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Comparative research breaking down disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences, in the service of scientific freedom

Sociétés Politiques Comparées aims to disseminate work conducted in the intellectual tradition of historical and comparative political sociology. It was founded in 2008 by the Fonds d'Analyse des Sociétés Politiques (FASOPO) with a view to fostering a better understanding of political societies, especially those from elsewhere, at a time when the focus on 'global governance' was reducing interpretive paradigms to a few cultural and geopolitical variables. The journal has continued in this vein since its creation.

Four characteristics have defined *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* since its inception. First, a commitment to studying social and political phenomena from a comparative perspective inspired by historical political sociology. Second, a desire to disseminate this knowledge within academia, but also civil society, political institutions, and decision-making bodies. Third, a commitment to creating a space for knowledge that is free of the unspoken assumptions on which the international division of intellectual work relies, which tends to assign specific positions to knowledge about, or researchers from, societies in the so-called 'Global North' or 'Global South'. For this reason, we pay particular attention, on the one hand, to studies on non-European societies – especially African, Asian, and Latin American – which eschew analyses based solely on canonical cultural regions, and, on the other hand, to valorising the contributions that studies of societies in the so-called 'Global South' can make to our understanding of European societies and of the social sciences more generally. Finally, *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* advocates for a conception of the social sciences that breaks down disciplinary boundaries and for a comparative approach to research, in terms not of the situations analysed but rather of the questions asked and the issues addressed. Ultimately what is at stake, for us, is demonstrating the public interest of fundamental research on political societies, running counter to the tendency to assess knowledge by its ability to meet the demands of guiding public action.

In 2008, when *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* was founded, the rise of the project-based research model was beginning to frame scientific publications as final 'products' or 'deliverables' designed to conclude the research process. For us, founding *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* as a pre-publication space was a way of staking a claim for the importance of scientific writing as a tool with which to formulate and share questions (rather than as a way of presenting results). In 2015,

as article formats, and journals more generally, became increasingly ‘standardized’, it seemed necessary to turn *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* into a non-conformist academic journal. Our aim was to continue to advocate for research conducted without the constraints of extra-scientific criteria, while simultaneously renewing the place occupied in the scientific field by the historical and comparative political sociology that inspired us.

In 2025, it seems fundamental to us to continue on this path in the face of the increasing attacks – beyond the caricatural Trumpism of the present moment – sustained by scientific reasoning, critical distance, and the rigorous debate that characterizes academic work. Scientific freedom is not only under threat from current reactionary, conservative politics, it is also in jeopardy whenever public authorities, private actors, civil society, or even academia itself challenge our freedom to ask questions and define research topics, to choose investigative methods, to conduct fieldwork, and to define modes of writing and forms of dissemination. *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* was constructed with the desire to defend all these levels of scientific freedom and this is more essential now than ever before.

In this context, issue 64|2025 of *Sociétés Politiques Comparées* brings fresh impetus to the journal. Its philosophy remains the same, focused on its goals of valuing scientific rigor and originality, above all, but also of proving open to the ‘humanities’ and remaining free of the standardization and formal constraints with which many journals are forced to comply in the name of neoliberal ‘excellence’. Moving to Firenze University Press (FUP) offers us the opportunity to pursue our own path while remaining open access and providing greater visibility to the articles we publish thanks to indexing in scientific search engines. This indexing will apply to our new issues, but also to the journal’s archives giving a new lease of life to those articles published up to and including 2024. This should also allow us to publish the work of more young authors, whose recognition in our professional world is contingent on respecting normative systems to some degree. We take this new direction without compromising on the journal’s fundamental values and *raison d’être*: defending research as a creative act of scientific imagination, which refuses to be subjugated by any form of authority claiming to have a monopoly on the construction of knowledge. We thank FUP for having understood the specificity of our endeavour and for accompanying us in this change at such a crucial juncture for academia and for research.