Chapter Title: Introduction: The places of empire

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Introduction: The places of empire

Abstract

The built environment of Western Europe became entangled with overseas imperialism in the period 1860–1960, when colonial empires were at their largest. Europeans at home experienced the vast imperial spaces, formed by networks between colonies and metropoles, by encountering the local imperial 'places' that sustained such networks: mission houses, government buildings, factories, offices, museums. Such sites contributed to the development of an imperial culture in European societies, which legitimised colonial rule by stressing the necessity and righteousness of imperial power relations. As architecture of this kind could be found in different colonial powers, as well as in countries without colonies but with ties to the empires of others, it allows us to scrutinise the transnational, European nature of imperial culture.

Keywords: Architecture; imperialism; colonialism; imperial culture; space; transnational history

Empires are large. It is one of their signature qualities. As assemblages of different peoples and polities, empires link distant territories to each other by their very definition: they are 'large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space'; consequently, when studying empires, '[s]pace matters, size matters, and so does the character of space and size'.[1] Yet empires are also small. Or rather, their effects are also felt in local and small-scale places, right down to the level of towns, streets, and even individual buildings. Such buildings are the subject of this study: pieces of architecture whose appearance, meaning, and very existence were based on their role in wider imperial frameworks. Imperial places, as such buildings are termed here, encourage us to think not only about the *space*, but also about the *place* of empire.

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1   Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in world history*; Schlögel, 'Commentary', p. 138.

The principal question for this book is how imperial places contributed to the development of a transnational imperial culture in Europe, during modern imperialism between 1860 and 1960. Although architecture that functioned as an imperial place could be found anywhere within an empire, this study investigates architecture that created physical and imagined links to the empire specifically in Western Europe. It is guided by a number of questions about the relation between architecture, imperialism, and European history. What imperial networks did buildings like factories, government buildings, or mission houses in Europe maintain? How did such buildings mediate these connections to Europeans, and thereby construct an imperial culture that legitimised European imperialism? And to what extent was this culture a transnational European phenomenon? Working through these questions in this introduction and in the chapters to come, allows us to understand if and how contemporary Europeans perceived their living environment as part of a wider imperial space, and what role conceptions of Europe and a European identity played in this awareness and imagination of imperialism.

The place of empire in history

What imperial networks did buildings in Europe maintain? Imperial places are conceived in this study as the nodes that created networks between European 'mother countries', or metropoles, and their overseas colonies. These could be networks of people, such as merchants, sailors, or missionaries; of objects, like tropical commodities or manufactures; and of ideas, including political identities or notions of racial kinship. Such networks stood at the basis of empires and drew together far-flung regions into an imperial space: an integrated, interconnected entity made up by the various territories of the empire. This study examines the role of the European built environment in the creation and imagination of such imperial spaces.

Thinking through the concept of imperial space envisages an empire as a whole, rather than as a fragmented collection of circumscribed, self-evident entities as the traditional conception of empires would have it.[2] Rooted in the colonial era itself, this conception simplified empires as one-way movements, directed away from a nation-state in Europe and towards

2   E.g. Lester, *Imperial networks*; Lambert and Lester, *Colonial lives*; Cooper, *Colonialism in question*, pp. 22–26, 29; Blais, Deprest and Singaravélou, *Territoires impériaux*; Drieënhuizen, *Koloniale collecties*.

'peripheral' overseas colonies. However, as the relationships *between* places determine their nature just as much as their internal characteristics, both metropoles and colonies were shaped by their relation to each other within an imperial space: in the words of Nicholas Dirks, imperialism was 'less a process that began in the European metropole and expanded outward than it was a moment when new encounters with the world facilitated the formation of categories of metropole and colony in the first place'.[3]

This study covers the century between 1860 and 1960, a periodisation that is explained further below but in which imperial spaces, and the connectivity that characterised them, were at their height. At the heart of that time span sits the transformative period between 1870 and 1914, which saw colonial empires reaching their zenith and which, more generally, saw the provisional highlight of a globalisation process characterised as a worldwide 'great acceleration'.[4] Steam ships, railways, canals, and telegraphs (and later, radios, airships, and aeroplanes) connected more and more regions of the world and allowed for radically faster transport and communication. In this frenzied crucible of imperialist and nationalist ideologies, technological innovation, and global capitalism, territorial and commercial expansion came to be seen as crucial to a country's survival, transforming the European understanding of time and space.[5] For Europeans, living in an imperial space became a fact of life.

Or did it? Although the idea of imperial space hinges on connections between colonies and metropole, there has been much more research on how colonial territories were made part of imperial space – with the naming and mapping of 'uncharted' territory as the classic tools – than on metropolitan areas.[6] Nonetheless, outfitting public buildings in Europe with personifications of foreign continents or naming streets after colonial territories were equally acts of appropriation and displays of power. If empires had to instil 'awe as well as a sense of belonging' in their subjects, this could not only focus on the courts and capitals of the centre, but also had to be used to make Europeans identify with 'their' colonial territories one way or the other.[7] Furthermore, although the notion of imperial space is helpful to trace the connections running through empires and the things transmitted through them, it does not necessarily allow us to understand how present this vast and rather abstract space was for contemporary Europeans.

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3   Lester, 'Spatial concepts', p. 125; Massey, *Space, place and gender*, pp. 154–156; Dirks, *Colonialism and culture*, p. 6.
4   Bayly, *The birth of the modern world*, pp. 451–487.
5   Kern, *The culture of time and space*.
6   E.g. Carter, *The road to Botany Bay*; Clayton, 'The creation of imperial space'.
7   Cooper, *Colonialism in question*, p. 30.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of how Europeans experienced and imagined imperial spaces. Imperial spaces were not only produced by sailors crossing oceans or colonial governors holding office overseas, but were also co-created and experienced by metropolitan European populaces who had more mundane interests and understandings of empire. The imperial spaces as metropolitan Europeans imagined them, were much less multi-faceted and much more dichotomous, strongly coloured by the imperial metropole-colony scheme.[8] After all, as will be explained below, the imperial culture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe was based on the idea of the superiority of white European civilisation. It thus held that imperial exchanges happened on European, metropolitan terms. As a result, contemporary Europeans might have been unwilling or unable to 'take imperial space seriously': the connectivity and interdependence that the idea of an imperial space implied, endangered the distinction between colonisers and colonised that legitimised their rule.[9] The dominant idea of the metropole that exerted influence on the colonies instead of the other way round, might well have obscured the effects that the integration into an empire actually had for the metropole.[10]

To tie the concept of imperial space back to contemporary visions of empire, we should study imperial spaces not only from a bird's-eye view as networks. Imperial spaces were also imaginative geographies, 'representations of place, space and landscape that structure people's understandings of the world', according to a standard definition.[11] And to study empires as imaginative geographies, it is useful to examine imperial *places*, which this book conceptualises as the nodes between which imperial networks developed. From the perspective of metropolitan Europeans, such places worked as imperial spaces' concrete starting points, the sites where imperial space 'touched ground'. Hitherto, such nodes have received little attention in studies of imperial space in comparison to the connections between them. But surely there were more and other kinds of nodes than the ports and ships that have been identified so far.[12] As the following chapters will reveal, factories, offices, mission houses, museums, warehouses, and other sites in Europe all functioned as nodes in imperial networks.

8   As noted by Elizabeth Baigent in her review of Lambert and Lester, *Colonial lives*.
9   Cooper, *Colonialism in question*, p. 29.
10   A point made by Kuipers, *Fragmented empire*.
11   Driver, 'Imaginative geographies', p. 246.
12   E.g. Lester, *Imperial networks*, p. 6.

'Imperial place' is a play on the idea of imperial space. Place and space form an inseparable duo. Generally, space is large while place is smaller; places are found within space. And space is something undetermined, ambiguous, while a place is specific. The most basic and elegant definition of a place is that it is space given meaning, and this is essentially how imperial places are approached here.[13] The focus of the investigation thus becomes the processes of meaning-making by which Europeans constructed – both literally and figuratively – certain locations as imperial, ranging from visual representations or performances to architectural style. Following the argument that places derive their meaning from their links to others, imperial places are taken to have derived their meaning from their links to colonies or, more generally, places subject to a power relation with European countries. These could be physical links such as trade networks, but also imagined links of political belonging or religious fraternity. Studying imperial places thus connects local experiences in Europe with global empires. This approach resonates with concerns in the field of imperial history, but also with current developments in global history where efforts at a 'global microhistory' have been making waves, which enables the comprehension of how seemingly static places were immersed in wider circulations.[14] The analysis used in this study, however, examines the cultural and societal significance of certain sites in relation to the power relations at the heart of empire and is therefore tailored for the imperial context.

How did imperial places mediate their connections to Europeans, or what repertoires of meaning-making developed in Europe to acquaint and involve Europeans with the imperial connections of certain places? The various ways in which imperial places 'meant' something to Europeans are discussed below; however, in general, the main objective of this book is to investigate how they became meaningful locations that helped construct an imperial culture in Europe. Broadly, imperial culture denotes the cultural effects of imperialism on Europe, where the term 'culture' is to be understood less as Culture with a capital 'C' than as a worldview, belief system, or frame of reference that is sustained by the 'production and exchange of meanings'.[15] At the heart of this meaning-making process sat the idea of the unassailable superiority of European civilisation, perceived as culturally and racially distinct, which normalised and legitimised the projection of European power over the globe. In this sense, the concept of imperial culture not only

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13 Cresswell, *Place*, p. 12.
14 E.g. De Vito and Gerritsen, 'Micro-spatial histories of labour'; A Ghobrial, 'Introduction'.
15 Hall, 'Introduction', p. 11.

includes the basic awareness of empire in European societies, but also their more implicit but equally normative ideas of civilisation, race, or modernity. This culture or worldview was 'imperial' rather than 'colonial' as it originated in the metropole and did not necessarily need its own colonies to develop.[16] After all, methods of informal empire, where European powers exerted influence without formal political rule, also belonged to the 'repertoires of rule' of empires.[17] 'Imperial' is therefore also distinct from 'imperialist'. 'Imperialist' denotes political rule and influence, while 'imperial' denotes the cultural 'rules that govern the societies concerned': rules that claimed white Europeans were at the apex of human civilisation and were therefore destined to guide other people politically, economically, and morally.[18] Power thus resided in politics, but also in the cultural power to privilege Eurocentric understandings of the world and impose these on other regions.

Close attention to imperial cultures in Europe has been the main result of efforts to study metropoles and their overseas colonies more jointly, 'in a single analytic field'.[19] Edward Said laid the groundwork for the idea that European cultures legitimised imperialism by stereotyping and othering colonised populations.[20] Heeding the call of Said and much of the postcolonial scholarship that followed him, historians have worked to uncover the manifold ways in which imperial cultures developed in European countries, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[21] With this 'imperial turn', empire is no longer merely something that is ruled and exploited but also something that is thought and imagined. European metropoles are no longer seen as the 'unmoved movers' of empire, generating imperialism while remaining untouched by it. Instead, they are approached as being shaped or even constituted by imperialism as it interacted with crucial processes of state-formation and nation-building. Past research has traced imperial themes to phenomena as diverse as exhibitions, museums, literature, missionary work, education, and advertising and shown how an imperial worldview interacted with notions of citizenship, national identity, race, class, gender, and religion. Current calls from the public and

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16   Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 12.

17   Brown, 'Introduction'; Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, pp. 3–8.

18   Based on Minder, *La Suisse coloniale*, p. 11.

19   Stoler and Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony', p. 4.

20   Said, *Orientalism*; Said, *Culture and imperialism*.

21   Overviews for respective countries include Hall and Rose, *At home with the empire*; Blanchard, Lemaire and Bancel, *Culture coloniale en France*; Viaene, Van Reybrouck and Ceuppens, *Congo in België*; Short, *Magic lantern empire*; *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128 no. 2 [special issue on 'A new Dutch imperial history'], (2013).

academia to move beyond the continued coloniality of the contemporary world by 'decolonising' society are only making research into these topics more necessary.

The exact articulation of imperial culture depended on the specific domain in which it was produced, and on place, time, medium, and actors' intentions. Some of the domains examined under the umbrella of imperial culture, including in this study, are more obviously cultural than others. But all spoke to the imagination of contemporary Europeans and are subjected in this study to what Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger has called a 'culturalist' reading of what these domains meant and signified.[22] Low-key, implicit normalisations of imperial rule formed what has been called a 'banal imperialism', akin to the banal nationalism of unspoken and everyday markers of nationalist ideology.[23] Subtle signs were equally important articulations of imperial attitudes as the grand gestures of colonial expositions or jingoist outbursts.

The place of empire in architecture

The scale on which imperial places are identified in this study is that of architecture or the built environment. In itself, the above definition of place does not say anything about what can constitute a place – a room can be as meaningful as a province, yet what differs is the scale on which they are meaningful. The usual 'places' studied in relation to empires and networks are countries and, to a much lesser extent, regions and cities.

However, as this book deals with how Europeans encountered and imagined the space of empire in concrete ways, it focuses on buildings: literal and intuitive 'places' that were recognisable and relatable to many Europeans. Buildings – tangible, durable, and often immensely symbolic – fit more specific definitions of 'place': they have a location, consist of settings where activities of daily life take place, and generate a 'sense of place', an identification with it or belonging to it.[24] Therefore architecture, the material environment that human societies construct for themselves, is the main subject of this book.

Architectural historians have noted that the so-called spatial turn has drawn historians and other scholars to the large-scale level of networks but rarely to the level of buildings, not unlike the abovementioned focus

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22   Stollberg-Rilinger, 'State and political history'.
23   Kumar, *The idea of Englishness*, p. 135; referring to Billig, *Banal nationalism*.
24   Agnew, 'Space and place', pp. 326–327.

on 'connections' at the cost of 'nodes'.[25] However, as a 'social act' and the 'medium' of social relations, architecture is central to any human activity.[26] Rather than 'expressing' these relations, Heike Delitz argues, architecture constitutes them through its 'presence, its inescapability, its materiality and not in the least its affectivity'.[27] Following this understanding of space, place, and architecture, this book investigates how architecture turns a wider space into a place, making and marking the networks that created imperial spaces.[28]

This approach deviates somewhat from the usual conception in architectural history, where architecture is taken as forming (interior) 'spaces' itself.[29] The book certainly discusses floorplans and interiors; however, it is primarily concerned with how architecture translated the imperial spaces, whose operation they facilitated, into understandable terms for metropolitan Europeans. While the book does identify recurring strategies of imperial meaning-making, the exact elements that it investigates differ between buildings, as various different elements were used by Europeans to construct 'imperial' architecture. For one building, its imperial link might be found in its floorplans (such as with colonial museums with their exhibition galleries); for another, it might be mediated in their decorations; for yet another; it might be descriptions and depictions in other media. Rather than studying buildings in themselves, in all their detail, the book uses them as a lens through which to understand the imperial culture that developed, transnationally, in Europe. In doing so it prioritises zooming out, connecting and contrasting the perceptions of particular buildings with the imperial networks of which they were part, over zooming in.

To understand how imperial places emerged, functioned, and were in the public eye, they need to be placed in the context of the transformation of the architectural landscape that the nineteenth century witnessed. Industrialisation and population growth left their mark on European cities, related to the many 'globalising' trends mentioned above. The built environment became the stage for both the legitimisation of the new political orders that were established in the wake of reform and revolution, and for engineers and their technological innovations. The issue of style became salient, as universal classicism lost its monopoly over the way buildings

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25   E.g. Schmidt, *Passion and control*, p. 2.
26   Kostof, *A history of architecture*; p. 7; Stieber, 'Space, time, and architectural history', p. 139.
27   Delitz, *Gebaute Gesellschaft*, p. 13.
28   Harries, *The ethical function of architecture*, pp. 174–175; Holdsworth, 'Geography'.
29   Forty, *Words and buildings*, pp. 256–275.

looked and architects reached back into the past to freely use a range of other historicist styles with their own associations and references.[30] In the second half of the nineteenth century, this development presented architects with more experimental and eclectic design choices, perhaps embodied best by the hugely influential French *École des Beaux-Arts* that, by the 1870s, had developed a coherent 'system' of design referencing classical architecture.[31] Beaux-Arts architecture also exemplified the trend of integrating ornamental sculpture and murals with a strong didactic purpose into the design.[32] Later commentators have long derided these styles for their perceived superficiality. Nevertheless, they were charged with meaning and ideology, sometimes more implicit and associational, sometimes, especially when national identity was felt to be at stake, explicit.

The century also saw the emergence of new kinds of buildings to accommodate technological and societal changes, from railway stations and factories to offices, public parks, and museums. Existing buildings such as town halls and dwellings were now constructed on a much larger scale, and an increasingly standardised repertoire of diversified, recognisable building types arose.[33] Furthermore, new building materials were introduced such as iron, glass, steel, and reinforced concrete. Mass-produced and assembled in industrial fashion, these enabled the construction of larger and different buildings. In the early twentieth century, new materials and new visions saw the rise of varieties of reformist and modernist architecture that proposed radically new architectural forms for contemporary life.

What are the links between these architectural developments and imperialism? Imperial architecture is commonly seen as European architecture in the colonies.[34] However, recently there have been calls for more nuanced and transnational understandings of 'colonial' architecture.[35] With a more transnational approach, studies have connected the built environment in Europe to that of other continents, investigating, for instance, colonial

30   Bergdoll, *European architecture*, pp. 140–142.
31   Kostof, *A history of architecture*, pp. 571–573, 635–647; Van Zanten, 'Architectural composition', pp. 111–112.
32   Wintle, *The image of Europe*, pp. 56–57; Droth, Edwards and Hatt, *Sculpture victorious*, pp. 16–17.
33   Pevsner, *A history*, p. 289.
34   E.g. AlSayyad, *Forms of dominance*; Scriver, *The scaffolding of empire*; Çelik, *Empire, architecture, and the city*; Passchier, *Bouwen in Indonesië*; MacKenzie, *The British empire through buildings*.
35   Volait, 'Provincializing colonial architecture'; Lagae, 'Architectural history in a "transformed world"'.

returnees or religious networks.[36] The body of work on architecture in Europe with various imperial functions is highly fragmented but growing. A handful of case studies exist on notable buildings like colonial ministries, monuments, and museums, although these tend to be the usual suspects.[37] Other relevant themes are architectural exoticism and the use of colonial materials such as tropical hardwoods.[38] Finally, there is a growing literature in heritage studies on buildings related to overseas empire in a number of European cities.[39]

More so than to individual buildings, imperialism's influence has been traced to a range of European cities – although again, overseas 'colonial cities' have received much more attention than metropolitan 'imperial cities'.[40] London looms large here, as the inimitable 'heart of the empire' that was political capital, financial centre, and global port at the same time.[41] However, Paris, Amsterdam, Marseille, Liverpool, Rotterdam, and other major urban centres have also been interpreted as imperial cities in one way or the other, usually for their economic links to overseas colonies – shipping, trade, industry.[42] The approach followed in this book draws inspiration equally from architectural history as from this topic within urban history, which takes into account a wide range of relevant factors including town planning, local economic life, and civic pride.

Certainly, the focus on cities is not to say imperialism had no impact on more rural regions, as studies on the land-locked Limousin and the Scottish Highlands have shown.[43] However, urbanisation and industrialisation transformed Europe's cities into centres of trade, industry, and services, connected to other cities in increasingly global networks – in one century alone, the number of European cities with a population of more than 100,000

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36   King, *The bungalow*; Bremner, *Imperial gothic*; Lagae, 'Aller/retour?'.

37   For overviews see Thompson, *The empire strikes back?*, pp. 181–186; Aldrich, *Vestiges*; Bremner, 'The metropolis'.

38   E.g. Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*; Crinson, *Empire building*, pp. 65–70; Silverman, 'Art nouveau, art of darkness [part I]'; Nelson, *Architecture and empire in Jamaica*, pp. 236, 240–242.

39   E.g. Giles and Hawkins, *Storehouses of empire*; Catherine, *Wandelen naar Kongo*; Van der Heyden and Zeller, *Kolonialismus hierzulande*; Kroon and Wagtberg Hansen, *Sporen van smaragd*; Hondius et al., *Amsterdam slavery heritage guide; Guide de Paris colonial et des banlieus*.

40   Castryck, 'Disentangling the colonial city, pp. 183–184.

41   Driver and Gilbert, 'Heart of empire?'; Schneer, *London 1900*; Arnold, *The metropolis and its image*.

42   Driver and Gilbert, *Imperial cities*; Hunt, *Ten cities that made an empire*; Legêne and Ver Loren van Themaat, 'Cause célèbre'; Oostindie, *Het koloniale verleden van Rotterdam*.

43   Grondin, *L'empire en province*; Thomas, *Cultures of empire in the Scottish Highlands*.

increased from 21 in 1801 to 147 in 1901.[44] Larger cities, and especially port cities, were thus the most obvious cornerstones of imperial spaces and the most important habitats for imperial places.

The place of empire in Europe

To what extent did the imperial culture, to which the buildings and sites under discussion contributed, develop transnationally as a European phenomenon? Approaching imperial culture as a European culture allows us to go beyond a methodological nationalism in which imperial cultures have been studied mainly in the plural and confined to the respective nation-states.[45] Understandable as this may be, this approach risks missing insightful similarities and differences and leading to a collection of 'add-on' national histories.[46] After all, imperialism was a European project, and not just in the obvious sense in that it involved many European nations. In their seminal 1997 essay, Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper conceived of imperialism as a comprehensive process that went beyond the formal metropole-colony axis and instead was based on much wider circulations between different metropoles and colonies.[47] Recent research demonstrates that trans- and international links between European countries characterised imperialism just as much as rivalry and competition. Already in the early modern period, the trade networks of European states and companies were entangled with each other.[48] In the modern era, imperial powers observed and imitated each other's policies and legitimised their rule with the same racial ideologies, while science and religious missions were decidedly transnational fields to which Europeans of different nationalities contributed.[49] This meant that imperial spaces, especially those produced by non-state actors, also overlapped each other and transgressed formal imperial boundaries.

In this context, 'transnational' refers to both the historic phenomenon under review, which transcends national boundaries, and the research

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44   Briggs, *Victorian cities*, p. 79.
45   On methodological nationalism: Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 'Methodological nationalism and beyond'.
46   Göttsche and Dunker, 'Introduction', p. 7; Legêne, 'The European character', pp. 114–116.
47   Stoler and Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony', pp. 28–29.
48   See the contributions in Antunes and Polónia, *Beyond empires*.
49   Grant, Levine and Trentmann, 'Introduction'; Barth and Cvetkovski, 'Encounters of empires'; Arnold, 'Globalization and contingent colonialism'; Sèbe, 'Towards cosmopolitan perspectives'; Kamissek and Kreienbaum, 'An imperial cloud?'.

perspective employed to analyse it, which focuses on interconnections and circulations. 'International' is taken to refer to processes taking place literally between nation-states.[50] For the purposes of this book, a missionary congregation with branches in several European countries is considered a transnational organisation; a colonial exposition where several governments erected pavilions is considered an international event. Still, even transnational organisations such as congregations could be internally organised along national lines, which means their transnationality was not necessarily as obvious to contemporaries as to historians.

Most important for the purposes of this study is the assumption that imperialism's European nature also played out in the formation of a European imperial culture in the combined metropoles. Colonial knowledge was produced transnationally and comparative studies of imperial cultures of multiple European countries have highlighted many similarities.[51] The 'strikingly similar' means and messages of official pro-colonial propaganda in several European countries have led Matthew Stanard to conclude 'there were not several colonial cultures that developed [...] but rather a common European colonial culture among all states that engaged in the 'New Imperialism' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[52]

But if an imperial culture cannot easily be contained within the boundaries of single states, it cannot be contained within the boundaries of a clearly delineated group of states, either. Bernhard Schär warns against using too narrow an understanding of imperialism, a 'methodological imperialism' that limits itself to formal empires.[53] In fact, the openness of empires also offered opportunities to nationals of non-imperial powers. Recent research shows that countries not usually associated with colonies, such as Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden also had stakes in imperialism, which have been labelled a 'colonial complicity' or 'colonialism without colonies'.[54] Catholic missionaries from Poland and Slovenia ended up in African colonies; in Latvia, the seventeenth-century colonial pursuits of the duchy of Courland are nowadays appropriated to argue that Latvia was part of Western European modernity.[55] Austrians worked as 'explor-

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50   Patel, 'An emperor without clothes?', pp. 3–6.
51   Stoler and Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony', p. 13; see for instance MacKenzie, *European empires and the people*; Buettner, *Europe after empire*.
52   Stanard, 'Interwar pro-empire propaganda', p. 31.
53   Schär, *Tropenliebe*, p. 17.
54   Zangger, *Koloniale Schweiz*; Naum and Nordin, *Scandinavian colonialism*; Schär, 'Introduction'.
55   Wendt, 'Central European missionaries'; Dzenovska, 'Historical agency and the coloniality of power'.

ers' and geographers for colonial powers; the Austro-Hungarian empire participated in multi-lateral imperial conferences and embarked on its own mission to civilise racialised 'Oriental' populations in the Balkans.[56] These transnational connections allowed individuals and organisations from non-colonial powers to partake in that common imperial culture. German culture, for instance, teemed with themes of European conquest and racial difference even before the acquisition of German colonies; Swiss missionary publications and ethnographic expositions shared in the stereotypical depictions of non-Western people.[57]

However, this raises questions as to exactly what this transnational dimension entailed and what activities or networks enabled it to develop. Transnational links might not always be acknowledged in the actual contents of imperial culture – in the manner of Karl Marx, one can ask whether the imperial culture was European 'in itself' or 'for itself'. It is still unclear what role a sense of European commonality – or even identity – played that was more than the sum of its national-constituent parts.

The inclusion of one Swiss case study in the book, as explained below, serves to explore the transnationality of imperial culture in practice. Presupposing the existence of a European imperial culture is not to say imaginations and experiences of empire were identical all over Europe and in states with and without colonial empires. The heartlands of modern imperialism can still be located in maritime Western Europe. Yet this study attempts to paint a complete and accurate picture by reckoning with how far its different branches stretched into the continent.

In general, the very idea of continents with distinct identities is a meta-geographical fiction influenced by ideological assumptions.[58] Since the eighteenth century, 'Europe' had become the overarching concept which the inhabitants of that part of the world used to distinguish themselves from people from other regions, who were usually constructed as uncivilised and of a different racial makeup.[59] Imperialism reinforced this process and lent it real political meaning. Frantz Fanon famously held that 'Europe is literally the creation of the Third World', and historically, Europeans defined Europe and themselves in opposition to colonial others.[60] Throughout the colonial era, theorists portrayed imperialism as part of a wider European

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56   Sauer, 'Habsburg colonial'; Judson, *The Habsburg empire*, pp. 327–331.
57   Zantop, *Colonial fantasies*; Minder, *La Suisse* coloniale, p. 23.
58   Lewis and Wigen, *The myth of continents*.
59   Stuurman, 'Grenzen trekken', pp. 291–308.
60   Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, p. 58; Kiernan, 'Europe in the colonial mirror'; Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 99; Hansen, 'European integration'.

effort. They rooted it in a common antiquity and discussed it in technocratic terms in the International Colonial Institute founded in 1893.[61] Key concepts to legitimise colonial rule were the qualities of civilisation and whiteness, which inherently went beyond the borders between European nations. In the colonies, these categories marked individuals' 'European' status and identity, which were often more salient than nationality.[62]

Therefore, in this study the nation is not treated as a fixed frame of reference, but as one level among many, among which are the continental, imperial, or even global scale.[63] Another such level is the local sphere, which this study's focus on local contexts and individual buildings brings to the equation. Many of the specific case studies in the next chapters describe complex and layered constellations of imagined communities and frames of reference, including local, national, European, imperial, and global.

The sense of imperialism as a common European project was context-dependent, clearer at certain moments and places and in certain domains than in others: clearer in the colonial hill station or mission compound than in the office or mission college in Europe, perhaps. It was also clearer at some moments than others as the layered constellation of local, national, and imperial understandings of empire fluctuated throughout time. Stoler and Cooper argue that a pan-European awareness was particularly strong during the antislavery movement of the early nineteenth century and the debates over the aggressive 'new imperialism' late in the century.[64] The imperialist conflict of World War I shook up these relations. The idea of a European imperial project did not disappear: after 1918, both the repudiation of German colonial rule and the new League of Nations with its 'mandate territories' presupposed the existence of some kind of international standard to which imperial powers should adhere.[65] However, new research also suggests that metropolitan understandings of empire 'nationalised' more in the twentieth century, in what has been called an imperialist Eurocentrism 'portrayed in national rather than continental form'.[66] Furthermore, the idea of the empire as a national economic asset became stronger and more exclusive in the interwar period. Finally, the formal possession of colonies never ceased to matter. The nation-state that possessed them might well have been the clearest channel

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61 Wagner, 'The pitfalls of teaching a common colonial past'.
62 E.g. Stoler, *Race and the education of desire*, pp. 11–12, 102–106; Buettner, 'Problematic spaces, problematic races; Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state*, p. 31.
63 Schär, *Tropenliebe*, pp. 18–20.
64 Stoler and Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony', pp. 29–32.
65 Shipway, *Decolonization and its impact*, p. 11.
66 Wintle, *The image of Europe*, pp. 399–400.

through which imperial culture could be articulated. After all, empire-building abroad was entangled with nation-building at home, and many references to Europe might also have been lip service.[67] The starting point for this book is that a European imperial culture did not erase nationality, but rather gave 'new and related meanings and significance to what it meant to be British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, Belgian or Dutch'.[68]

Lastly, besides avoiding methodological nationalism and imperialism, an analysis of imperial culture as a European phenomenon also has to steer away from Eurocentrism. Critiques of normative, Eurocentric understandings of history and calls to 'provincialise' Europe have been at the heart of decolonial and postcolonial thought, to which the abovementioned research on European identity and imperialism, and therefore also this investigation, is indebted.[69] However, it has been noted that this kind of research into the imagination of empire also risks inadvertently relegating colonised populations to figuring as generalised 'Others' yet again.[70]

Although research on imperial culture indeed focuses on Europe rather than decentring it, it does this to achieve a detailed and contextualised understanding of how exclusive, Eurocentric representations of the world were constructed in the first place. It is precisely the study of empires 'at home' that allows us to place European history in its global context by scrutinising tensions and entanglements with other areas of the world.[71] As noted above, buildings implicated in imperialism were, obviously, as present and as numerous – if not more so – in the colonies, their existence enabled or contested by indigenous people as much as by Europeans. Yet studying imperial architecture in Europe is a deliberate effort to go beyond the obvious and to make imperialism part of the cultural history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, from which it has long been excluded. Methodologically speaking that is a metropolitan perspective, but one that serves to investigate how Europeans actually developed a 'metropolitan' way of looking at the world. Moreover, this kind of study offers the possibility to better contextualise the ways in which actors from outside Europe challenged imperial ideology and the European dominance that it legitimised.

One prerequisite for studying the construction and contestation of European dominance is to provincialise or demythologise the separate

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67   Wagner, 'Von der kolonialpraktischen Kooperation zum "europäischen Ideal"?', p. 47.
68   Thompson, 'Introduction', p. 8.
69   E.g. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Mignolo, 'Delinking'.
70   Price, 'One big thing', p. 626; 'Forum', p. 259; Raben, 'A new Dutch imperial history?', p. 30.
71   Leonhard, 'Comparison, transfer and entanglement', pp. 160–161.

national histories of European states.[72] Another is to use a critical perspective that considers how imperial power relations led to silences and misrepresentations in the historical record, especially where it concerns the agency of non-Europeans in those tensions and entanglements.[73] The imperial spaces linked to most buildings discussed in this book were also shaped and used by actors outside of Europe – not in the least when they themselves travelled to and from Europe, a movement that recurs in each chapter. However, the architecture of those sites was often used to limit their room for manoeuvre and to set them apart from society around them; in the ways in which the architecture was made to symbolise imperial spaces, the contributions of the colonised were usually overshadowed or silenced altogether. Rather than claiming all agency for Europeans, the analyses of European buildings below include the agency of the colonised in (often involuntarily) shaping the built environment of Europe, but also show how Europeans covered up their contribution. In this respect, the study of architecture allows us to contrast the practical production of imperial spaces, including the contributions of the colonised, with the ways in which these imperial spaces were subsequently presented.

Method, organisation, and periodisation

To operationalise the above theoretical considerations into a systematic investigation of how Europe's built environment contributed to the development of an imperial culture, this study surveys buildings from five distinct domains. These domains are missionary activity, political identities, trade and industry, shipping, and collecting and exhibiting. These topics were selected as relevant areas based on the existing literature on imperial culture.[74] The organisation of this book into these five topics is also informed by the concern in architectural history for the development of architecture in the modern era, as all chapters describe the rise of new types of buildings and their relations to imperialism. Every chapter translates to a specific kind or group of buildings: mission houses trained missionaries for service overseas; political buildings such as ministries, monuments, and town halls accommodated bureaucracies and articulated political identities; factories

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72   Ibid., p. 156.
73   On silences see Trouillot, *Silencing the past.*
74   Particularly helpful have been the distinct themes identified in Gissibl, 'Imagination and beyond'.

processed colonial commodities or produced for imperial markets; shipping firms' offices and docks facilitated imperial transport and migration; and ethnographic and colonial museums exhibited colonial people and cultures. Not every chapter corresponds neatly to a separate 'building type', but most buildings under discussion could not have existed a century earlier and if they did, would have been more modest in scale and effect.

The chapters first survey essential contexts: this background forms Part I of each chapter. They chart comparable buildings within one domain, highlighting examples from multiple European countries. They also facilitate the observation of some general trends and cast a wide net in search of relevant buildings and sites, in order to present a European cross-section of similar buildings. Some categories of buildings have been relatively well described. But most have not, and very few studies have brought together specific kinds of buildings with the same function but from different European countries. The surveys are, therefore, exploratory undertakings and the result of investigations into the existing literature and selected primary sources. They are also meant to invite the reader to think about certain buildings and building types strewn across Europe as having a role in the history of imperialism.

At the heart of every chapter is an in-depth case study of a specific building within each of the domains above, a case study that corresponds to Part II of each chapter. Respectively, these are the Missionshaus of the Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft in Basel (built 1858–1860), the City Chambers of Glasgow (1883–1889), the rice mills of the Zaan region (mostly built between 1870 and 1914), the HAPAG shipping company's head office in Hamburg (1899–1903 and 1912–1920), and finally the Musée des Colonies in Paris (1928–1930). These buildings were selected from the existing literature to provide a complete and multinational group of buildings to serve as sources; another criterion was that they are all still standing in the present day. The case-study approach suggests comparison and, in a way, to compare is inevitable when putting different buildings side by side. However, most comparisons will be made within each chapter: between the examples mentioned in the introductory surveys (Part I of each chapter) and the in-depth case studies that follow them (Part II). As such, this book is less a literal comparative study than a series of in-depth analyses of variants of the common theme of the mediation of empire by architecture in Europe, in order to answer the question of how an imperial culture was constructed across national borders.

The case studies pick up on the groundwork laid down by the surveys to give detailed attention to specific imperial networks, individual actors and organisations, design considerations, and the wider influence and image

of certain imperial places. They also enable us to unpick fascinating local contexts that are rarely connected to imperialism. Save for the Musée des Colonies in Paris, none of the case studies has been the subject of dedicated academic research – indeed, another motive for selecting them has been to go beyond the more familiar imperial capitals like London or Amsterdam and beyond the most obviously 'imperial' buildings like the former's Colonial Office and the latter's Koloniaal Instituut. But the primary reason for selecting these case studies was that they were the central nodes of strong, widespread imperial networks. As will be explained in later chapters, most of the cities and organisations discussed were leaders in their field. For instance, Glasgow (Chapter 2) was possibly Europe's most self-consciously 'imperial' city in the late nineteenth century, while HAPAG (Chapter 4) became the world's largest shipping company when it constructed its office. The chapters are ordered by the chronology of the case studies. Simultaneously, their order creates a movement from the most implicit imperial places (mission houses) to the most explicit (colonial museums), which is also, as turns out, a movement that reflects the growing role of nation-states in constructing these places.

Although each chapter also contains examples from other countries, they focus on the five examined in the case studies, that is, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. These countries were among the pre-eminent imperial powers of the day and their empires varied in size and age, with Switzerland obviously figuring as a nation without an empire that was nonetheless involved in the imperialism of other nations. These north-western European countries also saw themselves as being at the forefront of modern civilisation, as indicated by aspects such as industrial development, technological progress, and scientific advancement. This is also the main reason why the two Iberian colonial empires, those of Portugal and Spain, have been left out, and why the 'continental' Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires are excluded. Recent studies have justly corrected an older view of the continental empires as ossified behemoths, unable to follow the modern lead of the Western European imperial powers.[75] Yet a number of crucial differences remain. Industrialisation and technological innovation driven by bourgeois interests gave Western European powers a material and economic edge, while at the same time they came to rely on race and nation as the two central modes of classification in their empire to a much greater degree than their continental counterparts.[76]

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75   E.g. Burbank, Von Hagen and Remnev, *Russian empire*; Judson, *The Habsburg empire*.
76   Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, pp. 6–7, 287–290; Burbank and Von Hagen, 'Coming into the territory', pp. 24–25.

The book analyses a varied collection of sources to create an interdisciplinary approach between history and architectural history and between imperial and urban or local history. Contemporary descriptions, floorplans and sections, and large amounts of secondary literature shed light on the use of a particular building in relation to particular imperial networks and their development through time. However, the main emphasis is on the sources that allow us to understand the ways in which architecture was meaningful to contemporaries. Generally these were diverse and changed as they progressed from the planning phase to the construction phase, and again when they were put in use.[77] Top-down and deliberate 'placemaking' efforts might be undermined by more mundane and implicit appropriations of or even contestations over buildings' meanings. Therefore, the book includes a wide array of relevant forms of meaning-making and analyses a variety of sources.

The source material can be grouped according to the ways in which places were invested with certain meanings and made 'imperial'. The architecture itself is the most obvious of these ways, and in the chapters that follow much attention will be paid to analyses of why buildings looked the way they did, in order to find out how they accommodated and symbolised their imperial links. Architecture facilitated the activities tied to empire and housed the clerks, missionaries, workers, but also the machines, archives, and desks involved. Furthermore, architectural style, general appearance, size, decorations, and nomenclature could all convey a building's imperial significance. For instance, as will be demonstrated repeatedly, updated versions of the old language of classicism were consistently associated with imperial grandeur. More implicitly, ground plans, routing, and location framed users' experience of buildings and contained more subdued messages of power, status, or (lack of) agency.[78]

Of course, not all forms of meaning-making were to be found in the actual architecture: the functions of buildings as imperial places were also signified and reinforced by all kinds of representations, whether sanctioned by architects and clients or not. The broad category of written representations of imperial places is of central importance here and includes newspapers, guidebooks, travelogues, architecture journals, brochures, and memoirs. Praise and critique, attention or the lack of it, references to the empire and expressions of nationalism all contributed to how buildings were understood. Visual representations, such as photographs and drawings,

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77 Gieryn, 'What buildings do'; Whyte, 'How do buildings mean?'.
78 Markus, *Buildings and power*.

portrayed buildings in a certain way and disseminated their image, while maps depicted them in a certain context and related them to other places. Furthermore, these are used to understand the position and visibility of the sites in their urban environment. Finally, speeches gave the owners and users of newly erected buildings the opportunity to portray them in certain ways. In a world of print capitalism and mechanical reproductions, all these representations had a wide reach and professed the imperial qualities of buildings to different publics: newspaper readers, professional architects, tourists, businessmen.

In addition, the meaning of buildings was also performative.[79] Simply working in one might make one familiar with its imperial ties, and organising inauguration ceremonies – where the abovementioned speeches were delivered – was an opportunity to express a building's important function to a wider audience. That function could also be a reason for the public to target it, however, and two of the main case studies were actually stormed and occupied as symbols of the establishment at some point. The book includes examples of such contestations over imperial sites and balances out the top-down rhetoric with the more mundane perceptions that Europeans had of particular buildings. For this purpose, it uses contemporary photographs, maps, personal accounts, and, in one case, an interview.

Most of these sources were collected in numerous archives and collections accessed during a number of research stays in Glasgow, Hamburg, Paris, and Basel and in research in the Netherlands carried out from Amsterdam, which functioned as the 'home base' of the project. However, the transnational approach of this research project has also been facilitated by the availability of digitised primary sources. These enable the reader to consult specific contemporary publications that are otherwise very hard to come by without visits to countless foreign archives and libraries. Of course, digital collections have their own limitations. But they also bring within reach valuable ways of doing transnational history.

In terms of periodisation, the scope of this investigation is decided by the time when empires (and thus imperial cultures) reached their high point. Its focus is the period between 1860 and 1960, with particular attention to the pre-1914 period. This time span straddles the conventional 'long nineteenth' and 'short twentieth' centuries, but has a logic of its own that is based on the general continuity of imperial culture in this period. The 1870s are usually taken as the starting point for the late nineteenth-century 'age of empire', characterised by rapid territorial expansion. The decades that

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79   Leach, 'Belonging'.

followed also saw the rise of mass politics and more widespread education in the Western European imperial powers, which meant that imperialism started to matter more to more people.[80] However, it is worth pushing the starting point of this study back to 1860 as the 1850s and 1860s in many ways formed the preamble to this era. David Livingstone had been roaming across Eastern Africa since 1851 and although the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, construction had started in 1858. In the same year, the British government also took over control of India from the East India Company while Western powers definitively opened up the Chinese empire, after having done the same to Japan; France would take a hold over what was to become Indochina in the following years. In the context of this study, 1858 marks the start of the construction of the Basel mission house.

As for the end date of 1960, research into various countries has illustrated that an imperial culture continued to flourish until the 1960s.[81] The end of World War II in 1945 was a watershed moment for formal decolonisation but this process itself, likened to a 'sequence of implosions', took multiple decades and went on until at least the 1970s.[82] The years around 1960 were the most important within that period, when the Suez crisis had exposed Britain's and France relative weakness in a post-war world, the independence of many African colonies represented a 'wind of change', and France admitted defeat in Algeria. Furthermore, the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, and although initially the new European Economic Community was supposed to be wedded somehow to the remaining African colonies, this signalled the direction of a more exclusively 'European' integration that Western Europe would take in the decades to come.[83] In this investigation, this period is indicated by the revamping of the colonial museum in Paris into an art museum in 1960, but also by such events as the closing of several remaining rice mills in the Netherlands and the demolition of the Imperial Institute in London.

A final word on language. Despite the valuable sensation of reading texts expressing similar ideas about empire in different European languages, for the sake of streamlining and legibility, citations in languages other than English have been translated. Names of cities are also translated, but historical names for cities and colonies (e.g. Batavia, Indochina) are retained.

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80   MacKenzie, 'Introduction', p. 2.
81   MacKenzie, 'The persistence of empire'; Blanchard, Lemaire and Bancel, 'Introduction générale', pp. 15–16; Viaene, Van Reybrouck and Ceuppens, 'Koloniale cultuur', pp. 23–24; Kuitenbrouwer, 'Songs of an imperial underdog', pp. 109–119.
82   MacKenzie, 'The persistence of empire', p. 21.
83   Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*.

To refer to the people and cultures of these areas in a way not defined by the colonial domination of the time, generally the modern names for nationalities or ethnicities are used (e.g. Indonesian). All translations into English, including any mistakes, are the author's.

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