

Sociology 924 Preliminary Agenda issues from Interrogations #5, Week 6. 10/9/2002

1. **Theoretical pluralism: different theories for different mechanisms.** (Matt Vidal, Keedon Kwon, Sarah Swider, Robyn Autry, Cesar Rodriguez, Amy Lang, Christine Overdevest, Matt Nichter)
 - Why can't Steinmetz's arguments simply be reintegrated under a general Marxist framework? (Matt Vidal, Keedon Kwon, Sarah Swider, Robyn Autry, Cesar Rodriguez, Matt Nichter)
 - Or, alternatively: why can't this be integrated within a statist framework? (Keedon Kwon).
 - Steinmetz's claim that the historical trajectory he studies requires different "theories" for different contexts (periods, level of the state, policies) is not persuasive since in all periods there is a dependency on capital and this shapes policies (Matt Vidal, Cesar Rodriguez, Matt Nichter). Why cannot these other mechanisms be viewed as operating "within the overall constraints of the capitalist system"? (Cesar Rodriguez) Aren't the limits on autonomy imposed by capitalism? (Matt Nichter)
 - Perhaps these different theories are needed only because of the transitional character of the state in this period? (Sarah Swider)
 - Doesn't theoretical pluralism block our ability to develop general theories of change? (Amy Lang)
 - Does this theoretical pluralism ultimately render Steinmetz's account essentially Weberian? (Christine Overdevest): why cannot the statist mechanisms and semi-autonomy simply be subsumed under Marxist explanations?
2. **Theories, explanations & mechanisms.** (Matt Vidal, James Benson, Cesar Rodriguez)
 - Steinmetz argues that because there are distinct mechanisms needed to explain specific state policies, we therefore need distinct theories: "in his exposition of why we need multiple theories, he repeatedly identifies a theory with a mechanism. This seems weird..." (Matt Vidal)
 - However: the focus on the choice of theories by virtue of the "salience" of different properties of the state seems compelling (James Benson).
 - There seems to be a confusion in this analysis between the level of abstraction at which the theory of mechanisms is specified and the level of abstraction at which events are described – surely events can also be described abstractly (Cesar Rodriguez)
 - SO: What is the relationship between theory, mechanism and explanation?
3. **The problem of the "form of the state".** (Matt Dimick). Steinmetz rejects the idea that the state in late 19th century Germany had a distinctively capitalist form and this is partially why he thinks structural Marxists accounts are unsatisfactory. But what precisely is the relation between "form" and "function"? Does a noncapitalist form just mean that the state will perform capitalist functions suboptimally? Or can capitalist functions be performed by, for example, a feudal form of the state? Why would a suboptimal form persist for so long? How should we think of transition in which the state embodies complex combinations of different forms of the state – the German state certainly seemed to be in the process of becoming ever-more bourgeois around the end of c19.
4. **Comparative context of the analysis.** (Sun Jing) Are Steinmetz's explanations idiosyncratic to Germany, or would they hold across European cases? Does the four-paradigms of regulation apply more broadly?
5. **What is the "social"?** (Sara Swider)
6. **What does gender add to the analysis?** (Sara Swider) It isn't exactly clear why a specific gender analysis is helpful for the problems Steinmetz studies. What does it help explain?
7. **Motivations of political actors and the problem of the relevant contexts for "anxiety" and fear.** (Amy Lang). Steinmetz makes a good case that anxieties about the social question matter for policy, but it isn't clear how one establishes the relevant context which generates these anxieties. Why is it that local protests define the key anxiety-enhancing process?
8. **Discourses of reform** (Teresa Melgar, Landy Sanchez, Pablo Mitnick)
 - What precisely is the causal logic of the claim that paradigms affect policies? S argues that policies are structurally underdetermined and this is why paradigms matter – what does this mean? (Pablo Mitnick)
 - To what extent are the four paradigms of reform likely to be homogeneous discursive categories in the beliefs of the reformers? Do any of these reforms reflect at all the interests or perspectives of the targets of reform, or do they all simply reflect the biases of the reformers? (Teresa Melgar, Landy Sanchez)
 - How would Steinmetz's analysis relate to contemporary progressive reforms? (Teresa Melgar)
9. **clientelism.** (Landy Sanchez). There is little discussion of resistance, adaptations, negotiations of the clients of these reforms, but in some ways Bismarckian reforms look somewhat like Latin American Clientelism. Is this right?
10. **Intercity variations.** It is not clear that S's interpretations of the cross-city equations are compelling. (Pablo Mitnick)