Editorial

As an American working in Germany and privileged to be an editor at *Comparativ*, there seems no better time to revisit questions of migration, labor, and the Atlantic. Of course, the publication process takes some time, and we did not know what the political situation would be at the time of publication. But it would be impossible to argue that this issue is not timely, as political and business leaders reassess – or threaten – long-standing transatlantic alliances. Indeed, as the contributors to this issue discuss, Atlantic Studies as a perspective was, if not founded, at least encouraged by the post-World War II alliances that created NATO and that are now in jeopardy. This view has long centered on the Age of Revolutions, linking the American and French Revolutions as twin historic events in the creation of political modernity through the birth of liberal democracy. Looking at this Atlantic geopolitical history through the lens of migration history and labor, one cannot help but wonder at the cognitive dissonance of the current U.S. administration to weaken European alliances, while at the same time imagining an entirely new U.S. immigration system that was never reformed in the 1960s to reduce racial quotas - an old-fashioned vision of migration when only white Europeans were invited to enjoy the American Dream. After reading this issue, one can only conclude that not only was migration more complex, but even for those Europeans who did arrive – and, as this issue highlights, left for home or elsewhere – the experience was probably not always welcoming. Indeed, the editors devote the final section of their introduction to reframing, contextualizing, and provincializing this current obsession with the Atlantic (and Atlantic migrations) in its most simplistic form, as it persists today as a metaphor but also as a tangible geopolitical space.

Atlantic Crossings contains stimulating contributions that focus on the interconnectedness of migration and labor histories, which have often been treated separately. Although Atlantic migration is hardly a new field, by interweaving these histories, especially with a focus on labor, these authors demonstrate the importance of return migration and, even more convincingly, the multidirectionality of migration. In fact, it is difficult to think

of these mobilities as migration at all, since so many actors did not settle permanently, but returned home after years of work or when opportunities dried up, or moved on to other cities, countries, or empires. The governmental view, taken up in the social sciences but challenged in the history of migration at least for a few decades, that migrants move from country A to country B and settle there permanently is wrong. Why does it still fuel our most basic policies and politics today? The authors add a number of empirical observations to further dismantle this narrative and to show how state perceptions and categorizations cannot fully replace academic concepts like "migration."

What is the Atlantic? Today, as in the past, it has often been discussed as an intertwined space. Scholars initially focused heavily on the North Atlantic while ignoring the southern part of the equation, linking both the African and South American contexts. While in the early nineteenth century one could certainly observe a French Atlantic (in decline, according to Alan Forrest's latest book) or a Spanish or Anglo Atlantic, over the decades scholars have added the concept of a Black Atlantic and even a Red Atlantic, adding groups of actors who shaped a particular space through their business networks, migrations, family ties, and labor (as sailors, for example). The authors draw on this literature and add to it, especially through a nuanced focus on Southern Europe, which they argue should not be subsumed under Europe only by drawing on "South-South" perspectives. Rather than showing an integration of the Atlantic that increased, as one might suspect, through closer and more frequent connections at the end of the nineteenth century, these authors also show even more fractures within these aforementioned Atlantics. Moreover, the transience that the editors emphasize seems to borrow more from the work of Caribbean historians (such as Julius Scott) than from older perspectives of Atlantic history, while at the same time expanding the scope of what we might call transatlantic labor migration by including new actors and political projects in this history, while also paying attention to class, gender, and race.

The editors also highlight a fractured Atlantic in terms of its historiography. Some terms and positions, for example, have not translated well from Anglo-American to French scholarship and vice versa. By placing a "South-South" focus on this volume, the editors are not only reassessing the geography of the Atlantic and its key actors, but also asking us to question the historiography of the Atlantic. One of our goals at *Comparativ* is to promote a multilingual global history in Europe, and to that end we believe that this issue has found a good home in our decades-long tradition.

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