

Imagined Regions: The Construction of Traditional, Democratic, and Other Identities

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I. Regions in German History

Regional political culture, regional political traditions, regional disparities, regionalism — the terminology of space centering on the “region” has been experiencing a boom in the historiography of the last two decades. The integration of this academic trend into broader social usage is unmistakable. The stimulus of using “the region” as a cognitive category in politics, administration, the economy, the media, science, and culture began in the 1960s; but it continued more vigorously in the 1970s.

The broad social resonance of the region has been explained more than once as a compensatory phenomenon. Hermann Lübke, for example, views it as a form of “political historicism.” As a response to the spread of “homogeneous structures” associated with the “acceleration of civilizing change,”¹ emphasis on the region represents a reaction to actual or perceived tendencies toward centralization and uniformity. However, the “return of the regional”² is not simply backward-looking. The “paths” of the *Heimat* movement and of regionalism do not lead away from modernity, but rather to its very core, for they are both intimately connected to that inherently negative dimension of modernity that corresponds to the concept of “alienation.” In this context, alienation repre-

1. Hermann Lübke, “Politischer Historismus: Zur Philosophie des Regionalismus,” *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 20 (1979): 9. Corresponding to the conception of this essay as a “think-piece,” I have opted against providing extensive bibliographical references.

2. Rolf Lindner, ed., *Die Wiederkehr des Regionalen: Über die Formen kultureller Identität* (Frankfurt a. M., 1994).

sents a “spatial category, distinguishing between one’s own sphere and that of the other, between proximity and distance.”³

The renewed currency of the region as a historiographical category can also be understood as a countermovement. In particular, regional analysis has been directed against approaches emphasizing modernization theory, structuralist perspectives, and those narratives limited to the politics of “great men” and metropolitan institutions. In the 1960s and 1970s, German social history remained rooted in these categories, with which practitioners of historical social science believed they could explain the German *Sonderweg* and the long-term causes of the catastrophe of 1933. However, by the 1970s and increasingly in the 1980s, *Regionalgeschichte* took up the task of differentiating and challenging these overly crude interpretations. The impetus provided by regional history has thrived on the conscious juxtaposition of abstract political history from above with the authenticity of politics from below, which the historian clearly can analyze only on a small scale. Without doubt, this momentum has sustained extraordinarily rich research. Most conspicuously, regional historical studies have demonstrated that there is no such thing as *the* authoritarian German *Sonderweg*, nor even a Prusso-German *Sonderweg*. Instead, Germany encompassed numerous—regionally established—democratic “*Sonderwege*,” and many political traditions pointed not only toward 1933 but also toward 1949 or even 1989.

Nevertheless, this historiography has not proved itself immune to the tendency to idealize small lost worlds. This tendency accounts for some of the decidedly antimodern features of society’s enthusiasm for “the region.”⁴ Frequently, deploying the concept of region serves as a magic formula, with which one can then attempt to explain all sorts of things. To be sure, it may shed new light on old questions concerning the relationship between “traditional,” parochial, conservative trends on the one hand, and “modern,” national, and progressive elements in German history on the other. Too often, however, to invoke “the region” is in practice to limit oneself to challenging the “myths of centralization”⁵ or modernization, without substituting in their place something new. Despite isolated methodological forays by Peter Steinbach, Karl Rohe, and Alf Mintzel,⁶ the expansion of regional historical research

3. Wolfgang Lipp, “Heimatsbewegung, Regionalismus: Pfade aus der Moderne?” in *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Friedhelm Neidhardt, M. Rainer Lepsius, and Johannes Weiß (Opladen, 1986), 343–44.

4. Cf. Lipp, “Heimatsbewegung,” 334, 336, 338, 343.

5. Cf. Karl Schmitt, “Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen: Eine Einführung,” in *Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Dieter Oberndörfer and Karl Schmitt (Berlin, 1991), 9, *passim*.

6. See Thomas Kühne, “Wahlrecht – Wahlverhalten – Wahlkultur: Tradition und

and its substantial scientific yield stand in curious contrast to the markedly underdeveloped insistence on a theoretical framework. Even a precise conceptualization of the terms listed at the outset of this essay is entirely lacking in the literature.⁷

To date we have learned a great deal about regional differences in political attitudes and behavior, at least as far as these can be gathered from such indicators as election returns, the evolution of party systems, biographies of political deputies, or the willingness to strike. We now know that the grassroots politicization (*Fundamentalpolitisierung*) of German society—the great problem of German politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—was a process that occurred in different places at widely varying speeds and in greatly differing forms. However, at present we know very little about the relative importance of the category of “region” in the political thinking, perceptions, and actions of individuals and groups. In the future, such topics might better be investigated by means of a regional analysis that is inspired by the aims and methods of cultural history. For no conception of the region, whether German or non-German, historical or contemporary, can manage without a “cognitive-emotional component.” As Detlef Briesen and Jürgen Reulecke have written: “Whether a territory can be considered a region” will largely depend on “whether the people living there accept this space as a region and identify with it. Thus, essentially, the region is a mental construct.”⁸

The current predicament of regional studies lies in the fact that they rarely reflect on the constructed quality of the region itself. Regions are artefacts. As such, they can be “produced” in fundamentally different ways, by researchers or by historical protagonists. The real problem stems from conflating these two processes. The way a historian conceives or defines a historical region—in order, say, to limit the scope of his or her investigation—is too often presented as historical reality itself.⁹

Innovation in der historischen Wahlforschung,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993): 481–547, esp. 512ff. and 532ff.

7. Cf. Detlef Briesen, “Region, Regionalismus, Regionalgeschichte — Versuch einer Annäherung aus der Perspektive der neueren und Zeitgeschichte,” in *Region und Regionsbildung in Europa: Konzeptionen der Forschung und empirische Befunde*, ed. Gerhard Brunn (Baden-Baden, 1996), 151–62.

8. Detlef Briesen and Jürgen Reulecke, “Stand und Perspektiven einer neueren Regionalgeschichte,” *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung* 11 (1993): i–iv, esp. ii. Cf. Hartmut Voit, “Regionale Identität im vereinigten Deutschland: Chancen und Probleme,” in *Sachsen im Kaiserreich: Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Umbruch*, ed. Simone Lässig and Karl Heinrich Pohl (Weimar, 1996), 395–410, esp. 406–7.

9. For this and the following, see Hans Heinrich Blotevogel, Günter Heinritz, and Herbert Popp, “‘Regionalbewußtsein’: Zum Stand der Diskussion um einen Stein des Anstoßes,” *Geographische Zeitschrift* 77 (1989): 65–88; and Hans Heinrich Blotevogel,

II. The Region as a Construct of Research

As a methodological artefact, the region is a construct used by scholars “to confer order upon reality.”¹⁰ The determination of what constitutes a region derives from the interest of researchers in geographically localized and isolated manifestations of one or more selected characteristics. “All those areas where a particular attribute shows a *similar* manifestation are spatially lumped together and interpreted in their entirety as a ‘region.’”¹¹ A classic example of this form of regional study—that is, one based on the principle of similarity—is the cartographic branch of electoral sociology associated with André Siegfried.¹² The regions (or zones of political opinion) “produced” by electoral sociologists are homogeneous, in terms either of one specific factor or, often, of multiple, overlapping factors, such as voting patterns or social structure. This process of analysis, however, merely abstracts the territorial consciousness of the protagonists from such factors. For example, researchers prefer not to explain the homogeneity of regional voting patterns in “cultural” terms at all; rather, they refer to such “natural” factors as socio-structural or geographical circumstances. Apart from William Brustein,¹³ one of the most fervent representatives of this approach in Germany is Heinrich Best. Best’s “map of political interests” (*interessenpolitische Landkarte*) of early industrial Germany is based on the regional differentiation of petitions concerning trade policy submitted to the Paulskirche in 1848–49.¹⁴

An expressly national (or at least supraregional) scope of analysis is characteristic of this type of regional study. Regional deviations or *Sonderwege* become the focus of interest only insofar as they are elements that interfere with national development. In this context, a well-

“Auf dem Wege zu einer ‘Theorie der Regionalität’: Die Region als Forschungsobjekt der Geographie,” in *Region*, ed. Brunn, 44–68. Peter Weichhart, *Raumbezogene Identität: Bausteine zu einer Theorie räumlich-sozialer Kognition und Identifikation* (Stuttgart, 1990), is indispensable.

10. Blotevogel, “Wege,” 60, and more generally 58–60.

11. Peter Weichhart, “Die Region—Chimäre, Artefakt oder Strukturprinzip sozialer Systeme,” in *Region*, ed. Brunn, 25–43, 29.

12. Cf. Kühne, “Wahlrecht,” 499ff.

13. William Brustein, *The Social Origins of Political Regionalism: France, 1849–1981* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

14. Heinrich Best, “Die regionale Differenzierung interessenpolitischer Orientierungen im frühindustriellen Deutschland—ihre Ursachen und ihre Auswirkungen auf politische Entscheidungsprozesse,” in *Industrialisierung und Raum: Studien zur regionalen Differenzierung im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Rainer Fremdling and Richard Tilly (Stuttgart, 1979), 251–77, cit. 259. Cf. Heinrich Best, “Politische Regionen in Deutschland: Historische (Dis)Kontinuitäten,” in *Parteien*, ed. Oberndörfer and Schmitt, 39–64.

known pattern of interpretation considers regional fragmentation as a factor impeding the parliamentarization of the *Kaiserreich*.¹⁵ For example, party-political studies view the Poles as a prime example of a “regional” party in the Second Empire. This classification corresponds to contemporaries’ view of the Prusso-German authoritarian state in which the Poles, situated on the border with Russia, were seen as an element of strategic uncertainty. The Poles, however, did not consider themselves a regional movement within the German nation-state at all. Rather, their enormously successful efforts at political mobilization during election campaigns, and thus their ability to act as a leaven in the grassroots politicization of German society, were connected to their self-perception as a group whose common linguistic and national heritage spanned political borders.

Though less apparent, the nation is nevertheless very powerful as an analytical referent in the mainstream of regional history. Such analysis proceeds from a conception of the region that is geared toward the actions and sometimes the mentalities of protagonists in a certain area. But it hardly ever investigates the actors’ *conception* of this territory in its own right. As noted previously, for a number of reasons scholars restrict the scope of historical problems they examine by using spatial criteria. They do so because some problems cannot be adequately examined on the macro level, because the source material does not sustain study on a grander plane, or because the researcher believes that in the selected region, a specific historical problem has manifested itself very conspicuously. In contrast to the construction of disparate political regions from a bird’s-eye view, regional historians commonly claim that the demarcation of their subject area is historically justifiable due to the spatially concentrated interaction of the protagonists. In most cases, however, the selection of subject areas is based on the political, administrative, economic, or geographical specifics of the research project. For instance, the study may focus on communities, administrative districts, electoral constituencies, provinces, or federal states; but it may also focus on economic areas or “historical landscapes” (*historische Landschaften*).¹⁶ For the most part, historians leave in doubt, or fail to ask, whether and to what extent inhabitants conceived of themselves as living in a “region”: How did they actually act and interact with other protagonists inside this area — and also perhaps with those outside it? In short,

15. For a summary, see Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die deutschen Parteien, 1830–1914: Parteien und Gesellschaft im konstitutionellen Regierungssystem* (Göttingen, 1985), 30–32, 50, *passim*.

16. For a fruitful example of recent party history, see Lothar Gall and Dieter Langewiesche, eds., *Liberalismus und Region: Zur Geschichte des deutschen Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1995).

the construction of fixed "regions of interaction" may be indispensable as a question of practical investigative technique; but it cannot adequately compensate for the fact that people and organizations create not one but a "multiplicity of regions." Such regions "usually do not take the form of a well-ordered territorial mosaic, but rather reveal complex mutual overlappings and interpenetrations."¹⁷

III. Regional Political Culture as "Reality"

Currently, the most sophisticated theoretical reflections on studies of regional political culture have been advanced by Karl Rohe. He has raised the question of how specific sociocultural communities base their party-political preferences on their experiences, worldviews, habits, ways of life, and, not least, ideology proper. The chief assumption here is *not* that specific social structural features, which can usually be measured quantitatively, correspond to particular political preferences, but rather that these political preferences will be determined through a subjective interpretation of those features. The manner in which that subjective interpretation occurs, however, cannot be analyzed exclusively with quantitative methods (unless one is sounding current public opinion by means of polls). With respect to political culture, Rohe distinguishes this substantive aspect (*Inhaltsaspekt*) from the aspects of expression and process (*Ausdrucks- und Prozeßaspekt*). The aspect of expression denotes crystallizations of substance (content), for instance in the form of a certain political vocabulary or ritual. The aspect of process describes the updating and "maintenance" of political culture, especially by political elites.¹⁸ Rohe emphasizes — rightly — the central role of elites in dealing with cleavages and in translating sociostructural conflicts into the political system.¹⁹ He focuses therefore on the levels of mediation between parties and political elites on the one hand, and the sociomoral and cultural basis on the other. In this sense he speaks of "political coalitions" between voters and elites. He also distinguishes between practiced socioculture — the experienced, natural, internalized culture — and interpretive culture: the discursively generated, mediated, and conscious political culture that requires constant renewal.²⁰

Using the example of the Ruhrgebiet, Rohe and many other scholars

17. Blotevogel, "Wege," 59.

18. Karl Rohe, "Politische Kultur und ihre Analyse: Probleme und Perspektiven der politischen Kulturforschung," *Historische Zeitschrift* 250 (1990): 321–46, esp. 338ff.

19. Karl Rohe, *Wahlen und Wählertraditionen in Deutschland: Kulturelle Grundlagen deutscher Parteien und Parteiensysteme im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a. M., 1992), 24.

20. Rohe, "Politische Kultur," 341ff.

have focused on the long-term development of such a regional political culture. In particular, they have highlighted the continuity of the sociocultural "basis" and the discontinuity of party-political preferences. From the nineteenth century to the present, a nonparticipatory political culture prevailed. In the past, it was closely connected to the patriarchalism of heavy industry and mining. After 1945 it persisted as the unionized delegate system (*Stellvertretersystem*) based on the premise "I'm gonna take care of that for you" ("Ich mach dat für dich"). One cannot speak, however, of a regional identity among inhabitants of the Ruhrgebiet before the middle of the twentieth century. The party-political scene was initially heterogeneous, with the Center Party as the strongest force. But after 1945, the Social Democrats managed to become the guarantor of the welfare mentality (*Betreuungsmentalität*) and representative of the newly created regional consciousness of the Ruhrgebiet.²¹

IV. The Mythical World of Regional Political Cultures

Karl Rohe champions an open, multilayered understanding of regional political culture. This includes "the respective regional or federal state consciousness, the political mentalities of the population, the well-established habits and usages of speech and action, and the interpretation of political reality, as they are put forward by political elites and intellectuals."²² Rohe's work, though, clearly centers on socioculture, which in the final analysis is a variable of labor relationships and power structures. As a result, regional political culture acquires a natural bias: it becomes a cultural cage. Moreover, the openness of the concept halts abruptly at the frontier of the region itself. In the history of regional political cultures, the region remains an invariable quantity. The identity of the Ruhrgebiet after the Second World War is the telos of the history of a "region" that did not exist as such in the past. Even at the beginning of this century, the "Ruhrgebietler" did not perceive themselves as such: at that point, they were still Rhinelanders or Westphalians.

Such teleologies are hardly specific to the historiography of the Ruhrgebiet. A flood of recent *Landesgeschichten*, including studies of Germany's five new *Bundesstaaten*, works toward consolidating current "regional" identities that are the bread and butter of German

21. Cf. Karl Rohe, *Vom Revier zum Ruhrgebiet: Wahlen, Parteien, politische Kultur* (Essen, 1986); a more recent work, including an up-to-date bibliography, is Stefan Goch, "'Der Ruhrgebietler' – Überlegungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung regionalen Bewußtseins im Ruhrgebiet," *Westfälische Forschungen* 47 (1997): 585–620.

22. Karl Rohe, "Politische Kultur – politische Milieus: Zur Anwendung neuerer theoretischer Konzepte in einer modernen Landesgeschichte," in *Sachsen im Kaiserreich*, ed. Lässig and Pohl, 183.

federalism.²³ To overstate the case somewhat, one could say that such histories of regional political cultures are taken in by the mythical nature of their own subject matter, instead of challenging and “deconstructing” it. Regions can only become effective politically—that is, within the frameworks of power interests and conflicts, of mobilization and demobilization processes, and of participatory and representative cultures—if they are made “conscious.” This means that they must be designated by name, and they should impart identity.

In this respect, myths play a special role. Myths mediate truths. However, they do so not rationally and in abstract terms, but suggestively and concretely. They pass off historical narratives as “natural,” as divine providence or, for that matter, as an inevitable consequence of certain sociostructural, economic, or political circumstances. Events, too, are presented as fate. Myths may have a variegated substance: They can fall back on exemplary or traumatic events (as in the case of the Saar, which was constructed as a “region” only when it was severed from the Reich after the First World War). They can be oriented toward territories that have evolved over the course of time.²⁴ Or they can be based on principles of political behavior. Such principles may be a “healthy” spirit of subservience or a disposition toward opposition. Prussianism (perhaps the most consequential construct of a regional identity) on the one hand or the “special spirit” (*Sondergeist*) of the Bavarian Palatinate on the other suffice as examples of such dispositions.²⁵

In recent research on nationalism,²⁶ it has become commonplace to observe that nations are—and always were—“imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson). Such communities are/were not only imagined; they require(d) continual “maintenance.” What is far less often appreciated, however, is that this insight is even more applicable to regions than to nations, because regions’ boundaries are much less fixed, both synchronically and diachronically. Identities or “interpretive cultures” based on territory have always been refracted in multiple ways. The same is true for interactive or “sociocultures.”

23. Arno Mohr, “Politische Identität um jeden Preis? Zur Funktion der Landesgeschichtsschreibung in den Bundesländern,” *Neue Politische Literatur* 35 (1990): 222–74. Cf. Ulrich Heß, “Sachsen im 20. Jahrhundert: Wiederentdeckung einer Region oder Neukonstruktion einer regionalen Identität?” *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, no. 11 (1993): 719–28.

24. Cf. Heinz Gollwitzer, “Die politische Landschaft in der deutschen Geschichte des 19./20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Skizze zum deutschen Regionalismus,” *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 27 (1964): 523–52.

25. *Ibid.*, 536.

26. For a research update, see Dieter Langewiesche, “Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven,” *Neue Politische Literatur* 40 (1995): 190–236.

Historical stabilizations of particular spatial demarcations exist in the minds of people. They appear to develop most conspicuously by the application of external pressure, for instance through centralized power structures. They can also develop by means of more anonymous (or manipulative) processes of opinion-making. They favor spatially definable cohesion, and they result in the phenomenon we now call political regionalism but that contemporaries in the past—for instance, in the *Kaiserreich*—dubbed “particularism.” The constitutive element of such phenomena was not necessarily the goal of national autonomy but rather the cultivation of certain political attitudes, norms of behavior, and social interactions that contrasted with the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of the central authority. It was exactly these historically diverse constructions of “opposition” that constituted the liberal and democratic “traditions” of southern Germany before 1918—not the “special sociocultural perseverance of their advocates and content.”²⁷ Put another way: “persistence”-constructs are the mythical clay from which very different political choices have been fashioned in different eras. During the Second Empire, the option of a democratic-progressive opposition evolved in southern Germany in opposition to a reactionary, centrifugal Prussia-Germany. In the late twentieth century, on the other hand, southern Germany presents itself as a kind of hindrance to political and cultural processes of “modernization.”

V. Imagined Regions: Problems of Future Research

Historians of regional political cultures should not see their task in objectifying such territorial identities. Rather, they should make such identities transparent in the context of their historical and cultural contingency. They should problematize them, historically and culturally. From these observations, a number of central questions arise. How and to what end were regions made? For whom did they “exist,” when, and in what form? As mental and social constructs, regions are not only an aspect of personal and social identity in politics, but also a medium of purposive rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and power.²⁸ But it is important to clarify why and how certain regions have been constructed and others have not. More research is needed, therefore, into the role played here by institutional practices, spatially limited networks and social circles, economic and political interests, and symbolic or ideological representations.

27. This formulation is found in Lipp, “Heimatbewegung,” 348f., who argues against the thesis that “regionalist movements are based on ‘persistence.’”

28. Cf. Blotvogel, “Wege,” 60.

The task of *historical* regional political cultural studies is also to historicize the region itself. It must be seen as a spatial construct of identification in order to break it down into its contemporary and often quite controversial interpretive variety.²⁹ The entities we investigate today as discrete regional political cultures—the Ruhrgebiet, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Saxony, and so on—may in the past have had entirely different spatial coordinates. Nor should we forget that these demarcations were almost always intensely contested. Such “natural” boundaries as mountain ranges, rivers, state borders, territorial borders, administrative borders, diocesan borders; the boundaries that demarcate economic regions, languages, and dialects; and the boundaries of collective memories and myths—these and many other definitions of spatial constructs were never perfectly congruent; rather, they competed with each other and had to be continually redrawn (or reconfirmed).

In the nineteenth century, liberal parliamentarians claimed a virtual monopoly on the interpretation of spatial models of identification. These liberals differentiated between what they regarded as reasonable, “modern” patterns of spatial organization and outdated ones. Those patterns that were particularly useful to political opponents were held to be the most outdated; usually, they were identified with a parochial outlook (*Kirchturmshorizont*). Any historian of regional political cultures must pay attention to this intricate, convoluted amalgam of coexisting regional concepts in a particular historical situation, lest he or she be taken in by the hegemonial contemporary discourse on regions.

How, then, were regional identities endowed with meaning and substance in the past? What was the relation between regional identities and class identities, confessional identities, generational identities, and gender identities? From which other kinds of spatial concepts of identity were they differentiated? How did members of the political nation participate in the construction of regions? How did they attempt to infuse certain political biases into an already existing awareness of regional identity? Some examples of such processes are known. In 1866, the Kingdom of Saxony was at a crossroads, and its interpretation as a territory by nationalist-liberal, particularist-conservative, or German-democratic forces was highly controversial.³⁰ However, so far we know too little about other processes of identity formation. On what formal and informal levels of political activity were these regional identities

29. See Rohe, “Politische Kultur – politische Milieus,” 182; for past periods, see, inter alia, Franz Irsigler, “Raumerfahrung und Raumkonzepte im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit,” in *Region*, ed. Brunn, 163–74.

30. James Retallack, “‘Why Can’t a Saxon Be More Like a Prussian?’ Regional Identities and the Birth of Modern Political Culture in Germany, 1866–67,” *Canadian Journal of History* 32 (1997): 26–55.

constructed — in the state ministries, parliaments, parties, election meetings, newspapers, memorials, clubs, or at the local pub?

To be sure, regional historiography has not failed to pursue investigations at such levels. For example, Peter Steinbach's history of regional elections examines the processes whereby regional identity was constructed. It does so by examining election themes, manifestos, programs, and speeches, even including the image (-construction) of candidates and deputies themselves. Through the example of the Principality of Lippe, Steinbach has shown just how strongly regionally specific "ways of seeing" (*Deutungsmuster*) operated in history; he has also demonstrated that one cannot speak of such ways of seeing as undergoing continual refinement (*Abschleifung*) in the direction of "nationalization" as understood in classic modernization theory.³¹ Steinbach's thesis that a (partial) re-regionalization of politics occurred in the *Kaiserreich* nevertheless fails to avoid all the pitfalls of modernization theory. When regionally specific models of politics are defined by the historian in such a way that they are placed in sharp opposition to national ones, this approach does not always devote sufficient attention to the complex and contradictory nature of contemporary constructions. Newer research on monuments, festivals, and associational life, inspired by cultural-sociological concepts rather than by modernization theory, has cast considerable doubt on the historical validity of this binary view.

It would be a grave mistake for scholars to perceive regions, regional identities, and regional political cultures as derivatives of persistence and continuity exclusively, in opposition, say, to constructs of the nation as the engine of change.³² On the contrary, in analytical terms regions should be treated much like nations. Corresponding to the process of nation-building, the process of "region-building" warrants critical investigation. This would also be a logical extension of findings that Celia Applegate, Alon Confino, Rüdiger Gans, and Detlef Briesen have derived from their research on the Palatinate, Württemberg, and the Siegerland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nor must comparative analysis stop at the borders of Germany. As Xosé M. Núñez has written with reference to Spain: "Nation-building may also imply region-building. . . .

31. Cf. above all Peter Steinbach, *Die Politisierung der Region: Reich- und Landtagswahlen im Fürstentum Lippe, 1866–1881*, 2 vols. (Passau, 1989); and idem, "Politisierung und Nationalisierung der Region im 19. Jahrhundert: Regionalspezifische Politikrezeption im Spiegel historischer Wahlforschung," in idem, *Probleme politischer Partizipation im Modernisierungsprozeß* (Stuttgart, 1982), 321–49.

32. This is the basic presupposition of modernization theory, for instance as it is formulated paradigmatically by Stein Rokkan in *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Process of Development* (New York, 1970); cf. Kühne, "Wahlrecht," 507.

Collective identities must be seen as a kind of concentric spheres, overlapping and complementing each other, from the family and even further, and as all forms of social identity, they are the result of dynamic historical processes. Nationalisms have contributed to reaffirm local and regional identities in order to make national identity take stronger roots among the population. . . . In other words, love for the 'Heimat' could mean, and did in fact mean, love for the fatherland."³³

Of course, one must differentiate among different constructs of regional identity. On the one hand, around the turn of the century regional identity constructs were cemented at memorial ceremonies and other political celebrations geared toward national integration. In the same era, however, hard-fought election campaigns were serving to polarize social-economic groups within the nation and within the region. Not all forms of regional identity were in harmony with nationalisms and national identities. To probe further into the relationship between regional and other collective identities, their malleable substance, and their mutable frontiers, any history of regional political culture worthy of its name must seek to address these challenging issues squarely.

33. Xosé M. Núñez, "Region-Building in Spain during the 19th and 20th Centuries," in *Region*, ed. Brunn, 175–210, 176. Cf. Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, CA, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997); Rüdiger Gans and Detlef Briesen, "Das Siegerland zwischen ländlicher Beschränkung und nationaler Entgrenzung: Enge und Weite regionaler Identität," in *Wiederkehr*, ed. Lindner, 64–90. Cf. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "Die Konstruktion der Regionen und die Vielfalt der Loyalitäten im Frankreich des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Region, Nation, Europa: Historische Determinanten der Neugliederung eines Kontinents*, ed. Günther Lottes (Heidelberg, 1992), 121–26; a systematic foundation for a cultural history of the region — which cannot be provided here — might be based on Georg Simmel, "Soziologie des Raumes" (1903), in idem, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen, 1901–1908*, vol. 1, vol. 7 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a. M., 1995), 154–67; and idem, "Der Raum und die räumliche Ordnungen der Gesellschaft," in idem, *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Form der Vergesellschaftung* (1908), vol. 11 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a. M., 1992), 687–790; cf. Paul Nolte, "Georg Simmels Historische Anthropologie der Moderne: Rekonstruktion eines Forschungsprogramms," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (1998): 225–47, esp. 237–41. See also the pathbreaking work of Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, CA, 1989).

Saxony in German History

Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830–1933

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