



Economy and Society

RC02 2022 QUARTER 4 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Since our last newsletter, we have made significant progress towards organizing the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology, to be held in a hybrid format in Melbourne, Australia from June 25 to July 1, 2023.

Twenty-seven of your economy & society colleagues crafted session proposals and issued calls for abstracts. Many of their sessions received a very large number of high-quality abstracts. This created an uncomfortable situation for selecting among very strong abstracts for oral presentations. This pressure was partly relieved after the President of the ISA (Sari Hanafi) was able to allocate to RC02 an additional three sessions, and our colleagues in RC35 (Conceptual and Terminological Analysis) generously contributed an additional session that we are co-hosting. At the end of the day, RC02 is hosting or co-hosting 34 sessions, with approximately 200 papers. Whether you will join us in-person or virtually (or both), I believe that you will find a wealth of insights at RC02 sessions that will cover the breadth of economy and society. In addition to RC02, at the World Congress there are 66 other Research Committees, Thematic Groups and Working Groups organizing sessions to peak

your sociological curiosity. I warmly invite you to mark your calendars and plan on joining us.

Would you like to become more involved with this international community? The work is gratifying. Over the next few months, I will be reaching out with diverse service opportunities in which you can express yourself and apply your skills. To give a small taste of what is to come: We'll be organizing an Economy and Society Junior Scholars Laboratory in Melbourne immediately before the World Congress. The goal of the Laboratory is to attract junior scholars to RC02 and provide vehicles for mentorship, workshopping for publication, and career advice. We'll be organizing social events to compensate for the tedium of COVID-lockdowns and the lost connections in virtual conferences. We'll be organizing an inaugural committee to award an author for the best book in Economy and Society since the last World Congress. And in addition to all of this, we have space and money for YOUR IDEAS. To volunteer, sign up here:

<https://tinyurl.com/RC02volunteerFor2023>

RC02 is one of the largest and most active Research Committees in the International Sociological Association. In part, this is due to the centrality of our research to the discipline. And it is due,

undoubtedly, to the present and past Boards of RC02. But the lifeblood of RC02 is its members. What do you want to do?

I look forward to finding out, and meeting you in Melbourne in 2023.

Sincerely,

Aaron Pitluck

President, Economy and Society Research Committee (ISA RC02, 2018-2023)

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ARTICLE

Please send original essays to the Secretary and Newsletter Editor, Dustin Stoltz (dss219 [at] lehigh [dot] edu).

Andrea Komlosy's Foresight study based on Big History

BY Uwe Christian Plachetka

Andrea Komlosy (2022) provides a foresight study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemics based on models of Big History (Leonid and Anton Grinin, Korotayev 2022). Kondratieff waves and Grinin's conception of production principles are global history's chief trajectories. The agricultural-craft, industrial and cybernetic production principles are established by the neolithic, industrial and cybernetic revolution. The original data of each production principle's life cycle (Grinin 2012:39) indicate that the lion's share of their life span is spent reaching their hegemonic position, resembling Godelier (1974): The respective revolutionists need cultural hegemony over all other existing modes to establish their socio-economic configuration with its specific legal and normative framework.

Since no one can see into the future, calibrating a model means running it backward into history checking whether the algorithm's data are matching reasonably well with known data. I suggested the 14th-century Black Death and its impact as a reference pandemic due to the subsequent "scientific revolution" in astronomy by renaissance humanists (Plachetka 2020a). Leonid Grinin (pers. com.) insists on each principle's direct impact on manufacturing. The military revolution, dated back may be a substitute for the industrial revolution to meet the model rationale.

James Belich (2022) does exactly that, holding the Black Death responsible for the "Great Divergence". The end of the Pax Mongolica during the Plague disconnected Europe from the Silk Roads. Belich (2022: 232-33) considers the seven expeditions by Ming Admiral Zheng He (1405-1433) as a reboot of the Maritime Silk Road as a World-System network. This makes plausible Fra Mauro's citing Asian experts in his map made in Venice (Plachetka 2019)

on his map. Novel Asian information generated circa 1420 C.E. made him reject Ptolemy's portraying the Indian Ocean as landlocked. Anyway, Europeans had to make their own way: In contrast to the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic has no Monsoon winds providing "sea highways" to India. Since sea highways are one-way, the maneuver "volta do mar" required astronomic navigation for spotting sea highways suitable for sailing back home. Early Renaissance humanism developed scientific astronomy for mathematical geography. Between 1482-86, Diego Cão reached latitudes at the African West coast, where the pole-star is not visible. He put the then novel humanist solar astronomy to the test (Hunter 2012). Martellius turned that into cartography: The Yale Martelius map (ca. 1491) also allows us to understand the impact of a geographical symposium during the ecclesiastical council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-45) (Van Duzer 2019) contained in Fra Mauro's map as a "knowledge aggregator" (Nanetti et.al. 2015). Dating the map depends on the entry of the latest information, because the conventional date 1457 refers to Portugal's payment for the map after the expeditions of Cadamosto and Usodimare to Senegal (1455-56). After China's official inward turn since 1433, the maritime Silk Road was run by private traders of Hokkian origin left alone, with the apotheosis of Zhèng Hé among them exclusively (Tan 2009). The 16th-century Sino-Portuguese alliance to run the maritime Silk Road furnished Hokkians with some protection by state-craft i.e., superior battleships as results of the European military revolution. Without that scientific-epistemological revolution, the

Portuguese would not have been able to establish anything around the Indian Ocean.

As a preliminary conclusion:

1. The complexity of Belich's evidence for the impact of the Black Death requires a model to reduce it to manageable concepts for calibrating the discussed model.

2. The term "Fitness region" as analytical category: Vavilov's law of homologous series means to Peruvian Quechua farmers the use of spots of specific microclimatic conditions as selection criteria for cross-breeding of wind pollinators, e.g., potatoes: Random mutations that don't fit in won't blossom there. Thereby they adapt seeds to their local environmental conditions (Plachetka 2020b). In models of system evolution, such a selecting spot is a "fitness region".

3. Grinin's phases of a production principle's life cycle indicate that a new production principle in its infancy requires its adequate fitness region, such as the Mediterranean at the end of the Silk Roads for capitalism. Relevant changes in the system context allows the new system to transgress the boundaries of its pristine fitness region, heading towards its maturity and eventually its hegemonic position.

Based on these modeling considerations, trajectories from suitable historical showcases, considering their scale, can enable a calibration of the discussed model, but it's still a long way to identify the relevant proxy data from history, so Komlosy (2022) can only rely on narratives on the effects of Covid-related lockdowns to draw her conclusions.

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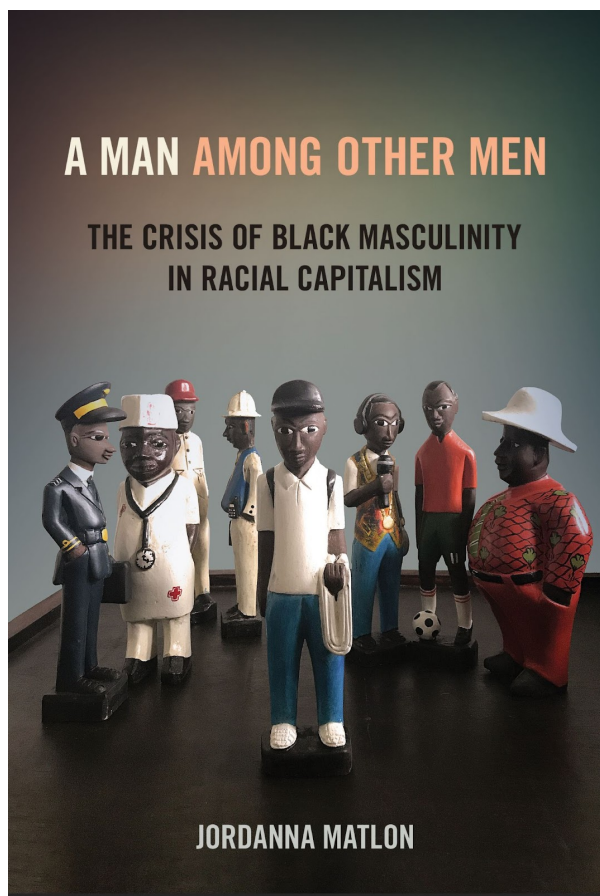
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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

[A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism](#) by Matlon, Jordanna. 2022. Cornell University Press.



A Man among Other Men examines competing constructions of modern manhood in the West African metropolis of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Engaging the histories, representational repertoires, and performative identities of men in Abidjan and across the Black Atlantic, Jordanna Matlon shows how French colonial legacies and

media tropes of Blackness act as powerful axes, rooting masculine identity and value within labor, consumerism, and commodification.

Through a broad chronological and transatlantic scope that culminates in a deep ethnography of the livelihoods and lifestyles of men in Abidjan's informal economy, Matlon demonstrates how men's subjectivities are formed in dialectical tension by and through hegemonic ideologies of race and patriarchy. *A Man among Other Men* provides a theoretically innovative, historically grounded, and empirically rich account of Black masculinity that illuminates the sustained power of imaginaries even as capitalism affords a deficit of material opportunities. Revealed is a story of Black abjection set against the anticipation of male privilege, a story of the long crisis of Black masculinity in racial capitalism.

Introduction: Greatness in Each Man

Pont Général de Gaulle is a bridge that connects Plateau, Abidjan's center and proud bastion of wide, leafy boulevards and steel-and-concrete modernity, with Treichville, the city's original African district, or quartier populaire, following the segregated spatial logic of the colonial city. Treichville is named after Marcel Treich-Laplène, early French explorer and first colonial

administrator of Côte d'Ivoire. Like Treichville, scattered throughout Abidjan are roads, bridges, and neighborhoods that preserve the appellations of the colonial era. Unlike those postcolonial states that indigenized the naming of their quotidian urban spaces, in Abidjan durable affirmations of European influence and the decades of *Françafrique* that dominate political, economic, and cultural relations between ex-colony and metropole endure. Pont Général de Gaulle honors Charles de Gaulle, the president of France when Côte d'Ivoire gained its independence. Côte d'Ivoire, the “Coast of Ivory,” alludes to a resource of brilliant whiteness whose violent extraction of bone from flesh is now firmly coupled with the dark side of the global economy. Yet Côte d'Ivoire's most forceful assertion with respect to its name has involved not this association, but rather the maintenance of an unyielding Frenchness: it declared, in 1986, a refusal to recognize any translations of its name—the English Ivory Coast, the Spanish Costa de Marfil—in formal diplomatic exchanges.

After reaching land in Treichville, Pont Général de Gaulle arrives at the Jardin Bourse du Travail, translated roughly as the “Labor Exchange” or “Labor Placement” Garden. Crossing this bridge in 2008, one would have looked up to find a billboard advertising the Irish beer Guinness. Eight Black men stand on either side of a

man-sized Guinness bottle. The label reads, in English, “Foreign Extra.” Each proud and distinguished looking, the men from left to right



appear to be, first, a retiree, invoking a lifetime of steady work and a pension in old age, followed by men whose sartorial expressions suggest various accumulation strategies: a businessman, an athlete, a mechanic, a man whose casual T-shirt and jeans indicate no discernible trade, a pilot, a doctor, and a DJ. The man in jeans holds a banner declaring, *Il y a de la GREATNESS en chaque homme* (There is GREATNESS in each man). Unlike the obdurate Francophonie of the name Côte d'Ivoire, here the roots of greatness bow to an Anglophone foreignness.

That the average man whose work is unmarked bears the banner for all men illustrates how Guinness has tapped into an African predicament of jobless men. A validation, this advertisement lays claim to parity among men irrespective of work, when otherwise empty time, waiting time, is made full with consumer time, momentary fixes of meaning-making. A man's worth, then, is contingent on something else: in this case, a Guinness beer. The Guinness brand bestows this resignified worth; this branding feeds a familiar narrative of branded Black bodies in the capitalist economy.

In 2008 Côte d'Ivoire was in the sixth year of a civil war that had split it into a rebel-held north and a government-controlled south. Already in its third decade of precipitous economic decline, the war exacerbated *la crise* (the crisis), justified the grounded economy, scared away much of the French and other expatriate populations who had long monopolized the inchoate business sector, and swelled an already strained urban labor market with displaced persons from the hinterland. Once the "Paris of West Africa," Abidjan had become a decadent city, decadent in the double sense of the excessive indulgence the state lavished on the city center during its heyday and in the dilapidated condition of the majority of its urban space, constituted not by the planned colonial city but by the *quartiers populaires*.

This was a time when, by official counts, three-quarters of Abidjan's four million residents were self-employed informally, earning their keep through luck and a hustler's sensibility. Under the Guinness billboard worked *vendeurs ambulants*, or mobile street vendors. Concentrated, with no shortage of irony, around the Jardin Bourse du Travail, these vendors sold inflatable balls, car mats, camcorders, toilet paper, phone recharge cards, and other assorted bric-a-brac to motorists stalled in rush-hour traffic. As if to garner some dignity out of their uncertain status, the Guinness billboard offered an alternative possibility, an imaginary that reflected the shifting occupational realities and aspirations of Abidjanais men during a time in which finding a steady job was as unlikely as striking media stardom. In this imaginary established professionals rub shoulders with the new figures of the crisis economy: equivalent, then, are the pilot and the DJ, the athlete and the mechanic, the businessman and the street vendor. What they have in common—what makes them all great—is a Guinness in their hands. Here, Guinness has explicitly invoked greatness outside of wage labor, a realm demarcated by the colonial project.

This greatness was also rooted in the history of conquest. The imperial mission sought out foreign possessions not only as a source of land and labor but also as a market for European

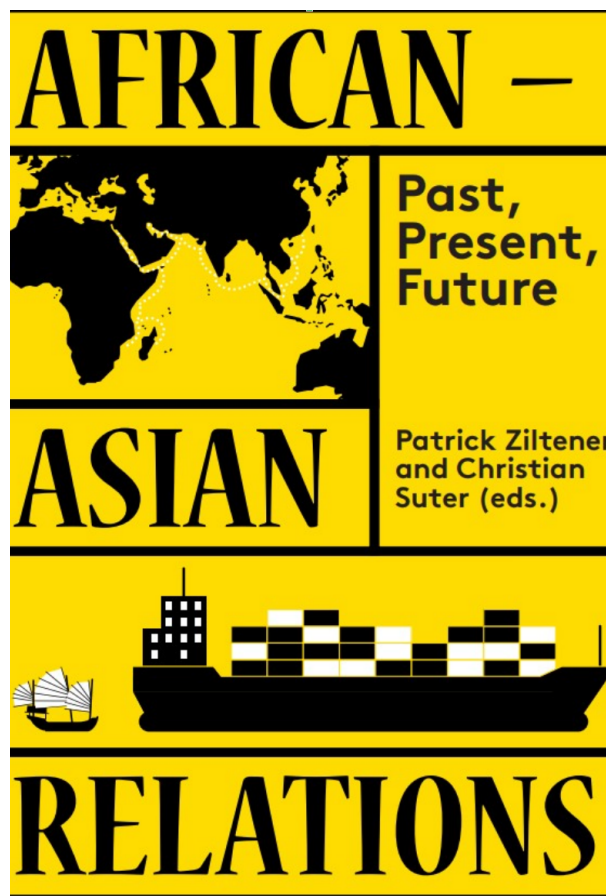
products. Undergirding this mission was a civilizational narrative that portrayed the consumption of foreign goods as Africans' path up the gilded evolutionary staircase. In late capitalism, a time when the reality of permanent contraction surpasses the anticipatory moment of an expanding wage economy, incorporation of the world's "bottom billion" renders proof of its triumph. An entrepreneurial-by-necessity, petty consumer class emerges as capitalism's final frontier. Supplanting the promise of wage labor under a regulated, planned economy, every man is now free to achieve greatness, making and spending on his own accord. His capacity to do so is a test of his self-worth.

The Guinness advertisement extolled a vision of corporate empire and citizen-consumer. Yet residuals of other imperial etchings coexisted in this space. Pont Général de Gaulle, the quartier Treichville, the name Côte d'Ivoire: all marked Abidjan as a bulwark of Françafrique, solidified through the extractive and exploitative relations of metropole and colony. These etchings overlaid different eras in the continuous story of racial capitalism, eras that differentially incorporated Black men into processes of production, consumption, and commodification. The story of Abidjan is a story of racial capitalism told in the exaggerated hierarchies of work and in the racialized imaginaries that these hierarchies

produced as men sought survival and status. During the interregnum, the miracle-turned-mirage that became known as la crise, imaginaries circulated in lieu of probable expectations. These imaginaries bore the legacies of Black men's incorporation into racial capitalism, as would-be workers and would-be consumers in a modern economy—and in an enduring relationship to commodification as value.

Dr. Jordanna Matlon is an urban ethnographer who studies racial capitalism and the articulation of Black masculinity in Africa and the African diaspora. Currently an assistant professor at American University's School of International Service, Matlon received her PhD in Sociology at UC Berkeley and was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse and a visiting scholar at the African Centre for Cities. She is generally interested in the ways "Blackness" operates as a signifier, intersects with gender norms, manifests in popular culture, and illuminates understandings of political economy. In addition to her book, *A Man among Other Men: The Crisis of Black Masculinity in Racial Capitalism*, Matlon's work has appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *Antipode*, *Poetics*, *Ethnography*, *Contexts*, and *Boston Review*, among other places.

African-Asian Relations: Past, Present, Future
 edited by Patrick Ziltener and Christian
 Suter. 2022. World Society Foundation.



The New Dynamism in Africa-Asian Relations in the 21st c.

As one of the last international meetings that took place on site before the pandemic, the World Society Foundation (WSF) Zurich convened a conference in 2019 at the shores of lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on “The Past,

Present and Future of African-Asian Relations.” Since, in the countries of the Global North, the scope and speed of change in the relations among the economies and states in the Global South is hardly felt and therefore only scantily observed, the new volume in the World Society Studies series presents a wide empirical spectrum of descriptive analyses of the “new dynamism” in African-Asian relations.

As “new dynamism” in African-Asian relations the editors understand “a significant increase in direct interactions between Africa and Asia in this century, as compared to the level of interactions in 20th century and during the Cold War,”—“direct” meaning interactions not mediated through Western-led institutions such as World Bank and IMF. Based on the analyses presented in the volume, the editors come to the conclusion: Yes, there is strong evidence for “a new dynamism in Africa-Asian relations, at bilateral and multilateral, local and regional levels, both in formal, institutional contexts and as informal practices. Asian and African countries have never, since the end of the colonial empires, been economically as highly integrated as nowadays. From trade to direct investment and resource-based infrastructure deals, we observe very dynamic processes that

transform the core-semiperiphery-periphery structure that we knew from the second half of the 20th century. The new African-Asian dynamism marks a *signum* of our century.” (p. 14). A map of Africa combined with an Index of African countries, places, and institutions makes the volume easy to consult for country- or issue-specific questions.

The book contains a summary chapter of African-Asian relations from the beginning of the Common era (CE) into the 15th c. by Philippe Beaujard, renowned French anthropologist and longtime historian of the world of the Indian ocean. As he shows, over these centuries, the Indian ocean constituted an integrated world-system which was—until the beginning of the 19th century—dominated by Asian economies. A series of comprehensible historical maps in this chapter make this world—or rather: these worlds—accessible for non-historians.

The main focus of the book, however, is on the change brought to Africa/Asia by the rise of China. There are valuable and illuminative chapters on India’s and South Korea’s activities in Africa, but clearly China is the heavy weight and center of gravity of the ongoing transformation. China has also been attracting Africans coming to China, first mainly to Hong Kong, then to neighboring Guangzhou at the Pearl river, estimated between 20’000 and

100’000 people (before the pandemic). A chapter analyzes the “interracial interaction” in the Southern Chinese trading hub during which “mafan” (Chinese for “trouble maker”) increasingly became the characterization of Nigerians, not only by many Chinese, but also as part of an African “intra-group Othering.”

There are chapters on the “arrival of ‘Made in China’ in Burkina Faso” and on the current activities in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with a focus on Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, and Central Africa—the question is pressing: Are we witnessing a new “specter of White Elephants”? And, in terms of development aid, can China be characterized as a “rogue aid donor” in Africa? The analysis in the volume finds this to be unjustified, but describes undesirable “side effects” that might lead to a local rise of corruption and nepotistic aid allocation.

While many chapters have a bilateral focus, e.g. on the China and Côte d’Ivoire cooperation or the role of China in Zimbabwe’s re-engagement policy, the volume does also look into the regional dimension of Sino-African development cooperation and the significance of the *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation* (FOCAC). China sees the *African Union* (AU) as having a “leading role in resolving African issues,” and, for that purpose, generously built the new AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For the

AU, the cooperation with China is not only an opportunity to finance development

frameworks—such as the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD)—, but also a chance to implement new regional development schemes.

The latest volume in the *World Society Studies* series published by the World Society

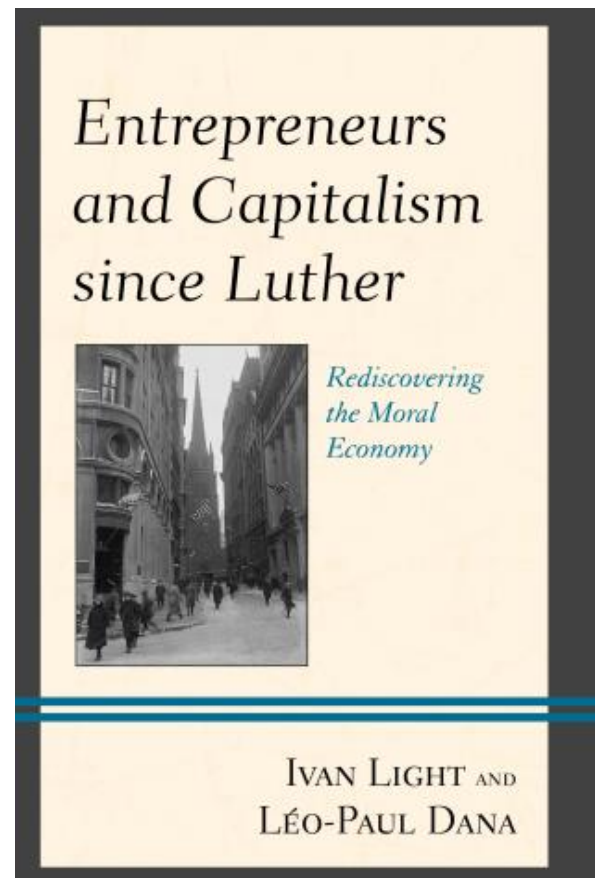
Foundation (WSF) offers a wide spectrum of analyses, calling for more interdisciplinary exchange and in-depth research on the “new dynamism” in African-Asian relations.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

[Entrepreneurs and Capitalism Since Luther: Rediscovering the Moral Economy](#) by Ivan Light and Leo-Paul Dana. 2022. Lexington.

Early capitalism depended upon religious minorities whose members knew how to run a business and could morally justify doing so. As these capabilities diffused into the general population, business elites increasingly substituted money for social capital. The authors trace the moral legitimation of capitalism from the Reformation to Joseph Schumpeter whose concept of “creative destruction” freed elite entrepreneurs like Donald Trump from conventional morality. In contemporary America, social networks still enforce conventional morality on small business, facilitating commerce and legitimating small capitalism. However, operating outside



conventional norms, elite entrepreneurs rely on successful results to evade moral criticism.

Reviews

“The world is clamoring for alternative models and understanding of unbridled capitalism. In this original and thoughtful book, Ivan Light and Léo Dana provide a broad, comprehensive, and compelling analysis reconciling entrepreneurship and capitalism with ethics and morality. This important book provides a blueprint for capitalism with a human face and heart. In an era burdened by crisis and cycles of devastating cynicism, this book offers a well-considered optimistic future for capitalism, entrepreneurship, and humanity.” —*David B. Audretsch, Distinguished Professor and the Ameritech Chair of Economic Development at Indiana University*

“In this exquisitely researched and eloquently argued volume, Ivan Light and Léo Paul Dana challenge the assertion that capitalism can only generate wealth through the anti-social, unrestricted, and amoral pursuit of profit. Mobilizing a diverse array of case studies, the authors convincingly argue that capitalism emerged from contexts that were collectively oriented, small in scale, and socially beneficial; not unlike those maintained by contemporary religious, ethnic, and moral communities. In generating this perspective, the authors present an alternative to the dystopia of neo-liberalism

that is both compelling and hopeful.” —*Steven J. Gold, Michigan State University*

“At today’s zenith of the resource-based view of the firm, Light and Dana provide an intellectual and historical gravitas for the approach, building a view that includes not only social, reputational and skill based resources but also the all-important work ethic, which defined the distinct contribution Reformation era thinking and action made possible today’s models of market capitalism. Tying theory to examples where the mix of cultural and community factors differ, they span the globe and ages showing where capitalism can build or have trouble taking hold. The book’s unexpected insights and rich depictions of diverse cultures make for a fascinating and thought-provoking read.” —*Jerome Katz, Brockhaus Chair of Entrepreneurship, Chaifetz School of Business, Saint Louis University*

Ivan Light is Professor Emeritus of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Léo-Paul Dana is Professor of business at Dalhousie University.