

Conclusions: The Multiple International Dimensions of Comecon. New Interpretations of Old Phenomena¹

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ABSTRACTS

Die in diesem Themenheft präsentierten Forschungsergebnisse stellen die bislang in der Literatur dominierende These von sozialistischen Ländern, die einzeln oder als im RGW formierter „Block“ nach Autarkie gestrebt hätten, infrage. Quantitativ ist natürlich die Einbeziehung der RGW-Länder in den Weltmarkt nie groß gewesen. Nach dem Zusammenbruch des Sozialismus während der Transformation zur Marktwirtschaft erscheinen indes die Länder Ostmitteleuropas noch stärker de-globalisiert als zu RGW-Zeiten. Seit den 1990er Jahren und vor allem nach dem EU-Beitritt 2004 entwickelte sich die Region zwar zu einem wichtigen Ziel von ausländischen Direktinvestitionen, fungierte jedoch vorrangig als „verlängerte Werkbank“ des Westens. Die niedrige Qualität der Einbeziehung der Volkswirtschaften dieser Region ist somit ein historisches Phänomen („old phenomena“), das von Ivan T. Berend zutreffend als „Detour from the periphery to the periphery“ beschrieben wurde.

Bei der Beurteilung der Qualität wirtschaftlicher Verflechtungen ist es aber auch hilfreich, die transnationalen Aktivitäten bestimmter Akteure und die Entwicklung entsprechender Netzwerke zu analysieren. Der Nutzen einer Betrachtung der Geschichte der sozialistischen Integration im Alltag bzw. „von unten“ wird in vielen Beiträgen des Heftes evident. Auch während des Kalten Krieges, als die (gesamt)europäische Kommunikation unterbrochen schien, wurde über wirtschaftliche Integration nachgedacht und diskutiert. Diese Debatten sollten sowohl im Zusammenhang mit Integrationsversuchen der 1920er Jahre als auch mit den Visegrád-Bemühungen der 1990er Jahre gesehen werden.

1 I would like to thank Falk Flade and Anna Labentz for translating this article from German to English, and Mark Keck-Szajbel for proofreading it.

The research presented in this thematic issue challenges a thesis that to date has dominated literature on former CMEA countries, namely that individually or as a Bloc, they sought self-sufficiency. Quantitatively, these countries involvement in world markets has of course never been extensive. In fact, during the post-socialist transition to an open-market economy, the East Central European countries appeared more de-globalized than during the CMEA period. Although these countries became an important site of direct foreign investment in the 1990s (and even more so after EU accession in 2004), they primarily functioned as an “extended workbench” of the West. The qualitatively low involvement of the national economies of this region in the world economy is thus an “old phenomena,” which Ivan T. Berend rightly described as a “detour from the periphery to the periphery.”

However, when assessing the character of economic interdependencies, it is also helpful to analyse the transnational activities of specific actors and the development of corresponding networks. The benefit of examining the history of socialist integration from the perspective of everyday life or “from below” is demonstrated by many of the contributions to this volume. Even during the Cold War when European-wide communication seemingly had broken down, economic integration was contemplated and discussed. These discussions should be seen in relation to efforts at integration in the 1920s and those of the Visegrad countries in the 1990s.

The contributions to this special issue dedicated to exploring the role of the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) within the global economy challenge the widespread assumption about the autarkic tendencies in Comecon countries. It is safe to say that the impact of Comecon countries on the global marketplace was not, in quantitative terms, large. While this observation certainly holds true for the period prior to 1945, it is equally applicable for the era following the political and economic transformations of 1989, whereby the share of exports from East Central European countries decreased even further. As demonstrated by Martin Dangerfield in this special issue, the share decreased from 15 per cent in 1989 to 11 per cent in 1995. This clearly indicates that the countries of East Central Europe became even more “deglobalized” after the transformation in the 1990s than they were during the existence of Comecon.

When taking a closer look at the global ranking of leading export or import nations, one will not find an East Central European country on the list. In 2015, no country in this region was among the 20 largest import or export nations. Due to its export of raw materials, only Russia ranked 15th on this list in 2015.² So what, if anything, is new about the economic position of the East in the world?

The weak economic integration of the region is an “old phenomenon”. Ivan Berend correctly refers to it as a “detour from the periphery to the periphery”.³ Peripheries are characterized by the fact that, while they are part of the global economy, they are structurally disadvantaged. This pattern is true for East Central Europe to date, and is applicable

2 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/37013/umfrage/ranking-der-top-20-exportlaender-weltweit/> (accessed 4 April 2017).

3 I.T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993. Detour from the periphery to the periphery*, Cambridge 1996.

to the time of Comecon's existence as well. In the twentieth century, the main share of global trade took place among most developed industrial nations, whereby Comecon managed to have a small share.

A comprehensive set of “post-socialist” monographs from East Central Europe about Comecon and its position in the global economy has yet to be written. Until today, the only monograph on this topic, published after 1990, was written in the USA and is uniquely based on archival material as well as interviews with Comecon experts from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Russia.⁴ Against this backdrop, it appears reasonable to ask about the precursors and models of integration in East Central Europe after 1989 – the Visegrád countries, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), and finally the European Union (EU) – in order to explore the respective historical contexts as well as the influence of the *longue durée* on the developments of socialist integration.⁵

When quantitative methods fail, qualitative approaches can be helpful. A transnational history that concentrates on actors and networks has emerged in recent works and has proven to be instrumental for research on East Central Europe and Comecon. The contributions to this special issue demonstrate the added value of decentralizing the history of socialist integration. In particular, the research of Jerzy Chodorowski on the human element in the doctrine and praxis of European economic integration shows the remarkable relevance of actorship in understanding these processes.⁶ Simon Godard's and Erik Radisch's analysis of actors and their concepts of Comecon give new insights into this field of research. The close examination of primary sources, as well as qualitative social research, show Comecon in another light – as a network of actors.

The network approach is fundamental to the examination of East Central Europe due to the specific networks found in the region. Many of these networks stem from the nineteenth century, that is, before the rise of the nation-state. Especially for this region, non-governmental actors and the development of an “international European society” of scientists and economists served as a basis for a European mindset. Two historians of technology – Thomas Misa and Johan Schot – labelled this kind of integration a “Hidden Integration”,⁷ a concept that can be applied in an analogous and promising way to Comecon.⁸ Unlike politicians, experts, economists, and scientists were active within the

4 Cf. R.W. Stone, *Satellites and commissars. Strategy and conflict in the politics of Soviet Bloc trade*, Princeton 1996; there are at least newer publications of this kind regarding a sectoral cooperation, see: F. Flade, *Energy Infrastructures in the Eastern Bloc. Poland and the Construction of Transnational Electricity, Oil, and Gas Systems*, Wiesbaden 2017.

5 The demand for such research was made by East Central European economic historians already prior to the 11th World Economic History Congress in Milan in 1994. Cf. J. Skodlarski, *The Origin of the Visegrad Group*, in: V. Průcha (ed.), *The System of Centrally Planned Economies in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe after World War II and the Causes of its Decay*, Prague 1994, pp. 148-156.

6 J. Chodorowski, *Osoba ludzka w doktrynie i praktyce europejskich wspólnot gospodarczych*, Poznań 1990.

7 T. Misa and J. Schot, *Inventing Europe: Technology and the Hidden Integration of Europe*, *History and Technology* 21/1 (2005), pp. 1-20.

8 Cf. D. Jajeśniak-Quast, „Hidden Integration.” *RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken*, in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1 (2014), pp. 179-195.

networks of the scientific community already before 1945.⁹ The contributions of Godard and Radisch show that these networks were also maintained in Comecon. Therefore, understanding Comecon calls for new interpretations of the old phenomena.

This old phenomenon encapsulates multiple international dimensions of Europe, both East and West. This phenomenon is what historians call a transnational perspective on an enlarged history of European integration.¹⁰ They focus on the formation and evolution of organizations, structures, and processes designed to facilitate and govern cross-border flows.¹¹ What calls for more attention is the “hidden integration of Europe”, which entails a reinterpretation of the old phenomenon in order to unravel the variety of forms of integration that have been invisible to the eyes of the ordinary citizens of Europe.¹² These forms were often conceived and actually accomplished by experts who preferred to work behind closed doors, hidden from the public eye.¹³ Initially, these experts responded to practical coordination issues resulting from the rapidly growing movement of information, goods, and people across borders. The working methods of these organizations, technocrats, and experts (as in Comecon) included experts meeting, committees, exhibitions, fairs, etc., which went back to the nineteenth century.

Transnational entanglement is nothing new. The formation of Comecon, as well as the European Economic Community (EEC), was the result of transnational interrelated effects and mutual influences. Falk Flade’s contribution on the subject of energy infrastructures shows that science and technology played a key role in the ambitious economic and social planning during the Cold War. Throughout the decades of Cold War competition, science and technology became increasingly important as vital societal resources, enjoying growing support in the East as well as in the West. The arms race and geopolitical competition brought forth new forms of entanglements that spanned the Iron Curtain, such as technocratic internationalism. Scientists and researchers were often obliged to remain loyal to the state and the party. At the same time, they were committed to the sci-

9 On the use of the term “scientific community” as well as the historical development using the example of Great Britain and the German states, cf. A. Schwarz, *Der Schlüssel zur modernen Welt. Wissenschaftspopularisierung in Großbritannien und Deutschland im Übergang zur Moderne (ca. 1870–1914)*, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 64–71. On the role of Polish lawyers in the “scientific community” of the interwar period, see: C. Kraft, *Europa im Blick der polnischen Juristen. Rechtsordnung und juristische Profession in Polen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Nation und Europa 1918–1939*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, at p. 13, 60.

10 Some historians also use the notion of Europeanization, which refers to outcomes (such as convergence in law or practices) than processes. See, for example, M. Conway and K.K. Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century. Historical Approaches*, Basingstoke 2010.

11 This definition is based on P.Y. Saunier, *Learning by Doing. Notes about the Making of the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 6/2 (2008), pp. 159–180. For an introduction to the transnational perspective on European integration, see W. Kaiser, B. Leucht and M. Rasmussen (eds.), *The History of the European Union. Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Polity, 1950–72*, Abingdon 2009.

12 Misa and Schot, *Inventing Europe*.

13 W. Kaiser and J. Schot, *Writing the Rules for Europe. Experts, Cartels, and International Organizations*, Basingstoke 2014, pp. 4f.

entific community and working methods, which were universal and transnational and, therefore, independent of the political system.¹⁴

Despite the Iron Curtain and the reduction of pan-European contacts, an army of experts in the academies of science in individual Comecon countries studied international journals as well as summarized and translated articles. The number of translations been made during the existence of Comecon was enormous: Conferences, exchange programmes, technology fairs, and exhibitions were the places for transnational circulation in Comecon. This technocratic internationalism stems from the internationalism of the nineteenth century. Therefore, even this kind of entanglement is an old phenomenon.

The contributions in this volume show that continuous and reflective exploration of new sources produces new and surprising insights. Comecon coordinated and initiated joint projects in many branches of the economy and infrastructure. The analysis of different bottom-up cooperation and integration attempts opened up new insights into the framework of planned economies. The contributions of Suvi Kansikas and Christian Gerlach show that Comecon countries made use of different approaches to gain access to the world market.

First, Comecon countries made use of international organizations acting on the global level in order to continue pan-European dialogue. After the Second World War, this was especially true for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The Temporary Sub-Commission on the Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas and the UNECE were de facto links between the periods before and after the war. Especially during the looming Cold War between 1945 and 1949, the legacy of the League of Nations, which was the European project of the interwar period, collided with the socialist transformation in East Central Europe. Therefore, it is my intention to soften the often applied caesura year of 1945, inasmuch as this year overshadows the very important transition periods of 1944–1946 as well as 1946–1949.

Second, Comecon countries tried to make use of European integration efforts, which evolved independently from the EEC after the Second World War. These approaches include the European rapprochement led by neutral countries and integration alliances such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and NORDEK (a plan for increased economic cooperation and integration among Nordic countries) after the Second World War. The contribution by Suvi Kansikas addresses these approaches in an impressive way. As a neutral country, Finland signed a cooperation agreement with Comecon in May 1973 and became the first capitalist country acknowledging Comecon as an international organization. As a result, new possibilities for Comecon countries opened up to maintain trade with Western Europe in the hot phase of the Cold War. The strategy of Comecon countries to redirect commodity flows and increase trade with EFTA countries can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the common market of the

14 K. Gestwa and S. Rohdewald, *Verflechtungsstudien. Naturwissenschaft und Technik im Kalten Krieg*, in: *Ost-europa* 10 (2009), pp. 5–14, at 9–10.

“smaller Europe”.¹⁵ Growing trade volumes with neutral countries can be seen as another consequence of the integration processes in Western Europe. After the foundation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), other West European countries became increasingly interesting for Comecon foreign trade. Due to the political neutrality of Finland and Sweden, Scandinavia played a major role in this. Third, there was a mixture between the attempt for regional integration on the one side and global integration on the other. Comecon’s approach to involve peripheral countries outside Europe (such as Mongolia, Cuba, or Vietnam) is only one aspect. The contribution of Christian Gerlach on agriculture trade reveals another global dimension of Comecon. The history of grain import (especially from the USA) to the Comecon countries in the 1970s points to the increasing global entanglement of Comecon. Gerlach also addresses the accession negotiations of individual Comecon countries to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which have to be seen in this context. Of importance are the liberalization efforts inside GATT as well as the talks of the Kennedy Round (1964–1967), which evened out many quantitative restrictions – the so-called quota regulations – that applied to specific trade items and commodity groups. These restrictions also applied to the trade between EEC and Comecon countries. However, the fact that most of the East Central European countries were not GATT members and, therefore, could not gain from trade liberalization, was problematic. Although the GATT’s founding agreement laid down that member countries should become free-market economies, the organization was characterized by relative flexibility and many exemptions. The best example of this strong pragmatism inside GATT was the relation to the EEC, which was acknowledged by GATT in spite of formal violations of global free trade. Comecon countries also counted on this pragmatism, and the Polish government applied for full membership. Following the Kennedy Round in 1967, this request was accepted, and Poland became the first Comecon country to join GATT after 1947/48. Other socialist GATT member countries like Cuba, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia had been members already before the communist siege of power, as they had been among the 23 GATT founding members and stayed contracting partners. Finally, the last way was an attempt to force regional integration. The industry associations of Comecon or the sectoral cooperation were a part of the attempt at “bottom-up” regional integration. During the period of Comecon, there were networks of international experts as well as organizations that communicated special forms of “governance”.¹⁶ The weakness of official political institutions and the lack of societal trust in the state institutions, as well as in the legislation, furthered the formation of expert networks based on the transfer of knowledge and efficiency.¹⁷ In the majority of cases, and especially in the

15 See: D. Jajeśniak-Quast, Reaktionen auf die westeuropäische Wirtschaftsintegration in Ostmitteleuropa. Die Tschechoslowakei und Polen von den fünfziger bis zu den siebziger Jahren, in: *ZeitRäume. Potsdamer Almanach* 2007, pp. 140-151.

16 Cf. R. Jessen and R. Bessel (eds.), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR*, Göttingen 1996.

17 Cf. A. Oberender, Die Partei der Patrone und Klienten. Formen personaler Herrschaft unter Leonid Brežnev, in: A.

socialist bloc, the establishment of such systems served as a compensation for existing deficits.¹⁸ To date, only few authors have broached the issue of socialist societies in their studies about networks.¹⁹ One reason for that is the difficulty to precisely define these connections and clearly distinguish them from other phenomena. Another reason might be the fact that, as a matter of principle, socialist social systems have not been adequately researched. In order to analyse the phenomenon of networks in socialist societies, one has to take into consideration the overlapping theoretical definitions, as observed in economic history, sociology, and political science.

Despite nationalization and centralization, one can observe a continuing presence of networks after the Second World War. In the course of de-Stalinization after 1956 and a more open debate in the communist parties of East Central Europe, as well as in the course of reform debates in the 1960s amongst economic elites, East Central European societies experienced a major bottom-up influence for the first time. Expert networks were created in order to broaden international cooperation in the overall structure of Comecon. As Radisch and Flade show in their articles for this volume, industry associations such as Intermetall, Interatomenergo, and the Central Dispatching Office (CDO) were founded in that period in order to more efficiently organize the division of labour. The causes for that were the economic reforms that took place in almost all socialist countries.²⁰

In the 1960s, a completely different economic climate prevailed in comparison to the previous decade. Now, the search for new techniques of international cooperation between various planned economies was at the centre of attention. This aspect was even considered to be of greater importance than the question concerning necessary changes in the domestic systems. After the death of Stalin in 1953, important innovations were no longer blocked.²¹ Experts in particular recognized the unique possibility to pursue their own ideas after the liberalization of Stalinist structures. It was in this atmosphere that some of the first international, socialist industry associations were founded, such as Intermetall and Agromasch.

Despite the strong autarkical tendencies in Comecon, a division of labour solely based on “socialist cooperation” could not suffice for the requirements of all technical parameters. That explains the increasing frequency of contacts with the West in the beginning of the 1970s. In order to progressively study the developments in the fields of agriculture and industry, especially in Western Europe and the USA, members of socialist industry

Schuhmann (ed.), *Vernetzte Improvisationen. Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR*, Köln 2008, pp. 57-76.

18 A. Schuhmann, *Einleitung*, in: Schuhmann, *Vernetzte Improvisationen*, pp. 9-20, at 9.

19 Cf. F. Sattler, *Unternehmerische und kompensatorische Netzwerke. Anregungen der Unternehmensgeschichte für die Analyse von wirtschaftlichen Netzwerkstrukturen in staatssozialistischen Gesellschaften*, in: Schuhmann, *Vernetzte Improvisationen*, pp. 139-155.

20 See: C. Boyer (ed.), *Zur Physiognomie sozialistischer Wirtschaftsreformen. Die SU, Polen, die Tschechoslowakei, Ungarn, die DDR und Jugoslawien im Vergleich*, Frankfurt am Main 2007; C. Boyer (ed.), *Sozialistische Wirtschaftsreformen. Tschechoslowakei und DDR im Vergleich*, Frankfurt am Main 2006.

21 M. Kaser, *Comecon. Integration Problems of the Planned Economies*, London 1967, p. 5.

associations visited foreign exhibitions and trade fairs as well as researched foreign patents and scientific prospects in journals or in exhibition catalogues. Furthermore, experts studied Western machine technologies through items purchased by the state. Because of the lack of foreign currency, the experts strove toward reducing parallel imports of machines from Western Europe in order to close the gap with their own technological standards. The industry associations' main aim was to standardize and unify licenses as well as machine acquisition for research purposes.

Nevertheless, it was not just the research results to be acquired from West European technology that were of relevance, but an exchange in the opposite direction – the sale of products to the West. For this reason, socialist industry associations organized international exhibitions and fairs, to which they invited Western companies. There had also been individual attempts to include Western companies into the organizations. Product quality was a permanent topic of discussion, also with regard to contacts in Western Europe. In the context of the expertise of other international organizations and the Comecon's Regular Commission for Standardization, this discourse influenced a number of regulations and produced results such as the international agreement SEPROSEV – a quality assessment and certification system. This agreement was signed by the Bulgarian, Cuban, Czechoslovak, East German, Hungarian, Mongolian, Polish, Romanian, Soviet, and Vietnamese governments in Moscow on 14 October 1988. After it came into force on 1 January 1989, the convention was also recognized by the Secretariat of the United Nations according to Article 102 of the UN Charter. The governments of the contracting states were obliged to align their products according to the technical specification standards in SEPROSEV and other (intern)national norms.²² The experts agreed that the first positive effects of SEPROSEV were not to be expected before 1991. However, due to the unexpected historical events in East Central Europe, these predictions remained unfulfilled. Martin Dangerfield's article shows that even after the breakup of Comecon, attempts at an East Central European integration in the form of the Visegrád states were not abandoned.

This special edition reveals the complex ways in which Comecon was involved in the global economy, and the multiple international dimensions of Comecon. Comecon was an international organization! That being said, it is odd that Madeleine Herren-Oesch fails to mention Comecon in her standard volume on international organizations since 1865.²³ In it, Herren-Oesch describes a global history of international order, while remaining silent about Comecon – an organization that assembled countries not only from (Eastern) Europe, but also from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Even the EEC recognized Comecon as an international organization during the Helsinki Summit, while the parallel integration processes initiated mutual economic relations.

22 See: Bundesarchiv Berlin, MLFN, Sign. DK 103/63, Gesetzesblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin 1988, Teil II Nr. 5, pp. 97-103.

23 M. Herren-Oesch, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*, Darmstadt 2009.

The multiple international dimensions of Comecon consist in the specific integration of Comecon, which should not just be understood as a process of expansion of existing bonds. In fact, this points to the dynamic of integration and disintegration processes. Historians define economic “integration” as the gradual abolition of economic barriers between independent states and as an increasing entanglement of their national economies as well as the merging of merchandise and markets.²⁴ This process not only took place within the customs union of the EEC, but also in the free-trade area within EFTA and the North European countries within NORDEK. These alternative integration models partly developed as a reaction to the foundation of the EEC, operating in mutual competition. The articles assembled in this volume show that it is possible to refer to Comecon as one alternative integration process in East Central Europe.

Gerold Ambrosius, Christian Henrich-Franke, Guido Thiemeyer, and Cornelius Neutsch, in dealing with European integration and European regional studies, point out the inflationary usage of the term “integration”.²⁵ In order to cover as many variations of East Central European integration efforts as possible, Comecon cannot be ignored. Gerold Ambrosius depicts many possible variations of economic integration in Europe since the nineteenth century. They concern the entanglements of merchandise and service markets and of labour and capital markets as well as the convergence of economically relevant parameters, standards, and norms.²⁶

Integration may not only be understood as a process of expansion within existing bonds. One has to question the interactions and transfers, which upon all integration efforts rest, but which also serve as discursive formation of delimitations. In that way, it is not only possible to untangle the ambiguity of transfer directions but also to illustrate – neither in the interwar period nor in the time of the socialist people’s republics – that there was never a fixed “East Central Europe” in a clear cut “Europe”. It was only the mutual reference that contributed to a discursive construction and consolidation of these ideas. It becomes clear that even during socialism, when (all) European communication seemed interrupted, there were discussions about economic integration. These discussions reach back to other integration attempts in the 1920s as well as with the Visegrád states in the 1990s. At the centre of this volume are the actors and practices of this transfer process. Economy experts and researchers were taken as much into consideration as cultural-political concepts and everyday contacts. Despite the numerous obstacles, the scientific community remained a barrier-free realm from the interwar era to the Cold War.²⁷

24 Cf. T. Eger, H. Fritz and H.-J. Wagener, *Europäische Integration. Recht und Ökonomie, Geschichte und Politik*, München 2006, pp. 22-24.

25 Cf. C. Henrich-Franke, C. Neutsch and G. Thiemeyer (eds.), *Internationalismus und Europäische Integration im Vergleich. Fallstudien zu Währungen, Landwirtschaft, Verkehrs- und Nachrichtenwesen*, Baden-Baden 2001, p. 8; and: G. Ambrosius, C. Henrich-Franke and C. Neutsch (eds.), *Internationale Politik und Integration europäischer Infrastruktur in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Baden-Baden 2012.

26 G. Ambrosius, *Wirtschaftsintegration in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein wirtschaftshistorisches Forschungsprogramm*, in: Henrich-Franke et al., *Internationalismus*, pp. 13-37, at 13.

27 Cf. J. Niederhut, *Grenzlose Gemeinschaft? Die scientific community im Kalten Krieg*, in: *Osteuropa* 59/10 (2009), pp. 57-68.

In light of all this, it needs to be stated once more that integration is always a mutual process, constantly challenging even those states that are considered integrated. It is this mutual character of integration that makes it an excellent research object. A historical analysis of socialist integration processes within Comecon obliges that the newest approaches in historiography are studied: for instance, models of comparison, entanglement, transfer, and transnational history. One must focus on the forms of entanglements that transcend the nation-state, such as structural connections, interdependences, transfers, and mutual perceptions. Comecon research, hence, entails new interpretations of old phenomena.²⁸

28 K.K. Patel, Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 52 (2004), pp. 625-645. Further reading recommendations and inspirations can be found at P.Y. Saunier, Learning by Doing. Notes about the Making of the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History, in: Journal of Modern European History 6 (2008), pp. 159-180.