

## Mental Maps. Constructing Identities in Space and Time

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The paper is intended to connect ideas on space and identity with those on mental mapping. It argues that history as well as the historian's profession need a profound change of paradigm that is caused mainly by two tendencies. The first outgrew in historical theory in the aftermath of postmodernism and its notification of multiple identities, the construction of identity and social behavior. The second tendency that influences our perspective on history and the historical profession was mainly caused by the return of geopolitics after the breaking events of 1989. The new world order as it is currently "under construction" does no longer bother only Eastern and Southeastern Europa. Instead - it demands a change in Western self-perception, it crushes established hierarchies as well as it alters our perception of the past.

Whereas historians over the past century saw history mainly as a product of time, the paper pleads – inspired by the works of Maria Todorova and Karl Schlögel – for a more balanced view on time and space, especially in trying to understand the construction of identity. Identity-building is a result of both: time and space. It is a "mental map" in the same meaning as space itself is made by the perception of "us" and the "other". Concerning the "Balkan" and "Balkan identities" the paper argues for the integration of both within an European history that is no longer based on cartography, political blocks and norms of modernization. Historians should look on Europe as a space of phenomena like nation, violence and war – all of which did not stop on political or geographical borders but shaped the identity of the European people in past and present.