

Editorial

Since the field of world and global history took on its current form with a clear rejection of its Eurocentric and universalist traditions, the question has arisen where to look to discover more of the hitherto unknown histories of entanglement, interdependence, and globalization. The editors and authors of this thematic issue argue that it is worth turning to the history of state socialism, and they demonstrate the potential it offers in the light of social and economic developments in East-Central Europe. Social and economic processes in state-socialist countries are fascinating because they help to understand the power of connectivity. While building a socialist economy and ensuring social justice were central to the ideologies driving state socialism and thus central to state planning, in practice the ideological pressures and the grasp of the state(s) played out in growing transnational entanglements and international interactions that had their own rational. In Hungary and Czechoslovakia – the regional focus of the articles – economic and social modernisation (or development) was profoundly shaped by interconnections.

By tracing the scope of action of actors dealing with social and economic issues under conditions of increasing global embeddedness, the articles reveal three spaces of relations and interaction: within the “Eastern bloc”, with “Western European” and North American countries, and with the countries of the so-called “Global South”. By examining the entanglements in Eastern Europe, in Europe, and in “West-South” and “East-South” constellations, they reveal a differentiated global agency of East-Central European actors, an agency that involved decisions for and against cooperation and that had its own tides. We see the various groups of actors presented in this issue as “shapers of global relations” and are able to situate East-Central Europe in global history. Moreover, the contributions offer a highly instructive reflection on the concept of “alternative” or “red” globalization in the socialist European “East”. By comparing the transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe with the “West” and the “Global South”, they conclude with a plea to move beyond the notion of separate globalizations (“Western-centred” and “alternative”) and argue for a recognition of the multiplicity of globalization processes. From all these insights emerges an innovative perspective for a global history of state socialism that will enable future scholarship to study, for example, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance or the other embodiments of the Cold War blocs in a new light.

With this first issue of *Comparativ* in 2024, we wish you a successful year. It will not be without profound controversies. We are living in a time of multiple, overlapping crises that create anxiety about the future. At the same time, we are witnessing multiple violations of international law, in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. And this is only the tip of the iceberg. It is difficult to predict what the consequences of these current political developments will be for societies around the world and for international politics. But they will shape how our field of research – transnational, transregional, and global history – develops. Whatever new questions emerge from this moment, we hope that there will continue to be many voices that resist the nationalist backlash and argue for the historicisation of transnational and transregional entanglements, and for explaining current global reconfigurations in the light of past crises and transformations.

We hope you will stay in touch with us and with *Comparativ*. We begin this year with renewed vigour. We welcome to our editorial board colleagues who have shaped the field of world and global history with original research and conceptual innovations. They will bring fresh ideas, and we hope you are as excited as we are about the direction this will take our journal in the coming year. We are fortunate to have the continued support of those who are leaving the editorial board, and we would like to take the opportunity of this first issue of 2024 to thank all of you who are committed to *Comparativ* as readers, authors, and editors. Stay tuned and stay involved!

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