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A part of the world or apart from the world? The postsocialist Global East in the geopolitics of knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how academics from the postsocialist countries of the Global East are increasingly claiming a voice in the publishing space of international geography journals. Based on a longitudinal database of editors, board members and authors of 22 leading English-language geography journals since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it demonstrates how the number of authors from postsocialist countries, notably from the new EU member states, has risen almost seven-fold since the 1990s, exhibiting the strongest growth rate among all world regions. Yet, their roles as gatekeepers of academic knowledge (editors, board members) are much weaker. With its analysis, the paper intervenes in epistemological debates about the marginal role of the postsocialist Global East in the geopolitics of knowledge. It suggests that despite constant challenges, academics from the postsocialist Global East are becoming more and more visible internationally. It is, therefore, an opportune time to articulate a collective epistemological project, pushing for a greater role in redefining its conditions and modalities – all the while being mindful that no amount of conceptual innovation expected from scholars of the region can make up for a critical reflection of inherently difficult political issues in increasingly neoliberalized academic knowledge production.

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Introduction

Let us imagine two scholars. We will call them Morris Zapp and Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy. Both are fictional, but they may appear familiar to many readers. Morris Zapp is a professor at Euphoric State University in a Western country and Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy is a professor at Lutenblag State University in Molvania,¹ a small country in Eastern Europe. Both are working on gentrification in Lutenblag, the capital of Molvania. And both want to publish an article about their research.

This is where the commonalities end. Morris Zapp gets a grant from his funding agency that pays for his travel, a local field assistant and teaching

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release to conduct field research. He goes to Lutenblag for a month and his field assistant helps set up interviews, acts as an interpreter, transcribes and translates the interviews into English. Morris Zapp then retreats for two weeks to his summer chalet to write up the article. He sends it to the *Journal of Great Geographical Research*, where an old PhD buddy of his is now an editor. With two rounds of revisions, the article finally appears one year later.

Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy was born and raised in Lutenblag and is locally known as the expert on gentrification (although he does not call it by this name). Over the years, he has collected dozens of interviews and extensive field observations, but, between 12 hours of teaching every week and heavy marking, he has never had the time to transcribe them nor the money to hire somebody to do it for him. He would prefer to write the article in Molvanian, his native language, but he will have to write it in English: his university recently introduced a publication scoring system and he is still missing some points to qualify for the bonus to top up his meager salary. He does not have money to pay for a translator, so he will write it directly in English. His English is not strong: English is taught badly in schools in Lutenblag and he has never had the chance to spend time abroad. He would rather not call the process he observes in Lutenblag gentrification (Gentile 2018; Smart and Smart 2017), but he knows that using the term “gentrification” will at least get some people interested in a case study in what people often tell him is an “exotic city” to do research on. Most of the literature he needs is behind a paywall, so he uses an illegal service popular throughout the East to get access to it. He sends his article also to the *Journal of Great Geographical Research*, but within two days receives a notice that the editors found that it “inadequately references the existing state-of-the-art and suffers from errors of logic and generally inappropriate style”: desk reject.

The stories of Morris Zapp and Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy may be fictional, but they feed on experiences of two of the authors of this article. We assume that the two stories will ring familiar with many readers on either side of the former iron curtain – a curtain that is still all too visible in academic publishing (Bajerski and Krzysztof 2018; Ferenčuhová 2016).

The landscape of global knowledge production is anything but flat. In geography, scholars from a handful, mostly Anglophone countries dominate knowledge production, whereas the voices of most others remain marginal (Gutiérrez and Pedro 2001; Timár 2004; Aalbers and Rossi 2007; Bański and Ferenc 2013). There is therefore something that could be called a “geopolitics of knowledge” (Grosfoguel and Ana Margarita 2002; J. Wang and Zhang 2020, this issue): a geographic unevenness in where knowledge is produced, for whom and with what effects. The Realpolitik of the geopolitics of knowledge means that scholars in different parts of the world have very different chances of being heard, i.e. of being published, read and cited around the world.

This geopolitics of knowledge is particularly problematic in the social sciences and humanities, where knowledge is not independent of the context in which it is produced. This key insight is known as the situatedness of knowledge (Haraway 1988; C. B. Neumann and Neumann 2015), or “know-where” (Agnew 2007). In other words, the accounts by Morris Zapp and Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy will produce different knowledges about urban processes in Lutenblag. Yet, in the global geopolitics of geographical knowledge, one is more likely to be heard than the other – and we are all the poorer for that.

This article aims to locate the postsocialist countries of the Global East in the geopolitics of geographical knowledge. In so doing, it contributes to the project of the Global East, which aims to problematize the epistemological situatedness of scholarship from and on the East, in the gray zones between North and South (Müller and Trubina 2020, this issue).² Its intention is to create awareness both of the weight (or absence of it) of voices from the postsocialist countries in geographical knowledge production and to sensitize for some of the difficulties scholars from these countries are facing in partaking as equals in the production of knowledge and theories. As such, this piece inquires into the preconditions of theorizing from the global elsewhere (Jazeel 2019; Robinson 2016), notably the ability to share the same publication space so as to become equal interlocutors, with specific reference to the postsocialist countries.

Empirically, this paper analyzes the changing weight and roles of academics from postsocialist countries in leading English-language geography journals since the end of socialism. More specifically, it looks at a sample of 22 geography journals and the presence of academics from postsocialist countries as editors, editorial board members and authors between 1991 and 2017. This analysis is important for at least three reasons. First, it puts figures to claims about the absence of the postsocialist Global East in global academic knowledge production, whether on cities (Ferenčuhová and Gentile 2016; Müller 2021; Müller and Trubina 2020, this issue; Sjöberg 2014) or more generally (Müller 2020, 2019; Timár 2004; Tlostanova 2015). Second, it allows tracing the longitudinal development of participation in the Anglophone discourse from the East, from the end of state socialism to today, therefore being more than a snapshot and opening temporal dynamics of the postsocialist period up to purview. Third and last, it allows disaggregating the postsocialist space to see the – widely diverging – dynamics at the country level. We conclude that sensitivity toward the situatedness of knowing needs to be combined with a more equal distribution of opportunities in global academic publishing to redeem the promise of a worlding of geographical knowledge.

Knowing (in) the East

It bears remembering that what are now the postsocialist countries have traditionally occupied a marginal place in the system of geographical

knowledge production. Research on these countries is controversially linked to the trips of Western geographers to the countries of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War to gather geographical intelligence (Matless, Oldfield, and Swain 2008) and more generally, to the emergence of area studies as an attempt to study “the enemy” and its satellites (Sidaway 2013). In an orientalist stance, the East has for a long time been a demi-Other “to be known” rather than a knowing subject in its own right (Todorova 1997; I. Neumann 1999; Kuus 2004). This did not change much with the collapse of state socialism, although some Western scholars, perhaps naively, believed the opposite: “One of the disappointments of the 1990 s was the realization that the removal of restrictions on publishing, and the social transformations themselves, in Central and Eastern Europe had not led to an explosion of new homegrown analyses of communist and post-communist reality” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005, 12). Instead, what exploded was not scholarship from the region but about the region. With the inpouring of Western aid and advice also arrived Western scholars eager to do research in the transforming countries. For a brief period in the mid-1990s to 2000s, there was an outbreak of interest among scholars in the social sciences and humanities in the West in exploring postsocialist cities, their transformations, citizens, and cultures. This often led to an uneven power relationship, as described in Timár (2004), where Western scholars, like our fictional Morris Zapp, often swept in to reap the rewards for publishing on something that their Eastern colleagues had been working on for a long time.

The concept of postsocialism, after 30 years still the standard moniker to refer to the former socialist countries of the East, reflects some of this uneven power relationship. As a concept coined by Western scholars and reflecting the concerns of Western academia, some Eastern scholars have critiqued it as orientализing: “postsocialism is an orientализing concept through which western anthropologists constructed postcommunist Europe” (Cervinkova 2012, 159; Buchowski 2004). The concept of postsocialism “that arguably have been ‘imposed’ on local scholars by their Western colleagues” (Poblocki 2020, this issue), reflects the knowledge hegemony of the West on the region, including defining what counts and what does not count as relevant debates to be had under the label of postsocialism, and increasingly also meets with critique among geographers (Gentile 2018; Müller 2019).

Further contributing to the marginal position of Eastern scholars in global knowledge production is the Anglophone hegemony in reputable international journals. The issue here is not just that the influential gatekeeping positions, such as those of editors and board members of journals or editors of handbooks, are occupied by scholars from Anglophone countries, mostly from the UK and the United States, thus instituting English as the *de facto* lingua franca. More crucially, it elevates Anglophone scholars into the arbiters of what counts as good, influential scholarship, thus reproducing these countries’ particular empirical concerns, methodological preferences, theoretical predilections,

funding priorities and style of scholarship while also relegating some of the scholars from the Global East whose English language skills might not always be up to the standards of their Anglophone colleagues (Gutiérrez and Pedro 2001; Timár 2004; Aalbers and Rossi 2007; Bański and Ferenc 2013).

This skewed geopolitics of knowledge production is intertwined with what one could call a “geo-economics” of knowledge, that is, a growing dependence of scholars’ salaries and job prospects on bibliometric ratings at universities around the world. The end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, just as the postsocialist countries were emerging from the turmoil of the 1990s, marked the expansion of formal research grading – the so-called Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), later replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (Mhurchú et al. 2016) of university departments in the UK. Similar tendencies of considering publishing articles in prestigious peer-reviewed journals and citations as “performance indicators” were introduced in many other countries, including the countries of the postsocialist Global East. We find it symptomatic that even in Scandinavian countries, often held up as model bulwarks against neoliberalisation, academics speak about the corporatization of universities in economic terms. To give just two examples, Fejes and Nylander (Fejes and Nylander 2017, 19) posit that the specific “economy of publication and citations” results in a paradoxical tendency: “researchers from non-Anglophone countries actively engage in a publication game that underscores their own subordination”. Moreover, this pressure to publish can also lead to what June Wang and Xu Zhang (J. Wang and Zhang 2020, this issue) call cheating the system which means to imitate what already exists and lead to outburst of “grabbism” or shanzhai (山寨, fake).³ Having discussed the “uneven geographies of international journal publishing spaces”, including the link between the internationalization of knowledge production and the rise of bibliometrics with the use of empirical data found in the Web of Science database, Paasi (2005, 785) similarly concludes that “global cultural, economic, and academic forces have not yet transformed the narrow ISI journal-based understanding of ‘internationality’ into a global fact in the social sciences”.

In this geopolitics and geo-economics of knowledge, it is the “center” that dictates how internationalization should be implemented and understood. The stronger dependence of authors in the peripheries of knowledge, from Poland to Kyrgyzstan, on those working in the Anglo-American metropole also follows from this. Our discussion thus is attuned both to the debates about social relations, and particularly class, and the ones about spatial relations, such as territorial subordination and domination. One witnesses the continuation of uneven and combined development of world regions which, in one way or another, crystallizes in the inner trends of urban geography and area studies. Examining the “situatedness” (Agnew 2007) of knowledge production, that is the links among specific regions and locations and scientific knowledge, includes reflecting on the consequences of universities functioning as corporate enterprises in the postsocialist Global East. Neoliberal globalization of higher

education has often been conceptualized as a process producing winners and losers (O'Brien and Leichenko 2003; Dehesa 2006) and the global competition between universities is intertwined with a flourishing global university rankings industry. Steven Sampson has, however, critiqued the winners vs. losers conceptualization of the neoliberal globalization for its assumption that it is a matter of luck whether one succeeds in this game: "The postsocialist transition was not a lottery or a game. The rules were made up as it went along, the playing field was uneven, the referee (Western donors and institutions) was often partisan, and the play was brutal" (Sampson 2008, 221).

In addition to the deep-seated regional disparities and the corporatization of non-Western universities, the legacy of the Cold War in epistemological geopolitics needs also be taken into account. If in the first decade of the twenty-first century it was noted that abolishing approaches in knowledge production that emerged during the Cold War is not an easy task and that the present epistemological configurations continued to be informed by racialized hierarchies (Chari and Verdery 2009), similar observations about the persistence of the East-West division in the media and in academia have been made in the context of the deterioration of the relationship between the West and Russia in the past decade (Sakwa 2008; Monaghan 2015). It is thus impossible to analyze the complex constellations of cultural and social, political and epistemological tendencies that take place on postsocialist territories without taking into consideration the fact that during the decades of the Cold War, the presence of the Soviet Empire and its "satellites" was structuring the Western liberal master narrative (I. Neumann 1999; Morozov 2009). With its collapse, the liberal democratic project has lost something it could strongly differentiate itself from. If, in the context of decolonial and postcolonial debates (Roy 2009; Jazeel 2019), scholars from the Global North talk with and about the countries of the Global South, that is, those they are historically connected with through processes of colonization and decolonization, two other "posts" – postcolonialism and post-socialism – have had more missed connections than joining forces (Chari and Verdery 2009; Hladik 2011; Ćirjaković 2012; Riabchuk 2013; Gerasimov, Glebov, and Mogilner 2013; Abashin 2014). Thinking "post-coloniality" through the postsocialist context necessitates thinking through the connections between a history of concepts and ideologies as well as reflecting on the appropriation of the postcolonial discourse by the politicians in Poland and Hungary (Fomina 2016).

Against this background, calls challenging East European scholars to produce innovative and powerful theories transforming local experience into a globally relevant one, as pertinent as they may be, perhaps underestimate the adverse conditions under which many Eastern scholars operate. In addition to the absence of meaningful research funding and access to literature, many are now required to demonstrate a consistently high level of scholarly output that favors returning to well-rehearsed recipes and well-trodden debates rather than

undertaking the risky and time-consuming endeavor of forging a meaningful, theoretically significant voice that would stand out from the crowd. One needs to be careful not to replicate the relations between the main voices of decolonial theory (working in the American and other Western universities) and their counterparts in the South who, although residing in a more challenging milieu, are expected to both dwell in “local histories” and upscale them to the global level.

These challenging conditions notwithstanding, the past few years have seen an increasing number of scholars based in the postsocialist Global East raise their voices. The scholarship on postsocialist cities is just one example of many where Eastern scholars now drive the debate and we see an increasingly lively exchange (see Ferencuhová 2016 for an overview). Books and papers have focused on suburbanization (Ioffe and Nefedova 1998; Krisjane and Berzins 2011; Stanilov and Luděk 2014; Grigorichev 2015; Breslavskii 2016), urban landscapes and representations (Shlipchenko 2008; Czepczyński 2008; Ilchenko 2020, this issue), the links among urban space, population and municipal funding (Salukvadze and Golubchikov 2016; Hudeček et al. 2019), diverse trajectories of urban growth (Tölle 2013; İanoş et al. 2015; Valiyev and Wallwork 2019), urban identities (Saar and Unt 2008; Velikonja 2009; Vendina 2012; Bissenova 2017; Kuhar, Monro, and Judit 2017), urban infrastructures (Gibas 2013; Tuvikene, Sgibnev, and Neugebauer 2019; Salukvadze and Sichinava 2019), mega-events (Gogishvili 2018; Gogishvili and Harris-Brandts 2019; Trubina 2019b, 2019a), marginalized populations in the urban environment (Chelcea 2006, 2019; Neugebauer 2015; Gogishvili and Harris-Brandts 2019), nuclear towns and small towns (Gunko 2014; Liubimau 2019), climate change (Haase et al. 2019; Ferencuhová 2020, this issue). Comparative work on urban development in the postsocialist countries has gradually expanded (Bodnar and Molnar 2010, for example, Tuvikene 2016; Kährlik et al. 2016). Concomitantly, the places from which empirical research informing urban theory emerges have expanded geographically over the past decades, and have begun to diverge from their earlier concentration in the US, the UK and Western Europe. Against this background, in this article, we are interested in whether we see a raising importance of East-based scholars in the leading journals of the discipline of geography more broadly.

Research design

In our research design, we aim to trace chronologically the role and place of academics from the postsocialist countries of the Global East in the publishing space of international geography journals, by establishing a longitudinal database of editors, board members and authors of 22 leading English-language geography journals since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. We decided to focus on a sample of 22 English-language journals (see Table 1), largely

Table 1. Journals contained in the sample.

Name of journal	First published (name changes)	Publisher
Annals of the AAG	1911	Taylor and Francis, AAG
Antipode	1969	Wiley-Blackwell, Antipode Foundation
Applied Geography	1981	Elsevier
Area	1969	Wiley-Blackwell, RGS IBG
Cultural geographies	1925	SAGE
Economic Geography	1969	Taylor and Francis
Environment and Planning A: economy and space	1979, joined EP in 1983	SAGE since 2015, before: Pion
Environment and Planning D: society andspace	1983 government and policy, 2017 politics and space	SAGE since 2015, before: Pion
Environment and Planning C: politics andspace	1994	SAGE since 2015, before: Pion
European Urban and Regional Studies	1994	SAGE
Gender Place and Culture	1970	Taylor and Francis
Geoforum	1831	Elsevier
Geographical Journal	1916	Wiley-Blackwell, RGS IBG
Geographical Review	2001	Wiley-Blackwell, AGS
Journal of Economic Geography	1975	Oxford University Press
Journal of Historical Geography	1982	Elsevier
Political Geography	1949	Elsevier
Professional Geographer	1977	Taylor and Francis, AAG
Progress in Human Geography	2000	SAGE
Social & Cultural Geography	1976	Taylor and Francis
Transactions	1980	Wiley-Blackwell, RGS IBG
Urban Geography		Taylor and Francis

replicating the sample selection from earlier studies (Gutiérrez and Pedro 2001; Bański and Ferenc 2013) by focusing on major generalist journals (e.g. *Transactions*, *Annals of the AAG*, etc.) and the leading journals of geographical subdisciplines (such as *Political Geography* or *Urban Geography*). All of the journals are included in the Web of Science, from which we sourced data on authorship. We realize that by selecting these journals we cover neither the numerous journals with a regional focus (such as this one) nor second-tier journals that are perhaps somewhat less prestigious but easier to publish in.⁴ While it is often these journals that scholars from the postsocialist Global East target for pragmatic reasons, we are less interested in them here. This is because we are concerned that in so doing these scholars risk subscribing to their own subordination in confining themselves to the role of regional experts and to a second-rank position in the global knowledge order, as these journals are often less read and cited in the mainstream.

We were interested in two key roles that scholars from the postsocialist Global East could occupy in our sample of journals. The first is that of gatekeeper, notably as editor or editorial board member, that shape what kind of knowledge is published in journals. Editors make initial decisions on whether to send a manuscript out for review, select reviewers and eventually decide on whether or not to publish a paper. In so doing, editors may, consciously or unconsciously, favor certain types of scholarship over others and draw on their network of colleagues to recruit reviewers, thus reproducing a certain line of scholarship. The function of board members may vary by journal, but at the very least, the editorial board serves as a business card of sorts for a journal, representing the diversity of regional contexts and theoretical traditions a journal seeks to welcome in its pages. Board members, therefore, have an important signaling function for attracting potential authors. The second role is that of author, who supplies the knowledge published in journals. *Ceteris paribus*, greater diversity of the region of origin of authors will lead to a greater diversity of themes and approaches in a journal and therefore to a more cosmopolitan outlook and a decentering, or provincializing, of research (Chakrabarty 2000; Jazeel 2019).

As did previous studies (Gutiérrez and Pedro 2001; Bański and Ferenc 2013) we used the country of the institutional affiliation as a proxy for attributing scholars to groups. While the majority of research on the geopolitics of academic publishing examines the conditions based on Anglophone versus non-Anglophone authors, considering the geographic focus of this article, we went for a different approach and decided to draw three groups: East, West and Rest. “East” comprises 30 postsocialist countries: the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia); the Yugoslav successor states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Hercegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia); the (other) Balkan states (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania); the 15 successor states of the Soviet Union; and Mongolia. “West” includes those European and Anglo-Saxon countries commonly associated with the term “EuroAmerican hegemony” (Dirlik 1998; Chakrabarty 2000;

Roy 2009) the EU-15 states (i.e. the EU before the 2004 Eastern enlargement), the EFTA states (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. The “Rest” group, as the name suggests, simply consists of all the countries not belonging to either of the above-mentioned groups. While these three groups are ostensibly regional, they also map broadly on epistemological positions and power associated with the concepts of Global East, Global North/EuroAmerica and Global South.

We collected data in a longitudinal fashion, starting in 1991, the year that marked the emergence of the postsocialist countries proper. For author data, we examined only articles (and not other forms such as reviews, etc.) in three periods of nine years each: 1991 to 1999, 2000 to 2008 and 2009 to 2017. The grouping into three longer periods smoothed fluctuations that would occur if one were to examine shorter periods. For gatekeeper data, which we needed to collect manually from archives and websites, we took two snapshots, in 1999 and in 2017, i.e. at the end of the first and the third nine-year period. Detailed methodological documentation for replication is available from the authors.

In focusing only on geography journals proper, our analysis, admittedly, is constrained by the differences in the status of geography, and related spatial disciplines, in Western and non-Western countries: there are just a few full-fledged geography departments in the large cities of the postsocialist Global East and they are often led by scholars and educators specializing in physical geography. The practical needs of students often drive specializations of the existing faculties and departments. As a result, in the eyes of many, geography is associated with things that promise employment. For instance, having considered the specializations offered by geography departments of all public universities in Poland, Pirog (Pirog 2012, 35) concludes that “the most popular specialisation among students of all universities is tourism”. Especially where postsocialist cities are concerned, the focus of this special issue, their past and present have been examined by scholars working in adjacent fields, such as economics (Lane and Myant 2007), sociology (Shevchenko 2008; Morris 2016), anthropology (Rivkin-Fish 2009; Darieva, Kaschuba, and Krebs 2011), urban history (Sezneva 2013), art history (IRWIN 2006), and politics of culture and political communication.

Analysis

Country affiliation

Looking at the origin of institutional affiliations from 1991 to 2017 in our sample, we clearly see the dominance of the West. The absolute number of institutional affiliations from this group was 4,852 in the first period and almost tripled to 12,601 for the third period. We see the drastic difference in absolute numbers the West group during 1991 to 1999 to the 35 authors from the postsocialist Global East and the 355 authors from the rest of the world. However, both the

East and the Rest demonstrated an enormous growth rate, reaching 224 and 1,634 authors in the latest period, respectively. While the dominance of the West is obvious, the presence of the Global Eastern academics overall grew significantly faster throughout these three periods (Figure 1). The same can be said for the third group comprised the countries from the rest of the world. Yet, the overall share of the East remains small, rising from 0.66% in the first period to 0.76% in the second period and then to 1.54% in the last period.

If we disaggregate the East by countries, we see that in the first period (1991–1999) Russian scholars were rather active, compared to most of the other post-Soviet states. Also, the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), was more dominant, as they comprised two-thirds of all authors. The dominance of the Visegrád countries remained constant in the following two periods with 56% to 62% of all affiliations. As shown in Figure 2, the Czech Republic and Poland, together with Estonia, represent the top three countries in terms of number of affiliations of the East for the most recent period. Estonia and Romania, both of which joined the EU in the 2000 s, particularly stand out, as they had no academic contribution to these geography journals in the first period and increased their number to 22 and 18, accordingly. On the other hand, publications from the majority of the other postsocialist states, particularly the post-Soviet ones, remained alarmingly limited. Out of the 12 countries that had less than five institutional affiliations per article in our sample in the period of 2009 to 2017 eight are former Soviet republics. Four countries (Bosnia & Hercegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia) have not a single institutional affiliation in the sample.

The comparison of the top three countries by the number of institutional affiliations per article of the countries belonging to the West, the East and the Rest still gives a significant difference, pointing toward the difficulties that the

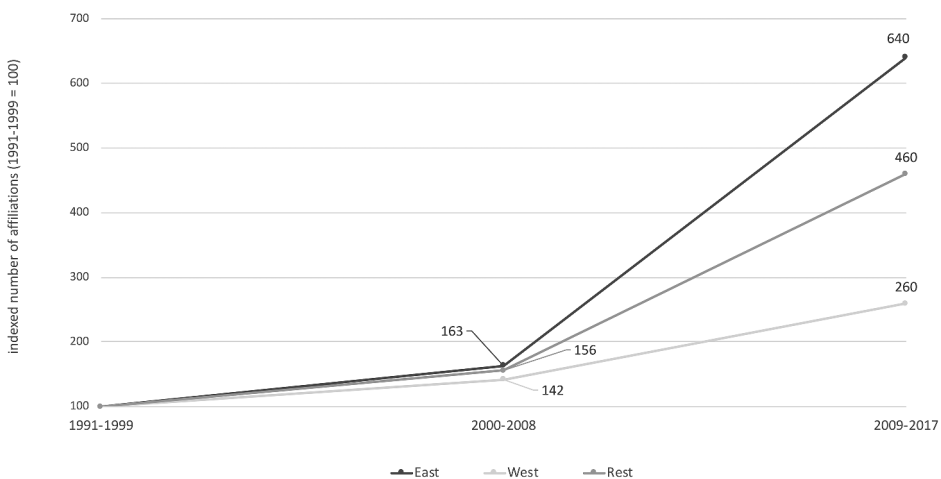


Figure 1. Relative growth of affiliation of authors in the sample, by groups, 1991 to 2017 (1991–1999 = 100).

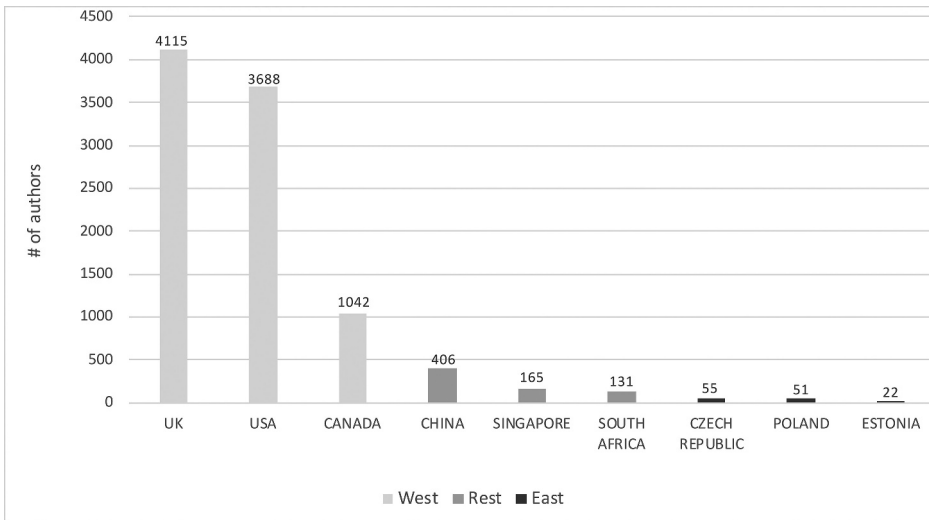


Figure 2. Affiliation of authors: top three countries of the West, the Rest and the East (2009–2017).

Global East academics have in terms of integration in the international journals where English is the lingua franca. While in this period almost all countries (except Albania, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) increased their contribution to the 22 journals scrutinized in this paper, most of them accomplished this goal only slightly. Out of the 21 countries that comprise the postsocialist Global East, 11 had only between one and three authors that published in this period.

The seven countries with the highest number of authors, shown in [Figure 3](#), all experienced significant growth, particularly in the latest period. Those states that joined the EU in the 2000 s generally showed the largest increase, whereas Russia is growing at a steady but slow rate. Thus, while Russian authors represented the second largest group in the 1990 s, Russia fell to seventh place in the most recent period, where the first six places are all held by EU member states.

By looking at the number of article affiliations per country and putting them in relation to the total population of that country, we can also discuss the productivity of each national academic community ([Figure 4](#)). We can see a higher productivity for those states with a GDP (PPP) per capita of 12,000 USD and more. With the increase in GDP per capita, productivity is also rising, as indicated by the regression line ($r = 0.603$; $p = 0.00296$). There is also a clear division between EU countries and non-EU countries, with the former tending to have a higher productivity than the latter (with the exception of Romania and Bulgaria). It also seems that those countries with a rather small population (and, consequently, national academic community), such as the Czech Republic or Estonia, are more actively involved in the international academic debate in the English-language geography journals of our sample. Moreover, this is particularly relevant for the states who do not share their mother tongue with many (or

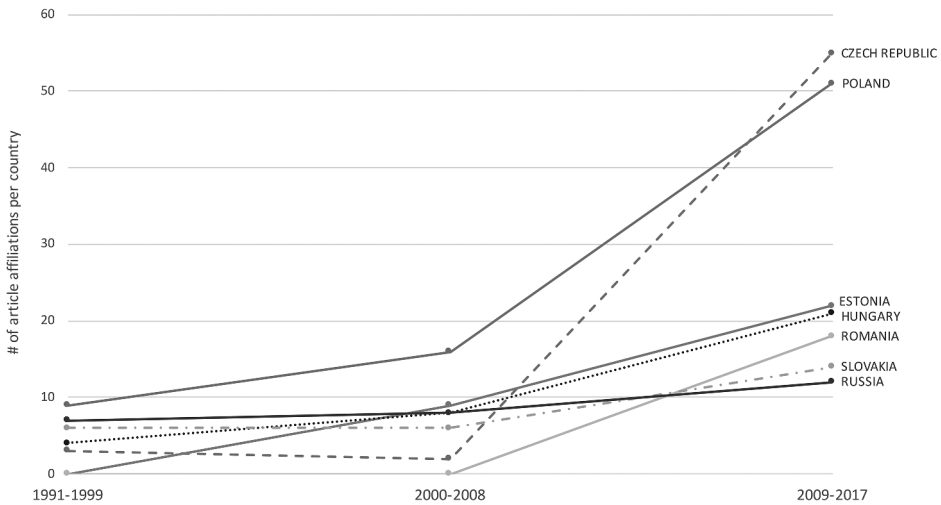


Figure 3. Development of number of authors per country (top seven countries of the East), 1991 to 2017.

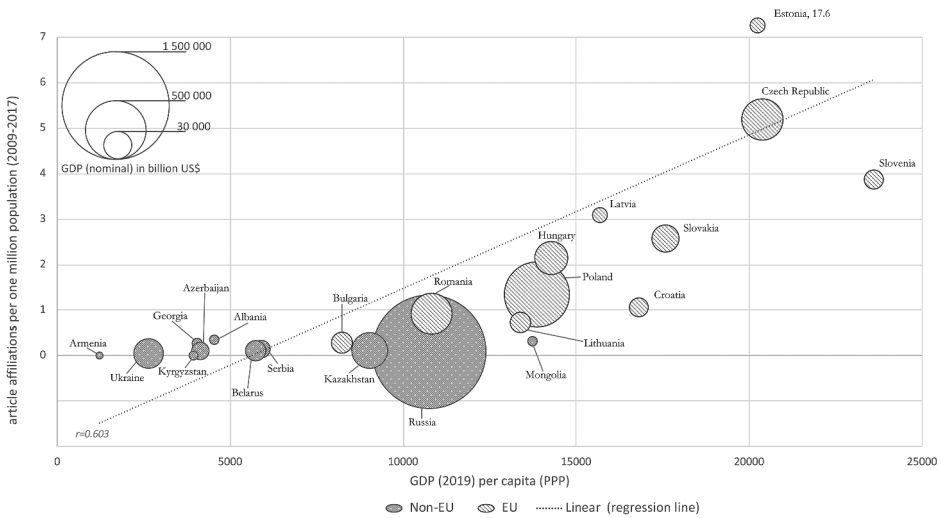


Figure 4. Country distribution according to productivity (affiliations per one million population) and GDP (PPP) per capita.

any) other countries. For example, for scholars in Estonia or Slovakia publishing in their own language would also mean having been weakly integrated in the international academic debate. The former has a per capita publication rate that is even higher than that of the United States which is the second country in terms of the publications in the 22 leading English-language geography journals studied within this research. Moreover, this number would be probably even higher if the so-called “second-tier” or more regional journals would have been included in the study sample. At the same time, Romanian academics,

thanks to the linguistic commonalities between Romanian and French and good knowledge of the latter, often have an advantage of publishing both in English as well as French journals.

Journal preferences

While the overall number of authors from postsocialist states publishing in the geography journals of our sample has been increasing over the time periods studied, this increase has not been even for all journals nor for all periods. Within the 1991–1999 period, the five English-language geography journals with the highest share of the Eastern authors were, in this order: *European Urban and Regional Studies*, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *Geographical Journal*, *Political Geography* and *Geoforum*. In that period, the share of contributions from academics from the postsocialist Global East in these journals ranged from 3.5% to 1%. Interestingly, within the same period, the very same geography journals were also among the top journals with the highest non-Anglophone author contributions. By contrast, those geography journals where the share of Anglophone authors accounted for 85% and more had the lowest percentage of the contributions from the postsocialist scholars. This probably suggests that it was harder for scholars from the postsocialist East to integrate themselves in those academic outlets that had a stronger preference and tradition of publishing Anglophone authors.

While the percentage as well as the absolute number of Eastern authors in *European Urban and Regional Studies* increased considerably for 2000 to 2008 it shrunk for other journals from the top five for this period compared to the first period of the study. However, the diversity of journals to which scholars from the East contributed significantly rose in these years, as they were publishing in 16 out of the 22 English-language geography journals studied for this article. *European Urban and Regional Studies* is leading among the geographical journals where researchers affiliated with institutions from postsocialist countries publish and it retains that status for the period 2009 to 2017 (see [Figure 5](#)). The fact that three members of its editorial advisory board are affiliated with postsocialist institutions of higher education makes the journal's current policy quite remarkable. The global academe needs more journals like this to make sure that the voices from the formerly underrepresented places are better heard and that research addressing new questions about these places is encouraged. One clear trend for the period from 2009 to 2017 is that authors from the postsocialist Global East concentrate in a relatively small number of journals. The five journals with the highest share of Eastern authors combine a striking 57% of the total number of Eastern authors. Moreover, the top five academic journals where the share of non-Anglophone authors is the highest share of the postsocialist Global East affiliated authors is also normally rather high.

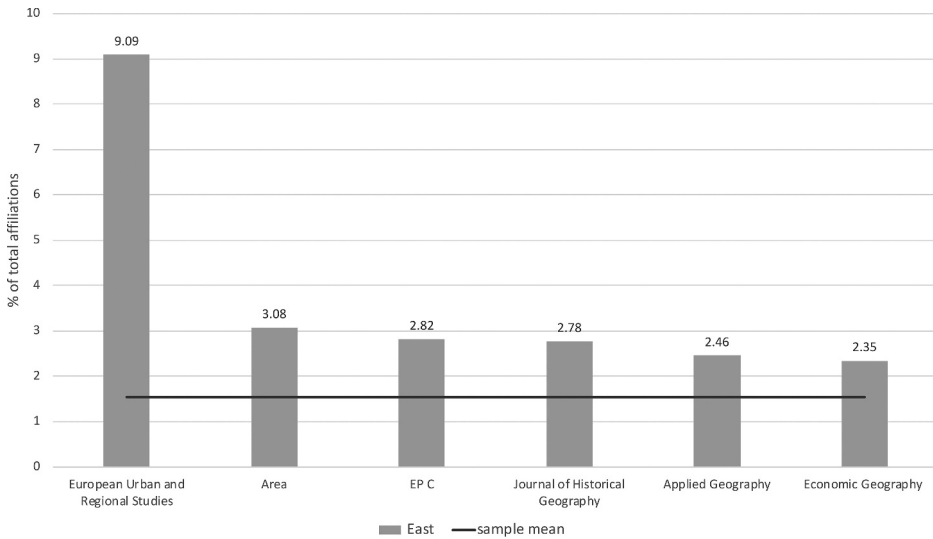


Figure 5. Share of Eastern affiliations among total affiliations, top six journals, 2009–2017.

The concentration of Eastern authors in just a few journals may be an obstacle for spreading and exchanging knowledge produced in the postsocialist Global East, as it comes with a limitation to just a few outlets and their specific readerships. We note in particular an absence of authors from the East in generalist and theory-oriented geography journals, such as *Transactions*, *Annals*, *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* and *Antipode*, and a preference for more applied or specialized ones, such as *Environment and Planning C* (under its previous orientation), *Journal of Historical Geography*, *Applied Geography*, *Economic Geography* and *European Urban and Regional Studies*. This would confirm the suspicion that scholarship from outside the Anglophone core tends to serve more as case studies than attempts to generate conceptualizations of emergent urban tendencies (Trubina 2011; Minca 2013; Ferenčuhová 2016; Ergin and Alkan 2019).

Editors and editorial boards

The editors, as well as the editorial boards of academic publications, act as the primary gatekeepers of academic journals. Thus, it is essential that these actors are diverse and representative of the actual global conditions of knowledge production. The editors' "identity" and their professional network often determine who and what gets published in a journal. The presence of the academics from institutions of the postsocialist Global East would make these sites of knowledge production more open to authors from outside the West. However, the data on gatekeepers show that the representation of academics from the East compared to the West is highly inadequate. There was not a single

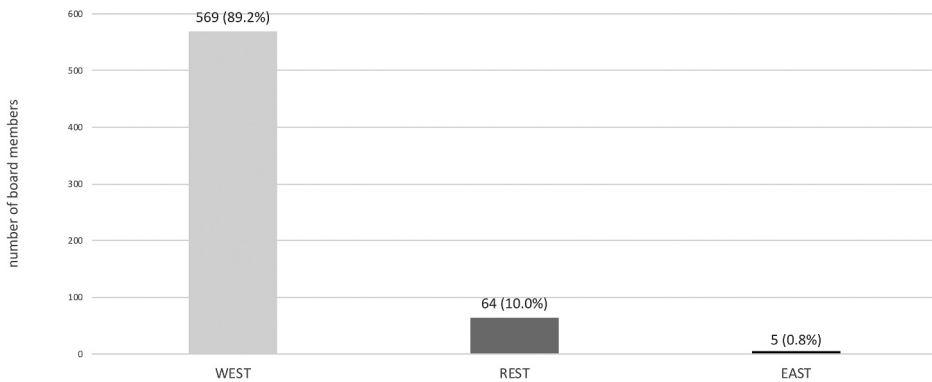


Figure 6. Affiliation of editorial board members, 2017.

editor from an academic institution of the postsocialist Global East in our sample, neither in 1999 nor in 2017.

The picture is also not very encouraging when looking at editorial board members (Figure 6). Only 5 out of 638 board members in the sample come from the East, which amounts to 0.78% and to less than 1.55% of share in authors. The Czech Republic has two board members, while Poland, Russia and Slovakia have one each. At the same time, over 89% of board members are based at academic institutions of the West.

Three of those five board members concentrate in one journal with a regional focus on Europe, European Urban and Regional Studies. By contrast, none of the large generalist journals sports a board member from the East. This suggests that gatekeepers from the postsocialist Global East are mostly enrolled in their capacities as regional experts. Yet, even in journals with a regional focus on the East, such as this one, they are often in a minority vis-à-vis Anglophone scholars.

Discussion

Our analysis shows that, despite ongoing difficulties in working conditions of scholars in the postsocialist Global East, since 1991 and particularly in the 2010 s there is a limited but dynamically increasing weight of scholars from the East in the international geographical debate. While the absolute number of scholars from institutions in the West is still overwhelmingly high, the increase of the weight of the postsocialist East is manifested in the rise of the number of authors as well as their significantly higher growth rate publishing in the pages of 22 geography journals in the sample. This follows the general trend of an increasing share of non-Anglophone or non-Western (labeled as the Rest in this article) contributions (Bański and Ferenc 2013; Kong and Qian 2017) and suggests a possible further integration of Eastern scholars in the above-mentioned journals. Looking at the significant increase that a large number of continental European states went

through in the 1990 s and 2000 s , a further strong growth of the share of the East can also be surmised. This is already happening for some countries as the data have illustrated. By contrast, Eastern scholars' role as gatekeepers of academic knowledge production is still extremely limited and often non-existent.

The political system and economic status have an effect on the role postsocialist countries get to play in English-language geography journals. [Figure 4](#), demonstrating the difference in terms of academic productivity of the countries in our sample, clearly shows a higher productivity for those with higher GDP per capita and for EU member states. On the contrary, those countries with a GDP (PPP) per capita of less than 12,000 USD are relegated to the group that either publishes very little or does not participate in the international debate in the studied journals at all. The dynamic increase of contributions from Eastern academics can be attributed to the economic growth and the impetus received from accession to the European Union that is clearly manifested in the higher GDP figures of these states, pointing to an uneven geopolitics of knowledge production within the postsocialist Global East itself. As a result, the growth rate of this group of authors from the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia has been much higher than those of authors based in the West. This increase was particularly visible from the 2000 s and among the countries of the Visegrád group, part of the Balkans and the Baltic States. Estonia, that is one of the frontrunners among these countries for example, has a per capita publication rate that is even higher than that of the United States and thus can be considered as completely integrated into the list of the Western countries if we consider the aspect that this paper has been looking at. This trend, however, is not true for all countries, as we see, for example, a marked increase in the case of Romania, while this is almost completely absent in neighboring Bulgaria, both of which joined the EU in 2007. In-depth comparative research on these two countries could provide valuable additional information.

The language also plays a role for pushing authors to publish in English. In contrast to many other world regions, there is no alternative to English as a *lingua franca* in the postsocialist Global East. Latin America can rely on Spanish and, to a lesser degree, Portuguese, and Southern Europe and parts of Africa can rely on French. Yet, after the collapse of the Soviet Union Russian largely ceased to exercise the function of a *lingua franca* and English remained the international language of choice. This is all the more true for smaller countries that may lack a varied academic debate in the national language, but *ipso facto* contribute to a more profound internationalization of academic debate in geography. The "leading positions" and high growth rates of Czech, Polish and Estonian authors can be explained partly directly by this fact. On the contrary, there still are countries where Russian language dominates, for example in the Central Asia, which might be the reason for their lower or absent participation in the academic discussions going on in international geography journals.

The limited access to paid journal content in the Global East region is another aspect to consider. This affects the habits of the local scholars and students, who

often cannot or do not consider following such journals as part of their teaching and learning practice. One of the authors of this paper, while studying at Tbilisi State University in Georgia between 2005 and 2011, recalls how limited the access of the university (considered as the best one nationally and in the South Caucasus for that period) was to various academic databases. Even though the situation in terms of access has improved considerably since then, in that period the majority of journal articles were received from professors that had international contacts or were involved in international projects however this also pushes them toward participation in the international academic debates going on in English. The “leading positions” and high growth rates of Czech, Poland and Estonian authors can be explained partly directly by this fact. While illegal services such as Sci-Hub founded and hosted in the postsocialist Global East (Himmelstein et al. 2018), have somewhat leveled the playing field, use of these services also pushes scholars into illegality when their colleagues in the West normally access these resources through their institutional accounts by default. Overall, the highly divergent access to knowledge can deepen the exclusion and worsen the prospects of integration of the postsocialist Global East in the international geographic debate (Ferenčuhová 2016).

The institutional factor is likely another aspect affecting scholars’ publishing practices in the postsocialist states of the postsocialist Global East and beyond. As Aalbers and Rossi (Aalbers and Rossi 2007, 119) outline, “the weakness and the contradictions” of national academic institutions in various states is key to understanding the existing unevenness of geographical knowledge production. While there have been radical structural and programmatic changes in geography education standards in the postsocialist Global East, geography (and urban studies) is comparatively less institutionalized and less integrated in curricula. This is particularly true for most of the Central Asian and some of the South Caucasus countries that have a particularly low number of contributions in the journals studied. Faculties and departments are oriented toward applied geography, which also tends to attract more students and, as a result, is often wealthier, gets more research grants and more attractively organized than other orientations. As Pirog (2012) mentions in an article on the reforms of geography teaching in the universities of Poland, the material taught within the economic and social geography programs is normally poorer in terms of academic content compared to physical geography. This strength of the physical geography and other applied subfields logically affects the academic output of researchers as well as the future generations of researchers that will graduate from such departments. Moreover, in Poland as well as in many other postsocialist states, applied aspects of geography such as specializations in tourism and GIS dominate due to the labor market conditions, thus further limiting the opportunities of scholarly advancement and scientific debate. The high number of articles published in the journal *Applied Geography*, which has been demonstrated

above, with at least one author from the postsocialist East is one illustration of this.

The lack of diversity and the dominance of US, UK and Canadian academics among journal editors and editorial board members are another important obstacles toward full-fledged internationalization, limiting the “scope of both topics and areas covered by the journals” (Bański and Ferenc 2013, 294). Editors and board members act as gatekeepers policing to what extent different epistemologies and intellectual thoughts are introduced. Thus, issues that are relevant to the postsocialist Global East are often either missing or discussed from the theoretical traditions of the Western world. Contributions coming from outside the Western core tend to be perceived as just another case study with little capacity to engage in theory-building or even irrelevant to the existing academic debates (Paasi 2005; Aalbers and Rossi 2007; Bański and Ferenc 2013). Thus, these two issues are interrelated and drive each other. If we follow the argument of Aalbers and Rossi (Aalbers and Rossi 2007, 117) that “native speakers have a gatekeeper and network advantage”, we might also assert the inverse, i.e. that more gatekeepers from the postsocialist Global East would also result in increased authorship. In our sample, European Urban and Regional Studies would confirm this assumption, having both the highest number of editorial board members from the postsocialist East currently and the highest share of articles affiliated with institutions from this part of the world in all three studied periods.

Poor representation of academics from the postsocialist Global East among editors and editorial boards, of course, does not necessarily mean that the knowledge production from this part of the world is limited to these academics. One limitation of our study can be found in the fact that we cannot account for the numerous scholars who have emigrated since the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and moved to various institutions in the West. Considering the leading position of the Anglophone academic entities, there is a chance that a large part of them have been attracted here. These migrated international scholars from the postsocialist Global East often also work (or have worked previously) on the region or country where they originate from, such as Sonia Hirt, Kiril Stanilov, Stefan Bouzarovski, Oleg Golubchikov, Petr Pavlínek and others. However, these academics are invisible in generalized statistical data and contribute, statistically, to the dominance of Western institutions. Contributions from these authors get published under the name of the country where their research institution is based, and not under their country of origin. Kong and Qian (2017) refer to such scholars as “in-between academics” who act as mediators of knowledge production and exchange and, what is most important, they have embedded local knowledge but also possess tools and know-how available to their Western colleagues that can be crucial for such a process. Further research could look at the role of these “in-between academics” as well as the relationship between the postsocialist East and the rest of the world and the citations of and to the papers published in this part of the world (see Ferenčuhová 2016).

Conclusion

The emergence and co-existence of the postsocialist states in the 1990s has been entangled with the internationalization of knowledge production; a process that continues today through many conflicting strands and tendencies. The postsocialist Global East as both a subject of research and as the vast space where many academics are based is by now firmly implicated in the global transmission of knowledge and in the distribution of recognition. In our article, we have found that postsocialist scholars' presence in leading geography journals has grown strongly, particularly in the 2010 s, but that their overall weight in global knowledge production remains limited. Most notably, the postsocialist Global East is poorly represented in gatekeeping positions, pointing to its weak role in shaping knowledge and its creation.

The conditions of possibility for a deeper internationalization of geography with an Eastern vector are structured by broader economic and institutional contexts – exemplified by Morris Zapp and Bogdan Voskreshchenskiy in the introduction – which are less than advantageous for academics from the East. In our account, we told the more or less familiar story of the asymmetrical patterns of knowledge production and reception stemming from the disparities of political and economic power. The corporatization of universities, and the competition for resources linked to science metrics it bolsters, prevents scholars and publishing venues from engaging with local specificities and epistemologies. While the high-impact, prestigious geographical journals tend to publish conceptual articles written by scholars from the UK or the USA, scholars based in the postsocialist Global East are often confined to conducting “publishable” and narrow inquiries and cite whoever “sits at the disciplinary centre” (Barnes and Sheppard 2009, 208). These region-based constraints are intertwined with the consequences of specific disciplinary cultures which for decades prevented many scholars in the postsocialist Global East from thinking theoretically, broadly and ambitiously (Ferenčuhová 2020). These capacities are inseparable from the sharing and transfer of knowledge by means of participating in a broader network of contacts and collaborators. Global East-based authors seldom cite each other and, more generally, make negligible use of work conducted in the neighboring countries since referring to the work by the Anglophone leaders of their disciplines increases their chances to see their articles published.

What is needed, then, is an emancipatory and collective project that seeks to question hegemonic discourses rather than mimicking and submitting to them; a project that seeks to carve out a Global East as an epistemological space that is both different and connected (Müller 2019). With the emerging voice of Eastern authors that this article has documented, the time is ripe to engage in a more ambitious agenda, joining and establishing dialogs with similar thrusts elsewhere in the world, whether in the South (Mbembe 2000; Chakrabarty 2000; Mignolo 2012; Mishra 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015) or further toward the East, in other Global Easts

(Chen 2010; H. Wang 2011). It is for the East to revise the geopolitics of knowledge – to push to speak back at established wisdom and challenge established networks, as some have already begun to do (Tlostanova 2015; Robinson 2016; Ferenčuhová and Gentile 2016; Karkov and Valiavicharska 2018; Müller and Trubina 2020, this issue). The shift to online publishing and the open access movement as well as increasing access to the results of scholarship through publication repositories are changing, if slowly, the existing power dynamic of access. The emergence of bottom-up networks of scholarship and activism is an encouraging outcome of the impetus of non-market forces and of a growing trans-border solidarity. The growing number of in-between scholars that hail from the East but have been trained or work in the West have the privilege of being able to act as code-switchers and intermediaries. But, in the politics of worlding the discipline of geography, the onus is not just on Eastern scholars to make themselves heard. It is also on Western scholars to take seriously the knowledge produced in and with the postsocialist Global East and make an effort to listen – and to learn. One first step in this direction would be to put more scholars from the postsocialist Global East on editorial boards and into editor positions, to allow them to shape the canon and direction of the discipline.

Notes

1. The Republic of Molvanîa, a Soviet state, is a fictional country described in the book “Molvanîa: A Land Untouched By Modern Dentistry” representing a composite of many of the worst stereotypes and clichés about Soviet states (Cilauro, Gleisner, and Sitch 2004). Morris Zapp and Euphoric State University figure in David Lodge’s satire of university work *Changing Places* (Lodge 1975).
2. We underscore that the Global East as the in-between space that sits uneasily between Global North and South is much larger than the postsocialist countries, certainly extending to the Middle East (a problematic term, but nevertheless used as a heuristic here) and the Asian East. One should thus speak of multiple Global Easts.
3. Shanzhai is the Chinese term for copying and faking (J. Wang and Zhang 2020, this issue).
4. Journals such as *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *Geografie*, *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *Geografisk Tidsskrift–Danish Journal of Geography*, *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift–Norwegian Journal of Geography*, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* while tend to be more regionally oriented or considered as the second tier they are also tend more considerate in terms of academic connections with the Global East. Thus, more contributions from the academics based in this part of the world can be found in these journals but also among the editors or the editorial board members.

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