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Editorial

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It is with great pleasure that I announce the publication of the quarterly *Comparative Southeast European Studies* (COMPSEES), which has evolved into its new format from that of its predecessor *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society*. From 2021 onwards, the Journal will be published both digitally in open access and in print.

2020 was a difficult year for many if not all of us. However, I am very glad to be able to announce today that the innovations envisaged for our Journal could be implemented despite the very limited extent of face-to-face collaboration that was possible. When the requirement came to work online and from home this Journal was in the midst of its metamorphosis, but thanks to the remarkable efforts made by all involved, the work was accomplished in good time in spite of the pandemic. The Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies and the De Gruyter publishing house concluded a new publication agreement, so that thanks to funding from the Institute and the technical expertise of De Gruyter the Journal will become more easily accessible and even more visible internationally, not least in Southeastern Europe itself. What is more, the agreement includes provision for a repository of *Südosteuropa*, so that soon a comprehensive digital archive of the Journal will be available to everyone.

As Editor-in-Chief since 2014 I have had the pleasure of the support by my co-editors Wim van Meurs and Ger Duijzings, and this is a welcome opportunity to thank them sincerely for what has been a very pleasant, constructive, and good-humoured cooperative journey. Both have engaged wholeheartedly in the process leading to the new name and format, which took hours of creative online sessions and offline thinking. I am also sincerely grateful to our economics editor Olga Popova, whose good sense of ‘what works’ effectively means that she is the one who deserves the credit for making a convincing case for what finally has become the Journal’s new name. Our former editorial assistant, Kathrin Jurkat, explored the journal market, assessed indexing parameters, and provided us with publishing context information more broadly. My sincere thanks go to all involved.

The members of our Editorial Board almost unanimously agreed to renew their commitment for another three-year-term, for which I am immensely grateful. My

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gratitude is directed first of all to their excellent support for the Journal in the past. They acted as guest editors, wrote research articles, book reviews and peer reports, as well as suggested topics and authors. I hugely appreciate their willingness to invest more of their precious time in the Journal, which guarantees a smooth and solid transition towards the new open access format.

The colleagues at the De Gruyter publishing house, Florian Hoppe, Ulrike Kitzing, Diana Kostovic, and Peter Golla, have been efficient and straightforward partners in all matters concerning the Journal's production, its indexing options, and its evolution generally. In a series of online sessions, we jointly set up the manuscript management system ScholarOne, tailoring it to the Journal's needs. ScholarOne will be an asset in streamlining the editorial workflow and managing submissions, the number of which has been substantially increasing over recent years, providing us with a healthy backlog. The cover and layout of the Journal have been slightly redesigned to make it more recognizably part of De Gruyter's journal family. We continue to abide by De Gruyter's publication ethics statement.

Last but not least I should like to seize this opportunity to thank the directorate of the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, as institutional editor of the Journal, for its confidence in deciding that *Comparative Southeast European Studies* should take up the position of flagship in the institute's open access policy commitment.

The new name *Comparative Southeast European Studies* is the logical next step in the Journal's evolution. After it was founded in 1952, for more than half a century *Südosteuropa* served as a well-established policy advice journal monitoring events in the region, before in 2007 taking a turn towards becoming a research-oriented multidisciplinary forum of the social sciences. Since 2014 the Journal has been published exclusively in English. We have continued to work towards improving its quality, including by addressing the citation indices relevant in the field, as they increase the pool of potential authors. A rigorous double-blind peer review regime has guided us while we have become more selective in what we publish. We prioritise work that is empirically and methodologically sound, well-written and jargon-free, thereby fostering *interdisciplinary* scholarly communication. We remain committed to broadening the range of the research we publish, while welcoming both emerging and established scholars to publish with us. *Comparative Southeast European Studies* strives to consolidate its reputation as one of the major area studies journals focusing on Southeastern Europe. We encourage transnational and entangled comparative perspectives, acknowledging that any 'area', any geographical construct, functions in its transareal, indeed global, relations.

Comparative Southeast European Studies will continue to be a forum for scholars in Political Science, Sociology, Contemporary History, Anthropology, Economics, International Relations, Law Studies, Gender Studies, Media Studies,

Cultural Studies, and related disciplines. Taking a comparative and broad multidisciplinary perspective, it will explore critical processes and societal issues related to the area bounded by the eastern Adriatic, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Black Sea. We use two formats to showcase research. There are peer-reviewed research articles and a shorter format open to other text genres, which are presented under headings such as 'Commentary', 'Interview', 'Background', 'Policy Analysis', 'Film in Focus', 'Debate', 'Spotlight', 'Book Symposium', 'The Making of...', for example. This is a flexible section allowing us to address more immediately pertinent political, social, cultural, and academic matters. In addition, the Journal also features a book review section.

In conclusion I should like to express my sincere appreciation to all contributors who have found the Journal an increasingly welcome and well-perceived outlet for their research. Without the help of a small army of external scholarly peers who support us in safeguarding the Journal's quality, we should not be where we stand today. Also, the significance to the Journal's quality of the work of our diligent team of native English-speaking copy editors cannot be underestimated. Their work with the authors to improve the language of their manuscripts is vital, not least because for non-native speakers of English, and especially for early-career scholars, they help remove potential linguistic barriers to communicating their research in a language other than their own.

We welcome both single manuscript submissions and proposals for guest-edited thematic sections. We look forward to working with you!

Sabine Rutar, Editor-in-Chief