Acknowledgments

In 2000, I relocated from Cambridge to Toronto and spent the year writing up my dissertation. In the spring of 2001, I paid a visit to the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto. There, in a small office located in the Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies, I encountered a true force of energy, someone at the centre of seemingly all communication vectors, Dr. Susan Solomon. Susan helped me: get my own little office in Robarts Library, where I wrote my dissertation; was central to my getting a very exciting job at CBC's *the fifth estate* the following year; provided critical advice for an application that won me a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columba; and finally, and most critically for this book, she walked me down the hallway and introduced me to an economic history professor named Scott Eddie who happened to be working on the most obscure topic I had ever heard of, the price of agricultural land in Posen and West Prussia, during something called the Program of Inner Colonization, from 1886 to 1918. Little did I know that twenty years later I would publish a book about the same program.

Scott hired me to help him with the general historical framing of the project for his introduction. He was knee-deep in statistics and cliometrics and required the larger political and cultural history of the land purchasing project called "inner colonization." I clearly recall him asking me to learn everything I could about the "Bodenfrage," the question of the land. I quickly became so intrigued that, by the fall of 2001, I had applied for (and would win) a four-month DAAD research scholarship to investigate the program in the archives of the Herder Institute in Marburg, Germany. There, in August 2002, I met yet another mentor figure, Director Eduard Mühle. Eduard provided a wonderful place of work for the study of the history of *Ostforschung* and published one of my earliest papers in their house journal. It was here in Marburg, studying the work of "inner colonization" that I first saw reference to Max Sering's incredible journey to North America in 1883, understood the connection

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of the North American West to the German East, and realized that this would be my next book.

From January 2003 to June 2005 I was a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for European Studies at the University of British Columbia. It was wonderful to be able to spend time again in the temperate rainforests of my British Columbian youth, and the idyllic institute provided a safe harbour in the early peripatetic life of a newly minted PhD. Another key figure who provided enormous support was the institute's director Sima Godfrey. One day in the fall of 2003, Sima simply said: "every year we host a conference and next year can be yours." With that I contacted a list of people I wanted to meet and talk to about German colonialism in Eastern Europe, and they all agreed to come (Sima's comment, "This is Vancouver, they always say yes"). For a couple of magical days in April 2004 I got to know David Blackbourn, Kristin Kopp, Vejas Liulevicius, and Oliver Schmidtke. In the audience was Eric D. Weitz, who immediately told me he wanted to publish the proceedings with the series he had at Palgrave. The result was, *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present* (Palgrave, 2009). While at the institute I befriended another visiting scholar, Stefan Gaenzle (University of Agder), and together we co-edited a special volume of the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, in which I was able to further develop my ideas of Germany as a colonial power in the East.

I have been happy to call the University of Windsor home since 2005. In addition to much support, it has provided me with three wonderful students who helped with transcriptions and research: Brian Simbirski, Daniel Tucker-Simmons, and Jonathan Mertz. A key attraction to Windsor for me was that, across the border and an hour down the highway, one finds a premier university with perhaps the best collection of German history books in North America, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Here I found two more mentors in the journey of this book. The director of the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, just down the hall from the Department of History, was Kathleen Canning. In 2006, Kathleen was instrumental in my winning their visiting fellowship for historians from "local" universities (Windsor is, after all, "South Detroit"). Throughout 2006–2007 I made journeys to Ann Arbor every two weeks for talks/workshops, and to access the books in the Hatcher Graduate Library. And it was around the same time that I became friends with the person who would ultimately be the biggest champion of a book dedicated to the now rather obscure Max Sering, Geoff Eley. Geoff insisted I submit the first article I wrote on Sering to *Social History*, and there it appeared in 2010. I was a fellow again in 2010–2011, when I was finally able to publish my dissertation and move full time to my "second book."

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Dr. Arnd Bauerkämper of the Free University of Berlin has been a tireless supporter over the years, had sponsored me in Berlin in 2004, 2008, and 2019, and was my host during a Humboldt Fellowship, in the summer of 2011 and the academic year 2012–2013. Christian Geulen hosted me during the research summer of 2010 in Koblenz. John Torpey, at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, graciously hosted me for a Fulbright year in 2015–2016.

In addition to the generous Humboldt Fellowship and Fulbright award, I have benefitted enormously from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council award (2006) and an Ontario Early Researcher Award (2010–2015).

I have to thank the librarians and archivists at the Prussian State Archives (Dahlem), the Federal Archives and University Library at Koblenz, the Federal Archives in Berlin (Lichterfelde) and Freiburg, the Humboldt University Archive and Library, the Free University of Berlin's many libraries, the State Library in Berlin, the New York Public Library, the CUNY Graduate Center Library, the Hatcher Graduate Library at the University of Michigan, and the Leddy Library at the University of Windsor.

That April 2004 conference in Vancouver was only the first of many presentations over two decades on Max Sering and Inner Colonization. I would like to heartily thank the fascinating questions and thoughtful critiques from audience members. Beyond those already mentioned I would very much like to offer appreciation for the advice, critique, and friendship of: Roger Chickering, Winson Chu, Matthew Fitzpatrick, Erik Grimmer-Solem, Jens-Uwe Guettel, Jesse Kauffman, Janne Lahti, Roberta Pergher, Peter Polak-Springer, Till van Rhaden, Gregor Thum, Gregory Zieren, and Angela Zimmerman.

My partner in life is film professor Kim Nelson (Windsor). In the summers of 2012 and 2013, Kim and a wonderful crew shot a feature-length documentary of the story of this book, *130 Year Roadtrip*. Among the many fascinating moments I experienced in helping make that film, meeting Sering's grandson, the lovely Wolfgang von Tirpitz, was surely the highlight.

I thank Kim for her years of support, proof-reading, and duty as a sounding board for any and all ideas. And I thank my children – Hagen, Ella, and Clio – for making the journey so much fun.

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