Constantin Iordachi

RECONCEPTUALIZING THE SOCIAL: EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE NEW SOCIOCULTURAL HISTORY

Abstract: This introductory essay reviews recent debates on social history, with a focus on the revival of this field of studies in post-communist East Central Europe and its potential impact on rejuvenating approaches to the social history of Europe. The first part of the essay provides a brief overview of the emergence of social history as a reaction to the dominant political history of the nineteenth century and its crystallization in different national schools, and highlights recent responses to the poststructuralist and postmodern critiques of "the social." The second part focuses on traditions of social history research in East Central Europe, taking Poland and Romania as main examples. The third part summarizes the main claims of the articles included in this issue and evaluates their implications for future research. It is argued that, at first glance, post-communist historiography in East Central Europe provides the picture of a discipline in transformation, still struggling to break up with the past and to rebuild its institutional framework, catching up with recent trends and redefining its role in continental and global historiography. The recent attempts to invigorate research in traditional fields of social history might seem largely obsolete, not only out of tune with international developments but also futile reiterations of vistas that have been for long experimented with and superseded in Western Europe. At closer scrutiny, however, historiography in East Central Europe appears—unequal and variegated as it is—as a laboratory for historical innovation and a field of experimentation and interaction of scholars from various disciplines and scholarly traditions, in which old and new trends amalgamate in peculiar ways. It is suggested that the tendency to reconceptualize the "social" that we currently witness in humanities and social sciences worldwide could be not only reinforced but also cross-fertilized by the "social turn" in East Central Europe, potentially leading to novel approaches.

The "social" has been in the last decades under the close critical scrutiny of historians and social scientists.[1] Internalizing the main gains of the linguistic, cul-

1 For debates on social history see, selectively, the following special journal issues: "Social History Today... and Tomorrow?," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976); "Special Issue on Social History*," Theory and Society,* 9 (1980) 5; "Social History and the American Political Climate: Problems and Strategies," *Journal of Social History*, 29 (1995); "The Futures of Social History," *Journal of Social History*, 37 (Fall 2003) 1. See also Jacques Revel, ed., *La construction du social* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996); and Patrick Joyce, ed., *The Social in Question. New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002).

East Central Europe/ECE, vols. 34–35, 2007/2008, part 1–2, pp. 1–35.

tural, and postmodern "turns," numerous scholars have contested the existence of society as a "natural," "objective," and all-encompassing category of investigation. They have criticized the causal methodology and pretence of objectivity associated with social history, and—on this basis—have questioned established social terminology and classifications. Informed by recent academic trends, many scholars now proclaim the "crisis" or even the "end" of social history. They claim that, in the writing of history, we have entered "postsocial history," marked by the dissolution of the social as a relevant or viable category of analysis.[2] In their attempt to go "beyond social history" and to identify alternative theoretical models of social action, some scholars argue that the time is ripe for writing "antisocial history," that is history without groups.[3] These sharp international debates have greatly affected the manner in which the concept of the "social" is theoretically defined and empirically researched, leading to significant changes in the academic status and practices of teaching social history. Not surprisingly, these academic debates, coupled with the sweeping transformations generated by the ongoing processes of globalization, have also affected the ways in which the social is normatively imagined in political programs and institutionalized and implemented in welfare policies.[4]

In the context of these debates, the current thematic issue provides a forum of reflection for historians specializing in various aspects of the social history of East Central Europe. Our endeavor is based on three main premises. First, we posit that the "social" will continue to remain a constant concern for historians and social scientists. As one of the most integrative analytical categories available to researchers, the "social" permeates all forms of writing and unavoidably figures—implicitly, if not explicitly—in all types of academic inquires. We thus witness not the "death" of social history *per se*, but the final dissatisfaction with a certain way of defining the social dominant in the 1960s and 1970s—with the social conceived as the building block of modernism, as one prominent critic of the field put it[5]—accompanied by a continuous search for new research methods and perspectives. Second, we take the intensity of these debates—spanning several decades—as a case in point about the continuous relevance of the social in (what is still called) *social* sciences and humanities. Far from being a marginalized area of scrutiny, the re-conceptualization of the social and by extension, of related key concepts of analytical inquiry, is a main driv-

2 Miguel A. Cabrera, "The Crisis of the Social and Post-Social History," *The European Legacy*, 10 (2005) 6, 611–620. For attempts to provide alternative models of social action that would transgress classical approaches to social history, see Miguel A. Cabrera, "Linguistic Approach or Return to Subjectivism? In Search of an Alternative to Social History," *Social History*, 24 (1999), 74–78; and Miguel A. Cabrera, *Postsocial History. An Introduction* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004).

3 Michael Seidman, "Social History and Antisocial History," *Common Knowledge*, 13 (2007) 1, 40–49.

4 Nikolas Rose, "The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government," *Economy and Society*, 25 (1996), 327–356; and Michel Dean, *Governmentality. Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 151–153.

5 Patrick Joyce, "The End of Social History?" *Social History*, 20 (1995) 1, 73–91.

ing force behind recent innovations in scholarship. It is telling in this respect that the critique of the social initiated in early 1980s has more recently been extended to a critique of the "cultural." The current awareness of the analytical limits of the broad and overarching concept of culture as a new hegemonic type of total history and the attempts to reconceptualize the social have led to the elaboration of alternative synthetic paradigms under the banner of sociocultural history.

Third, our focus on East Central Europe is not simply a subject matter informed by the well established but by now also contested academic tradition of "area studies." It is our conviction that the post-1989 renewed interaction and cross-fertilization between East Central European and Western historiographies can contribute to the rejuvenation of social history in novel forms. The political cataclysm of 1989–1991 in East Central Europe has posed new challenges to the already changing field of social history, accelerating ongoing trends. On the one hand, the collapse of the "really existing socialism" precipitated the disenchantment with Marxism as a mode of analysis. On the other hand, the imperious need to integrate the history of East Central European countries into a common European framework demanded novel transnational perspectives of research, leading to the emergence of the "social history of Europe" as a new, integrative field of study. In addition, while sharing larger, European-wide developments, the rich and still under-researched historical experience of East Central Europe in the modern period—marked by massive demographic and socio-political transformations, attempts of large scale social engineering under fascist and communist dictatorships, and the processes of political democratization and European integration—presents certain particularities that makes it a laboratory for the study of social transformation. The history of former communist regimes, in particular, provides a fertile ground for testing new methodologies; its study, necessitating interdisciplinary perspectives combining insights from history, oral history, political science, sociology, and anthropology, among other disciplines, stimulates the rapprochement between the "social" and the "cultural" dimensions of research.

In order to contextualize the historiographical debates presented in this thematic issue, the current introductory essay reviews recent debates on social history, with a focus on the post-1989 interaction and mutual influences between Eastern and Western historiographies, and its potential impact on rejuvenating approaches to the social. The first part focuses on the emergence of social history as a reaction against the dominant political history of the nineteenth century and its crystallization in different national variants: "social science history" in the United States, the neo-Marxist "Historians' Group" and "history from below" in Britain, the three generations of the French *Annales* and their interest in deep structures and the *longue durée* of historical change, the German "Bielefeld school" and its paradigm of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* and the Italian school of "*microstoria*." The part continues with a review of recent postmodern and poststructuralist challenges to the writing of history, assessing their "critique" of the social and their impact on writing social history. The second part explores traditions of social history research in East Central Europe, with an emphasis on the recent revival of interest in social history in the region that arguably amounts

to a genuine even if "belated" social turn. It also summarizes the main claims of the articles included in this issue and evaluates their implications for future research. The conclusions offer a tentative summary of recent international trends in writing social history, highlighting fresh transnational and relational approaches to regional and European social history.

Before entering these debates, two words of warning to our readers, and a clarification of terms. First, given the great plurality of historiographical traditions in East Central Europe and the multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches associated with social history, the current thematic issue cannot claim to offer a full or complete overview of the evolution of this field of study, a task that exceeds the means of a single volume or the academic backgrounds and visions of a small group of authors. Second, while building on the insights gained in these articles, the main argument presented in the introduction is not necessarily confined to this limited and variegated set of case studies, but refers to major trends in post-communist East Central Europe, in general. It is hoped that the thematic issue will stimulate reflection on the contested category of the "social," leading to new, critical, and interdisciplinary research on the social history of East Central Europe and its integration into university curricula in the region.

Finally, given the long history and heavy political connotations of apparently "neutral" regional geographical denominations, such as Western, Central, or Eastern Europe, our usage of the term East Central Europe necessitates several clarifications. As made evident in a programmatic article published in 2004,[6] the editors of this journal subscribe to the view that concepts of historical regions are no more than analytical constructions devised for heuristic purposes; as abstract concepts, they do not reflect historical reality *per se*, but are (ever-changing) attempts at endowing geography with historical and cultural meaning, reflecting "essentially contested" geopolitical conventions prevalent at a certain point in time.[7] The long, rich, and highly disputed history of the concept of Central Europe is a case in point: one can identify a great number of rival definitions, from the Habsburg vision of Central Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Hungarian *Kárpát-medence* (Carpathian basis), the German *Mitteleuropa* on the eve of World War One, the French dominated *Europe Centrale* of the interwar period, to the purge of the concept of Central Europe from the Cold War political vocabulary under Soviet hegemony and its revival

6 Maciej Janowski, Constantin Iordachi, and Balázs Trencsényi, "Why Bother about Regions: Debates over Symbolic Geography in Poland, Hungary and Romania," *East Central Europe. L'Europe du Centre Est, Eine wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift,* 1 (2005) 1-2, 5-58.

7 For debates over mental maps and symbolic geographies, see the influential, path-breaking work by Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); on "Occidentalism" as a counter-part of Orientalism, succinctly defined as "stylized images of the West," see James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). On the invention of the concept of Eastern Europe, see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994); on the history of the concept of the Balkans, see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

in mid-1980s in the work of anti-communist émigré intellectuals and dissidents.[8] In our usage, the term East Central Europe refers to the vast historical space "between the Baltic and the Adriatic." While largely heterogeneous, this space is characterized by a distinguishable geo-political position (in the middle of the continent, in-between Western and Eastern Europe), multiple imperial legacies (most notably the Byzantine/Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg), a common recent communist past, and—connected with this—common post-communist challenges marked by processes of transition from command to market economy, political democratization, and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic political, economic and security organization.[9] We plead neither for a rigid or "totalizing" definition of East Central Europe, one that would cut across various historical periods, nor for short-term (and thus arguably short-sighted) perspectives that mar certain uncritical "transitologist" approaches. Yet we argue that concepts of historical regions are able to serve as privileged angles through which to approach the history of certain geographical spaces and as useful heuristic devices for tackling certain research topics with an obvious regional relevance.

SOCIAL HISTORY: "OLD" AND "NEW"

The emergence, evolution, current state, and prospects of social history can be understood only by employing a long-term historiographical perspective that takes into account the profound changes the writing of history has underwent since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. During this long period of time, historians extended their research to new social categories and areas of inquiry, incorporated metatheoretical and methodological borrowings from other disciplines, and questioned the main tenets of traditional approaches. As a result, the writing of history was dominated by debates between the "traditional history," which rejected the model of research provided by natural sciences and shifted to legal studies as a model for the evaluation of evidence, and the "new history," which drew closer to social sciences

8 On the German vision of *Mitteleuropa* see Friedrich Naumann, *Central Europe,* trans. by Christabel M. Meredith (London: P.S. King, 1917). On the "Central Europe of the 1980s," see George Schöpflin and Nancy Wood, eds., *In Search of Central Europe* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1989); and László Kontler, "Introduction: Reflections on Symbolic Geography," *European Review of History*, 6 (1999), 1, 9-15; on its relation to the Balkans, see Todorova, "Between Classification and Politics: The Balkans and the Myth of Central Europe," *Imagining the Balkans*, 140-160.

9 It is interesting to note that the title of the journal *East Central Europe* was coined in 1974, being thus among the first signs of the revival of Central European studies in academia; the term got a new wind in the wake of European Union's Eastern enlargement, referring to eight of the ten countries that joined the organization in 2004 (the three Baltic states: Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia; the four "Visegrád countries–Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia; and Slovenia); to which Romania and Bulgaria were symbolically added once they became EU members in 2007.

by employing quantitative methods and behavioral models. The two types of history writing were divided by different research agendas and methodologies and differed in the types of evidence and standards of proof they employed.[10]

The proliferation of social history has been at the forefront of these debates. For Eric Hobsbawm, a leading British theoretician and practitioner of social history, the conflict between the "old" and "new" history, which in his view divided the profession from 1890 up to 1970, was a "battle between the conventional assumption that 'history is past politics', either within nation-states or in their relations to each other, and a history of the structures and changes of societies and cultures, between history as narrative and history as analysis and synthesis, between those who thought it impossible to generalize about human affairs and those who thought it essential."[11]

The battle against the "traditional" history was waged on two main frontlines, continental and American. In Europe, the confrontation with the dominant neo-Rankean paradigm of studying history was initiated by the German historian Karl Gottfried Lamprecht (1856–1915).[12] Arguing that history was "primarily a socio-psychological science,"[13] Lamprecht experimented with new interdisciplinary and comparative approaches to the social, economic, and cultural history of societies.[14]

10 For a debate over the two types of history, see Robert William Fogel and Geoffrey R. Elton, *Which Road to the Past? Two Views of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). For more recent perspectives, see Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987); and Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Some Reflections on the New History," *American Historical Review,* 94 (1989) 3, 661–670; and Peter Burke, "Overture: The New History. Its Past and Its Future," in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1992), 1–23.

11 Eric Hobsbawm, "Among the Historians," in *Interesting Times. A Twentieth Century Life* (London: Abacus, 2002), 285.

12 On Lamprecht's personality and activity, see Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856-1915)* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993); Gerald Diesener, "Lamprecht, Karl. German cultural and social historian," in Kelly Boyd, ed., *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, Vol. 1 (London/Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 680–681; and Georg G. Iggers, "The Historian Banished. Karl Lamprecht in Imperial Germany," *Central European History,* 27 (1994), 87–92. His research agenda was institutionalized in the *Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschiche* in Leipzig. See Roger Chickering, "Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfachlichung und Professionalisierung. Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890–1990," *Central European History,* 40 (2007) 2, 350–352.

13 Cited in Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2nd ed., 13.

14 See Karl Lamprecht, *What is History? Five Lectures on the Modern Science of History*, trans. by E. A. Andrews and William Edward Dodd (New York: Macmillan, 1905). See also his monumental *Deutsche Geschichte,* 12 vols. (Berlin: R. Gaertners verlagsbuchhandlung, 1895–1909).

Lamprecht's vision and research agenda stirred a great debate in German historiograph at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, called *Methodenstreit* (the methodological dispute). Although Lamprecht remained rather marginal in the German academic world of his time, his innovative research agenda was to exert fertile influences in France and the United States.

In the United States, a new "progressive" school of writing history emerged around 1900 and reached prominence in the 1920s, having as main representatives James Harvey Robinson, Charles A. Beard, Carl L. Becker, and Vernon Parrington, among others.[15] Departing from the prevailing view of US history, which stressed the European origins of America's democracy and the enduring importance of the Euro-Atlantic connection, the new "progressive" interpretation of American history emphasized the decisive role played by domestic forces in the shaping of American society. In doing so, progressive history replaced the emphasis on political history with the study of the economic and environmental factors at work in shaping large scale social and political structures.[16] Gradually, in the field of academic studies, progressive history gave rise to the new discipline of social history.

The first institution actively engaged in the promotion of social history research was the International Institute for Social History (IISH), founded in Amsterdam in 1935 by the Dutch economic historian and political scientist N. W. Posthumus (1880–1960) with the aim of providing a forum for Marxist-oriented research outside the realm of dogmatic Stalinism. During the time, the institute acquired a large documentary and research archive pertaining to social history, including personal papers of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky, and Leon Trotsky, among others. It stimulated research in various fields of social history, most notably labor and women's history. Since 1955, it publishes the *International Review of Social History*.

As a separate field of historical inquiry, however, social history developed fully only in the post-1945 period. According to Howsbawm's *ego-histoire* account, the first panel on social history at an international congress of historical sciences was organized in 1950 in Paris.[17] Since that time, social history became institutionalized in new academic departments, research institutes and specializing journals, mostly in the United Kingdom (see the establishment of *Past and Present. A Journal of Historical Studies,* 1952), the United States (*Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 1958; the *Journal of Social History,* 1967; and the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,*

15 On the main features of the American progressive history, see Charles Crowe, "The Emergence of Progressive History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27 (1966) 1, 109–124; and Ernst A. Breisach, *American Progressive History: An Experiment in Modernization* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

16 The epitome of the new orientation was Frederick J. Turner's work, which credits United States' expanding Western frontier with a central role in the emergence and consolidation of democracy. See Turner, "Social Forces in American History," *The American Historical Review*, 16 (1911) 2, 217–233.

17 Hobsbawm, "Among the Historians," 286.

1970), and later in Germany (*Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft,* 1975).

In the United States, building on the traditions of progressive history, the so-called "new social history" emerged with vigor in the 1950s and 1960s, having two main branches.[18] A first branch was that of "social science history," the rise of which was intrinsically linked to the development of behavioralism, with its cliometrician and quantitative approaches, and the growing interaction between history and the neighboring fields of sociology and political science. The practice of "social science history" encompassed a shift of interest from political events to socio-economic structures and a change in methods from narrative to quantitative techniques and interdisciplinary models of interpretation.[19] Social science history, was also explicitely "theoretical," being characterized by the conscious and large-scale utilization of models and types of historical interpretation. The second stream, closely tied to the civil rights movement was the "history from below," a form of *histoire engagé* animated by a leftist impetus for citizenship emancipation and equality of race or gender subordinated groups.

In Great Britain, social history was promoted mainly by the activity of the Marxist "Historians' Group,"[20] made up of prominent historians such as Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, Rodney Hilton, Raphael Samuel, John Saville, Dorothy Thompson, Edmund Dell, Victor Kiernan, Maurice Dobb and Edward P. Thompson.[21] Thompson's approach and social history school institutionalized in the *Center of Social History* at Warwick University was particularly influential, inspiring a new,

18 On the evolution of social history research in the United States, see Alice Kessler Harris, "Social History," in Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 163–180; Georg G. Iggers, "American Traditions of Social History," in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 41–50; Kenneth L. Kusmer, "American Social History: The Boorstin Experience," *Reviews in American History*, 4 (1976) 4, 471–482; Leonard Joseph Moore, "Good Old-Fashioned New Social History and the Twentieth-Century American Right," *Reviews in American History*, 24 (1996) 4, 555–573; and Sean Wilentz, "Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 26 (1984), 1–24 and the response by Nick Salvatore, 25–30.

19 See the pathbreaking but amply debated and controversial book by Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the cross. The economics of American Negro slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), an economic and quantitative approach to the history of slavery in the United States.

20 For social history in Great Britain, see Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Writing of Social History: Recent Studies of 19th Century England," *The Journal of British Studies*, 11 (1971) 1, 148–170; Himmelfarb, "The Group: British Marxist Historians," in *The New History and the Old*, 70–93; and Eric Hobsbawm, "From Social History to the History of Society," in Felix Gilbert and Stephen Graubard, eds., *Historical Studies Today* (New York: WW Norton, 1972), 1–26.

21 Edward P. Thompson: *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1963); and "Eighteenth century English society: Class struggle without class?" *Social History*, 2 (1978) 5, 133–165.

culturally oriented research agenda focusing on the emergence and political importance of the working class, the history of labor movements, and the role of ideology in shaping British social policy.

Another leading figure of Marxist historiography in Great Britain, Eric Hobsbawm, pleaded for a new form of social history writing: the history of society. Hobsbawm claimed that "It is now impossible to pursue many activities of the social scientist in any but a trivial manner without coming to terms with social structure and its transformations: without the history of societies." In his view, the new history of society necessitated the construction of new models of research: "The history of society is ... a collaboration between general modes of social structure and change and the specific set of phenomena which actually occurred." Social historians had the imperative task to elaborate valid models of socio-historical dynamics, "for the benefit of all the social sciences.[22]

In France, the intellectual prestige of three consecutive generations of the *Annales* school conferred on history a position of hegemony among the social sciences and had a great impact on the development of social and economic history, as well as on the study of collective mentalities and material civilization.[23] Marc Bloch pioneered the comparative study of neighboring societies, while Fernand Braudel stimulated the rapprochement between history and sociology and militated for the creation of a common language of social sciences. Borrowing from human geography, he also re-valorized the project of *histoire totale* (total history)—launched by Ernst Troeltsch and continued in a certain way by geographer Vidal de la Blache—and promoted the study of deep structures and the *longue durée* of historical change, at the expense of *histoire événementielle*. These efforts were continued by a third generation of *Annales* historians, who turned to the study of the popular culture, and of the deep social and ideological structures of the society.

Although social history was always an important component of the research project of the *Annales*, the social was never fully separated from the economic and cultural dimensions of society, conducted under the banner of *histoire totale*. As a distinct field of study, social history was promoted in the French historiography by Ernest Labrousse (1895–1988).[24] Building on the tradition of *histoire sérielle* inaugu-

22 Eric Hobsbawm, "From Social History to the History of Society," 1-26.

23 On the Annales school, see Georg G. Iggers, "France: The *Annales,*" in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 51–64; Maurice Aymand, "The *Annales* and French Historiography (1929–1972)," *The Journal of European Economic History*, 1 (1972), 2, 491–511; Lynn Hunt, "French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the *Annales* Paradigm," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986) 2, 209–224; Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–89* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990); Ernst Breisach, "The *Annales* School," in *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 370–376; and Stuart Clark, ed., *The Annales School: Critical Assessments*. 4 vols., (London: Routledge, 1999). On social history and the Annales school, see *Social Historians in Contemporary France: Essays from Annales*, ed. and trans. by the staff of *Annales* (Paris, New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

24 See Ernest Labrousse's pioneering works: *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des*

rated by the French sociologist, economist and historian François Simiand, coupled with influences from the behavioral and cliometric traditions in the United States, Labrousse promoted the development of quantitative history. He employed innovative statistical methods to study societies at three interdependent analytical levels: economic, social, and mental.[25] More recently, the research agenda and interdisciplinary orientation of the *Annales* has suffered important changes (also reflected in the change of the title of its leading journal, from the 1946 *Annales. Economies. Sociétés, Civilisations* to *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales,* in 1994).[26] The legacy of the *Annales* school is currently under critical scrutiny in France or elsewhere.[27]

German historiography was a relative latecomer to the field of social history as compared to its American and British counterparts.[28] The reasons for the "backwardness" of social history in Germany, as one of the pioneers of the field put it back in 1975—had to do mainly with the conservative tradition of the German academic system, the experience of the totalitarian Nazi regime, and the upheaval of the postwar process of de-Nazification and political-institutional reconstruction.[29] It was only in the 1960s that a new generation of scholars trained abroad—mostly in the United States—broke with the prevailing conservative German historiographical orientation and proposed a neo-Weberian paradigm of studying social history, that of *Historische Sozialwissenschaft* (Historical Social Science). This school was brought

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revenus en France au XVIIIe siècle, 2 vols. (Paris, Librairie Dalloz, 1933); and *La crise de l'economie francaise a la fin de l'ancien regime et au debut de la revolution* (Paris: Presses universitaries de France, 1944).

25 See the magisterial work coordonated by Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse: *Histoire èconomique et sociale de la France,* 4 vols., (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970–1982). For his project of social history and its impact on French historiography, see also *Conjoncture èconomique, structures sociales. Hommage à Ernest Labrousse* (Paris: Mouton, 1974). See also the site of the French Association of Cliometics/l'Association Française de Cliométrie, founded in 2001, at http://www.cliometrie.org.

26 See the new programmatic articles of the Editors of the journal *Annales*, "Histoire et Sciences Sociales: Un Tournant critique," *Annales ESC*, 43 (1988), 291–293; and "Tentons l'expérience," *Annales ESC*, 44 (1989), 1317–1323.

27 For critical perspectives, see *François* Furet, "Beyond the Annales," *The Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983) 3, 389–410; and Antoine Prost, "What Has Happen to French Social History?" *The Historical Journal*, 35 (1992) 3, 671–679.

28 Georg G. Iggers, "Critical Theory and Social History: 'Historical Social Science' in the Federal Republic of Germany," in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 65–77; Breisach, "The Transformation of German Historiography," in *Historiography*, 378–385; Jürgen Kocka, "Theory and Social History: Recent Developments in West Germany," *Social Research,* 47 (1980) 2, 426–457. See also Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

29 Jürgen Kocka: "Theoretical Approches to Social and Economic History of Modern Germany: Some Recent Trends, Concepts, and Problems in Western and Eastern Germany," *Journal of Modern History,* 47 (May 1975) 1, 102.

to prominence by authors such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler[30] and Jürgen Kocka,[31] who came to be known as the "Bielefeld school." They proposed a new synthetic approach to the general history of society, called *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (societal history), best exemplified by Hans-Ulrich Wehler's magisterial *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*.[32] In the 1980s, this form of social science history was challenged by a new approach focusing on the history of everyday life, *Alltagsgeschichte*, a peculiar German form of "history from below," promoted by young historians, and having Alf Lüdtke as a main animator.[33]

By the 1980s, social history became deeply entrenched in mainstream academic life; in many countries, it had even reached a position of hegemony in humanities and social sciences. Soon, however, its dominance was challenged by the emergence of the "new cultural history." Surely, scholarly interest in culture was anything but new, as the venerable German tradition of *Kulturgeschichte* testifies. By the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century there were already numerous explicit attempts to define culture as a distinct field of inquiry, most notably in the influential work of such pioneering scholars as Jakob Burckhardt and Johan Huizinga.[34] Peter Burke identified the following stages in the evolution of the field of cultural history: the classical phase, at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century; the "social history of art" in the 1930s; the study of popular culture in the 1960s; and the "new cultural history" in the 1980s. The fate of Norbert Elias's book *The Civilizing Proc-*

30 See Hans-Ulrich Wehler: *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte* (Köln, Berlin: Kiepenheur u. Witsch, 1966); *The German Empire, 1871-1918* (Leamington Spa, UK: Berg, 1985); *Politische Sozialgeschichte, 1867-1945* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

31 Jürgen Kocka, *Facing total war: German society, 1914-1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984); For his view on social history, see Jürgen Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte. Begriff - Entwicklung - Probleme*, 2nd ed., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

32 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* 4 vols., (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987–2003).

33 Alf Lüdtke, "The Historiography of Everyday Life: The Personal and the Political," in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (London: Routledge-Paul, 1982), 38–54; Alf Lüdtke, "Stofflichkeit, Macht-Lust und Reiz der Oberflächen: Zu den Perspektiven von Alltagsgeschichte," in Winfried Schulze, ed., *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie: Eine Diskussion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1994), 65–80; Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). For general overviews of the history of everyday life and its relation to social history, see Volker Ullrich, "Alltagsgeschichte. Über einen neuen Geschichtstrend in der Bundesrepublik," *Neue Politische Literatur,* 29 (1984), 50-71; Roger Fletcher, "History from Below Comes to Germany: The New History Movement in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Journal of Modern History,* 60 (1988), 557-568; and David F. Crew, "*Altagsgeschichte*: A New Social History 'From Below?'" *Central European History*, 22 (1989), 394–407.

34 See Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1908); and Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Dawn of the Renaissance*, trans. by Fritz Hopman (London, 1924), originally published as *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen.*

ess, on the history of manners, can be taken as an emblem of the revival of cultural history, under new auspices: published in German in 1939, the book passed almost unnoticed, only to be rediscovered thirty years later following its translation into English (1969/1982), and to become one of the icons of the new cultural turn.[35]

The emergence of the "new cultural history" was part of the wider cultural turn in humanities and social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, political science, and the new interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. As Burke pertinently pointed out, the defining mark of the new turn was its "concern with the symbolic and its interpretation."[36] The most important influence came from the field of interpretative anthropology, having at its center Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural interpretation. Geertz differentiated between culture and social structures, regarding ideas, concepts, and values not as "shadows cast by the organization of society" but as "independent" and interdependent forces that should be studied in their own contexts.[37] Geertz defined culture not in view of its social function (as in Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology), but in view of its *meaning*: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of laws, but an interpretative one in search of meaning."[38] To analyze the meaning of cultural symbols, such as rites, rituals, institutions, or other belief systems, Geertz advanced a new methodology of microscopic anthropological research, called—with a notion borrowed from Gilbert Ryle—"thick description." His theory of culture exercised an enormous influence on humanities and social sciences.

The new cultural history was also deeply influenced by the linguistic and postmodern turns that took place in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively, marked by the theories developed by Richard Rotty,[39] Roland Barthes, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Michel Foucault, and the deconstructionst method of Jacques Derrida. These theories and methods have had a great impact on the writing of history. First, the linguistic turn increased the historians' awareness of and sensitivity to issues of vocabulary, terminology and social categorization, leading to novel approaches bridging conceptual and social history.[40] The German school of *Begriffsgeschicte* used the analysis of

35 Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, vol. 1, *Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes,* and vol. 2, *Wandlungen der Gesellschaft. Entwurf einer Theorie der Zivilisation* (Basel: Verlag Haus zum Falken, 1939). English edition: *The Civilizing Process*, vol.1, *The History of Manners* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), and vol. 2, *State Formation and Civilization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

36 Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 2nd ed., 3.

37 Cliford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essay* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 361–362.

38 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

39 Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

40 See Raymond Williams' pathbreaking work, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). On relections on the terminology of social

political discourses in order to explore not simply the history of political thought but also the social structures of a given society,[41] while British intellectual historians representing the "Cambridge school" focused on the discursive structures of "political languages."[42] Second, there occurred an expansion of anthropological and semiotic approaches to cultural and social history, facilitating the development of the history of gender and sexuality, oral history, and the history of everyday life. A plethora of new works explored the history of representations, of practices, of memory and remembering.[43] Applying the methodology of social constructivism, they pointed out to the construction of reality through the continuous production and reproduction of meaning. Third, social historians shifted their focus from macro-social to micro-social perspectives.[44] Microhistory enabled historians to gain new insights into patterns of behaviors at individual or collective levels; yet it also posed new theoretical and methodological challenges to historians, relating to the constriction of scales and the relation between micro and macro perspectives of research.

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history, see Alfred Cobban, "The Vocabulary of Social History," *Political Science Quarterly*, 71 (1956) 1, 1–17; Daniel Orlovsky, "Social History and its Categories," *Slavic Review,* 47 (1988) 4, 620–623.

41 Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe; historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, E. Klett, 1972–1997). See also works by Reinhart Koselleck: *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution: allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967); "*Begriffsgeschichte* and Social History," in *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. by Keith Tribe (London and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 73–92; and "Sozialgeschichte und Begriffsgeschichte" in Wolfgang Schieder and Volker Sellin, eds., *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland: Entwicklungen und Perspektiven im internationalen Zusammenhang,* 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1987), vol. 2, 89–107.

42 On the "Cambridge school" of "political languages," see John G. Pocock, Gordon J. Schochet and Lois G. Schwoerer, *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* 2 vols., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990–1992). For a comparison of the German and British schools, see Melvin Richter, "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe,*" *History and Theory,* 29 (1990) 1, 38–69.

43 For two of the most influential—indeed iconic books of the cultural turn—see Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

44 For paradigmatic works of microhistory, see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); and Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For theoretical reflections on microhistory, see Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 93–113; and Jacques Revel, "Micro-analyse construction du sociale" in Revel, ed., *La construction du social*, published in English as "Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social," in Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Histories: French constructions of the past*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: New Press, 1995), 492–502.

The cultural turn has deeply and irreversibly impacted the writing of social history. The massive changes it generated can be better understood by considering the evolution of the scholarly vision of some of the leading practitioners of social history. Let me employ here the example of Geoff Eley, whose outstanding and eventful career illustrates, in a remarkable manner, the sinuous evolution of the field of social history–drawing "a crooked line," as he suggestively defines it in his recent scholarly biography.[45] Eley was trained in Oxford, the UK, and made his debut in the academic profession in the 1970s in the United States, as a social historian specializing in German studies. In the 1980s, he turned away from social history and moved firmly into the field of the new cultural history. More recently, Eley advocates a broad history of society based on a synthesis between the "twin categories" of the social and the cultural. Under the suggestive title "Backing Away from the Social," Eley states unequivocally that:

> "Social history" simply isn't available anymore, whether in its most coherent and self-conscious materialist versions (Marxist, *Annaliste*, social-scientific) or in the more amorphous, but still aggrandizing, forms of the 1970s. In the form of the original project, "social history" has ceased to exist. ... The new cultural history took its place.[46]

Eley celebrated the end of social history project as a "liberation," unleashing the historians' imagination and opening the stage for new approaches:

> The move out of "social history" was both necessary and fruitful. With the loosening, during the 1980s, of the hold of "society" and "the social" on the analytical imagination—and of the determinative power of the social structure and its causal claims—the imaginative and epistemological space for other kinds of analysis could grow. The rich multiplications of new cultural histories ensued.

Yet, for Eley the end of social history does not mean the end of the scholarly interest in the social. On the contrary, he pleads for a merger between social and cultural history, under the form of sociocultural history. What are the main features of the new, emerging type of history writing? First, the new sociocultural history refutes the "polarized division between the 'social' and the 'cultural'" denouncing it as "a false categorical separation." Second, the new sociocultural history needs to restore the trust in "the possibility of grasping society as a whole, of theoretizing its bases of cohesion and instability and of analyzing its forms of motion." Finally, in order to return to the forefront of historical research, the new sociocultural history should renew its insurgent, militant spirit which is currently lacking.[47]

45 Geoff Eley, *Crooked Line. From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

46 Eley, *Crooked Line*, 189.

47 Eley, "Conclusion," *Crooked Line,* 200–203.

Is this broad sociocultural history of society conceived by Eley a "return" to, or even more, a "revenge" of social history?[48] Certainly, as Eley pertinently pointed out, the social history project of the 1960 and 1970 is exhausted. Yet it would be misleading and also counterproductive to simply proclaim the "victory" of the new cultural history over social history. It is more important to understand the deep impact these two rival yet deeply interrelated historiographical "turns" have had on the writing of history and the new insights they have generated.

LEGACIES AND PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL HISTORY IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE: TOWARD A "BELATED" SOCIAL TURN?

The evolution of scholarly research in the field of social history in the Soviet-dominated East Central Europe followed a markedly different dialectics than in post-1945 Western historiographies, for reasons that had to do, first and foremost, with the communist takeover. Soon after conquering the political power, as part of their new cultural policies, the ruling communist parties discontinued former institutes of research, purged politically undesirable scholars, and set academic research and education on new political-ideological foundations, emulating closely the Soviet model.

The brutal political repression and ideological control affected greatly academic research under the communist rule; in many ways, the harmful effects it generated are still to be overcome. Yet, in evaluating the communist historiography one should be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. Without doubt, the new political changes stimulated, in a certain manner, social history research. The official history writing was based on Marxism-Leninism, an ideology which placed a strong emphasis on class struggle and the history of the working class in order to account for political change in the modern period. Rigid as it was, the Marxist tripartite scheme of understanding human societies—made up of the economic base, the social structure and the cultural suprastructure—was conducive to social history research, focusing mostly on long term processes of socio-economic change. As a matter of fact, although social history is not necessarily leftist,[49] it was precisely the Marxism thought that provided the main theoretical and political inspiration to social historians in Western Europe. Notwithstanding the prevailing dogmatism, the adoption of Marxism as a theoretical framework fostered interest and sensitivity to the overall *problematique* of social history in East Central Europe as well. In this context, prominent East Central European economic and social historians and sociologists made notable scholarly contributions, mostly in the fields of industrialization, working class formation and working class movements, but also to the more general history of society.

48 See Jürgen Kocka's review of Eley, "*Crooked Line:* Returning to social history?," *History and Theory*, 47 (2008), 421–426; Burke, *What is cultural History?*, 114.

49 Jürgen Kocka, "What Is Leftist about Social History Today?" *Journal of Social History*, 29 (1995), 67–71

Surely, the evolution of social history in communist East Central Europe was far from monolithic. Beyond the common features generated by the regional imposition of the Soviet model, one can also identify significant country-specific differences. By and large, in countries where there existed strong pre-communist traditions of social research in history or social sciences; where Stalinist political purges in academia remained incomplete; or where the political control over scholarly research was relatively relaxed after the process of de-Stalinization, social history developed considerably. In contrast, in countries where pre-communist traditions of social history scholarship were limited; where political purges disrupted pre-Communist research networks almost completely; and were political control in academia remained strong even after Stalin's death, social history did not develop beyond an incipient stage. In order to illustrate the two contrasting poles, I shall briefly expand on the examples of Poland on the one hand, and Romania on the other, two case studies that are not discussed at length in this issue.

In Poland, social history developed in an incipient form since the interwar period, in close mutual interaction with the related fields of sociology and economic history. During that period, sociology was fully institutionalized in several major universities, the most important centers being the Institute of Social Economy in Warsaw led by Ludwik Krzywicki, and the Sociological Institute at the University of Poznań led by Florian Znaniecki, while the most important academic serial publication in the field was the *Polish Sociological Review*.[50] After the great disruptions caused by World War II and the temporary ban on teaching and research in sociology following the communist takeover (1951-1956), the Polish sociological school could recover and make significant contributions to the study of society.[51] Research on economic history in interwar Poland was also particularly strong. In 1931, two eminent economic historians, Jan Rutkowski and Franciszek Bujak established a scholarly journal titled *Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych* (*Annales d'histoire sociale et économique*) in Poznań, remarkably similar in scope to its French counterpart.[52]

50 For the evolution of Polish sociology, see Eileen Markley Znaniecka, "Sociology in Poland," *American Sociological Review*, 1 (1936) 2, 296–298; Theodore Abel, "Sociology in Postwar Poland," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (1950) 1, 104–106; Edmund Mokrzycki, "From Social Knowledge To Social Research the Case of Polish Sociology," *Acta Sociologica*, 17 (1974) 1, 48–54; Hieronim Kubiak, "Hopes, Illusions and Deceptions: Half a Century of Political Sociology in Poland," *Current Sociology*, 44 (1996) 3, 21–39; and Janusz Mucha, "Poland in Central and Eastern Europe, Polish Sociology within the Central European Context," *Journal of Classical Sociology, (*2006) 6, 251–256.

51 See the activity of the *Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne* (the Polish Sociological Association), established in 1957 under the leadership of Stanisław Ossowski, and the *Polish Sociological Bulletin* (1961–).

52 The journal was suspended from 1939 to 1946, a period covered only in vol. 8 (1946) no. 2. For a complete bibliography, see Wiesława Turczynowicz, *Bibliografia zawartości Roczników dziejów społecznych i gospodarczych*: t. I, 1931––t. XL, 1979, [Bibliography of the content of Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych. Vol. 1 (1931) – vol. XL (1979], vol. 1, (Warszawa : s.n., 1981).

Under these relatively favorable interdisciplinary auspices, social history research made significant progress in communist Poland.[53] One major area of research was the social history of medieval Poland, approached mostly from a legal-historical perspective and closely connected with the history of human settlements and internal colonization. While this tradition of research can be traced back to the nineteenth century[54], it is important to note that it continued uninterrupted through the interwar into the communist periods, generating a large body of works. During that time the paradigm of interpretation shifted considerably, yet a certain continuity in approach is still visible.[55] In the last two decades, Polish medievalists gradually redirected their main research interests from socio-economic aspects to the study of rituals and symbolic forms of power, thus moving closer to historical anthropology.

By and large, social history research in communist Poland concentrated on early modern and modern history. It was conducted mainly within specialized research groups organized at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, on various themes, mostly on agrarian relations, the emergence of capitalism, and the history of the working class. One such group was created and directed by the eminent historian Witold Kula.[56] Although Kula initially started as an economic historian, he was more and more drawn into social history, and later

53 For a historical synthesis on the social history of Poland, see Ireneusz Ihnatowicz, Antoni Mączak, and Benedykt Zientara, *Społeczeństwo polskie od X do XX wieku* [Polish society from the 10th to the 20th century] (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1979). An enlarged edition, with additional chapters by Janusz Żarnowski on the period 1914–1945, was published in 1988 and reprinted several times.

54 For an early example of this "legalist" approach to social history, see Michał Bobrzyński, "Geneza społeczeństwa polskiego na podstawie kroniki Galla i dyplomatów XII w" [The Genesis of the Polish society on the basis of the chronicle of Gallus and 12th century diplomas], in *Szkice i studia historyczne* [Historical essays and studies], vol. 1 (Cracow: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1922), 88–158 (first published in 1881).

55 See Benedykt Zientara, *Henryk Brodaty i jego czasy* [Henry the Bearded and his times] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975). German edition: *Heinrich der Bärtige und seine Zeit. Politik und Gesellschaft im mitelalterlichen Schlesien*, trans. by P.O. Loew (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2002); Karol Modzelewski, *Chłopi w monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej* [The peasantry in the early Piast monarchy] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1987). Relatively recent examples are: Andrzej Janeczek, *Osadnictwo pogranicza polsko-ruskiego. Województwo bełskie od schyłku XIV do początku XVII wieku* [The settlements on the Polish-Ruthenian borderland. The voivodship of Bełz from late 14th till early 17th centuries] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1991); and Grzegorz Jawor, *Osady prawa wołoskiego i ich mieszkańcy na Rusi Czerwonej w późnym średniowieczu* [The settelments on Valachian law and their inhabitants in Red Ruthenia in the late Middle Ages] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwesrytetu Marii Curie Skłodowskiej, 2004), 2nd ed.

56 Witold Kula, Janina Leskiewiczowa, eds., *Przemiany społeczne w Królestwie Polskim 1815-1864* [Social changes in the Polish Kingdom, 1815–1864] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1979), a synthetic volume representative for the research activity of the research group formed around Kula.

even into anthropology.[57] His laborious work, spanning several decades, was highly influential in Poland as well as outside the country. Particularly influential was also the group coordinated by Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis on the social history of the Polish intelligentsia in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries,[58] inspiring a major direction of research in recent Polish historiography.[59]

The history of the working class, written from a Marxist perspective, was obviously another major direction of research. A majority of dogmatic works in the field was intimately connected with the official communist interpretation of history; yet others deviated from the official line in significant ways. Among the numerous historians working in this field one should mention Anna Żarnowska covering the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century,[60] and Janusz

57 See, selectively, the following works by Witold Kula (mostly on economic history): *Teoria ekonomiczna ustroju feudalnego: próba modelu* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Nauk., 1962); English edition: *An economic theory of the feudal system: Towards a model of the Polish economy, 1500–1800* (London: N.L.B., 1976); *Kształtowanie się kapitalizmu w Polsce* [Formation of capitalism in Poland] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1955); *Szkice o manufakturach w Polsce XVIII wieku* [Essays on manufactures in Poland in 18th century], 2 vols., (Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1956); *Problemy i metody historii gospodarczej* (Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1963); English edition: *The problems and methods of economic history* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2001). On social history, see *Miary i Ludzie* (Warszawa 1970). English edition: *Measures and Men* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1986). For a synthetic perspective on Witold Kula's work, see *Dziedzictwo Witolda Kuli* [Legacy of Witold Kula] (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1990).

58 Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis, *"Klassa umysłowa." Inteligencja Królestwa Polskiego, 1832–1862* [The intellectual class. The intelligentsia of the Polish Kingdom 1832–1862] (Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1973). For works published by this research group, see Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis, ed., *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX w.* [Polish intelligentsia in the 19th and the 20th centuries], 6 vols., (Warsaw, 1979–1991); and Stefania Kowalska-Glikman, ed., *Drobnomieszczaństwo XIX i XX w* [The small bourgeoisie In the 19th-20th centuries], 3 vols., (Warsaw, 1984, 1988, 1992). The last book by Ryszarda Czepulis Rastenis, *Ludzie nauki i talentu: studia o świadomości społecznej inteligencji polskiej w zaborze rosyjskim* [People of learning and talent. Studies on social consciousness of Polish intelligentsia in the Russian partition] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988), is methodologically different, since it deals with the subjective consciousness of the educated strata rather than with "hard" statistics and prosopographical analysis. This evolution is illustrative of a more general trend in the Polish social history of the last decades.

59 See Józef Borzyszkowski, *Inteligencja polska w Prusach Zachodnich 1848–1920* [Polish Intelligentsia in West Prussia] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1986); and Irena Homola. *Kwiat społeczeństwa. (Struktura społeczna i zarys położenia inteligencji krakowskiej w latach 1860–1914)* [The Cream of society. (Social structure and outline of the situation of the intelligentsia in Cracow, 1860–1914)] (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1984).

60 Anna Żarnowska, "Spojrzenie na rewolucję 1905 roku w polskiej historiografii – garść refleksji" [A look at the 1905 Revolution In the Polish historiography – a few reflections], *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, CXIII (2006) 4, 59–94, a comprehensive bibliographical essay on research on the history of the working class at the turn of nineteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Żarnowski on interwar Poland.[61] Overall, in communist Poland social history was a rich and relatively diversified field of study. It is telling in this respect that many research projects on social history initiated during the communism period continued, even if in a different form, in the post-communist period as well.[62]

In Romania, research on social history developed mainly in the context of the "great debate" over competing models of development which unfolded in the political and intellectual life of the country since the middle of the nineteenth century.[63] This debate reached a high degree of theoretical sophistication during the interwar period, involving, among others, the neo-liberal sociologist Ştefan Zeletin,[64] the social-democratic intellectual Şerban Voinea,[65] the corporatist theoretician Mihail Manoilescu,[66] the peasantist economist Virgil Madgearu,[67] and the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti and his

61 Janusz Żarnowski: *Społeczeństwo Polski międzwojennej* [The society of interwar Poland] (Warszawa, Wiedza Powszechna, 1969); *Struktura społeczna inteligencji w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* [Social Structure of Intelligentsia in Poland] (Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1964); *Polska 1918-1939: praca, technika, społeczeństwo* [Poland 1918–1939: Labour, technology, society] (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1992).

62 For recent works on social history, see Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Niemiecka interwencja militarna na Ukrainie w 1918 roku* [German military intervention in the Ukraine in 1918] (Warsaw 2000), a work focusing mainly on the peasantry; Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Inteligencja polska na Wołyniu w okresie międzywojennym* [Polish intelligentsia in the Interwar Volhynia] (Warsaw: Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN, 2005); and Helena Datner, *Ta i tamta strona. Żydowska inteligencja Warszawy drugiej połowy XIX wieku* [This and that side. The Jewish intelligentsia of Warsaw in the second half of the nineteenth century] (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2007). A new series of books published since 1990 by the Trio publishing house, entitled "W Krainie PRL" [In the Country of PRL (Polish People's Republic, 1949–1989)] investigated the everyday life and various aspects of sociocultural history of Poland under communism. The series published mainly works of members of the doctoral seminar conduced by Professor Marcin Kula (the son of Witold Kula), but also researchers from other centres. See e.g. Błażej Brzostek, *Za progiem. Codzienność w przestrzeni publicznej Warszawy 1955-1970* [Outdoors. Every day life in the public space of Warsaw] (Warsaw: W Krainie PRL, 2007).

63 For an overview of this debate, see Keith Hitchins, "Models of Development," in *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 55–89.

64 Ştefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română. Originea şi rolul ei istoric* [The Romanian bourgeoisie. Its origins and historical role] (Bucharest: Nemira, 1997). For a very useful introductory overview of the sociological debates on Romania's social history, see Henry H. Stahl, *Gânditori şi curente de istorie socială românească* [Thinkers and trends in the Romanian social history] (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2001).

65 Şerban Voinea, *Marxism oligarhic: Contribuţie la problema desvoltării capitaliste a României* [Oligarhic Marxism: Contribution to the problem of the capitalist development of Romania] (Bucharest: Brănişteanu, 1926).

66 Mihail Manoilescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme; doctrine du corporatisme intègral et pur* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934).

67 Virgil N. Madgearu, *Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism: Contribuţiuni la studiul evoluţiei sociale româneşti* [Agrarianism, capitalism, imperialism: Contributions to the study of the Romanain social evolution] (Bucharest: Economistul, 1936); *Rostul şi destinul burgheziei româneşti* [The role and destiny of the Romanian bourgeoisie] (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1942).

monographic sociological school inspired by Frédéric Le Play.[68] After the communist takeover in 1945, this rich scholarly tradition was brutally interrupted, as communist authorities dismantled previous research schools, irrespective of their sharp theoretical and political divisions, and purged its most representative historians and social scientists.[69] Gheorghe Brătianu, a social historian trained in Paris and influenced by the first generation of the French *Annales* school, died in prison in 1950.[70] The Communist leadership also purged Lucretiu Pătrăşcanu (1900–1954), Romania's most representative Marxist social thinker.[71] In addition, sociology was banned as a bourgeois science and, unlike in Poland, it did not experience a comeback until 1990.[72]

In the first decade following the communist takeover, the official Marxist historiography failed to substantiate its new interpretation of history with elaborate works on social history. Instead, its priority was to counter the main tenets of the interwar bourgeois nationalism, accompanied by the promotion of an alternative vision of the Romanian national identity. The first Marxist synthesis of Romania's history, coordinated by Mihail Roller (1908-1958), denied the Latin origins of the Romanians, instead crediting the Slavs with a formative role in the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people; it also emphasized the "progressive" role played by Russia and the Soviet Union in the evolution of modern Romania. The emergence of social history as a distinct branch of Marxist historiography occurred only gradually in the late 1950s, stimulated mainly by historians trained in the interwar period, such as Petre

68 For one emblematic product of the monographic school coordinated by Gusti, see *Enciclopedia României*, 4 vols. (Bucharest: Imprimeria națională, 1936–1944). On Gusti's activity see Zoltán Rostás*, Dimitrie Gusti and the Bucharest School of Sociology* (Iaşi: Center for Romanian Studies, 2007).

69 For the historiographical policies of the Romanian Communist Party, see Vlad Georgescu, *Politică şi istorie. Cazul comuniştilor români, 1944–1977* [Politics and History. The Case of Romanian Communists, 1944–1977] (Munich: J. Dumitru Verlag, 1983); Şerban Papacostea, "Captive Clio: Romanian Historiography Under Communist Rule," *European History Quarterly,* 26 (1996), 181–209. For recent developments, see Bogdan Murgescu, *A fi Istoric in anul 2000* [To Be a Historian in the year 2000] (Bucharest: All, 2000).

70 Gheorghe Brătianu, *Sfatul domnesc şi adunarea stărilor în Principatele Române* [The princely council and the assembly of estates] (Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică, 1995). His masterpiece, *La mer Noire, des origines à la conquête ottomane* (Monachii: Societas academica Dacoromana, 1969), a creative application of the *Annales* school methodology to the case study of the Black Sea, was published for the first time in 1969 in French, and only in 1980 in Romanian.

71 Lucretiu Pătrăşcanu: *Sub trei dictaturi* [Under three dictatorships] (Bucharest: Forum, 1944); *Un veac de frământări sociale, 1821–1907* [A century of social upheaval, 1821–1907] (Bucharest: Cartea Rusa, 1945); *Problemele de bază ale României* [Fundamental issues of Romania] (Bucharest: Editura de stat, 1946).

72 For the tribulations of the Romanian sociology, see the fate of the journal *Sociologie Românească* [Romanian Sociology], founded in 1936 by Dimitrie Gusti, suspended after World War II, reestablished in 1990 until 1996, and again in 1999–. See the website at http://www.sociologieromaneasca.ro/index.htm

Constantinescu-Iaşi, P. P. Panaitescu[73] and Andrei Oţetea.[74] The latter served for a long period as the director of the Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga" (1947–1948, 1956–1970). As the editor of the manuscripts of Karl Marx discovered at the IISH (Amsterdam),[75] and the coordinator of another massive synthesis of Romania's history, Oţetea was instrumental in recovering traditional views on the Romanian national identity, supported by a peculiar blend between Marxism and nationalism.

Research on social history further expanded in the 1960's and 70s, when numerous studies explored agrarian relations, the process of nascent industrialization, the emergence of capitalist relations of productions, the "decline" of the landowning aristocracy, and the rise of the bourgeoisie[76] and of the working class, all from a Marxist perspective. Starting in the late 1970s, social history research lost ground in favor of the preferred topics of the rise of the national movement and the development of the national identity. (Signs of this development were already visible in the historiography on Transylvania, in which social history issues were subsumed to the history of the Romanian national movement, on the count that the social and the national questions were closely intertwined.[77]) Due to political interdictions, some of the most valuable and far-reaching research projects on social history could not be carried out to their full completion. The fate of the leading historian Vlad Georgescu

73 Petre P. Panaitescu: *Mihai Viteazul* [Michael the Brave] (Bucharest: Fundaţia Regele Carol I, 1936); *Obştea ţărănească în Ţara Românească şi Moldova: orînduirea feudală* [The peasant commune in Wallachia and Moldova: The feudal regime] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1964).

74 Andrei Oţetea, *Marea rascoală a ţăranilor din 1907* [The great peasant revolt of 1907] Bucharest: Editura Academiei , 1967); and Andrei Oţetea, ed., et al, *Istoria poporului român* [The history of the Romanian people] (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1970).

75 Karl Marx, *Insemnări despre Români: (Ms. inedite)*, ed. by Andrei Oţetea (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1964); English edition: *Notes About the Rumanians: Unpublished Manuscripts* (Washington: U. S. Joint Publications Research Service, 1965).

76 The most significant contributions in this field were made by Gheorghe Platon in the 1980s and, more recently, by Alexandru-Florin Platon. For a synthetic view, see Gheorghe Platon, *Istoria modernă a României* [Modern History of Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1985). For recent works, see Gheorghe Platon, and Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Boierimea din Moldova în secolul al XIX-lea: context european, evoluţie socială şi politică (date statistice şi observaţii istorice)* [The boyars of Moldavia in the 19th century. European context, social and political evolution (statistical data and historical observation)] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1995); Alexandru-Florin Platon. *Geneza burgheziei în Principatele Române: A doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea - prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea: preliminariile unei istorii* [The Genesis of the bourgeoisie in the Romanian Principalities: The second half of the XVIIIth century, the first half of the XIXth century. Preliminaries of a history] (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "A.I. Cuza", 1997).

77 See, selectively, David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum or The Political Struggle of the Romanians in Transylvania During the 18th Century* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1971); David Prodan, *Iobăgia în Transilvania în secolul al XVII-lea* [Serfdom in Transylvania in the 17th century] (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1986); and Ştefan Pascu, *A History of Transylvania* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982).

is relevant in this respect. In the early 1970s, at the Institute of South-Eastern European Studies in Bucharest, Georgescu conducted cliometric research on the history of the Romanian socio-political elites and of the political thought in the principalities.[78] In the 1980s, having his research heavily censored, Georgescu was forced to emigrate to the West, where he remained active in the dissident movement, as the Director of the Romanian Service of Radio Free Europe. His research program was discontinued, being pursued only individually by some of his former collaborators or by younger researchers, such as Elena Siupur and Sorin Rădulescu.[79]

In the dogmatic political context of the 1980s, meaningful original work could be conducted almost exclusively in the domains of cultural and intellectual history, which were not directly tied to the official propaganda of the regime and thus sheltered, to a certain extent, from ideological intervention. Even if restricted to a handful of authors, the cultural turn in humanities and social sciences influenced Romanian historiography as well, particularly in its French variants and coming mostly via the more receptive field of literary studies. The most important contributions to cultural studies were made by Pompiliu Teodor on the intellectual history of the Enlightenment at the University of Cluj; by Alexandru Duțu on the comparative history of mentalities at the Institute of South-East European Studies, Bucharest; and by Lucian Boia on the history of the imaginary, at the University of Bucharest.[80] Another major direction of research was the history of historiography. The works by Alexandru Zub at the Institute of History and Archeology "A. D. Xenopol" in Iaşi, and of Lucian Boia, were the most important in the field; in the

78 See Vlad Georgescu: *Political Ideas and the Enlightenment in the Romanian Principalities, 1750-1831* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1971); *Istoria ideilor politice româneşti, 1369-1878* [The history of the Romanian political ideas, 1369–1878] (Munich: J. Dumitru Verlag, 1987); see also his synthesis of Romanain history published in exile: *Istoria românilor de la origini până în zilele noastre* (Los Angeles: American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1984); English editions: *The Romanians: A history*, trans. by Alexandra Bley-Vroman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991).

79 Elena Siupur, "The Training of Intellectuals in South-East Europe during the 19th Century. The Romanian Model," *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes,* (1986) 2, 469–490; and Sorin Mihai Rădulescu, *Elita liberală românească, 1866-1900* [The Romanian liberal elite] (Bucharest: Editura All, 1994).

80 See Pompiliu Teodor, *Enlightenment and Romanian Society* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1980); Alexandru Duțu: *Romanian Humanists and European Culture: A Contribution to Comparative Cultural History* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1977); *Humanisme, baroque, lumières: l'exemple roumain* (Bucharest, 1984); *Literatura comparată şi istoria mentalităţilor* [Comparative literature and the history of mentalities] (Bucharest: Univers, 1981); *Les livres de sagesse dans la culture roumaine; Introduction á l'histoire des mentalités sud-est européennes* (Bucharest: [s.n.], 1971); *European Intellectual Movements and Modernization of Romanian Culture* (Bucharest, 1981); Lucian Boia: *L'exploration imaginaire de l'espace* (Paris: La Dècouverte, 1987); *La fin du monde: une histoire sans fin* (Paris: La Dècouverte, 1989); and, more recently, *Pour une histoire de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1998).

post-communist period, the two historians led the campaign of demythologizing Romanian historiography.[81]

These individual scholarly achievements notwithstanding, social history failed to fully consolidate as a distinct field of study in communist Romania. It is very telling in this respect that, although issues pertaining to social history did permeate mainstream Marxist synthesis of Romanian history, the "social" never gained an autonomous status, being mentioned in title chapters only as part of more general formulas such as "socio-economic history" or "economic and socio-political history." In the post-communist period, the main impulses for the rejuvenation of social history came from members of the former interwar sociological school, most notably Henri H. Stahl, or from the emerging field of studies of communism.[82]

The contrasting cases of Poland and Romania prove that, in evaluating communist historiographies, one should be careful not to extrapolate national trends at a regional level; yet, it is safe to appreciate that social history in communist East Central Europe never became the dominant *histoire-reine*, a self-conscious, all encompassing and expanding paradigm that would match similar developments in Western European historiographies. The excessive politicization and control of history writing left little room for genuine debates on the theoretical and methodological foundations of social history. Instead of critical, creative and interdisciplinary applications of the Marxist social theory, official communist historiography imposed a rigid and teleological schema of historical periodization, accompanied by an almost unilateral and propagandistic focus on working class formation and the political history of the ruling communist parties. While in certain contexts deviation from the official interpretation of history was tolerated, it was done at heavy personal costs and involved unavoidable concessions. In addition, substantive research on the social fabrics of communist societies was seen as potentially undermining the regime and was therefore suppressed.

It was only in the post-communist period that the potential of social history research could develop unhampered. First, the liberalization of political life made research possible on subjects that had previously been considered taboo.[83] Second, freed from political constraints, social history has become institutionalized in new research institutes or academic departments in the region, such as: the Institute of

81 See Alexandru Zub, *Mihail Kogălniceanu, istoric* (Iaşi: Junimea 1974); and Lucian Boia: *Evoluţia istoriografiei române* [The Evolution of Romanian Historiography] (Bucharest: Universitatea din Bucureşti, 1976); and *Ètudes d'historiographie* (Bucharest: Université de Bucarest, 1985); *Istorie şi mit în conştiinţa românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997); English edition: *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).

82 See Henri H. Stahl, *Probleme confuze in istoria socială a României* [Controversial issues in Romania's social history] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1992).

83 For overviews of historiography in post-communist East Central Europe, see mainly Ulf Brunnbauer, ed., *(Re)Writing History in Southeast Europe after Socialism* (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 2004); and Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, and Péter Apor, eds., *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2007).

Economic and Social History of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University, founded in 1990 with the declared aim of "filling a gap in Czech historiography through its focus on economic and social history;"[84] the Department of Economic and Social History, ELTE University, Budapest; the Centre of Social History at the Institute of General History, the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow; the Association for Social History, established in Belgrade in 1998, etc. This renewed wave of interest in social history is also illustrated by the appearance of new specialized publications, such as: *Prager wirtschafts- und sozialhistorische Mitteilungen/Prague Economic and Social History Papers*, established in 1990; the *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju/Annual for Social History*, published in Belgrade since 1994; *Revista de Istorie Socială* (The Review of Social History), published since 1996 by the Polirom publishing house in Iasi, Romania; *The Russian Social History Yearbook/Social'naja istorija. Ezhegodnik* published in Moscow since 1998 (with the support of the International Institute of Social History); and the Hungarian journal *Korall társadalomtörténeti folyóirat* (Coral: A Journal of Social History) founded in 1999 as a new forum of social history research.

These developments suggest that we are witnessing a social (re)turn in East Central European historiographies, which, given the decline of social history in Western Europe, has passed largely unnoticed.[85] The paths to this social turn have been sinuous and variegated. In some cases, the path led back to the pre-communist past in order to recover interwar traditions of social history. In others, it involved the continuation, in a new context, of valuable research projects initiated under socialism. Yet, in other cases, the revival of social history was intrinsically linked with the emergence of a new generation of researchers, often trained abroad, promoting interdisciplinary methods of research.[86] They have engaged with social history themes by way of related sub-fields of research, such as gender and women's studies, urban studies, or the history of national movements.

Last but not least, the revival of the interest in the social in East Central Europe owes a great deal to the scholarly interaction and exchange with Western so-

84 For this statement of purpose, see http://uhsd.ff.cuni.cz/index_en.htm.html, retrieved on March 27, 2007.

85 For overviews of the field of social history in post-communist East Central Europe see, on Hungary: Zsombor Bódy and József Ö. Kovács, eds., *Bevezetés a társadalomtörténetbe* [Introduction to Social History] (Budapest: Osiris, 2003); on Romania see Alexandru-Florin Platon, Cristina Ohina-Vavie, and Jacques-Guy Petit, eds., *Noi perspective asupra istoriei sociale în România şi Franţa/Nouvelles perspectvies de l'histoire sociale en France et en Roumanie* (Iaşi: Editura Universitii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2003); on the GDR, see Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 1999); and Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger GmbH, 1994).

86 For examples of social history research, see Roumen Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto obshtestvo, 1878-1939* [The Bulgarian society, 1878–1939], 2 vols. (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2005); and Gábor Gyáni, *Parlor and Kitchen: Housing and Domestic Culture in Budapest, 1870-1940* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2002).

cial history, sociology and anthropology. This trend is best exemplified by studies on communism, which I believe was the most productive field of cross-fertilization between Eastern and Western historiographies. Back in the 1960s and 70s, a new generation of Western social historians changed the face of comparative communist studies in general, and that of Soviet studies, in particular. These "revisionist" historians—as they came to be referred to in the debate with "traditional" Sovietologists,—rejected simplified accounts of communist societies as being made up solely of the ruling communist elite and the working people or, in moral terms, of "victims" and "victimizers," with no intermediary social strata in-between.[87] Instead, social historians emphasized the complexity of communist societies, made up of a multitude of social strata and interest groups who vied for political power and influence.[88] In the 1980s and 1990s, communist studies were further transformed by a new generation of anthropologists and cultural historians who conducted fieldwork in the Soviet-dominated East Central Europe.[89] Informed by primary research and equipped with a set of innovative theories and methods, anthropologists and cultural historians promoted a new research agenda aimed at the interdisciplinary study of communist societies focusing, among other things, on time and space, everyday life and everyday culture, social and political relations, political discourses and the issue of national identity, all studied in their original loci.[90]

87 For the new revisionist trend, see Stephen F. Cohen, "Stalin's Terror As Social History," *Russian Review*, 45 (1986) 4, 375–384; William Case, "Social History and the Revisionism of the Stalinist Era," *Russian Review*, 46 (1987) 4, 382–385; and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Revision and Retreat in the Historiography of 1917: Social History and its Critics," *Russian Review*, 3 (1994) 2, 165–182.

88 See for example, H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

89 For the methodology and political implications of field research in communist societies, see Joel Martin Halpern and David A. Kideckel, "Anthropology of Eastern Europe," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 12 (1983), 377–402; Steven L. Sampson and David A. Kideckel, "Anthropologists Going into the Cold: Research in the Age of Mutually Assured Destruction," in Paul Turner and David Pitt Hadley, eds., *The Anthropology of War and Peace* (Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvery, 1989), 160–173; Katherine Verdery, "How I Became Nationed," in Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, eds., *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 341–344.

90 As main representatives of this trend, I mention selectively: Gail Kligman, *Călus: Symbolic Transformation in Romanian Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1991); Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites, eds., *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Due to political interdictions, "local" historical writing in communist East Central Europe shunned these international research endeavors. It was only in the post-communist period that the dialogue and exchange between Eastern and Western historiographies could freely intensify. In the 1990's, one could already identify the beneficial effects of this interchange. On the one hand, Western authors have gradually adjusted their research agenda addressing local issues and concerns, such as nationalism and national identity. On the other hand, emulating Western scholarship, numerous new works authored by young scholars in the region approached the study of communism with the specific tools and methods of political science, oral history, and social and cultural anthropology. These developments have contributed to a gradual shift in the local research agenda from political to sociocultural history, and to an increasingly interdisciplinary orientation and scholarly interaction. The growing convergence of research and the multiple avenues of international institutional collaboration have blurred the sharp distinction between "Western vs. Eastern," or "local vs. external" scholarship.

SOCIAL HISTORY IN POST-COMMUNIST EAST CENTRAL EUROPE: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

The revival of research on social history in post-communist East Central Europe poses a set of intriguing research questions, such as: Is the new wave of social history research in East Central Europe a return to the good, old social history of the 1960 and 1970s, so that everything old "is new again" in the region? Or, can one speak of the emergence of a new type of sociocultural history, based on a synthesis between the research agenda of social history and the cultural turn? What is the impact of the post-1989 convergence between East and West on the evolution of social history? In order to tackle some of these research questions, the current thematic issue of the journal *East Central Europe* brings together local and Western scholars, engaging them in a collaborative critical rethinking of the theoretical underpinnings and research agenda of social history.[91] The thematic issue is organized in two sections. The first section encompasses general overviews of social history research in the last decades in various countries, namely Germany, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Greece, followed by three regional overviews focusing on the institutionalization of gender studies, on historical anthropology, and on the history of everyday life. In these countries, and in East Central Europe in general, the evolution of history writing was influenced by sweeping domestic, regional, and global political changes, marked by the collapse of the communist regimes, geo-political reorganization, and the process of the European Union's eastwards enlargement. As former members of

91 The thematic issue is the result of an interdisciplinary conference entitled "Social History in East Central Europe: Regional Perspectives in Global Context," organized by the Department of History, and Pasts, Inc., Center for Historical Studies, Central European University, Budapest, in November 2005.

the Soviet-dominated camp, East Germany, Bulgaria, and Estonia shared a Soviet/communist legacy, amply manifest in the field of historiography as well. Apart from these common features, there were significant differences, highlighted in these country reports.

East Germany experienced not only radical political transformation and institutional reorganization, but also a process of state dissolution, accompanied by instant integration of the Eastern *Länder* into the West German federal institutions, and accession to the supranational institutions of the European Community. These changes had profound implications for the institutional re-organization of history in general, and the writing of history in particular.[92] In the first article of the issue, titled "Not Dusk, But Dawn: The Cultural Turn and German Social History after 1990," Arnd Bauerkämper provides a critical overview of the evolution of social history in West German historiography and its transformation following the process of German unification in 1990. Bauerkämper argues that, since its emergence as a distinct sub-field of research, social history in West Germany developed in polemical confrontations with the proponents of traditional but still dominant political history in the 1960s and 70s, on the one hand, and with the proponents of cultural history and the history of everyday life in the 1980s, on the other. The political changes set into motion by the collapse of the communist systems and the process of German unification reconfigured the terms of these historiographical debates. The challenge of writing the social history of communist GDR has been one of the vectors of change in the unified German historiography, stimulating synthetic perspectives uniting social, cultural and political history in novel ways. Bauerkämper focuses on the emergence of new forms of sociocultural history characterized by cultural constructivist approaches to issues of identity, agency and subjectivity. In order to illustrate the innovative contribution cultural constructivist approaches might make to the effort of writing the history of the GDR, Bauerkämper discussed several important topics of research, namely the impact of the communist takeover on GDR's social structures and relations, mostly in regard to the change of political elites, the nationalization and collectivization of industry and agriculture and the new opportunities for internal migration and social mobility for the rural population, and the intrusion of the communist political power into everyday life. Bauerkämper argues that the new scholarship on the GDR has also promoted comparative studies and investigations into cross-border entanglements and transfers, further undermining national paradigms of investigation.

In Bulgaria, post-communist political transformation was not accompanied by crises of unification or state- (re)building as happened in East Germany. The main issues in the process of institutional reform in the field of historiography were the break with the communist past, the emancipation of the history writing from political interference, and the renewal of ties with the international research community.

92 Stefan Berger, "Former GDR Historians in the Reunified Germany: An Alternative Historical Culture and its Attempts to Come to Terms with the GDR Past," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38 (2003) 1, 63–83.

In his article, Roumen Daskalov focuses on the evolution of the field of social history in Bulgaria, emphasizing the complex pattern of continuities and raptures with the communist historiography. He reviews major studies on the social history of modern Bulgaria written mostly during the communist period, and critically reflects on the peculiarities of Marxist interpretation of the history of Bulgaria, with its emphasis on labor history and the issue of class struggle. Against this background, Daskalov evaluates new trends and developments in the field of social history, such as the emergence of gender and women's history, oral history, history of everyday life, historical anthropology, etc. In the end, Daskalov presents his own attempt to provide an encompassing "history of the society" (*Gesellschaftsgeschichte*) of modern Bulgaria within the interval 1878 to 1939. Daskalov places his endeavor within the larger historiographical context of the revival of new—critical and nuanced—grand narratives on modernization. This interesting example of transfer to post-communist East Central Europe of a major social history paradigm elaborated in West Germany testifies to the prestige enjoyed and the influence exerted by the "Bielefeld school" in this region; it also raises interesting questions concerning the timing of these transfers and exchanges, and their implications.

While sharing a Soviet legacy with other countries in East Central Europe, in terms of post-communist transformation Estonia belongs to a different analytical category, that of "restored states". Liberated from the Soviet occupation in 1991, Estonia embarked on a process of intensive state-(re)building, marked by a rapid transition from a Soviet republic to a sovereign political entity. As part of the effort to recreate Estonian national institutions, historians severed their ties with the former Soviet Marxist historiography and engaged in constructing a new national master narrative centered on the history of their newly independent country. Olaf Mertelsmann argues that the development of post-Soviet Estonian historiography has been influenced by three major factors: 1) the Soviet legacy; 2) the agrarian character of the Estonian society in the twentieth century; and 3) the smallness of the academic community. In the early 1990s, there was a shift from Marxist-oriented social history, focusing mainly on history of the peasantry and of the working class, to the dominance of political history. More recently, the expansion of the educational system at graduate level, and a renewed interaction with the international scholarly community resulted in a more dynamic and pluralistic research community in Estonia. A new generation of historians tackles new topics of research pertaining to medieval, early modern, and modern history by means of up-to-date methodological outlooks, focusing mainly on the history of elites, the history of education, nationalism, history of everyday life, and gender and women's history. Social history has been at the forefront of these new historiographical trends. An important part of the new social history research in Estonia focuses on the recent communist past; given the fact that access to Soviet archives has been restricted until recently, researchers have mainly employed oral history research. As a result, a vast amount of oral history sources has been collected since the late 1980s, made up of life stories, issue-oriented interviews, and ethnological questionnaires. Oral history has consequently emerged as a major field of research in Estonia.

In Greece, the process of institutional transformation and historiographical change has followed a different chronology than in former communist countries and goes back to the legacy of the Civil War following World War Two (1946–1949), and to the process of democratization and European integration initiated with vigor in the mid-1970s after the fall of the dictatorship commonly known as the "Regime of the Colonels" (1967–1974). Beyond these major differences, the evolution of recent Greek historiography shares certain similarities with other cases in East Central Europe. On the background of this political context, Yannis Yannitsiotis explores contested narratives within the Greek historiography during the last three decades related to the study of the social history of modern Greece. He argues that social history failed to become an established field of study in Marxist Greek historiography. Although there was a general and vaguely defined interest in social matters, these topics were subordinated to the paramount interest in economic modernization and modern Greece's relation to the West. Social history emerged as an autonomous field only in the 1990s, finding inspiration in the tradition of British Marxism, mostly in the sub-fields of labor history and "history from below." In a rich and informative overview, Yannitsiotis documents the shift from the prevalence of political history during the 1970s, to the emergence of social history during the 1990s, inspired mostly by E. P. Thompson's approach, and the recent dominance of sociocultural approaches. Yannitsiotis argues that the main vector of historiographical transformation was the emergence of gender and women's studies, which questioned mainstream Marxist social concepts, such as class, promoting instead critical cultural approaches to individual and collective identities.

These national overviews are supplemented by three articles that focus on the evolution of certain disciplines of study at a regional level: gender and women's studies, historical anthropology, and the history of everyday life under socialist dictatorships. As it was made obvious in Yannitsiotis' article as well, social history has been closely tied to the emergence of new fields of study, such as gender and women's history, as part of the overall trend of writing history from below. The evolution of these novel fields cannot be discussed only at historiographical level, without paying attention to the institutional dimension of this process, such as: their acceptance as "legitimate" research fields by the larger academic world, their insertion into teaching, research, and writing at undergraduate and graduate university levels, and the changing institutional status of these newly-established disciplines and the political debates associated with them. Susan Zimmerman provides a comprehensive overview of the institutionalization of gender and women's studies in East Central Europe, and evaluates their prospects for the future. She integrates institutional change in higher education in the context of post-communist transformation, reflecting on the role of universities in particular, and the production of specialized academic knowledge in general, in the contemporary globalized and rapidly changing societies. Her contextual analysis emphases the interplay among various actors involved in the process of institution-building and transformation, such as academics, NGO's and women activists, and state dignitaries and politicians involved in decision making processes. She takes into account national as well as international factors that

shaped these processes, thus providing a relational and transnational treatment of this complex issue at a regional level. Based on a detailed and informative discussion of the process of innovative institutional-building and transformation in the field of higher education in East Central Europe, Zimmerman argues that gender and women's studies have been "an area of exceptional growth" in the region, providing an example of a success story. Yet, remarkable as it is, this success does not seem irreversible; gender and women's studies remain vulnerable to institutional constraints or potentially hostile political pressure.

In an article intriguingly titled "A promising liaison?," Ulf Brunnbauer evaluates the implications of the recent rapprochement between historical and anthropological research in Southeastern Europe. Brunnbauer points out that, although ethnography has a venerable tradition in the region, until recently it developed only a scant interest in social structures and social change, focusing instead on "folk" culture reified as a static and immutable reality of village communities. Historians, on their part, focused their research mostly on the political history of their nation, at the expense of in-depth social or cultural research. During the last two decades, the interaction between history and anthropology/ethnology has significantly increased, leading to innovative theoretically minded and comparative research. On the one hand, historians have engaged in oral history research on the recent past; on the other hand, ethnologists showed a growing interest in historical oriented research. The history of the everyday life under communist dictatorships, in particular, has emerged as a major field of interest for historians and anthropologists alike. Brunnbauer assesses the strength and weaknesses of both, historical and anthropological, approaches to the history of everyday life, arguing that, by and large, ethnologists proved better equipped than professional historians for the study of socialism. In the end, Brunnbauer evaluates the prospects of historical anthropology in Southeastern Europe as encouraging, especially for the study of the recent socialist past.

In many ways continuing the historiographical discussion initiated by Brunnbauer, Péter Apor warns against the uncritical conflation of microhistory, on the one hand, and the history of everyday life under socialist dictatorships, on the other, and the confusions it might generate. Apor argues that, in the last decades, historians have developed a growing interest in everyday life in urban as well as in rural local communities. New laborious works have deconstructed ways of life, living conditions, fashion and dressing, leisure, tourism and consumption, and sexual habits and child care under communism, trying to understand the complex web of heavily ideologized everyday practices. Where does this drive for comprehending the history of everyday life in communist societies derive from? What are its historiographical implications? Apor seeks to answer these questions by analyzing the uses and abuses of these paradigms, their moral-political backgrounds, and their impact and implications for future research on socialism in East Central Europe.

The second section of the thematic issue provides a collection of case studies on various topics connected with social history research, which include quantitative economic history, identity, memory, and the social history of elites. Their variety, in terms of chronological span and geographical focus but also of the disciplinary back-

ground and academic traditions to which they relate, illustrates, yet again, the great heterogeneity of the research fields associated with social history.

Since its origins, social history research has been closely linked to the field of economic history, and made ample use of quantitative methods. In East Central European historiography, this field of studies has remained largely unexplored, so that historians are often forced to rely on partial estimates or simply use their intuition when they need to assess the economic impact of major socio-political crisis, leading to impressionistic results. In "Understanding Economic and Social Developments in the Periphery," Martin Ivanov employs rigorous quantitative methods in order to revisit estimates of the Bulgarian national income for the period 1892–1924, by major sectors of the economy. On this basis, he is able to provide a new picture of Bulgaria's economic growth, and to evaluate more accurately the economic impact of various social or geo-political phenomena during this period, such as Bulgaria's secession from the Ottoman imperial market, the massive migration input to Bulgarian society, the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), and the Great War. Overall, this study enables Ivanov to formulate a more plausible hypothesis for Bulgaria's modernization endeavor.

New studies on social history place a great emphasis on the concept of identity. Laurence Fontaine reflects on the theoretical and methodological debates surrounding this contested analytical category. In the first part of her essay, Fontaine critically reviews some of the most authoritative treatments of identity in the fields of history and sociology. In the second part, she illustrates the great analytical potential of identity studies by way of an intriguing case study: migrant merchants in early modern Europe. She documents the pejorative—and many times contradictory—social clichés and stereotypes projected on migrants by authorities or the sedentary communities with which they entered into contact. But Fontaine also points out to the imaginative ways in which migrant merchants appropriated and even utilized the multiple roles and identities ascribed to them "from above" to their own advantages, temporary assuming various social roles which were able to bring them social acceptance or material gains through the manipulation of the others' needs, fears, or desires. The migrant merchants' "polyphony of external representations" thus provides a powerful illustration of the fact that identities can be studied only embedded in their given historical contexts, by means of relational perspectives that take into account the interactions of all actors involved and their multiple forms of social, gender, or political belongings.

The concept of memory has recently received intense scholarly attention, as a corollary of the concept of identity. Sabine Rutar explores recent works on the construction of the memory of World War II in former socialist Yugoslavia and its successor states. She concentrates on the state of the art of oral history in Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, on questions and problems connected with oral sources on former Yugoslavia, and spells out the methodological outline of her own work in this field. Rutar argues that remembrance in former Yugoslavia, and especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina—having as main chronological stages the experience of World War II, Tito's Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslav wars of succession—is caught

up between personal experiences of both peaceful coexistence and interethnic conflict. This tension produces radically discordant memories. Due to its paramount importance, the interpretative matrix of the memory of World War II and its ongoing transformation and re-negotiation represents one of the key matters with regard to the reconstruction of individual and collective identities in the Yugoslav successor states. Official war remembrance embraced a vast, officially controlled, memory space in socialist Yugoslavia. The defense doctrine of the socialist state was rooted in an idealized imagination of the Yugoslav partisan war, calling for battle-ready, attentive, resourceful, and flexible social actors. Against this background, Rutar points out to mechanisms of remembrance vs. amnesia or heroization vs. marginalization/condemnation in the post-Yugoslav period, and explores the influence of such memory patterns on today's political and social agency.

The history of social stratification has always been an important part of research on social history. Recent technological advances in computer software make possible large-scale studies on social stratification, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. In "Elite Studies in the Age of Computer Science," Victor Karády presents the overall design and main aims of a comparative research project on elite formation in Central European societies. The project employs the prosopographical method, focusing on the serial collection of circa 200,000 individual biographies. This ambitious research project was initiated in 2005 with a pilot project on the evolution of Hungarian elites from the 1867 "Compromise" with Austria to the beginning of the Communist rule (1948). On the basis of this experience, Karády argues that, given the fact that advanced computer programs can process huge databases and execute a large number of sorting operations, scholars specializing in elite studies are now able to initiate quasi-total surveys of elite groups in certain historical regions or even (smaller) modern nation states, which have been so far practically impossible.

CLUSTERING CONCEPTS: TOWARD A NEW SOCIOCULTURAL HISTORY

How can one write social history in the twenty-first century? On the basis of this partial overview, corroborated with the research result of other available historiographical surveys, several general trends can be identified. First, it is evident that social history has been long divorced from economic history, shifting instead toward critical- and cultural-oriented methodologies. Second, the linguistic and cultural turns in the humanities and social sciences have caused a paradigm shift from causal explanations and emphasis on impersonal social structures to the question of meaning in the context of personal and collective identity, reasserting the continuous scholarly relevance of subjectivity. The central referential object of social studies is not the concept of "society" anymore, but the concept of identity. Methodologically, in order to de-essentialize social identities, there is a tendency to consider them in flux and motion, by emphasizing processes of "becoming" and "transformation"

rather than static models or structures. There is also a focus on the hybridity and multiplicity of identities rather than on their homogeneity or internal coherence, and on the interplay among various levels of identity, such as legal-political status, age, gender, ethnicity, race, etc. In order to capture the dynamics of these phenomena, and to better explain behavior at an individual level, there is also a tendency to concentrate on small-scale research, using the tools of microhistory. Yet, for coping with the problems posed by the combination of micro and macro scales of research, there are calls for bringing large structures "back in."

Third, and most important, the reconfiguration of the "social" appears to be inseparable from the "cultural." Surely, ever since their emergence as autonomous fields of study, social history and cultural history have always been intertwined in multiple ways. Yet the new sociocultural history does not only link the social and the cultural dimensions of human existence in a more systematic, conscious, and programmatic manner, but it also reconceptualizes them as inseparable from each-other. The research agenda of the journal *Cultural and Social Studies*, established in 2004 by the Social History Society in the UK, is illustrative in this respect. The journal specifically aims "to make connections across the broad territory of cultural and social history," by emphasizing the ways in which the 'social' and the 'cultural' are 'extricably linked,'" thus contributing to a better understanding of society. This research agenda is based on the assumption that culture is not "an entity distinct from 'society', but ... a product of social practice, and therefore at the heart of society itself."[93]

Fourth, the merger between social and cultural history enables historians to revisit old areas of investigation, such as the social history of politics, particularly well developed in Germany.[94] In addition, the dissatisfaction with the concept of society has brought the state "back in," reviving interest in related issues such as power and institutions. Drawing inspiration mostly from the work of Michel Foucault, we witness the emergence of governmentality as a new field of study concerned with technologies of rule in modern societies, and of biopolitics, concerned with the relationship between power, population and the environment.[95]

93 See the statement of purpose available at http://socialhistory.gellius.net/journal.php; for the Society of Social History, see http://socialhistory.gellius.net/Home.php.

94 See Georg G. Iggers, *The Social History of Politics: Critical Perspectives in West German Historical Writing since 1945* (Dover, N.H.: Berg, 1985).

95 See John Caputo and Mark Yount, eds., *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Jon Simons, *Foucault & the Political* (London: Routledge, 1995); Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For the field of governmentality, see Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999); Jack Z. Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy, eds, *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); and Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. With Two Lectures By and an Interview with Michel Foucault (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Fifth, the new social history also pays greater attention to the issue of geographical spaces, transcending its previous concentration on national history.[96] The enlargement of the analytical focus from the history of political elites to that of wider socio-political groups has stimulated the comparative study of societies at micro- and macro-levels. Currently, in addition to the focus on subnational units of analysis blooming especially in French historiography in studies of local or regional history, there is a new trend toward transnational history. New analytical frameworks have been elaborated for approaching regional or European history from a transnational perspective, such as *histoire croisée*, "shared" or "connected history," and the history of "transfers."

Last but not least, there are attempts at bridging the gap between national schools of social history, marked not only by the effort of synthesizing various theoretical and methodological approaches, but also by new steps toward the internationalization of social history research. Following the successful experience of the International Institute for Social History, new international bodies have been more recently established, most notably the European Social Science History Conference organized biannually since 1998 (a co-initiative of the IISH, see http://www.iisg.nl/esshc/), and the International Social History Association (ISHA), created in 2005 at the 20th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Sydney.[97]

What are, in this context, the prospects of a new type of "socialcultural" history in East Central Europe? At first glance, East Central European historiography provides the picture of a historiography in transformation, still struggling to break up with the past and to rebuild its institutional framework, to catch up with recent trends in international historiography, and to redefine its role in continental and global historiography. To a superficial external observer, the research agenda of East Central Europe might seem largely obsolete; its attempt to invigorate traditional fields of social history might seem out of tune with international developments, and could be taken as mere attempts to follow established patterns and reiterate vistas that have been for long experimented with in Western Europe but are now applied anew to East Central European history as if they have not been superseded. At closer scrutiny, however, East Central European historiography appears—unequal and variegated as it is—as a laboratory for historical innovation, a field of experimentation and interaction of scholars from various disciplines and historiographical traditions, in which old and new trends amalgamate in peculiar ways.

It is our conviction that the renewed interdisciplinary interest in social history in/of East Central Europe can prove a driving force behind the wider international tendency of rejuvenating the social. "It is a good time to be a social historian" decreed triumphantly Eric Hobsbawm in the 1960s, at a time when the Historians' Group gained a position of prominence in British scholarly life and cultural pres-

96 Stephen Mosley, "Common Ground: Integrating Social and Environmental History," *Journal of Social History,* 39 (2006) 3, 915–933.

97 Béla Tomka, "Perfecting Institutionalization: The Foundation of the International Social History Association," *Journal of Social History*, 40 (2007) 4, 987–989.

tige abroad.[98] "It is not a good moment to be a social historian" lamented Jürgen Kocka, the doyen of the field of social history in Germany in 1995, at a time of sharp criticism against social history coming from the rising field of cultural history.[99] It is an urgency to become a "sociocultural" historian in post-communist East Central Europe, this author would modestly add, from a regional (disad)vantage point. As the essays included in this journal issue amply document, this effort is not just an exercise meant to catch up with the "developed West"; contrary to received clichés, East Central Europe is not simply a latecomer, a passive receiver that would transfer and adopt ready-made academic paradigms to its own tradition of area studies. The new research agenda of sociocultural history in East Central Europe is able to contribute to the process of re-writing European history from an integrated perspective. Currently, European history-writing is in a process of transformation, moving away from its concentration on the historical experience of Western Europe and toward considering the history of other regions, as well.[100] Countries in East Central Europe can actively contribute to enhancing the plurality of historical and cultural experiences defying "Europeanness" and European values. They can expose the tendency of essentializing the experience of European historical regions such as "the West" or "the East," by promoting a more integrative perspective. In the long run, the fruitful cross-fertilization between Western scholarship and historians in East Central Europe might lead to the reconfiguration of the European history. This effort does not merely presuppose the integration of East Central European history into pan-European master narratives, but devises a new analytical framework informed by transnational history and the history of transfers. There are encouraging signs that this effort is currently under way.

98 Eric Hobsbawm, "From social history to the history of society," *Daedalus,* 100 (Winter 1991), 43.

99 Jürgen Kocka, "Loses, Gains and Opportunities: Social History Today", *Journal of Social History,* 37 (Fall 2003) 1, 21.

100 See the recent trend to go beyond the unilateral concentration on the social history of Western Europe, to the social history of Europe: Hartmut Kaelble: *Industrialisation and Social Inequality in 19th Century Europe*, trans. by Bruce Little (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); *Social Mobility in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Europe and America in Comparative Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Kaelble, ed., *The European Way: European Societies during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); and *Sozialgeschichte Europas: 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 2007). However, the integration of East Central Europe into European history has remained to date more of a desideratum rather than an accomplishment.