Acknowledgements

This book has been long in the making, and the journey to its completion has had many twists and turns. Consequently, the list of individuals and organizations to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude is long. Along the way, many incredible people I met in a professional context have become dear friends, which I count as one of the great payoffs of this process.

At its core, I have hoped in this book to understand how social worlds are transformed by historical shocks and their remnants reassembled by those left in the wake of sweeping change. For this curiosity, I have to first thank my parents, Henry and Helen, and my grandmother, Rosa. They shared with me the insights and experiences gained from life in turbulent pre-war Poland, the Holocaust, deportation to the Soviet Far East, post-war Polish reconstruction, and new beginnings in the United States in the 1970s. They and many others emerged from each of these trials to start new lives. Despite the many hardships they faced, my parents maintained an enthusiasm for life and a curiosity that I hope I have inherited in some small part. I am deeply grateful to them for inspiring me and setting me on this journey and many others.

My wife, Eleonora, has been an intellectual counterpart and loving and devoted companion through every stage and deserves the most credit for supporting me through the whole process. She has followed me across the post-socialist region since the mid-1990s, and championed my work even when I was discouraged by some defeat along the way. I am deeply grateful for her encouragement, assistance, meticulous editing, and patience.

Three mentors deserve special recognition. My dissertation advisor in the political science department at Columbia, Ira Katznelson, has believed in the project since its inception and supported me throughout. I am deeply grateful for his kindness and direction. David Stark has been an extremely generous, warm, and supportive advisor since graduate school. He introduced me to new ideas in sociology, pushed me to sharpen my thinking, and was enthusiastic about the argument in this book as it took shape. At his invitation and with his
support, I also had the opportunity of spending a postdoctoral year at the Harriman Institute at Columbia University as part of a project on “Networks and institutions in post-communism.” Bruce Kogut has been an influence since I participated in the “Small worlds of corporate governance” project he led. Bruce pointed me to literatures outside political science that I had not explored and shaped my thinking in ways that are very different from my graduate training. In every interaction, his energy and enthusiasm have been an inspiration. I can only hope that a little bit of Ira, David, and Bruce’s scholarly creativity and style have rubbed off on me in the time I have been fortunate to spend in their company and with their research.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at Columbia University’s Harriman Institute: Balazs Vedres, Alexandra Szajdjer, and Eugene Raikhel. Interacting with them over the course of a year added not only great richness to this project but also regular doses of fun and an ability to share our fondness for and fascination with the post-socialist region.

I also was extremely fortunate to spend a year in the Max Weber program at the European University Institute. My mentor, Laszlo Bruszt, helped sharpen key parts of the argument. I am grateful to Ramon Marimon, Karen Tilman, and my colleagues Ben Ansell, David Art, Simon Bornschier, Isabelle Engeli, Jane Gingrich, Silja Hausermann, and Miriam Ronzoni for their insight, encouragement, and comments on my work, as well as their company during an incredible year in Florence.

Throughout the period in which this book was written my colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) – Eva Bertram, Michael Brown, Kent Eaton, Paul Frymer, Ronnie Gruhn, Ronnie Lipschutz, Mark Massoud, Dean Mathiowetz, Benjamin Read, Vanita Seth, Megan Thomas, Daniel Wirls, and Michael Urban – have given me their support, feedback, encouragement, and friendship. I am truly blessed to work in a department with such wonderful people.

Along the way, numerous individuals have shown me unexpected kindness. Gerry McDermott, whom I met by chance at the American Political Science Association while still in graduate school, stands out. I have benefited from the insight and encouragement of Josh Aderholt, Andrew Arato, Leo Arriola, Thom Henry Chivens, Ruth Collier, Alex Cooley, Rachel Epstein, Gil Eyal, Timothy Frye, Venelin Ganev, Doug Guthrie, Agata Hanczewski, John Huber, Wade Jacoby, Ira Katznelson, Xiaobo Lu, Isabela Mares, Frances Matthew, Iain McMenamin, Katharina Pistor, Grigore Pop-Eleches, Martin Rhodes, Jack Snyder, and Steve Solnick. I would also like to thank the members of the Berkeley “Comparative politics” workshop. Finally, the manuscript benefited greatly from John Haslam’s support at Cambridge, the invaluable comments of three anonymous reviewers, and Mike Richardson’s meticulous copy-editing.

The fieldwork on which this book was based has benefited from the support of too many individuals to name. All those who were generous enough to meet for interviews – and there are too many to name here – contributed to the
findings in this book. Several individuals went inexplicably out of their way to assist me. Adriana Halpert was extremely generous when I wandered into her office at Capital. I walked in, a perfect stranger, and walked out with a gold-mine and an advocate. Adrian Baboi-Stroe was a constant friend and guide to the world of Romanian politics. Hermina Emirian was my fearless and resourceful assistant in Bulgaria. The Institute for the Study of Politics of the Polish Academy of Sciences provided tremendous support during my research in Poland.

This work would not have been possible without the financial support of UCSC, Columbia University, the Harriman Institute, the American Council of Learned Societies, the German Marshall Fund, and the National Science Foundation.

Lastly, I would like to thank the joys of my life – Oscar and Stella. Their arrival may have slowed me down a bit but their love and invitations to play also gave me the inspiration and courage to bring this project to a close.