

## Review Symposium

*Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe.* By Gil Eyal, Iván Széleányi, and Eleanor Townsley. New York: Verso Books, 1998. Pp. vii+280. \$35.00 (cloth); \$20.00 (paper).

*Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe.* By David Stark and László Bruszt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. xi+284. \$59.95 (cloth); \$22.95 (paper).

## Neoclassical Sociology: From the End of Communism to the End of Classes<sup>1</sup>

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American sociology marked the triumphalism of the immediate postwar period with its emblematic “end of ideology” thesis. Class struggle for an alternative socialist order was ruled an anachronism because capitalism and liberal democracy could effectively deliver expanded freedoms and improved living standards. America was as good as it gets while “communism” was the despised, totalitarian “other.” Protagonists of the “the end of ideology”—the most famous being Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell, and Philip Selznick—had themselves started out as unrepentant socialists in the 1930s. Their drift toward complacency, culminating in 1950s “functionalism,” was itself overtaken by the successor radicalism of the 1960s, a radicalism that pointed to the seamy side of U.S. capitalism and the limits of its “democracy.” This revolt against the end of ideology and its concomitant “anticommunism” inspired such commentators as Iván Széleányi and David Stark in the 1970s and 1980s to develop alternative *class* critiques of actually existing “communism.” They reconceptualized communism in more positive terms as “state socialism,” pointing to its potentialities as well as its limits. Széleányi came to his (new) class analysis of state socialism by joining critical sociology drawn from the West to the critical theory of the Budapest school, while Stark’s interest

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in Marxian-inspired labor studies gave rise to research into the possibilities and limits of worker democracy, first in Yugoslavia and then in Hungary.

In their most recent books, however, Szelényi and Stark turn away from their past to merge with other contemporary theoretical currents—currents that espouse a second round of the end of ideology, embracing capitalism in its multiple guises, losing touch with sociology's critical powers. While the first round of the end of ideology still recognized a working class—even if it focused on its supposed pathologies—the second round, nearly half a century later, seems to have abandoned class altogether. The basis of this new sociology is no longer, as it was in the 1950s, the threat of totalitarian others—either from without (communism) or from within (working class)—but the commemoration of their disappearance. Nowhere has this new sociology found more fertile soil than in the former socialist countries of Central Europe.

#### CENTRAL EUROPE: A LABORATORY FOR THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE CAPITALISMS

In *Making Capitalism without Capitalists* Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi, and Eleanor Townsley call the new paradigm *neoclassical sociology*. If the *classical sociology* of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim achieved canonical status by engagement with the problems and possibilities of the 19th-century transition to modern capitalism, then *neoclassical sociology* is the analogous engagement with the capitalist transitions at the end of the 20th century. Whereas classical sociology was haunted by the prospect of a socialist alternative to capitalism, neoclassical sociology marks the demise of that alternative. In place of the classical concern with the origins, dynamics, and reproduction of a singular capitalism, neoclassical sociology is concerned with capitalism's diversity, "a mosaic of the most diverse socio-economic structures and institutions" (Eyal et al., p. 16). It is no longer a matter of studying the origins of a single order but the multiple origins of plural orders. Whereas classical sociology dwelt on the uniqueness of capitalism through comparison with noncapitalist societies—the feudal past or a socialist future—neoclassical sociology compares capitalism with capitalism. The contemporary world, in particular the burial of socialism, calls for a research program of comparative capitalisms.

In a similar vein David Stark and László Bruszt, in their *Postsocialist Pathways*, argue that the eclipse of communism redirects the sociological focus and sociological imagination to the different paths to multiple but always capitalist futures. "When we stop defining capitalism in terms of socialism, we see that, in our epoch, capitalism as a construct is analytically interesting only in the plural: *Capitalisms* must be compared vis-à-vis each other" (p. 3; emphasis in the original). Like Eyal et al. they regard East and Central Europe as natural laboratories for the new sociology. Both books try to grapple with the continuities and discontinuities

of socialism and capitalism. Both try to come to terms with the eerie echoes of the past alongside entirely novel economic, political, and social forms. Rather than revolutions or evolutions, they think in terms of mutations, reconfigurations, or, to use Stark's prescient concept, "recombinations."

Their similarities notwithstanding, the books focus on different analytic levels of the transition. Stark and Bruszt focus on *institutions*, the collapse of the old and the creation of the new, connected by strategies of extrication. They call their approach *path dependent* in that institutional solutions—forms of democracy and privatization—forged within the moments of extrication from socialism, have locked Hungary, the Czech Republic, East Germany, and Poland into divergent paths. On the one side, Stark and Bruszt distinguish their perspective from the neoliberal "transition as imitation" of textbook capitalism, what they call "capitalism by design" or one might call *future dependence*. On the other side, they hotly dispute the *past dependence* of involutory approaches that treat postsocialism as the degenerative product of communist legacies.<sup>2</sup>

Eyal et al. adopt a similar "path" perspective toward the transition, but in contrast to Stark and Bruszt their paths go back deep into communist and even precommunist days of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Their paths, however, are not of institutions but of *individuals*. Indeed, they have little to say about institutional transformation—the logic of collapse, extrication, and creation. Instead they focus on the trajectory of various elites—individuals endowed with different forms of capital (economic, social, political, and cultural resources) who strategically adjust to the exigencies of traversing different orders. They call their approach *trajectory adjustment*: institutions shape the dispositions of individuals, who in turn contest and transform those institutions, leading to the readjustment of individual trajectories. Both books share a common outlook on the transition: they both optimistically celebrate the indeterminacy, novelty, and variety of the transformations—whether of institutional patterns or elite alliances—taking place in post-Soviet societies.

In this essay I would like to suggest that such neoclassical optimism is misplaced and unsubstantiated—rooted more in faith than in reality. The optimism of these authors is based, I argue, on an overestimation of the importance of elites, patterns of privatization, and political democracy, and on an underestimation of the importance of capital accumulation, class relations,<sup>3</sup> and global forces. *In other words, in their "comparative*

<sup>2</sup> In a sense their approach is also "past dependent" but the past only goes as far back as the break with socialism. This is not to say that legacies of communism do not enter their analysis, but their key claim is that the consequence of those legacies is shaped by the particular mode of extrication. For the clearest elaboration of their complex causal logic see Stark and Bruszt (p. 164).

<sup>3</sup> By class relations I mean the relations of domination and exploitation between classes, which is to say classes have to be studied in relation to one another and class structures have to be studied as systemic wholes (see Wright 1997).

*capitalisms,” capitalism drops out of the picture.* In pursuing openness and plurality, neoclassical sociology forsakes classical sociology’s elaboration of the limits of capitalism—limited possibilities for democratic institutions and individual self-fulfillment. Thus, Eyal et al. extend Weber’s vision of different capitalisms as the project of different bourgeoisies and expand Weber’s distinction between class and status (rank) to compare precommunist, communist, and postcommunist societies. In the process, however, they lose Weber’s critical insights: his iron cage view of capitalism, his tying of capitalist efficiency to bureaucratic domination, and more generally his own disenchantment with Western rationalism.

Stark and Bruszt move away from Weber’s concern with the fate of the individual to echo Durkheim’s concern with crafting institutions.<sup>4</sup> Like Durkheim they are very critical of both market and state panaceas—markets require both underlying trust and supportive institutions just as states can only supply coordination at a distance. Like Durkheim they turn to intermediary associations as the fulcrum of an effective capitalism—only for Stark and Bruszt these associations are ownership networks among firms whereas for Durkheim they are occupational associations. Just as Durkheim extolled the enabling power of constraints, so Stark and Bruszt laud democratic accountability and policy coherence. Yet, entirely absent is Durkheim’s trenchant critique of power inequalities and of social injustice that for him, at least, marked the gap between the pathological present and the ideal future. Indeed, Stark and Bruszt’s repudiation of the very concept of transition, because of its implied evolution toward a normative future, allows them to endow the present with multiple potentialities. The past cannot be reborn, the future is uncertain, and so the present is triumphant.

The use of “neoclassical” to describe the new research program suggests parallels with neoclassical economics, and indeed parallels there are. Both emphasize strategic action in the deployment of capital, only neoclassical sociology extends the meaning of capital to include social and cultural as well as economic resources.<sup>5</sup> Both downplay oppression and social justice. Both have optimistic assessments of the potentialities of capitalism as the end of history. In one fundamental respect, however, neoclassical sociology

<sup>4</sup> While Eyal et al. are very clear about situating themselves within a Weberian research program, Stark and Bruszt do not acknowledge any connection to Durkheim. The parallels, however, are unmistakable, especially as Stark and Bruszt draw so widely on Durkheimian-influenced economic sociology, such as Mark Granovetter’s focus on the embeddedness of markets, Charles Sabel’s idea of developmental associations, Wolfgang Streeck’s notion of associative orders, and more generally on the neoinstitutionalism of John Meyer, Walter Powell, Paul DiMaggio, and others who highlight the normative constraints on the form and operation of organizations.

<sup>5</sup> One is struck by the parallels with the 1950s renaissance of sociology in the form of structural functionalism which derived from Talcott Parsons’s theory of social action, itself an explicit attempt to make neoclassical economics a special case of a broader sociology. In claiming to synthesize neoclassical economics and path dependency, Eyal et al. are also proposing a quite general theory of social action (see, e.g., pp. 36–45).

diverges from neoclassical economics, namely in replacing the latter's singular normative model of capitalism with multiple capitalisms derived from different origins. But, as I shall argue, this last claim remains unproven, resting as it does on the diversity of *superstructural* manifestations of capitalism (social origins of elites, property forms, and political democracy) rather than on an underlying diversity of economic forms of production and corresponding class relations.

Ironically, in their earlier pioneering analyses of state socialism both Szelényi and Stark were anything but “neoclassical” in their orientation. To the contrary, they were heavily influenced by Marx—an influence that has left traces in their accounts of postsocialist capitalism even though economic processes, class relations, and alternatives to capitalism have disappeared. Waving farewell to the now-calumniated socialism, which magically and unexpectedly evaporated, they lose their critical sense toward emergent, peripheral capitalisms. Even in their common appropriation of Pierre Bourdieu, they deploy his theory as an all-purpose tool kit for the analysis of resources (capital), dispositions (*habitus*), and strategic action (in social space and fields), but in the process sacrifice the political dimension of Bourdieu's writings—the analysis of the *reproduction and mystification of class relations*.<sup>6</sup> In a paradoxical twist of history, it is as if it is not the beginning but the end of socialism that spells the end of classes!

In what follows I discuss the move away from the study of subaltern groups and class relations—so present in their early works—to the focus on ruling elites, ownership patterns, and forms of democracy. I then interrogate the conceptual basis for the research program into comparative capitalisms, namely their *origin driven* analyses—whether this be Stark and Bruszt's path dependency, which starts with the breakdown of socialism and highlights discontinuity between socialism and its aftermaths, or Eyal et al.'s trajectory adjustment, which offers greater historical sweep and continuity. I put both frameworks to the challenging Russian test and show how their conceptualizations minimize the constraints on elites by nonelites, politics by economics, the national by the global. I propose an alternative approach, namely to suspend the study of origins for the study of class relations in the present. As against neoclassical optimism I propose a postsocialist theory, analogous to postcolonial theory, that restores a critical focus based on the limits to change at the same time it recuperates subaltern alternatives. So, finally, I propose not only a recovery of class but also the excavation of embedded socialism.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, Eyal et al. “claim to have reconstructed Bourdieu's theory, shifting it from a static explanation of social reproduction into a dynamic, comparative-historical theory which is able to explain social change” (p. 187).

THE ROAD TO NEOCLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY

Iván Szelényi is the leading sociologist of the former Soviet world. He is best known for the classic book, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (1979), which he wrote with György Konrád in the middle 1970s when both were under surveillance of the Hungarian state. State socialism, they argued, had a special place for intellectuals as architects and legitimizers of the “rational redistribution” of resources in a planned economy. Intellectuals formulated and justified the plan as serving the needs of all. To be sure, intellectuals had not yet arrived at their appointed destination, but they were a class *in statu nascendi*, a class opposed to the workers in whose name they would rule and from whose labor they would organize the extraction of surplus. From this two-class model of socialism much else followed, not least its possible democratization through intellectuals’ responsiveness to the working class.

Szelényi (1983) concretized this theoretical framework in his study of Hungarian urban inequalities, specifically the distribution of housing, which showed that supervisors, technicians, white-collar workers, and managers, in short the new class, had privileged access to subsidized resources (apartments). This meant, he further argued, that under state socialism the working class had an interest in the expansion of markets so that they could bypass the biases of “rational redistribution” and engage in entrepreneurial activity, such as obtaining materials to build their own homes. Markets, he argued, countered the inequalities of the administrative distribution of resources. He, thereby, laid the foundation of the transition debate two decades later: whether the market transition would exacerbate or undermine previous inequalities of the socialist state.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1980s it seemed as though the ascendancy of intellectuals had been halted. Working with his former Hungarian students, Szelényi discovered a second new class making its way upward—peasant entrepreneurs who were able to take advantage of the opening up of the market in the still-socialist Hungary. In *Socialist Entrepreneurs* Szelényi now argued that the old bourgeoisie, whose life had been cut short by the advent of communism and who had parked their resources in the educational system or in the party, were now exploiting the new opportunities of Hungary’s mixed economy of the 1980s. Early communism, therefore, marked a period of interrupted embourgeoisement that was now reasserting itself in late communism. However, once more history overtook Szelényi’s theory. State socialism collapsed. Although there were elements in the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the first postsocialist government, that were attracted to the entrepreneurial Third Road, reality did not treat indigenous capitalists too well. Certainly, they did not become a new ruling class.

In his latest collaboration with Gil Eyal and Eleanor Townsley, Szelényi

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., the transition debate in the *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 101, no. 4 (January 1996).

returns to *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. Drawing on surveys that oversampled elites as well as their own observations and interviews, the authors argue that postsocialist Hungary, as well as Poland and the Czech Republic, have spawned a new ruling elite, dominated by the intelligentsia. In effect, Szelényi and his collaborators are returning to the thesis of intellectuals on the road to class power, only now intellectuals realize their mission *after* rather than during the period of state socialism. This is what they call the second *Bildungsbürgertum*, the second arrival of a cultural bourgeoisie. The first *Bildungsbürgertum* arose in the 19th century when Central European intelligentsia pioneered a modernization project in partnership with professional civil servants. At the end of the 20th century the intelligentsia again envisioned a capitalist utopia, but this time in association with the socialist managerial elite—a coalition of propertyless agents who thus “make capitalism without capitalists.” Just as the first *Bildungsbürgertum* was a reaction against the rank order of feudalism, so the second *Bildungsbürgertum* is a reaction against the rank order of communism. Just as the first ascendancy of the intelligentsia proved transitory, Eyal et al. argue, so will the second. Indeed, at the end of their book they present new data, suggesting that a new economic bourgeoisie may be in the process of formation.

Even though he seems to be returning to his earlier ideas, Szelényi’s vision now lacks the critical perspective that so marked *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. Konrád and Szelényi approached state socialism from the standpoint of its exploited working classes, just as *Socialist Entrepreneurs* (Szelényi 1988) began with a study of peasant workers. But the latest analysis has shifted away from class relations to the “pacting” of elites.<sup>8</sup> We can detect a similar shift in the work of David Stark, whose pioneering Hungarian social research made important contributions to the study of workplace politics. Like Szelényi, Stark began his career with a focus on the working class, showing how shop floor participation both contributed to and challenged the reproduction of class domination. His 1980s research into Hungarian factory regimes exposed the forging of all manner of informal arrangements as workers adapted to the exigencies of an administered economy. In his most celebrated article of that period, Stark (1986) showed how the development of internal subcontracting systems acted as a pseudo-market within the socialist enterprise, compensating for the dysfunctions of the plan, just as in modern capitalism the internal administration of labor countered the dysfunctions of the external market. Hierarchies require markets, just as markets require hierarchies. Capitalism and state socialism were each other’s mirror

<sup>8</sup> Elite studies may note the separation between elite and mass, but they do not see the source of that separation in a specific relation of (class) subordination. Thus, Eyal et al. do note (p. 35) that the transition to postcommunism has led to a polarized social structure, but they still insist on an elite analysis because capitalism is being made from above (pp. 159–60). A class perspective argues that “made” from above means “shouldered” from below.

image. State socialism, therefore, could not be reduced to a totalitarian model of a command economy but, at least in its mature form, required all sorts of subordinate organizations operating along lines that contradict communism's dominant logic. This offered Stark (1989a, 1989b) the conceptual tools for a richer, variegated portrait of state socialism.

Joining forces with the Hungarian political scientist László Bruszt, Stark now transposes his earlier interest in the diversity of socialisms into a plurality of emergent capitalisms. Curiously enough, however, Stark and Bruszt connect postsocialist diversity not to diverse socialist legacies but to the autonomy of the political, to choices made in the democratic transition.<sup>9</sup> In the first part of *Postsocialist Pathways* they chart the different paths of "extrication" shaped by the strategic interaction of (a) hardliners and reformers and (b) ruling elites and the opposition. Thus, Hungary developed the most perfect democracy in the region because the opposition was weak while the ruling class was divided, whereas in Poland the opposition, organized around Solidarity, was much stronger, thus compromising liberal democracy. Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania were at the other extreme. There the opposition was so weak that communist parties had merely to rename themselves to regain power. In the second part of their book Stark and Bruszt link the different privatization strategies of Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to their different paths of extrication—reunification in Germany, capitulation in the Czech Republic, compromise in Poland, electoral competition in Hungary. In the final part they drive home the thesis that, far from being incompatible with capitalism, democratic deliberation and dense association are its necessary conditions. Extended accountability, as they call it, promoted a vibrant capitalism in the Czech Republic, whereas more limited accountability produced weaker capitalisms in Hungary and Germany.<sup>10</sup>

The underlying parallels between these two books are striking. Both stress historical pathways or trajectories from past to present, so that where we end up bears some relation to where we start out. The plurality of origins gives rise to a plurality of capitalisms. To be sure, their histories start at different points, and so they come to different conclusions about the present, but both books take the commonsensical view that origins matter. This may be common sense, but it is not necessarily sociological sense. Classical sociology may have been interested in origins, but its overwhelming theoretical thrust was to argue that modern capitalism was so all-encompassing that it erased its origins. To understand modern capitalism, therefore, was to understand it as a system, made up of badly or not so badly integrated parts. The crucial questions concerned the *repro-*

<sup>9</sup> Here the influence of theorists of the transition in Latin America—Philippe Schmitter, Terry Karl, Adam Przeworski, and others—is palpable. They too emphasize the openness and opportunities presented by the democratic transition.

<sup>10</sup> One might note that Czech success has become rather tarnished in the last two or three years, with multiple political scandals and desultory economic performance.



*duction* of a system of relations, especially the economic relations that defined capitalism. In concentrating on origins, neoclassical sociology fails to do what its classical forbears did so well, namely to study the new order as a system of interdependent parts—relations of economy to polity, of elites to nonelites.

For classical sociology—and here I am referring to Weber and Durkheim as well as to Marx—it was a mystery how capitalism survived its internal tensions and contradictions, how it absorbed tendencies toward dissolution and disruptive transformation. But for neoclassical sociology questions of capitalism's continuity are replaced by the study of origins. It is as if, with the eclipse of the socialist alternative, there is no longer a counterpoint, an external position from which to understand capitalism's defining systemic and contradictory character. Thus, Eyal et al. study the formation of new elites out of old elites, while Stark and Bruszt, although closer to a systemic analysis, nonetheless study the origins of ownership patterns and corporate networks. Both books study the economy at a distance, as a taken-for-granted abstraction and not as a concrete set of productive relations. Whereas in their earlier writings they focused on the ingenuity of the subaltern classes in coping with socialism, the way workers and peasants challenged and transformed state socialism in the microprocesses of everyday life, Szelényi and Stark now turn to the elites engineering embryonic capitalisms. Their analyses exclude subordinate classes, which in effect become the bewildered—silent and silenced—spectators of transformations that engulf them.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE DURKHEIMIAN REPRIS: POSTSOCIALIST PATHWAYS

*Postsocialist Pathways* is a collection of essays that were originally written over a period of seven years, starting in 1990, with themes spanning the phases of the transition itself: political extrication, privatization, and new forms of network capitalism. Stark and Bruszt try to bring the essays under a single rubric: the relation between property transformation and the consolidation of political democracy (pp. 1, 129). They ask whether the twin transformations are mutually contradictory. If property transformation and economic restructuring calls for popular sacrifice, will not this be blocked as democracy extends veto power to the suffering classes? Stark and Bruszt argue that a peculiar form of capitalism, residing neither in markets nor states but in networks of deliberation, has emerged to foster an economic growth that will benefit all. In short, in the postsocialist

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Szelényi has retained his interest in the popular classes in his as-yet-unpublished study of the transformations of a Hungarian gypsy village over the last 150 years. He is also at work on a multinational study of poverty and ethnicity. In this review, however, I am confining my attention to *Making Capitalism without Capitalists*.

world, the transition to capitalism and democracy can be mutually reinforcing.

But where does this comparative advantage of postsocialism come from if not from socialism itself? Indeed, that is exactly what Stark and Bruszt suggest: postsocialist states have neither strong markets nor coherent states but “they have decades of experiences with strong networks” (p. 122). These economic networks, they conjecture, provide the foundation for the new form of capitalism that is neither market driven nor state driven. To be successful—and now the measure of success has shifted to *policy coherence*—these networks must be both deliberative and associational: that is, they must bind enterprises together in a process of joint and extensive participatory decision making.<sup>12</sup> It turns out that Hungarian networks are associational but not deliberative, German networks are deliberative but not associational, while the Czech networks offer a superior combination of association and deliberation.

The accuracy of these claims about novel arrangements concerns me less than the theory of their origins. Given Stark’s earlier work, which made much of the specificity of Hungarian socialism, one might have expected the authors to trace the origins of postsocialist pathways to divergent socialisms. Far from it. Instead they make a decisive analytical distinction between the *dissolution* of the old order and the *creation* of the new. On the one hand, they present the dissolution in a singular fashion: the communist party state, based on “delegation by usurpation,” spread its tentacles throughout society and eventually dissipated itself by dissolving into its environment. It collapsed through overextension and absorption. On the other hand, they stress the multiple paths of extrication, which cannot, therefore, be explained by a singular past. Rather, they argue, the diverse ways of reworking the past spring from diverse political conjunctures in the moments of dissolution. In Hungary—the perfection of its democratic consolidation notwithstanding—power is concentrated in the executive, leading to policy swings that are disastrous for its economy. The Czech Republic is the most successful in developing a deliberative relation between the executive and parliament, and its economic networks supposedly reflect this success. Again the empirical basis of these connections is thin, but the argument is interesting. It is as if each country started with the same (crumbling) foundations of state socialism but, for complex political reasons, each designed and built very different houses on those foundations. Once the scaffolding goes up, the trajectory is constrained. So path dependency *is* past dependency, it is just that for Stark and Bruszt the “past” starts with the breakup of communism. As we shall see through a brief discussion of the Russian case, this is too arbitrary a starting point.

Stark and Bruszt pay virtually no attention to Russia in their com-

<sup>12</sup> They are here drawing explicitly on the ideas of Charles Sabel, in which a democratic capitalism based on flexible specialization and deliberative associations can dissolve conflict and contradiction.

parative analysis, but it is worth testing out their scheme on this exceptional terrain. There can be no doubt about the importance of associational ties among enterprises, even though these ties are less the product of privatization and more a function of economic interdependence based on barter or the links that bind enterprises into the so-called financial industrial groups. But are the associations “deliberative” in the sense of being accountable to diverse actors? Like the Hungarian enterprise networks, only more so, the Russian networks are accountable to themselves alone and insulated from external pressures. Like the Hungarian associations, they are continually being bailed out by the state, leading to the asymmetric distributions of assets and liabilities. The Russian state must surely be regarded as the prototype of what Stark and Bruszt call the “antidevelopmental state.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, turning to the political field one can see in Russia’s so-called superpresidentialism an exaggeration of the Hungarian concentration of power in the executive.

It all fits very nicely—too nicely! No two economies diverged more in the socialist period than those of Hungary and Russia, and yet we see a postsocialist convergence—at least in terms of their network properties and their political fields. Surely this demonstrates the importance of post-socialist extrication? Yes and no. For all their supposed convergence, these national economies are worlds apart: in the one a dramatic and unprecedented disintegration, while in the other stuttering growth; in the one a retreat to primitive barter relations and subsistence existence, while in the other the consolidation of a money economy; in the one criminalization of the economy, while in the other the emergent rule of law; in the one an enormous concentration of power in oligarchs who control media, natural resources, and banking, while in the other a diversified economic structure. So, if there are certain convergences that can be explained by the paths of extrication from communism, at the same time there are deeper and more significant *divergences* that go back much further in time. In short, there may be path dependency, but where does the path begin, which crystallizing event determines which future, how many such events might there be? It is far from obvious that the most significant divergence of historical paths begins when the party state is replaced by the formal trappings of liberal democracy.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure certain phenomena are affected by the mode of extrication from socialism, but they may be only the more superficial ones. Ultimately the data Stark and Bruszt offer to demarcate different capitalisms in

<sup>13</sup> The antidevelopmental state siphons resources out of the economy rather than inspiring economic development (Stark and Bruszt, pp. 151–52). The most astute analysis of the Russian state and its inability to implement economic reforms is to be found in Woodruff (1999b).

<sup>14</sup> Anna Selenyi (1999a, 1999b), e.g., argues that the new political order is decisively shaped by the forms of opposition and experimentation of the old order. It made a difference that Hungary was able to experiment with economic reforms for two decades whereas the experimentation in Russia was much more limited.

Central Europe concern patterns of ownership. They take the importance of these ownership patterns for granted. But how much does it matter that Hungarian companies own one another, that Czech companies are more likely to be owned by banks, that Polish companies are likely to be owned by investment companies, or that German companies are likely to be owned by the Treudhandanstalt? What difference do the recombinant forms of property, founded between state and market, make? What evidence is there that they have any particular effects on economic performance, on capital accumulation, or even on inequality? Although they claim to be interested in how democracy threatens economic reform by giving power to those who suffer its consequences, we hear nothing of the armies of rural and industrial workers, of the potential disrupters of reform. We read much about privatization schemes but not about dispossession, unemployment, and immiseration. In these pages, in short, we discover little about the economic or political consequences of property reform.

#### THE WEBERIAN REPRIS: MAKING CAPITALISM WITHOUT CAPITALISTS

*Making Capitalism without Capitalists* takes a different approach to the transition. First, its theoretical originality lies not in the analysis of institutions, their collapse, recreation, dynamics, and so on, but in the way individuals adjust their trajectories to the exigencies of institutions. Second, its empirical focus is not the variety of ownership patterns within Central Europe but what Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic have in common, namely a form of capitalism defined by the *absence of a class of proprietors*. Without an economic bourgeoisie, so Eyal et al. argue, the cultural bourgeoisie that formed under and in opposition to socialism becomes the dominant elite in partnership with a managerial elite. Third, the book's comparative method lumps contemporary Central Europe into a more or less homogeneous category to be compared with its communist and precommunist past, as well as with alternate forms of capitalism.<sup>15</sup> If their historical inquiry is breathtaking in scope, its arguments are less falsifiable than Stark and Bruszt's provocative claim that diversity within Central Europe springs from the recent patterns of extrication from communism.

In elaborating the argument for trajectory adjustment Eyal et al. take

<sup>15</sup> In their conclusion (pp. 189–90) Eyal et al. do speculate that the habituses, that is the ingrained dispositions, inherited not just from communism but from precommunism, could lead to different capitalisms within Central Europe. But these are just speculations, and they do not explain how habituses are transmitted from one generation to the next. More convincing is Eyal's (2000) "Pastors and Prognosticators," which examines the different alliances among elites that composed Slovakia as compared to the Czech Republic.

over the now-familiar tool kit of Pierre Bourdieu that conceives of social action as the strategic deployment of different forms of capital (economic, social/political, and cultural) within a social space, governed by interests and inherited dispositions (*habitus*). This leads them to map out the alliances among elites in terms of forms of capital in precommunist, communist, postcommunist, and capitalist societies. Thus, precommunist elites subordinate economic capital to social capital; under communism political elites subordinate the increasingly important cultural elites; postcommunism subordinates economic capital to cultural capital. All these are to be contrasted with Western capitalism, in which cultural elites are subordinated to economic elites.<sup>16</sup> The authors recognize that they leave hanging the question of whether postcommunist capitalism will turn out different from any other capitalism, despite its different origins (Eyal et al., p. 190).

In order to comprehend the lasting influence of those different origins we have to ask how Eyal et al. understand the relation between past and future. How does communism continue to live so powerfully within postcommunist capitalism as to assert the latter's lasting peculiarity? Postcommunist capitalism is the project of elites that originally formed in opposition to communism, specifically the project of dissidents who rejected the political order in the name of civil society and reform communists (technocrats) who rejected the economic order in the name of monetarism. The question Eyal et al. pose in their most original chapter (the book's third) is how these two groups, occupying opposed positions under communism, could form an alliance in postcommunism. Drawing on the analogy of Weber's elective affinity between the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, they show how self-denying dissidents and capitalist-spirited technocrats shared a commitment to living within truth and opposing communist mendacity, to establishing government from afar and opposing state regulation of everyday life, and to supporting the rule of law and opposing party despotism. In other words, new postcommunist institutions originate from enduring "*habitués*" inherited from the past.

It is one thing for elites to have projects, it is another to realize them. Eyal et al. recognize that emergent capitalisms are the product of negotiated compromises. The dissidents and technocrats may be able to reconcile their own differences, but they still need the support of managers who run the economy. They, therefore, recompose their ideologies of civil

<sup>16</sup> Note that Eyal et al. use the different forms of capital to map out alliances among elites, but they do not deal with the question of the accumulation of capital and in particular of economic capital. Indeed, they regard the task in Central Europe as privatization and not accumulation. "Accumulation occurred under state socialism, and the task of post-communist capitalism is to individualize it" (Eyal et al., p. 192). Primitive accumulation—i.e., dispossessing a large proportion of the population from direct access to the means of subsistence—may have occurred, but accumulation is a continual process that does not cease with proletarianization. Indeed, we have only to look at the Russian economy to know that while privatization can be accomplished, it can come at the cost of enormous disaccumulation and even deproletarianization.

society and monetarism into a “managerialist ideology” that gives cohesion to the new power bloc. The relative balance of managers, dissidents, and technocrats, then, will determine the character and strength of the communist legacy.

But why, one may ask, are compromises only struck among elites and not between classes? It is just as plausible that the divergent postsocialist trajectories have been shaped by the activist Solidarity movement with its accentuation of “voice” or by the individualistic Hungarian working class that “exited” into the second economy. Or if one wants to lump Central Europe together, one might contrast its oppositional working classes with the Russian working class that, to overgeneralize, pursued a strategy of “loyalty.”<sup>17</sup> Why are these interclass relations not as important as the composition of the power bloc? Indeed, it could be argued that the compromises struck between dominant and subordinate classes set the prior conditions for alliances among the dominant classes.

Even if Eyal et al. do not take up the question of class relations, to their credit they do take up the Russian challenge. If in Central Europe they see the emergence of *capitalism without capitalists*, in Russia they cleverly recognize a case of *capitalists without capitalism*. That is to say, in Central Europe the institutions of capitalism exist without a bourgeoisie, while in Russia there is a bourgeoisie, a class of owners recruited from the former nomenclatura, but it is running amuck in the absence of effective regulation. Here we witness neither revolution nor evolution to be sure but *involution*—an imploding world in which a merchant bourgeoisie forged from the old nomenclatura raided the economy to produce primitive disaccumulation, a return to peasant society, a retreat to self-provisioning, the expansion of petty commodity production and of primitive barter. As the new bourgeoisie reaches for global hypermodernity, they thrust the mass of the population into a premodern quagmire. Here *extrication from the past* becomes, one might say, the *revenge of the past*.

The Russian catastrophe convincingly vindicates Eyal et al.’s argument, contra Stark and Bruszt, that communist origins are critically important to postcommunist outcomes. But there is a paradox. Precisely here where the communist habitus was the most strong and the anticommunist intelligentsia most weak, the neoliberal vision has been the most vigorously pursued through rapid liberalization, privatization, and then stabilization. Of course, neoliberalism is here not an inherited habitus but a borrowed ideology that is opportunistically deployed to justify new forms of exploitation and dispossession. But that is just the point. By focusing on elites, Eyal et al. go only so far in appreciating the peculiarities of post-Soviet Russia. They focus on the continuity of the old political class transformed into an economic elite, but they miss the radical transfor-

<sup>17</sup> I am here using the terminology of Albert Hirschman that David Stark (1989a) once used in connection with the differences between Hungary, Poland, and East Germany.

mation of society. Trajectory adjustment, in looking for continuity, misses the dramatic disjuncture in Russian society.

If now there are capitalists without capitalism, before, we might say, there was *socialism without socialists*. By this I mean that Soviet society was socialist in its redistributive economy and in its centrally organized society—an elaborate and overweening social structure that governed people's strategies and rewards. People acted on the basis of their place in society, not on the basis of a vision of the future. As a result, especially in its last phase, there was no significant class of actors who believed in a socialist future. Adhesion to socialism was more a ritual enactment, so that when the system faced crisis it could turn either to despotism or it collapsed. There were no "socialists" committed to restoring and rebuilding the structure. One might say that Russia has moved from one extreme to the other, from a society *structured by positions* to a society *structured by assets*; from competition for privileged positions to competition for asset accumulation; from a society in which individuals occupy places in preexisting social relations to a society in which individuals are continually constructing social bonds; from a world of social channels to one of social anarchy. The constitution of class shifts from relations of vertical domination to networks of horizontal interdependence. One might think of Russia today as the first truly "poststructural" society, rejecting administered visions and investments in the future and held together by a system of personal ties. Reaction to the failure of the most modernist of projects (the planned society) has led to the most postmodern, egotistical world. While Bourdieu's framework of strategies around convertible capitals does indeed capture something about post-Soviet society, it is a mistake to project this back into the past, to impose an asset-based theory on a position-based society. By universalizing Bourdieu's theoretical categories, Eyal et al. miss its historical and critical import and thereby elide profound differences between Soviet and post-Soviet orders.

I may now summarize. Both works focus on divergent paths to presumptively different capitalisms, but where the one traces this divergence to *individual habituses* formed under communism and even precommunism, the other focuses on *institutional solutions* to the problem of extrication from communism. Their measures of capitalism also differ. The one looks upon capitalism in terms of *ruling elites*, the negotiations among former dissidents, technocrats, and managers, while the other studies *patterns of ownership*, novel recombinant forms that belie conventional models. Both, therefore, assess the phenomenal form of capitalism rather than its underlying reality, its superstructures rather than its economic base. Elites, ownership patterns, and politics may all diverge and transform themselves while the social relations of capitalism remain the same. Neither book comes to grips with the social relations of the economy that define it as capitalist, above all with the relations between classes.

THE MARXIAN REPRIS: ENDURING CLASS RELATIONS

Karl Marx offers an alternative model for the study of transitions, one that is not based on origins. While modern capitalism may have multiple origins (and Marx offers different accounts in his various writings), once established capitalism constitutes its own system of class reproduction and dynamic accumulation. The systemic logic effectively wipes out origins.<sup>18</sup> Even though capitalism may diverge in its expression from sector to sector, from country to country, from region to region, these divergences are interconnected—the result of common underlying economic processes. To study such *sui generis* economic processes, one must subordinate the study of historical paths and trajectories to careful *in situ* analyses of actual social relations. This calls for ethnographic data that will reveal the day-to-day world of strategic action bound by changing constraints—the sort of detailed analysis that Marx extracted from the Blue Books of government inspectors or the fieldwork that Engels conducted in Manchester.

We already have examples of ethnographic research in post-Soviet societies that, instead of searching out the influence of origins, start out by examining constraints in the present. For example, in her study of de-collectivization in Romania, Katherine Verdery (1999) does not look for the source of privatization but shows how property relations become the object of struggle within her village. Political and economic relations, inherited from the past to be sure, govern the unfolding dynamics of property redistribution. The point of departure is the present, and it is from this vantage point that the past is understood. The same applies to Gerald Creed's (1999) ethnography of the struggle over the liquidation of agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria. Peasants act here as a bulwark against de-collectivization, mobilizing the past in defending their lifeline to collective and individual existence. Or take Slawomira Zbierski-Salameh's (1999) field research in rural Poland that shows how shock therapy strengthened the hold of monopolistic organizations—procurement centers, state farms, and banks—over the peasantry who, in self-protection, retreated to closed-cycle subsistence production. Again the focus is on the here and now of the transition, the struggle over the interpretation and deployment of economic reform by different classes. David Woodruff's (1999a) close observation of Russian enterprises, similarly, shows how local forces combine to defy punitive monetization by resorting to barter as they contend with distant government edicts. If

<sup>18</sup> Max Weber is interesting in this regard. While he dedicated much of his life to the study of the origins of modern capitalism, he did so because its primary peculiarity lay in the obliteration of all traces of those origins. In other words, the universal significance of modern capitalism lay in its independence from its origins, its capacity to spread all over the world. Indeed, one might say, that this interpretation of Weber inspired Wallerstein's world-systems analysis. On the other hand, unlike Marx, Weber did not have a theory of capitalist dynamics—neither of capital accumulation nor of class struggle.



these ethnographies of everyday life share any common conclusion it is that the past becomes a terrain of struggle, manipulated by forces contending in the present.

The past is an object and field of conflict, but it is also a reference point against which to compare the present. Revisiting anthropological studies of socialism is another possible technique of such before-and-after evaluation of the transition. In May 1999, János Lukács and I returned to the sites of our Hungarian industrial ethnographies of the 1980s (Burawoy and Lukács 1992). What had happened to my fellow workers in the 10 years after the Fall? I was surprised to discover that, despite the retrenchment of all but a few thousand of the original 15,000 and with the exception of our devoted shop steward, Gyuri, who had retired to his home village, all members of the October Revolution Socialist Brigade were still working in what used to be the Lenin Steel Works. Shaped under late communism, their habituses had indeed endured the transition. Csaba was still living and drinking with his father in their one-room apartment. Béla, whose leg had been crushed under a steel girder, was still grumbling, seemingly untouched by his upwardly mobile children. As he had done so successfully in the 1980s, Karcsi was still exploiting his handicraft skills and entrepreneurial talents to tide him over work stoppages. Bandi and his wife (with friends and relatives) were exhausted from building their new home, while Laci sat gloomily in his two-room apartment with his unemployed wife and his two barely employed sons. The steelworker habitus endured to be sure, but the overwhelming reality was status degradation, deplorable working conditions, plummeting wages, and imminent unemployment.

While workers were laid off, on the other side of the class divide a few managers made a killing by spinning off their departments as limited companies, charging the enterprise with overheads, taxes, transportation, and so on. Here is the story Stark and Bruszt tell of recombinant ownership—the enterprise shell, under state ownership, was landed with liabilities while the satellites made off with the assets. No one wanted this dinosaur. Through the 1990s it was buffeted by a series of makeshift deals, until finally a Slovakian company went halves with the Hungarian government in a pretense at resurrecting the mill. To Gabi, our earnest young manager, however, it seemed that the Slovaks had only absconded with the cash. There was no sign of any new investment, just another level of bureaucracy. Now, a year later, an American company has taken over the Slovakian conglomerate. The mill could close tomorrow, with the last human dregs poured into the street.

Contrast this with Egér's Csepel Auto, a division of Hungary's largest truck enterprise, which was bought out by the Germany Corporation ZF, one of the biggest gearbox manufacturers in the world. I gasped in disbelief as I walked through the aisles of the spotless, silent glass house that had been the grimy, dark, whirring machine shop. Young technicians, relaxed and scarce, had replaced our oily brigades of ingenious, improvising, pet-

ulant operators. Tomás, the information systems manager who escorted us, was one of the handful of Hungarians to have survived the transition. The rest had been weeded out. Half the number of employees now produced 30 times the product! Property relations may be diffuse, but the consequences are not. Neoclassical sociologists may celebrate indeterminacy and uncertain futures, but for most this simply means insecurity. *Capitalism may be made without capitalists but certainly not without workers*—a small fraction upgraded, the majority disconsolate and degraded. To my fellow furnacemen, capitalism was but the immiseration of socialism. It is not clear whether postsocialist capitalism is different from any other, at least from the perspective of those who shoulder it.

As these examples reveal, not only communism but also the forces of globalization haunt the present. Stark and Bruszt write how the neoliberal programs sowed disillusion, shifted the prevailing winds from West to East, from market panaceas to the elixir of the state. They claim that both models were “decoupled” from the Central European reality—a reality of deliberative networks that were neither markets nor hierarchies. Stark and Bruszt are right to be skeptical of the inexorable power of globalization, but “decoupling” becomes the conceptual excuse for ignoring global factors altogether. Stark and Bruszt overlook the possibility that “recombinant property” was as much a strategic hedge against competition from or expropriation by international capital as it was a function of the balance of forces at the time of extrication from state socialism. Similarly, as Eyal et al.’s data show, “managerialism” is now in retreat before the encroachment of foreign capital.

This is where the project of “comparative capitalisms” meets its greatest sociological challenge. Russia and Hungary may diverge in remarkable ways, but that divergence is as much a product of their differential insertion into what is a singular world capitalist system as it is of their communist origins. Or better, it is a product of the way global capitalism combines with antecedent forms of production as these undergo market transition. It is difficult to talk of independent national or regional capitalisms—as is implied in “comparing capitalisms”—when the global order is so interconnected. We need to understand how the global, whether through supranational institutions, transnational connections, or post-national discourses, has mediated effects on what has come to be called the “local.”

Just as ethnography offers a nuanced understanding of class constraints in the present, so it also offers insight into the significance of the global. Lynne Haney (2000), for example, has shown how the (neo)liberal model of welfare was latched onto by Hungarian state managers and even sociologists for the very real material benefits it offered them. Benefits to the bureaucratic class, however, came at the expense of welfare clients who in turn tried to reclaim their lost assistance by appealing to the socialist universalism of the past. Like a lightning rod, the state transmitted global pressures, creating a devastated population of women. But

the global can also strike outside the purview of the state. Zsuzsa Gille (2000) shows that Hungary's flimsy postcommunist democracy put up little resistance to multinational incineration capital that would make Hungary a backyard for dumping Western waste. The project had popular support among villagers who competed for economic crumbs from burnt ashes. They were located next to toxic waste that had been deposited by Hungary's biggest chemical factory. For many socialist years, this enterprise had been bribed to produce what was too dangerous to produce in Austria. Those rural populations excluded from incineration profits were easily mobilized by the Greens to oppose the project, but with little effect. Contestation and negotiation there may have been, but the results only augured badly for Hungary's rural population.

These ethnographic studies offer a postsocialist antidote to neoclassical optimism, recognizing the debilitating constraints of historical past and global present even as they also recognize ingenuity and innovation. As the few manage to reassert their control over property and profits, organizational and cultural capital, so the majority stave off increased insecurity and dispossession. The ethnographic eye exposes the seamy side of capitalism—means testing, incineration, and unemployment. As the joke goes, Soviet teaching may have been wrong about communism but it was right about capitalism. Of course, Western ideologues have their responses: the liberal reforms were introduced too slowly (or too quickly), Stalinist managers sabotaged (or failed to comprehend) the market transition, the people are not ready for capitalism, they are too corrupted by communism, and so on. In these perspectives the problem lies with the executors of the vision rather than with the vision itself. Just as development theory of the 1960s, which also blamed the victims for their suffering, gave rise to dependency theory and then to postcolonial theory, so we might expect neoclassical sociology to inspire new postsocialist theorizing that moves from the limits of global capitalism to the contestation of Western transplants by indigenous visions and alternatives.

#### THE ROAD TO POSTSOCIALIST THEORY

Central European intellectuals have found their own ways of coming to terms with the failure of postcommunist capitalism. According to Eyal et al., these intellectuals of the second *Bildungsbürgertum* also blame the victims of socialism for collaborating—implicitly or explicitly—with the corrupt old regime. In order to atone for the past, to redeem their sinfulness, the people of Central Europe need to be more diligent in their sacrifice, in their confessions, and in their rituals of purification. Those evil habituses formed under socialism still need to be purged. But for how long will intellectuals make the past guilty for the violation of the present, attribute the pathologies of contemporary capitalism to its socialist origins?

Eyal et al.'s own origin-driven theory dovetails well with this denun-

ciation of the past, but it is not the only possible interpretation of the contemporary plight. Eyal et al. might have drawn lessons from their own account of the demise of the first *Bildungsbürgertum*—the way Central European intellectuals in the early 20th century turned away from the capitalist project either to the radical right or to the radical left. Today we might well ask, How long will it be before postcommunist intellectuals reject those Western prescriptions they had so avidly embraced—liberal democracy and free markets? How long will it be before neoclassical theory, which condemns socialism and exonerates capitalism, gives way to *postsocialist theory*, which takes a more critical approach to capitalism in order to rescue the positive potential of socialism?

Postsocialist theory could follow postcolonial theory. Just as disillusion with “national independence” led postcolonial theory to reject the very goals of liberation as themselves too tainted by the oppressor’s ideology, so disillusion could lead postsocialist intellectuals to contemplate alternatives to the imported Western models. Just as postcolonial theory turned to subaltern studies and the search for opportunities and visions eclipsed in the colonial or even precolonial world, so postsocialist theory will perhaps exhume alternatives that were rapidly closed off when communism began to teeter.<sup>19</sup> Postsocialist theory might well return to the subterranean alternatives that the youthful Stark and Szelényi did so much to uncover—be they the different market socialisms of the Hungarian second economy or the mobilized society of Polish Solidarity. The standpoint of such postsocialist critique is not some externally fabricated blueprint but a concrete imagination that was not brought to complete fruition—what Erik Wright, for example, has called a real utopia (see, e.g., Wright 2000).

It is probably too soon to revisit state socialism and the possibilities that were never allowed to mature. Nonetheless, in time there will be a revisionist history that, while not denying communist horrors, will recognize socialism’s potentialities. Capitalism’s early history was no less horrific than communism’s, but it managed to cultivate its potentialities and handle its contradictions by reconstituting itself. Socialism did not have such a chance—for world historic reasons rather than internal limits—to refashion itself before it was overrun. Capitalism had the opportunity to do what socialism never succeeded in doing, to contain its barbaric tendencies—or, more precisely in capitalism’s case, to export them to naïve and expectant nations, most recently those freed from the communist vice. The export package has not been the 20th-century mixed economy of advanced capitalism but an early 19th-century market utopianism that today implants a dependent development. After all, how many advanced capitalisms can there be in the world? Neoclassical so-

<sup>19</sup> I am thinking here of the subaltern studies associated with such distinguished social historians of the Indian subcontinent as Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. In the context of the history of socialism, Linda Fuller’s (1992, 1999) excavations of the realities and potentialities of working-class politics in Cuba and East Germany are exemplary.

ciology can celebrate a plurality of capitalisms, but they may turn out to be no different from core and periphery, development and underdevelopment. Plural origins easily dissolve into a singular world capitalism. Neoclassical optimism will give way to postsocialist critique that will assimilate not only the lessons of the socialist experiment but also those of the capitalist transition. The history of the second *Bildungsbürgertum* has yet to play itself out.

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