

Jerzy Kochanowski / Claudia Kraft (eds.)

Rooms for Manoeuvre

Another Look at Negotiating Processes
in the Socialist Bloc

Vienna University Press





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Herausgegeben von Oliver Rathkolb

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Umschlagabbildung: Die Fotografie auf dem Cover zeigt das Dorf Golzow im Oderbruch (DDR) im
Jahr 1978. Es stammt von dem Berliner Fotografen Erhard Stiefel. Er nahm das Bild für die filmische
Langzeitproduktion von Barbara und Winfried Junge, „Die Kinder von Golzow“, auf. (Archiv
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Contents

Preface	7
-------------------	---

Jerzy Kochanowski / Claudia Kraft	
Introduction: “Rooms for Manoeuvre” – a New Paradigm for the Research of State Socialist Societies	9

Part I: Socialist Space-Time

Maria Hetzer	
Negotiating Economic Development and Everyday Needs in Rural GDR and Beyond	31

Martin Jemelka	
The Unified Cooperative Farm – Agrocombine Slušovice: Genesis, Tradition, Interpretation	51

Juraj Buzalka	
Room to Manoeuvre under State Socialism and the Memory of Livelihood	71

Part II: Peripheries

Dušan Segeš	
A Failed “Marriage”: The Attitude of the Peasants and the Government Toward the First Stage of Collectivisation in the Prešov Region (1949– 1953)	95

Jerzy Kochanowski	
A ‘Free City’? The Zakopane of Władysław Gomułka, 1956–1970	119

Błażej Brzostek	
“Spaces for Freedom” of the Romanian Littoral Zone 1960–1980	141

Markus Krzoska	
The Devastation of Villages in the German-Polish Lignite Mining Region of Zittau-Bogatynia between 1980 and 2000. Opportunity or Threat for Local Residents?	167

Part III: Privacy in State Socialism

Jakub Gałęziowski	
Single Mothers and Their Babies in Poland in 1945–1949. The Social Care System vs. Female Freedom and Subjectivity	191

Barbara Klich-Kluczewska	
Far from a Children’s Home. Adoption and the Question of Individual Agency in the People’s Republic of Poland	213

Maria Buko	
Repressed Personality – Privacy as a Room for Manoeuvre of Sybiraks in the Polish People’s Republic	231

Part IV: Rooms for Experts

Matthias Barelkowski	
Communication with(out) Borders? Amateur Radio in the People’s Republic of Poland – From Personal Hobby to Social Imperative and State Surveillance	257

Theodore R. Weeks	
Esperanto in People’s Poland: Internationalism, Public Space, Propaganda	279

Authors	303
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Preface

This anthology, edited by Claudia Kraft and Jerzy Kochanowski, is a valuable addition to the series “Zeitgeschichte im Kontext” (“Contemporary History in Context”). On the basis of international case studies presenting an experiential history of state socialism, the propaganda image of the Cold War is deconstructed with regard to the rooms for manoeuvre available to social actors. While in the “West” a monolithic portrayal of a rigid, thoroughly organized system was communicated up to 1989, this volume analyses many examples of societal rooms for manoeuvre in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR. On the one hand, we have the people’s adaptations to their respective national communist societies and the rules of the regimes, while on the other hand, we can observe social practices, for instance in Polish mountain regions or Czech-Polish-German border regions, that even led to the introduction of market-oriented state enterprises. Of course, it would be illusory to assume that these were spaces free of hegemony, but at the same time new internal social dynamics are revealed that had hitherto remained concealed. It is remarkable that such rooms for manoeuvre had an impact not only in individual cities or border regions but also in spheres ranging from social and family policy to amateur radio or agricultural cooperatives.

This volume also represents an important contribution to an open and innovative history of Europe, the long-term impact of which extends far beyond 1989/1991.

Vienna, May 2021

Oliver Rathkolb

Introduction: “Rooms for Manoeuvre” – a New Paradigm for the Research of State Socialist Societies*

The scholarly examination of the state socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe can now look back on a history of almost thirty years. And, already, it again presents itself as an object of historicization. In the countries of the former “Eastern Bloc” as well as in Western European and North American historiography, the examination of this political and social constellation is no longer pursued merely as a history of “coming to terms with the past.” Rather, it has developed into a separate field of contemporary historiography that encompasses a variety of topics and methodological approaches. Nonetheless, the process of historicization also repeatedly sparks debates about the admissibility or inadmissibility of specific research questions and approaches as well as about the (historical) political instrumentalization of that epoch. Historical scholarship strives to find ways to avoid a blatant juxtaposition between “system” and “everyday life” or “system” and “society.” Still, time and again, it must be pointed out that the study of history and the social or political use of history cannot be separated, but often overlap.¹ At the same time, debates taking place within the respective national context have led to a situation in which innovative and self-reflective research approaches have had a hard time coming to terms with the use of history for the purpose of constructing identity. In this respect, Poland is a particularly interesting case. After the political upheaval of 1989, although the character of the socialist state was discussed in public, the debate was still mainly carried out by academics.² This high-level intellectual exchange of views in daily

* This volume is the result of the German-Polish research project “Rooms for Manoeuvre in State Socialism: Between Adaptation and Experiment”, which was funded by the Polish National Science Centre (NCN, project no. 2014/15/G/HS3/04344) and the German Research Foundation (DFG, project no. ROOMS, KR 3510/2-1) at the Universities of Warsaw and Siegen as part of the “Beethoven” funding initiative.

1 As, for example, in the case of the expert commission’s deliberations on the creation of a historical network for coming to terms with the SED dictatorship, which were the starting point for a multi-faceted debate, documented in Sabrow 2007.

2 The most important positions were collected in Fik 1996.

and weekly newspapers contributed significantly to awakening an interest in a well-founded historical study of the People's Republic of Poland beyond a one-dimensional depiction of the authoritarian state vs. oppressed society.³ Be that as it may, the debate on the character of the People's Republic of Poland became highly polarized. It gave rise to axiomatic positions that insist on the need to deal with the recent past, above all, with the moral condemnation of an objectionable "system" in order to provide society with a contemporary moral compass.⁴

One way to deconstruct such identity-forming narratives is to use a comparative perspective that does not ignore country specifics, but considers historical constellations that were also shaped by the transnational elements of specific social and political configurations. The point of departure of the German-Polish research project "Rooms for Manoeuvre in State Socialism," which apart from Poland also looked at the GDR, Romania and Czechoslovakia, was therefore the question of how the dissimilar paths through socialism, which not least depended on the respective prehistories, could be brought into a common research perspective. In this context, it was critical to avoid levelling the differences, but rather to look for spatial and temporal parameters by which the differences could be better understood. We anticipated that this comparative perspective would provide us with a more open view on research questions that have already been frequently raised.⁵

One specific challenge of international research projects lies particularly in the need for constant translation. This not only involves linguistic translation, but also the transfer and adaptation of concepts and, finally, the very different weighting of topics and research questions in the respective social contexts, which also needs to be communicated. An aspect of translation was also dealt with at the beginning of the research project, whose results are now available in this volume. The idea of "open spaces" or "wolne przestrzenie," which the Polish author and co-editor of this volume, Jerzy Kochanowski, had brought into the debate, was intended to bring into focus social, political, but also geographical spaces which were decidedly not understood as spaces for oppositional action, as apolitical "niches" or – when it came to spaces of private economic initiatives – as the "Trojan horse" of capitalism in the socialist planned economy. Rather, the

3 Particularly impressive is the documentation in almost 60 volumes of the series "W krainie PRL" (In the Land of the People's Republic of Poland), which was issued by the Warsaw publishing house Trio from 2000–2011.

4 See Stobiecki in 2002 and Peters in 2016, especially for the period since the right-wing conservative Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) took office in 2015.

5 The merit of having already asked these questions, also in a comparative and transfer-historical perspective, goes to the project "Hidden Paths within Socialism," which dealt with informal contacts in the state socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Borodziej / Kochanowski / v. Puttkamer 2010a and more comprehensively Borodziej / Kochanowski / Puttkamer v. 2010b.

aim was to identify those geographical, social and institutional spaces in which individuals and groups combined the logics of action of the social system with their own interests, goals and values and thereby often contributed to the stabilization of state socialist rule. Emphasis was placed on adopting both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. The former focused both on the respective pre-socialist legacy and the rapid change in times of political and social upheaval. The presence of historically different sets of experiences as well as the expectations for the future brought about by the socialist course of modernization could be a resource for historical actors to (re)claim their agency. Geographically peripheral regions could develop into experimental fields for new social or economic constellations, within which "peripherality" became an advantage over the power residing at the center. The concept of "Rooms for Manoeuvre" was initially only a translational approach to "open spaces", which were neither considered to be spheres of total autonomy nor spaces that existed beyond human agency. Ultimately, it proved to be a flexible and open-ended conceptual instrument by means of which very different subprojects could enter into fruitful communication. Against this backdrop, it should be noted, for example, that Alf Lüdtke's concept of "Eigensinn" (stubbornness) with its perspective on everyday history provided important methodological impulses for many project members. In an English text, which similarly deals with the agency of historical actors in modern mass dictatorships, the author located ambivalences and ambiguities in the behavior of historical actors likewise semantically in a "room for manoeuvring."⁶

Rooms for manoeuvre has proven to be a productive research concept in two respects. First of all, "rooms" can be understood as social or geographical spaces. Spaces are always experienced and appropriated by the actors. At the same time, physical spaces, but also spaces of representation, have an impact on historical action.⁷ In all projects, the relationship between the actors, who are restricted but also empowered by specific spatial constellations and simultaneously shape their social or physical environment through action, was a major factor. We underscore this because historical experiences are accumulated in spaces (there are phenomena of preserving practices and resiliencies), so that we find different layers of time in space, which are experienced by the historical actors as realms of experience and horizons of expectation.⁸ We consider this to be particularly important at a time when state socialism is being re-historicized. This is especially true in view of the new experiences that have been accumulated since 1989,

6 Lüdtke 2016, p. 13, p. 23, p. 29.

7 Hirschhausen v. / Grandits / Kraft / Müller / Serrier 2019.

8 Koselleck 2004.

and given that we were convinced from the very start that we also had to include the pre-socialist period in our analysis.

Second, the metaphor of “manouvering” refers to actor-centered approaches. Here, we refer to Alf Lüdtke’s reflections on “domination as social practice.”⁹ He thus describes a field of interaction between those in power and those subject to it, which – depending on the situation – is characterized by mutual evasion and exploitation of the other’s weaknesses as well as cooperation. In short, each party is looking after their own interests. The various concepts at play here include: “adaptation,” “assimilation,” “mimicry” and “stubbornness.” Lüdtke’s approach, which he already developed in the 1980s, remains innovative within research on modern forms of authoritarian regimes. It is especially useful for describing constellations in which people are not autonomous in their actions, but nevertheless enabled to transform dominant patterns of behavior into something new through adaptation – something that seems to elude total control by political institutions and social norms.¹⁰ In addition to Lüdtke’s “Eigensinn” (stubbornness), Michel de Certeau’s “practices of everyday life” also proved instrumental for the analysis. The author distinguishes between the “strategies” of the powerful, who are able to occupy places and dictate the conditions for action, and those of the less powerful actors. The latter develop tactics that may not allow them to escape the framework conditions, but they can still use the established order for their own purposes.¹¹ De Certeau uses spatial categories to highlight the specific capacity of the actors to act. He explicitly distinguishes between spaces and places. Places are effectively created by the powerful, who exist independently of them. For their part, the less powerful cannot escape this order, yet they still have agency. It is through their actions that they turn places into spaces. De Certeau describes the latter as being filled with everyday practices which the actors manage to adapt to their own interests within the given social order.¹² In this way, they essentially escape this order without leaving it¹³ and create a space for themselves to act – in a word, *room for manoeuvre*.

9 Lüdtke 1991.

10 The research concept of “Eigensinn” is difficult to translate into other languages and, in Lüdtke’s English essays, for example, it often remains in the original German: Alf Lüdtke, “Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay: Eigensinn and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900,” in: Michael Hanagan/Charles Stephenson (eds.), *Confrontation. Class Consciousness, and the Labor Process. Studies in Proletarian Class Formation*, New York 1986, pp. 65–95. For the history of the term, see also “Eigensinn” in Lindenberger 2015. For the Polish translation of the concept in an anthology with texts by Alf Lüdtke and Thomas Lindenberger, the term “samo-wola” (arbitrariness) was chosen, see Lindenberger / Lüdtke 2018.

11 de Certeau 1988, p. XIX.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 117–122. It is worth pointing out here that East Central European scholars have also been thinking – albeit from a more social science perspective – about how social action can be

Heuristically, what exactly is the added value of the concept of *rooms for manoeuvre*? As historians working on Central and Eastern Europe, we are often confronted with the fact that our research is framed and put into a certain perspective by other, more systematically oriented disciplines. In the study of state socialism, sociology occupies an important position, for example when it postulates that socialist societies were unstable precisely because of their rigid institutional order. The primacy of the political over all other forms of societal challenges meant that these societies were not able to react flexibly to change and thus failed to attain a key accomplishment of modern societies, namely ensuring stability through flexibility.¹⁴ For our research perspective, it has proved immensely useful to include not only this sociological ex-post perspective, but also sociological self-descriptions in the countries from the late phase of state socialism under analysis. The Polish sociologist Andrzej Rychard, for example, provided such a self-description in 1987. He explained how it was precisely through the state's omnipresent interference in society that overlaps emerged between the interests of "society" and those of political leadership. Even if they were not on an equal footing, cooperative relationships nonetheless arose that contributed to the stability of the system. The society, which pursued pragmatic interests, adopted an attitude of active adaptation ("aktywne dostosowanie"). In the process, it not only changed itself, but also the system, stabilizing and making it more effective, for instance through informal economic activity.¹⁵ Indeed, from his intimate knowledge of his own experience with state socialism, Wolfgang Engler developed the concept of the "bargaining society" with regard to the GDR after it had collapsed.¹⁶ The authors in this volume pursue a precise historicization and trace how the historical actors created *rooms for manoeuvre* in which, under the conditions of the given political and social order, their own interests and goals were aligned with those of the "system." The developing coexistence had very different impacts on the "system." If we could tell the history of state socialism as a history of recurrent crises and subsequent "normalizations" without repeating a teleology of failure, then this would allow us to create a multidimensional perspective through which we could focus on the treatment of the unintended consequences of actions.

described in a political system that strongly controls social spheres of action. Concepts were developed such as the "second society" for Hungary, Hankiss 1988 and "społeczeństwo drugiego obiegu" (society of the second circuit) for Poland, Marody 1999.

13 de Certeau 1988, p. 13.

14 Lepsius 1994, on sociological interpretations of (the end of) state socialism, see also Ettrich 2005.

15 Rychard 1987.

16 Engler 1997.

It therefore seems reasonable to consider *rooms for manoeuvre* as a research perspective (in the sense of a “creative metaphor”¹⁷) rather than as fixed geographical or social spaces. In this way, we avoid the danger of seeing special zones, which are less affected by the disciplinary power of the state, as the “flip side” of normal state socialism. If we were to assume such a “flip side,” our research might either lead to the banalization of state socialism as a social order or to the unquestioned confirmation of its claim to the comprehensive exercise of power beyond these allegedly “open spaces.” We obtain a more precise picture of state socialism if we are prepared to think of spaces as constantly being produced according to the situation. Taking recourse to Lüdtkke’s everyday history is particularly useful here.¹⁸ Its guiding principle is not to examine the supposedly apolitical everyday life in modern interventionist states, which extend their claim to power to the very last recesses of society. Rather, everyday history asks how the actors deal with these omnipresent impositions and how they can appropriate them. Of course, it would be naïve to assume that all historical actors had the same resources at their disposal that made them manoeuvrable. It is therefore important to take into account the institutional and political context. However, our examples have shown that situational appropriations can change the scope of action and that at the same time certain spatial constellations influence agency. This, in turn, has prompted us to reconsider the respective capacity to act. Michel de Certeau stressed the often unconscious nature of the tactics underlying everyday practices, as opposed to the carefully planned strategies designed by many kinds of social institutions to control behavior and regulate relationships. Nevertheless, in view of our case studies, it seems appropriate to consider the continuum of strategies and tactics rather than their mere juxtaposition. As research in several of our subprojects has shown, less powerful historical actors were also able to act strategically, while powerful institutions and their representatives were forced to resort to improvised tactics.

Contributions of the volume

Socialist Space-Time

What was state socialism? Is it a self-contained epoch? Or is it part of a larger historical continuum that cannot be understood without including pre-socialist legacies in the analysis and examining how the historical actors combined the

17 Hirschhausen v. / Grandits / Kraft / Müller / Serrier 2019, p. 368.

18 Lüdtkke 1995.

radically new with the traditional forms of life and economy?¹⁹ There was a mixture of new political and economic rationalities, on the one hand, and existing ways of life and even resistant materialities (be it natural areas or infrastructures), on the other. It is therefore difficult to speak of "the" state socialism that eventually asserted itself and then continued in its "real socialist" variant until the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. Even the often apologetically used term "real existing socialism" indicates that this system was far removed from the original social utopia and nevertheless relevant to lived experiences. It was precisely the mixture of pre-socialist orders and norms and newly created institutions and value systems that often contributed to the emergence of a specific socialist "space-time," which was not a rigid system but a situation that had to be stabilized through constant negotiation processes.²⁰ This observation affirms that state socialism is not to be regarded as a rigid monolithic "system." Rather, in its forty years of existence, it was characterized by dynamic social change and phases of accelerated or delayed modernization, which varied greatly from sector to sector. What is more, generational changes led to the contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous.²¹ The authors of the articles collected here show that state socialism was not a fixed system. Instead, ideas and debates were formed about it through the manner in which actors created spaces via their actions and expressed ideas about a socialism that had failed or was still unrealized. This might be summed up in the words of Doreen Massey, a leading voice from critical geography: "It is not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time."²² It is precisely in those places that were meant to embody the new order in exemplary fashion – such as agricultural production cooperatives – that the fascinating landscape of these negotiation processes unfolds.

Maria Hetzer's contribution thus shows how very different traditions, lifestyles and future expectations converged at LPG Golzow in the German Democratic Republic. While war-induced migration and a vast range of wartime destruction hampered socio-economic transformation, they also created a space for socialist planning – similar as the former large-scale agricultural economy of Ostelbien. Although the socialist planning had to struggle with numerous difficulties, the author shows that these in fact provided opportunities for the empowerment of local actors. State regulations permanently confronted the LPG

19 For Poland, however, Andrzej Leder has recently pointed to the radical transformation brought about by war, occupation, and system change from a socio-psychological perspective, Leder 2016 (the German translation of the Polish original from 2014 appeared in 2019, Leder 2019).

20 See also Dorsch 2013.

21 Świda-Ziemba 2010.

22 Massey 1992, p. 79.

with the task of dealing creatively with existing resources. Therefore, the much-vaunted “Plan” was both a facilitator and a hindrance to independent action. Specifically, in situations in which state intervention was particularly direct – such as when the LPG was to be presented to foreign visitors as a model of socialist agriculture – opportunities arose for making new demands on the state and thus improving one’s own negotiating position. The negotiation processes did not follow any clear rules; instead the rules were constantly adapted to the situational challenges. Modernity took hold and gender policy was managed flexibly, which resulted in agency for women. At the same time, however, the events following 1989 show that old patterns of action reappeared in the radically changed economic situation, while, at a time of increased mobility needs, it was women who were among the losers in this new era. It can be observed, then, that the space-time of socialist rurality had created a constellation in which tradition and progress coexisted. It was certainly a constellation in its own right and not merely the antithesis of urban modernity.

Martin Jemelka presents a similar case of socialist space-time, in which pre-socialist and socialist practices were combined at the Unified Cooperative Farm – Agrocombine Slušovice in Czechoslovakia. He elaborates on how the geographical proximity of the cooperative to Zlín and the form of rational industrial modernity established there by the Bat’a works as early as the interwar period played an important role in the development of this economically successful cooperative. It is striking that the “Bat’a principles” are difficult to describe purely in economic or political terms. Bat’a’s “authoritative management of modern society” demonstrates the flexibility of organizational methods of industrial modernity with regard to different social contexts. The rationalization promoted in Slušovice since the 1970s and the introduction of new market-oriented technologies and products were immune to ideological criticism due to the considerable economic success. This created space for a separate value system. Here, new products (fewer and fewer agricultural ones), new modes of production (licensed production of western consumer goods) were coupled with socio-political reforms and attractive opportunities for communitization (sports, leisure culture). As a result, long-time director of the JZD František Čuba was granted immense organizational power. He was neither a mere Bat’a follower nor a mastermind of the Perestroika reforms of the 1980s. Čuba was rather a representative of a socialist industrial modernism that skillfully exploited the spaces of opportunity offered by economic and socio-political patterns in an ideologically altered context.

Juraj Buzalka conceives a completely different state socialist space-time with the “post peasant house,” which is considered retrospectively as a “room to manoeuvre.” As a cultural anthropologist, the author has investigated the significance of agricultural properties for the economic practices of the rural

population in Poland and Slovakia. He observes that while the economic system of state socialism is not remembered positively, there is a positive recollection surrounding the peasant house. The house is understood to have been the bedrock of autarky and trust in oneself and one's family and friends. It was thus a foundation for agrarian practices **under** state socialism, which in hindsight cannot be remembered as capitalist or socialist practices. Just as one cannot talk about a state socialist practice of rural economy, the current peasant self-image cannot simply be analytically grasped as "post-socialist." Rather, Buzalka identifies a "post-peasant economy," which developed under state socialism, as a specific form of economic modernity. Socialist modernization in particular has thus brought about a strong focus on small-scale private property, which, however, cannot be grasped with the classical notions of socialist or capitalist ideas of ownership. The author concludes that research should avoid vague descriptions such as "postsocialism." Instead, the idea of the "economic organization of the house" should be stressed more in the analysis of economic activity in rural areas, before and after the system change.

Peripheries

At the outset of our research project, we hypothesized that geographical criteria, such as distance from the center, proximity to the border or natural features (e.g. mountain or coastal regions) would foster the formation of *rooms for manoeuvre* that are particularly difficult to control. On the one hand, these spaces could play a significant social and economic role in the socialist welfare state; on the other hand, they also came into conflict with the ideological and economic premises of the state. It quickly became evident, however, that "periphery" was not an unambiguous term.²³ Furthermore, besides the category of space, the question of the pre-socialist legacy – and thus a diachronic perspective – was once again relevant. At the same time, however, the historical actors did not follow the paths apparently prescribed by traditional social relations and institutions. On the contrary, they used historical knowledge according to the situation, although they could also ignore it for the sake of present objectives.²⁴

Both in terms of its geographical location and its economic structure, the eastern Slovakian Prešov region can be regarded as a periphery in the Stalinist modernization project. This project was massively promoted in Czechoslovakia

23 Particularly illuminating in this respect was the comment by Thomas Lindenberger during the project's final conference at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw (22/23 November 2018), in which he pointed out the range of "marginality," "remoteness" and even "eccentricity" (in the case of Zakopane) of the peripheries under consideration.

24 Hirschhausen v. / Grandits / Kraft / Müller / Serrier 2019 pp. 386f.

from the end of the 1940s. **Dušan Segeš** describes the way in which the peasants of this region fought against the forced collectivization of agriculture during the Stalinist era. The region had already experienced a dynamic socio-economic change since the 19th century. The pauperization of the peasants working in subsistence farming triggered large emigration movements, as a result of which traditional social relations and thus also the gender relations changed greatly. Simultaneously, the importance of kinship and village relations created a setting in which the preservation of “domestic peace” was considered desirable by all local actors – be they farmers or representatives of the local administrative and party apparatus. Thus, a multitude of delaying tactics were observed, with which the farmers (quite in the sense of de Certeau) escaped the new agricultural order without actually leaving it. At the height of Stalinist collectivization, a manoeuvring space was created on the ground as the peasants learned to undermine state demands with ever new tactics. In addition, the process of collectivization planned by the state also presented itself as a process of communication between local party and administrative officials and farmers. In this context, all participants reinterpreted state guidelines for their own purposes. The introduction of centrally planned socialist modernity also took place in the Prešov region. However, the actions of the local actors cannot be described one-dimensionally as a form of resistance. On the contrary, they anticipated state reactions, withdrew, or only pretended to collectivize. In this respect, local networks of contacts played a more important role than blatant political positionings.

Jerzy Kochanowski describes a completely different periphery with the tourist center of Zakopane in the Polish Tatra Mountains. The diachronic perspective is relevant here as well. Zakopane was already able to look back on a long and quite illustrious tradition of tourism when the new state socialist rulers decided to use it for the purposes of state-organized recreation. In the process, these administrators either did not want to or could not deprive the location of its special aura. In fact, Zakopane was and remained a center of mass tourism, but in a way that created a microcosm in which notions of socialist property and socialist-organized holiday-making could never supplant local interests and resources. Interestingly, the local economic actors – mainly due to land and property ownership – had such unfettered power that Zakopane for them was much more than a “manoeuvring space”. It is therefore not actually possible to speak of negotiation processes between the successful and self-confident entrepreneurs under socialism and the local administrative and party institutions. The latter were dealt with in an instrumental way and endeavoured to benefit from the established order themselves within the scope of their possibilities. In the boom phase of tourism since the thaw in 1956, government agencies – both locally and in Warsaw – had come to terms with the successful entrepreneurs. From the 1970s onward, a new generation of socialist functionaries set out to put an end to

the historical and socio-economic exceptionalism of Zakopane and turn the place into a "socialist city." It was all in vain, however, as private enterprise was already flourishing again in the crisis-ridden 1980s. This failure, clearly shows that throughout the entire period of state socialist rule, a significant proportion of the relevant actors in state institutions and in the party, as well as the factory managers, were concerned with maintaining a state of "social peace." As a consequence, the private (tourist) infrastructure was not only tolerated but even financed by these bodies.

In his contribution on the Romanian Black Sea coast, **Błażej Brzostek** shows how differently the appropriation of traditional tourist destinations could take shape in the state socialist camp. The Romanian state leadership recognized their economic value early on and was able to build on a modest tourist infrastructure. By the 19th century, the idyllic sea beach at the European periphery had already attracted more than just local tourists. The dynamic development of a tourist infrastructure that also targeted Western tourists began in the late 1950s. During this period, the Stalinist idea of recreation as a complement to proletarian work receded into the background and Western tourists were seen as a welcome source of income. This was intended from the 1960s onward to promote the desired independence from the USSR. By promoting the tourism industry aimed at foreign tourists, the Romanian party leadership realized that its control and disciplinary apparatus would be challenged in various ways. The preferential treatment of Western tourists, which included the availability of a range of consumer goods in exchange for hard currency, turned a spotlight on the economic disparities on the ground in the systemic conflict. Here, as well as more generally regarding social contacts between foreign and domestic tourists, complete separation was impossible. Yet the ramped up modern mass tourism affected other areas as well. In the hinterland, enclaves of Romanian independent tourism emerged, which accommodated a need for isolation from state-organized leisure. For the party leadership, the Black Sea coast was a space of very different self-representations. It enabled both a show of external independence from the Soviet Union and an opportunity for internal monitoring via the Securitate's increased presence in the strongholds of tourism. The *rooms for manoeuvre* created for enterprising youth, nudists, or nonconformists were never actually free from state control. Still, they opened up new spaces for taking action – no less in the immediate vicinity or even in the middle of a state prestige project.

In his contribution, **Markus Krzoska** describes historical actors in a twofold peripheral location (on the outskirts of large coal waste dumps as well as in the German-Polish border region on the Lusatian Neisse), which were simultaneously at the center of a fundamental dilemma of late socialist economies. Specifically, there was a constant tension between energy production from lignite mining, on the one hand, and serious environmental pollution, on the other.

Krzoska outlines the *rooms for manoeuvre* of the local population as well as of the political and economic elites, which were at least as much constrained by deficient economic, geological-topographical and infrastructural conditions as by political and planned-economy directives. In doing so, he succeeds in breaking down one-dimensional narratives of opposition, oppression, and resistance. He paints a complex picture of negotiation processes between local, regional and central authorities, on the one hand, and economic, future-oriented and traditional, homeland-related interests, on the other. The opening up of *rooms for manoeuvre* – as in the Polish case, where local actors succeeded in attracting supraregional attention to the economic and, above all, ecological problems of their home region – did not necessarily mean that these actors could exploit them in the long term. This is clearly demonstrated by the situation in the Polish lignite mining region after 1989. At the same time, ambivalences emerge in the ability to measure the “success” of the manoeuvring or negotiation processes. Could moving to more modern housing compensate for the loss of ancestral living space when an entire village was relocated, as with Deutsch-Ossig in Eastern Germany? And what was lost when an old church building in Olbersdorf, also in Eastern Germany, was demolished and then replaced by a multi-functional community center? The author emphasizes that such questions resist definitive answers, since manoeuvring also meant a continuous realignment of one’s own expectations and objectives. This realignment, moreover, affected not only the ordinary inhabitants of the lignite areas, but also the functionaries in state, party and economic institutions, who had to navigate a complex web of interests.

Privacy in State Socialism

When speaking of privacy under state socialism, it is precisely in retrospect that we often imagine a dichotomous separation between an over-politicized party-state public sphere and a private sphere of refuge. But the same holds true for state socialism as for other modern political systems: Public and private spheres are not fixed spaces, but are produced and given meaning by different actors. They are also not complementary spaces, but are interwoven and constitute each other – depending on the meanings attributed to them.²⁵ Nor can the “private” be understood in a generalized way as a space of refuge that guarantees trusting and nonviolent social relations. In this context, it is therefore interesting to examine the question of how *rooms for manoeuvre* existed in spheres that were designated as private, what actors were active, and how interests there were negotiated.

25 Gal 2003; Kraft 2008, pp. 6–11.

Jakub Gałęziowski focuses on Polish Mother and Child Homes in the first post-war years. He reminds us that the establishment of state socialism in Poland went hand in hand with overcoming the terrible consequences of the war. Besides the many other problems of rebuilding, the new authorities were also concerned with the phenomenon of single mothers. This included women who had been raped, female forced laborers who returned from the German Reich with a child, but also "abandoned" women or young girls who urgently needed support in the broader post-war chaos.

As Polish statehood was initially weak in the new Polish northern and western regions, the challenge of dealing with this social problem was daunting. The author uses the example of a Mother and Child Home in Słupsk (Stolp), which was considered exemplary at the time, to illustrate the complex mixture of actors involved. State authorities reacted quickly with regard to the legal equality of legitimate and illegitimate children. Much more problematic was the social security of mothers and children. The original practice of laying claim to the costs of their accommodation from their families proved to be unsuitable, since for many single mothers the homes were valued because of the anonymity they offered. Social hypocrisy in a conservative Catholic population contributed to the stigmatization of single mothers (the majority of whom, since 1947, consisted of women "abandoned" by their lovers). The social authorities consequently also became active in this area in material terms – although not until the end of the 1940s. In the "long" post-war period (war destruction and manifold migration movements up to the end of the 1940s justify such a designation), the Mother and Child Home in Słupsk represented a place where a social problem, which was often not addressed and alleviated in private due to a social double standard, was treated by activating social networks. With regard to the home in Słupsk, it is worth to reflect also about the peripheral location in the new Polish western territories and a certain anonymity, resulting from the fact that social relationships in this region still had to be formed.

Barbara Klich-Kluczevska focuses in her contribution on adoptions in the People's Republic of Poland. Adoptions are well-suited for problematizing the concept of privacy. They not only concerned very personal life decisions, but they also brought the actors into contact with state welfare institutions. The author elaborates on how far social practices – especially in rural areas – were able to deviate from the guidelines and ideas of state welfare management. The latter sought to formalize the treatment of orphans or "social orphans" and to bring it exclusively under state control, which was mainly exerted in state children's homes. Much less clear was the state's influence over family group homes, which had become more and more widespread since the late 1950s. Here, married couples cared for several children, with concepts of family care and state funding and supervision becoming intertwined. However, the liminality of social prac-

tices was particularly significant in the case of the so-called “*dochowańcy*” (children who were “adopted” in order to work for farming families and were offered the prospect of an inheritance). Adoptions of “*dochowańcy*” took place less with regard to the welfare of the child than economic considerations. The author examines the extent to which social practices in rural areas were removed from an urban modernity, in which state authorities, lawyers and educational experts addressed the well-being of children. The emotionality of familial relations receded into the background in favor of economic and utilitarian concerns. In the 1960s, this phenomenon was still not uncommon among individual farmers. It shows the enormous gap that existed between an envisaged socialist (agrarian) modernity and social practices that had their origins in pre-modern rural societies.

Maria Buko dedicates her contribution to the Poles deported to Siberia (*Sybiraks*) who were able to return to Poland after the Second World War (some not until the 1950s). The People’s Republic of Poland made it impossible for this group to make the experience of deportation and the gulags part of an official war time memory. Unlike National Socialist crimes, Soviet atrocities were not allowed to become part of the official collective memory. The author evaluates biographical interviews conducted with the *Sybiraks* in the late phase of the People’s Republic of Poland in the 1980s and in the 1990s. She is able to demonstrate that the former deportees felt discriminated against not only by the socialist system, but also by the majority society, which perpetuated this culture of remembrance. Memories of the gulag were thus relegated to the family sphere. Nevertheless, beyond this space, a community of remembrance emerged among those who had suffered Soviet repression. It was, consequently, not so much the private sphere of the family that became a locus of memory, but rather the community of a shared experience that was doubly connected – through the personal memories of the gulag and through the experience of official suppression of memory in the People’s Republic. The author observes that in this community of remembrance imposed forgetting played a dominant role. Normally, there was more discussion about the injustice experienced in the People’s Republic than about the deportation experience. Life under socialism was also more or less viewed as a continuation of the experience of injustice.

(Negotiated) Transnational Rooms

In her contribution on transnationalism during the Cold War, Penny von Eschen reminds us that this phenomenon needs to be considered from a particular perspective. During this time, namely, transnationalism was a “highly specific political and ideological formation.” At the same time, however, a description of

transnationalism should not overlook "networks that predate the cold war."²⁶ The last section of the volume is devoted to precisely those constellations in which negotiation processes are examined in the field of tension between bloc membership, national sovereignty, and cross-border practices. The focus is on the importance of knowledge, but also of cultural capital in general. The actors had already acquired this before the caesuras of the Second World War and systemic change and it was now highly relevant for the construction of the new system. In this respect, one might consider a much wider range of institutions that had cultural capital because of their societal activities. The state party was either indifferent to them because of their seemingly apolitical stance (such as dog breeders' associations) or their expertise and commitment was urgently needed (for example, charities).²⁷

In his contribution on Polish radio amateurs, **Matthias Barelkowski** shows how actors who had specific technical knowledge that was "relevant to security" for the People's Republic of Poland created *rooms for manoeuvre* in complex negotiation processes. Following the Second World War, a wide range of political actors came together again in the relaunched pre-war association. Its apolitical character and proclaimed internationality were initially removed from the association's charter, which still dated from the interwar period. With the thaw, however, the radio amateurs managed to re-establish their "apolitical" independence to a certain extent, successfully freeing their association from being incorporated into a paramilitary group. The author shows an extensive overlapping of interests between the radio amateurs and the party. The latter relied on the specific technical knowledge of amateur radio operators (hams) and stressed the importance of Poland's visible presence in international associations (such as the International Amateur Radio Union, IARU). This, in turn, was entirely in the interest of the hams, who were more than willing to compensate for their high-profile participation in prominent meetings with regular intelligence work. A certain *room for manoeuvre* for the hams resulted from the simple fact that the party leadership wanted to remain informed about international developments in this field, which was also technologically important. It therefore depended on both linguistic and technical translation of the international expert debates. We encounter a story here of concessions, dependencies, mistrust, but also overlapping interests. Inadequate means of control meant that the hams were particularly closely watched in times of political unrest. However, they did not necessarily possess the oppositional capacity that was attributed to them on the basis of their technical knowledge.

26 van Eschen 2013, pp. 452f.

27 Ruzikowski 2017.

Theodore R. Weeks describes one group with undisputed cultural capital in his contribution on Polish Esperantists. Similar to the radio amateurs, they made use of a per se cross-border, transnational medium, in this case an artificial language invented on Polish soil by Ludwik Zamenhof in 1887. Esperanto was intended to enable borderless communication. As elsewhere, the relationship between a group of experts and the state party displays an interesting ambiguity. Esperanto, as Weeks emphasizes right at the beginning of his article, was “perfectly suited to socialism.” But internationality – especially during the time of Stalinist isolation – did not have a good reputation in Poland or, for that matter, in the entire Eastern Bloc. Esperanto, moreover, aroused suspicion on several counts, as it created a “semi-autonomous space” for a group with specific knowledge, both within the country itself and across borders. As a consequence, the magazine “Pola Esperantisto” could not be published in the years 1949–1957. Even afterwards, the party’s relationship with the Esperantists, who were reproached for their pre-war bourgeois history despite their commitment to the new order, was characterized by indifference and mistrust. Despite this, the Esperantists still had *room to manoeuvre*. As early as 1959, the World Congress of Esperantists could be held in Warsaw; in 1987, this event was repeated for the centenary of the invention of the language in its country of origin. There was a strong desire for the Esperantists to convey a positive image of the country to the congress participants, and abroad more generally. Illustrated books, for example, were also published in Esperanto and presented both the modernity of the country and its heroic resistance during the Second World War. This overlapping of interests between the state party and the Esperantists regarding international understanding and the preservation of world peace remained more in the ideological realm. Even so, Esperanto enabled its speakers to cross real and virtual borders and connect with the world.

The range of *rooms for manoeuvre* discussed here is without question partial and fragmentary. We hope, however, that their example will highlight new avenues for research. The question was also raised whether this perspective is only meaningful for the analysis of authoritarian states or whether it is not generally inevitable in modern societies with pronounced state and institutional regulation. *Rooms for manoeuvre* may also be expected more broadly as creative ways of responding to the impositions of institutional order and social norms. Since topics such as dealing with social stigmatization due to illegitimate children, adoptions, agricultural reforms or the development of tourism were also on the agenda in capitalist countries, case studies would be desirable here as well. In any event, a comparative analysis is likely to provide new insights into the differences, but also the similarities in the arrangement of the various *rooms for manoeuvre*.

Furthermore, the question arises as to what role the *rooms for manoeuvre* not only played (or still play) in enduring or stabilizing social orders, but also how

they changed during a transformation process or contributed to shaping it.²⁸ In this regard, one might consider the previous example of private economic initiative under socialism, commonly regarded as the "Trojan horse" of free market capitalism in socialist states. Nonetheless, a closer look is needed here, as the Polish sociologist Edmund Mokrzycki explained at the beginning of the 1990s: "Contrary to popular opinion that saw private enterprise as a capitalist Trojan horse in a socialist stronghold, the sector was as integral a part of the socialist economy as the Vladimir Lenin Steelworks [in Krakow] or the State Agricultural Farms (PGRs). The very first weeks of the transformation revealed the total dependency of the sector on the central distribution of goods and above all its symbiotic relationship with state industry and trade. For the sector, market mechanisms – to the extent that they had indeed been effectively implemented by the reforms – turned out to be lethal rather than beneficial."²⁹ At the same time, more recent transformation research has shown that the free-market competencies developed by citizens as early as the 1970s to cope with the scarcity of the state socialist economy were an important resource later in the 1990s. Not only was it a critical means of coping the transformation of this decade, but it also contributed to the development of a "transformation from below."³⁰ The *rooms for manoeuvre* of state socialism are in any case present in historical memory. Zakopane, for example, is still a recurrent theme in caricatures to this day.³¹ Unfortunately, recent developments (2021) in some countries of Eastern Central Europe indicate that *rooms for manoeuvre* will no doubt once again become more important in the future.

Translated by Christopher Reid

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28 Marody 1999; Rychard 1998.

29 Mokrzycki 1994, p. 46.

30 Ther 2016, pp. 167ff.

31 Kochanowski 2019, pp. 249ff.

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Part I: Socialist Space-Time

