

KEYNOTE II

Martha Lampland (UC San Diego)

Thoughts from Central European Social History: Wages, Calories and Labor Power

/ Chair: Karl Hall (Central European University / Vienna)

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I take the occasion of this conference to consider how standards are fashioned by recounting three vignettes from my work on Hungary to illustrate the historically and culturally contingent conditions of their formulation. The first example is the design of cooperative farm wages in the early socialist period, the second is the policy of calorie money adopted during the inflationary spiral in 1945, and the third considers the redesign of time and motion studies for calibrating productivity in socialist enterprises. Although these examples describe activities conducted in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> c., I will conclude my talk with a few remarks about how my approach may be applied to the study of algorithms and digital culture.

Martha Lampland is a Professor of Sociology and a core member of the Science Studies Program at the University of California, San Diego. She received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1987. Her interests consist of political economy, social history, and feminist science studies; her research focuses on Hungary, and Central Europe more generally. She has a long term interest in the history of commodifying labor, and the variety of formalizing practices that entails: rationalization, standardization, quantification, and commensuration. Lampland's early field work was conducted during the socialist period in Hungary; later studies addressed the postsocialist context, with an eye to continuities as much as to change. Archival research she has conducted has spanned both the 19th and 20th centuries. As an anthropologist conducting research in Europe, she is keenly aware of the fact that the concepts we enshrine as social theory are sociocultural artifacts of European history, so the provincialism of contemporary social theory is a recurring theme in her analyses. In recent years, Lampland has spent time studying jokes, specifically the role of humor in politics.

Professor Lampland has published two books on the commodification of labor: *The Object of Labor. Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (University of Chicago Press, 1995) and *The Value of Labor. The Science of Commodification in Hungary, 1920–1956* (Chicago, 2016). She has also co-edited two books: *Altering States. Ethnographies of the Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, co-edited with Daphne Berdahl and Matti Bunzl (University of Michigan Press, 2000); and *Standards and their Stories. How Quantifying, Classifying and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life*, co-edited with Leigh Star (Cornell University Press, 2009).