Book Discussion

Regine A. Spector, *Order at the Bazaar: Power and Trade in Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).

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Accounting for Order in the Most Unlikely of Places

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Regine Spector's *Order at the Bazaar* draws big insights from small settings. Whereas other analyses of post-Soviet political economy generally take a "top-down" institutional approach or focus on how firms—the notional cradles of future economic growth—interact with the state, Spector points her analytical lens at those sites where a preponderance of economic activity actually takes place, at least in Kyrgyzstan. And rather than examine macroeconomic statistics or seek to identify empirical regularities across space, she uses fieldwork to bring to life how traders, buyers, middlemen, bosses, and politicians cope, cooperate, and clash. In so doing, this unique and thoroughly researched book makes important contributions to debates about political economy, state-building, and political development and decay in Central Asia and the broader post communist region.

The conventional wisdom on bazaars is that these sites represent primitive development and an absence of order. They are more often associated with pickpockets and swindlers than with entrepreneurship and economic sustenance. Likewise, a theoretical focus on Kyrgyzstan, at least in political science, typically yields a depiction of chaotic and vindictive politics, rampant corruption, and unruly street action, in stark contrast to its neighbors, where order is imposed from the top. Yet it is precisely due to this lack of structure that bazaars provide an opening for actors at various levels to negotiate their own forms of order through self-organization and entrepreneurial activity. Spector demonstrates how traders resolve conflicts and establish regularity without recourse to formal legal structures or authoritarian management.

Methodologically, Spector relies on participant observation and interviews with key players—mostly traders—in order to narrate the recent history of the development of bazaars in Kyrgyzstan and describe how encounters play out. This approach reveals how traders, despite their nominally weak position,

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are able to assert their agency both individually and collectively to shape their immediate circumstances and the informal (and sometimes formal) rules governing bazaar activity. This optic provides intimate and rare insights into the ways that people adapt at the micro level to the national-level political disruptions that intermittently afflict Kyrgyzstan. It also enables Spector to show connections between occurrences at different levels of analysis and between the ostensibly "social" activities of bazaar merchants and more explicitly "political" developments, as owners seek political office or municipal authorities look to extract more revenue from these durable sources of economic activity. Beyond that, Spector articulates a rationale for rethinking how scholars view institutions, analytically speaking. In her account, Kyrgyz are neither victims nor heroes, but rather resilient, flawed, and opportunistic actors. In one sense, for people who have lived in the region or studied post-Soviet politics, it is a truism that people adapt to their surroundings. Yet there are larger implications of this grounded epistemological stance: rather than viewing institutions—as political economists usually do—as constraints that structure behavior in patterned ways, she analyzes them as resources that people selectively engage with, circumvent, manipulate, or ignore to advance their interests. This focus on a particular kind of agency—creative and improvisational interaction between individuals and their messy surroundings—is well suited for studying this topic in the Central Asian region, yet has not been articulated as a methodological statement in its own right in comparative politics, much less as forcefully as it is here.

There are two areas in which Spector could have drawn out the implications of her argument, both of which relate to the broader institutional setting. First of all, what are the prospects for scaling up "islands of order"? While the examples she evinces may be encouraging, given the dismal outcomes observers may have been led to expect in Kyrgyzstan, they only take us so far. Bazaars are not self-contained entities, as Spector recognizes, but are part of broader social, political, and economic ecosystems. But it is not clear how the small victories attained at the local level might be replicated in the broader milieu— whether islands can be extended into archipelagos of order or whether, less propitiously, local institutional arrangements are not reproducible and every battle must be fought anew depending on unique constellations of factors. Given the unlikelihood that top-down efforts will be made in Kyrgyzstan to replicate best practices on a wider scale, are we left with nothing more than small successes in some niches of the private sector amid "disorderly" surroundings and a sea of dysfunction in the public realm?

A second path not explored is how Spector's findings in Kyrgyzstan might apply in neighboring countries, especially those where order is imposed

from above, as in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and—to a lesser extent—Kazakhstan and Russia. Kyrgyzstan, for all its flaws, provides the conditions for entrepreneurial action, if only out of neglect. This raises the question of how much space is needed to enable the types of collective action and innovation Spector describes. If, for example, control over bazaars is centralized and closely tied to the state, if laws are stacked in favor of owners and managers rather than workers and are actually enforced, if the law acts as an instrument of state control and mobilization from below is suppressed, how much agency is left to be exercised? Where can we find niches of creativity, and how much space is there for meaningful collective action? Or are weapons of the weak the only forms of resistance available? Questions like these will emerge as important if and when political changes occur in centralized states, giving previously dormant collectivities and institutional arrangements the opportunityto assert themselves.

These are minor quibbles about a book that represents a major achievement and deserves to be read by scholars of Central Asian and post-Soviet studies, comparative political economy, and development.

Locating Institutions in Kyrgyzstan's Bazaar Economies

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Located on the outskirts of Bishkek, the Dordoi bazaar is a symbolic landmark of Kyrgyzstan's post-Soviet economic trajectory toward market liberalization and trade in China-made consumer goods (or, more precisely, their re-export to neighboring countries with more purchasing power). While the many thousand containers, the crowds of bustling buyers and sellers, and the overwhelming din make "going to Dordoi" a rather strenuous trip for most of the capital's residents, in recent years this marketplace has caught the attention of scholars and tourists alike. Be it due to an air of orientalism, which in this part of the world is commonly associated with the "ancient" Silk Road, or because of the undisputed relevance that Dordoi has attained on account of providing local income opportunities, exposure to bazaar life is considered to promise both cultural experiences and valuable scientific insights.

Upon their first encounter with a sprawling site such as Dordoi, the layperson and the professional observer usually share an impression of chaos, soon followed by puzzlement as to how all this apparent disorder can function

harmoniously. This is, in the simplest terms, Regine A. Spector's point of departure in her monograph *Order at the Bazaar: Power and Trade in Central Asia*. More academically speaking, her goal is to "unsettle" the predominant perspectives on Kyrgyzstan, which frame the country primarily in terms of conflict, predation, or patronage, and use this framing to advocate the importance of formal institutions to improving governance and advancing market reforms or development. Instead, Spector argues that bazaars can be understood as "islands of order" that exist "below" the nation-state level, and makes an effort to trace the ways in which order—broadly defined to encompass "orderliness," "lawfulness," "regulation," and "self-discipline"—is forged from the bottom up, based on everyday beliefs, norms, behaviors, and discourses (p. 10).

Taking this approach, the book contrasts Dordoi with another well-known marketplace in Bishkek: the Osh bazaar, which is located in the center of the city and differs with regard to its genesis, structure, and clientele. Before entering into this comparison, Spector touches on some key aspects that contributed to the rapid emergence of bazaars in post-1991 Kyrgyzstan (their number quadrupled between the late Soviet era and the year 2005). Among these were a lack of alternative employment due to declining industrial output; the phenomenon of "shuttle trading" across now more permeable borders; the introduction of a simplified national tax system; and Kyrgyzstan's accession to the WTO in 1998, which significantly reduced customs tariffs with other member states. Beyond economic transition and policy effects, this part of the book also addresses the evolving perceptions of bazaars and the people who work in them. In particular, the author traces a gradual de-stigmatization of the trade profession, which originated in the criminalization of "private speculation" during the Socialist era but was compounded by a (primordial) ethnic understanding that the nomadic heritage of the Kyrgyz would be violated were they to engage in profit-seeking commercial activities. These aspects are further illustrated in the life stories of traders, who speak of "shame" and "embarrassment" when they recollect the beginnings of their careers but nowadays describe themselves as "grateful for the nightmare" (p. 41) because it offered them a way to "survive" and earn a decent living.

In the book's core section, four empirical chapters discuss different institutions that contributed to the creation of order at the Dordoi and Osh bazaars. At Dordoi, Spector first highlights how a trade union, established in 1997, evolved as the key intermediary between traders, bazaar management, and the local administrative authorities. Less focused on social welfare provision than their Soviet predecessors, the *starshie* (elders) of this readjusted union claim to have resolved various practical issues that emerged in the capitalist era, among

them curbing "bureaucratic predation" and bribe-seeking; settling a conflict between Dordoi traders and cargo companies over access to customers; and negotiating a flexible system of rental payments for containers according to their more or less lucrative location in the marketplace.

Next to the trade union's role in steering collective action and lobbying on its members' behalf, Spector identifies the owner of Dordoi, Askar Salymbekov, and his "diplomatic" capabilities as another source of bazaar order. Drawing mostly on press articles and other secondary sources, she reconstructs how Salymbekov navigated Kyrgyzstan's delicate politico-economic landscape to protect Dordoi through two "revolutions" (2005 and 2010) and prevent his profitable business from becoming a target for redistribution to more powerful elites (*reiderstvo*). In this chapter, the author's intention is to conceptualize the political maneuvering of influential individuals not only in terms of "analytic rationality" (interests, plans, and rules), but also as influenced by the particular societal context, personal experience, and intuition. As much as the approach of perceiving "business as diplomacy" is theoretically convincing, the data presented to support it remains ambiguous. When relying mainly on public statements by Salymbekov himself, a formulation such as "sometimes we had to lead difficult negotiations" (p. 89) might as well be a rhetorical disguise for "diplomatic moves," especially because the subsequent pages disclose that Salymbekov principally embraced quite conventional means of Kyrgyz power games: bribing, seeking a seat in parliament to gain immunity and upgrade his social networks, and keeping a "private security" team of "sportsmen" (which could also be used for other purposes than fending off racketeers at Dordoi).

Moving to the Osh bazaar in central Bishkek, Spector reveals how various notions of "disorder" were associated with this marketplace throughout the 1990s and 2000s due to its physical appearance, its reputation as a site of betrayal and deception, and the Kyrgyz state's weak capacity to govern trade there. From its origins as a Soviet *kolkhoz* market under the control of the Kyrgyz Consumer Union (*Potrebsoiuz*), we can follow the gradual dismantling of collective property management in the early post-Soviet period and the emerging supremacy of private economic interests. The author points to the ensuing "fragmented nature of ownership" at Osh bazaar (76 entities by 2005) as the key driver for a political battle: the ambitions of influential bazaar owners to collect rent from a growing number of traders, even if they crowded the sidewalks and access roads, came into conflict with the municipality's attempts to "civilize" and modernize the marketplace (the reconstruction of which nevertheless occurred in 2011).

The final empirical chapter starts from the observation that traders at the Osh bazaar, unlike their counterparts in Dordoi, lacked a union-like representation of their rights. Instead, Spector argues, order was established in specific sections of the Osh bazaar by drawing on an institution of Kyrgyz culture, the *aksakal* (literally "white beard," meaning "elder"). The author then provides the narrations of two self-made *aksakals*, who became sources of "authority" by resolving conflicts, channeling information, and serving as role models for younger traders. Although such actions certainly affected the bazaar's social order and parallels to the basic functionality of *aksakals* in village life can be detected, to suggest that they amounted to an urban, market-environment adaptation of "pre-Soviet, nomadic, rural-based traditions" (p. 162) verges on (culturally) relativistic over-interpretation. This can be noticed when realizing that in fact *aksakal* is the only available means of properly assigning someone with ultimate seniority in the Kyrgyz-language environment of Osh bazaar, or when taking into account the limitations of this status indication even for the selected protagonists, one of whom reports that in neither his native village nor the bazaar's café would he still be ad- dressed as an *aksakal*. Furthermore, the author could, at this juncture, have explored the reality that the (mostly non-Kyrgyz) *starshie* of Dordoi in fact perform very similar tasks to the *aksakals* and that the term *starshie* might refer not only to "elders" within this more Russian-speaking environment, but equally to a wider cultural concept.

The manuscript's concluding chapters further substantiate the convincing argument that a shift in focus is necessary: away from "national contexts"—perceived through prisms of endemic corruption, weak rule of law, and limited foreign direct investment (FDI)—and toward processes in which social orders and growth potentials emerge at the local level. In addition to offering insights from other bazaars in Kyrgyzstan and the wider post-Soviet region, Spector examines two international aid efforts in Kyrgyzstan, on tax policy reforms and on programs to strengthen the parliament, demonstrating that even well- intentioned top-down approaches based on rationalist and neoclassical economic assumptions may fail if they collide with vernacular perceptions and routines such as those elaborated in this monograph.

For a political science and development studies audience, in particular, Spector's book offers a fresh and in-depth look at the evolution of private trading through its focus on the historical particularities and micro-dynamics of Bishkek's two main bazaars. From other vantage points, such as that of social/ cultural anthropology, the following remarks could be made: If bazaars constitute "islands of order," why would the author still need to characterize the state sector as "chaotic" (p. 45), despite existing studies that show how acquiring a

position in Kyrgyzstan's bureaucratic apparatus is an investment with a clear expectation of return, and thus a process guided by certain rules that need to be obeyed along the way (see also the political ambitions of Dordoi owner Salymbekov)? Moving forward from Spector's important contribution, one might plead for a more stringent application of the ethnographic approach. With more reliance on data from participant observation, there would be an opportunity to move beyond the self-presentations of established interlocutors (owners or elders) and their inclination toward discourses of social harmony, be they inspired by a Soviet ideology of supposed tolerance or by Kyrgyz cultural values of unity (*yntymak*).

Finally, switching to a micro-level perspective does not absolve research efforts of investigating the "dark sides" of how power and trade become institutionalized in competitive settings. It rather obliges us to attend to the unspoken-of yet observable practices for handling conflicts, such as the exclusion, avoidance, and silencing of less influential traders who belong to marginal age, gender, geographical, or ethnic groups.

Markets and Spontaneous Order in the Bazaars of Central Eurasia

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Order in the Bazaar is a stunning book written in beautiful prose—a major feat for a work that so deeply engages social science—that recounts the stories of hundreds of traders and entrepreneurs who have come to be the heart and soul of Kyrgyzstan's economy. Rather than wait for the state to impose regulations or for the Soviet welfare state to magically reappear, traders took matters into their own hands. Drawing on years of careful fieldwork in two Bishkek bazaars, Regine Spector brilliantly demonstrates the capacity of individuals to overcome social and economic dilemmas. It is an optimistic book that contributes to the growing consensus among scholars of Central Eurasia that the most important politics is that which happens outside the state.

Spector shows how depictions of chaos in Kyrgyzstan are widely overblown. Instead of disorder, individuals have found ways to conquer challenges and create order that are deeply embedded in their institutional landscapes. She also moves quickly to dispel stereotypes of instability, corruption, and predation that are common in depictions of Central Eurasia. Spector argues that

despite the weak institutional environment in Kyrgyzstan, disorder has largely disappeared in some markets since independence. How has this happened? It has happened thanks to the ability of entrepreneurs to establish organizations and effectively manage new opportunities. These rules were not entirely new, but were adaptations of the old order that market traders reconstituted to suit their ends.

Through careful ethnographic work, Spector explains why Kyrgyzstan's bazaars have become some of the largest and most prosperous in the region. She details the evolution of stability in the bazaar, contrasting it with the recurring crises that have consumed the state. At the Dordoi bazaar, diverse groups of traders, many of whom were Russian-speaking, did what was most familiar to them: they incorporated organizational elements common to Soviet trade unions. By contrast, the Osh Bazaar (also in Bishkek) was run largely by Kyrgyz traders, who eschewed Soviet organizational structures and took customary forms of governance as the basis for market self-governance. Traders adapted these customary structures to suit their needs. Notably, although they used the honorific *aksakal* ("white beards," elders) to denote bazaar leaders, many leaders were not quite old enough to qualify for this status (some self-proclaimed elders were in their early 50s). These bazaars also featured *baibiches*, or women leaders, who had adapted old customary titles to the new realities of a hectic marketplace.

In Spector's moving account, traders are not victims. By illustrating their agency, Spector easily brushes aside alternative explanations that depict traders as hapless victims of state collapse who fell into trade because they were part of a powerless class that had nothing left to lose by engaging in the venalities of the marketplace. Similarly, she dispenses with the notion that bazaars are simply "havens for mafias and protectors, who capitalized on their monopoly over the use of violence in the context of new countries with weak state capacity." On the contrary, she frames traders' agency as being deeply embedded in the institutional environment, which both liberates and constrains the choices they can make.

The book makes an important contribution to the study of markets in Central Eurasia, where scholars all too often lament "neo-liberalism" and the demise of the social safety net that was the Soviet welfare state. The contributions of this book could have been magnified significantly had Spector engaged more deeply with the economics and political economy literature rather than casting it aside as an alternative hypothesis. I suspect that most of those who fall under the blanket of "rational choice" would agree with Spector's analysis and be impressed with her finding that there is path dependence in the kinds of institutional choices confronted by entrepreneurs. This path dependence

leads to an institutional stickiness.1 This "stickiness" is the *metis,* which helps explain variation in the organizational forms Spector finds at the bazaar.2

If we take this approach seriously, the puzzle Spector uncovers at the beginning of the book seems a bit less surprising. Why did bazaars in Kyrgyzstan escape disorder and disarray? Why were they a source of vibrancy and even resilience? Because the government of Kyrgyzstan, through its liberal reforms (some of the most market-friendly in the region), gave entrepreneurs the space to make their own rules. Unlike Soviet institutions, which sought to impose a kind of homogenizing order, liberal reforms that facilitated the messiness of markets created the kind of divergent outcomes Spector anticipates.

Thus, the critiques of "rational choice" approaches obfuscate commonalities with this broader literature, to which the book makes quite a sustained contribution. The arguments in the book would be more persuasive to a more diverse audience had Spector seen these perspectives as complements rather than competitors. Although the author criticizes economic approaches that assume that markets are frictionless and able to emerge spontaneously, most of the economics literature on the topic would emphatically agree with this assessment.

The political economy literature, too, rarely assumes that markets are frictionless. Some of the most notable work in this tradition analyzes the emergence of self-organized solutions.3 In this literature, Spector would have found good company that could have strengthened her claims. For example, Spector (rightly) takes issue with Sugden,4 who argues that property institutions emerge spontaneously, without conscious design. In her work, Spector shows that rules emerge from society, but they are not spontaneous. Instead, they are crafted. Entrepreneurs and traders adapted rules to suit their needs, without relying on formal forces. In so doing, each bazaar adopted a set of working rules that met the needs of their community. This finding reflects the work of Nobel

1 D. Acemoglu, S. Johnson, and J.A. Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *The American Economic Review*, 91, no. 5 (2001): 1369–1401; W.B. Arthur, *Path Dependence* (Ann Arbor, mi: University of Michigan Press, 1994); P. Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *The American Political Science Review*, 94, no. 2 (2000): 251–67, https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011.

2 P.J. Boettke and C.J. Coyne, "Methodological Individualism, Spontaneous Order, and the Research Program of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 57 (2005): 145–58.

3 R.C. Ellickson, *Order Without Law: How Neighbors Settle Disputes* (Cambridge, ma: Harvard University Press, 1991); P.T. Leeson, *Anarchy Unbound: Why Self-Governance Works Better than You Think* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

4 R. Sugden, "Spontaneous Order," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3, no. 4 (1989): 85–97.

Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom, who showed how individuals are able to overcome collective dilemmas in diverse institutional environments.5 Some of the most enduring institutions arise from a bottom-up process: organizational design and locally-embedded rulemaking.

Ostrom would have anticipated the conclusions Spector draws. Ostrom, too, disagreed with spontaneous order solutions to collective dilemmas and found many similarities to what Spector illustrates: that it is through organizations and rules that individuals can generate sustainable solutions to common problems. Although not spontaneous, Ostrom showed how self-organized rules emerge through decentralized processes—without design. In this way, Spec- tor's work shares some features with that of David Skarbek,6 who has applied Ostrom's principles to show how markets emerge in some of the most unlikely environments, such as prisons.

If we view Spector's book through this prism, her work is a sterling political economy text that carefully constructs how individuals craft and adapt rules to their environments. If we take the lens of this scholarship as a starting point, then we might not be so surprised by the initial research puzzle that order can emerge out of chaos, but her findings actually contribute to this literature in many important ways, most notably by examining how organizational forms adapt to new situations. If anything, this book is an important lesson to scholars of development to assume that individuals can solve difficult problems, rather than to be surprised that this happens.

Spector's book should be read by economists, political scientists, and anthropologists working on development issues not only in Central Asia, but across the developing world. The book illustrates the ability of individuals to rapidly adapt to the political, social, and economic changes that surround them. It gives us an entirely new lens through which to view the collapse of the Soviet welfare state: self-help. The book makes a seminal contribution to our understanding of institutional adaptation and evolution, with a focus on markets. It makes an even more important contribution to the study of decentralized market processes. Although its author would likely dispute this, the book does a superb job of bringing Hayekian mechanisms to the bazaars of Kyrgyzstan.

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5 E. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); E. Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity* (Princeton, nj: Princeton University Press, 2005).

6 D. Skarbek, "Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 82, no. 1 (2012): 96–109, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2012.01.002; D. Skarbek, *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Response to Reviews: Drawing Insights from Everyday Political Economy in Eurasia and Beyond

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I am tremendously grateful for the thoughtful and constructive reviews of my book by Scott Radnitz, Philipp Schröder, and Jennifer Murtazashvili, and am honored to have the opportunity to respond in writing to their ideas and critiques. Before turning to the reviews, I would like to first situate the intellectual origins of this book for the readers of *Central Asian Affairs* and those interested in the study of comparative political economy and development more broadly. When I began research in the mid-2000s, political science studies of Central Asia focused on the region's civil wars; tensions related to ethnicity, clan, and religion; stalled democratization; and regime changes. One of my overarching goals in writing the book, as all of the reviewers mention, was to shift attention away from war, conflict, disorder, and lawlessness and toward how every- day citizens and elites constructed meaning and order in their economic lives
throughout the tumultuous 1990s and 2000s.

Analysis of the presence of a certain rhythm to everyday economic activity struck me as curiously absent from scholarly, journalistic, and policy accounts of the region. *Order at the Bazaar* thus continues a recent movement within Central Asian studies toward identifying and better understanding patterns of political and social order in the region, for example the post-civil war settlement that has undergirded politics in Tajikistan for two decades,7 the discourses and institutions constituting stable authoritarian regimes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan,8 and the presence of customary sources of authority and forms of conflict resolution in Afghanistan.9

7 J. Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); J. Driscoll, "Consolidating a Weak State after Civil War: A Tajik Fable," in J. Heathershaw and E. Schatz (eds.), *Paradox of Power: The Logics of State Weakness in Eurasia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 25–43.

8 E. Schatz, "Transnational Image Making and Soft Authoritarian Kazakhstan," *Slavic Review*, 67, no. 1 (2008): 50–62; J. Murtazashvili, "Coloured by Revolution: The Political Economy of Autocratic Stability in Uzbekistan," *Democratization*, 19, no. 1 (2012): 78–97.

9 N. Coburn, *Bazaar Politics: Power and Pottery in an Afghan Market Town* (Stanford, ca: Stanford University Press, 2011); J.B. Murtazashvili, *Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

I examine everyday meanings and practices as they relate to economic activity, emphasizing the understandings, roles, and actions of older traders in Kyrgyzstan. Instead of characterizing them as either eager, profit-seeking natural entrepreneurs or victims of structural changes that unleashed high unemployment and all but eliminated social safety nets, I view them, in the words of Radnitz, as "neither victims nor heroes, but rather resilient, flawed, and opportunistic actors." Their pathways to "success" have often included financial bankruptcy and other significant challenges. In addition, conversations with traders revealed that they are driven not only by the quest for economic gain, but also by senses of responsibility to create practices, rules, and organizations in the workplace. They strive to practice legitimate and appropriate forms of economic exchange and interaction. This study contributes to our understanding of the changing moral and culturally-imbued sensibilities10 that constitute everyday practices and institutions as they relate to the trading sector.

Turning now to the reviews, two comments by Radnitz invite consideration of the ways in which we can extend the findings of the book. The prospect of scaling up "islands of order" to "archipelagos of order" is an appealing way to think about the varieties of order that transcend nation-state, city, and other traditional geographic boundaries, yet one that may be too optimistic for this context. For example, while trade unions do exist at other bazaars in the country, I would argue that some of the local arrangements at Dordoi are highly con- tingent and not necessarily reproducible in other places or at other scales— suggesting, as Radnitz surmises, that "every battle must be fought anew." While this conclusion is perhaps disheartening for those seeking generalizable and transferable institutional arrangements, these islands nevertheless deserve our attention; in fact, the task of identifying and studying them and their constantly shifting constellations arguably becomes even more necessary. More recent research, for example, has illuminated the ways in which certain bazaars (including Dordoi) have become important points of sale for apparel produced in dilapidated yet electricity-rich buildings in Bishkek, thus forming a dynamic, export-oriented apparel-production network in a region where manufacturing has considerably declined since the Soviet era.11

10 B. Sanghera and E. Satybaldieva, "Moral Sentiments and Economic Practices in Kyrgyzstan: The Internal Embeddedness of a Moral Economy," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 33, no. 5 (2009): 921–35; B. Sanghera and A. Ilyasov, "The Social Embeddedness of Professions in Kyrgyzstan: An Investigation into Professionalism, Institutions and Emotions," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, no. 4 (2008): 643–61.

11 R.A. Spector and A. Botoeva, "New Shop Owners in Old Buildings: Spatial Politics of the Apparel Industry in Kyrgyzstan," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 33, no. 3 (2017): 235–53; R.A. Spector,

The second question that Radnitz raises relates to the possibility that islands of order might exist in neighboring countries that are more authoritarian than Kyrgyzstan. I do believe that islands of order exist in such settings, characterized not by violence, intimidation, or fear exercised from above, but rather by bottom-up trust-based groups that share knowledge, information, money, and organizational capacity. Yet just like those I identified in Kyrgyzstan, these islands are situated within broader political and power relationships. Take the case of Akromiya, in neighboring Uzbekistan. While the state's violent and bloody crackdown on members of this group in 2005 captured headlines, the bottom-up origins and logic of this group's interwoven business, social welfare, and religious practices—and its ties to high-level political leaders and national power structures—could be considered an island of order, if a short- lived one.12 The question in my mind is not whether such islands exist even in the most isolated, war-torn, or authoritarian of contexts, but rather how we as researchers study them, given the time commitment, methodological skills, and language training necessary to gain such insights into the region13 and the challenges associated with accessing the region.14

Schröder's review asks an important question regarding what we might learn from directing the spotlight to a broader swath of those working at bazaars. I chose to privilege older, more influential traders because of their integral experience of creating organizations and embodying the authority that helped to create order in this context of otherwise weak rule of law. At various points throughout the book, however, I contrast the experiences of these elders with others—for example, younger women just starting out recount being compelled to join the trade union to get credit (p. 77), suggesting that motivations for joining the trade union in more recent years have been very different from those that guided traders in the 1990s and 2000s. There are other dark sides to the bazaar, or "sins," as Tatiana called them (p. 69): for instance, we know that mafia members have allegedly operated money exchanges at the bazaar

"A Regional Production Network in a Predatory State: Export-Oriented Manufacturing at the Margins of the Law," *Review of International Political Economy*, 25, no. 2 (2018): 169–89.

12 S. Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); A. Khamidov, "The Taming of the Sacred: How 'Weak' State Structures Regulate Religion in Uzbekistan," in J. Heathershaw and E. Schatz (eds.), *Paradox of Power: The Logics of State Weakness in Eurasia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 169–83.

13 E. Schatz, *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (Chicago, il: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

14 L.P. Markowitz, "Scientific Closure and Research Strategies in Uzbekistan," *Social Science Quarterly*, 97, no. 4 (2016): 894–908.

(p. 60). It is my hope that future studies will illuminate in greater detail the varied experiences at the bazaar across class, ethnicity, gender, and religion—including those that would point to "exclusion, avoidance, and silencing," as Schröder writes. Indeed, there is much to learn from the region's bazaars. Recent studies demonstrate, for example, how social relationships and gift-giving practices are intertwined with economic rationales among Uighur traders in Kyrgyzstan;15 how Islamic lifestyles are being manufactured at bazaars in Tajikistan via international trade;16 and how transnational traders connect bazaars and trade hubs in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan with production and transit centers in China, the UAE, and other countries around the world.17

Finally, Murtazashvili's reading of the book draws a parallel between my findings and Ostrom's contributions to understanding how people "generate sustainable solutions to common problems" through the creation of rules and institutions. I would like to take this opportunity to think through the conditions under which Ostrom's work might be relevant, and in so doing explain why Ostrom's framework does not play a central role in my book. Ostrom's insights and contributions are based on her research on the governance of common pool resources such as fisheries and pastures. She found that bottom-up, polycentric, and multi-scalar institutional configurations govern common pool resources, a finding that has been considered path-breaking in demonstrating that the "tragedy of the commons," or the overuse and degradation of scarce common resources, is not inevitable and that there are alternatives to the state vs. market mechanisms binary that allow us to avoid such "tragedies." However, her rational choice-inspired institutionalist approach has been criticized because it offers a "limited conception of time and history"18 and a

15 R. Steenberg, "Embedded Rubber Sandals: Trade and Gifts across the Sino–Kyrgyz Border," *Central Asian Survey*, 35, no. 3 (2016): 405–20.

16 M. Stephan-Emmrich and A. Mirzoev, "The Manufacturing of Islamic Lifestyles in Tajikistan through the Prism of Dushanbe's Bazaars," *Central Asian Survey*, 35, no. 2 (2016): 157–77.

17 H.H. Karrar, "Kyrgyzstan's Dordoi and Kara-Suu Bazaars: Mobility, Globalization and Survival in Two Central Asian Markets," *Globalizations*, 14, no. 4 (2017): 643–57; M. Marsden, "Crossing Eurasia: Trans-Regional Afghan Trading Networks in China and Beyond," *Central Asian Survey*, 35, no. 1 (2016): 1–15; M. Marsden, "Actually Existing Silk Roads," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 8, no. 1 (2017): 22–30.

18 F. Obeng-Odoom, "The Meaning, Prospects, and Future of the Commons: Revisiting the Legacies of Elinor Ostrom and Henry George," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 75, no. 2 (2016): 386.

narrow understanding of "context, culture and meaning" as they relate to how people "use and manage common property regimes."19

When I began research on this project, I did not expect the reappropriation of institutional forms and the emergence of local orders and forms of authority to become the focus. Given the paucity of existing research on bazaars and everyday political economy in the region more generally, I observed local practices, interviewed traders, read newspaper articles dating back to the 1990s, and sought to understand what everyday traders meant by the word "order" (in both the Russian and Kyrgyz languages)20 in order to more accurately capture the variety of understandings people hold in their particular post-socialist, Central Asian context. Adopting such an ethnographic sensibility21 revealed the varied ways in which people understood, legitimated, adapted, and shaped their workplaces at bazaars, including through rules and institutions, and simultaneously the limits of their actions and desires for the state to create jobs outside the bazaar, to better regulate bazaar owners and work-related policies, and to set examples for morally acceptable behavior that would guide future generations.

I also found, as I discuss in the book's first chapter, that bazaars in contemporary Kyrgyzstan and other parts of the post-Soviet region are located on private land rented out to traders by bazaar owners. Thus, Ostrom's focus on common pool resources did not fit this context well. In fact, the histories of how land became privatized in different ways, and who the owners came to be, shaped the possibilities for collective mobilization and the subsequent power dynamics in which traders became embedded. While, as Murtazashvili rightly notes, the country's "liberal reforms gave entrepreneurs the space to make their own rules" to some extent, the presence of powerholders in society, including bureaucrats extracting bribes or private landowners dictating rental rates and creating new fees and policies, indicated to me that the organizational forms and (in)actions I featured in the book were best described not as apolitical self- organized solutions but rather as highly contingent political processes that in- volved navigating power dynamics with various "external" forces. Beyond the study of bazaars, this focus on local understandings and everyday economic practices—including how citizens, businesses, and government officials come to understand and define priorities and problems, and then respond to them, including by remaining silent and resisting—continues to be an exciting path forward in this region and beyond.

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19 T. Forsyth and C. Johnson, "Elinor Ostrom's Legacy: Governing the Commons, and the Rational Choice Controversy," *Development and Change*, 45 (September 2014): 1100.

20 F. Schaffer, *Elucidating Social Science Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide* (New York, NY:Routledge, 2016).

21 Schatz, *Political Ethnography.*