



## The Ghana Job: Opening Socialist Hungary to the “Developing World”

Why was Hungary interested in the decolonized “developing world”? What does this episode of Eastern European history tell us about shared postcolonialities, transnational interconnectivity, and semi-peripheral positioning or development strategies? My talk introduces why and how socialist Hungary decided to develop foreign economic relations with decolonized countries, which in turn facilitated a new orientation towards the world and the emergence of Hungarian development expertise towards developing countries.

My study investigates the Centre for Afro-Asian Research (CAAR) founded at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1963 (from 1973 renamed as the Institute for World Economy, IWE) parallel to similar institutions established internationally at that time. CAAR was established as a government think tank by József Bognár, who was a close friend to Prime Minister János Kádár and a hugely important figure in socialist era Hungarian reform economics and foreign economic policy-making.

The associates of CAAR and IWE promoted export-oriented growth and fabricated new geographical development concepts as alternatives to the dichotomous Cold War categories of “capitalist” and “socialist” worlds in order to reposition Hungary in the world economy.

The institute evolved out of the “Ghana job”: during his Eastern European round-trip president Kwame Nkrumah asked Bognár and his team of economists to develop the First Seven-Year Plan of Ghana

in 1962. During the Nkrumah period, the pan-Africanist, African socialist and Non-Aligned country of Ghana became a transnational hub of various experts and intellectuals, and a contested site not only of conflicting and intertwined “socialist” and “capitalist” views on development, but also of intensive cooperation and competition between Eastern Bloc countries in asserting their influence in the decolonized world. With Bognár’s assignment, the issue of “poorly developed countries” ignited the comparative reconceptualization of development histories in Hungary and led to ex-

porting the Hungarian development model to the “Third World” based on the discourse of anti-imperialism, socialist solidarity and shared postcolonial histories.

In this context, I interpret the “Ghana job” from a postcolonial and world-systemic perspective as situated in a complex web of transnational relations, and point out Ghana’s decisive role in opening semiperipheral Hungary towards the global periphery during the 1960s by generating a field of development expertise, which enabled entrance into a new market of transnational development consultancy.

### ABOUT THE PRESENTER



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**Zoltán GINELLI** is a critical geographer and historian of science from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. He is an assistant researcher at the Institute for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and an assistant for the Leverhulme Trust-funded research project “1989 after 1989: Rethinking the Fall of State Socialism in Global Perspective” based at Exeter University (2014–2018). His research focuses on the historical geographies of scientific knowledge, transnational and global history, world-systems analysis, and postcolonial and decolonial theory. His dissertation studies the transnational history of the “quantitative revolution” in Cold War geography and spatial planning. His main work is on the history of Hungarian geography, and his current research focuses on socialist globalization and the changing relations between Eastern Europe and the “Third World”, specifically Hungary and Africa.



**April 17 5:30 PM**  
Seminar Room  
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