

## Editorial

In this issue we continue the critical reflection on respatializations of global historical periods of change and caesuras by turning to the events of “1989”. About thirty years later seems a particularly good point of time of doing so as more archival material becomes accessible and as a younger generation of historians enters the debate, which sees the conflicts and transformation in and around 1989 with greater distance compared to long-standing interpretations by participants. In this course, especially individual societies gained attention which experienced at that time fundamental transformations linked with transnational and transregional shifts and were thus “1989” entered collective memory as a global caesura. This raises the intriguing question of how and to what extent these single memories have merged slowly into a common global memory of 1989, especially as we note at the same time a decreasing interest among scholars to actually consider the global character of that year and the changes it saw and initiated.

In view of that the issue interprets on the one hand 1989 as “global moment” with a nuanced understanding what signifies such moments and provides on the other hands empirical evidence for Africa regarding both the deep embeddedness of the course of events in transregional process and international dynamics and constellations as well as to how this shaped recollections.

The introduction outlines criteria for what constitutes a global moment. These include firstly a synchronicity of socio-political upheavals and conflicts which can be observed in many places of the world. The many mutual observations and references to each other did not lead, however, to a diffusion of some central models, rather they initiated their idiosyncratic adaption and intensified intercultural transfer. Secondly, global moments exist not per se but interrelated dynamics have to be recognized and signified by contemporaries. Related to that, thirdly interpretations that highlight interconnectedness and world-changing shifts have to be anchored in collective consciousness and memory. Therefore, two dimensions make global moments, entangled conflicts and transforma-

tions as well as their recognition and remembrance. The latter also draws attention to the fact that global interpretations of events can be forgotten or become less attractive than national or local interpretations at a later point of time when social and political circumstances change again.

Precisely this seems to happen currently in Africa in regard to the turbulent period around 1989. The proxy wars during the global cold war ended and initiated both social and political reorganisation in individual societies as well as a repositioning in the world at large as can be seen in the abandonment of nuclear weapons in South Africa which took place in the context of an international debate about disarmament and was anchored transnational peace movements. This globality, however, receded to the background, it is less and less remembered while national and pan-African spaces are increasingly used as frames when 1989 is the topic. The global character of the African events that are an essential part of the global moment of 1989 give way to a regionalization of the memory of 1989, which might also take place in other world region right now or in times to come. Does that mean that existing historical narratives have to be rewritten? At least the shifts in collective memory draws attention to a renegotiation of narratives and the hypotheses in this issue is that this concerns above all the long-time dominant narrative of 1989 about a self-liberation of peoples and nations from Soviet dominance and the transformation to market economies and democratic systems. Throughout Eastern Europe – and beyond – its triumphant narrative of “Westernization” is confronted with realities that do not fit. This in turn, invites us to think about the afterlives of global moments when regionally embedded processes of creating meaning do not melt into one globally recognized powerful narrative. It seems that we are in the midst of a process where the collectives memories of 1989 diverge and turn into separate repositories of historical knowledge which reorganize past global connectedness according the specific challenges societies are confronted with today.

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