



Analysis of the Journal
Comparative Studies in Society and History
2006-2010
Fenna Plaisier

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Introduction

This essay deals with the journal of *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (CSSH). A quick glance at the website of the journal shows how the journal wants to represent itself regarding aims and approaches. *CSSH* deals with research concerning ‘problems of recurrent patterning and change in human societies through time and in the contemporary world’.¹ The journal thus contains topics which are relevant for social science and humanities. Furthermore, it is claimed that the journal brings together ‘multidisciplinary research, cultural studies and theory’. It focuses especially on political science, history, sociology and anthropology. By combining different disciplines on debates and research problems, the journal aims to give alternative approaches on topics, which could lead to new and unexpected insights or better understanding of developments or concepts in society and history. The journal thus aims to build bridges between different disciplines. All in all, the journal promises a broad area of topics as well as difference research approaches.

The promises and aims of the journal are appealing. It promises innovation and original approaches. *CSSH* is a journal which challenges scholars to move beyond the borders of their disciplines and to use the experience, knowledge and expertise developed in other disciplines in their own research project. The question however, is if the journal is capable to fulfil all their promises. Is the journal what it pretends to be and does it build bridges between different disciplines in social science and history? Or are these promises just a shining outside and is the content disappointing?

This essay will dig into this question by analysing five years of the journal, the volumes of the years 2006-2010, to provide a critical report. First some general information about the journal will be given. This contains a short overview of the history of the journal, the publisher of the journal, their reputation and access possibilities. Second, to know more about the organisation of the journal, *CSSH* will be placed in its context, and will provide information about where and by whom the journal is hosted, the background of the editors and the editorial processes. After this, the third section will elaborate on the content of the journal. This third section begins with some quantitative aspects of the sections of the *CSSH*, and then turn to analyse the themes of the article. What kind of themes are there, which themes are dominate, are there any fluctuations in this? This will give valuable information to evaluate the interdisciplinary and comparative aims of the journal. Therefore it is also

¹ ‘Comparative studies in society and history, *Cambridge journals*, <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=CSS>, viewed on 18-05-2011.

important to know more about the authors, what is their discipline and from which university do they come from? The last section, the conclusion, will balance the outcomes of the others sections.

1. General information

When reading the general aims of the journal, one cannot escape the feeling of excitement about the aims of this ‘international forum of new research and interpretation’. Indeed, interdisciplinary and comparative studies can put things in different light. Moreover, this international character gives people with different scientific cultural background the opportunity to apply alternative approaches and methods to the study on society and history. Nevertheless, the website of the journal does not provide a clear definition about what the concept comparative implies. More insight in this aim is given in the article about the *CSSH* by former editor Raymond Grew, written by the occasion *CSSH* its fiftieths anniversary. He asserts that this comparative claim does not mean that authors should give an account of phenomena that occurred in two places. Looking back on his time as an editor, Grew claims that the editorial board ‘favoured articles that evoke comparison because they focused on a problematic relevant in other context, articles that questioned easy assumptions, and that invited further research.’² The comparative aim thus contain more than geographical comparison. It means that the articles should challenge assumptions taken for granted by using different methods or different theories.

From 1960 onwards, the field of comparative social research grow noticeably in various disciplines of social studies: the amount of comparative research increased as did the range of approached used in inquiries. The acceptance and rising popularity of comparative approaches both in methods and frame of analyses, gave rise to several new field of research and to new institutions and organisations supporting comparative studies.³ The founding of the *CSSH* in 1958 can thus be placed in this development in social studies. The founder, Sylvia Thrupp (1903-1997), in that time associated professor of history at the University of Chicago, was herself interested in medieval social-economic history. According to her colleagues, she brought dynamism in this field by the used methods from economic and

² Raymond Grew, ‘On the society and history of the *CSSH*’, *Comparative studies in society and history* 50 (2008), 12.

³ Patricia Kennett ed., *A handbook of comparative social policy* (Louth 2004)1, Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot, *Rethinking comparative cultural sociology. Repertoires of evaluation in France and the United States* (Cambridge 2000), 4.

social theories in her studies.⁴ According to Thrupp, the combination of social science and history was the best way to counter errors in research: both fields could mutually benefit from each other. Methods of social science could be used in history, while history can be used in social science to compare developments or events. Hence, her main aim was to build bridges between social science and history.⁵ Thrupp remained editor until 1973, when Raymond Grew took over her position as an editor.

After accepting a position at the University of Michigan, Thrupp took the journal with her to her new environment. The journal still receives support from the University of Michigan, but is not associated with any membership.⁶ It is owned by a non-profit organisation, which is called *The Society for the Comparative Study of Society and History*. This organisation exist out of professors, most of them are from the University of Michigan. Because of the involvement of the Michigan University, direct in the form of financial support and indirect by owners of the Journal, the next section will give more information about the University of Michigan. Despite this involvement, the journal sees itself as an independent entity, not aligned with the University or any other institutions.⁷

CSSH is published four times a year by the *Cambridge University Press*, ‘a leading British publisher, (...) the oldest printer and publisher in the world and one of the largest academic publishers globally’.⁸ From 1958 until the last volume in 2011, the journal extended heavily. It started with 409 pages per volume and grew out to more than 1000 pages per volume nowadays. The impact factor of the journal will be given to provide an indication of the reputation of the *CSSH*.⁹ The five-year impact factor (2004-2008) is 0.515; there are 85 cites items in the past 5 years out of the total amount of 165 items.

2. Behind the show

Before turning to the question of who is pulling the strings in *CSSH*, first some information of the University of Michigan will be given because of its direct and indirect involvement. The university is situated in the state of Michigan. Reading the *Vision and Goals* on the website of the university, one can find some similarities with the aims of the journal. On the

⁴ ‘Sylvia L. Thrupp’ *The American Historical Association (AHA)*,

<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2000/0003/0003mem6.cfm>, viewed on 10-04-2011.

⁵ Joel T. Rosenthal, ‘Sylvia L. Thrupp: The Chicago years (1946-61) *Medieval Feminist Forum* 41(2006) 29-34.

⁶ Grew, ‘On the society’, 10.

⁷ Thomas Trautmann, ‘Being editor, *CSSH* 48 (2008), 21-25, here, 22.

⁸ Cambridge University Press, <http://www.cambridge.org/>, viewed on 10-04-2011.

⁹ The impact factor of *CSSH* can be found on ISI web of knowledge: <http://admin-apps.isiknowledge.com/JCR/JCR?RQ=RECORD&rank=1&journal=COMP+STUD+SOC+HIST#>, viewed on 11-04-2011.

website they state that ‘the University is defined by a *culture of interdisciplinary teaching and research* (...)’ and that they ‘encourage students to ‘to transcend disciplinary boundaries by tackling complex and vexing challenges facing modern societies at local, national and global levels.’¹⁰ This overlaps with the vision of the journal, which also wants to cross disciplinary boundaries by combining methods of different approaches. The university, like the journal, also claims to be global oriented, i.e. focused on non-western as well on western countries. University and journal have the same aims and vision of how knowledge should be used. It thus seems to be that the journal is situated in an environment that can fully support their vision.

This reputation of the journal must be carried and preserved by the team of editors of the journal. They are the driving force of the journal and they decide whether an article is good enough to be published in *CSSH*. Since the journal does not have an editorial collective which making collective decisions, the editor carries a great responsibility. He or she can decide whether to reject or accept the articles, without being obliged to consult the rest of the board. This gives more weight the function of editor than when the decision process would be a collectively made.¹¹ However, peer-review process is an instrument to diminish the influence of the editor. Submissions are first read by at least two scholars who the advice either to accept or reject the essay.

The editor in the first volume of 2006 was Thomas Trautmann, currently a Professor Emeritus of History and Anthropology at the University of Michigan. He is specialised in the Ancient History of India, interested in the concept of kinship and Oriental scholarship in Colonial India and the history of anthropology. He thus combines history and anthropology, using the ideas and concepts of anthropology when studying Ancient India. In the fourth issue of 2006, Andrew Shryock took over his position as editor. Like Trautmann, Shryock is being interested in many subjects, although his focus lays somewhere else. As a professor of cultural anthropology he is interested in the region of Africa and the Middle East. His works on the Arab world contains topics as nationalism, tradition and modernity, oral tradition and the Islam. Next to his focus on the Arab world, he is also interested in different ethnic communities living in North America, hereby focusing among other things on the identity politics, ethnicity and transnational communities.

¹⁰ Vision and Goals, *University of Michigan*, <http://www.umich.edu/pres/mission.php>, viewed on 11-04-2011.

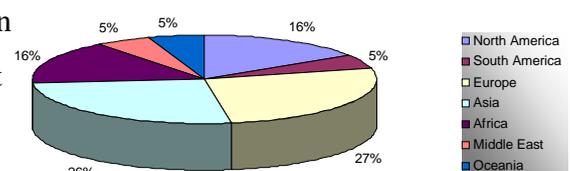
¹¹ Thomas Trautmann, ‘Being editor’, 22-23.

Currently¹², the board exist out of ten people: one editor, a managing editor, an assistant and the editorial committee. In this committee, the previous editor Trautmann and Grew are both represented. The board exist out of 6 anthropologist and 4 historians. Besides the assistance, all members of the board are professors. It thus exists out of high educated persons. Since the journal is aims to be global in scope, it is interesting to know in which regions the members of the board are specialised. As showed in the figure below, most of the editors focus on either Asia or Europe, or both. In contrast, the Middle East, Oceania and South America are poorly represented in the board.

Since the journal is founded by a woman, one may assume that the gender rate is quite even divided. However, the gender rate male/female is 70 to 30.¹³ This implies that, although the journal is founded by a woman, men are in the majority.

The editors decide whether essays¹⁴ are suitable to be published. What are the conditions the author has to meet? There is quite an extensive list of conditions authors should come up to. The article should be written in a way that makes complex issues comprehensible to somebody who is not specialized in the subject. Not surprisingly, it is stressed that the essay should be characterized by ‘by a comparative perspective in [its] theoretical, geographic, temporal, methodological, or disciplinary focus’¹⁵. Furthermore, the essay must meet the general aims of the journal. Hence, the submissions have to deal with an issue in social science or humanity, focus on recurrent patterning and change in human society. The following phrase gives an impression what reviewers have to take into account in their advices towards the editor: ‘We ask readers to evaluate the importance of a paper’s theoretical contribution, the rigor of its analysis, the author’s deployment of evidence in support of their arguments,

Geographical focus off study of the editors, 2011.



¹² Since exact details of the editorial board in the period 2006-2010 are hard to find, this part will focus on the current board. Since there is no evidence of big changes within the board, I assume that the conclusions draw here, also counts for the period 2006-2010.

¹³ <http://www.umich.edu/>, viewed on 11-04-2011.

¹⁴ In the document “instructions for contributors” the term essay is used instead of articles. Presumably, because a submission is not an article until it is published in a journal.

¹⁵ Comparative studies in society and history. Notes for contributors, <http://cssh.lsa.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/SubmissionPolicies.pdf>, viewed on 11-04-2011.

and the relevance of the paper to a comparative perspective.’¹⁶ These conditions give the impression that the essay under consideration has to be innovative – regarding the aim of a theoretical contribution – and comparative. This is hence what should be expected from the content of the journal

The journal has an anonymous peer review process. This anonymity refers to the reviewer and not to the author. The submitted essays are read by at least two independent scholars in the field of the subject of the essay. The journal claims to be stringent in review procedure; just one out of ten articles submitted are published. The most common reasons why articles are rejected is their lack of comparative aspects, the emphasis on policy recommendations instead of giving a theoretical analysis, the author falls short in making an original contribution to the field or published his/her article already in another journal. The comparative element thus is the most important condition an essay must fulfil. Moreover, regarding the rejection on the policy recommendation implies that the *CSSH* does not want to be a journal which provides guidelines for the future, i.e. to be a prescriptive theoretical journal. *CSSH* thus wants to distance itself from fields in which this is more accepted, like International Relations or philosophy.

3. Content

Sections

The journal mainly exists out of research articles and does not contain many book reviews. Some issues contain a review article; an article which gives a critical reflection on the current state of a scientific debate. An example of such an article is ‘Globalization, the Chinese State, and Chinese Subjectivities’, written by Vanessa L. Fong.¹⁷ This article contains an overview of the recent development in the social studies on China. She reassesses this development by including processes as globalization and new theoretical assumption in the social sciences.

A rubric which the previous editor Grew praised in his article about the history of *CSSH* is the *CSSH discussion*.¹⁸ In the period 2006-2010, this rubric just appears ones in 2009. This is however quite an interesting an alternative section, since it is a debate between three authors in one article. This provides several perspectives of the debate and gives the authors the opportunity to challenge one another. This debate and the review articles are

¹⁶ Ibidem, 2.

¹⁷ Vanessa L. Fong, ‘Globalization, the Chinese State, and Chinese Subjectivities’ *CSSH*, 48 (2006) 946-953.

¹⁸ Grew, ‘On the society’13.

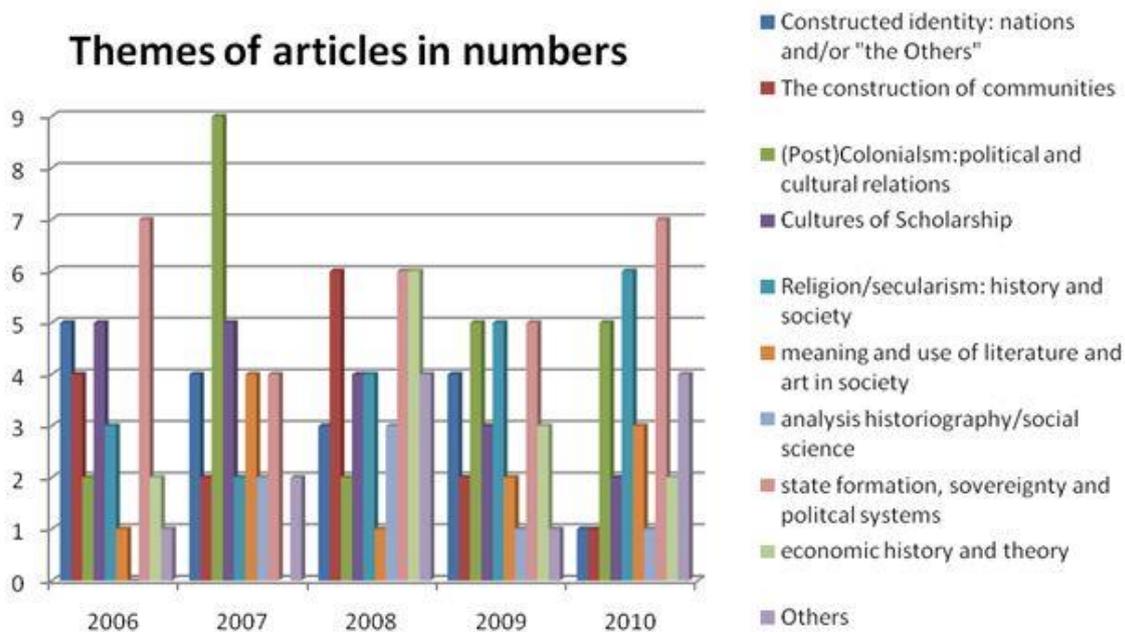


counted as research articles in the analysis to themes, geographical focus and periods of the research articles. Since research articles are 95% of the journal, the rest of the analysis is focused only on the research articles. The analysis of these articles will be about the themes of the articles, geographical focus and the period the article is about.

Before turning to this analysis of the article first some quantitative information about the sections will be given. The average number of articles is 31,6 per volume, about eight articles per issue. What is striking is the rise of book reviews. In 2006 there were just five book reviews, while in 2010 this number increased to twenty. Another change in the book reviews is that from 2007 on, the book reviews started to deal with more than one book per review. In this way the journal aims to compare several books in on one theme.

Themes, geographical focus and period

The abstracts of the journal do not provide enough information about the articles. Most of them are just the first sentences of the article's introduction instead of a short description of its content. To find out what an article is about, it is helpful to read the Editorials. These sections provide a good overview of all the articles and place them in a broader context. It is written by the editor; in this case from 2007-2010 by Shyrock and this confirms the idea about the great influence of the editor. The interpretation of the articles and the context wherein the articles are placed, derives from this one person.



First of all the journal contains a great variety in themes, which is presumably a consequence of the interdisciplinary approach. It is interesting to read what anthropological methods and theories can add to historical debates. An example of this additional value of interdisciplinary research can be found in the article about stateformation in the Middle Ages ‘Celtic Fosterage: Adoptive Kinship and Clientage in Northwest Europe’.¹⁹ This article gives a new dimension to the historiography on the medieval period, as it places the modern interpretation of the concept of kinship and fosterage to historical times. The article concludes that fosterage in medieval period can be interpreted as elementary structures of familial clientage and feudatory state formation. This topic on stateformation, sovereignty and political systems is popular as showed in the figure above; it remain a recurrent theme in all the volumes. Often, the articles are about our biased view on stateformation, showing how the state systems in Africa or Eastern-Europe worked differently than assumed. The author tries to show that our European or western view constrain us to understand the developments and systems in other states of areas.

In opposition to this recurrent theme of state formation, the theme on colonial history fluctuates between 2006 and 2010. Most of the articles in this theme are dealing with the relation between the mother country and the colony. There are articles about cooperation and

¹⁹ Peter Parks, ‘Celtic Fosterage: Adoptive Kinship and Clientage in Northwest Europe’ *CSSH*, 48(2006), 359-395.

resistance between the western countries and the (former) colonies, oppression and propaganda of the western government in the colony, but also the cultural exchange between the colonizers and the colonised. Articles dealing with this cultural exchange, try to undermine the idea that only the western countries brought their cultural heritage to the colonies. This theme remains quite important, although in 2008 the emphasis was more on the construction of communities within colonies. I will come back to this theme later in this essay.

Closely related to the theme colonialism is the construction of nations and “the Others”. The articles sorted under this theme dig in the problem on how an identity is constructed. The linguistic aspect, propaganda and commemoration are examples how scholars try to clarify this. The construction of communities or national identity often deals with former colonies, where nationalistic movements try to develop the idea of a nation. Some articles try to clarify the difference and similarities between the construction of nations in different areas or periods, using the concepts of representation, commemoration and propaganda.²⁰ Furthermore, the Construction of “the Others” refer most of the time to Orientalism: a construction of the eastern region by western countries. Some scholars argue that the representation of the Orient developed in the early modern period still exist nowadays. From 2008 on, more articles which deal with the perception and construction of the “Others” in relation to the national identity, are centred around current debates on immigrants and Muslims. The perspectives of Muslims from western point of view and vice versa are analysed. This shift can be illustrated by the article ‘Convert Alert: German Muslims and Turkish Christians as Threats to Security in the New Europe’, written by Esra Özyürek.²¹ In this article the author describes how the debate at the beginning of the 21st century on the identity of Europe is influenced by the conversion to Islam of European people.

This theme is similar to the theme constructing communities. The latter thought, focus on the constructing of identity on the level of communities within a nation. These articles focus on post-colonial countries, immigrant-communities in South or North America or Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Themes on the construction of either nations, the

²⁰ Obviously, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined communities* are thus still relevant in this debate on the construction of nations.

²¹ Esra Özyürek ‘Convert Alert: German Muslims and Turkish Christians as Threats to Security in the New Europe’ 51 (2009) *CSSH*, 91-116.

“Others or communities, were mostly popular in the first three volumes. The focus on communities from 2008 onwards was more related to religion.

This shift of theme was coupled with a shift in geographical orientation. From 2008, there is more written about the Middle East than beforehand. Especially in 2009 there were a lot of articles on the Ottoman Empire, on the perception of the Islam in the Arab world self and their perception to the western countries. Hence, the theme about religion and secularism becomes more important. The assumption that religion will eventually die out and disappear in non-western countries is being challenged. One issue in 2010 deals only with problems regarding secularism. This is quite exceptional for *CSSH*, since it never deals just with one topic in an issue. The issue contains articles about secularism and Islam, the analytical framework of secularism and the how secularism did already occur in the 19th century.

Both these shifts, the shift towards the Middle East, the Islam and secularism, reflect the current global political debates about Islam, immigration and the European identity. However, it is remarkable that the first editor Thomas Trautmann is interested in India, in the concept of kinship and Oriental scholarship in Colonial history of India, whereas his successor Andrew Shryock is specialised in the Middle East and North Africa and thereby focussing on the Islam. It seems again that the editor is the most important figure of the journal. Other evidence pointing in this direction is the focus on Oriental scholarship. In the first two years articles on the ‘cultures of scholarship’ are quite common. The often deals with the development of anthropology in the 19th and early 20th century, focusing on the relation between western culture, political aims and the construction of science about the distant, exotic countries. Although ‘cultures of scholarship’ remains a recurrent theme, the focus on Orientalism or anthropology changes to the focus development and roots of International Relations and Development studies. Despite this shift, it still deals with the interaction of science and the society.

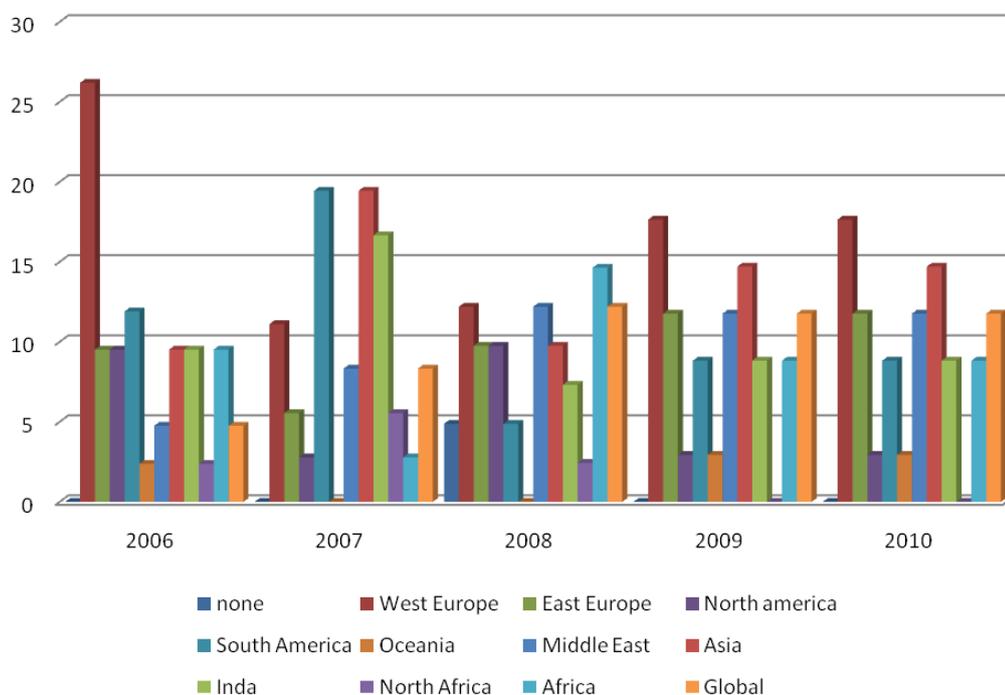
Other themes are: the meaning and use of literature and art in society; analysis of historiography or social science; economic history and theory; and others. The first theme is related to the question how art and literature shape our world view and assumptions about what is right and wrong. The second theme, “analysis of historiography and social science” deals with topics about the development, the current state and the flaws in both fields. Economic history and theory, the third theme, forms an example which changed its scope from world systems theories like Wallerstein, toward global relationships. Economic history is more focused on trade systems and exchanges between regions, while economic theory is

more focused on the relation between culture and economic growth. Despite the quite extensive list of themes used in this analysis, there are some articles which did not fit in either of these themes. These articles are covered under “Others”.

All in all, it can be concluded that construction and identity are more or less central themes in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Although there are some fluctuations in during the five years of analysis, the theory of constructivism is integrated in the majority of the articles. Another constant element in themes of the journal is the anthropological and historical approach, as most of the articles deals with anthropological or historical questions, using methods of both fields. Hence, the bridge between social science and history is clearly there.

Although the themes overlap, there is not much of debate in the articles, since most of the articles deal with new approaches on subject, without really going into discussion with other authors and scholars who have written about the same topic. An exception is the earlier mentioned *CSSH* discussion in 2009 and some of the review articles.

Geographical focus of articles in percentages

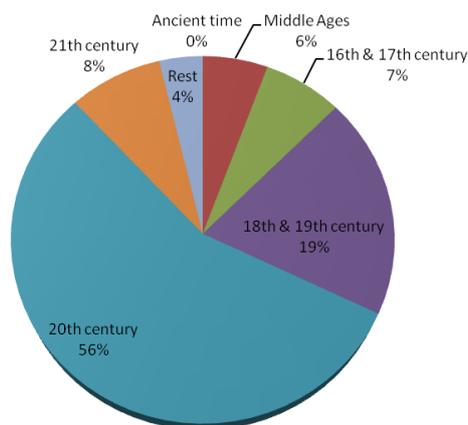


A lot of articles in the first volume are focused on Western Europe. This estimate can however give a wrong impression, since most of the articles on Western Europe contain a

comparison with a non-western country or with Eastern Europe. This is quite logical, since themes on colonial history deals with the relation mother country and colony, whereas the themes on state formation or construction of identity include comparison between different states or different communities. Hence, a lot of articles deals with more than one region, in which Western Europe is often one of this regions. This focus on Western Europe however, declined, while the focus on the Middle East and Africa or the whole world increased.

The graph about the periods the articles cover, are given below. The 20th century is the most common period where authors write about, followed by the 18th and 19th century. Ancient time are almost never included, only when dealing with longer period, e.g. from the prehistory until now, or from Ancient times until now. These long term period are included in the category “Rest”. Articles about these long-term periods often contain topics about world history or the continuation of a theme through history.

Periods of articles, in percentages, 2006-2010

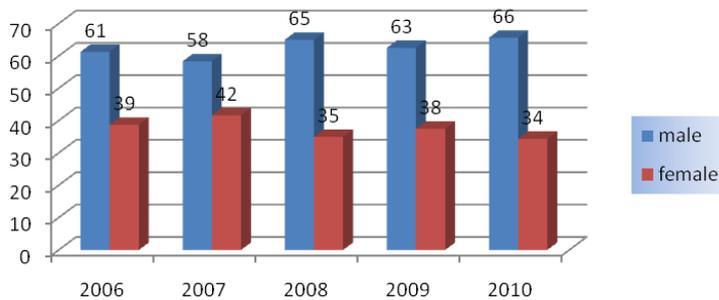


It is not surprising that the 20th and 19th centuries are overrepresented, as most of the articles deals with nations, communities, colonialism or scholarship. However, this overemphasis on the recent years seem to be in contradiction with the journals claim to be interdisciplinary and to have a

great variety in articles. The period before 18th century are poorly represented in the journal. Only 13% of the total deals with these periods.

4. The authors

Authors: gender, in percentage, 2006-2010

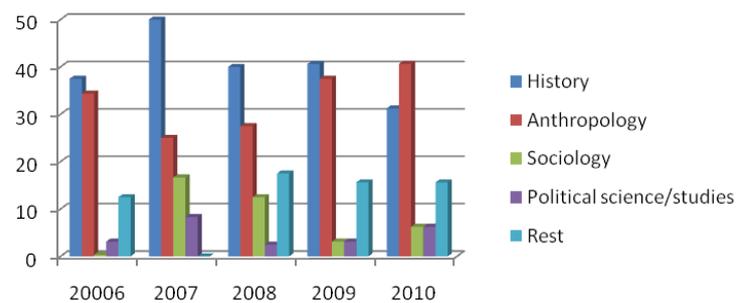


Just as it is important to know who runs the journal, it is equally essential to know more about who is writing the content of the journal, i.e. having an idea about the authors of the articles. This section will provide some statistics about the authors: the gender rate, the department they

are from, their professional degree and the continent they are currently living. Moreover, the universities where more than five authors come from will be gives as well.

The ratio male/female is more or less the same from 2006 to 2010. In 2007 the difference between the number of women and men is 16%, the least in comparing with other years. In comparing with other journals, women are quite good represented. This might have to do with the fact that the journal is founded by a woman, though this cannot be estimated.

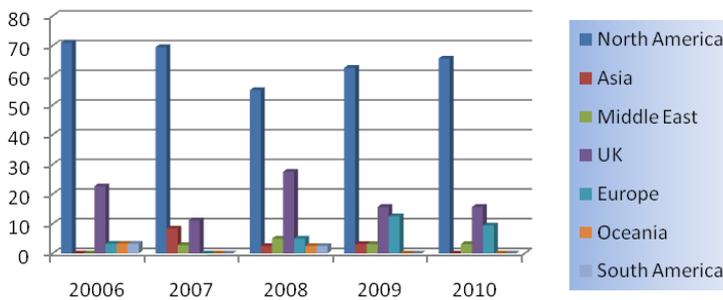
Authors: department , in percentages, 2006-2010



Most of the authors are from history or anthropology. This observation is in line with the conclusion made in the content about the approach of the articles: most of the articles were about anthropology or history. Moreover, it does confirm the idea that the articles include a comparative element between social science and history.

In the last year the number of historians declined, but it is not sure if this trend continues this way as it might be an exception. However, it can also have to do with the change of editor from an historian to an anthropologist. The last year there were more anthropologists than historians. To know more about the relation between the editor and the department the authors of the articles are from, it is necessary to look to the long term development.

Authors: continent, in percentage, 2006-2010

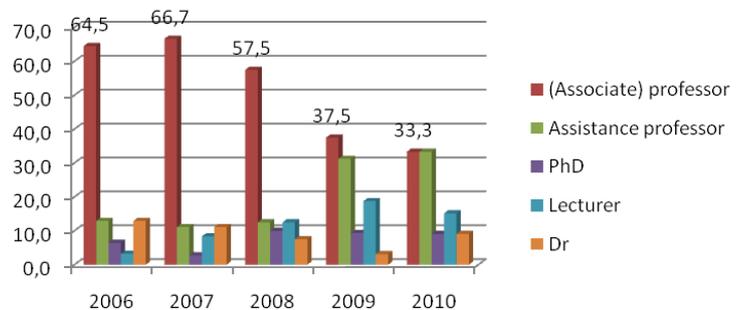


since the authors of the Middle East are from Israel or Turkey. The UK comes next to the USA, followed by the rest of Europe.

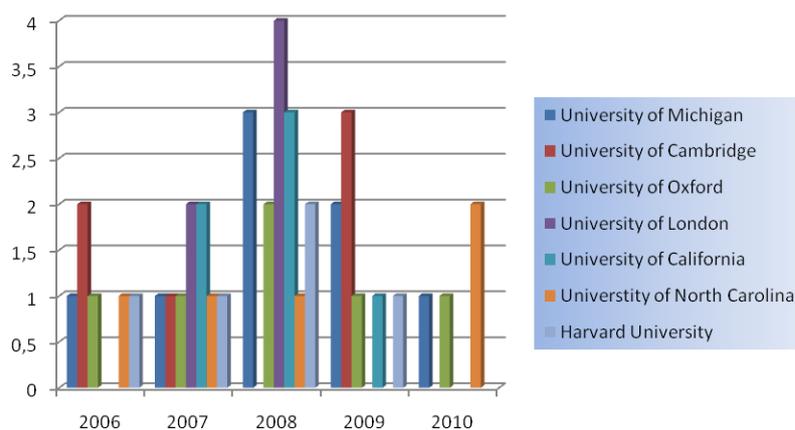
The numbers of professor of the authors are declining in the period 2006-2010. A reason for this decline can be that the journal, i.e. the editor,

For a journal that wants to be international the next graph must be disappointed. Almost all the authors are from universities in North America. Only a few of these North American authors come from Canada, the rest are all from the USA. There are no African scholars,

Authors: profession in percentage, 2006-2010



Authors: university they come from, per year from 2006-2010



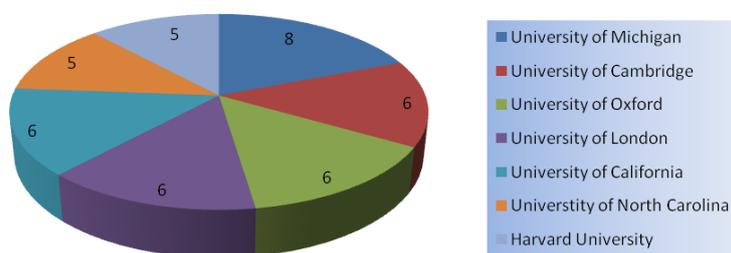
tries to attract young authors. The aim of the journal is certainly to be innovative, which can result in attract younger professionals. However, on the other hand it may have to do with declining reputation of the journal, although this is doubtful as is showed in the impact factor.

The universities where more than 5 authors come from (in total in the years 2006-2010), are showed in the following graphs. The most authors come from the University of Michigan, what can hardly be a surprise since the journal is supported by this university and the *The Society for the Comparative Study of Society and History*, which exist out of professors from University of Michigan. The total number of authors in these five years (only

research and review articles) is 172. This is more than the total amount of articles, as some of the articles are written by two authors.

There are three universities of the United Kingdom included as is showed in the pie graph below. The universities presented in the graphs are well known universities with a high reputation. This gives an indication on the quality of the authors. Other high ranked universities, such as the university of Chicago or Brown University are also represented.

**Authors: university they come from, total
2006-2010**



To rephrase, most of the authors are from USA or UK, most of them are men and working in the department of history or anthropology. The number of professors decreased in the period of analysis. There can be several reasons to clarify this development. One could be that the journal is more eager to attract innovative writings from young scholars. However, this is more speculative and more qualitative research should be done to explain this. Like the decline in number of professors, there are fewer historians among the authors in 2010 than there were in 2006. Can this be a consequence of the great influence of one man in the journal, the editor? Again, to found this out there should be more research done to the quantitative and qualitative developments in the *CSSH*

Conclusion

Comparative Studies in Society and History, a journal which tries to be innovative, interdisciplinary, i.e. comparative, and international. Do they succeed to fulfil their promises? In this essay five years of the journal have been analyzed, wherein I first provided some general information of the journal and then moved on to more detailed information. The founder of the journal, Sylvia Thrupp, who herself brought more dynamic in the field of

medieval social-economic history. She used new methods, derived from social and economic theory. Founding the journal, she wanted to contribute and push forward comparative studies. Analysing this journal, I asked myself if her spirit is still there. Reading the aims of the journal and the conditions for contributors, it seems if the journal still aims to bring together different disciplines. However, what is important is the content of the articles.

The journal contains many interesting articles with comparative analysis, in which history and anthropology are often combined. Some articles try to challenge assumptions in the historiography of colonial history, or they reassess certain concepts in anthropology. Authors try to demonstrate how our culture and our history influence our view on the object of history and social sciences. Or they try to discover recurrent themes from the ancient until modern times. Articles on religion, focused not on the inherent value of religion, but on the interaction of religion, culture and human behaviour. A good example in for this is the article ‘Columbus ultimate goal: Jerusalem’, where the author states that the reason why Columbus started his journey, was to find a route to Jerusalem. The use of religious themes in history and nowadays in society can give a better understanding of communities of personal behaviour. Therefore the journal can be called innovative and original. The majority of the articles contain a comparative element, whether this is between regions, periods or methods.

The articles are hence innovative and indeed combine methods of other disciplines to the main object of the article. One original section is the CSSH discussion in which several authors are going into debate about one topic. It is therefore a pity that this section rarely occurs in the period 2006-2010. However, what is missing is a debate about this comparative use of methods. Errors can occur when using history to explain current events and developments and vice versa, using social theory in history can lead to anachronism.

Another criticism can be made in regarding to the journal’s aim to be international; this does not correspond with the findings in this analysis when looking at the universities where most of the authors are working. There is not one author from African university included in the journal. There are only a few authors coming from South America or Asia. Dominant is the USA, followed by the UK. This is a disadvantage for a journal that tries to seek new approaches and aims to be international orientated. However, the dominance of universities from the USA and the UK is quite common in the scientific world.

The journal has a great variety in themes, but this cannot be claimed about the periods the articles deal with. Ancient time, middle ages and the 16th and 17th century are hardly represented in the journal. Some more variation should be made to further the aim of being



interdisciplinary and broadly oriented. Building bridges between history and social science should imply that scholars should look further than the modern times.

The editor of *CSSH* is an important figure, who has the task to keep the spirit of Sylvia Thrupp. The editor carries a great responsibility, as he is the one who can decide whether an article can be published. The peer-review process guarantees that this decision is not a one-man-show. His influence however, cannot be denied. The change of editor in 2006 implied also a shift in theme of articles. Nevertheless, the editor has to deal with an editorial committee with influential people, like the previous editors. This will help to maintain giving priority to the general aims of the journal.

The overall conclusion of the journal is that it is innovative and original. Nearly all articles do contain a comparative element. In most of the cases this was a combination of history and social sciences, just what Sylvia Thrupp aspired and what the journal still promises to do. Hence, aside from the lack of scholars from universities outside the USA or the UK and themes about pre-modern historical periods, the journal does fulfil its most important claim. It does build bridges between social science and history.



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