the map represented an act of late-19th-century Japanese *islanding* from the Asian continent.[120]

This process of islanding, itself suggesting the 'turbulent interplay' of connections and disconnections,[121] was not confined to Japan – and here we come to my second reading of the 'N.Y.K. Line' map. Australia, too, had undergone a form of islanding between the 1890s and the mid-1920s moment of the map's production. For decades and perhaps centuries prior to the British first landing on the continent's east coast in 1770, trepang fishing crews from Makassar had come annually to its north coast – to the land they called Marege'.[122] There, they developed deep connections with Yolŋu country. The classic example of such entanglements is the word for 'European' in many Yolŋu languages, *balanda*, which was itself derived from the Makassarese and Buginese word, *Balanda* (Holland). Brought on the sails of annual fishing expeditions from Sulawesi, the term gave the many Yolŋu clans with which Makassarese fishers interacted a conceptual vocabulary for encounters that predated the actual arrival of the Dutch or later the British in Yolŋu country. However, in 1906, the newly-federated settler government banned Makassarese fishers from coming to the shores of what colonial maps now labelled the 'Northern Territory'. This was also an act of islanding – of 'Australia' from 'Southeast Asia' – in ways that foreshadowed the epistemological division of 'Southeast Asia' from 'South Asia' in the decades after World War II. Thus, the 'N.Y.K. Line' map depicted the unit of Australia, to which Japanese company ships were steaming, as a *fait accompli*; but behind this claim of Japanese-Australian connection lay a recent history of Yolŋu-Makassar disconnection.[123]

That disconnection was not merely material. It also entailed a denial of Yolŋu knowledge systems, and of Aboriginal people's ways of imagining the world more generally. I started this essay with terracentric metaphors all too familiar to historians trained in Euro-American

119. D. Mervart, 'Meiji Japan's China Solution to Tokugawa Japan's China Problem', in: *Japan Forum* 27 (2015) 4, 544–558.
120. S. Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony*, Chicago 2013.
121. R. Wenzlhuemer, 'Dis:connectivity in Global History', pre-published paper, 12.
122. C. C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege': Macassan trepangers in northern Australia*, Melbourne 2017 edition [1976].
123. See also R. Ganter, 'Turning the Map Upside Down', in: *History Compass* 4 (2006) 1, 26–35; and S. Mawson, 'The Deep Past of Pre-Colonial Australia', in: *The Historical Journal* 64 (2021) 5, 1477–1499.

epistemologies – of history as a 'field' and the archives as 'lands'.[124] But Yolŋu languages and cosmology, and therefore history and geography, reject binaries of the sea and the land, and instead find meaning in the changing gradations of water from *fresh* to *brackish* to *salt*. Consequently, the so-called 'low water mark', which divides land from sea in international law, has no Indigenous legal status, as Yolŋu activists have successfully argued in Australian courts.[125] To impose international law on Aboriginal country, and to present this imposition as historically 'natural' through cartographic arguments and nation-state narratives, thus constituted an act of epistemological disconnection – even violence – from which our discipline has yet to recover. In late-19th-century Japan, too, the new labelling of China as 'the East' and thereby as distinct from 'Japan' or 'the West', created a shifting epistemological logic from which it remains difficult to escape.[126]

If the neologism 'dis:connectivity' is an invitation to reflect on the language, concepts and future practices of global history, then, in that spirit, I would like to propose that the adjective *global* be imagined as akin to *datsu*: that is, as referring to a project of casting off many of the normative assumptions that have been central to the discipline of history since its European birth in the 19th century. The problem is, however, that this definition of 'global' itself assumes the normative translatability of concepts from Euro-American academia to non-European contexts. In Japanese, for example, 'global history' is rendered in the *katakana* script (*gurōbaru hisutorii* グローバル・ヒストリー), indicating an imported loan word, because the closest 'Indigenous' rendering ('world history', *sekaishi* 世界史) has long carried the nuance of 'the world' as separate from 'Japan'. Thus, to correct the epistemological presumptuousness of (European) 'history' by presuming a translatable definition of 'global' muddies the waters of what casting off entails and what its intellectual stakes might be.

But perhaps it is exactly through this metaphor of muddying – of a brackish zone between freshwater and saltwater, in Yolŋu thought – that historians can find a space for new analyses of the world. There is a disorienting creativity in this space that might inspire a reconsideration of 'connections', an exploration of 'disconnections' – and, ultimately, the emergence of an analytical language which goes beyond the linear presumptions of both terms.

124. B. G. Smith, 'Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century', in: *American Historical Review* 100 (1995) 4, 1150–1176.

125. Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country: Recognising Indigenous Sea Rights*, Neutral Bay, N.S.W. 2003 [1999]; F. Morphy / H. Morphy, 'The Blue Mud Bay Case: Refractions through Saltwater Country', in: *Dialogue* 28 (2009), 15–25.

126. See S. Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, Berkeley 1995.