

## **Methods for Understanding Economic Change: Socio-Economics and German Political Economy, 1896–1938**

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### **1. Introduction to the Translations of Selected Classics from *Schmollers Jahrbuch***

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a sense of stability and security. As early as 1960 Daniel Bell had announced the *End of Ideology*, three decades later Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the *End of History*. Since then there has been much more development, fragility and instability than nearly anyone predicted. The international order appears increasingly insecure and is under siege from many angles, and the consequences of the rise of digital technologies for society, democracy and the economy are still unclear. In such circumstances it might be necessary to reconsider the way in which social science is conducted. Not in the framework of stability, equilibrium, and cross-sectionally. But in a framework of development, change, and historically.

The translated articles in this special issue cover a period that was similarly characterized by development, change and historical approaches to the social world. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries share a surprising number of patterns which resonate with our contemporary world regarding its dynamism and fragility. Globally it was a largely peaceful period, even though local military conflicts loomed on the horizon. The balance of powers between the major geopolitical players was upset by the quick ascendancy of Germany. The international gold standard created further tensions between national sovereignty in economic policy and the demands of an international order based on it. The political order was fundamentally transformed with the extension of suffrage and the rise of mass political parties. Technological change was pervasive, up-

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