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Editorial – theory generation, comparative analysis and bringing the “Global East” into play

This first issue of 2018 of *Eurasian Geography and Economics* (*EGE*) marks a set of changes for the journal. In this Editorial, we address the direction of the journal and its coverage, introduce the new Editorial Team, outline changes to the range of types of papers we consider, and extend a welcome to new Editorial Board members.

To begin, we would like to acknowledge the huge amount of work and commitment to *EGE* shown by outgoing Editors Professor John O’Loughlin (University of Colorado Boulder) and Professor Ralph Clem (Florida International University). Both have long-standing associations with *EGE* (as discussed in O’Loughlin and Clem 2017) and have committed their time to supporting scholarship on the region – and scholars of the region – and the success of *EGE*. It is fitting to take this opportunity to thank them for their service to *EGE* and support of scholarship on and in the region more generally. Furthermore, we are very pleased that John and Ralph have continued their commitment to the journal by joining the Editorial Board.

We would also like to express our thanks to Nancy Place who is stepping down from her role as Editorial Assistant. It is important to acknowledge the tremendous amount of “unseen” work that goes into a journal as well, and the quality of manuscripts published in *EGE* owes a huge amount to Nancy’s efforts. It should be acknowledged that in the case of *EGE*, this role goes beyond copy editing manuscripts and demands a knowledge of the region and some capability with Russian and Chinese alphabets, making it a rather unique role which Nancy has handled with great professionalism.

As for *EGE*, a focus on the broader Eurasian region is obviously as vital as ever. In their farewell Editorial message, John and Ralph (O’Loughlin and Clem 2017, 587) noted the increasing “divide between the topics that engage and energize the public [...] and the academic world,” and that *EGE* should not shy away from confronting sensitive or controversial topics and issues. One of the main reasons for the expansion of this gap lies in the dramatic changes that have taken place in the global political and geopolitical configuration over the past 5 years or so.

First, while the acute financial and sovereign debt crisis of the late 2000s and early 2010s has to some extent receded, it has been supplanted by a political crisis with multiple ramifications, many of which were unthinkable until not long ago. Of these, the most worrying is probably the steady global decline of democracy (which started well before the financial crisis). This is most certainly the case within



the broad region covered by this journal, yet it is clear that the widespread rise of populist parties with authoritarian, nationalist, illiberal, and frequently xenophobic or outright racist agendas weakens democratic institutions even where they are regarded as stable and consolidated, such as in Italy or the United States. Importantly, the ongoing populist authoritarian drift means that the independence of academic research is under threat as governments try to influence the research agenda by steering or slashing research funding, often under the (neoliberal) pretext of “effectivization,” “profiling,” “business-relevance,” and so forth.

Second, the postwar geopolitical order is experiencing its deepest crisis ever, epitomized by the United Kingdom’s disorganized exit from the European Union (EU) (and ongoing pressures on the whole EU project), the rise in right-wing populist movements and governments throughout Europe, and the threat posed by the kakistocratic whims of Donald Trump’s presidency to the major edifices of Western and global cooperation and security (NATO, the WTO, NAFTA, the Paris Climate Agreement, etc.).

Third, China is demonstrating much greater economic and military assertiveness across the globe, gradually squeezing out the United States from its position as the global hegemon of the post-Wall era. Its Belt and Road Initiative, comprising the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, will have massive implications for investment along infrastructure corridors designed to increase connectivity between Eurasian countries, and between Eurasia and the rest of the global economy.

Fourth, Putinism in Russia has evolved from an ideology of “managed” (or “sovereign”) democracy to one that prizes authoritarian leadership, militarism and “traditional values,” and which is happy to export these values to other countries, not least by fomenting the populist wave by exploiting the weaknesses of social media as channels for (dis)information. By occupying Crimea and through its hybrid warfare in the Donbas, as well as by supporting the Assad regime in Syria at any cost, the Kremlin has demonstrated that it rejects the global order established after WWII.

Finally, these developments pull into play a whole range of countries within Eurasia and their global connections, including throughout Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East – contexts which are often relatively understudied but which are nevertheless important in understanding global development. And change in the region also has massive implications for a wide range of contemporary concerns, including energy and resource use, environmental impacts, climate change, and sociopolitical responses to these challenges.

In short, the global geopolitical and geo-economic balance has been disrupted over the past years, and the number and salience of controversial or sensitive topics that require scholarly engagement has increased rapidly. EGE is ideally placed to be the journal in which these events are covered and debated, and as such welcomes submissions that tackle the rapid and turbulent changes taking place in Eurasia, broadly understood, making them more understandable to current society. We



particularly welcome research that takes a closer view at these phenomena, engaging deeply with the ground-level realities of the field.

Our general vision for *EGE* is thus that it will expand its role (as established by previous Editorial Teams) in being the key journal bringing theoretically informed knowledge about change in Eurasia to a wider public and policy audience. At the same time, the journal will be a key actor in efforts to decolonize geographical knowledge by making perspectives from beyond the “Global Northwest” explicitly relevant to global developments in geographical and economic theory and knowledge. While the past decade has seen an improvement along these lines, *EGE* is in a unique position to accelerate the overall tempo of this change. Despite scholarship which has pushed knowledge and perspectives from the “Global South,” often within the lens of postcolonial theory, into the midst of contemporary academic debate, it seems increasingly important to actively argue the same for knowledge and theory from the “Global East” (for want of a better term), a region which strangely remains at times somewhat marginalized in geographical knowledge and debates.

For this reason, we particularly welcome theory-generating (as opposed to “theory-using”) research, and we would like to encourage authors who are willing to undertake the painstaking work involved in comparative research – where comparison need not be limited to (but should include) Eurasia. Indeed, our goal is that *EGE* should be the natural destination for papers that engage in genuine acts of comparison, and papers should certainly reflect on the implications of their findings for the region and the world as a whole.

To address this, we therefore welcome the submission of a range of types of manuscripts, as outlined below:

- *Original research articles* are of course welcome, but these should clearly set their analysis in the relevant international research literature and make clear how they contribute to wider debates in Geography and Economics and to understandings of the Eurasian region and beyond. Articles must appeal to an international audience in academia and beyond, and the broader implications of case studies must be made clear. As noted above, work which is theory-generating and/or comparative is welcome;
- Also in this category, comprehensive and critical *review papers* will be considered; that is, papers based on a critical review of current literature which advance state-of-the-art thinking on a particular focus, topic, or body of theory based on analysis of the region. These could include relevant keynote papers from major conferences in association with research groups (perhaps with critical responses);
- Proposals for *guest-edited theme or special issues* comprising of a Guest Editorial and a set of related papers are also an important format for the journal and should be discussed with the Editorial Team in advance. These



can take the form of a whole issue or a *research forum* consisting of a smaller number of (possibly shorter) papers as part of an issue;

- For more rapid coverage of important events in the region we will also publish papers in the *Eurasian Pulse* section of the journal. These are shorter pieces, which should still establish their wider significance, but which can present critical accounts of key contemporary developments, events, and policy;
- In a similar vein shorter *research notes* can also be considered, where they summarize key research findings of significance to understanding the region;
- *Book reviews* of single volumes (authored or edited volumes) which focus on the region are welcomed, as are extended *book review essays* which provide a critical commentary on two or more related books. These could also include a response from the authors in a debate-style section.

This is therefore the task facing the new Editorial Team. The Editor-in-Chief role is now filled by Craig Young, who also handles papers on the “non-post-Soviet” part of Europe, and new Associate Editor Mike Gentile now takes responsibility for submissions with a theoretical or empirical focus on the countries of the Former Soviet Union. Tim Oakes and Kam Wing Chan continue as Associate Editors focusing on the East and South Asian regions. We also welcome Nadir Kinossian to the newly created post of Book Review Editor.

Kam Wing Chan joined the Editorial Board in 2001 and became Associate Editor in 2007. He is Professor of Geography at the University of Washington, USA. His research focuses on China’s urbanization, migration, spatial economy, and the *hukou* (household registration) system. He has also served as a consultant for the United Nations, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Labor Organization, Paulson Institute, and McKinsey & Co.

Mike Gentile is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Oslo, Norway. Trained as an urban geographer, he has a long-standing interest in the transformations (sometimes not) taking place across Eurasia. Together with Thomas Borén (Stockholm University), Mike founded the Cities After Transition network, which currently brings together hundreds of scholars interested in all matters urban related to Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Mike’s relationship with *EGE* stretches back to 2003, when it published his first (ever) article. Since then he has published in it on several occasions, including a recent theme issue on “Post-socialist Cities and Urban Theory.” He joined the Editorial Board in 2016.

Nadir Kinossian works in the Department of Regional Geography of Europe of the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde), Germany. His research interests include spatial policy, urban governance, and cultural landscapes. He has worked in academia, consultancy, and municipal administration in the UK, Norway, and Russia. His published work focuses primarily on Russia and the Russian Arctic. Nadir has previously published in *EGE* and joins the Editorial Team in 2018.



Tim Oakes is Professor of Human Geography and Director of the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, USA. His work focuses on the cultural and socioeconomic geographies of contemporary China, and he recently launched a new research network of Asia-, North America-, and UK-based scholars working on the social and cultural implications of China's infrastructure push within Asia. Tim has been on the *EGE* Editorial Board since 2014, and became Associate Editor in 2017.

Craig Young is Professor of Human Geography at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Craig first started working in the region in Poland in 1993. Since then he has researched across Central and Eastern Europe, more recently publishing on Romania (primarily with Dr Duncan Light, Bournemouth University) and some research collaborations with Chinese scholars. His interests in the region lie in urban policy (especially around notions of "creativity" and the "creative city") and the cultural politics of post-socialist identity, including a focus on history, memory, politics, and identity.

To conclude, our vision for the journal is further reflected in a number of additions to the journal's Editorial Board. With this issue we welcome 13 new members: Matthias Bernt (Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space); Carolyn Cartier (University of Technology, Sydney); Slavomíra Ferencuhová (Masaryk University); Natalie Koch (Syracuse University); Joanna Kusiak (University of Cambridge); Taras Kuzio (Kyiv Mohyla Academy); Duncan Light (Bournemouth University); Michael McFaul (Stanford University); Vlad Mykhnenko (University of Oxford); Choon-Piew Pow (National University of Singapore); Xuefei Ren (Michigan State University); Jennifer Robinson (University College London); and Örjan Sjöberg (Stockholm School of Economics). We welcome them, and look forward to working closely with the Editorial Board and contributing authors in the further development of the journal.

Reference

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Kam Wing Chan
Department of Geography,
University of Washington,
Seattle, WA, USA

Michael Gentile
Department of Sociology and Human Geography,
University of Oslo,
Oslo, Norway



Nadir Kinossian
*Department of Regional Geography of Europe,
Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde,
Leipzig, Germany*

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5934-9210>

Tim Oakes
*Geography, University of Colorado,
Boulder, CO, USA*

Craig Young
*School of Science and the Environment,
Manchester Metropolitan University,
Manchester, UK*

 c.young@mmu.ac.uk