

Acknowledgments

“You have data – we have friends.”

In one of the first courses I attended as a doctoral student, a lively debate erupted between the political scientists and the social anthropologists present. Fully aware that this would trigger a controversy, political scientist Klaus Schlichte raised the accusation that social anthropology is “not based on a reliable database, but only on stories and narratives told by people in the field.” Political sciences, by contrast, work with reliable, objective data, he claimed. Stuart Kirsch, one of the anthropologists participating in the discussion, just raised an eyebrow, smiled mildly and replied, “Well, Klaus, you may have data, but we have friends.”

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