

To whom it may concern.

For some years, I have had the pleasure of following the anthropological work of Theo Barth (no family relation). My contact with him started when my publisher engaged him in 1993 to translate a set of essays of mine from English to Norwegian -- a task he accomplished very successfully. Subsequently, I followed his empirical and theoretical work during his studies of changing Jewish identity and social organization in Europe. Barth proved himself a persistent and innovative fieldworker and social analyst, driven by both empirical curiosity and an unusual sense of theoretical problem. The European Jewish scene is highly diverse, complex, and dynamic; and he pursued its complexities with a swift grasp both of its local and human details and its general features and processes. Most impressive, perhaps, was his continuously searching and critical analytical will, never opting for the easier answers and more superficial resolutions, but steadily advancing the scope and subtlety of his insights.

Theo Barth has been active in several fields and cross-disciplines, but the study of European Jews no doubt represents his major work so far. Of particular interest in it to me has been his application of some provisional ideas of mine in regard to generative model building, and the character of the disordered systems that are characteristic features of complex societies. He has sought to develop these concepts for the analysis of his own materials with originality and creativity, thereby significantly advancing our analytical understanding of processes of social interaction and emergent forms in complex social systems. In his present manuscript, which he is now submitting for the dr. philos. degree in Oslo, he provides what in my judgment is an important, fascinating, and highly original study, both theoretically and empirically. I believe it should stimulate much thought and discussion, and I shall be following his future work in these fields with the greatest of interest.

Oslo, June 2006

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