

TRAJECTORIES

Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology Section
Volume 36 No. 1 | Fall 2025/ Winter 2026

Message from the Chair

The year we've left behind, 2025, was the kind of year that makes it clear how important comparative historical scholarship is. In the U.S., we've heard "unprecedented" many times with respect to political and legal changes and challenges issuing from the executive branch and responding to it. This is a historical question, and scholars of U.S. history have turned to the past to compare and contrast the U.S. of today with other periods of crisis. Similar questions are being asked in other countries where populist and authoritarian challenges are also pushing up against long taken for granted civic and political freedom. Popular and scholarly commentators have weighed in on whether or not we've reached the end of the line for the thriving of liberal democracy in many countries—particularly those of the West.

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This Trajectories logo shows loess-smoothed trends in percent of state budgets allocated to "social programs" in (from top to bottom at $x = 0$) France, New Zealand, the UK, US, and Korea, ca. 1990 - 2020. Source: OECD.

One wonders what Alexis de Tocqueville would write were he able to visit the United States now and write a sequel to *Democracy in America*. While he prefaced his initial book with the conviction that democracy would spread across the world, what might he say today as we look out at what can appear to be a retreat from liberal democracy in countries that once defended it?

In addition, consider what assessment W.E.B. DuBois might make of where we are with respect to the global color line and its attendant injustices. While the struggles of the mid-twentieth century—from the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. to the fight for independence in former colonies—delivered certain important gains, we see now what appears to be a rapid retreat from political and legal efforts to level the playing field and work toward national inclusion and justice. And what might Benedict Anderson say to us about the “imagined communities” of the future? Will those communities continue to privilege the nation-state form, or might we be moving toward communities conceptualized more firmly at local levels or beyond nation-state borders with the assistance of virtual technologies?

While CHS scholars cannot predict the future, we can consult the past to better understand where we are today and to consider in what direction we may be moving. As we struggle to find our feet in the midst of shifting social, cultural, and political terrain the work of comparative historical sociologists allows us to mine the usable past, while at the same time posing critical questions about the viability and desirability of possible futures. The members of CHS are engaged now in which is vital to responding well to the challenges confronting the many communities we belong to.

With admiration and thanks for your continued support, presence, and good work.

Angel Adams



CHS Awards 2025

Ibn Khaldun Distinguished Career Award

The section presents the Ibn Khaldun Distinguished Career Award every year in order to recognize a lifetime of outstanding contributions to the subfield of comparative-historical sociology.

Winner: George Steinmetz, University of Michigan Ann-Arbor

Barrington Moore Book Award

The section presents the Barrington Moore Book Award every year to the best book in the area of comparative-historical sociology.

Winner: Zeke Baker, Sonoma State University, *Governing Climate: How Science and Politics Have Shaped Our Environmental Future*. (University of California Press, 2024.)

Charles Tilly Article Award

The section presents the Charles Tilly Article Award every year to the best article in the subfield of comparative-historical sociology.

Co-winner: Andreas Wimmer, Seungwon Lee, and Jack LaViolette (Columbia University), “Diffusion Through Multiple Domains: The Spread of Romantic Nationalism Across Europe, 1770–1930.” *American Journal of Sociology* 130 (4): 931–75.

Co-winner: Anna K.M. Skarpelis (Queen’s College, CUNY), “Horror Vacui: Racial Misalignment, Symbolic Repair, and Imperial Legitimation in German National Socialist Portrait Photography¹.” *American Journal of Sociology*: Vol 129, No 2.

Honorable Mention: Joy Chen (Renmin University), Erik H. Wang (NYU), and Xiaoming Zhang (Zhejiang University), “From Powerholders to Stakeholders: State-building with Elite Compensation in Early Medieval China.” *American Journal of Political Science* 69 (2): 607–23.

Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award

The section presents the Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award every year to the best doctoral dissertation in the area of comparative-historical sociology.

Co-winner: Mary Shi, UC Berkeley, “Settlers’ Republic: Land, Infrastructure, and the Emergence of New Technologies of Government in the United States, 1789–1862”

Honorable Mention: Youbin Kang, University of Wisconsin-Madison, “Underground Labor and the Politics of Circuits: Public Transit Systems of New York and Seoul, 1974-2022”

Reinhard Bendix Student Paper Award

The section presents the Reinhard Bendix Student Paper Award every year to the best graduate student paper in the subfield of comparative-historical sociology.

Co-winner: Peter Kent-Stoll, UMass Amherst, “Dispossessory citizenship: The settler colonial state and the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ relocation program, 1952–1972.” *Social Problems* 71, no. 4 (2024): 1014-1031.

Co-winner: Emily H. Ruppel, UC Berkeley, “How Work Becomes Invisible: The Erosion of the Wage Floor for Workers with Disabilities.” *American Sociological Review* 89, no. 5 (2024): 907-936.

Honorable Mention: Muhammad Amasha, Yale University, “Theorizing Dilemmas through Intellectuals’ Politics

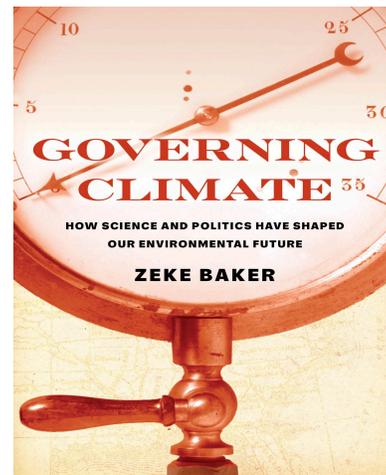
Interviews with Awardees

Barrington Moore Book Award

Winner: Zeke Baker, Sonoma State University, *Governing Climate: How Science and Politics Have Shaped Our Environmental Future*. (University of California Press, 2024.)



disrupt ecological and social systems, and how to explain and confront the emergent U.S. politics of climate denial. As important as these questions were, and remain, I found them unsatisfactory with respect to the sociology of knowledge and the longer-term history of social power.



What question does your research address?
Governing Climate, and my research more generally, seeks to understand the conditions under which science matters to the government. My work is especially interested in predictive environmental sciences, their social origins, and how claims about the future work their way into state-making and power struggles.

How did you decide to study this problem?
I was exposed to the sociology of climate change as an undergraduate student. The field was quite nascent in the first decade of the 2000s, and it was chiefly invested in two big issues: how climate change might

So, I became invested in conversations among environmental historians, historians of science, and historical sociologists, which led me to conduct a rigorous, deeply historical investigation into how science, climate, and government are configured in the case of the United States and, to some extent, transnationally.

What is the major contribution of your research?
I would be happy if the book helps create some controversy around some key assumptions among sociologists, especially about climate change and the relevance of history. One assumption is that climate change is a scientific and social issue aligned with liberal values. It is

contingently, not necessarily, so. Another assumption is that historical research is irrelevant to studying contemporary environmental politics. The politics of climate change has a centuries-long history, and therefore a deeper set of questions and lessons that may be fruitful objects of sociological analysis. A third assumption is that the climate crisis will, in the last instance, be socially recognized as such. My

research shows how climates and environments have been interpreted and represented in a myriad of politically-laden ways. I hope *Governing Climate* invites fresh historical-comparative inquiry that suspends these assumptions.



Charles Tilly Article Award

Co-winner: Andreas Wimmer, Seungwon Lee, and Jack LaViolette (Columbia University), “Diffusion Through Multiple Domains: The Spread of Romantic Nationalism Across Europe, 1770–1930.” *American Journal of Sociology* 130 (4): 931–75.



Andreas Wimmer, Columbia University

What question does your research address?

How do new ideas that contradict established, hegemonic systems of thought spread and travel across the world?

How did you decide to study this problem?

We take the case of early nationalism that spread from the late 18th century throughout the 19th century across Europe. I had come across an Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism assembled by scholars from the humanities. It provided the database for a quantitative study of the diffusion of nationalism across the cities of Europe.

What is the major contribution of your research?

We show that romantic nationalism spread across language, political, and religious boundaries in a rhizoid, bottom-up process through multiple channels of diffusion. It fell on especially fertile ground in areas governed by foreign dynasties, which contradicted nationalist ideals of self-rule. We thus offer a detailed, data-based case study of the mechanisms through which anti-hegemonic ideas can spread across the world.



Co-winner: Anna K.M. Skarpelis (Queen's College, CUNY), "Horror Vacui: Racial Misalignment, Symbolic Repair, and Imperial Legitimation in German National Socialist Portrait Photography," American Journal of Sociology: Vol 129, No 2.



Anna K.M. Skarpelis

What is your research question and contribution to the field?

Empirically, I ask how Nazi Germany's regime sustained its claims to racial supremacy and political legitimacy when "racial science" itself showed that most Germans did not conform to the regime's own Nordic ideal. Conceptually, I wanted to understand how internal contradictions within authoritarian regimes can, rather than leading to their dissolution, at times actively reinforce them. I became interested in the mechanisms through which social order is produced and sustained, and chose to study these through cultural artifacts—especially visual media—as engines of state symbolic power.

My answer to the empirical question is that we need to look beyond brute force and legal domination at what I call "horror vacui racialization"—a sociocultural process that fills the

void between regime ideals and social reality by intensifying racial meaning in cultural and visual domains, especially portrait photography. Instead of abandoning racial supremacy, the state turned inward to *redefine* and *expand* racial categories through cultural practices. But this inward turn had a distinctive character: it involved a form of recursive and self-referential racial classification.

I had been reading art historian Gülru Necipoğlu's magnificent book "The Topkapi Scroll – Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture" for pleasure, leading me to a detour into the predictably problematic American and Germany responses to Islamic Art when something clicked for me and a clearer intervention became possible. I realized that what we were witnessing was a process of excessive classification, representation, and cultural scripting. This process helped fill ideological gaps in Nazi racial doctrine *and* collective meaning to align diverse populations under its racial vision. Photography came to act as a powerful technology of *racial repair*, and not simply as a form of soft power that exhausts itself in straightforward visual propaganda.

In terms of contributions to comparative historical sociology, I think the most obvious one is a theory of cultural mechanisms in state power; it also refigures how sociologists can use visual materials for research. I deliberately do not analyze the photographs in formal terms, as art historians or traditional visual sociologists might. It is not so much their visual content that matters; they become a structural social mechanism themselves. And photographers, although often sidelined as marginal regime-adjacent actors, are not merely simple illustrators of empire, but instead key actors in reshaping National Socialist racial visions and therefore key contributors to state and conflict formation.

What does this award mean to you?

I find myself returning to the award lists of multiple ASA sections whenever I have focused and narrow reading lists. To now be included among a group of such some extra time to read and find myself wanting to go out of my often excessively excellent scholars is profoundly humbling. Receiving this award is especially meaningful to me because comparative historical sociology is a subfield I deeply admire; it is in fact the very reason why I dropped out of my first Ph.D. program in political science.

Moreover, I am grateful for the visibility this award brings, especially given that I am not based at a research university. I hope this helps the article travel into graduate programs where it can be

engaged, debated, and built upon. I also wish for this unabashedly interdisciplinary and deeply qualitative piece to inspire current and future graduate students to follow their intellectual hunches, regardless of prevailing methodological fashions.

Lastly, at this moment of deep political upheaval and uncertainty in the United States, I hope that the ideas in *Horror Vacui* reach more scholars and students grappling with the contemporary stakes of race, ideology, and power.



Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award

Mary Shi, UC Berkeley, “Settlers’ Republic: Land, Infrastructure, and the Emergence of New Technologies of Government in the United States, 1789–1862”



Mary Shi, LSA Collegiate Fellow

What question does your research address?

My research puts land at the center of American state formation to make visible the settler origins of American political and economic development. It asks, how does analyzing the United States as a case of settler colonial state formation allow scholars to rethink the origins of political and economic modernity?

How did you decide to study this problem?

At the broadest level, I am interested in the history of modern state power. I began my dissertation trying to uncover the origins of infrastructure-led development in the United States. I wanted to understand how large-scale infrastructure projects like the Erie Canal, first transcontinental railroad, and Hoover Dam became potent symbols of American technological, political, and economic power and, in doing so, normalize infrastructure promotion as a way for governments to stimulate what we now call “economic development” despite projects’

often high social and ecological costs. I saw infrastructure promotion as a window into the role states now play as technocratic arbiters of the public good. Very quickly, I realized that the answer to this question was intimately tied up with the United States' origins as a republic founded in an age of empires—what I came to term in my dissertation a *settlers' republic*. I expanded my research to investigate the role of land in American state formation more generally.

What is the major contribution of your research?

My research shows war didn't make the American state—colonialism did. Contrary to standard accounts which date the rise of centralized authority in the United States to the post-Civil War period, my research documents the myriad ways in which early Americans were unafraid to mobilize government to achieve their settler vision of economy and society in the pre-Civil War era and in doing so lay the foundations of the modern, territorially-defined, administrative and developmental state. Questions of how to acquire, manage, and sell land dominated pre-Civil War Congressional debates; revenue from dispossessed Indigenous homelands was used to fund “internal improvements” such as canals and railroads; and the earliest expansions of federal administrative agencies such as the General Land Office, the Corps of Topographical Engineers, and Department of Interior were established to first sell and then “improve” land according to settler ideals of economic freedom through property ownership.

In other words, it was through managing land that early Americans developed the administrative institutions, special expertise, and mode of seeing like a state that allowed the concrete

management of land to turn into the abstract government of economy and society.

Crucially, through the concept of *settlers' republic*, my work demonstrates how these dynamics emerged through early Americans' attempts to resolve the contradictions between their republican ideals of equality, popular sovereignty, and limited government and prevailing imperial norms of territorially ambiguous and expansive rule by difference. Understanding modern state formation requires considering both of these ideological forces—liberalism and empire—equally. Instead of resolving these contradictions, my work shows how early Americans were unable to construct political institutions that could democratically govern across difference and instead relied on strategies of exclusion and technocratic depoliticization. Today, we live in the shadow of these imperfect institutions.

Honorable Mention

Youbin Kang, University of Wisconsin-Madison, “Underground Labor and the Politics of Circuits: Public Transit Systems of New York and Seoul, 1974-2022”

What question does your research address?

How is labor implicated in the development and operation of municipal infrastructure projects?

How did you decide to study this problem?

I studied the garment industry prior to this, characterized by footloose capital and deadly working conditions. I wanted to shift my focus to a workplace that was place-bound and governed

through public interests which is characteristic of the transportation industry.

ideals of equality, popular sovereignty, and limited government and prevailing imperial norms of territorially ambiguous and expansive rule by difference. empire—equally. Instead of resolving these contradictions, my work shows how early Americans were unable to construct political institutions that could democratically govern across difference and instead relied on strategies of exclusion and technocratic depoliticization. Today, we live in the shadow of these imperfect institutions.

The Reinhard Bendix Student Paper Award

Emily Ruppel, UC Berkeley “How Work Becomes Invisible: The Erosion of the Wage Floor for Workers with Disabilities.” *American Sociological Review* 89, no. 5 (2024): 907-936.



Emily Ruppel, UC Berkeley

What is the major contribution of your research?

My contribution is to show how labor articulation - including its racial, classed, and gendered aspects - affects how public transit is funded and operated, through debt instruments in NYC and labor control in Seoul, two global cities that don't receive comparable federal funding for public transit. It also contributes a thick description of fifty years of bureaucratic transit governance and spiky labor relations in two global cities, New York City and Seoul which have each seen incredible demographic change and urban development. I also like to think that I forward a methodological intervention into historical sociology that demonstrates the utility of theorizing up from organizationally bounded case studies.



What is your research question and contribution to the field?

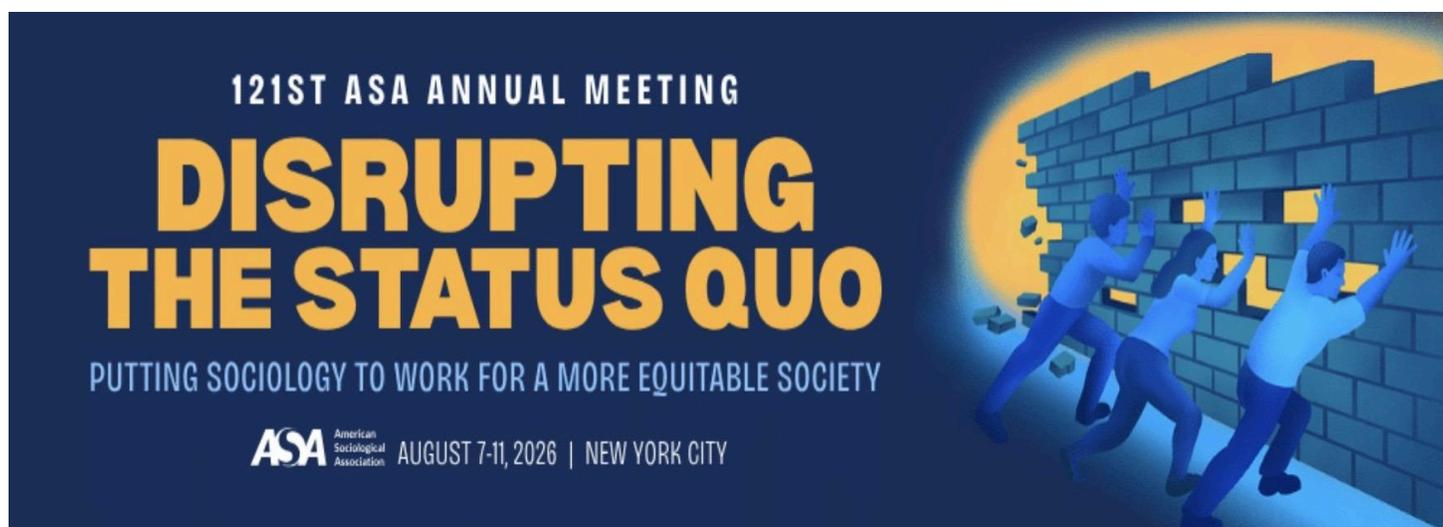
My dissertation is about the reconstitution of disability as profitable from 1970s-present. Specifically, I study employment programs for workers with disabilities, documenting the growth and deregulation of this industry through historical research and documenting contemporary labor practices through ethnographic fieldwork. Exploitation in these programs has received popular attention, including viral exposés of Goodwill, but almost no empirical research. I received the Reinhard Bendix Award for a paper published in the *American Sociological Review* about 1986 amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act which removed all federal minimums for disabled workers' wages, enabling them to fall to pennies per hour. I ask why these

amendments passed by Congressional consensus, despite counterfactual possibilities suggested by disability rights organizing. I hope this paper will illuminate processes through which labor is mystified as such, enabling exploitation. I call these processes “delaborization,” and while the *ASR* paper focuses on workers with disabilities, I hope scholars might extend its arguments to other forms of invisibilized labor like prison industries, workfare, migrant work, and care work.

What does this award mean to you?

I started working on this paper in my first semester of graduate school and it came out the fall I went on the job market, so it defined my

graduate school experience. My phenomenal adviser, Michael Burawoy, must’ve read fifteen or twenty drafts. When you’re working on a big project – especially a historical project, which entails lots of time alone poring over documents – it’s easy to doubt whether the case matters as much as you think it does. I think this is especially true for scholars working on marginalized topics and populations; I spent a lot of time convincing colleagues that the disabled workers whom my paper is about matter. So the Reinhard Bendix Award has affirmed that this history is worth documenting. I’m bringing that renewed confidence in the case’s significance to my dissertation, and to the book I’m developing from the dissertation.



CHS AWARDS CALL 2026

BARRINGTON MOORE BOOK AWARD

The section presents the Barrington Moore Book Award every year to the best book in the area of comparative-historical sociology.

To be eligible for consideration, nominated books must have been published in one of the two years immediately prior to the year of the award (i.e., for the award given in 2026, only books published in 2025 or 2024 will be considered). Eligible books must also not have been previously nominated for the Moore Award. Thus, books that were nominated for the 2025 award are not eligible to be considered for the 2026 award.

To nominate a book for the Moore Award, please send an email and the nominated book to each member of the award committee by **March 15, 2026** deadline. Letters of nomination are not required.

Please note that all nominees must be members of the ASA to be considered for any section award, and winners of the Moore Award are expected to be members of the comparative-historical sociology section at the time the award is presented.

Committee

Benjamin Abrams, Chair, b.abrams@ucl.ac.uk

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CHARLES TILLY ARTICLE AWARD

The section presents the Charles Tilly Article Award every year to the best article in the subfield of comparative-historical sociology.

To be eligible for consideration, nominated articles must have been published in one of the two years immediately prior to the year of the award (i.e., for the award given in 2026, only articles published in 2024 or 2025 will be considered).

To nominate an article for the Tilly Award, please send an e-mail to each member of the award committee. The e-mail should indicate the author, title, journal, and publication date of the article that you wish to nominate, and it should also attach a PDF of the article. The nominating e-mail and PDF of the article must be received by each member of the committee by **March 15, 2026**.

Please note that all nominees must be members of the ASA to be considered for any section award.

Committee

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IBN KHALDUN DISTINGUISHED CAREER AWARD

The section presents the Ibn Khaldun Distinguished Career Award every year in order to recognize a lifetime of outstanding contributions to the subfield of comparative-historical sociology. This is one of the most celebrated awards given by the section, and it is presented only to scholars of the utmost distinction.

To nominate someone for the award, please send a letter of nomination to Marisela Martinez-Cola at marisela.cola@morehouse.edu. The letter should briefly discuss the significance and impact of the nominee on the subfield of comparative-historical sociology. Please also provide the most current curriculum vitae for the nominee as well as the nominee's contact information, including their e-mail address.

Nominations must be received by all members of the committee by **March 31, 2026**.

Please note that nominees must have received their Ph.D. no later than 1999. All nominees must be members of the ASA to be considered for any section award.

Committee:

George Steinmetz, Chair, geostein@umich.edu

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REINHARD BENDIX STUDENT PAPER AWARD

The section presents the Reinhard Bendix Student Paper Award every year to the best graduate student paper in the subfield of comparative-historical sociology.

To be eligible for consideration, nominated papers must have been written by students enrolled in a graduate program at the time the paper was written. Both published and unpublished papers are eligible.

To nominate a paper, authors and/or mentors should send an e-mail to each member of the award committee. The e-mail should indicate the author and title of the paper, and it should attach a PDF of the article. The e-mail and the nominated paper must be received by each member of the committee by **March 15, 2026**. Students may self-nominate their finest work, or a paper may be nominated by a student's mentors.

Please note that all nominees must be members of the ASA to be considered for any section award.

Committee:

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THEDA SKOCPOL DISSERTATION AWARD

The section presents the Theda Skocpol Dissertation Award every year to the best doctoral dissertation in the area of comparative-historical sociology.

To be eligible for consideration, nominated dissertations must have been defended and filed between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2025.

To nominate a dissertation, please send an e-mail to each member of the award committee. The e-mail should indicate the author, title, and filing date of the dissertation that you wish to nominate. An electronic copy of the dissertation must also be sent to each member of the award committee. (For dissertations that are too large to send over email, please e-mail the committee members a

durable link to a downloadable version of the dissertation.) Both the nominating e-mail and the electronic copy of the nominated dissertation must be received by each member of the committee by **March 15, 2026**. Dissertations may be nominated by dissertation chairs, advisors, or current department chairs. Self-nominations are also welcome.

Please note that all nominees must be members of the ASA to be considered for any section award.

Committee:

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CHS CHICAGO MINI-CONFERENCE 2025

On August 7, 2025 the Comparative-Historical Sociology Section hosted a mini-conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago to mark the twentieth anniversary of *Remaking Modernity* by Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff. The event brought together more than twenty-four presenters across seven panels to revisit the book's central insights and consider the relevance for contemporary historical sociology.

Participants explored a wide range of themes, including regimes of labor and population control, the liberation movements, infrastructural, ecological, and urban struggles, and new ways of

rethinking historical processes. The opening plenary featured Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens and Ann Shola Orloff in conversation, moderated by Cedric de Leon and Jonah Stuart Brundage. Their discussion reflected on the book's intellectual legacy and its ongoing influence on studies of Jung, and Katrina Quisumbing King, moderated by Karolina Koziura. This final session invited participants to reflect on how to conceptualize and study "the global," and how the intertwined histories of imperialism, capitalism, racism, and migration have shaped the multiple, unequal experiences of modernity across the world.

The conference was organized by a team of volunteers brought together by Cedric de Leon, including Heba Alex, Fatma Müge Göçek, Yannick Coenders, Luis Flores, Erielle Jones, Minwoo Jung, Benjamin Kaplow, Karolina Koziura, Sally Schmisek, Swati Birla, Mary Shi, Yunhan Wen.

NEW RESEARCH

Juho Korhonen, Assistant Professor, Indiana University Bloomington.

Korhonen, Juho. "Why Historical Research Frameworks Matter for Sociological Methods and Decolonial Approaches? Empire and Nation Compared with Intra- and Inter-Imperiality". *Sociologia* 62(1): 3-19.

Abstract: Sociology faces many obstacles in coming to terms with its so-called imperial entanglements. In this article, I address one of the dimensions of this problem. Much like archival sources present their own histories of making and organization that researchers should be aware of, so too do disciplinary research frameworks carry their own histories and historical metaprinciples of organization. I juxtapose two different ways of organizing and framing sociology's disciplinary focus historically. I call these the empire and nation framework and the intra- and inter-imperial framework. Through this juxtaposition, I argue for the importance of methodologically explicitly recognizing and justifying our choice of different historical research frameworks with which sociology can operate.

The article is available online here: <https://journal.fi/sociologia/article/view/159734>

Swati Birla, Assistant Professor, State University of New York New Paltz

Birla Swati. "Sovereignty over time." *History of the Present*, 15 (2): 170–196.

Abstract: This essay examines the dismantling of native sovereignties to establish postcolonial sovereignty in South Asia, focusing on the 1948 military annexation of Hyderabad. It argues that forming postcolonial states involved both self-determination and the dismantling of other sovereignties. Sovereignty, both as a criterion and an object of cognition, entailed denying self-determination to contested polities and imposing new forms of alienation and subjection. The colonial-anticolonial genealogy and postcolonial nation narratives foreclosed the politics of territory and obscured the historical nature of territory. By focusing on states that disappeared after 1945, the essay underscores the need to rethink the links between territory, sovereignty, and statehood in the politics of self-determination.

The article is available here: doi.org/10.1215/21599785-11857287

ON THE JOB MARKET

Giovanni Zampieri, Postdoctoral Fellow at Sapienza Università di Roma (Italy)

My dissertation, titled *Bureaucrats of the Soul: The Infrastructures of Sacramental Penance in 18th-century Verona (circa 1750–1800)*, reconstructs the sociotechnical networks that enabled priests to authoritatively interpret and administer absolution while sitting in confessional booths, framing the hearing of confessions as a site for examining how organizations delegate interpretive power to agents operating in settings designed to be opaque. Combining archival methods with a microhistorical approach, the chapters examine sources such as printed licenses, registers of licensed confessors, manuals for hearing confessions, reference letters, and requests to renew or relocate confessional booths, showing that what seemed to be an isolated, backstage-type interaction between penitent and priest was, in fact, coordinated via an extensive infrastructure that made it deeply scripted, actively negotiated and—to some extent—remarkably public. The contribution of the dissertation is twofold. On the one hand, the thorough

marginalized topics and populations; I spent a lot of time convincing colleagues that the disabled workers whom my paper is about matter. So the Reinhard Bendix Award has affirmed that this history is

worth documenting. I'm bringing that renewed confidence in the case's significance to my dissertation, and to the book I'm developing from the dissertation reconstruction of the practices and institutions mobilized to select, train, monitor, and discipline confessors specifies (and complements) established sociohistorical narratives of confession, which portray it as either a pre-modern remnant of the institutionalization of charisma, à la Weber, or as an exceptionally successful device for shaping modern subjectivities, à la Foucault, while systematically underexploring (and undertheorizing) the link between a set of beliefs and discourses and their instantiation in concrete networks of symbols, practices, and artifacts. On the other hand, I frame the administration of confessors as a compelling site for addressing the more general sociological question of how organizations authorize agents to interpret on their behalf in settings where direct supervision is structurally impossible, combining historical and cultural sociological theories with insights from Science and Technology Studies to develop a framework applicable beyond this particular case.

I am interested in historical sociology, cultural sociology, sociological theory,

ON THE JOB MARKET

JN Redman (Nate), Cal-Poly, Pomona

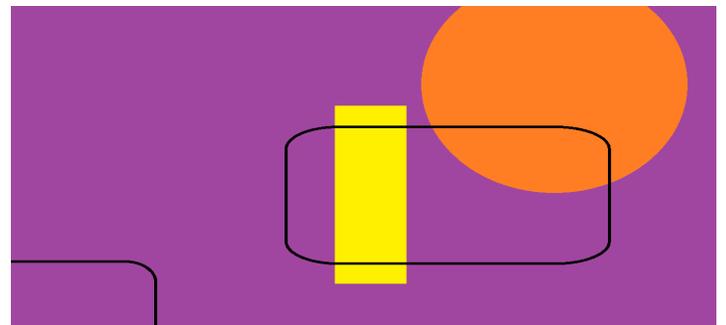
Dissertation Abstract: How does societal uncertainty shape action? Uncertainty poses a challenge for rational action because it suggests that many situations in which informed decisions are impossible. “Preppers” are a growing lifestyle movement that holds that major disasters are inevitable and that the world as we know it will end soon. Preppers spend impressive amounts of time, money, and energy attempting to mitigate these imagined risks, making them a strategic case with which to unpack the relationship between societal uncertainty, rationality, and collective action. Drawing on 5 years of participant observation with preppers in Southern California and on YouTube, I argue that they imagine future disasters to bind uncertainty into moralized risks to be avoided, thereby revealing lines of action as seemingly rational. Drawing on documentary research and historical

sociology of ideas and intellectuals, and early modern and modern history comparison, I argue that scientific and governmental authorities have approached existential risks in precisely the same manner. Uncertainty requires actors to draw on their imaginations, social interactions, and cultural elements to fashion mental representations of an unknown future. Preppers help clarify the mechanisms by which ostensibly rational decisions are invariably embedded in social structures and webs of moral and cultural significance, and frequently produce behaviors that are unrealistic and likely to create further uncertainty.

Fields of Study: Culture, Economic Sociology, Sociology of Risk, Governance, Ethnographic Methods, Historical Sociology, Social Movements, Feminist Theory, Science & Technology Studies

BEYOND THE BLURB

The Trajectories team invites you to share texts that are anchoring your thinking or opening new paths in your reading, writing, and teaching. These may be long-time companions or new arrivals on your summer or year-ahead reading list. Whether they help you reimagine historical sociology or simply offer clarity in uncertain times, we welcome your contributions to a collective bibliography—a shared archive for thinking through rupture and renewal.



Below, we share responses from some of our colleagues

Sunmin Kim (Dartmouth).

What historical text has helped shape your thinking - of methods, concepts, stakes- in the current moment?

The Origin of Totalitarianism, and Lying in Politics (Hannah Arendt. 1951, 1971)

In one or two lines, tell us what drew you to the text and what you're hoping to think through with it.

I was working on an article about contemporary immigration politics and was drawn to Arendt's discussion of how totalitarianism blurs the distinction between facts and fiction. It seems that our discussion of immigration is increasing.

What historical text has helped shape your thinking - of methods, concepts, stakes- in the current moment?

The Natural History of Revolution. Lyford P. Edwards. 1927

In one or two lines, tell us what drew you to the text and what you're hoping to think through with it.

I have recently revisited this text while working on a review of the history of revolutionary theory, and found that while the book is well recognized by experts, it has been most underappreciated by others. It is - in my view- the foundational text for the study of revolutions in the US. At a time where we are considering how we might rejuvenate present revolutionary theory, it pays to focus not only on what we might discover, but what we have forgotten.

Neha Lund, Brown University,

What historical text has helped shape your thinking - of methods, concepts, stakes- in the current moment?

Black Reconstruction, W.E.B. Du Bois, 1935

In one or two lines, tell us what drew you to the text and what you're hoping to think through with it.

This beautifully written text helps me better understand the current political landscape in the U.S. and also allows me to reimagine the power of historical sociology.

Fiona Greenland

What historical text has helped shape your thinking - of methods, concepts, stakes- in the current moment?

Anne Applebaum, Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine (2017)

In one or two lines, tell us what drew you to the text and what you're hoping to think through with it.

This book deeply influenced my thinking on states' role in genocide. Applebaum's focus is the Soviet state-engineered famine in 1930s Ukraine, which killed millions of people. Her methodology makes transparent the political choices that led to the famine and the individual- and community-level suffering that resulted.