

SECTORS

*Newsletter of the American Sociological Association's
Sociology of Development Section*

Section Officers, 2023-2024

Chair

Erin McDonnell
University of Notre Dame

Chair-elect

Monica Prasad
Johns Hopkins University

Secretary/Treasurer

Matthias vom Hau
Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals

Section Council

Devparna Roy
Nazareth College
Alexandre White
Johns Hopkins University
Jennifer E. Givens
Utah State University
Luiz Vilaça
University of Notre Dame
Heidi E. Rademacher
SUNY Brockport
Holly Reed
Queens College, CUNY

Student Representatives

Ji-won Lee (2024)
University at Albany, SUNY

Mentorship Program Coordinator

Karin Johnson
Texas A&M University

Newsletter Editors

Grace Wang
LSE
Noor Anwar Ali
Northwestern University

Message from the Chair

During Notre Dame football games, we play a short clip around the theme “What Would You Fight For?” Each time it showcases a different professor and the efforts they are making to try to make the world a better place. The most recent one featured a colleague in engineering who, after his wife had breast cancer and he saw how hard it was for doctors to get good ongoing imaging of how tumors were responding to treatment, innovated new light-based technology for imaging tumors.

As social scientists we are not often asked those questions. What are you fighting for?

Sometimes, in the face of so many extrinsic incentives and busy deadlines, it can be easy to lose touch with our deepest intrinsic motivations that called us to our research and profession in the first place (economists call this the “crowding out” effect). What was I fighting for in my research? My teaching? My service? I found it a very profound exercise to attempt to explicitly answer those questions. Gaining clarity by journaling about them and talking them out with a colleague helped not only energize me, but gain some clarity about how to prioritize the many things that call for our attention in the short period of time we have to accomplish them.

I’m enormously proud that I think so many of our members in the Development section have things that they are fighting for to increase the goodness in the world, the ASA, the section, their departments, their classrooms. Seeing the incredible papers that members submit to our ASA sections gives me such excitement and hope about the future of our discipline and our section.

In my brief time as chair, I am fighting for a section that is a vibrant and engaging place that enables all our members to thrive, and acts as an ally to lift up the accomplishments and voices of people all around the world who have not traditionally have a place at the table.

Erin McDonnell
Notre Dame du Lac & Kellogg Associate Professor
University of Notre Dame

<u>IN THIS ISSUE</u>	
Rethinking the Role of States in Development	2
Yet Another Great Thing the State Does for Development	3
By <i>Samuel Cohn</i>	
The State as Moral Arbitrer of Humanity	5
By <i>Subadevan</i>	
New Book Spotlight – Author Interview	6
Ya-Wen Lei, author of <i>The Gilded Cage</i>	
Graduate Student Spotlight	8
Relationship Formation in a Game of Depth vs. Breadth	
By <i>Derek Richardson</i>	
Enclosure with Chinese Characteristics: Agricultural Capitalism and Uneven Rural development	9
By <i>Tiantian Liu</i>	
Webinars	10
Annual Meeting Information	11
Awards Nominations	12
Section Annoucement	13

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF STATES IN DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The state has always been integral to the discipline of sociology, as an analytical subject, a focal mode of social organization, and an implicit framework on which our investigations of social life depend. Our foundational sociological theorists, from Weber to Bourdieu place great significance within the state. While there are many ways of defining the state, one influential formulation is that of Bourdieu, who, drawing on Weber, defines the state as possessing “a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the corresponding population.” (Bourdieu 1994, 3)

The dominance of state-centric approaches to understanding social life is especially true in the field of development. Scholars such as Amartya Sen and Rogers Brubaker have emphasized how much the nation-state a person is born into structures one’s Weberian “life-chances.” As well, the state in modern societies is considered the only institution that is expected to and can be held responsible for the universal provision of social goods and services (Cammatt and MacLean 2014). We consider economic and social development the mandate and purview of the state more than any other organization. Despite growing acknowledgement of methodological nationalism, skepticism of Weberian legal-rational assumptions about what states are and what they do, and attention paid to the “boundary problem” between state and society, it is hard to deny the primacy of states as the framework for and subject of analysis in the study of development (Mitchell 1991).

States and their attendant subnational units – provinces, villages, electoral districts – are essential to our current understanding of what development looks like and how it is achieved. Scholars have carefully traced the formation of the modern nation-state and its variant forms. They’ve debated the institutional “recipes” and state structures that lead to positive development outcomes. There is a large and rich literature on developmental states, the idea

that development results from top-down, planned strategies by state actors (Evans 1995). State capacity and public sector effectiveness are considered crucial to a wide range of developmental outcomes.

Yet, few scholars would argue with the statement that building capable and accountable states has been a highly elusive endeavor in the developing world. Efforts to build developmental capacity within states have yielded uneven results. In response, a growing area of scholarship is focused on how economic and social development is pursued outside of the state. These kinds of social arrangements are far from new – religious organizations, trade unions, friendly societies, among many other organizations have historically undertaken a wide range of development activities. Today, such social orders are often identified in reference to states, as “hybrid,” “informal” or “voluntary” states (Boege et al 2009; Post et al 2017; Davis 2017). As we continue to grapple with problems of development, both old and new, we must critically examine the assumptions and epistemological suppositions embedded in how we think about states. We ask: when does focusing on states serve us and when does it impede our understanding of the social world and how it develops? Is the primacy we give to states justified, or is development possible through other modes of social organization? Can shifting focus away from the state reveal creative strategies and arrangements for securing economic and social development?

References:

- Boege, Volker, M. Anne Brown, and Kevin P. Clements. 2009. “Hybrid Political Orders, Not Fragile States.” *Peace Review* 21(1):13–21.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1), 1–18.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2015. *Grounds for Difference*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Davis, Diane. E. 2017. Informality and state theory: Some concluding remarks. *Current Sociology*, 65(2), 315-324.
- Evans, Peter. 1995. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. Princeton University Press.
- MacLean, Lauren M., and Melani Cammett. 2014. *The Politics of Non-state Social Welfare*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics.” *American Political Science Review* 85(1):77–96.
- Post, Alison E., Vivian Bronsoler, and Lana Salman. 2017. “Hybrid Regimes for Local Public Goods Provision: A Framework for Analysis.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4):952–66.
- Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2003. “Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology.” *The International Migration Review* 37(3): 576–610.

Sectors Co-Editors,
Grace Yuehan Wang, Noor Anwar Ali and Tim Gorman

Yet Another Great Thing the State Does for Development

Samuel Cohn, Texas A&M University

Development sociologists’ favorite model of the State and Development is the developmentalist state. It compellingly explains the rise of East Asia (Wade 1990). Singapore and Malaysia have used other state-led interventions to achieve success (Jomo 2004). The under-respected import-substitution states of Latin America had credible records of growth (Fishlow 1990). The vulnerabilities of developmentalist states are twofold: a) states that are too broke or incompetent to execute and b) industries where there is no market failure. When there is no market failure, free markets do just fine (Cohn 2016). That leaves a wide field of action for developmentalist states. We are right in loving them.

Marxist functionalists have long argued that the state is essential for reproducing the capitalist economy. James O’Connor (1973) argues that states produce transportation infrastructure, education, scientific research, defense and policing. My own work on Brazil found that provision of water, sewerage and airports had dramatic effects on increasing employment. Sociologists are ambivalent about defense and policing; they are bored by transportation infrastructure. There are no originality prizes in writing about human capital. But these factors matter in development. The current assault on the state by conservative anti-tax activists represents a tremendous

threat to economic well-being. We know what neoliberalism did to the Global South. It is now about to happen to rich countries.

Most theories of the state and development assume that government does something useful in its official capacity. And in real life, it actually does. But there is a forgotten link between the state and economic growth that works even if government is completely useless. Government bureaucrats sitting behind desks rubber stamping useless pieces of paper can still reduce poverty and increase wealth.

Government has one of the highest Leontief multipliers of any industry (Cohn et. al, 2023). Leontief multipliers measure the extent to which the expansion of economic activity in any one industry promotes economic growth in other industries. There are two primary causal mechanisms that cause industries to favorably impact other industries.

One, Type I multipliers, measure the impact of the purchase of inputs and supplies. A beer manufacturer who purchases hops and vats stimulates both the agriculture sector and metal manufacturing. Governments actually have low Type I multipliers because they don't buy very much materiel. The one exception of course is defense spending. However, only governments with defense industries get any benefit from this. Few countries in the Global South can count on growing from stimulating their own defense industries.

The second and more important impact comes from Type II-I multipliers. This is the stimulus to consumer industries that come from workers in a growing industry spending their wages. The more employment, and the higher the wages, the more consumption comes from workers spending their paychecks. My work on nineteenth century Norway showed that the Norwegian economy largely grew from domestic consumption based on the wages paid to fisherman and codfish processors (Cohn and Upchurch 2020).

Governments are labor intensive. They pay wages that are high by local standards. Capital cities tend to be prosperous places. Metropolitan Washington D.C., including the Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs is a prosperous place with a high standard of living. Washington D. C. has only two meaningful base industries, government and tourism. Almost everything else in the Washington area comes from government employees and the military spending their wages. They spend on housing, groceries, entertainment, and health care. The restaurant and bar scene in Washington is excellent – with many of the customers being in the public sector.

The Distrito Federal in Brazil is the richest of all Brazilian states. The Distrito Federal contains Brasilia – and almost nothing else. There are few other local industries (agribusiness is concentrated in nearby Goiana). Surprisingly, the Amazonian states are wealthy too. Nearly all the population is concentrated in the capital cities of those states. Most of the population in those capitals works in the federal or state government. For parallel cases in the US, see Columbus, Ohio and Austin, Texas (both Ohio State and the University of Texas are public).

Shrink-the-state MAGA politicians want to get rid of useless government bureaucrats. Those government bureaucrats pay the bills for a lot of private sector people. Industries with high Leontief multipliers are a good thing. Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs is never good development policy.

References:

- Cohn, Samuel. 2016. "State and Economic Development" Pp. 393-412 in Gregory Hooks (ed.), *Handbook of Development Sociology*, Berkeley, California. University of California.
- Cohn, Samuel, Jose Morales, Madison Poe, Yilin Li and Bryson Bassett. 2023. "Why Economic Growth Stimulates More Growth in Some Countries Rather Than Others." *Sociology of Development* 9:4. Pp. 1-29.
- Cohn, Samuel and Michael Upchurch. 2020. "Technological Basis of Egalitarian Economic Growth: How Nineteenth Century Norway's Boats With No Decks Provided a Humanistic Alternative to Industrial Slums." *Sociology of Development* 6: 368-393.
- Fishlow, Albert. 1990. "Latin American State". *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 4: 61-74.
- Jomo, K.S. 2004. "Southeast Asian Developmental States in Comparative Perspective." Pp. 57-77 in Linda Low (ed.), *Developmental States: Relevancy, Redundancy or Reconfiguration?* Haupauge, N.Y., Nova Science.
- O'Connor, James. 1973. *Fiscal Crisis of the State*. New York, Saint Martins.

The State as Moral Arbiter of Humanity

Subadevan, Brown University

In the 90s, the influential volume bringing the state back in (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985) highlighted the autonomy of the state and the importance of unpacking its varying institutional architectures in accounting for differential developmental outcomes. In recent years, however, constant unpacking has seemingly muddied the conceptual waters of what the state is. For instance, Morgan and Orloff (2017) liken the multifaceted state to the many-handed Hindu goddess Kali in their highly influential volume. The implication – analyses of the state should always be contextualized and relational. Is the notion of an abstract state then still useful? I argue, yes – for underpinning various formulations is the notion of the state as moral arbiter of humanity.

As Mitchell (1999) argues, the state is both material thing and ideological construct. While the former refers to institutions and the extent of its infrastructural reach – a.k.a state capacity, ideology matters. Ideological notions of what constitutes membership shapes the institutional character of the state and its distribution of resources. This helps, as Naqvi (2022) advocates us to, to think beyond notions of state failure to foreground inequality by design. Ideological notions of differentiated deservedness shape the distribution of resources. It is through the state that the global is refracted locally, impacting people's everyday lives (Castells 2011; Sassen 1998). This holds true for both the increased marketization of society and the transnational nature of civil society. In the former, this constitutes contemporary efforts to propagate market hegemony – i.e. neoliberalism. Contemporary manifestations of market hegemony depend on the state to facilitate access, even for the creation of zones of exception (Levien 2018; Slobodian 2023). The state similarly matters for the operation of civil society, whether locally driven or transnationally connected. Recent works engaging the conduct of randomized control trials (de Souza Leão and Eyal 2019), sex work reform efforts in China and Thailand (Shih 2023), and the mobilization for women's rights in India (Roychowdhury 2020) all demonstrate how the state influences the form and function of nongovernmental organizations operating within its borders.

This does not mean other arenas of social and political contestation are inconsequential. However, battles in these arenas are aimed at changing the institutional character of the state, not abandoning it altogether. The battles that occur in these arenas are at their core, moral battles aimed at transforming the state's character. The state is always enmeshed in a web of relations across actors and scales. The state, however, is also a thing, its material character congealing the outcomes of previous battles over its form and function. These battles are geared at reshaping whom the state recognizes as part of its moral community, thus possessing entitlements and rights. This has often been discussed under the rubric of citizenship (e.g. see (Chatterjee 2004; Holston 2008) conceptually expanded to not only discuss legal status, but whether various groups have the capability to claim political, social, and economic rights.

I suggest, however, that we move beyond the notion of citizenship to recognize such battles as being waged over humanity. The expansion of rights hinges on the expansion of notions of equal worth (Lamont 2023). Notions of differential deservedness coded into state policies and programs are moral entanglements over whose claims are worth engaging. Saying some are less deserving entails branding them infrahuman, or less than human compared to others (Gilroy 2005). These analytic enables engagement with recent calls to understand modernity as inherently racialized (Itzigsohn and Brown 2020). Moral claims of differential deservedness are often naturalized through racialized hierarchies. Battles over the state's form are attempts to reinforce or challenge these naturalized hierarchies. Ultimately, it is through the institutional architecture of the state, the congealed edifice of previous battles, that such moral claims of worthiness – i.e. humanity – are arbitrated.

References:

Spring 2024 – 2025 SECTORS Volume 12 (1)

Castells, Manuel. 2011. "Globalization, Identification, and the State: A Powerless State or a Network State." in *The Power of Identity*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Chatterjee, Partha. 2004. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. Columbia University Press.

de Souza Leão, Luciana, and Gil Eyal. 2019. "The Rise of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) in International Development in Historical Perspective." *Theory and Society* 48:383–418.

Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University Press.

Gilroy, Paul. 2005. "Race and the Right to Be Human." Pp. 29–59 in *Postcolonial melancholia*. Columbia University Press.

Holston, James. 2008. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Itzigsohn, José, and Karida L. Brown. 2020. "The Sociology of WEB Du Bois." in *The Sociology of WEB Du Bois*. New York University Press.

Lamont, Michèle. 2023. *Seeing Others: How Recognition Works—and How It Can Heal a Divided World*. Simon and Schuster.

Levien, Michael. 2018. *Dispossession without Development: Land Grabs in Neoliberal India*. Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy. 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect." *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* 76:90.

Morgan, Kimberly, and Ann Shola Orloff. 2017. *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Naqvi, Ijlal. 2022. *Access to Power: Electricity and the Infrastructural State in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.

Roychowdhury, Poulami. 2020. *Capable Women, Incapable States: Negotiating Violence and Rights in India*. Oxford University Press.

Sassen, Saskia. 1998. *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*. New Press New York.

Shih, Elena. 2023. *Manufacturing Freedom: Sex Work, Anti-Trafficking Rehab, and the Racial Wages of Rescue*. Univ of California Press.

Slobodian, Quinn. 2023. *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy*. Random House

NEW BOOK SPOTLIGHT – AUTHOR INTERVIEW

The Gilded Cage: Technology, Development and State Capitalism in China

Prof. Ya Wen Lei, Department of Sociology, Harvard University

Princeton University Press

Q1:

You adopted a comparative analytical approach in your book, where you compared China's techno-developmentalism with France's (The Radiance of France), the United States', and East Asian developmental states (Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore). Could you share with us how we should select appropriate cases when we are doing comparative analysis?

There are two major ways to approach case comparison. The first is to design an empirical study comparing two or multiple cases, choosing cases based on their comparability and how their differences might explain diverse outcomes. My AJS and ASR articles adopted this strategy as the scale of the cases was manageable for me in these two articles. The second method situates a case in relation to the literature to explore differences and commonalities across cases. *The Gilded Cage* is based on this approach. Comparative analysis based on empirical data is often challenging, especially for complex cases at the national level. I could not do this in my book, but I think linking a case to existing literature can be beneficial as it allows for a deeper understanding of a case's empirical and theoretical contributions.

In fact, when I completed the first draft of my book manuscript, I didn't adopt a comparative perspective. However, scholars who read my manuscript inquired how my case was different from those in existing literature and encouraged me to develop a comparative analysis. Their suggestions prompted me to systematically compare

and discuss my case in relation to others as I revised the manuscript. In the end, I compared my case with literature on France's technopolitical regime, East Asian developmental states, and the "hidden" developmental state and digital capitalism in the United States, because of their importance in the literature and relevance to my case.

Q2:

When researchers are doing comparative analysis, how should we highlight the characteristics of our analytical subject while making it distinct from other cases?

The existing literature, along with our empirical data, guides us in distinguishing analytical aspects that may differ between cases. Initially, I identify these aspects, then re-examine my data and secondary literature on other cases to determine how my case and others might be characterized in specific aspects. This iterative process of examining data and literature sharpens my analysis.

Q3:

During your fieldwork, you interviewed many workers and managers in manufacturing factories. It is documented in your book that some of them were surprised that you asked them about their lives, their children's education etc. How should researchers maintain their objectivity and distance themselves from being too close with their interviewees when conducting in-person interviews?

I should clarify that my questions about interviewees' lives and their children's education were part of my research. Generally, I believe empathy and objectivity are not mutually exclusive. I always show respect to my interviewees and informants, letting them know that I understand their situations and the difficulties they face. However, I am also clear that my interactions with them are as a researcher.

Q4:

Because of Covid-pandemic, you had to conduct online ethnography to complete your study. Speaking from your experience, what are some best strategies of conducting online ethnography? How can you ensure the quality of your ethnographic research when you cannot feel and sense the surroundings in your field?

I was fortunate to have conducted fieldwork for my book several years before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. This early work allowed me to build a strong social network and gain a thorough understanding of my field. During the pandemic, I utilized these established connections to carry out online ethnography and interviews, which enabled me to complete my study. Without this foundational work, completing my book amidst the pandemic challenges would have likely been unachievable.

It's important not to overgeneralize from personal experience, as each project is unique. In my approach, I consider the types of data needed and how various research methods can contribute to understanding my research question. For instance, in my study of food delivery workers, I noted the restrictive nature of data gleaned from joining and observing worker-organized social media groups. To enhance my research, I incorporated additional data obtained through online interviews. What I'm trying to convey is the importance of considering the limitations of certain research methods, such as online ethnography, in collecting data and addressing specific research questions. Reflecting on these limitations can guide us toward alternative approaches.

Q5:

In your book, you coined the terms "new bird" and "old bird" to distinguish the old economic sector from the new one. Since you are an established scholar, it is more acceptable for our scholarly community to accept your newly coined academic terms in your book. Young scholars might also find it necessary to come up with new concepts or terms in their research. Do you think there are pitfalls young scholars should avoid when doing so?

I did not create the terms "new bird" and "old bird"; these were coined by some Chinese government officials. However, in my book, I highlighted the metaphors of the bird and the cage, even using the cage metaphor in the title. In the first draft, these metaphors weren't a focus, but scholars who read my manuscript pointed out the recurrence of the metaphors and suggested I use them more systematically for their strong thematic resonance. I found this advice very insightful and revised my manuscript to reflect it.

It's not necessary for researchers to invent new terms or concepts. Any new concept must prove analytically valuable to be a significant contribution.

Based on what I've shared, you can see I've gained much from scholars who kindly read my work. Working on *The Gilded Cage*, my second monograph, I felt somewhat adrift. My professors offered guidance and feedback during my PhD, simplifying the process of completing my first book. Post-graduation, however, obtaining feedback proved more challenging. I believe it's crucial for scholars at any stage to receive critical feedback. Those interested in creating new concepts or terms should especially seek feedback on their analytical clarity and utility.

GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Relationship Formation in a Game of Breadth versus Depth

Derek Richardson, PhD Candidate, Indiana University

Western biomedicine is often regarded as an objective science, built upon a foundation of rational, evidence-based knowledge. There are institutional barriers that prevent ordinary citizens from mastering this body of knowledge, barriers that have been purposefully erected to maintain clear distinctions between who is and is not a biomedical "expert" and, correspondingly, who is and is not capable of treating disease. The barriers that distinguish "experts" from "non-experts" in international development, however, are less clear. Increasingly, ordinary citizens from the Global North who lack prior education or experience in international development and nonprofit management are establishing their own international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to provide aid in the Global South. Unlike "traditional" INGOs that manage multi-million-dollar budgets, hire "expert" professional staff, and have full-time presences in many countries, these citizen-led "grassroots" INGOs generally run on shoestring budgets, rely on volunteers, and implement small-scale projects in a single country. My dissertation takes the emergence and proliferation of grassroots INGOs as a starting point to explore definitions of expertise and how they manifest in organizational structures and interactions between givers and receivers of aid. I do this through a comparative research design that involves conducting ethnographic observations and interviews in "traditional" and "grassroots" INGOs that provide health care services in Cambodia.

My focus on health care-providing INGOs is deliberate. While the existence of the "grassroots" organizational form suggests that development and management expertise is not required to engage in international altruism, medical expertise is required to treat patients. By studying health care-providing INGOs, I aim to appreciate how these variously present and absent forms of expertise are constructed interactionally within organizations and subsequently deployed in the aid provision process. My focus on Cambodia is practical. There is a high density of both types of INGOs in the country, and I have prior research experience here.

Before beginning my fieldwork, I was already aware that my research design is quite ambitious: I have finite time and money to spend in Cambodia, during which I need to embed myself within multiple INGOs located throughout the country. This reality forced me to choose “breadth over depth,” a decision with ramifications that I am currently facing now that I am four months into my fieldwork.

I have already experienced the payoffs of greater “breadth” – examining the similarities and differences between individual cases helps illuminate the broader social structures that explain why and how “traditional” and “grassroots” INGOs operate as they do. I, however, was reluctant to abandon efforts at achieving “depth.” During my final weeks with one of my cases, I returned to my field site as frequently as possible and tried to schedule as many interviews as I could before departing. “How can I maximize the remaining time that I have with this INGO?” I wondered each day.

This maximization strategy ultimately backfired. Ethnographers generally argue that pursuing “breadth” requires long-term immersion to fully understand study participants’ lives and perspectives. Ironically, my efforts to achieve “depth” made me lose sight of the participants’ lives I sought to understand. By constantly thinking in terms of “How can I log more observation hours?” and “How can I fit in more interviews before leaving?”, I essentially viewed myself as a “data collector” and my research participants as “data producers.”

Such a relationship between researcher and study participants is troubling. Issues of validity aside, it is eerily resemblant of colonialist power dynamics between Northern researchers and Southern societies that has plagued, and continues to plague, modern social science. Thankfully, my commitment to “breadth” by including comparison cases provides opportunities for me to think more critically about developing relationships with study participants in the future and rectify past missteps. Moving forward, I welcome the challenge of observing and preserving the humanity of my study participants in my fieldwork. As cliché as it may sound, sometimes – even when conducting international fieldwork on a tight timeline – less *is* more.

Enclosure with Chinese Characteristics: Agricultural Capitalism and Uneven Rural Development

Tiantian Liu, PhD Candidate, Johns Hopkins University

My dissertation examines diverse local trajectories of capitalist agrarian transformation and how they shape rural development, peasant livelihood, and broader patterns of inequality. Specifically, it looks at the Chinese state’s “land transfer” reform, which turns farmland into a rental commodity for large-scale commercial farming. Based on 19 months of ethnography in two counties, over 150 interviews with academics and officials, and extensive archival research, it finds that land transfer first emerged as a bottom-up experiment in early-industrialized, coastal regions in the 1990s. As peasants moved to off-farm employments, they willingly rented land to local farmers and created informal land markets. In facilitating this indigenous innovation, local states have formed weak despotic, but strong infrastructural power through institutionalized cooperation with local farmers. This has created a vibrant farming sector. However, land transfer’s expansion into rural, inland regions since late 2000s, aimed at reducing poverty and interregional inequality, mostly relied on top-down political campaigns. Cadres used strong despotic power against peasants when setting up land rental markets and big farms, but had no institutionalized incentives to ensure farms’ viability after campaigns ended. Campaign-style policy emulation has a built-in disincentive to form state infrastructural power. This has undermined the production and market conditions of agribusinesses, many of which have suffered extensive failures and could not pay land rent to peasants.

Under the context of a cross-regional rural social reproduction crisis, caused by state policies that have conditioned rural basic education and marriage upon the purchase of commodified housing, land transfer's socioeconomic impacts have varied across regions. In the hinterland, its failure to generate economic development has exacerbated elderly villagers' livelihood crisis by eliminating their only income from land. In comparison, successful land rental in coastal, industrialized regions has not undermined the already extensively de-agrarianized rural livelihoods. Such mixed outcomes frustrate the state's developmental agenda by re-consolidating, rather than reducing, rural socioeconomic inequalities between coastal and inland Regions.

My dissertation makes several contributions. First, it reveals how the transition from institutional innovation to emulation involves a fundamental shift in bureaucratic logics and creates distinct sub-national pathways of state-capacity formation. This adds a spatial-comparative dimension to the political sociology on state power and connects it to the studies on institutional change. My project then deploys this state-capacity lens to trace the contrasting political, market dynamics that shape local agrarian capital accumulation. It constructs a systematic comparison of land transfer, the largest developmental reform in rural China since de-collectivization, and reveals new pathways of agrarian transformation across space and time. This moves the debates on agricultural capitalization in China beyond policy changes and capital-peasant interactions. Last, my project sheds lights on the relationship between institutional reform and inequality. It explains why even "successful" emulation of indigenous institutions may fail to generate broad-based development. This reveals the institutional, political limits of experiment-based institutional reform, which had moved China out of the "poverty trap", in further narrowing spatial inequality.

WEBINARS

DEVSOC Webinar: Book Panel on Decolonizing Development & We Can Change the World

Date & Time: Friday February 16th, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. ET

Panelists: Jennifer Keahey, and Douglas L. Murray

Discussants: Mushahid Hussain, and Matthew Zinsli

Moderator: Holly Reed

Publishing Global South Cases

Date & Time: Thursday March 21th, from 1pm to 2:30 pm ET

Panelists: Magaret Frye, Erin McDonnell, and Holly Reed

Contemporary Reflections on Development Theory and Social Theory from/in the Global South

Date & Time: Thursday April 11th, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. ET

Panelists: Patrick Bond, Jose Mauricio Domingues, and Aditya Nigam

ANNUAL MEETING SESSION INFORMATION

The 2024 Annual Meeting will be held in Montréal on August 9-13, 2024. Based on the routine rotation of sections, our Sociology of Development day is Tuesday, August 13. The online portal is open for submissions until February 26, 11:59 p.m. Eastern. In addition to paper/extended abstract submissions, proposals are being accepted for courses, workshops, pre-conferences, the Sociology in Practice Settings Symposium, and the Teaching and Learning Symposium.

Regular Session: Development

Organizer: Holly Reed

Regular Session: Gender & Development

Organizer: Isabel Pike

Section Session: Learning from What Works in Development

Organizer: Erin McDonnell

Often sociology focuses on illuminating social problems in the world, which is enormously important. But sociology can also contribute to helping us find answers to those social problems by identifying the conditions under which some policies, programs, partnerships, or other social arrangements work better than others. Where are the "bright spots" in development, where despite considerable challenges, things are going relatively well? What can we learn, of both theoretical and practical importance, from such examples?

Section Session: Knowing Crises: How are Ecological and Human Health Crises Understood, Framed, and Addressed?

Organizers: Jonathan Shaffer & Jennifer Lai

Sociology has long been concerned with investigating the social drivers that pattern illness and injustice in human health around the world. Similarly, rapidly expanding sociological research on the human-drivers of the environment and climate change have shaped interpretations of social action in response to accelerating locally-experienced ecological threats particularly in the developing world. This panel seeks papers that empirically and/or theoretically engage with the social production of ways of knowing – understanding, framing, and intervening on – the imbricated crises of the environment and human health. We're particularly interested in papers that explore the many tensions that such ways of knowing unveil: between local and global narratives, between ascriptions of agency between human and non-human systems, between interventions focused on the collective/political and technical, and many others.

Section Session: Sociology of Development Open Topic Session

Organizer: Luiz Vilaça

This session honors the Sociology of Development section's commitment to intellectual inclusivity and breadth, which is written into our bylaws. This session is open to all methodological and theoretical traditions, welcoming work that is theoretical, empirical or both.

Section on the Sociology of Development Roundtables

Organizer: Andy Chang

AWARDS

The Sociology of Development section of the American Sociological Association invites nominations for three awards recognizing outstanding scholarship in the area of the sociology of development: Book Award, Faculty Article Award, and Graduate Student Paper Award.

Sociology of Development Section Book Award

All books published in 2022 or 2023 are eligible. A brief letter of nomination (self-nominations are welcome) and a copy of the nominated book should be sent to each of the committee members listed below by **March 1, 2024**:

Heidi Rademacher (Chair)
SUNY Brockport
hrademacher@brockport.edu

Akshay Mangla
Oxford University (UK)
akshay.mangla@gmail.com

Kristy Kelly
Drexel University
kek72@drexel.edu

Gabriel Suchodoski
UCLA
g1such@ucla.edu

Matthew Zinsli
UW Madison
matthewzinsli@gmail.com

Mary-Collier Wilks
UNC Wilmington
wilksm@uncw.edu

Sociology of Development Section Faculty Article Award

Please send a letter of nomination and an electronic version of the article to each of the committee members listed below by **March 1, 2024**. If the article has been published, the copyright date must be 2022 or 2023. However, unpublished articles are also welcome and self-nominations are encouraged.

Jennifer E Givens (chair)
Utah State University
jennifer.givens@usu.edu

Benjamin Bradlow
Princeton University
bhbradlow@princeton.edu

Rehana Odendaal
University of Pennsylvania
rehana@upenn.edu

Maria Isabel Espinoza
Michigan State University
espin145@msu.edu

Diana Graizbord
University of Georgia
dgraizbord@uga.edu

Sociology of Development Section Graduate Student Paper Award

Please send a letter of nomination and an electronic version of the article to each of the committee members listed below by **March 1, 2024**. If the article has been published, the copyright date must be 2022 or 2023. However, unpublished articles are also welcome and self-nominations are encouraged.

Alexandre White (chair)
Johns Hopkins University
alexandrewhite@jhu.edu

Andy Chang
Singapore Management University
andygiu@Gmail.com

Raphael Mondesir
Seattle Pacific University
mondesirr@spu.edu

Tuba I Agartan
Providence College
tagartan@providence.edu

Rita Jalali
American University
rita.jalali@gmail.com

SECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Call for Applications — Sectors Co-Editor (2024-2026)

The Sociology of Development section is seeking **two** co-editors for our newsletter, Sectors. This is a great opportunity for a junior scholar or graduate student to get more involved with the section and its diverse members.

The new Sectors co-editor will have a two-year term from August 2024 to July 2026. They will work with current co-editor/s to collaboratively shape the content and format of the newsletter. They will seek out and develop original content and maintain regular features.

Qualifications:

- Strong organizational skills, including ability to meet deadlines
- Strong written communication skills
- Graduate students are welcome and encouraged to apply

Please submit a one-page CV to: socdevsectors@gmail.com by **April 25, 2024**. Applicants will hear back by the end of the Spring 2024 term.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Sociology of Development Section of ASA promotes work in sociology on the causes and effects of development. We support work in all geographical regions including the United States, other advanced industrial nations and the Global South. We are open to work of all theoretical orientations and all methodological orientations. Both theoretical and applied work is welcome.

SECTION COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

ASA Sociology of Development Page:

<http://www.asanet.org/sections/development.cfm>

Sociology of Development Website:

<http://sociologyofdevelopment.com/>

Sociology of Development Newsletter:

Please send all your ideas, feedback, and submissions to socdevsectors@gmail.com.