

Inventing Europe

Technology and the Making of Europe,
1850 to the Present



Inventing Europe: Technology and the Making of Europe, 1850 to the Present

The EUROCORES Programme “Inventing Europe” creates a platform for transnational research on the long-term process of European integration. It uses the lens of history of technology to arrive at a cultural history of innovation processes.

By looking at transnationally developed and used technologies as cultural products, this research programme aims at understanding the varied ways in which people have built, explored and, also, opposed the concept and practice of “Europe” over the past 150 years.

Four general areas to be explored are:

- Building Europe through Infrastructures, or: how Europe has been shaped by the material links of transnational infrastructures, such as railways, roads and electricity networks;
- Constructing European Ways of Knowing, or: how Europe became articulated through efforts to unite knowledge (knowledge networks) and and organise practices on a European scale (multinational, large scale technology projects);
- Consuming Europe, or: how consumer goods and artefacts were reworked through local, regional, national, European, and global use;
- Europe in the Global World, or: how Europe was created through colonial, ex-colonial, trans-Atlantic, Cold-War and other global exchanges.

“Inventing Europe” understands technology as comprising machines, products, systems, and infrastructures as well as the skills, knowledge, cultural scripts and social contexts that make them work. In the same vein, technological change is understood as a deeply political, social, and cultural process, which involves choices that are taken by and shape in turn people and institutions alike.

This EUROCORES Programme will integrate the history of technology into a broader European historiography, and it will provide a novel perspective on the debates about European integration. The research results of the EUROCORES theme are expected to be presented in a coherent fashion through an edited and published book series, as well as web products and reflections on exhibitions. Research undertaken in this programme develops against the background of a lively public debate about the future of Europe.

In doing so, “Inventing Europe” addresses, to some extent, the cultural deficit underlying many current debates about the future for Europe. “Inventing Europe” looks at cultural and social processes that, more often than not, precede institutional developments.

The research agenda will be developed through four international Collaborative Research Projects and through a series of workshops, conferences, summer schools and research collaborations with related research networks and projects in Europe and beyond.

List of funded Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs)

European Ways of Life in the 'American Century': Mediating Consumption and Technology in the Twentieth Century (EUWOL)

(CNRS, DASTI, NWO, NFR, VR)

EUWOL analyzes European consumption patterns in the 'short 20th century', i.e. from 1918 to 1989. Taking the US challenge as a point of departure the project emphasizes both the decisive importance of national appropriation strategies in various European countries and the intra-European networks that have contributed to the formation of specific European ways of life.

Project Leader:

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The Development of European Waterways, Road and Rail Infrastructures: A Geographical Information System for the History of European Integration (1825-2005) (Water, Road & Rail)

(AKA, FCT, CICYT, NWO, TÜBITAK)

Water, Road & Rail documents and assesses the contribution of new transport technologies and infrastructures to the process of European integration from 1825 to 2005. The main goal is to create new integrated pan-European digital datasets and to analyse these resources to underpin a narrative of the role of transport in long-run European integration. The results of the CRP will provide an empirical basis for multidisciplinary studies on the relationship between terrestrial infrastructures and the European integration. This can only be achieved by spatially integrating datasets of economic, social and demographic variables with transport infrastructure datasets.

Project Leader:

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Europe Goes Critical: The Emergence and Governance of Critical Transnational European Infrastructures (EUROCRIT)

(AKA, DASTI, NWO, NFR, VR)

There is at present a strong political concern about “critical infrastructures” partly triggered by terrorist attacks demonstrating the vulnerability of infrastructures. The purpose of EUROCRIT is to put this discussion on critical infrastructures in a historical and transnational perspective. It studies how infrastructures have expanded in Europe both through the interconnection across national borders and through interconnections of different kinds of infrastructures with one another. The focus is on energy infrastructures, particularly electricity and natural gas networks. To discover and examine interdependencies, EUROCRIT investigates both international organisations that have addressed such issues or, in their absence, bilateral collaborations; and system failures, in which largely hidden interdependencies were often painfully exposed.

Project Leader:

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Software for Europe (SOFT-EU)

(AKA, NWO, GAČR)

SOFT-EU addresses the role of software in the shaping of post-war Europe through the tensions between two contrasting modes of computer technology appropriation: the direct importation of applications software; and the development of software through university-industry co-entrepreneurship.

Writing a contextual history of software allows addressing historical themes concerning Europe and Europeanness in the second half of the 20th century. In the initial era of post-war reconstruction, building a computing machine could be seen as a source of specifically national pride; a decade later, the shift from hardware to software initiatives appeared to present a very different character. SOFT-EU studies what informed this change and what was the role of underlying software standards in the move towards European unification and the Cold War.

Project Leader:

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The aim of the European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Scheme is to enable researchers in different European countries to develop collaboration and scientific synergy in areas where European scale and scope are required to reach the critical mass necessary for top class science in a global context.

The scheme provides a flexible framework which allows national basic research funding and performing organisations to join forces to support excellent European research in and across all scientific areas.

The European Science Foundation (ESF) provides scientific coordination and support for networking activities of funded scientists currently through the EC FP6 Programme, under contract no. ERAS-CT-2003-980409. Research funding is provided by participating national organisations.

www.esf.org/eurocores

THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT THE INVENTING EUROPE PROGRAMME:

Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF)

Austrian Science Fund, Austria

Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS)

National Fund for Scientific Research, Belgium

Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti (HAZU)

Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatia

Nacionalna zaklada za znanost, visoko školstvo i tehnološki razvoj Republike Hrvatske (NZZ)

National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia, Croatia

Grantová agentura České republiky (GAČR)

Czech Science Foundation, Czech Republic

Forskings- og Innovationsstyrelsen (DASTI)

Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation, Denmark

Eesti Teadusfond (ETF)

Estonian Science Foundation, Estonia

Suomen Akademia (AKA)

Academy of Finland, Finland

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)

National Center for Scientific Research, France

Rannsóknamiðstöð Íslands (RANNIS)

Icelandic Centre for Research, Iceland

Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR)

National Research Council, Italy

Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO)

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, the Netherlands

Norges forskningsråd (NFR)

Research Council of Norway, Norway

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT)

Foundation for Science and Technology, Portugal

Comisión Interministerial de Ciencia y Tecnología (CICYT)

Interministerial Committee on Science and Technology, Spain

Vetenskapsrådet (VR)

Swedish Research Council, Sweden

Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu (TÜBİTAK)

Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, Turkey

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

United Kingdom



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To celebrate the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, a train decorated with flags and carrying coal crosses the French-Luxembourg border on 10 February 1953.

This event exemplifies the intimate relationships between technology and European integration

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