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INTELLECTUAL COLLABORATION WITH THE THIRD REICH

TREASON OR REASON?

Edited by
Maria Björkman, Patrik Lundell and
Sven Widmalm



Intellectual Collaboration with the Third Reich

The book investigates the rather neglected “intellectual” collaboration between National Socialist Germany and other countries, including views on knowledge and politics among “pro-German” intellectuals, using a comparative approach. These moves were shaped by the Nazi system, which viewed scientific and cultural exchange as part and parcel of their cultural propaganda and policy. Positive views of the Hitler regime among intellectuals of all sorts were indicative of a broader discontent with democracy that, among other things, represented an alternative approach to modernization which was not limited to the German heartlands.

This book draws together international experts in an analysis of right-wing Europe under Hitler; a study which has gained new resonance amidst the wave of European nationalism in the twenty-first century.

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**Edited by Maria Björkman, Patrik Lundell,
and Sven Widmalm**

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Björkman, Maria, editor. | Lundell, Patrik, 1969- editor. | Widmalm, Sven, editor.

Title: Intellectual collaboration with the Third Reich : treason or reason? / edited by Maria Björkman, Patrik Lundell, and Sven Widmalm

Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2019. |

Series: Routledge studies in Second World War history | Includes

bibliographical references and index. Identifiers: LCCN 2018060410 |

ISBN 9780815394747 (hardback) | ISBN 9781351185110 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781351185097 (epub) | ISBN 9781351185103 (adobe) |

ISBN 9781351185080 (mobi)

Subjects: LCSH: Nazi propaganda—Europe. | National socialism—Public

opinion. | Hitler, Adolf, 1889-1945—Influence. | Germany—Intellectual

life—20th century. | Europe—Intellectual life—20th century. | Political

culture—Germany—History—20th century. | World War, 1939-1945—

Collaborationists. | Germany—Foreign relations—1933-1945.

Classification: LCC DD256.6 .H58 2019 | DDC 303.48/243009043—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018060410>

ISBN: 978-0-8153-9474-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-351-18511-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

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Acknowledgements

This volume originates from a conference organized by the research project “Brown networks” (*Bruna nätverk*), focussing on intellectual relations between Sweden and Nazi Germany. The project was financed by the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and the conference received support from The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences. Thanks also to Benjamin Martin for invaluable comments on the introduction.

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1 Collaboration and normalization

*Maria Björkman, Patrik Lundell &
Sven Widmalm*

The rise of right-wing extremism is a current as well as an historical problem. A word that has been used a good deal lately is “normalization”, the process of making what has seemed politically outrageous appear mainstream. The concept hints at the importance of cultural processes for political change. “Politics is downstream from culture” is a slogan associated with the American and European far right which implies that cultural normalization paves the way for political change.

But as culture is also a result of politics, the relationship between the two broad categories is perhaps best described using the “idiom” of co-production – i.e. they define one another in myriad ways that cannot be understood as linear or unidirectional (Jasanoff 2004). National Socialism is a prime example of this dynamic. The idea of a national culture, fostered by a racially homogenous “people’s community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*), was not invented by the Nazis but was central to their movement; at the same time, they attempted to establish a fascist culture (including in academic research, also the natural sciences) founded on the Nazi “world view” (*Weltanschauung*). As this book will discuss, Nazi cultural policy (*Kulturpolitik*) however often toned down extreme aspects of the Nazi world view, which helps explain why many prominent intellectuals in other countries participated in intellectual exchange with Germany or joined German-led international organizations. They were not necessarily enamoured of the regime or its ideology; intellectual co-operation was often seen as reasonable for pragmatic purposes. After all Germany had been a leader in many artistic, scholarly and scientific fields and to some extent still was.

This book discusses relations between Nazi Germany and a host of other countries in various intellectual – mostly academic – areas. The overarching theme, then, is cultural relations with Nazi Germany from a comparative perspective. An important aim is to throw light on the rationality behind and mechanisms of collaboration, which – because it involved the Third Reich – might easily be interpreted as politically suspect and morally sinister. German cultural policy during the Nazi era has been broadly dealt with in previous scholarship, as has individual actors. This book contributes a “foreign” perspective, demonstrating through 15 case studies on exchange in the sciences, arts and humanities how cultural-policy ambitions in the

Third Reich meshed with those of other countries – democratic as well as autocratic, European as well as non-European.

Collaboration of intellectuals with the Nazi regime raised questions dealt with already six years before the *Machtergreifung* by the Jewish philosopher and writer Julien Benda, in his famous book *La Trahison des Clercs* (1927) (“The Treason of the Intellectuals”, 2007). It is fuelled by rage against the intellectual class that Benda himself belonged to and that, as he thought, had abandoned the Enlightenment legacy by supporting the organized class hatred and virulent nationalism that had emerged in the 19th century. By abandoning a rational enlightened tradition in favour of irrational extremist movements like Italian fascism, Soviet bolshevism, or the Action Française, treasonous intellectuals imperilled Western culture. Benda focussed on right-wing radicalism, the roots of which he identified in German culture. From Romanticism onwards, German intellectuals had chosen to serve Power and abandoned the ambition to offer moral guidance from an independent position.

Our concern is similar to Benda’s; the tension between intellectual autonomy and political partisanship in the face of vile extremism informs many of the book’s chapters. Unlike Benda, however, we discuss how this conflict played out in international exchange and collaboration. Furthermore, our concern is less with the moral probity of intellectuals and more with the rationality behind collaboration. One aspect that is discussed or at least implied in many contributions is that of normalization – not in the sense that the Nazi world view was necessarily made to seem normal but in the sense that it was often played down so that Nazi Germany could be accepted as a partner or even a leader in international collaboration.

Patrik Lundell has argued, in the case of Sweden, that “pro-German” (*tyskvänliga*) intellectuals who promoted collaboration with Nazi Germany tended to argue in accordance with a specific rationality emphasizing the need for an “objective” or “neutral” evaluation of conditions there (Lundell 2016, 2017). Using Daniel Hallin’s (1986) model for analysing objectivity in relation to media discourses in Sweden, Lundell describes this strategy as an attempt at normalization: by deemphasizing or toning down aspects of the Nazi world view, like anti-Semitism, Nazi politics could be removed from the category of the outrageous, concerning which there could be no serious discussion, to that of reasonable discourse, where debate and dialogue about the objective state of affairs in Germany was permissible and collaboration legitimized. As we will see in the following chapters, this strategy mirrored that of Third-Reich cultural policy, which was not so much about spreading hard-core Nazi ideology as about making Germany accepted as a collaborative partner. This rationality served the dual purpose of strengthening German cultural, academic, and therefore political influence and of providing Germany with much needed intellectual input from other countries – autocratic as well as democratic. The normalization of Nazi Germany was however far from ideologically neutral. Cultural exchange with the Third Reich involved participation in the co-production of a nascent fascist World Order founded on the belief, not in itself

peculiarly fascist, that “any vision of international political, legal, or economic order must be accompanied by an international vision of cultural order” (Martin 2016, p. 3, cf. Iriye 1997, ch. 1). Despite their fundamental hostility towards internationalism, fascist states therefore “attempted to assume and copy its structural pattern” (Herren 2017, p. 192).

German cultural policy relied on a system of public institutions. The *Auswärtiges Amt* (AA, German Foreign Office), acting through embassies, legations or consulates was central in these endeavours. They were closely associated with a system of institutions promoting academic exchange, importantly the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD, German Academic Exchange Service) and later the *Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Institut* (DWI, German Science Institute) (Hausmann 2001). The propaganda ministry also had a stake in academic and cultural collaboration through the *Deutsche Kongress-Zentrale*, created in 1934 among other things to regulate academic exchange (Herren 2002).

On one level, there was nothing exceptional about this. Cultural policies aimed to strengthen national brands were common in Europe and elsewhere and became more organized after the First World War. But there was a fascist tendency reflected in Germany’s aspiration to organize various cultural interest groups – through their own *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture) and its eight subdivisions and through international bodies organized on corporatist principles with each country being represented by a national organization. The ideology behind the system was, according to Benjamin Martin, simultaneously national and international – “inter-national” – in that national specificity was emphasized along with the need for collaboration. A strong motive for non-German organizations to join was professional interest to regulate, e.g. international copyright law. At the same time, by joining international organizations, like the Permanent Council for International Cooperation among Composers, leading intellectuals and the corporations they represented, legitimized the Third Reich’s ambition to guide European cultural developments (Garberding 2007; Martin 2016).

The public face of Nazi cultural policy was hence somewhat benign, emphasizing national specificity and common professional interests. As Pamela M. Potter has argued, cultural policy in Germany itself did not have the impact suggested by propaganda manifestations like book burnings or exhibitions of *entartete Kunst/Musik*. It targeted specific individuals and groups but allowed for a wide variety of artistic expressions including modernistic ones if the artists were not seen as enemies of the regime (Potter 2016). Potter emphasizes that many historians have shown that modernistic ideals indeed thrived among radical right-wingers in Weimar and Nazi Germany (cf. Herf 1984; Griffin 1991), but that popular and even academic accounts often revert to the misleading image of total suppression. This was true also of the sciences where much has been made of the attempts by the likes of Nobel Laureates Philipp Lenard and Johannes Stark to create German or Aryan versions of, e.g. physics, chemistry and mathematics that

should be practically oriented and devoid of Jewish influences. Such attempts failed, and much research carried out in the Third Reich was “normal” according to internationally accepted scientific standards (Walker 1995; Hentschel 1996). The attempts to create a German version of Christian doctrine, founded on the idea that Jesus was not Jewish, likewise did not gain much traction with a regime that was not religiously oriented (Heschel 2008).

The question of normalization echoes in fascist historiography, not least in relation to the idea of modernity. National Socialism has often been described as a form of cultural madness, founded on irrational hatred, for example what Saul Friedländer (1997) called “redemptive anti-Semitism”. But there is also a tradition (often Marxist) of downplaying ideological aspects of fascism, favouring interpretations that relate to the logic of modernity, e.g. contradictions in the capitalist system. A controversial example is Götz Aly and Susanne Heim’s *Architects of Annihilation* (2002 [1991]) describing the genocidal eastward expansion of the Third Reich as a technocratic project following a capitalist rationality. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that “it was the spirit of instrumental rationality, and its modern, bureaucratic form of institutionalization, which had made the Holocaust-style solutions not only possible, but eminently ‘reasonable’” (Bauman 1989, p. 18). Richard J. Evans has been critical of such approaches but nevertheless stresses that using “barbarism as the central conceptual tool for understanding the Third Reich is to mistake moral condemnation for thought” (Evans 2015, loc 1413). Many historians of fascism agree that the movement was not merely a cultish hodgepodge but had an ideologically coherent core built around the idea of national (in Germany also racial) exceptionalism (Griffin 2012). Without subscribing to any essentialist definition of fascism, we do agree that Nazi ideology displayed a level of coherence, with race-biological ethno-nationalism as a central characteristic, combining irrational elements like redemptive anti-Semitism with scientism. This goes to prove that “modern science and technology on their own are no guarantee against barbarism” (Herf 2000, p. 74). As Robert Proctor has pointed out, Nazi medicine was not necessarily bad science nor devoid of ethics, but the rationality behind the Nazi doctors’ ethical considerations followed a “criminal logic” (Proctor 2000, p. 343). Hence, normalization in the area of intellectual exchange was not only a matter of de-emphasizing gruesome aspects of the Nazi world view, be it by Nazi cultural institutions and individuals or by their partners abroad. It also chimed with the Nazi’s de facto affirmation of many intellectual pursuits that were considered normal and modern in e.g. western democracies. Nazi ideology was nevertheless part of what has often been referred to as the Faustian bargain of collaboration. Though subdued, it nevertheless crossed the borders of nations and minds as a form of intellectual contraband.

The Swedish case

Sweden does not figure prominently in this volume. But as it originates from a conference organized by a research project, “Brown networks”

(*Bruna nätverk*; Björkman *et al.* 2016a), focussing on intellectual relations between Sweden and Germany, the book's thematic and analytical scope, which was first established from a Swedish perspective, will now be elaborated using examples from this project and other Swedish research.

Like many other western countries, Sweden introduced universal suffrage in connection with the First World War (1919). In the interwar years, the party system was dominated by reformist Social Democracy on the one hand (sometimes collaborating with a centrist agrarian party) and a coalition of right-wing parties on the other, with liberals losing influence. These mainstream parties were flanked by small extremist ones on the left and right. During the Second World War, there was a Social-Democratic led coalition government.

Ties between Sweden and the (second) German Reich had been strong in many areas: political (right as well as left-wing), economic, academic, cultural, military, religious and so on. The First World War saw a division along political lines with the left mostly supporting the Entente and the right leaning more towards the Central Powers. While American influences did grow in the 1920s, ties to Germany remained largely intact. Sweden, for instance, collaborated with moderates among the Entente in the International Research Council (IRC) and the League of Nations to put an end to the ostracism of Germany from those bodies. Like in, e.g. the Netherlands, Switzerland and Denmark, neutrality was seen as a distinguishing political and also cultural trait constituting an obligation to mediate between the great powers, not only in politics but also in culturally significant areas like research and religion (Lettevall *et al.* 2012). With the rise of National Socialism attitudes to the “new Germany”, broadly speaking, reproduced the dividing line from the First World War with left-wing intellectuals being mostly hostile to the Hitler regime and conservatives showing a more positive interest, but with both sides remaining culturally attached to Germany. In the first years after the *Machtergreifung* perplexity, hostility and confusion (not least regarding anti-Semitism) characterized Swedish reactions. In a few years, cultural and academic relations were however re-established, also by many who disliked the regime. Exchange continued from around 1935 and throughout much of the war, not only among academics and intellectuals like journalists but in areas like religion, business, government, sports, and not least the military (Richardson 1996).

During these years, popular support for German-style fascism was low in Sweden and right-wing extremist parties got almost no votes in the general elections (Åmark 2011, ch. 9). Among academics and other intellectuals, there were few organized fascists. There were however several prominent individuals and organizations that promoted the German cause, and sometimes Nazi ideology. Important individuals – leaders in their respective fields in Sweden as well as internationally – included world famous geographer, “explorer” and writer Sven Hedin, Nobel Laureate chemist Hans von Euler, pioneering geneticist and plant breeder Herman Nilsson-Ehle, leading literary historian and journalist Fredrik Böök, pathologist Folke Henschen and

histologist Gösta Häggqvist (both at the Karolinska Institute), sculptor Carl Milles, and composer Kurt Atterberg. The first important Nazi-positive organization with intellectual pretensions was Samfundet Manhem (the Manhem Society), created in 1934, unusual in openly promoting anti-Semitism; its impact was however limited because of its extremism (Berggren 2013, 2014). There were a number of more mainstream organizations in Sweden that became more or less co-ordinated (*gleichschaltet*) with time. Among these were several Swedish–German “friendship societies” predating the Third Reich – importantly Swedish–German societies in the larger cities. There were also many clubs and organizations catering to various interests among members of the German–Swedish community – social, cultural, philanthropic, or professional (for a list, see Forsén 2015, pp. 347–350). A special position was occupied by the general-interest German Colonies that were founded in ten Swedish towns and cities from 1935 and that were Nazified from the beginning. Most important among these was the German Colony in Stockholm, with 2,500 individual as well as organizational members (Forsén 2015, pp. 99–102 and *passim*). Relations between these organizations and the German legation were often close.

The most important academic and cultural “pro-German” (though not explicitly pro-Nazi) organization in Sweden, with more than 5,000 members, was Riksföreningen Sverige–Tyskland (RST, the Swedish–German National Association), founded in the southern university town Lund in 1937. It was a kind of friendship society and not officially part of the network of co-ordinated associations that took orders from Berlin. Its stated mission was to promote a “neutral” or “objective” – i.e. positive – image of the “new Germany”, which it did through its journal, through other publishing ventures, and through cultural activities like lectures and film screenings (Lundell 2017). A main target of RST propaganda was the Swedish press which they claimed gave a factually distorted image of developments in Germany. Not least the liberal daily *Dagens Nyheter*, owned by the Jewish Bonnier family, was a target of criticism. Among RST’s members were many university teachers, physicians, lawyers and so on, including all of the above-mentioned prominent “pro-German” intellectuals except for Böök (Hübinette 2002).

It is not a coincidence that RST was founded in Lund. Fascist student organizations were very active there, and Lund probably had more Nazi sympathizers among university teachers than other establishments of higher education in Sweden (Oredsson 1996). The most notorious demonstrations of anti-Semitism among Swedish students were however not limited to Lund. In 1939, students in Stockholm and Uppsala as well as Lund demonstrated and voted against a suggestion that ten Jewish physicians would be allowed to practice in Sweden, claiming that they would crowd out Swedes from the labour market (Larsmo 2007; Högberg 2013; Berg 2016; Ljungström 2016).¹ Similarly, in 1937, Nazi students at Stockholm University demonstrated against the appointment of the expatriated Jew David Katz to a chair in psychology (Nilsson 1989).

The Swedish press was divided along ideological lines with regard to the Hitler regime, with liberal or socialist papers being mostly critical and conservative papers being more “neutral” or mildly positive. A small number of newspapers were outspokenly pro-Nazi, but their readership was limited. On the other hand, and similarly to the RST journal, a few well-established newspapers gave “pro-German” intellectuals a platform with significant impact, thereby helping to normalize the discourse concerning Nazism. After war broke out, the coalition government issued regulations that the press should not upset any belligerent power, which in practice meant Germany. A series of repressive measures were taken against the few papers that did not comply. Furthermore, during the early war years, journalistic exchange was upheld through “press visits” by Swedes to Germany and occupied territories and by Germans to Sweden (Schierbeck 1995). This was in line with the Government’s policy of neutrality according to which the press should present as “objective” a view of events as possible (Lundell 2017, p. 104). Before it became obvious that Germany was losing the war, normalization hence had the status of official press policy in Sweden.

Exchange between Sweden and Germany during the Third Reich was guided by social networks of like-minded intellectuals and by a system of Swedish and German institutions, but there is no sharp distinction between these categories. Nilsson-Ehle, von Euler, and Hedin for instance constituted an extremely powerful hub by virtue of their extensive networks, national as well as international, and also because of their institutional affiliations. Nilsson-Ehle, a Nazi sympathizer, was a central figure internationally in genetics and plant breeding (Tunlid 2004). He was likewise a leading proponent of eugenics and for many years a board member of Statens institut för rasbiologi (the Government Institute for Race Biology, 1922–1958). There he was a close ally of the Director Herman Lundborg, also a Nazi sympathizer, and helped promote international contacts that (years before the rise of National Socialism) included several future leaders of Nazi eugenics, like Eugen Fischer, Fritz Lenz, Hans Günther and Ernst Rüdin (Hagerman 2016). In 1937, Nilsson-Ehle became the first chairman of RST (cf. below). von Euler, who originated from Germany, was a central figure in Swedish–German scientific and cultural relations for more than half a century. He was very active among German expats in Stockholm: in 1937, he became head of the Germany Colony and, from 1941, he chaired the board of the Nazified German School founded that year. He received several awards and honours from Nazi Germany and was, at one point, considered for the position of director of the Reichsforschungsrat (Reich Research Council) (Widmalm 2011). Among the three, Hedin was the most outspoken Nazi sympathizer. He met with Hitler – an admirer of his books – on numerous occasions and was the only foreigner (among the planned five, one for each continent) to address “world youth” at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 (Odelberg 2012, pp. 54–58). Nilsson-Ehle, von Euler and Hedin constituted such a strong pillar of support for the “new Germany” also because they

were connected with one another socially. All three belonged to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the RST; Hedin was also a fellow of the literary Swedish Academy; von Euler and Hedin were both members of the board of the co-ordinated Svensk–Tyska föreningen (Swedish–German Association) in Stockholm. Nilsson-Ehle and von Euler collaborated scientifically and Hedin used von Euler’s expertise concerning scientific conditions in Germany when writing his notorious tribute to the Hitler regime, *Germany and World Peace* (1937a, 1937b).² Similar networks existed in the humanities, not least German studies (*Germanistik*), though they were not focussed on individuals that were close to the trio of scientists when it came to national and international stature (Almgren 2005; Åkerlund 2010; Garberding 2015).

As Sheila Faith Weiss (2005) has shown, international activities of leading German eugenicists were co-ordinated to help fulfil the regime’s general cultural-policy goals. The fact that eugenics was at the core of Nazi ideology, and that eugenicists outside of Germany were divided with respect to Nazi views on matters like race and sterilization, made it especially challenging to maintain good relations and a position of German leadership in this field. When Ernst Rüdin was forced to resign from the presidency of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations (IFEEO) in 1936, due to a four-year time limitation, he could not be replaced by a compatriot as the presidency was supposed to circulate between member states. The numerically dominant and in all senses co-ordinated German fraction of IFEEO therefore promoted non-German candidates that supported Nazi eugenics. They found their man in Torsten Sjögren, a young Swedish psychiatrist who had worked with Rüdin in Munich, had been mentored by Lundborg and was supported also by Nilsson-Ehle (themselves considered suitable successors to Rüdin by the Germans but judged to be in too frail health). As president of IFEEO, Sjögren would indeed promote Nazi eugenics, so this episode exemplifies successful cultural policy, in the intellectual domain most closely associated with Nazi ideology to boot (Björkman 2011, p. 136, 142–143; Kühl 2013, pp. 107–108).

The eugenics network was similar to others in that it acted informally and also through channels provided by the system of institutions defining Nazi cultural policy that, as we have pointed out, was somewhat sanitized from an ideological perspective. A closer look however reveals sinister aspects like the continuous monitoring of political reliability and of course race. Diplomats and civil servants attached to the legation in Stockholm or to one of the consulates tried to keep a tab on these issues; sometimes, Swedish academics who were sympathetic to the “new Germany” were used as informers; besides, one closely followed what was written in the press and sent reports, press clippings or even verbatim translations of articles revealing the political alignment of Swedes back to Berlin (Almgren 2005; Widmalm 2016).

An illustrative example of this kind of monitoring is the expedition of three German historians to Sweden and Denmark in 1937. Masked as

a scholarly visit, it was in reality an attempt by the Nord- und Ostdeutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (North and East-German Research Association) to gauge attitudes among Scandinavian historians towards Nazi Germany – in particular, views on future research collaboration and on the treatment of Jews (Widmalm 2016, pp. 66–77). In a lengthy report, the Kiel historian Otto Scheel described attitudes among Swedish colleagues as mostly positive. The vice chancellor of Stockholm University, historian Sven Tunberg, saw no obstacles to Swedish–German exchange; as for the “Jewish question”, he explained that the negative reactions in Sweden to Nazi anti-Semitism depended on the circumstance that there were so few Jews in Sweden and that it should not cause any problems when it came to collaboration. Scheel claimed that these opinions were typical among Swedish historians. Because of Tunberg’s position, his support was seen as especially important and he became involved in complicated negotiations concerning exchange that included discussions about which scholarly topics were most appropriate from a *political* perspective, to help strengthen cultural ties between Sweden and Germany. Even the Schutzstaffel (SS) was put on the case, apparently because it was thought that Tunberg might become some sort of mole. As was pointed out by Goebbels’ Kongress-Zentrale already in 1936, German visitors to Sweden should however not take for granted that positive expressions about developments in Germany were sincere; they may only be a sign of politeness. And Tunberg’s own views are indeed difficult to pin down. But he continued supporting German exchange also when he became head of Swedish propaganda and counter-propaganda during the war, thus actively contributing to officially sanctioned normalization.

German cultural policy vis-à-vis Sweden was characterized by normalization in the sense that one attempted to play down controversial aspects of Nazi politics – not only anti-Semitism and political persecution, but also overtly ideological aspects of German research and research policy associated with such Nazi coryphées as Bernard Rust, Alfred Rosenberg and Heinrich Himmler, unsavoury characters also in the eyes of many Swedish Third-Reich supporters. Therefore, it was important to keep track not only of which Swedes visited Germany, e.g. to lecture or be awarded academic honours (a very significant aspect of exchange to the German mind). German academics visiting Sweden were also monitored with respect to what views they expressed regarding the fatherland and not least what impression they made professionally (cf. Weiss 2005). The head of DAAD in Stockholm, Hermann Kappner, pointed out in 1936 that, in order to gain the trust of scientific institutions in Sweden, one must avoid anything that could be seen as propaganda and stand by strict professional values. Only then would it be possible to make the Swedes accept exchange with “such lecturers that would best serve the German cause” (quoted in Widmalm 2016, p. 63). Reversely, Kappner explained, Swedes should be invited to Germany only by universities and similar bodies with high scientific credibility – not by German–Scandinavian societies and the like that would always be suspected of

being politicized. A planned visit by the crackpot Nazi historian Herman Wirth in 1935 was consequently seen as problematic because Swedes might not think highly of his Ahnenerbe-style research (Hermann Kappner to Wilhelm Burmeister [Director of the DAAD], 28 August 1935, AA Pol. Arch., Stockholm, 336; cf. Löw 2013). A lecture at Lund by the orientalist Hans Heinrich Schaefer was severely criticized for being propagandistic in a way that was scholarly shoddy: it “lacked everything that has made German research world famous” and would only confirm the common misapprehension that German research had “given up on objectivity” (quoted in Widmalm 2016, p. 84).

As we have noted, the rhetoric of objectivity was popular also with Swedish academics, not least those writing in the RST journal, where it was constantly argued that developments in Germany must be treated objectively or neutrally (Lundell 2017). Herman Nilsson-Ehle explained, shortly after becoming chairman of the Association, that “he as a scientist had not become leader of this national association, unless its task had been to counter [...] the machinations against Germany in an objective and scientific manner” (quoted in Widmalm 1999, p. 259; cf. Lundell 2016, p. 277). When Hitler boycotted the Nobel Prize in 1937, because of the peace prize awarded by the Norwegian Parliament to Carl von Ossietzky, Sven Hedin bitterly complained that it should, in the future, be awarded by “Swedish men of whose impartiality and objectivity there can be no doubt, whatever party they belong to” (quoted in Widmalm forthcoming 2019). When students protested a visit by the biologist-philosopher Adolf Meyer-Abich to the agrarian university at Ultuna, Uppsala, in 1943, he and his hosts, several of whom were Nazi sympathizers, decried their inability to tell the difference between science and politics (Widmalm 2016, pp. 87–89). The direct cause of the protests was the shutdown of Oslo University by the Nazi authorities in December 1943, after which cultural exchange between Sweden and Germany actually would finally cease.

In a general sense, the Swedish case illustrates the structural preconditions for cultural exchange between Germany and other countries. Social networks and what is best described as an institutional system guided co-operation and other activities such as the exchange of lecturers or the bestowing of awards. There was nothing odd about this. The fact that Germany adhered to a system established before 1933 was part of the normalization process. Swedes participating in or promoting exchange with Germany would argue that politicizing was wrong and clouded judgement; from a position of neutrality, Germany should not be treated differently than other intellectually prominent nations. As we will see, these structural and rhetorical characteristics were typical of intellectual exchange between Germany and many other countries as well. At the same time, there were differences having to do with political circumstances, the partial overlap between individual and institutional initiatives, or – on the German side – a tangible tension between competing individuals and fractions among the Reich ministries or between party and government organizations. In short, networks and system were heterogeneous; the influence of organizations and individuals must be evaluated from case to case.

Overview of the book

Normalization is – though often not labelled as such in the individual chapters – an interpretative framework for the book as a whole, evident e.g. in the discursive strategy of cultural policy to emphasize a-political objectivity and neutrality, in the attempts to establish international collaboration on an ethno-nationalist footing, and in the downplaying of extreme ideological positions. The following chapters give witness to the partial success of this strategy. Networks and institutions provided a politically sanitized rationality for collaboration that was supported, or at least deemed acceptable, by intellectuals in many countries. A measure of the strategy's success is the relative invisibility of the “Jewish question” or other pronounced anti-rational aspects of the Nazi world view in collaborative contexts.

The seeming contradiction of Nazi cultural policy – a renunciation of internationalism or even objectivity coupled with the promotion of international exchange through networks and institutions – is analysed in the chapter by Andrea Albrecht, Lutz Danneberg and Alexandra Skowronski. They point to “a series of semantic accommodations, such as substituting the notion *internationale Verständigung* (international understanding) by *zwischenvölkisches Verstehen* (understanding between peoples)”. Nazi ideologues like Alfred Rosenberg and Philipp Lenard substituted “objective” science, associated with e.g. Jewish cosmopolitanism, with *völkisch* “situatedness”. In the case of literature, classical music and film, such reinterpretations allowed for German participation or leadership in international exchange, and this was to some extent true also for the sciences (Martin 2016). What could seem like “international” collaboration outside of Germany and among internationally minded German academics could simultaneously be interpreted as “*zwischenvölkisch*” collaboration by Nazi ideologues.

Benjamin Martin's chapter traces the *völkisch* mindset behind Nazi ideas of visual art, seen as a transcendent, non-commercial, non-political reflection of the nation. Unlike literature, music and film, the visual arts were not organized along a corporatist inter-national system; they nevertheless played a vital role in cultural diplomacy aiming to build networks among foreign intellectuals and cultural producers. A depoliticized understanding of art – similar to that of objective or neutral science discussed elsewhere in the book – masked the ideological intent of various international contacts to redefine art as essentially national so that it was not to be “confused and undermined by the cacophony of democratic politics and cultural life”. Like Albrecht *et al.*, Martin points out that during the war, the Nazi strategy of promoting collaboration between distinctively national cultures was undermined, also among fascist allies, by an increasing tendency to emphasize German hegemony.

Institutional networks functioned, during the Nazi period, much like they had earlier, though they were more politicized than before the First World War. In fact, a model for the system of fascist-led corporatist international

organizations in the arts might have been that of the sciences – with the International Association of Academies established in 1899 and resurrected in 1919 as the IRC, creating a system of scientific “unions” organized by national academies. In the interwar period, international organizations or national organizations with an international orientation (like the academies) flourished, constituting an infrastructure for international exchange where Nazi Germany played an important part. To this system belonged various organizations promoting bilateral cultural exchange. Johannes Dafinger’s chapter is focused on the Nazi umbrella organization of such societies that were German-based, *Vereinigung zwischenstaatlicher Verbände*. They maintained academic, intellectual, cultural and informal political transnational networks on a large scale, thereby helping to shape a common discourse of an ethno-nationalist “New Europe”. Members of these organizations retrospectively often described them as “apolitical”. But evidence shows that they contributed to the process of normalizing authoritarian, anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic ideas.

A partial failure of Nazi cultural policy is exemplified in Hans-Joachim Bieber’s overview of German-Japanese scholarly exchange. Politically, academically, and not least militarily bonds between the two countries strengthened during the Nazi period, when fascism (broadly defined) was implemented also in Japan, although a deepening of relations in research and culture after the Axis was established was prevented by wartime conditions. Exchange between the two countries was promoted by a system of institutions, like the Japan Institute and the Japanese-German Cultural Institute (both bilateral), but it was quite asymmetrical, e.g. with an emphasis on Japanese studying in Germany and Germans lecturing in Japan, but not vice versa. Furthermore, Japanese academics’ reactions towards Nazism were largely negative, and sensitivity to racial issues was high.

The overlapping of social networks and the system of institutions is illustrated by the essential role played by certain individuals who were central to both. The Swedish trio Nilsson-Ehle, Hedin and von Euler has been mentioned; other examples are Richard Strauss among German and non-German composers and Ernst Rüdin among German and non-German eugenicists and psychiatrists. Matthias Berg’s chapter discusses Karl Brandt, since the mid-1920s the most influential German historian when it came to international relations. He was from 1932 chairman of the German Historians’ Association and from 1933 vice president of the International Historical Committee. Focussing on questions of competition, co-operation and collaboration, Berg uses Brandt as an empirical lens to analyse how international relations could be navigated by scholars who were simultaneously under attack from colleagues who had fully adopted the Nazi world view by denouncing internationalism.

The established science academies were of course also affected by the changing conditions for international relations brought on by the rise of Nazi Germany. Fernando Clara investigates the balancing act performed by the Portuguese Academy of Sciences in Lisbon vis-à-vis Germany by

focussing on how matters pertaining to German foreign membership were handled. A postwar self-image of neutrality characterized by collaboration with the Allies is contrasted with a more ambiguous reality. Between 1932 and 1945, there was an increase in German and Italian foreign membership that had no equivalent among other nations. This was an indication of the affinity between these regimes and that of Salazar. In science, these relations were upheld by overlapping social networks and institutions.

The system of scientific academies was by no means dominated by Germany. Accommodation to Nazi interests in this context was probably more common among smaller nations like Portugal. Helke Rausch however shows that accommodation took place also in the emerging scientific great power across the Atlantic. Focussing on the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics, she analyses the Rockefeller Foundation's scientific philanthropy in Germany, where it remained eager to offer support until the end of the 1930s. Rockefeller representatives were attracted by the idea of apolitical scientific excellence promoted by Nazi policy, and the technocratic vision of the totalitarian regime meshed well with the foundation's social engineering vision of modernity. This example shows, along with many of the book's case studies, that there was often a specific rationality informing Nazi collaboration that, depending on political viewpoints, could just as easily be seen as morally reprehensible. In the case of Rockefeller, adverse public opinion in the US led to a withdrawal from the German scene in the late 1930s.

An example of how social networks among academics with similar intellectual and ideological inclinations ran parallel and sometimes intersected with institutional systems is the network of the Germanophile and *völkisch*-nationalist Swiss historian Hektor Amman whose professional and political trajectory is the focus of Fabian Link's chapter. Already before 1933, Amman's network had promoted the legitimization of a German-dominated Europe. As experts of ethnic politics from various perspectives, its members willingly assisted the Nazi regime, and after the war, they continued to help each other's careers, influencing Germanophone academia long into the postwar period.

Another example of network-based normalization is given in Annika Berg's investigation of pro-Nazi propaganda in travel reports published by physicians in a leading Swedish medical journal. She shows that the editors published a disproportionate amount of reports from Germany and that these not only discussed medical matters but often contained political remarks, ranging from non-committal to enthusiastic. Critique was almost non-existent. The medical journal thus helped normalize a "pro-German" discourse by offering a media platform to a network of politically like-minded physicians whose views were hardly representative of the profession as a whole.

Cláudia Ninhos' chapter maps the increasingly intense relations between Nazi Germany and Portugal, especially network-based exchange in genetics.

This example illustrates that German cultural policy was by no means only a propaganda exercise but that an important rationale was to further knowledge transfer, e.g. through conference participation and internships. Ideological influence was simultaneously part of the bargain as Portuguese geneticists who participated in exchange with Germany tended to sympathize with the regime and, when back in Portugal, to disseminate Nazi ideals.

The intense development of higher education in Brazil during the Nazi period created plenty of cultural policy opportunities for Germany (until 1942 when Brazil joined the Allies) as well as other countries. André Felipe Cândido da Silva's discussion of policy relations concerning education shows how social, cultural and scientific events affected the formation of disciplines and institutions as well as individual careers. Many initiatives were run by German official and semi-official institutions, but informal networks played an important role. At the same time, the polycratic nature of the Nazi regime, with competing or even fighting Nazi and government agencies, caused problems, as did the persecution of Jewish scholars, many of whom took refuge in Brazil.

A theme that several contributions touch upon is that of historical revision. It is brought into focus in Pascal Germann's chapter on the relationship between Swiss and German genetics and eugenics, which questions an established narrative that the former had kept the latter at arm's length distance. Germann argues that Swiss genetics developed in partial alliance with Nazi eugenics. Rather than openly appearing as Nazi sympathizers, Swiss geneticists presented their enterprise as "neutral science" – like in Sweden, where political circumstances were similar, this approach was informed by the hallowed ideal of scientific objectivity as well as the political self-perception of a small and neutral country. On the one hand, collaboration followed the rationality of *Realpolitik*, a readiness to accept and exploit the new European power relations; on the other hand, ideological and scientific affinities were important as well, and Swiss geneticists frequently worked against international efforts to isolate Nazi eugenics.

Marició Janué i Miret's chapter exemplifies the ethno-nationalist tendency of German cultural policy, in this case promoted mainly by social networks. In order to help constitute a European New Order, German intellectuals portrayed the Spanish nation as one of the "pure" European cultures. By equating Catholicism with Christianity and a reformed Catholicism with fascism, a Francoist version of the concept *Hispanidad* was linked to the expansion of the cultural New Order also in Latin America. Spaniards were thus assigned a vital role vis-à-vis Anglo-Saxon and Bolshevik threats to German geostrategic interests. This exemplifies how ethno-nationalist internationalism worked in practice.

The question, if Nazi collaboration among intellectuals should simply be seen as a form of moral treason or if it should also be understood as rational behaviour given political as well as intellectual (including ideological) contexts

is highlighted in Mark Walker's chapter on "Copenhagen", the meeting between Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr in September 1941, famous because of Michael Frayn's eponymous play. Heisenberg had been lambasted as a "white Jew" by anti-Semitic physics but survived those attacks to become part of the Nazi nuclear programme and a cultural ambassador for the regime. No matter how we view the moral implications of Heisenberg's attempt to gather information about nuclear research outside of Germany, his mission followed the logic of German cultural policy. The meeting was one in a series of similar performances by Heisenberg. As an effective goodwill ambassador, since he did not spread obvious propaganda, he tried to entice natives (though failing in the case of Bohr) to co-operation controlled by DWI and other German organizations.

Susanne Heim addresses the question of morality head on in her discussion of the motives behind German researchers' co-operation with the regime. As a rule, she claims, scientists were not coerced into collaboration. They usually offered their scientific capacities in order to advance science as well as their own careers. This may be seen as an abdication from political responsibility of a different kind than the treason Benda discussed, which focussed on political activism. Heim claims that German scientists in general did not have to submit to Nazi ideology. Her description runs in parallel with Pamela M. Potter's analysis of art during the Nazi regime – as long as you did not actively dissent, or belonged to the wrong "race", you were given a pretty wide berth to carry on as usual, be it as a modernist architect or, like Heisenberg, a practitioner of "Jewish" theoretical physics. Heim argues that any judgement concerning "betrayal" must be based on explicit ethical standards imposed on science from the outside. Science itself has plenty of reason but no inherent morality, which makes talk of treason in Benda's sense, against moral obligations inherent in intellectual pursuits, meaningless.

Concluding remarks

History never translates directly. This does not mean that there are no lessons to be learned (cf. Andersson and Tydén 2007). For example, in his *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992), Christopher Browning uncovers mechanisms that made drafted reservists – in many cases not at all followers of Nazi ideology – participate in the Holocaust without being compelled to do so. On a general level, Browning's analysis gives an indication of how extreme political violence can be understood. It is also true that a fair valuation of historical processes is necessary to provide guidance for the future in many areas, not least concerning those burning issues that are often (in Europe) labelled "grand challenges", of which racism including anti-Semitism is one. Historical research contributes a fund of knowledge that makes us better equipped to understand the present and plan for the future (Guldi and Armitage 2014); in a very real sense, we have only historic knowledge to rely on.

This book deals with topics that have never been completely out of date and whose significance is again on the rise. Does this mean that there is a continuity between ideas among the radical right concerning for example nation and race in the 1930s and today? Is there an essence of fascism that historical research can identify so that we are better equipped to respond when it is coming back, or is it simply wrong to talk about fascism other than as a historical phenomenon? Such questions informed an animated discussion in Sweden in 2014 when the Social Democratic Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated that the populist right-wing party Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats) is neo-fascist – a claim founded on Roger Griffin’s (1991) definition of fascism as an ultra-nationalist call for national rebirth. Critics argued that such parallels are useless as they ignore important and historically specific features of fascism, like corporatism, racism, or totalitarianism (Björkman *et al.* 2016b, pp. 27–28). Christopher Browning (2018) has commented that a more appropriate term than “fascism” to describe recent developments in the US and elsewhere would be “illiberal democracy” – a label associated with European developments in, especially, Hungary.

It is clear that right-wing extremism of the modern kind not only relies on nationalism (“ultra” or not) promoted as national revival and that it constitutes a frontal attack on mainstream intellectual pursuits, be it the internationalized art scene, journalism or academic research and expertise in e.g. climatology (especially in the US), economy (*vide* the Brexit movement) and of course history.³ If normalization of these phenomena will succeed in the US or Europe is an open question (for an argument that it might, see Bershidsky 2018).

This book makes no claim to advance the discussion about the relationship between today’s situation and the Nazi period. What we offer is rather a historical mirror that has special value because of its geographic and cultural plurality. There is no doubt that the intellectuals participating in collaboration or exchange with German colleagues and organizations during the Third Reich (or financed them, as with the Rockefeller Foundation) knew that they supported an antidemocratic and racist system. They often pointed out that precisely those aspects of the Third Reich were unfortunate and should not be imitated in their own countries. At the same time, they were frequently promoting the normalization of fascism by calling for an “understanding” of the “new Germany” since its excesses were a reaction to the conditions brought about by Versailles (broadly condemned not only among conservatives) and the failures of Weimar (and hence of democracy). Among such people, a common rhetorical turn was to deplore Nazi anti-Semitism, while at the same time pointing out that the great influence of Jews in Germany made it understandable.

The Swedish professor of political science and pugnacious left-wing intellectual Herbert Tingsten (1936) proposed that Nazi ideology was in large part the result of pragmatic considerations propped up by ad hoc intellectual legitimization, which is reasonable enough. Those who endorsed the anti-democratic