

Charles Tilly's own recollection of the emergence of the history project of the SSRC's Committee on Comparative Politics:

“Now, part of what happened is one of those wonderful opportunities that comes along. That is, I was at the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences in Paolo Alto in 1968-1969, and during that time, Gabriel Almond [...] was actively promulgating theories of political modernization, political development, and so forth. He had an idea that I didn't agree with very much but that benefited me in my enterprises enormously. That was, after we had conversed generally about the historical analysis of European states, he said, ‘Look, my friends and I at the Social Science Research Council have these nifty ideas about political development, but what we need is some historical verification. We really need some historical application of these because what we've been doing mainly is cross-sectional comparisons of contemporary states. So we get to say a lot about Thailand and Japan and the United States and so forth, but we really want to see whether these schemes work historically.’ Now, I didn't think they worked historically very well, but on the other hand, the idea of being able to do something systematic with European history I found very appealing. So Gay Almond, to his credit, perhaps knowing from the beginning that he was taking an egg that could hatch a viper, organized a program so that I could bring [...] a wonderful group of historians and social scientists to the center for a summer. [...] Just an extraordinary group of people. I got almost everybody I wanted. I mean, basically the SSRC said, ‘We'll finance your inviting people to California for two months – mainly Europeans – for two months of intensive seminar, if you will agree that you will produce a book at the end.’” (p. 195).

“A Conversation with Charles Tilly.” *Journal of Urban History*, 1998, 24:184-225.