

The French Revolution and the New Spatial Format for Empire

A Nation-State with Imperial Extensions

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ABSTRACT Both global history and the new imperial history identify an emerging convergence of spatial formats, practices, and knowledge for organizing societies during the nineteenth century, though each emphasizes different competitive formats: the territorializing nation-state and the enduring empire. Rather than contrasting empire and nation-state, this article takes their combination seriously through the example of the respatialization of the French Empire during the Revolution and the reorganization of domestic territory into departments. The history of departmentalization underscores the emerging and changing interrelationships between nation and empire. The territorialization of metropolitan France, which developed out of imperial and transregional exchanges, was emblematic of the new type of empire that became a prevailing model for societal organization in the nineteenth century: the nation-state with imperial extensions.

KEYWORDS French Revolution, empire, territoriality, global history, department

The global turn in historiography has influenced the study of the French Revolution in the decades since the bicentennial. Despite this burgeoning research, the French Revolution's role as a principal turning point in European and world historical periodization—demarcating the end of the early modern and the rise of the modern world—has become less obvious to nonspecialists. Instead, globalization has emerged as the new indicator of epochal shifts as researchers in broad, synthesizing and comparative historical fields have “gone global” and imperial, focusing their attention on the late nineteenth century.¹ In a recent volume, David A. Bell and Yair Mintzker critique this approach to global history, which, they argue, focuses on communications and exchange and overlooks political revolutions as generators of social change.² The book's subtitle, *France and the Birth of the Modern World*—which I read as a reference

1. Middell, “French Revolution.”

2. Bell and Mintzker, introduction, xx.

to Christopher A. Bayly's global history of the nineteenth century—indicates a desire to reposition France and the French Revolution within global history narratives.³ The Revolution, they argue, deserves a central place in the history of European and global social change.

One way to recenter the French Revolution in global history is to consider the radical spatial transformation of the French Empire under revolution.⁴ The present article seeks to do just that: it uses the perspective of global history and critical political geography to propose a conceptual rather than an empirical intervention. While recent approaches analyze the French Revolution through the global turn, trends in global history also merit consideration, and rarely do conceptual debates in global history take on the French Revolution. This article considers the transformation of the French Empire during the French Revolution (1789–99) in light of debates in global and imperial history about the emergence, endurance, and entanglements of spatial formats on a global scale in the nineteenth century.⁵ Both global history and the new imperial history—two seemingly complementary fields that have developed in recent decades to analyze comparisons and connections among societies on a global scale—share a focus on understanding what appears to be an emerging convergence of spatial formats, practices, and knowledge for organizing societies during the nineteenth century. However, each emphasizes different spatial units as the defining elements of that century: the territorializing nation-state and the enduring empire. This article argues for the central importance of the French Revolution in opening up new questions in global and imperial history, yet in doing so, I continue the effort to provincialize France.⁶

In my analysis of the respatialization of the French Empire, I broaden the time span beyond the revolutionary decade. My temporal and spatial approach may be somewhat disorienting, but that is precisely the point. In that respect, I have taken inspiration from Sebastian Conrad, who shows that global history may entail considering different periodizations in different world regions, as well as Tamar Herzog, who demonstrates that starting an investigation “elsewhere” in terms of both space and chronology can reveal new perspectives.⁷ The sections of the article work backward chronologically to situate processes of respatialization during the French Revolution in various *longue durée* transregional histories and to invite global historians of the late nineteenth century to

3. Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*.

4. And respatialization across the Atlantic world: Maruschke and Middell, *French Revolution as a Moment of Respatialization*.

5. Middell, “Category of Spatial Formats.”

6. Cooper, “Provincializing France.”

7. Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History”; Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession*.

reach back further, too. First, I give an overview of debates in global and imperial history on nation-states and empires in the nineteenth century to situate the Revolution's legacy. Second, I focus on the history of departmentalization between 1789 and 1815 to show the construction of both metropolitan "French" space and a distinction between European and extra-European space in this process. In the following two sections I consider contexts in which the production of France took shape:⁸ the third section unravels an early modern history of cartography and transatlantic and Eurasian exchanges that enabled new ways to imagine France, and the fourth narrows the focus to the French Empire in the eighteenth century to show the tensions between assimilationist trends and the production of a French national space prior to and during the Revolution. These various temporal and spatial frameworks provide fresh methods for understanding the history of the department in a territorializing empire under revolution.

The respatialization of the French Empire in the midst of revolution, in which France sought to maintain its colonies and consolidated control over a national territory, is an early example of a new spatial format for societal organization that proliferated by the late nineteenth century: a nation-state with imperial extensions.⁹ A number of historians and social scientists have identified this format, which was neither a nation-state nor a continuation of the overseas western European empires of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ New democratizing, nationalizing, and/or territorializing projects emerged in the context of empires, and emerging "nations" also retroactively sought colonies. To understand the origins of this format, I bring together literature from the spatial turn, which often focuses on the reorganization of France's domestic space during the Revolution, with the burgeoning literature from the global turn, including the articles in this forum, which position France and its colonies within a shifting, interconnected world. I argue that the nation-state cum empire format—characterized by a territorializing and nationalizing core with imperial extensions—emerged from the revolutionary reforms that rescaled French society within its empire, as well as from efforts to reposition France within a world of increasingly dense connections and imperial competition. Doing so situates

8. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*.

9. Middell, "French Revolution," 33.

10. Krishan Kumar ("Nation-States as Empires") and Julian Go ("Myths of Nation and Empire") analyze the false opposition between these two ideal types in the social sciences. Gary Wilder and Josep M. Fradera examine historical cases in which authoritarian colonies and democratizing metropolises were "structurally interrelated and not simply added to one another" (Wilder, *French Imperial Nation-State*, 25). In *Imperial Nation* Fradera focuses on legal, constitutional aspects of this combination in the Iberian, French, British, and American empires and traces the shift from testing imperial constitutions during the Age of Revolutions to colonial constitutions whereby the colonies are characterized by *spécialité*.

the French Revolution in global history and in new imperial history debates on how nation-states and empires thrived in combination over the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century.

The Spatial Order of the Nineteenth Century

To understand the contours of the current globalized era, historians trace the emergence of the connectivity experienced in societies today to the technological progress of the middle to late nineteenth century. The telegraph, the railway, and the steamship transformed the speed at which societies could interact and trade over long distances, as well as the capabilities of states to control these flows. Although critics allege that global history fetishizes connections, the field also seeks to understand how connectivity is controlled and, more specifically, how these technologies supported state and nonstate actors' globalizing and territorializing projects.¹¹ How did we get to the mid-twentieth century's spatial order governed by standardized time and organized in nation-states?¹² As historians influenced by the spatial turn take on geographers' dialectical understanding of de- and reterritorialization processes, they ask how the periodization of globalization—and the emergence of a global condition since the mid-nineteenth century—and shifting territorial regimes were interrelated.¹³

Territoriality refers to the “use of territory [blocks of space] for political, social, and economic ends.”¹⁴ In his pathbreaking study, Stuart Elden shows that this concept established its meaning slowly over time. His work follows the development of territoriality in Western thought from ancient Greece and finds that current concepts of territoriality emerged in Europe by the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Territoriality became a dominant strategy for state organization by the late nineteenth century, not only in Europe, in combination with transportation technologies and advances in cartography and in combination with the nation.¹⁶ Historians and social scientists generally think of nation-state territoriality as different from imperial spatiality, as the former tends to involve a clear demarcation of borders and an even production of national space; in contrast, the definition of empires has been in flux, as they have assumed multiple forms over their much longer history. They shared some common features brought to light by large comparative studies: vertical integration, linguistic and ethnic

11. Drayton and Motadel, “Discussion”; for an example, see Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*.

12. Ogle, *Global Transformation of Time*; Muschik, “Managing the World.”

13. For the global condition, see Bright and Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization.” For “successive transformations of territoriality,” see Maier, *Once within Borders*, 12; and Maier, “Transformations.”

14. Agnew, *Globalization and Sovereignty*, 6.

15. Elden, *Birth of Territory*.

16. See Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions*; and Maier, *Once within Borders*.

plurality, fragmented and overlapping jurisdictions, and dispersed enclaves. Instead of clearly demarcated borders, they featured buffer zones or contact spaces along their fringes. In short, empire denoted flexibility in governing different people in different places differently, even as territorial expansion accompanied by territorialization became central to imperial acquisitions in the nineteenth century.¹⁷

Territorializing forms of rule and nationalizing projects both characterized revolutionary France, although France maintained many of its Old Regime colonies, *comptoirs*, and, initially, the French East India Company. It became a nation-state within the context of empire, a project that opens up questions about the dynamics between the two forms of state spatial organization. The territorializing nation-state emerged within the context of the flexible empire, and that empire in turn took on new forms during the Age of Revolutions (ca. 1770–1830) such that France became a nation-state with imperial extensions, or what Josep M. Fradera termed the “imperial nation.”¹⁸

Global historians posit that territorialization in empires and independent states advanced in response to the increasing interconnectedness of globalization as a strategy to regain control over flows of capital, goods, and people.¹⁹ The term *respatialization* represents the entangled reordering of space domestically and internationally, which encompasses more than territorialization alone.²⁰ For example, by the early nineteenth century, German cities defortified, which Mintzker attributes to state territorialization processes under and following Napoléon.²¹ Conrad’s work on the German Empire prior to World War I shows the complex interplay between imperial and national projects as strategies to deal with a globally connected world from which Germany could not retreat.²² The rise of territoriality in combination with the nation is one of the most important concepts for understanding the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet conceptual integration of empires into this narrative still needs refining. Empires, too, have been key to shaping modernity under the global condition.²³ By the second half of the nineteenth century at the latest, a nation-state with

17. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*; Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*; Hirschhausen and Leonhard, *Comparing Empires*.

18. Fradera, *Imperial Nation*. With this term I highlight what is new about this format for empire (the language of sovereignty of the people, rights, and democracy in the metropole) rather than what endures.

19. Middell and Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn.”

20. Other heuristic models—namely, “transpatialization” and the “TPSN” scheme—inspire this definition: Schayegh, *Middle East*; Jessop, Brenner, and Jones, “Theorizing Sociospatial Relations.”

21. Mintzker, *Defortification*.

22. Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation*.

23. Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires*.

imperial extensions appeared to be a proven model for social integration and world market competition for emerging states such as Germany and Italy, but also for Japan, France, Britain, and the United States.

New imperial history, which emerged from a critical reflection on the complex and interconnected history of metropolitan Britain and its empire, has also focused on understanding the apparent synchronization of imperial projects from Britain, Germany, and Japan, to name just a few examples.²⁴ These historians try to understand transimperial intercultural transfers of knowledge and practices in the late nineteenth century, despite the difficulty in recovering such transfers from national archives.²⁵ How else can historians explain a common imperial repertoire of the late nineteenth century: the shared techniques of formal and informal empire; collective mentalities, stereotypes, and images of empire and the colonized; a shared terminology of empire such as “colony” (*colonie*, *Kolonie*, *colonia*, etc.); and a shared imperial culture that undergirded and legitimized imperial practices?²⁶ This research has mainly focused on European transregional empires. Some authors insist that other actors tapped this shared knowledge base, including the colonized in their anti-imperialist struggles, the Japanese in building their empire, and also geographically contiguous empires in Europe.²⁷

At the risk of oversimplifying: to account for the convergence of spatial formats during the nineteenth century, global history tracks the rise of nation-state territoriality in polities that may or may not have had imperial attachments, while the new imperial history stresses the endurance of empire and a converging imperial repertoire, either in spite of or fueled by the rise of nationalism and nonnational anti-imperial projects.²⁸ This simultaneous emergence of similar spatial formats and projects concerns historians of the Age of Revolutions who deal with entangled revolutions and independence movements of which nation-states—including nation-states within the context of empire, such as revolutionary and postrevolutionary France—were one possible outcome.²⁹ Both global historians and imperial historians seek in their narratives to account for the latter—nation-states within the context of empire—which remain undertheorized. How were rationally organized territorial units linked with a hodgepodge of imperial extensions? The rise of territoriality as a political concept and practice is central to both accounts.

24. Howe, *New Imperial Histories*.

25. See, e.g., Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen*; and Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*.

26. Stoler and McGranahan, “Introduction.”

27. Kamissek and Kreienbaum, “Imperial Cloud?” For Japan, see Hennessey, “Rule by Association.”

28. Anti-imperial movements did not by default promote a national framework either in their formations or in their visions of emancipation: Wilder, *Freedom Time*; Getachew, *Worldmaking*.

29. Adelman, “Age of Imperial Revolutions.”

Territorializing France

The most emblematic feature of France's spatial transformation during the Revolution was departmentalization, which historians typically approach as a national story. Yet the revolutionary state later departmentalized colonies, and both the revolutionary and Napoleonic state found departments useful in annexing territory in Europe. The project to departmentalize France's domestic territory was connected to reorganizing the French Empire between 1789 and 1815.

The National Assembly enacted its departmentalization plan in 1790 following extensive debate. The Assembly dissolved Old Regime provinces and reorganized metropolitan France into eighty-three departments, producing an evenly divided and thereby integrated national space. The department and its subdivisions introduced a new, basic ordering principle that marked the transformation from Old Regime provinces characterized by privileges, exceptions, and a jumble of overlapping jurisdictions into the First French Republic (1792). The department was fundamental in shifting sovereignty to the people and ensuring the state's efficiency. As the monarch lost the privilege to tax, the department informed new national structures of collections and contributions; it also shaped electoral districts and thereby the representation of the people. Instead of establishing departments by population size, the deputies decided on evenly divided geographic space as the framework for reorganizing society. The boundaries of each department were three days' walking journey to the department's capital and a day within the canton, a lower administrative unit. Each department was to avoid historically laden references to past loyalties and instead referenced natural formations such as rivers, mountains, and geographic directions, even if departments in their implementation disregarded the "natural boundaries" of these features.³⁰ Enacting and reinforcing revolutionary thought in society entailed the comprehensive rationalization and unification of previously fragmented and diverse French metropolitan space, going beyond the department's narrow purpose in early proposals as an electoral unit.³¹ Other measures such as the revolutionary calendar brought similar ideals to the organization of time; the department, however, has endured as an administrative unit and has not changed much since 1790.

Technocratic measures for ordering France in a manner that reflected the ideological and political foundations of revolutionary thought pervaded all aspects of French society; they were part and parcel of regeneration. The

30. Ozouf, "Département," 497.

31. Forrest, "Reimagining Space."

principle that breaking France up into smaller units produced a better form of state organization stemmed from debates among eighteenth-century French thinkers about how best to manage the kingdom.³² These eighteenth-century ideas appealed to revolutionaries' desire to replace the Old Regime's privilege-based state sovereignty with the sovereignty of the people. The eradication of hierarchical structures produced a framework underpinned by the political concept of territory.³³ Marie-Vic Ozouf-Marignier shows that debates among committee members and the consultation of local views highlighted the many tensions and contradictions that the department could resolve or cause: how should the French people balance demands of unity and division, centralization and decentralization, nature and artifice, demographic and geographic equality, history and rationality? The ideals of the department confronted rivalries among towns whose status might rise or fall in these new administrative spaces.³⁴ The committee encountered a range of resistance on the basis of geography, demography, history, and language as departmentalization reworked the relationship between existing and overlapping legal, administrative, and ecclesiastical spaces in France and rescaled or replaced local forms of citizenship. The goal of departmentalization was to guarantee newly created French citizens equal access to the state and to awaken their political consciousness.

Centralizing control of the relationship between the citizenry and the terrain entailed the creation and implementation of standards to measure, define, and categorize France. Measuring land and controlling terrain went hand in hand with fixing property relations and reforming agricultural practices during the Revolution.³⁵ Technocratic practices of mapping and measuring land defined and delimited territory, a process that was not solved once and for all but continued over time.³⁶ The technocratic shift in state administration depended on "reduc[ing] and simplify[ing] disparate information into numbers that can be easily compared . . . in order to manage uncertainty, impose control, or secure legitimacy."³⁷ During the 1790s the metric system, long in the making, standardized the measurement of terrain according to the model of objectified Cartesian space.³⁸ Administrators viewed cartography and statistics as relevant techniques to render French space legible and thus enforce the state's territorial

32. Ozouf-Marignier, *La formation des départements*, 19–43.

33. Elden, *Birth of Territory*, 322–30.

34. Towns in the countryside to some extent shaped the implementation of this new division: Margadant, *Urban Rivalries*.

35. Brassart et al., "Terre et agriculture"; Blaufarb, *Great Demarcation*.

36. Elden, *Birth of Territory*, 323.

37. Espeland and Stevens, "Commensuration as a Social Process," 316.

38. Warf, *Time-Space Compression*, 74–77.

claims.³⁹ While state and commercial endeavors to map France “accurately” had already started in the late seventeenth century, it was only in the second half of the eighteenth century that maps of France increasingly referenced linear boundaries.⁴⁰ Detailed statistical surveys of agriculture, land property structures, and language accompanied the mapping of France, which was systematically conducted for the first time between 1668 and 1740.⁴¹

Though the boundaries of some departments formed what might be termed France’s borderlands, external boundaries were hardly a reality on the ground. During the eighteenth century there was a slow shift toward a bounded understanding of state space. Internal fortifications had been reduced in favor of fortifications closer to France’s edges. Commissions tried to prevent the formation of enclaved populations cut off by boundary production.⁴² Clear demarcations became more important following the Revolution, notably because of the revolutionary wars, but also the creation of departments and the introduction of citizenship.⁴³ Peter Sahlins’s work on France’s boundary with Spain in the Pyrenees shows how two diverging regimes—royal and republican—as well as local inhabitants sought to inscribe new meaning on the political boundary in a relatively stable border region. New scrutiny on language played a role in demarcating citizen and subject, and the language of citizenship helped affirm a new identity tied to national territory in the borderlands.⁴⁴ However, the “natural frontiers” of the Pyrenees and the Rhine (mountain range and river) posed different challenges and opportunities for French authorities. The Rhineland, in particular, served as a way for the various revolutionary governments to articulate their shifting views of the unity and indivisibility of France: they erected frontier barriers, made expansionary claims and annexed land, and in some cases created dependent sister republics.⁴⁵

Although the state was an active agent in demarcating territory, one should not underestimate the “will of the people” as a territorializing force, and the department served the purpose of integrating regions that demanded annexation. In Corsica, people’s claims to self-determination overturned Genoa’s hold on the island and helped establish Corsica as an integral part of France that

39. Elden, *Birth of Territory*, 324. For a general account, see Harley, “Deconstructing the Map.”

40. Branch, *Cartographic State*, 159–62. The Napoleonic Empire paid special political attention to redrawing and delimiting boundaries. In 1814–15 the first clear territorial boundaries of settlements were introduced. On the role of bordering in the process of territorializing France, see Nordman, *Frontières de France*.

41. Perrot and Woolf, *State and Statistics*.

42. Balani, “I confini tra Francia e Stato sabauda.” Conversely, promoting enclaves along frontiers had been a strategy to promote expansion, and statesmen occasionally shifted between these policies.

43. Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers,” 1443.

44. Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 168–97.

45. Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers.”

could be departmentalized. Corsica set a new precedent: demand for annexation from below showed deputies that invoking popular sovereignty might be a convenient principle to expand revolutionary France.⁴⁶ The department proved to be a flexible institution, useful in annexing territory along France's boundaries.⁴⁷ The internal boundaries of departments therefore served a territorializing and integrating purpose in France's national and imperial projects, even as France's external boundaries remained contested during the revolutionary period; government officials and everyday residents in Alsace and Lorraine used mapmaking to produce the French-German boundary well into the twentieth century.⁴⁸

Popular sovereignty was not, however, a principle deputies invoked in regards to France's colonies, although, as Manuel Covo demonstrates in his contribution to this forum, planters in Saint-Domingue compared their island to Corsica. When deputies declared Corsica "an integral part of France" but declined to invite representatives from Saint-Domingue to the Estates General, white planters insisted on the similarities between the two islands, though they also called attention to Saint-Domingue's longer historical ties to France.⁴⁹ In this example, we see the production of a European space, Corsica, and a people that could be departmentalized under the logic of popular sovereignty, and an extra-European space, Saint-Domingue, populated not only by white planters but also by many African-descended enslaved people, that deputies were reluctant to departmentalize. But in 1795 and after years of turmoil in Saint-Domingue, the Directory's constitution strengthened the abolition of slavery, a major impediment to recognizing the colonies as part of "France," and opened the door to departmentalizing the colonies (Title I, Articles 6 and 7).⁵⁰ On paper, the colonies were thereby integrated equally into a territorializing France, a step toward incorporating citizens in the colonies and ensuring their equal administrative access and rights. But the colonies, though divided into departments, lacked the judicial and administrative organization of departments in European French space. The ongoing administrative and legal uncertainty in the colonies—despite the 1795 constitution, which declared them "integral parts of the republic . . . subject to the same constitutional law"—persisted throughout the revolution through acts of "purposeful neglect."⁵¹ Only in 1798 did an administrative map of the colonies and their divisions define the terms of these

46. Kolla, *Sovereignty*, 35–49.

47. Nordman and Ozouf-Marignier, *Le territoire*, 12.

48. Dunlop, *Cartophilia*.

49. Kolla, *Sovereignty*, 36.

50. Gainot, "Constitutionalization of General Freedom."

51. Spieler, "Legal Structure of Colonial Rule," 398.

overseas departments. Departmentalization of colonies neither encompassed the whole empire nor could reflect the constant shifts in occupations, military losses, and changing forms of imperialism in the French Empire throughout the Revolution.

Several contributions to this forum show that *colony* was an ill-defined term whose apparent coherence belied the heterogeneous spaces of the French Empire; neither mapping nor departmentalizing would likely capture these locations or concepts of French imperialism. As Elizabeth Cross's article demonstrates, a map—and European maps displayed territory—depicting a formal administrative system would never have been able to represent adequately the multiple places, local agreements, scales of action, and transregional or transimperial networks of the French East India Company's operations or the fallout of its dissolution, as Indian *comptoirs* fell into British hands. Pernille Røge's article on West Africa reveals that not everyone wanted to bring the empire under a single framework, even if warfare and inadequate financial resources had not made such a project impossible. This forum shows that the extent and the nature of the French Empire in this period were both at stake when imperialists pondered what mapping and/or departmentalizing could accomplish when the agents of empire encountered and incorporated colonial and non-European forms of societal organization that were not defined by territoriality.

The project to departmentalize the colonies was very soon of little relevance under Napoléon, as the constitution of Year VIII extended only to “European territory,” organized in departments and communal districts.⁵² The Napoleonic state retained and strengthened many of the other spatial reforms of the Revolution. Departments formed new units for European annexed territories that, as in “France,” replaced and modified Old Regime overlapping and chaotic legal, political, and religious jurisdictions. French administrators were forced to take prior local reform efforts into account when creating new departments, as they did in France.⁵³ The contents of departments did not remain static. The Directory abolished the districts; the Consulate restored the districts under the new moniker *arrondissements*. Napoléon eliminated elected department councils and introduced prefects. The creation of sister republics and client states alongside departments illustrates legal and institutional differentiation across the empire. Michael Broers describes Napoléon's administration as hierarchical (an “administrative ladder”) and the system as “centralized in the manner of

52. Stated in Article 1. “European territory” is mentioned also in Fradera, *Imperial Nation*, 86. For the post-1798 period, see Gainot, *L'empire colonial*, from 154.

53. For Belgium, see Dubois, *La révolution géographique*; for Italy, see di Fiore, “Respatialization of Italy.”

a spider's web."⁵⁴ Military divisions, an administrative unit that allowed for coordination across neighboring departments, proved crucial for conquering "non-French" spaces inside and outside "France," the Vendée being one example where authorities transferred techniques used to suppress revolt in other areas. Military divisions became important administrative units for the restoration of order, which mirrored, in some cases, the Old Regime conquered states.

Annexations began as early as 1792, and by the later years of Napoléon's empire, not all departments were contiguous to "France," such as the Illyrian provinces and some Italian departments that had allied client states in between. That is, the expanse of departments would not meet an important criterion for territory as a contiguous, bounded space.⁵⁵ The departmentalization of noncontiguous spaces highlights the importance of conceptually decoupling territoriality from the assumption that the concept characterizes the nation-state format exclusively. Moreover, the project to departmentalize the Napoleonic Empire in Europe strengthened the differentiation state administrators made between European places and people that could be departmentalized and the overseas colonies that could not, a key feature of the format for empire in the nineteenth century. The history of departmentalization addresses questions historians have asked about the organization of European empires in the nineteenth century, as do some articles in this forum. Mathieu Ferradou examines the French "Terror" through the Irish experience, showing the entangled history of cosmopolitan, national, and imperial citizenship in the French Republic and British Empire, which impacted the organization of both empires in the long nineteenth century, in particular the place of Ireland and the Irish. The history of departmentalization during the revolutionary decade and the Napoleonic Empire also sheds new light on the place of Ireland in an emerging form of imperialism at the turn of the nineteenth century in a comparative and entangled context (as both Ferradou and Cross demonstrate in this forum). Britain, France, and Germany combined continental with colonial forms of empire while also constructing nations, blurring distinctions historians tend to make between typologies of European empires, leading to lingering questions about whether Ireland, Algeria, and Poland were "colonies."⁵⁶ In short, though historians tend to frame the history of the department as a national development, it soon became a useful institution for imperial territorial consolidation and expansion. But its usefulness also faced limits in the heterogeneous places that constituted the empire.

54. Broers, *Europe*, 55, 54.

55. Sassen, "When Territory Deborders Territoriality."

56. Dickinson, "German Empire."

American Colonies and Asian Empires in the Territorialization of France

Early modern transregional developments in cartography reflected colonial experiences in the Americas and growing knowledge of Asian empires. The trans-imperial knowledge exchange that characterized the global Enlightenment laid the groundwork for the respatialization of the French Empire during the Revolution and was thus critical to the elaboration of forms of state spatial organization that would become a successful model in the nineteenth century: a territorializing, nationalizing, and democratizing metropolitan core with imperial extensions. In a study on the territorial boundaries of Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas, Tamar Herzog challenges the reader to think of the production of European space in a new light by putting the history of “frontiers of possession” in Spanish America first.⁵⁷ As proponents of postcolonial theory have long argued, albeit in other terms, experiences in the imperial extensions of Europe’s nation-states played a role in defining territorializing nations in Europe.

Historians have noted the importance of colonies in France’s nationalization projects whose goal was to forge a population with a strong sense of belonging that could be integrated into France’s redivided political-administrative space. Ideational, material, and institutional practices imported from colonial rule accompanied metropolitan departmentalization.⁵⁸ An internal *mission civilisatrice* helped forge a uniform population by integrating the “savage” peasants in the peripheries.⁵⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century, schoolteachers were at the forefront of this mission to turn the residents of France into Frenchmen.⁶⁰ Colonial-style resources such as reports from officials and travel accounts informed the development of an anthropological perspective on metropolitan France. As in the colonies, officials lacked detailed knowledge of France’s terrain and its inhabitants. The colonies, especially France’s islands with large enslaved populations, served as “laboratories” for the development of biopolitical tools like censuses, statistics, and commercial surveys and were thus a reference point for refashioning citizens in France during and after revolution.⁶¹ Colonialism, however, was also significant beyond nationalization projects in France.

Mapmaking practices, especially representing the Americas, impacted concepts of territoriality, and Paris was one of the centers for cartography in the

57. Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession*.

58. Popkin, “Revolution and Changing Identities.”

59. Kumar, “Nation-States as Empires,” 127.

60. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*.

61. Nelson, “Colonizing France.”

early modern world.⁶² The ability to think of France as a unified whole was connected to placing France on the globe. The symbolic and scientific representation of France developed in relation to an expanding, but eventually finite, known world: “The size and form of France could be determined only once the size and shape of the earth itself were known.”⁶³ Gathering this knowledge required geodetic surveys beyond France. Teams traveled to Lapland, and a joint Spanish-French expedition (1736–44) reached the Spanish colonies, today’s Ecuador, to determine the spherical or possibly oblong nature of the globe at the equator and the poles.⁶⁴ Geodesy at home and abroad was important to the mapping of France, but encounters in Ecuador and experiences in administering colonies in North America both reveal one of the key problems European sovereigns faced in the New World: Europeans knew very little about the places and people that they laid claim to. The underexplored landscape of North and South America, especially the sprawling Louisiana Territory and the impenetrable Amazon, challenged the traditional ways that sovereigns made sense of their claims.

Before the eighteenth century, European treaty negotiations referenced lists or tables of places, parishes, and principalities. On these lists, distant places in the New World made less sense, especially where claims were so vast. Statesmen knew little about the inhabitants or physical geography of these areas. European states failed to “interpellate the sub-altern population as subjects.”⁶⁵ A turn to mapping allowed sovereigns to visualize their territorial claims and possessions. These maps were referential but also functioned discursively: they were so advantageous during treaty negotiations among European powers that their usage became standard in negotiating New World claims by the time of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713).⁶⁶ Maps violently but conveniently obscured Indigenous forms of sovereignty, property relations, and knowledge production. Utrecht was also a turning point toward advancing a “linear vision” and a “territorial vision” of state space in Europe, in addition to standardizing the treatment of New World claims.⁶⁷ To be specific, island colonies, the earliest colonial holdings in the New World, had done little to challenge the European spatial mindset. Islands were easily bounded and could be thought of as places rather than territories in treaty agreements.⁶⁸ On large landmasses, rivers or mountain ranges

62. Petto, *When France Was King*; Pedley, *Commerce of Cartography*; Godlewska, *Geography Unbound*.

63. Konovitz, *Cartography in France*, 4.

64. Safier, *Measuring the New World*.

65. Kearns, “Territory of Colonialism,” 224.

66. Miquelon, “Envisioning the French Empire.”

67. Balani, “I confini tra Francia e Stato sabaudo,” 63.

68. Colonial practices were often first tested in island settings. Establishing colonies on the American continents, however, confronted colonists and imperial administrations with new ways of thinking about space. See Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*.

formed “natural boundaries,” as in Europe, but European sovereigns dividing up claims in the Americas were concerned neither about the languages of creole residents nor about Native communities, as they had been in the Pyrenees or along the Rhine.⁶⁹ The challenges of colonialism in the Americas led Europeans to turn frequently to boundary lines as a form of claim making in the Americas, prior to their systematic use in demarcating state space in Europe. Without boundary lines, one could hardly conceive of the revolutionary reforms whereby France’s administrative space was methodically broken up into smaller units to foster unity and equality, let alone externally demarcated. French colonial rule in North America and its cooperation and competition with the Spanish and British Empires contributed to the future production of France in a process of “colonial reflection.”⁷⁰

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, French expansionary efforts in other corners of the world often failed, but growing knowledge of Asian empires nonetheless contributed to European concepts of political space.⁷¹ Enlightenment thinkers examined primary sources from other world regions, especially Asia and the Americas, and engaged with non-European scientific traditions.⁷² Just as there is no straight line leading from the Enlightenment to the French Revolution, there is no direct relationship between the production of knowledge in and about the colonies and its adoption and assessment in the metropole.⁷³ A territorializing Qing Empire, for instance, demonstrates both the Eurasian entanglement of cartographic practices and the similar pressures Asian and European states faced in this period as they expanded their domains and engaged in transregional, (trans)imperial trade.

The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) consolidated its expanded imperial rule over non-Han people over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, taking more or less the shape of China today. Like European transatlantic empires and Eurasian Russia, the Qing state sought to gain more extensive knowledge of its frontier and people through cartographic surveys and ethnographic missions that accompanied its military incursions. In 1663 Louis XIV financed the French

69. Di Fiore, “Production of Borders.” Attempts to separate British subjects and US citizens who shared cultural and linguistic identities following US independence illustrate this problem: Hatter, *Citizens of Convenience*.

70. Branch, “‘Colonial Reflection’ and Territoriality.” In *Cartographic State* Branch echoes arguments advanced by Elden, *Birth of Territory*; and Maier, *Once within Borders*.

71. Tricoire, *Der koloniale Traum*. For Asian/Eurasian empires, see Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East*; Takeda, *Iran and a French Empire*; and Trakulhun, *Asiatische Revolutionen*, which emphasizes the duality of the gaze as Asian thinkers observed European revolutions.

72. Conrad expands the Enlightenment well into the nineteenth century (“Enlightenment in Global History”).

73. For the Enlightenment and new forms of colonialism, see Tricoire, *Enlightened Colonialism*; and Charles and Cheney, “Colonial Machine Dismantled.”

Jesuit mission to China both to enable the French Academy of Science to observe more parts of the globe and to receive recognition for France's primacy in cartography.⁷⁴ The Qing emperor, Kangxi (r. 1661–1722), likewise thought of himself as an important player in world affairs who was driven by the same motivations as expanding European sovereigns: to better control his frontier space, people, and trade.⁷⁵ Kangxi correctly anticipated that European mercantile and military incursions in Central, South, and Southeast Asia would one day require documentation in the form of maps for future negotiations. The first edition of the Kangxi atlas, commissioned decades after the Cassini surveys, appeared in 1717, several decades before France's 1744 atlas and, for that matter, the Russian Empire's 1745 atlas.⁷⁶ The Kangxi atlas was the result of a collaborative effort between French Jesuits and Qing scholars using both French and Chinese geographic techniques; the circulation of Russian maps of Siberia also influenced their work.⁷⁷ Despite the atlas's advances, some cartographers in France criticized the Jesuits for not taking geodetic measurements.⁷⁸ These developments highlight the Eurasian exchange of cartographic knowledge and techniques during the Enlightenment; furthermore, they support global historians' contention that states began to territorialize to regain or maintain control over flows of goods, capital, and people as their trade networks expanded and intensified.

The growing consensus on spatial representations in transatlantic treaty negotiations was not limited, therefore, to that ocean basin but evolved from growing transregional trade, missionary, and scientific interconnections that were not exclusively European. Maps became a standardized, universal medium that hardly required extensive foreign language knowledge. Growing and persistent contact and entanglements with other world regions through diaspora, trade, and religious—that is, imperial—networks fueled debates that contributed to the spatial transformation of France during the Revolution. From a kingdom comprising places, parishes, provinces, colonies, and trading posts, France became a nation-state with imperial extensions. These imperial entanglements helped shape the tools and concepts the revolutionaries used to transform France, but the question of what *l'espace français* meant at the time of the French Revolution remains open, which I turn to in the following section.⁷⁹

74. Hostetler, "Qing Connections," 656.

75. Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*.

76. Hostetler, "Qing Connections," 654.

77. For French Jesuit and Chinese connections, see Statman, "Fusang," 7; for Russian, Chinese, and Jesuit connections, see Mosca, "Qing Empire," 121.

78. Petto, *When France Was King*, 78.

79. Nordman and Ozouf-Marignier, *Le territoire*, 7.

Rescaling France and Repositioning the Empire

The urgency to reshape France during the Revolution was part of a longer, contradictory process of ordering French space that entailed addressing the chaotic legal realities of the entire Old Regime and its claims in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. While reforming “French space” during the Revolution was largely a domestic event, evidenced explicitly in departmentalization, we can ask what was strategic about separating, subdividing, and consolidating domestic French space and, potentially, extradomestic French space. Though advances in cartography altered ways of imagining political rule, the messiness of trade networks and legal codes meant that spatial fragmentation persisted, and sometimes remained useful, as a colonial reality.⁸⁰

The contributions to this forum propose new directions for thinking about French space and empire during the revolutionary decade. They demonstrate that the definition, production, and position of a “colony” were under negotiation during the Revolution. White planters referenced older debates and attempted to position Saint-Domingue as a French “province” to gain representation in the Estates General; in their participation in the Revolution’s federal moment, they looked beyond France to federal models that could guarantee the continuation of colonial particularism, that is, white supremacy and slavery. The French East India Company defied classification and challenged revolutionaries’ ideas about empire, as well as their efforts to reform it. Revolutionaries in Paris struggled to situate the Irish: were they anti-imperial republican brothers or British enemies? At the same time, the Irish maneuvered between the British Empire and the French Republic, navigating different and shifting concepts of citizenship in each polity as they chartered a new political future for Ireland. François Blanchot, governor of the French colony in Senegal, was confident that the French Constitution of Year III would not apply to the West African holdings he administered, despite the constitution’s applicability throughout the empire. Men and women of the era saw “colonies,” “empires,” and “nations” as elements of a single discussion about the organization of political life, but historians too often separate these spaces preemptively as if metropole “here” and the empire “out there” operated according to separate logics. The contributions to this forum do not just shed light on the colonies during the Revolution. By exploring debates about what a colony was and which spaces were an integral part of France, these authors raise big questions about the nature of empire and about France itself.

80. Benton, “Spatial Histories of Empire.”

France—which was, after all, a key part of the French Empire—was also produced in an imperial context. But an imperial perspective entails more than merely highlighting the endurance of empire in (post)revolutionary France. Rather, I ask how reworking metropolitan space during the Revolution—most explicitly through departmentalization—could take place within the context of the empire as well as of a fuzzier French “nation” with settlements in North America. Linking citizenship to territory meant that France experienced one of the classic problems faced both by consolidating states like Germany in the nineteenth century and by states like India seeking independence in the twentieth century: the nation did not correspond to the territory.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the project to territorialize France—and, in so doing, to consolidate the metropole—led to the rescaling of France and the French people within the empire. This new format for empire built on developments that preceded the Revolution.

Citizenship and its link to territory became key to reworking Old Regime privileges and integrating people to the state apparatus. French citizenship had principally depended on birth on French soil, but the monarchy did not clearly regulate it.⁸² According to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of August 1789, “The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation,” that is, in citizens.⁸³ National citizenship—along with the department—leveled legal and some political distinctions within France while heightening distinctions between France and other states.⁸⁴ The concept of citizenship, based on the ideal of homogeneous political representation, was the revolutionary attempt to reorganize patterns of authority based on privilege and heterogeneous jurisdiction.⁸⁵ In other words, revolutionary reforms rescaled citizenship in metropolitan France (and later in occupied states) as it moved from a local designation to a newly forged national scale in revolutionary France and in (post-)Napoleonic Europe.⁸⁶

One of the pressing problems reformers faced was the question of how to manage and integrate disparate peoples, whose languages, religions, juridical principles, and customary practices varied widely, into a unified spatial pattern.⁸⁷ The Assembly aimed to abolish previous principles of distinction and

81. For Germans as a “transimperial nation,” see Dickinson, “German Empire”; for India, see Abraham, *How India Became Territorial*.

82. In *Unnaturally French* Sahlins importantly refers to Old Regime “citizenship” and naturalization, which entailed a bundle of legal, administrative, and social practices that developed before the Revolution.

83. For an overview, see Weil, *How to Be French*, 11–29.

84. Febvre, “Frontière,” 213–14.

85. Forrest, “Reimagining Space.”

86. On how urban citizenship was *not* transformed into national citizenship but was replaced without reflection, see Prak, “Burghers into Citizens.”

87. Nelson, “Colonizing France.”

exclusion by eliminating serfdom, reintegrating Protestants, and granting equal rights to Jews. Despite the inclusion of these groups, the differentiation between active and passive citizens in turn introduced new hierarchies.⁸⁸ The debates of the 1790s and beyond turned on the question of whether French nationality was attached to residency on French territory or whether it was derived from familial lineage. The boundaries of citizenship shifted with the revolutionary political tide since citizenship was a political category, and the term *étranger* (foreigner) was contextually and linguistically ambiguous, as Ferradou indicates in this forum, showing that nationality and citizenship were not interchangeable.⁸⁹ Administrators in border regions implemented the new and changing understandings of the categories of citizen and foreigner. Enforcement was subjective and irregular, but it nevertheless contributed to the production of territorial borders.⁹⁰

The hierarchies and boundaries of French citizenship, even with regard to measures that applied only to metropolitan France, always existed in an imperial context. Debates about citizenship as the basic political organizing principle in the metropole took place against the question of extending French citizenship and representation to residents of the colonies, including free people of color and enslaved people. The early “cosmopolitan” phase of the Revolution, despite embracing foreign political allies, did not extend citizenship to people of color in French colonies, nor did it abolish slavery. Lorelle Semley notes that the early French constitutions addressed questions of race and gender through references to empire and “within the reverberating silences around slavery.”⁹¹ The French Empire during the Revolution was, moreover, still marked by the close entanglement between the rights of citizenship and “issues of place.”⁹² Place mattered because the distinct conjuncture of legal and political conditions within the spatial hierarchy determined “who had rights and in what place.”⁹³ As the legal status of the individual was debated in a distinct place and was determined by his or her own positionality within the empire, the category of citizenship in relation to territory also became the arena for rescaling imperial hierarchies while producing an evenly integrated territorial “nation.”

These developments had older precedents that are worth exploring. During the Old Regime, laws regulating slavery established France as a separate legal

88. Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*, 269–74.

89. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*, 35–49.

90. Morieux, *Channel*, 300–307.

91. Semley, *To Be Free and French*, 33.

92. Andreas Fahrmeir and H. S. Jones refer to local memberships, including in metropolitan France (“Space and Belonging,” 244).

93. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 223.

territory from its colonies. The principle that presence on “free soil” made enslaved people free had perhaps developed between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries out of municipal liberties in reference to local serfdom and slavery, before the principle applied throughout France.⁹⁴ During the eighteenth century French encounters with enslaved people from the colonies had led to diverging legal realities: free soil in the metropole and the legally codified state of slavery in the colonies.⁹⁵ Enslaved men and women, mostly in France’s Atlantic port cities, challenged the legal grounds for their enslaved status in France without threatening slavery in France’s colonies or the Code Noir.⁹⁶ Covo’s article in this forum explores the question of “producing France” from another angle: how colonists in Saint-Domingue sought, perhaps paradoxically, to question the monopoly and diversify trade and to strengthen the island’s relationship to France while also maintaining its separate legal status with regard to slavery. The metropole should serve Saint-Domingue, colonists maintained, and not the other way around. This division between colonies and metropole developed despite otherwise assimilationist legal traditions and policies connecting France with its colonies.⁹⁷ The free soil principle did not advance in a linear progression, but it nevertheless influenced state formation and legal systems in the Atlantic world.⁹⁸ The free soil doctrine and a colonial lobby supporting the continuation of slavery both contributed to the separation of the metropole from the colonies while simultaneously advancing a unified legal code for the former. In the early years of the Revolution, departmentalization and granting citizenship to residents of metropolitan France occurred against the backdrop of a continuation of the status quo in the colonies, thus reinforcing the separation of the metropole from the colonies, even as contemporaries in the colonies opposed certain elements of this arrangement: the Assembly did not grant representation to white Saint-Dominguan deputies in the metropole seamlessly, but the colony’s economic strength allowed for the continuation of slavery.

The colonies challenged the notion that citizenship should be the main organizing principle of a territorializing metropole. The presence of free and enslaved people of color in metropolitan France and in the colonies increased the urgency of the question: who is French? In internal surveys of metropolitan France—for example, the 1794 *Rapport Grégoire* documenting the patois spoken throughout French territory—that question was essentially about the

94. Peabody, “Alternative Genealogy.”

95. Peabody, “*There Are No Slaves in France*.”

96. On the revisions of the Code Noir, see Chatman, ““There Are No Slaves in France””; and Covo, “Race, Slavery, and Colonies,” 294.

97. Middell, “France, the Abolition of Slavery, and Abolitionisms.”

98. Peabody and Grinberg, *Free Soil*.

inhabitants of France.⁹⁹ In the colonies, however, it was more complex: slavery and racism raised issues about the legal boundaries between nationals and foreigners.¹⁰⁰ In 1790 colonists and the Committee on Colonies reached an agreement on the legal differentiation between the metropole and the colonies. However, turmoil in Saint-Domingue led first to political rights for free men of color in Saint-Domingue in 1792 and then to widespread self-emancipation via slave insurrection. The local abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue in 1793 then forced the National Convention to address the issue, and the abolition of slavery across the French Empire followed in 1794.¹⁰¹ The abolition of slavery became especially relevant to the question of expanding French citizenship throughout the empire.

France's constitution of 1795 strengthened the abolition of slavery in the French Empire, extended citizenship to free people of color and the formerly enslaved, and allowed for the departmentalization of the colonies. Fradera analyzes this "imperial constitution" that drew the whole empire into a single legal framework, and he differentiates it from France's earlier and later "colonial constitutions" that relied on *spécificité*: a constitution for the metropole with separate laws or constitutions for the colonies.¹⁰² Even under this "imperial constitution," the citizenship granted to formerly enslaved men remained ambiguous. Missing legal precisions allowed for different interpretations of the citizenship status of formerly enslaved and free people of color, and the application of constitutional law remained different from case to case.¹⁰³ Semley also observes that limits to suffrage changed the rights granted by citizenship in 1795 and that 1798 legislation depicted formerly enslaved people, whether born in Africa or the Americas, as "immigrants" to be naturalized as citizens; she does so to engage with how shifting transatlantic developments across the empire during the Revolution shaped hierarchies and constructions of gender, race, and place in the French Empire throughout the long nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴

How do we classify these developments in relation to the question of the respatialization of the French Empire? One could hardly discuss the territorialization of France without contextualizing how the radical transformation of administrative space was characterized by ongoing ambiguity in the colonies. This hesitation—in contrast to the enthusiasm with which the National

99. Grégoire, *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois*.

100. Covo, "Race, Slavery, and Colonies," 297.

101. Blackburn, "Force of Example."

102. For later constitutions, see Fradera, *Imperial Nation*, 74–88, 111–26; on 62 he directly discusses the transition.

103. Biancardini, "L'opinion coloniale."

104. Semley, *To Be Free and French*, 42–43.

Assembly had moved to departmentalize France—was connected to revolutionaries’ reluctance to abolish slavery. By 1799 the colonies once again had fallen outside the constitution. Scholars’ heightened focus on Saint-Domingue during the Revolution ignores the uneven effects (or lack of substantive change) in some of France’s other colonies,¹⁰⁵ as Pernille Røge underscores in this forum from the perspective of Gorée and Saint-Louis. Matching the imperial territory with “the people,” reluctantly and on paper before quickly abandoning this initiative, did not lead to the routinization, institutionalization, and performance needed to stabilize this “nation-state *as* empire” as a new spatial format guiding French imperialism, but in this brief historical moment, revolutionaries tested a new model that surpassed historians’ conceptual categories of empire and nation-state. Despite “stasis” in the colonies and revolutionaries’ halting plans for a different sort of imperial polity, consolidating the metropole substantially altered the format for empire.

Debates on reorganizing France’s economy developed in the context of France’s participation in a globalizing economy and what it meant for societal forms of organization and commercial competition. Extending citizenship to free people of color and formerly enslaved people cannot be disentangled from the attempt to stabilize Saint-Domingue’s plantation system, the economic heart of the empire. Following abolition, administrators sent to the colonies were tasked with maintaining “economic continuity even as they instituted political and social discontinuity,” that is, enforcing abolition and the “egalitarianism of Republican citizenship” while also maintaining plantation production.¹⁰⁶ Contributions by Cross, Covo, and Røge in this forum explore the relationship between the global economy and sociopolitical organization from different angles: the French East India Company, the *exclusif*, and labor.¹⁰⁷ Like disagreements over the institution of slavery, economic pressure and warfare in the colonies prior to and during the Revolution challenged mercantilist trade regulations that distinguished between trade in Europe and in the Americas.¹⁰⁸ Within France, the diverging interests of the Parisian center and the export-oriented Atlantic and Mediterranean port cities fueled regional revolts during the 1790s.¹⁰⁹ The departmentalization of France’s port cities necessarily affected their transatlantic trade networks and their connections to globalizing markets.¹¹⁰

105. Spieler, “Legal Structure of Colonial Rule,” 367.

106. Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 183.

107. See also Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*.

108. Covo, “Baltimore and the French Atlantic.”

109. Forrest, *Paris, the Provinces*.

110. Drayton, “Globalisation of France.”

The relationship between localities and markets was also at stake in the territorialization of France. Old Regime France lacked a single customs authority and had never been a single market for internal goods or imports. Fragmented economic management meant that internal barriers to trade within France restricted the flow of French goods; goods produced in France could cost more than colonial goods or goods produced in Britain or Holland, which had better managed systems.¹¹¹ Creating a unified metropole that benefited from empire had long been an organizing principle of the *exclusif*: Jean-Baptiste Colbert had imagined colonial monopoly as part of a larger economic program that included the construction of canals and roads and the reduction of internal trade barriers. Just days after they promulgated the Rights of Man, deputies took the first steps in “regenerating” the French economy by removing barriers to the grain trade within France while forbidding exports.¹¹² Jeremy J. Whiteman demonstrates the extent to which these “internal” changes were part of dialectical territorializing and globalizing projects. Removing internal barriers to trade and taxing external trade systematically would result in the creation of a strengthened “national scale” and could reposition France within its imperial framework and a globalizing economy.¹¹³ Deputies debated how to position France within imperial and interimperial trade: should they uphold and strengthen the *exclusif* or loosen regulations in favor of free trade? A customs union, accompanied by infrastructure projects, was already a step toward realizing the benefits either theory claimed would befall the “nation.”

Experimentation with new ways of organizing the empire, which drew on older precedents, characterized this revolutionary decade—but that is not an argument for continuity. A spatial turn perspective brings to light the extent to which producing France within the context of empire strategically rescaled the French nation, altering substantially the spatial organization of the French Empire.¹¹⁴ Prior concepts of demarcating a metropole expressed in the *exclusif* and the free soil doctrine were realized through the territorialization of metropolitan France during the Revolution within the context of empire, which led to the production of a new format for empire—rather than a continuation of the Old Regime—with the nation-state at its core. From the perspective of certain individual colonies, historians might see chaos or stasis of empire during the Revolution. Instead, this forum, which brings together the multiple experiences from the colonies and the metropole, demonstrates that France repositioned

111. Whiteman, *Reform, Revolution, and French Global Policy*, chap. 5.

112. Whiteman, *Reform, Revolution, and French Global Policy*, 145.

113. Covo, “Commerce, empire et révolutions.”

114. For “producing” in another imperial context, see Goswami, *Producing India*.

itself in the international arena at the same time as it was being produced via a complex process of rescaling within the context of empire.

Conclusions

Departments had a role to play in reorganizing the metropolitan French nation-state, in extending and stabilizing the French Empire, in demarcating European and non-European space, and in imagining and implementing other egalitarian, democratic possibilities. Looking forward to 1946, the departmentalization of the *départements d'outre-mer* crossed transatlantic history with trans-Caribbean history through the later reverberations of the Haitian Revolution, of Toussaint Louverture's constitution, and with reference to the radical egalitarian promises of revolutionary France.¹¹⁵ The French Revolution, whether in a national or a global perspective, cannot be boxed into a teleological narrative of the decline of empire and the rise of the nation-state. The revolutionary decade and the larger Age of Revolutions were rife with experimentation, as the articles in this forum show.

If historians want to understand the character of the globalized world that developed in the late nineteenth century and continues to shape global processes today, then we need to study the moment when spatial formats that later defined this period were up for negotiation: the Age of Revolutions. Analyzing the respatialization of the French Empire—and territorialization in the metropole in particular—during the Revolution helps us think more critically about the narratives of shifting spatial orders in global, imperial, and national history. Through territorializing metropolitan France, the Revolution shaped a new format for French Empire that disintegrated only in the 1940s: a nation-state with imperial extensions. This spatial lens revises the periodization of the multiple French empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries characterized traditionally by political shifts in the metropole. Instead, the norms of this format appear to endure the long nineteenth century, though the format was contested again in 1848 in ways that were reminiscent of 1789.

Conceptually, revolutionary developments like the introduction of the department and citizenship challenge historians' assumed isomorphism between state, territory, and nation. Revolutionaries, colonists, merchants, and administrators searched for ways to manage these emerging reforms in an imperial context; the Revolution was a central moment in global history where various actors assessed (competing) possibilities for reorganizing empire. Global and imperial

115. Forsdick, "Haiti and Departmentalization," 330; Nesbitt, "Departmentalization."

historians—including nonspecialists in revolutionary France—should take this moment seriously. The Revolution was more than just a precursor to the decisive events and technologies of the late nineteenth century that shaped the modern world. It represents the implementation of the first nation-state with imperial extensions that became the successful spatial format that defined the nineteenth century and continues to impact the postcolonial Atlantic world.

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