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Trajectories

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Letter From the Chair

Andreas Wimmer
Princeton University

As I moved through various disciplines over the past decades, from anthropology to development studies to sociology and political science, and across countries, from Switzerland to Germany to the USA, I always wondered about how well de-fined disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries are, especially in the United States with it's huge internal academic field. Every time I moved, I had to start from scratch learning whom to cite and how to make an argument. Not only are social sci-entists sociologists, anthropologists or political sci-entists, but they are "comparative historical" soci-ologists rather than "political sociologists" or "cul-tural sociologists", and even within our sub-field, there are different segments, different traditions of doing comparative historical sociology: Tilleans and Skocpoleans, Steinmetzeans and Raginians, and so forth. I will not use this letter of the chair to argue against sub-disciplinary specialization—

obviously I embrace it and believe in its institutional merits (it's good to get to know one's most similar others) and intellectual advantages (it reduces complexity and disciplines the mind), otherwise I would not have agreed to serve as chair. Rather, I think it might be useful to bring to the attention of my fellow comparative historical sociologists some interesting ways of doing historical and comparative social science that have emerged in other disciplines. This is not a systematic overview, but a perhaps rather arbitrary list of work that I came across recently and of which I think others in the field might be interested in as well.

They are all connected to the problem of how we define units of observation and how we establish that what we think has driven historical developments in one direction rather than in another is empirically plausible. The problem, in other words, is that of identifying relevant mechanisms. The eternal challenge in our field, especially for those concerned with macro-social developments, is complexity. The *ceteris* in our comparisons stubbornly refuse to be *paribus*, the universe of relevant cases is often hard to keep from expanding beyond our capacity to think, unexpected things turn up from outside and mess up our neat historical stories, suppressing or even reversing the causal mechanism we had thought we could isolate in the flow of events.

One smart way to reduce complexity in meaningful ways is to search for quasi-natural experiments: to find examples where some causal factor is almost randomly distributed between otherwise comparable units. While the search for randomization in political science and economics has given rise to some rather uninteresting, if methodologically clean research agendas, it has also produced interesting work of relevance to historically minded scholars in neighboring disciplines. Keith Darden (2013) for example uses the frequent shift of state boundaries over people in Eastern Europe and the Western Soviet Union to explore the long-term, intergenerational effects that states have on the population. He argues, in a forthcoming book, that whatever the language in which the first generation was alphabetized determines the national identity of subsequent generations, and thus their political leanings when state boundaries change, invasions occur, and civil wars break out.

Similarly, economist Ted Miguel (2004) has studied two neighboring provinces in Tanzania and Kenya that share many pre-colonial and colonial features but were then "randomly" assigned to either of the two states. Nation-building policies, as pursued by the Tanzanian government under Nyerere, show lasting effects on public goods provision. Another interesting example of using this research design comes from economists Acemoglu and co-authors (2011). They explore whether those parts of Germany that were occupied by Napoleon, who then abolished the ancient régime and introduced modern legal principles long before this was done in the rest of today's country, had an early start in economic development. This design is meant to confirm their argument about the institutional basis of sustained growth and prosperity.

This reminds me of another research, rather more apocryphal, by an old-school Swiss cultural anthropologist (Weiss 1947), who dug even deeper into the past. Observing a clear pattern in a diverse array of cultural practices—from food to language to Christmas and New Year's customs—he showed that they all align with the borders of the former kingdom of Burgundy that had occupied Western parts of Switzerland during the middle ages. Others have later linked this pattern to contemporary levels of female representation in local parliaments or communal taxation—while the German-French language difference does much less in explaining local level variation in these matters.

A second trend of research, mostly in economics, is to explore long-term historical legacies by assembling new, global data on epochs long past—thus minimizing reverse causation problems, avoiding feed-back-loops too difficult to disentangle, and the like. I am particularly impressed by the work of historical economists (in sociology, there is a related tradition, see most recently Mahoney 2010). Nathan Nunn produced a detailed dataset, based on the tribal origin information on lists of slaves shipped to the new world, on how much different regions of Africa were affected by the slave trade. He then shows that slavery in the past is associated with economic under-development in the present (Nunn 2008)—and that this associated is due to the culture of distrust that slave-raiding created and that became reproduced across generations. A similar research design—digging up global data on historical developments long-gone

and showing their lasting effects—was pursued in a recent study by political scientist Woodberry (2012). He assembled a dataset on Protestant missionary presence around the colonial world to show that through fostering independent organizations and thinking these made subsequent democratization easier and longer lasting.

I am not arguing, of course, that historical sociologists should all emulate these comparative political scientists or historical economists. And many of the studies cited above, I should note, could be criticized both in terms of theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence. The goal is therefore not to invite colonization by our neighbors. Whenever I get an opportunity (e.g. 2014 (forthcoming)), I do the opposite and encourage political scientists to think more like comparative historical sociologists: regain a focus on macro-level developments (rather than some detailed aspect of it), pursue long-term processes rather than short-term decision making, take contingency and sequentiality serious, and so forth. However, "we" can also learn from "them". In terms of research designs that can establish the empirical plausibility of a causal mechanism, it seems that neighboring disciplines have gained an edge over comparative historical sociologists. It's perhaps a good moment for lifting disciplinary boundaries somewhat and forage on others' grazing grounds.

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Book Symposium (Glaeser)

Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism
by Andreas Glaeser
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011

Editors' Note: Andreas Glaeser's Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism *(Chicago 2011) was the subject of an Author Meets Critics panel at the Social Science History Association meeting in Vancouver in November 2012. These are the revised comments of Richard Biernacki, Martha Lampland, and Virág Molnár, with Andreas Glaeser's response. We would like to thank Marion Fourcade for organizing the session.*

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In the intellectual iron cage of an overly professionalized sociology, each of the two kinds of facts that standard explanatory theories bridge—facts divisible into causes and those divisible into effects—serve as object-tokens, as mere *examples* of a recommended theory's concepts. Research that dissolves this ossified partitioning of theory versus event-tokens, or more spectacularly a study

that dispenses with the convention of correlating thing-like antecedents with discrete after-effects even as it upholds rigorous explanation, transports us into a new disciplinary universe.

Nothing less than this adventure is what Andreas Glaeser springs upon readers of his *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, The Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism*. Glaeser of necessity exhibits his most fundamental move rather than elaborating upon it, which initially makes it perplexing to specify what the book is "about." If one assumes this massive tome is to be grasped through the prism of historical sociology, one must try to encapsulate it through a central empirical puzzle. From that cut-and-dried perspective, just as for Tocqueville's analysis of the French revolution in 1789, so for Glaeser's of the German transformation in 1989, the question perhaps would be less why epochal political change took place than why it did so with "unpredictability, speed, and [relative] nonviolence" (Glaeser, 528). Invoking Tocqueville's ghost, we should ask how rigid patterns of reflection and conduct caused the old regime to "fall so suddenly and so completely" (Tocqueville, 85). In East Germany, the notorious secret security officers, the Stasi, reactivated plans in 1989 to incarcerate thousands of meticulously identified domestic opponents by pressure of arms (Hollitzer, 44). Yet within weeks of readying this intervention, not only the militarized superintendency but all foundations of the dictatorial party state dissolved without a shot fired (Glaeser, 528). If I may bolster Glaeser's conclusions by citing concurring archival excavators: "Considered in sum, the outlook of ordinary employees [of the Stasi] in the first half of November was characterized by disorientation and growing bitterness" (Süß 1994, 21).

For reviewers in the professional cage who understandably have interpreted *Political Epistemics* as addressing mainly such empirical tokens via a substantive theory, Glaeser's publication has appeared recondite: nothing less, indeed, than a "doorstop of a book" (Lamont, 258). With irony on Glaeser's side, let me announce "No wonder"! To venture my opinion, the swift and bloodless character of the East German revolution was all too obviously overdetermined. The underperforming socialist economy's dependence on aid from lenders and politicians of the Federal Republic led

leaders in the East to accommodate Western opinion surprisingly early in the revolutionary process—April, 1989—by suspending use of arms against escapees through the intimidating Berlin Wall (Gieseke, 254). Then, too, the supposed Soviet guardian Gorbachev communicated that his own model of accommodation should suit his German juniors just as well. Meanwhile, no later than August 1989, official archives show, Stasi supervisors discussed whether popular dissent was tending toward an uprising similar to that of June, 1953, when tanks had to be deployed against rebellious workers (Giesecke, 476). The growing vigor of the street demonstrations in Fall, 1989 promised that armed repression, if it did not lead to civil war, would at the least depress catastrophically the East's labor productivity for long to come (Richter, 33, 35). More concretely, when Stasi employees began receiving postal death threats, some of them grew fearful about executing their plan for interning the anti-regime troublemakers (Richter, 34). Were Glaeser theorizing how antecedent events entailed specific features of the outcome, he would have attempted to "weigh" the array of factors in context that contributed to the abruptness of the East German collapse. He would also have more explicitly explored major counterfactuals to gauge necessary and sufficient causes, perhaps in addition to characterizing the regime as a macro-social formation susceptible to disintegration. That he offers almost no such conventional apparatus for evental explanation forcibly suggests he is up to something more tantalizing.

My take is that *Political Epistemics* works via a "self-evidencing explanation" that is neither viciously circular nor merely thickly descriptive. To be sure, Glaeser never labels his decipherment as one that assumes this form, although it is a well-known type in scientists' repertoire (Lipton, 3). In a brief formula it means: *what* is explained provides the essential justification for the correctness of the explanation. Consider here a well-known analogy from physics, no less. The expansion of space in the universe as galaxies fly apart "explains" astronomers' observation of longer wavelengths in the light spectra (red shift) from distant galaxies. "A" (an expanding universe) explains "B" (observed red shift). In turn, "B" is justificatory evidence of "A": the red shift justifies investigators' belief that the galaxies are receding from

each other. A corroborating side-detail is that the further from earth a galaxy is located, the correspondingly mathematically swifter the observed recession in accordance with the red shift. "Self-evidencing" is not emptily circular. Certainly the red shift does not symmetrically "explain" why the galaxies recede or why space everywhere amplifies. The universe's broadening-out is analytically "just so"—even if conceivably all of it could be decomposed into contingently interacting micro-forces or agents. Sociologists in favor of hard science might do well to ponder in this instance how explorers did not start their investigations by theorizing the mechanisms of cosmic motion. They undertook to interpret negligible light shifts "on their own terms," considering what else the minutia showed "must" by implication hold true. The corpses of once-esteemed works of social science aside, for genuine discovery we do not start with an object-event as an outcome to be explained reductively through a self-subsisting theory's fixing of antecedent conditions.

These preliminary remarks are requisite for anyone to avoid oversimplifying how Glaeser's descriptions and narrative function. In the opening episode of *Political Epistemics*, the longtime head of the Stasi secret police, Erich Mielke, addresses in the critical days of November 1989 on his first and last occasion the People's Congress assembled in East Berlin. Mielke coughed up commonplace assurances which in that moment's climate of mass protest appeared to those in attendance as incomprehensibly comical. The Stasi, Mielke repeated to the representatives, remains a populist media conveyer that obtains socially essential information with which the representatives of the working class can deliberate on how to build socialism. After all, Mielke reiterated, the Stasi domestic spies are "sons and daughters of the working class" who have "always maintained extraordinarily high contact with the working people"—and so forth. Then Mielke with stammering and audience interruption blurted

> My apologies, this is only natural for humankind… this is just a formality…I love…but I love all…. All human beings…well, but I love, but I commit myself to this.

Despite the raucous skepticism in the delegate's chamber, Glaeser insists that Mielke with this *I love you* truly "is likely to have meant what he said" (Glaeser, 7), if "not in the word sense alone but in that of the social arrangements that were GDR (East German) socialism." How so?

Certainly Glaser is correct in his estimation that Mielke probably expressed himself sincerely. As we know, when public opinion found expression in the streets in November 1989, many Stasi members found it astounding and psychologically traumatizing to apperceive that broad swaths of the citizenry held the domestic surveillance in low regard (Süß, 21). To clarify how Mielke's confession of genuine love was produced, the Stasi cannot be analyzed primarily as a fixed institution: neither as one carrying out macro-functions nor as one serving individuals' exogenous politico-economic interests. As (in every sense) a truly "phenomenal" paper-generating bureaucracy, the Stasi's army of informants religiously enscrolled the alarming change in sentiments among party members and even among the elite's cadres—information on which higher-ups should by theory have had an overwhelming interest to act preemptively (Süß, 1994, 20; Peterson, 238-240). For the previously astute and situationally masterful chief Mielke to have responded so clumsily, however, the Stasi as a spy business must have been *constituted* by a crucially shared understanding: that is to say, its diligent staff must have taken for granted that the Stasi was an inseparable arm of the workers who by doctrine shared a monolithic consciousness and who, as the legitimating class of the state, would as a matter of course approve of all measures to preserve and perfect socialism (Glaeser, 62). Without this generative premise the Stasi could not conceive its own operations, Mielke revealed. That is only one reason why the incident in my view is for Glaeser elegantly self-evidencing. This episode's many affiliates entail that the *understandings* through which individuals' actions congeal into thickets of social coordination constitute a resulting institution's ongoing direction and its progressive re-patterning. It was not a gerontocracy's ostrich-like insulation that led to rigidity. To the contrary, the tacit dynamic of knowledge-seeking froze the Stasi (and by implication the smug East German elites) into impotent bewilderment. Glaeser's iconic episode justifies a conclusion that the

vigorous everyday activity by which the corps of Stasi careerists reckoned that they warranted transparent knowledge for policy responses led, instead, inevitably—as a total reversal—to fatal misinterpretation of what was indeed happening overall.

Glaeser could easily have supplemented his documentation to show that the more accurate the Stasi's assessments of revolutionary dispositions, the less insight its officers had either into responsive systemic reforms or into feasible agendas for preserving the socialist order. In Chemnitz in early October, 1989 the Stasi by its tactics of opening mail and overhearing conversation soberly concluded that "An explosive outlook is dominant" (Horsch, 13). Yet, true to Glaeser's rendering, a genuine diagnosis of the underlying causes of dissent proved impossible to adduce by the agency's irrevocably coordinating understandings. If, by mutually validating agreement, Stasi undertakings and the East German governing apparatuses expressed the commitments of the whole working class, then by default the only remaining driver of popular discontent had to be corrupting propaganda from the bourgeois West (Glaeser 112)!

The absorbing, sometimes spell-binding detail of Glaeser's volume is, I surmise, not "about" East Germany—certainly not anymore than Max Weber in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* would have recommended that we dissect the anatomy of louses due to interest either in louses or in a theory "about" them. As Glaeser hints, I daresay, we remain perversely affiliated relatives of a deceased East German culture due to how our variants of circularly self-validating understandings mobilize cooperation under the aegis of our so-called market capitalism as well.

That Mielke and the other Stasi agents at the bottom of their hearts experienced their paper-pushing and hawkish prying—in fact their entire lives—as an expression of love for humanity can be unpacked systematically for its surprising origins, legitimating power, and above all for its fragile implementation. Partly this is what Glaeser accomplished by colligating archival documents with his painstaking interviews of former Stasi members. But his deeper purpose in exploring the trajectories and intercourse of Stasi activists was to consider how any person at all calls upon cultural understandings to view and experience herself or himself as endowed with human agency in the first

instance (Glaeser, 38). The only way to explain the peculiarities of the spy characters is, once again, to grant methodological primacy to their understandings. Mortal souls learn how to validate knowledge to organize their experiences through time, to imagine investing in worthwhile purposes, and to piece together their own "self" as an object of concern. The bearing of such constitutive understandings is treacherous, however. The beliefs we imbibe to create agentic selves and to organize actions (Glaeser, 42) we may also fetishize. As Glaeser shows with his artful renditions of Communist rituals as public displays, we as social actors turn our beliefs' performative affirmation into an absolute end for enduring, socially recognized personhood apart from the contingency and finitude of historical circumstance. Here much cultural sociology would mislead us, for Marxist-Leninist theory was not wholly (perhaps not even "primarily") a tool of power. Instead, as an agent-constituting ethos, *it* possessed the elites. Glaeser in his interviews finds that long after the German Democratic Republic's extinction, some Stasi members authentically enacted the tell-tale distinctions of taste and demeanor that had signified a socialist habitus in an era past.

In the heyday of the German Democratic Republic, Stasi members "objectified" themselves through stringent self-evaluation. For example, as young enrollees some had allegedly lapsed by playing cards or by donning ostentatious clothing. In interviews decades later they still endorsed the harsh punishment they had received for negligible slacking as students. Glaeser suggests this interminably echoing self-criticism reveals how one's value to oneself depended on outward behavioral signs and on group validation. Even the surveillance tsar Erich Mielke appears to have been plagued by anxiety that if he did not penetrate every source of deviance in the country, the Party would be justified in replacing him for failings of character (Glaeser, 471-472). This dependency on shared meanings moved even the privileged bosses beyond instrumental interest. It requires us to see political power as a frail byproduct, not as a discernible resource granted automatically by macro-political structures. Stasi members learned to avoid Western TV broadcasts even in the privacy of their homes, as if the sheer act of watching <u>solus</u> damaged their sense of inner worth. To infiltrate dissi-

dent circles required Stasi informants to prolong interaction with corrupting enemies, who other way round potentially threatened the ideological purity of the informants. In consequence, Stasi spy reports on the citizenry came to display narrative distance from deviant opinions to counter the authors' doubt about whether their contact had caused co-contamination.

To follow the solidifying of socialist understandings in the course of prosaic intercourse, Glaeser retraces how the ideals of Marxist-Leninism resonated in the economic and moral wreckage of Germany's immediate post-war years. As Eastern youth and anti-fascist workers cleared away rubble and restarted factories, they experienced their solidary striving under the banner of socialism as a formula for success. Yet Marxist economic theory's emphasis on labor's productivity as the key to social development ironically led enthusiastic party members to nothing less than … philosophical idealism. It enabled them to suppose that inspired socialist workers, by heartfelt determination alone, would objectively outperform their capitalist counterparts. Marxism's materialist emphasis on economic constraints morphed into its ironic but inbuilt flip side, Leninist idealism of the unleashed human will. An absolute trust in societal advance via a populace's high motivation explains why the Stasi did not experience its notorious surveillance as a cynical abuse of power. "The (Stasi) attempt to discover a proclivity for party-critical thinking and to preempt its appearance in public," Glaeser concludes, "is fully comprehensible from within the party's understanding about itself and the world" (Glaeser, 159). Unremitting surveillance was a byproduct of belief in the continuing necessity of monolithic citizen intentionality. When popular enthusiasm was no longer restorable in Fall, 1989, Stasi activity stalled on its own for lack of a feeling of a validated mission. This literal "self-evidencing," as I have termed it, pushes any investigator to respect the integrity of East German ideology and to bracket accounts in which Communism's ideals were in the main cynically abused.

Glaeser's showcasing of processual action on the ground leads him to treat the major political events that pushed toward disintegration of the regime almost as narrative incidentals. *Political Epistemics* thereby challenges us to reflect on how

sociologists convincingly delimit both their objects of analysis and their criteria for adequate explanation. It is simple to unearth structural constraints that rendered the East German elites' actual response to mass protests almost the only rationally executable possibility. For example, a realist might claim that the East German Democratic Republic had landed in such a self-destructive debt crisis by the 1980's that the increasingly well-informed socialists could not have trusted that there was any genuine opportunity for economic reforms to retrieve the regime from bankruptcy (Maier 1997, 61-78). In that case of over-determination, the elite inaction that was observed might have taken place even if the party had not been so fanciful in imagining it had unquestionable authority based on working-class support. (The causal logic would be the same as that of a psychoanalyst who declared to a patient on the couch: "Although you were crazy, still the real world would have prevented anyone from having acted other than as you did!") More fundamentally, it may not be demonstrable that because elites fetishized party doctrine, they were utterly *incapable* of reorienting pragmatic change-overs. We know *only* that very analogously to some capitalist politicians and economists in the global capitalist meltdown of late 2008, German socialists in their own crisis *happened* not to have responded astutely—the observable actuality.

This challenge in warranting how maladaptive political understandings made the *actual* conduct virtually the only *possible* conduct raises a more basic question. How does one explain the variation in elite behavior that surfaces in Glaeser's portraits? Gerhard Schürer, head of a state planning commission, tried to force through price reforms in 1979 (Glaeser, 550). In addition, the Stasi agent Karl Maier's launched "guarded attempts at critique" of the regime (Glaeser, 199-200, 331-332). In Glaeser's passages about regime insiders' increasing self-doubt, a Stasi officer predicted already in 1988 that "if all of this continues as it does now, we'll be walking around with a submachine gun in two years" (Glaeser 542). If Stasi employees were isolated in their matchless neighborhoods and sealed family networks, how does a sociologist explain these privileged socialists' unsettling insights *alongside* their widespread blindness? Scientifically we cannot resort to asserting that critical thinkers such as Gerhard Schürer were

personally (randomly?) brave, as if, conversely, widespread cowardice explains conformity. Perhaps socialist ideology was, just as Glaeser suggests, bumping into more disconfirming economic evidence in the course of the dismal 1980's. But how could any independent yardstick ever be found to falsify a hypothesis of rising cognitive dissonance? Does not every period of political life entail a constant brush with latently disconfirming evidence for a prevailing ideology? It seems well-nigh circular to use East Germans' mass disaffection by late 1989 to judge an experience of ratiocinative disconfirmation *retrospectively*. Equally inexpedient, it seems reductive to hypothesize that the political process consisted of "underlying" economic stagnation refracted through culture.

In my view, Glaeser's processual model easily flips all these criticisms on their head. For example, the counterfactual reasoning has to privilege some entities as causally „deep," in the sense that posited objective economic structures durably delimit the possibilities for well-informed action. In keeping with Glaeser's processual approach, however, more detailed historical accounts have shown that the features of the East German economy relevant for prognostication lent every observer only a constantly moving picture, one whose future outline took on wildly varying casts depending on nothing less than ... which understandings came to the fore in shifting interactional contexts, returning us to Glaeser's main point. East Germany to its last day improved labor productivity respectably (compared to the present-day U.S, at least). The regime's ongoing challenge was remobilizing resources to expand exports and to deal with Western creditors (119, Jenkins). What mattered for East German government responses therefore were estimates of forthcoming proceeds—in only subjectively specifiable long- or short-term periods. The dynamic money values for the future were in exceptional flux, depending on the changing makeup of Soviet bloc exchanges. East German pessimism in 1989-1990 about prospects for socialist advance (Süß 1999: 416, 431) for all we know was nothing more than over-reaction to finding the economic situation truthfully not as rosy as previously trumpeted (Joestel, 143-144). This is only to reinforce the primacy of dynamically situated understandings over some historical sociologists' templates of core structures. To push the point, so-called struc-

tures can even be causally superficial relative to the understandings that lend them any bearing on action. By this sound principle Glaeser disavows characterizing East Germany as a total social form, whether that might have been a kind of participatory dictatorship, a soft totalitarianism, or what have you (Glaeser, 562).

There is one central understanding somewhat neglected by Glaeser that perhaps as a constant constrained East German reforms. Even if protestors did not initially articulate the goal of reunification under West German auspices, the circumstantial observation that the opening up of East German political discussion in 1989 so immediately raised the possibility of such absorption prompts a hypothesis. In the strange condition of a divided nation, in which the only rationale for maintaining a separate German Democratic Republic was this state's enshrining of the mandates of a protected working class, East German politicians who entertained market-friendly reforms for capitalists made it more questionable why their rump German provinces in the East should *not* unite with the larger Federal Republic in the West. That terribly omnipresent if implicit dilemma did not cement the options for any other Eastern European leaders of the period.

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Before I begin my substantive comments, I would like to say that reading this book brought up all sorts of memories. I first went to Hungary in 1973, and spent a lot of time there in the 1980s. This means, of course, that I had various encounters with people who were probably secret police: an official call because I was seen wearing a nationalist cockade, and strange visits with no apparent purpose, except untoward advances. I was even accused of being a spy in the village where I did field work in the early 1980s, which nearly everyone took as a joke, except for the crusty old party secretary. I knew a number of dissidents personally, and attended what was called the "flying university" on occasion. (The "flying university" was an event held in someone's home where we discussed important readings and issues that were banned by the Communist Party.) Since 1989, I have learned that several people I associated with had worked for the secret police, revelations that didn't surprise me. But a couple of years ago, one of my oldest and closest friends was exposed as an informant. That shook me to my core. I haven't had a chance to speak with him about it, but learning of the situation under which he was pressured to work for the secret police, I know that if I had been put in that situation, I would have become an informant too. I haven't made a point of asking to see the secret police file that was compiled on my activities while in Hungary, thinking that I would only learn about shenanigans of my youth I'd rather forget. Katherine Verdery, who has done extensive research in Romania, asked for and was given her file. She is in the process of writing a book on the social conditions of producing knowledge by the Securitate, surely to be an excellent complement to Andreas's book.

When Andreas first described his project to me, I was incredulous. His description of the Stasi officers' allegiance to the party/state was entirely foreign to me, based on my experiences in Hungary. Granted, I had never actually sought out secret police to interview. But I am fairly confident that the sort of trust and faith in the Communist Party Andreas documents in the GDR among Stasi had long evaporated in Hungary, if it had existed at all, by 1956. Rare was the party member or ideologue who believed wholeheartedly and unquestioningly in the party's dictates. I hasten to say that this does not mean that everyone in Hungary derided socialism. In the village where I did field work in the 1980s, I frequently heard people laud the socialist project as a commendable goal. Unfortunately, their experiences living in socialist Hungary did not live up to the promise a socialist future represented. They saw principles like full employment and universal health insurance worthy of their respect; their quarrel was with the way the Commu-

nist Party ruled in the *name* of socialism. A joke conveys a common sentiment. What's the difference between democracy and socialist democracy? The difference between f***ing and getting f***ed.

I will divide my comments on Andreas's thought-provoking book into three sections: 1) historical ethnography, 2) theoretical exposition, and 3) the character of socialism.

1. Historical ethnography

Andreas has performed an invaluable service by writing this book. He availed himself of a rich trove of documents, and worked diligently to arrange interviews with people from all three communities, resulting in an extremely convincing account. I found the choice to devote portions of the text to individual biographies as a way of telling the history very illuminating. It brought me much closer to the experiences and attitudes of the interviewees, whose motives could easily have remained opaque to the reader. Indeed, I may not have been convinced by Andreas's account otherwise. This isn't the only way to write historical ethnography, but in this instance, it was very effective.

Andreas notes the constraints ethnographers face when conducting historical research. In particular, he emphasized the difficulties of recuperating emotive and kinesthetic understandings from his sources, issues at the heart of his work. Implicit in this criticism is a concern about demonstrating how understandings are emergent phenomena, not a set of static ideas or inclinations. I appreciate the difficulties Andreas discusses, but I am of the opinion that these constraints can be mitigated by expanding the kinds of materials and sources one examines. Incorporating studies of novels, films, TV shows, popular media, leisure activities like board games, etc. all bring one much closer to the everyday experiences and emotional complexities of one's subjects. Of course, this makes doing historical ethnography extremely labor intensive. I realized recently that in my own work, I have been trying to approximate the sense of intimacy I had with people in the village. This is impossible, of course, but worth trying. A corollary of this point is that to argue successfully, as Andreas did in his book, demands a lot of the reader. Walking through the evidence step by step takes a long

time, but it is a necessary task. Evidence in a historical ethnography is not as amenable to condensation or succinct visual depiction, as is the case with other forms of data. In the current climate, when people regularly joke about not reading any more, it has become difficult to argue convincingly with rich historical evidence if it requires patience on the part of the reader.

Andreas argued strongly throughout the book that ethnographic work is necessarily analytical. As I understood him, he means by this that theory and evidence emerge together and are deeply intertwined. I would submit that this is the case for any ethnography worth its salt. It is a commonplace to assume when doing ethnography that, at least among anthropologists, the ideas and assumptions that led one to do research are challenged in the field, and they either hold up or they don't. (This is what I call the revenge of the empirical.) If successful, the ethnographer will be able to reconfigure her theoretical framework to make sense of what has been revealed. This is analysis in the simplest sense.

2. Theoretical exposition

The main theoretical points in the book are, to my mind, uncontroversial. This may be due to my own training, discipline, scholarly sensibilities or all of the above. It has long been a mainstay of anthropological analysis that actions and beliefs are intimately connected, and emotionally powerful. So Andreas's focus on doing, action, process is straightforward. I would add an important caveat, i.e. these processes are historically and culturally contingent. It may be that in my case Andreas is preaching to the choir.

I respect the amount of care and attention Andreas has taken to develop these ideas thoroughly, but he has not won me over with his concept of "action-reaction effect flows." Why does this concept give us more purchase than familiar phrases like processes being both constituting and constitutive? Or in more recent terms like co-production? Is the point to emphasize interaction? My reading of the notion of constitutive/constituting is that it assumes interaction and on-going processes. To make this point, I prefer the elegant and succinct turn of phrase R.Williams offers when he speaks of society as being both a "product and a process," i.e. we experience society as a system outside of

us, created before us, by others, but by virtue of putting these ideas in action, society changes over time. This is comparable to Andreas's point about "institution forming dynamics." Indeed, early on in the book, on p. 29 Andreas says something very similar. The social world "exists in process of making and remaking."

I am less disturbed by the notion of "consequent processualism" Andreas offers us. Social action is always productive or *consequential*, if you prefer that formulation, but it is also contingent. This point needs to be emphasized to avoid the trap that some fall into when using the idea of path dependence, i.e. leaving little room for unexpected and unanticipated events to emerge. In general terms, I would have preferred to have seen less time in the book devoted to developing a specific theory of social action. If I were to be facetious, I could say that all he needed to do was mention Marx, Foucault, Simmel and Mead, and we would have known what he was up to.

3. The nature of socialism

Andreas claims that his project provides an epistemic explanation for the failure of socialism by examining its institution forming dynamics, so let's look at the issue of socialism more closely. Here I have two general concerns. The first is his tendency to generalize about socialism based on German history. Hungarian socialism was significantly different from the GDR; Poland and Czechoslovakia also differed in important ways. One of the strengths of post-Cold War scholarship has been to recognize the substantial differences between socialist states. My second concern is the danger of exoticizing socialism. Andreas (and others) often make claims about the socialist party state that I find far too broad in scope. I think we need to be more cautious in analyzing the features of states, be they Marxist-Leninist, one-party regimes or liberal democratic.

a. The role of fascism in the GDR and the concomitant role of the Soviet Union in party/state affairs. In the GDR, one cannot overestimate the foundational role of building the Marxist-Leninist party/state as an alternative to National Socialism, and by extension, as an alternative to the FRG. This is very clear in Andreas's analysis. This powerful dynamic is missing in the other countries of the region. As a consequence,

the degree of ideological rigidity Andreas attributes to the KPD is an extreme case. I have no doubt that Andreas's depiction of East German Communist practice is accurate. But it does not reflect very different attitudes and philosophies elsewhere in Eastern Europe. We can also judge the ideological and political differences among Eastern Europe regimes based on current reinterpretations of the role of the Soviet Union in each country. The image of the Soviet Union as exercising a strong and unilateral control of socialist governments in Eastern Europe has been discarded. The Soviets clearly set limitations on potential actions, but just how these were negotiated varied from country to country, and over time. For example, if one looks at the cable traffic Soviet officials sent to Moscow from Budapest, one can regularly read complaints about the Hungarians refusing to follow Soviet advice. Communist Party officials in Hungary often postured one way in Budapest and another in Moscow. I also read documents in Hungarian state archives in which the Soviets complained openly to the Hungarian about their stubbornness and intransigence. In short, the degree to which Communist governments adhered to the Marxist-Leninist line differed.

b. The character of internal dissent, criticism and reform. Andreas makes an extremely important point about the lack of internal dissent within the Stasi, and therefore the inability of party state to learn from its mistakes. My reading of Hungarian Communist Party documents from the 1950s shows a very different picture; criticisms were raised at every level of the party/state on a regular basis. Our different take could be due to reading different sorts of documents and talking to different groups of people. In 1950s Hungary, bureaucrats and party officials were regularly chastised by their superiors for not getting work done. I saw this in documents at the national level and at the county level. In fact, I got used to reading monthly reports in which the primary purpose was to identify goals set for the office that had not been met and a list of dates by which these tasks were to be completed. Of course, this was not the public representation the Hungarian Communist Party; in newspapers and radio programs the party was infallible. More to the point about whether the party/state was able to recognize its problems, there is ample evidence in Hungarian archives (and

personal accounts) that there were regular battles between party leaders over policy issues. Certainly, tensions between various ministries were openly expressed in government letters and reports. The animosity was often fueled by personal animus, but just as often by the conflicting mandates government offices were expected to follow. Before I began reading government documents, I was expecting to read the kinds of stilted ideological passages and formulaic commentaries I had gotten used to in the press. So at first I was surprised by the tone I found in internal correspondence. I did eventually find the stiff prose I had been expecting, but this was far more common among those lower down in the party hierarchy than I anticipated. And it was fairly easy when reading these reports to figure out what was being elided by the use of flowery language. The closer one was to the center of power, the more matter of fact reports became. The Ministry of Interior, the equivalent of the Stasi in Hungary, would send the leadership matter of fact memos recounting how many party secretaries had been physically attacked or killed, disturbances in factories among workers, as well as commentaries on the moral failings of particular party officials. Finally, the history of economic reform in Hungary alone stands as evidence that the party/state was willing to change its direction. Of course, when and how criticism is voiced and changes made in any specific context is an empirical question.

   c. Exoticizing socialism. A final point I'd like to make about the nature of socialism is a more general one, i.e. the danger of exoticizing socialism. At several points in the book I thought the depiction of socialism was extreme, especially if one thinks of it as a contrast to capitalism. When reviewing materials from the early socialist period (1948-1956), I was consistently struck by the sense that much of what I was seeing in government materials could easily have been found in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, i.e. mundane bureaucratic practices characteristic of a modernizing state. The question then becomes, what was specifically socialist in character about the party/state? Are these features specific to the politics of one-party state? What about economic policy is specific to socialism? And of course, all these questions are temporal as well. I for one am committed to understanding socialism better, and exoticizing

government practices or political attitudes does not serve us in this regard.

   To close, I would ask just one question. In the introduction, Andreas states that the GDR couldn't manage the conditions of its own institutional reproduction. One might quibble with this claim in light of the fact that the Communist Party stayed in power for 40 years. That's a pretty long time. The question then becomes: what does it mean to reproduce an institution in any sense? How does one evaluate this process in any context? how would it be done in the politics of states, in the histories of corporations? What do we need to see to convince us of the ability or inability of an institution to reproduce itself? Part of the means of doing so (presumably) would be to change over time, which Andreas claims was not possible in the GDR. That may have been the case—obviously, I'm skeptical—but I would need to know more about how Andreas defines institutional reproduction to be convinced.

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The Social Construction of Socialist Reality: Comments on Andreas Glaeser's *Political Epistemics*

Last year I was asked by the *British Journal of Sociology* to review Andreas' book[1], and after finishing it, I was searching for an image, a visual metaphor that captured the spirit of the book and the scale of the effort and labor that went into producing it. Then I thought about the so-called "puzzlers" that work on an archival project which aims to reconstruct partially destroyed Stasi file. As Andreas explains in his book, the Stasi was very much taken by surprise by the events of 1989, the opening of the Berlin Wall and the escalating protests. As it slowly dawned on them that the situation was more than serious, the Stasi frantically began dismantling its vast archives. When the shredders failed, the officers went on to rip up the files by

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[1] See Virág Molnár, "Review of 'Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism' by Andreas Glaeser." *British Journal of Sociology* 63(3): 577-78.

their bare hands. They were only stopped by out-raged protesters who stormed the Stasi headquar-ters. In 1995 the German government decided to set up a special archival unit that was entrusted with reassembling the shredded files from over 15,000 sacks of torn-up bits of paper.

Andreas ' book exhibits similar determination, thoroughness, and forensic sensitivity, as he em-barks on piecing together the epistemic founda-tions of actually existing socialism. He offers a fresh and original perspective on the failure of so-cialism by tracing it to epistemological reasons, breaking with conventional explanations that at-tribute the collapse to structural factors such as economic disintegration or an ailing Soviet Union incapable of maintaining its iron grip over the Eastern Bloc. He argues that the increasingly dog-matic and self-referential understandings cultivated by the socialist party seriously undermined its abil-ity to reflect on a changing East German society, generating growing disconnect between the party state and its citizens. By the mid-1980s the rift was beyond repair. State interventions that were based on inadequate understandings of the situation in fact only exacerbated the very problem they as-pired to control.

The book's aims are twofold. The first objec-tive is to develop a general theoretical model that maps the dialectical relationship between people's understandings of the social world, as they are shaped by everyday experiences, and the political institutions that arise out of their actions as a result of these understandings. The second objective is to propose a historical argument that casts a new light on the workings and demise of East German so-cialism, exposing the "GDR elites' failure to pro-duce understandings of the everyday operations of socialism adequate to the maintenance of its insti-tutions through timely reforms" (p. XV).

The book puts forward an ambitious agenda and at 640 pages it has a touch of monumentality, which was not alien from the socialist system it-self, but in the end all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place. The analysis is carefully developed and clearly structured, and there is a strong narrative arc to the empirical parts that make for an engag-ing read. I also felt that these later empirical chap-ters were kind of a reward for those who got through the more involved and abstract theoretical sections of the book. But instead of meticulously

summarizing various parts of the argument, I would like to spend my time on highlighting some aspects Andreas' approach that can further a broader conversation about the contribution of the book.

I think the book is successful not because it gives answers to everything we ever wanted to know about socialism and its demise, but because it provides readers with a new perspective; with theoretical and analytical tools that allow us to ask a range of new questions.

It is in this spirit that I would like to raise a set of issues regarding the argument and the analysis of the book. My comments and questions cluster around two aspects of the analysis: the compara-tive and the epistemological.

Comparisons
When we deal with an argument that is based on a single case study, in this case the single country case of East Germany, the question of gener-alizability routinely comes up. I am not raising this issue because I think that there is a problem with single case studies per se as a method or analytical strategy. I am actually quite drawn to case study research myself. But I think it is kind of instinctive to look for counterfactual cases. Can we find such cases, and if so, what does that mean for the argu-ment expounded in the book?

A useful comparative country case is inciden-tally the one I know best, that of Hungary. I think the Hungarian case is instructive because it intro-duces an element into the social construction of socialist reality that to me is missing from the de-scription of the East German case, and that is the element of foreign occupation. After the revolution of 1956 was crushed by Soviet tanks in Hungary, we cannot say that socialist reality was constructed primarily through this monolithic intentionality embodied by the Communist party, circular valida-tions, self-referential understandings that were de-rived from Marxist-Leninist ideology and were used to explain away the contradictions of the sys-tem, which might have been more immediately true for East Germany. As soon as the maintenance of the socialist system is closely associated with foreign occupation, this changes the "space of validations" to use the terminology developed by Andreas in the book. It also triggers understand-ings, practices and cultural norms that point way

beyond socialism and are often passed on almost subconsciously from one generation to the next. After all, in the case of Hungary, we are dealing with a country that was under various degrees of foreign rule since at least the 16th century: 150 years of Ottoman occupation, then the Habsburgs, then the Nazis and so on. In this broader historical context, socialism and Soviet domination increasingly become just another chapter in a long history of foreign rule. I believe this changes the basis of institutional validation of socialism for the party and the state, not only for ordinary citizens.

Another aspect where the Hungarian case as a comparative case can be illuminating is in problematizing the boundaries of the political. In the book Andreas is focusing on the most explicitly political activities, the work of the guardians of the party state (aka secret police) on the one hand and the activities of political dissidents on the other. However, by the early 1980s the economy, including everyday routine economic activities, had become highly politicized, and I feel it has to be explored as part of the political as well. By the early 1980s informalization in the economy was pervasive in Hungary, and social reality was more akin to what we see in China today, a curious combination of socialism and capitalism, obviously not on the same scale as in China. But this example is again to bolster the point that socialist reality in Hungary was perhaps not as one dimensional and monolithic as in East Germany. By the 1980s, it was certainly quite messy and confusing to everyone, including party functionaries.

One last point along the comparative angle: this time within the country case study. Andreas is focusing on mapping the web of understandings of two groups: members of the Stasi, i.e., the East German secret police, and political dissidents. He is really looking at the two extremes, the two poles of the political spectrum in terms of systemic loyalties: those most committed to the socialist cause and those most opposed to it. I was actually curious to hear why he decided to focus primarily on these two groups. I think if we wanted to reconstruct the full range of understandings present under socialism, it would also be necessary to reconstruct the understandings of other social groups as well; including party functionaries, groups of more ordinary citizens (professionals, university students etc.).

Epistemological dilemmas with methodological implications

The various understandings in the book are reconstructed primarily through interviews. Andreas mentions other sources he drew on but in the write-up in the empirical chapters the interview data seems very dominant. I was wondering whether the privileging of interview data at the expense of other sources might introduce any biases into the analysis. Let me just illuminate this point with an example: Andreas describes how important the officer school was in the developmental trajectory of the Stasi informants. The officer school, however, is described exclusively through the personal recollections of the officers (i.e., the students), whereas I am sure there are other documents and archival sources that shed light on what went on at officer schools as well. Countless reports and evaluations must have been written about training and events by the organizers and the participants, and these also seem to be important sources of understandings about the socialist cause and the legitimacy of the system.

A corollary of this comment is, of course, the dilemma of how do we reconstruct understandings when interview data is not available. This is very common in historical research where often the most important actors we would like to interview are already dead. That said, of course, one of the main contributions of Andreas' book is showing how to incorporate interviews into historical analysis. One big irony about the lack of interest in the sociological analysis of socialism is that today one could still collect interview data about participants' first-hand experiences, as Andreas' book importantly illustrates; whereas in a decade when this topic might arouse interest again, this unique opportunity will be lost.

Similarly, understandings are validated, for example, by certain events as described quite poignantly in the chapter that probes dissidents' understandings. But let's say, for instance, that the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union did not directly affect actors in East Germany, like it didn't affect Ulrike Poppe, one of the key dissidents interviewed in the book. Does this, however, mean that this event was not consequential for the demise of the socialist system?

Finally, the events and understandings about the end of socialism are reconstructed 15-20 years

after 1989, the collapse of the system. That is, they are also post facto rationalizations in which actors, in retrospect, are very likely to describe events and actions as more teleological than they really were. This, of course, does not undermine the book's central argument, but I think it calls attention to the need to examine the actors' narratives from additional perspectives: as memory work, as staged performance, as identity work. This retrospective nature of the actors' recollections and the weight given to these recollections in the analysis also present a caveat regarding the book's central claim, namely that it provides a better explanation for the end of socialism than previous accounts; though it certainly refines and deepens our understanding of what socialism was and why it ended.

All in all, I sincerely hope that the book will inspire further research at least in two areas:

1. Andreas's book draws attention to the importance of studying what socialism was really about – as opposed to most of the existing literature on socialist Eastern Europe which focuses exclusively on the transition from socialism to capitalism – and why it failed.

2. I think the theoretical apparatus lends itself to the analysis of a range other fascinating cases. I would be particularly curious to see how it could be applied to understanding how circular validations have led to the financial crisis of 2008 and why the crash is not amounting to more formidable social changes (we seem to be back to circular validations), or to understand the complex of social reality, the betwixt and between socialism and capitalism in contemporary China.

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Response to Commentators

For the reader of these pages it might be useful if I tried to embed as many of my responses to Biernacki, Lampland and Molnár as possible into a summary of central aspects of the book as I understand it.[3] *Political Epistemics* (hence *PE*)'s main historical argument is simply that if one rejects Marxism's deterministic philosophy of history, and if one looks closely at the political practices in GDR- socialism from the 1960s onward, then its history is best interpreted as one of the most ambitious efforts ever undertaken to perform a self-fulfilling prophecy. The project generated uptake on a scale significant enough not only to get it going, but also to stabilize it to such a degree that it appeared firmly entrenched. Through the biographies of one group of socialist officials, secret police officers, PE tries to make plausible how and why uptake occurred when it occurred. Yet the

[3] Such an effort cannot pretend to capture the authorial understandings ex ante that motivated research and writing in the first place. Naturally, these have changed significantly in the process. And even though these understandings ultimately gave rise to each other, the successor understandings did not always replace their predecessors thus creating, in due time, a cacophony of understandings that were not always at peace with each other. I cannot even offer you the choirmaster version of the final effort to more or less harmonize these understandings into a more or less coherent text. The reasons are twofold. On the one hand what I have just said about motivating understandings applies to those of the choirmaster, albeit on a smaller scale. On the other hand my own thinking has moved on and what I take the book to mean today is necessarily tinged by my wishes about what I think now I should have written. Incidentally, what I have just said about myself writing this book is an instantiation of what the book under consideration here is most concerned with: the emergence, transformation and consequences of people's understandings of some aspect of the world and its consequences.

party's project never swayed the large majority of the population in the same way that liberal capitalism seems to have. PE explores the reasons for indifference and resistance to the party's project through the lives of peace and civil rights activists in Berlin during the 1980s. Even though the party was painfully aware of and fought as against continuing reservations and opposition, it could never really understand why uptake failed to materialize to the degree that it had hoped for. PE argues that the reasons for the party's failure lie buried in its self-understanding, its practices and institutions of knowledge making and thus concludes that socialism ultimately failed for epistemic reasons.

To make this argument PE develops general sociological theory to study the emergence, maintenance, and change of wider institutional clusters. Unlike the various neo-institutionalisms currently in play, PE does so from a hermeneutic perspective by substantively focusing the analysis on the emergence, maintenance, and change of people's understandings. These in turn are taken to guide the actions that in their regularization as reactions to other people's actions form the institutions under consideration. Lampland asks why PE bases the analytics on action-reaction effect chains wondering about the gains of employing this unfamiliar and admittedly awkward term. The problem with more familiar terminology is this. "Interaction" presupposes a bidirectional flow between two poles. In sociological (and anthropological) studies the term interaction has accordingly come to index face to face encounters. Many actions, however, respond to actions far beyond co-presence. Typically they are reactions to temporally and spatially diverse antecedents while giving rise to reactions in yet other places and times. What intervenes are socio-technological means of communication, transportation and storage. People still react to Aristotle's writings; they keep reacting to the actions of their parents long after they are dead; and bureaucratic chains of action are often unidirectional. Interaction is thus just a very special case of action-reaction effect chains. "Practices" might be an alternative that comes to readers' minds. And yet, practices are already institutionalized packages intertwining action sequences and understandings. Therefore, it makes sense to find more basic concepts that can inform efforts to explain the emergence and transformation of practices. Moreover,

actions unlike practices can be spontaneous and creative without being arbitrary because they are oriented, directed and guided by understandings. Thus the regularization of understandings is a way to understand the regularization of actions into practices. In this vein PE makes extensive use of the term co-constitution;[4] thinking in terms of action-reaction effect sequences helps us to think through *how* this may happen. Biernacki points out at the beginning of his comments that in tracing process PE refrains from drawing unidirectional causal arrows from understandings over actions to institutions. Instead, PE espouses hermeneutics also in method by developing detailed sets of heuristics to follow processes of co-constitution between moments of flow (understanding, actions, situations) and successively larger, socially stabilized and thus seemingly objectified institutional arrangements (habits, knowledge, transferences, persons, relations, practices, groups, organizations).

PE arrives at the larger historical argument presented at the opening of this article from a nested set of case studies strategically chosen to illuminate the disintegration of socialism in the German Democratic Republic. In fact PE zeros in on a single social arena to generate insight into the implosion of socialism in the GDR that is the secret police's effort to control the peace and civil rights movements in the Berlin during the 1980s. One could say then with Molnár that PE focuses on "extremes"—secret police officers and dissidents—while neglecting the majority of the population. However, since PE studies people's trajectories towards these "extremes" from many different positions in society, PE's particular strategic angle still allows it to integrate a broad range of understandings of socialism, even if in some cases only indirectly. This is the case for example with the refugees who fled the GDR in the summer of 1989 and who through their "voting by feet" contributed majorly to the country's demise. In fact, focusing on "extremes" allows PE to study the particular dynamics of political understandings in the GDR with great clarity, precisely because greater observable changes renders dynamics more legible.

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[4] PE argues that the verb to produce implies too much ex ante planning to be suitable as a metaphor for processes of institution formation.

This is also the reason why PE samples data for processual relevance not for demographic representativeness.

Arguing from the very limited arena of policing dissidence to the macro-historical dynamics of socialism, bears significant resemblance with the "self-evidencing" that Biernacki describes for the cosmological conclusions drawn from the observed red-shift of stellar light sources. However, where physicists can rely on laws they conceive of as universal to achieve the rhetorical effect of self-evidence in their audience, PE needs to plausibilize the theory it uses for scaling up historically in a step-wise fashion. Hence the nesting of cases, which is in keeping also with good hermeneutic method. Accordingly, PE locates the emergence of people's understandings and actions in their social and physical environments; it embeds the development of their understandings in their careers as secret police officers and dissidents within the organizations they help to form; it situates these organizations within the wider fabric of GDR politics and the history of socialism, which in turn it takes to form a significant part of the, mnemonic, organizational and physical environment in which people's understandings get shaped and sorted through the institutionalization of validating processes. PE refuses to read these nestings as increasing levels of abstraction where the lower is legible ethnographically and the higher only statistically. Instead it treats each container as just as local as that which it contains; it treats it not as different in kind but only different in spatial and temporal reach and principally open to ethnographic analysis.

Even though the theory was thus developed *by* extending and nesting cases and *for* explaining the cases at hand, it was also developed in the expectation—luckily shared by Biernacki and Molnár—that it be useful for analyzing social life much beyond socialism's demise.[5] This expectation is plau-

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[5] In spite of the fact that students are told to engage in this kind dialogue between theory and data, I am much less optimistic than Lampland that this is really what is done in practice. In fact I see neither in anthropology nor in sociology much of an effort to develop more comprehensive theoretizations on the basis of field work evidence. Where an older generation of anthropologist has tried that, they have become vilified. For good reasons and bad, much effort in ethnography has been invested in celebrating the particular, the individual and theory has become an engagement with philosophy with little refraction in fieldwork data.

sibilized by parts of the theory itself, which sees ways of social life not as total forms that can be treated as "systems", but as more or less integrated thickets of processes with varying degrees of institutionalization. Consequently we often hide much more than we do reveal if we forget that terms like democracy or socialism are at most synecdoches extending to a complex whole what properly characterizes only part of it. The style of comparative logic in PE is very different, then, from the Mill and Durkheim inspired work still en vogue in sociology. In addition to focusing on processes and their dynamics rather than systems as basic units of analysis, PE undertakes once more a classical hermeneutic move: an effort to understand oneself in the image of other is undertaken, precisely because this refraction allows for better visibility of self.

The theoretical core piece of *PE* is a sociology of understanding. To the degree that some vague notion of the hermeneutic as concerning meaning is accepted by culturalists, most of the theory may be "uncontroversial," as Lampland puts it in her comments. The problem is that this vague culturality, this vague appeal to meaning blunts cultural analysis. Worse, perhaps, it disregards the fact that there has been a thorough and devastating critique (that was launched in several waves but perhaps most effectively by the post-structuralists) on central aspects of the hermeneutic (and the cultural) program. Most importantly the hermeneutic social sciences have been faulted for: a.) favoring static over dynamic conceptualizations of understandings; b.) for neglecting the ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions characterizing understandings brought into play in many situations; c.) for failing to consider the interplay between discourse, emotion and perception; d.) as Biernacki reminds us at the end of his comments, for downplaying the variance of understandings between different people by attributing understandings to corporate groups of any size; e.) for relying on simple socialization models for capturing the sociality of understanding. If these criticisms are taken seriously it means that the hermeneutic has neither a proper way to deal with the prevalent plurality of understandings and the inherent overdetermination of the cultural nor a way to think the sociality of understanding which further implies that it is left without a way to move from process

to structure as well as from "micro" analysis" to "macro" formations and back.

The sociology of understanding I present in the introduction and chapters three and four of the book aspires to provide solutions precisely to these problems. To do so it enrolls a rather diverse set of contributions into a reformed hermeneutics ranging from Mead and Wittgenstein, to rhetoric and performance theory, from practice theory and linguistic anthropology to psychoanalysis. The key analytical moves are the following. In keeping with the original Vico-Herder project of a hermeneutic social science[6], PE primarily regards understanding as a process of differentiation and integration that proceeds in a plurality of media each of which offers—much like different materials or genre conventions to the artist—characteristic possibilities and limitations for construing the world to orient, direct, and guide action. The three media PE is able to consider are ordinary language discourse, emotion and kinesthesia.[7] The specific advantage of discourse as medium lies in the fact that it allows subjunctives constructions and hugely complex forms of differentiation and integration; the advantage of emotions as a medium of understanding lies in their ego-centricity hence their outstanding ability to signal relevance etc.

Operating with several modes of understanding offers possibilities to expand significantly on Weberian or Festingerian cases of dissonance as dynamic element of social life. All three modes of understanding can now be related to each other dialectically as moments in a hermeneutic process where they can amplify or differentiate each other.[8]

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[6] Of course neither of them called it that. Vico's term was "new science" and Herder's "philosophy of history."

[7] Formal languages played no role in either the world of the secret police officers I studied, nor in the world of the dissidents. Except for the use live television footage, emotions and kinesthesia needed to be accessed through discourse. For a systematic consideration of the other senses there were not enough data. Even though I spent time looking at large numbers of period photographs, attributing what they depicted to the sense perception of any one of my interviewees would have been a mistake.

[8] This approach is very different from major work in the sociology and anthropology of emotions which tends to study norms of and ideologies about feelings rather than feelings. It also runs counter to Durkheim inspired attempts to distribute the discursive and the emotional over different functions such as the epistemic and the social. Instead it emphasizes the epistemic effect of all three.

The life stories of Stasi officers and dissidents show that changes in discursive understanding often begin with changes in emotive or kinesthetic understandings creating experiences at odds with extant discursive understandings. Moreover, the discursification of changing emotive understandings typically required partners with whom one could actually talk about these feelings. Indeed, PE shows that intimacy can be a very important element in epistemic changes.

The decisive move is to see that these understanding become picked out of processual flow and thus bounded and objectified through different forms of validation thus indeed treating them theoretically and empirically as "emergent phenomena" as Lampland suggests. Understand*ing* becomes *an* understanding, the continuous verb a gerund in three different ways: through *recognition* in comparison with the understandings of other actors past or present who in reality or imagination endorse or reject understandings; through *corroboration* in the evaluation of action success; and through *resonance* in matching particular understandings against others we hold already. Validation is what makes understandings stable enough to be severed from one context to be used in another and it thus is the basis of learning. Validation makes understandings more or less actionable and thus forms the basis of agency, our ability to act.

Paying attention to validations can solve a number of the above-mentioned problems of classical hermeneutics in one fell swoop. Perhaps it is most important to note for sociologist of a Marxian or Durkheimian stripe, both of whom are traditionally fearful of idealism, that validation immediately ties understandings and agency to social and natural structures. Social structures come into play through recognition which issues from networks of people that actors consider authorities. Since it is very difficult to stabilize discursive understandings outside of networks of authority (for the reasons Wittgenstein adduces in his late philosophy), PE is very interested in the development of the extent and composition of people's networks. Natural structures come into play in two different ways. First by enabling or constraining particular kinds of actions and experiences and second by facilitating or preempting particular social encounters for example through the structuring of neighborhoods, natural barriers such as mountains or rivers etc.

If Biernacki wonders how one would ever "falsify a hypothesis of rising cognitive dissonance?" then the notion that understandings become actualized or de-actualized by validation offers at least some clues about how to make such conclusions more plausible as to appear self-evidencing to the reader. Dissonance is the result of experiences of validations actualizing contradicting understandings. Not only can one obtain them through narrative accounts, but one can ask of particular social and natural environments how likely they were to enable validations of a particular kind for particular understandings in a particular time and place. Following a hermeneutic and dialectical method, my point is that most validations issue form institutionalized environments that can be investigated independently of any one particular actor.

PE therefore makes an effort, wherever possible, to reconstruct the historical spaces of validation through which particular individuals have passed at particular places and times. And just like Lampland suggests, I have to this purpose made use of newspapers, television newscasts, novels and memoirs. The reconstruction of such spaces can also be used to investigate counter-factuals. The search for presences needs to be backed up with an inquiry into absences to make a case for changes of understandings. Of course at the end of the day Biernacki is right. Experience is such a multifaceted, complex phenomenon, that any empirical investigation remains cursory at best which is of course true for any kind of sociological investigation the seemingly most data driven quantitative research included. And yet, one can try to get to a level and kind of data exposure that allows self-evidencing to work on the background of the provided theory. The reconstruction of social arenas by finding a plurality of participants who were entangled in action –reaction effect sequences at the time of interests further adds possibilities to inflect individual narrative accounts. What is more important perhaps for the readers of these pages, PE offers heuristics centering on the notion of spaces of validation to make critical use of interview data for the purposes of a historical ethnography.

Molnár and Lampland raise critical questions from a comparative case they know first hand, namely Hungary. Perhaps I should have prefaced the use of "socialism" much more regularly with the qualifier "GDR". Indeed I have no doubt that in each country in Eastern Europe the situation was quite different. Analyzing these differences between various socialist countries in terms of the differences in their validation spaces as Molnár suggests makes sense and is quite in keeping with PE's intentions. In the comparison of cases, time period makes also a great difference. Most of the data that Lampland reports as exhibiting greater possibilities for internal critique for example date to the 1950s. PE describes the party life in East Germany likewise as more open during this period. And once more the sociology of understanding seems well suited to make sense of these differences. What Lampland seems to mean when she fears that the officers PE describes were in fact "exoticized" must be the fact that these men by and large strove to become the "new men" the party had envisioned. If these men do not appear as expected, this may also be the result of the fact that most ethnographic-historical studies of socialism in Eastern Europe are typically based on the accounts of people who lived at a certain distance to the centers of power. Their understandable accounts of persecution and survival have often painted an image of socialist officials as power-mongering, cynical or incompetent. Unfortunately such portrayals fit only too well with the liberal Western imagination of socialism. In an effort to escape liberal prejudices PE therefore endeavors precisely not to exoticize the Stasi officers. Quite to the contrary by telling the history of the Stasi through the biographies its officers, PE shows that the officers were leading a quite ordinary life that offered particular choices and possibilities that made sense to these men in the context in which they appeared. It also shows how these contexts changed in the course of time by characterizing changing work environments and the increasing homogenization of the officers' networks of authority. PE systematically employs the sociology of understanding to structure its account of these officers' life-stories. And it proceeds in completely parallel fashion with the dissidents, showing systematically how validating events shape peoples discursive, emotive and kinesthetic understandings of party, state and socialism.

We will never know, however, how different Hungarian (or Polish, Czechoslovak etc) officials were before we have not studied them. Molnár's

call to action on this account is well taken because as she says, the founding generation is dying fast. For this to happen we need to overcome an old well-meaning prejudice of social scientists in general and of ethnographers in particular: to under-stand the world mainly through the lens of the economically or politically excluded.

Member Awards

Chris Rhomberg's book, *The Broken Table: The Detroit Newspaper Strike and the State of American Labor* (Russell Sage, 2012), received the 2013 Distinguished Scholarly Monograph Award from the American Sociological Association's section on Labor and Labor Movements.

Member Publications

Articles and Book Chapters

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Boy, John D. and John Torpey. 2013. "Inventing the Axial Age: The Origins and Uses of a Historical Concept." *Theory and Society* 42(3): 241-259.

Chase-Dunn, Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall. 2012. "Global Scale Analysis in Human History." Pp. 185-200 in *A Companion to World History*. Edited by Douglas Northrop. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Fairbrother, Malcolm. Forthcoming. "Two Multilevel Modeling Techniques for Analyzing Comparative Longitudinal Survey Datasets." *Political Science Research and Methods*. doi:10.1017/psrm.2013.24.

Hall, Thomas D. 2012. "Incorporation into and Merger of World-Systems." Pp. 37-55 in *Routledge Handbook of World-Systems Analysis*. Edited by Salvatore J. Babones and Christopher Chase-Dunn. New York: Routledge.

Hall, Thomas D. 2013. "Lessons from Comparing the Two Southwests: Southwest China and Northwest New Spain / Southwest USA." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 19(1): 24-56.

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Hung, Ho-fung. 2013. "China: Savior or Challenger of the Dollar Hegemony?" *Development and Change*. 44(6): 1341-1361.

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Morawska, Ewa. 2013. "Structuring Immigrants' Civic-Political Incorporation Into the Host Society." Pp.137-161 in *Outsiders No More? Models of Immigrant Political Incorporation*. Edited by Jennifer Hochshild et al. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morawska, Ewa. 2013. "Toward a Reconciliation of the Structuration and Morphogenesis Theories of Social Processes 'Tested' in the Eventful Historical Analysis." In *Social Theories of History and Histories of Social Theory* (*Current Perspectives in Social Theory, Vol. 31*).

Morawska, Ewa. Fortchcoming. "Multiculturalism from Below: Reflections of an Immigrant Ethnographer." In *Challenges and Directions of Multiculturalism*. Edited by Peter Kivisto. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Onaka, Fumiya. 2013. "Aspects of Process Theories and Process-Oriented Methodologies in Historical and Comparative Sociology: An Introduction." *Historical Social Research* 38(2): 161-171.

Onaka, Fumiya. 2013. "Relating Socio-Cultural Network Concepts to Process-Oriented Methodology." *Historical Social Research* 38(2): 236-251.

Owens, Peter B. Forthcoming. "The Collective Dynamics of Genocidal Violence in Cambodia, 1975-1979." *Social Science History*.

Pula, Besnik. 2013. "Binding Institutions: Peasants and Nation-State Rule in the Albanian Highlands, 1919-1939." *Political Power and Social Theory* 25: 37-70.

Rhomberg, Chris. 2013. "Class and Collective Action: Writing Stories about Actors and Events." *Sociología Histórica* 2.

Treiber, Linda. 2013. "McJobs and Pieces of Flair: Linking McDonaldization to Alienating Work." *Teaching Sociology* 41(4): 370-376.

Xu, Xiahong. 2013. "Belonging Before Believing: Group Ethos and Bloc Recruitment in the Making of Chinese Communism." *American Sociological Review* 78(5): 773-796.

Books

Agarwala, Rina. 2013. *Informal Labor, Formal Politics and Dignified Discontent in India.* **New York: Cambridge University Press.**

Since the 1980s, the world's governments have decreased state welfare and increased the proportion of unprotected "informal" or "precarious" workers. As a result, more and more workers do not receive secure wages or benefits from either employers or the state. What are these workers doing to improve their livelihoods? Dignifying Discontent offers a fresh and provocative look into the alternative social movements informal workers in India are launching. It also offers a unique analysis of the conditions under which these movements succeed or fail. Drawing from 300 interviews with informal workers, government officials, and union leaders, Rina Agarwala argues that Indian informal workers are using their power as voters to demand the state for welfare benefits (such as education, housing, and healthcare), rather than demanding employers for traditional work benefits (such as minimum wages and job security). In addition, they are organizing at the neighborhood level, rather than the shop floor, and appealing to "citizenship," rather than labor rights. Agarwala concludes that movements are most successful when operating under parties that compete for mass votes and support economic liberalization (even populist parties). They are least successful when operating under non-competitive electoral contexts (even those tied to communist parties).

Braun, Jerome. 2013. *Democratic Culture and Moral Character: A Study in Culture and Personality.* **Springer.**

This book returns critical theory to its roots in both psychology and the social sciences. It shows some of the relationships between equality in a political and social sense and personal identity that either relates well to such equality, or rebels against it. All this reflects processes of social and cultural influence that involve not only random change but also processes of social and cultural evolution that themselves have effects regarding potentials for self-fulfillment and even public morality. This book provides a framework to help one study the interaction between individual aspirations and social opportunities.

Jerome Braun, known for his writings in interdisciplinary social science, an approach he calls pragmatic critical theory, here provides a book that discusses issues relevant to the moral underpinnings of democratic society, including issues of social evolution and of culture and personality.

This book will be of particular interest to scholars and students of Psychology (particularly in the areas of Political Psychology, Psychology of Personality and Cultural Psychology), Sociology (especially those interested in Sociology of Alienation and Sociology of Culture, as well as Historical Sociology, Political Sociology and Sociology of Mental Health), Anthropology (particularly in the areas of Psychological Anthropology and Political Anthropology), Cultural Studies, and Social Theory as well as Political Theory in general.

Campbell, Fergus and Tony Varley, eds. 2013. *Land Questions in Modern Ireland.* **Manchester: Manchester University Press.**

This collection of essays explores the nature and dynamics of Ireland's land questions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and also the ways in which the Irish land question has been written about by historians.

The book makes a vital contribution to the study of historiography by including for the first time the reflections of a group of prominent historians on their earlier work. These historians consider their influences and how their views have changed since the publication of their books, so that these essays provide an ethnographic study of historians' thoughts on the shelf-life of books exploring the way history is made.

The book will be of interest to historians of modern Ireland, and those interested in the revisionist debate in Ireland, as well as to sociologists and anthropologists studying Ireland or rural societies.

de Leon, Cedric. 2014. *Party and Society: Reconstructing a Sociology of Democratic Party Politics.* **Cambridge: Polity Press.**

Political parties are central to democratic life, yet there is no standard definition to describe them or the role they occupy. "Voter-centered" theoretical approaches suggest that parties are the mere recipients of voter interests and loyalties. "Party-centered" approaches, by contrast, envision parties that polarize, democratize, or dominate society. In addition to offering isolated and competing notions of democratic politics, such approaches are also silent on the role of the state and are unable to account for organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the African National Congress, which exhibit characteristics of parties, states, and social movements simultaneously.

In this timely book, Cedric de Leon examines the ways in which social scientists and other observers have imagined the relationship between parties and society. He introduces and critiques the full range of approaches, using enlivening comparative examples from across the globe. Cutting through a vast body of research, de Leon offers a succinct and lively analysis that outlines the key thinking in the field, placing it in historical and contemporary context. The resulting book will appeal to students of sociology, political science, social psychology, and related fields.

Drori, Gili S., Markus A. Höllerer and Peter Walgenbach, eds. 2013. *Global Themes and Local Variations in Organization and Management: Perspectives on Glocalization.* **New York and London: Routledge**.

The dramatic wave of globalization throughout the 20th century–spurred by information and communication technology, and imprinted primarily by North American hegemony–resulted in a world that seems neither "flat" nor "spiky". Rather, globalization has revealed itself as "glocalization": as a complex process that fuses the global and the local, and interlaces worldwide similarity with cross-national variation. This realization has also struck scholars of organization and management, even if they have so far hardly referred to the very term "glocalization". At its core, the discipline of management is founded upon assumptions of universality; For example, decision-making criteria in the management of organizations are assumed to follow law-like patterns that confirm theories of the homo oeconomicus. Still, even the most rational choice-inspired studies recognize that the global spread of organization and management is accompanied by great variation across social and cultural contexts. What are the dimensions of such glocalization of organization and management? What is the nature of glocalization in these arena? And, what are the drivers of such trends? This compilation of research and commentary wrestles with such questions by assembling research about various organization practices, from numerous countries and world regions, and over the course of recent history.

Geva, Dorit. 2013. *Conscription, Family, and the Modern State: A Comparative Study of France and the United States.* **New York: Cambridge University Press.**

The development of modern military conscription systems is usually seen as a response to countries' security needs, and as reflection of national political ideologies like civic republicanism or democratic egalitarianism. This study of conscription politics in France and the United States in the first half of the twentieth century challenges such common sense interpretations. Instead, it shows how despite institutional and ideological differences, both countries implemented conscription systems shaped by political and military leaders' concerns about how taking ordinary family men for military service would affect men's presumed positions as heads of families, especially as breadwinners and figures of paternal authority. The first of its kind, this carefully researched

book combines an ambitious range of scholarly traditions and offers an original comparison of how protection of men's household authority affected one of the paradigmatic institutions of modern states.

Goldstone, Jack A. 2014. *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction*. **New York: Oxford University Press.**

Covering cases from the ancient world to the Arab Revolutions of 2011, the book redefines revolutions to include both structural change and the pursuit of social justice, and introduces ideas from complexity theory to show why revolutions are so hard to predict in advance, but seem inevitable in hindsight.

Hansen, Karen V. 2013. *Encounter on the Great Plains: Scandinavian Settlers and the Dispossession of Dakota Indians, 1890-1930*. **New York: Oxford University Press.**

In 1904, the first Scandinavian settlers moved onto the Spirit Lake Dakota Indian Reservation. These land-hungry immigrants struggled against severe poverty, often becoming the sharecropping tenants of Dakota landowners. Yet the homesteaders' impoverishment did not impede their quest to acquire Indian land, and by 1929 Scandinavians owned more reservation acreage than their Dakota neighbors. Norwegian homesteader Helena Haugen Kanten put it plainly: "We stole the land from the Indians."

With this largely unknown story at its center, Encounter on the Great Plains brings together two dominant processes in American history: the unceasing migration of newcomers to North America, and the protracted dispossession of indigenous peoples who inhabited the continent.

Drawing on fifteen years of archival research and 130 oral histories, Karen V. Hansen explores the epic issues of co-existence between settlers and Indians and the effect of racial hierarchies, both legal and cultural, on marginalized peoples. Hansen offers a wealth of intimate detail about daily lives and community events, showing how both Dakotas and Scandinavians resisted assimilation and used their rights as new citizens to combat attacks on their cultures. In this flowing narrative, women emerge as resourceful agents of their own economic interests. Dakota women gained autonomy in the use of their allotments, while Scandinavian women staked and "proved up" their own claims.

Hansen chronicles the intertwined stories of Dakotas and immigrants-women and men, farmers, domestic servants, and day laborers. Their shared struggles reveal efforts to maintain a language, sustain a culture, and navigate their complex ties to more than one nation. The history of the American West cannot be told without these voices: their long connections, intermittent conflicts, and profound influence over one another defy easy categorization and provide a new perspective on the processes of immigration and land taking.

Lachmann, Richard. 2013. *What is Historical Sociology?* **Cambridge: Polity**

Sociology began as a historical discipline, created by Marx, Weber and others, to explain the emergence and consequences of rational, capitalist society. Today, the best historical sociology combines precision in theory-construction with the careful selection of appropriate methodologies to address ongoing debates across a range of subfields.

This book explores what sociologists gain by treating temporality seriously, what we learn from placing social relations and events in historical context. In a series of chapters, readers will see how historical sociologists have addressed the origins of capitalism, revolutions and social movements, empires and states, inequality, gender and culture. The goal is not to present a comprehensive history of historical sociology; rather, readers will encounter analyses of exemplary works and see how authors engaged past debates and their contemporaries in

sociology, history and other disciplines to advance our understanding of how societies are created and remade across time.

Lange, Matthew. 2013. *Comparative-Historical Methods*. **London: SAGE.**

This title provides a thorough and integrated review of comparative-historical methods. It sets out an intellectual history of comparative-historical analysis and presents the main methodological techniques employed by researchers, including comparative-historical analysis, case-based methods, comparative methods, data, case selection and theory.

Rinaldo, Rachel. 2013. *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia*. **New York: Oxford University Press.**

Examining a feminist NGO, Muslim women's organizations, and a Muslim political party, Rinaldo reveals that democratization and the Islamic revival in Indonesia are shaping new forms of personal and political agency for women. These unexpected kinds of agency draw on different approaches to interpreting religious texts and facilitate different repertoires of collective action - one oriented toward rights and equality, the other toward more public moral regulation. As Islam becomes a primary source of meaning and identity in Indonesia, some women activists draw on Islam to argue for women's empowerment and equality, while others use Islam to advocate for a more Islamic nation.

So, Alvin Y. 2013. *Class and Class Conflict in Post-Socialist China*. **Singapore: World Scientific.**

Class and Class Conflict in Post-Socialist China traces the origins and the profound changes of the patterns of class conflict in post-socialist China since 1978. The first of its kind in the field of China Studies that offers comprehensive overviews and traces the historical evolutions of different patterns of class conflict (among workers, peasants, capitalists, and the middle class) in post-socialist China, the book provides comprehensive overviews of different patterns of class conflict. It uses a state-centered approach to study class conflict, i.e., study how the communist party-state restructures the patterns of class conflict in Chinese society, and brings in a historical dimension by tracing the origins and developments of class conflict in socialist and post-socialist China.

Member News

On August 12th, 2013, during the ASA's annual meeting in New York, **the Global-Transnational and Historical-Comparative Sections of the ASA** held a **joint mentoring lunch** for graduate students and postdocs. Conceived by Julia Adams (Yale) and Julian Go (Boston University), the mentoring lunch was attended by nearly one hundred graduate students and postdocs from 36 different institutions and 19 faculty.

During a lunch—served by Convene conference services in a facility near Times Square in New York—groups of ten graduate students were paired with two faculty from other institutions based on matching interests. Faculty guided discussions revolving around professional development, research challenges, and new, exciting intellectual directions for both Global/Transnational and Comparative-Historical sociology.

The organizers asked participants for feedback in a survey given electronically after the lunch, and received a

positive and enthusiastic response. Of the 50 people who responded, all of them rated it either "somewhat" or "very" effective, and all of them expressed interest in participating in the event again in the future. Accordingly, organizers from both sections plan to repeat the event at the ASA's next annual meeting in San Francisco.

The lunch was funded by both ASA sections as well as Yale's new Center for Historical Enquiry and the Social Sciences.

(Nick Wilson)

The Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration in Moscow will hold its **First International Conference on Political Demography and Macrosocial Dynamics** on December 13-14 in Moscow. The conference will explore the ways that population changes affect politics and political economy in Russia, Europe, China, South Korea, and the U.S. For information on attending or presenting research, contact Jack Goldstone at jgoldsto@gmu.edu.

Special Issue: Reassembling Ethnography: Actor-Network Theory and Sociology

Qualitative Sociology's December issue (Vol.36, No.4) explores the purchase of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) for qualitative and ethnographic sociologies. Founded in the early 1980s by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law, ANT has become one of the most exciting and innovative intellectual developments in recent memory. Originally developed as an alternative approach in the sociology of science, it has long professed and exhibited usefulness in the analysis of all arenas of social life. Although ANT concepts, theories, and sensibilities have been taken up across the social sciences and humanities, sociology, particularly within the U.S. context, has lagged.

Envisioned as an exercise in translation, this special issue introduces, engages, and expands on many of ANT's signature features, such as its skepticism towards taken-for-granted divisions, categories, and concepts, its attention to processes of circulation, its interest in the relational interface between humans and nonhumans, and finally its appreciation for uncertainty and multiplicity. After an ANT-inspired introduction that traces the assembling of the special issue written by guest editors Gianpaolo Baiocchi (NYU), Diana Graizbord (Brown University) and Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz (Brown University), the issue features seven empirically rich and theoretically provocative essays on art, materiality and meaning-making; devices of democratic representation; independent film and the formation of "civil society;" urban social movements and the limits of parliamentarian politics; genomics and science of race; the conversion of religious buildings; and reflexivity in sociological account-making. The issue concludes with a thoughtful and thought-provoking essay by ANT founder, John Law, and Vicky Singleton, that explores the origins and afterlives of ANT. Calling for a serious engagement, this special issue is sure to stimulate discussion and debate about ANT's potential to inspire a deeper, wider, and more robust ethnographic imagination.

This issue is now available online at http://link.springer.com/journal/11133/onlineFirst/page/1.

Section Members on the Job Market & Recently Defended Dissertations

Sinem Adar
Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow
Department of Sociology, University of South Florida
(Ph.D., Brown University, 2013)

Waiting for the Future, Longing for the Past: Ambiguities of Belonging in Turkey and Egypt

Istanbul and Alexandria, two of the most important port cities of the Ottoman Empire, experienced a gradual transition from religious diversity to homogenization during the unfolding of national projects in Turkey and Egypt, respectively, from the early 1920s till the 1970s. Although the emigration of non-Muslims was a common experience in Istanbul and Alexandria, lived experiences of these populations who were excluded from the national space in Turkey and Egypt differed significantly. This dissertation explains these differences by exploring the ways in which non-Muslims in Istanbul and Alexandria perceived and experienced belonging during the unfolding of national projects in Turkey and Egypt.

Based on newspaper reviews and oral history interviews collected through 15 months of historical and ethnographic research, it demonstrates the ways in which two post-Ottoman national projects, Turkey and Egypt, deployed religion in ways to consolidate and weaken boundaries of the nation, on one hand, and confessional community boundaries, on the other hand. Accordingly, non-Muslims in Istanbul felt left in an ambiguous zone between individual citizenship and confessional membership. State policies that dissolved the communal realm as a primary basis of social organization rendered confessional communities symbolic—one exception was in the 1950s. On the other hand, the communal realm was an important source of belonging for Non-Muslims in Alexandria especially when they lacked formal citizenship status, as it was the case with some non-Coptic and non-Muslim groups.

Research interests: Nationalism and nation-building; citizenship, belonging and identity; diversity, co-existence and solidarity; sociology of perceptions and emotions; sociology of the Middle East and the contemporary Balkans

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Elisabeth Anderson
Northwestern University

Policy Entrepreneurs and Institutional Change: The Politics of Nineteenth-Century Child Labor Reform in Germany and the U.S.

Why do states devote resources to protecting groups that seem politically, economically, and socially powerless? My dissertation explores this question through an analysis of the political origins and development of nineteenth-century child labor regulation in Germany and the U.S. Child labor laws emerged in continental Europe and the American states not as a result of working-class mobilizations, but as a consequence of middle-class policy entrepreneurs' dedicated reform advocacy. Child labor policy entrepreneurs did not act on the basis of narrow material or power interests, but rather on behalf of a voiceless and marginalized minority whom they both pitied and feared. Explaining the emergence and content of child labor laws therefore requires understanding these actors' motivations and actions. In each of four case studies, I explicate the culturally embedded ideas that informed policy entrepreneurs' interpretive understanding of the child labor problem, motivated their po-

litical action, and shaped policy outcomes. Furthermore, because effective policy entrepreneurs never acted alone, I identify the strategies through which they forged coalitions to overcome political barriers and successfully effect institutional change. On the basis of this analysis I develop a theoretical model which challenges existing theories of welfare policy development by bringing individual actors, their culturally embedded ideas, and their creative political action to the fore.

Dissertation committee: Bruce Carruthers, Ann Orloff, Charles Camic, Nicola Beisel

Research interests: My research interests span political sociology, comparative-historical sociology, sociology of the welfare state/social policy, and theory. Current projects include: (1) a study (with Bruce Carruthers) of how Progressive Era policy experts partnered with industry to combat predatory lending; and (2) the construction (with Monica Prasad) of a cross-national and historical dataset to be used for future study of the relationship between income tax progressivity and welfare state spending.

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John D. Boy
CUNY Graduate Center

Postsecular Europe and the Church-Planting Movement

My dissertation investigates the global diffusion of voluntary religiosity. I study this phenomenon in the context of "church planting," that is, strategic efforts by multi-institutional networks of individuals and organizations to found new conservative Protestant churches. I use a modified ethnographic approach (focused and multi-sited) to study the work of one of the most prominent of these networks in seven urban areas in Europe. I argue that this network makes strategic use of gentrified urban spaces to make a place for religion in the everyday lives of city dwellers. The result is a transformation of the religious landscape and a change in religious vitality in the broader society. In addition, my dissertation uses archival materials to shed light on how Europe came to be framed as a mission field by American Protestant missionary societies in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, I draw on illustrated mission periodicals to study framing processes.

Dissertation committee: John Torpey (chair), Marnia Lazreg, Bryan S. Turner, Stanley Aronowitz

Research interests: Comparative–historical sociology, cultural sociology, the sociology of religion.

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Jennifer Guillén
Texas A&M University

Racial and Ethnic Identities Among Mexican-White Couples in Texas

My dissertation is a multi-sited examination of racial and ethnic identity across social, historical and contextual spaces. Through snowball sampling and extensive recruitment throughout Brazos County, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, Texas, 50 Mexican-white couples (90 interviews) were conducted in order to evaluate the fluidity, or lack of fluidity, in racial and/or ethnic identity among these individuals. This specific interracial coupling was of particular interest in order to examine how individuals navigate their identities in multiple social and contextual locations; the process of learning about racial and ethnic identification and how this translates to mi-

cro- and macro-structures, including the racialization of Mexicans; and, the production and reproduction of racial and ethnic identities in multiple historically-situated contexts.

Dissertation committee: Sarah N. Gatson (co-chair), Rogelio Sáenz (co-chair), Jane Sell, Marco Portales

Research interests: Intersectionality (race, class, gender, sexuality); race and ethnicity; intergroup relations; identity; Latin@s in the U.S., México, Afromexicanos; family; qualitative methods; grounded theory; comparative and historical methodology; law and society; popular culture and media; aging

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Jonathan Obert
University of Chicago

Six Guns and State Formation: The Private Roots of Public Violence in American Political Development

How did the American state construct a powerful security bureaucracy while private individuals and firms simultaneously preserved the legally authorized capacity to protect themselves through violence? Challenging the conventional wisdom that strong states operate like a monopoly protection racket, my dissertation argues that the roots of this seeming contradiction lie in the 19th Century, when the amateur republican model of organized violence infusing American political institutions was transformed into a powerful but dualistic security field of both public and private violence experts (e.g. gunfighters, police, private detectives and vigilantes) who shared resources, membership, and occasionally rules. This, in turn, was a consequence of "frontier" conditions—social and physical environments where traditional institutional roles and forms of social authority become ambiguous and unsettled and in which the traditional roles of political officials were "decoupled" from the underlying concrete social networks allowing them to mobilize ad hoc coercive force without an permanent security bureaucracy. As a result, market, social and state actors confronting an unprecedented expansion in urban and rural frontiers in the mid-19th Century all began to adapt republican coercive institutions to their own ends, in the process creating a patchwork of distinct but mutually reinforcing public and private forms of organized violence and setting up a network among security providers and an institutional framework that persists to this day. To establish these claims, I collected an array of new micro and meso-level data on violence organization in Louisiana, Colorado, and Illinois, which I analyze using case study, geographic and network analytic methods.

Dissertation committee: John F. Padgett (chair), Dan Slater, Paul Staniland, John Mearsheimer

Research interests: I am also interested in the co-evolution of legal control over firearms and gun manufacturing markets, the origins and emergence of violence expertise, and the development of the private security industry.

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Jung Mee Park
Postdoctoral Fellow
Korean Studies Institute, University of Southern California
(Ph.D., Cornell University, 2013)

Why Treaties Matter: The Legal and Cultural Effects of 19th Century Treaties

Theories of nation-state formation conventionally highlighted within nation struggles in economics, politics, and military as catalysts for change. The significance of external forces such as international treaties affecting

domestic reforms has been largely omitted. In my dissertation, I examined how the diffusion of international law via bilateral treaties changed the economic, political, and criminal laws for nation-states, especially Asian and Latin American states. By creating a dataset of 235 19th Century treaties involving European, Asian, North American, and South American states, I examined the encounters between different legal systems, which introduced and later challenged concepts such as sovereignty, autonomy, and free-trade. I found that geographic origins of the treaty partners affected the types of treaties signed and the level of mutual benefits found in the treaties. When Asian states concluded treaties with European states, European states benefited greatly from the interchanges through extraterritorial rights and most favored nation clauses. In contrast, European and Latin American treaties guaranteed more symmetric rights to both parties, despite Asian and Latin American states having comparable levels of development in the 19th Century. With case study chapters, I recounted the transitions of China, Japan, and Korea as the influence of international law enervated China, empowered Japan, and disenfranchised Korea. Language, culture, and conflict mediated the process by which laws from abroad diffused and helped to reshape state practices.

Dissertation committee: David Strang (chair), Mabel Berezin, Katsuya Hirano (history)

Research interests: I am interested in tracing the history of immigration policies in the United States based on 19th century bilateral treaties, and I will resume my investigation of religion and nationalism in East Asia.

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Section Awards

Barrington Moore Book Award

The section presents the Barrington Moore Award every year to the best book in the area of comparative and historical sociology. Nominated publications should have been published during the two years prior to the year of the award (i.e., for the 2014 award only books published in 2012 or 2013 will be considered). Books may be nominated only once for this prize. Thus, books nominated last year cannot be considered again for the 2011 award.

Books may be nominated by authors or by other section members. Non-authors may nominate a book by sending a letter or email to the prize committee members. Non-authors should ask authors to arrange to have the book sent to each member of the committee. Authors may nominate their book by sending a letter or email to the prize committee members and making arrangements for each member to receive a copy. Nominations must be received by **February 15, 2014** to be considered.

The committee members and their mailing addresses are:

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Jim Mahoney
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Charles Tilly Best Article Award

The section awards this prize every year to the best article in the area of comparative and historical sociology. Nominated publications should have appeared during two years prior to the year of the award (i.e., for the 2014 award only articles published in 2012 or 2013 will be considered).

Authors or other members of the section may nominate an article by sending an e-mail to each member of this prize committee along with a PDF copy of the article. The letter and copy of the article must be received by each member of the committee by **February 15, 2014** to be considered.

The committee members and their e-mail addresses are:

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Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award

The section presents the Theda Skocpol Award every year to the best doctoral dissertation in the area of comparative and historical sociology. Eligible dissertations must have been defended and filed between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2013.

Dissertations may be nominated by dissertation chairs, advisors or current department chairs. We ask that each nomination letter include a brief discussion of the specific strengths and contributions of the dissertation. Self-nominations are not allowed for this award. Dissertations may be nominated by sending a letter or email to each

member of this prize committee. Authors are then responsible for providing each member of the committee with a printed copy of the dissertation. Both the nominating letter and the dissertation must be received by each member of the committee by **February 15, 2014** to be considered.

The committee members and their e-mail and mailing addresses are:

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Kevan Harris
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Reinhard Bendix Best Student Paper Award

The section presents the Reinhard Bendix Award every year to the best graduate student paper in the area of comparative and historical sociology. Submissions are solicited for papers written by students enrolled in graduate programs at the time the paper was written. Both published and unpublished papers will be considered.

Students may self-nominate their finest work or it may be nominated by their mentors. Authors and mentors may nominate a paper by sending an e-mail to each member of this prize committee along with a PDF copy of the article. The letter and copy of the article must be received by each member of the committee by **February 15, 2014** to be considered.

The members of the committee and their e-mail addresses are:

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Call for Member Information

Let's make sure that the website of the Comparative and Historical Sociology section remains a vibrant hub of intellectual exchange! Please keep the Web Editor updated with your latest information, including: (1) the current link to your professional webpage; (2) citation information and links to your latest article and book publications; (3) announcements and calls for upcoming jobs, conferences, and publications pertaining to comparative and historical sociology. And be sure to visit the website (http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/) to learn about recent and upcoming section activities – and to browse current and back issues of the newsletter.

Please email your information to Kurtulus Gemici, CHS Web Editor:
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Contributions to *Trajectories* are always welcome. Please contact the editors at atesaltinordu@sabanciuniv.edu *and* seio@hawaii.edu.