

Critique and Social Change: An Introduction

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Kern, T., Laux, T., & Pruisken, I. (2017). Critique and Social Change: An Introduction. *Historical Social Research*, 42(3), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.3.7-23>

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Historical Social Research Historische Sozialforschung

Thomas Kern, Thomas Laux & Insa Pruisken:
Critique and Social Change: An Introduction.

doi: 10.12759/hsr.43.2017.3.7-23

Published in:

Historical Social Research 42 (2017) 3

Cite as:

Thomas Kern, Thomas Laux, and Insa Pruisken. 2017. Critique and Social Change: An Introduction. *Historical Social Research* 42 (3): 7-23.
doi: 10.12759/hsr.42.2017.3.7-23.

Historical Social Research Historische Sozialforschung

All articles published in this Special Issue:

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Critique and Social Change: An Introduction

Thomas Kern, Thomas Laux & Insa Pruisken *

Abstract: »Kritik und sozialer Wandel: Einleitung«. This introduction of the HSR Special Issue on "Critique and Social Change: Historical, Cultural, and Institutional Perspectives" addresses the question of how critique and social change are interrelated. Conflicts and disputes are considered to be a major source of critique. We distinguish three types of conflicts: (1) Value conflicts result from the ongoing process of rationalization and the differentiation of relatively autonomous "value spheres" (Weber) such as politics, economy, science, law, etc. (2) The growth and expansion of these value spheres, e.g. the growth of capitalism, in turn produce new forms of inequalities and leads to distributional conflicts. (3) As questions of distribution and inclusion are closely linked, critique also originates from identity conflicts, which address the social recognition of individuals and collectivities. In order to understand how critique is related to social change, we suggest that critique can be studied either as a condition for or as an effect from social change. Based on this distinction we provide an overview over the contributions of this volume.

Keywords: Critique, culture, conflict, protest, political sociology.

1. Introduction

How does critique change society? What are the conditions for critique to emerge? These questions are the core of recent sociological discussions about social and cultural change. Since Karl Marx, there has been a long and great tradition of sociological theories placing critique at the center of their analyses by pointing at more or less contradicting principles of modern societies (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa 2009; Habermas 1995a, 1995b; Touraine 1971). Although these "critical theories" start from different angles, they share the perception that powerful forces such as alienation, commodification, political power, and objectivation threaten the sovereignty and self-determination of the modern

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subject. Hence, critique inevitably arises from the individual's pursuits for authenticity and autonomy.

However, despite their manifold contributions to the intellectual development of sociology as a discipline, traditional critical approaches have been often criticized themselves. A comprehensive review of this literature would exceed the scope of this article. Firstly, some researchers deprecate that the presuppositions and analytical distinctions of traditional critical theories often determine the substance of their findings (Rucht 1991; Alexander 1982). In this way, they often run the risk of oversimplifying and overgeneralizing the social, historical, and cultural circumstances that shape the causes and consequences of protest and critique.

A further striking objection against traditional critical theories is that the modern, functionally differentiated society lacks of a definite moral center that provides the necessary normative basis for the "privileged" articulation of critique (Vobruba 2010, 61, 80; Vobruba 2017, 177; Luhmann 1998, 956-7). Following Max Weber (1986), modern societies consist of "value spheres" such as economy, politics, religion, science, etc. where each sphere constitutes "an autonomous universe of meaning" (Schimank 2015, 415) and follows its own kind of "value rationality" (such as profit seeking in the economic sphere, striving for power in the political sphere, and striving for truth in the sphere of science). Considering that there is no hierarchy of "values" – because all spheres make a more or less indispensable contribution to the reproduction of social life – Weber compared the condition of modern society with a polytheistic canopy where "the gods of the various orders and values are engaged" (Weber 1958) in a constant struggle. Hence, there is no privileged philosophical, political, or religious point of view for the articulation of critique.

Closely related to this point, it has also been highlighted that traditional critical approaches often neglect the empirical practices of critique in everyday-life and thereby fail to "comprehend why it is so difficult to criticize" (Boltanski, Honneth and Celikates 2014, 562). While social actors are often conceived as "unconscious and deluded," it is more or less taken for granted that conscious and critical sociologists – owing to their science and their methods – "are capable of unmasking the truth and thereby enlighten other people" (Boltanski, Honneth and Celikates 2014, 562; Rucht 1991).¹

This is where the recent sociology of critique comes into play. In contrast to traditional approaches, it shifts the primary focus from developing a somehow "superior" scientifically grounded perspective on society to the manifold disputes in which actors display their "critical capacities" (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 2006; Diaz-Bone 2015). This "pragmatic turn" in the analysis of critique has led to a revitalization of the critique of capitalism (Potthast 2001; Boltanski

¹ Celikates (2009) illustrates this contradiction in the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

and Chiapello 2005) and to an increasing body of literature that reaches far beyond the linguistic boundaries of French sociology (Diaz-Bone 2015).

The contributions of this Special Issue of *Historical Social Research* (HSR) share a general interest in this new developing field. They explore the causes and consequences of critique in different empirical cases and from different theoretical perspectives (Boltanski 2010; Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 359; Boltanski and Thévenot 2014, 32; Rosa 2009, 278; Vobruba 2017, 177). Their question is why, how, and under which conditions individual actors, social movements, intellectuals, civic activists, etc. voice their critique and give impetus to social change.

Critique is a promising object of research because of its omnipresence in everyday-life, not only in terms of collective protest, but also as a permanent feature of interpretations and justifications in manifold daily disputes (Boltanski and Thévenot 2014, 32). The individual or collective perception “that something is going wrong” often initiates reflection and becomes a starting point for the articulation of critique (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 359-60). Consequently, we understand critique as an important catalyst for social change. Time and again, it challenges “the logic of order” (Touraine 1995, 235) in society, initiates the reevaluation of institutional arrangements, and causes social change. The study of critique is thus a challenge for both micro and macro sociologists working on different topics and fields. Subsequently, we believe that the studies presented in this volume may enrich further theoretical debates.

The introduction to this Special Issue is divided into two parts. First, we maintain that critique is in many ways related to cultural tensions and societal conflicts. Three basic types of conflict are distinguished: value conflicts, distributional conflicts, and identity conflicts. The second part shows how the study of conflicts and critique can analytically go in two different directions: Critique can be studied either as an outcome of or as a condition for social change. Subsequently, we present the contributions of this volume.

2. Critique, Culture, and Conflicts

Critique refers to the general ability of individual and collective actors to dissociate themselves (at least to some extent) from their “everyday life-world” (Schutz and Luckmann 1973) and to critically reflect this dissociation. Thereby, the individual recognizes that we live in a “socially constructed universe” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 132). Notably in conflicting situations or “unsettled” times (Swidler 1986) one can realize that the cultural patterns (such as codes, symbols, and narratives) that compose (and legitimize) institutional orders always have more than one meaning. There is no social order that fully realizes all possible meanings of its cultural foundations. For this reason, the

process of institutionalization produces continual tensions between the “real” social world and its “ideal” cultural premises (Alexander 1987, 40). As other interpretations of the world are always possible, the cultural “surplus of meaning” (Ricoeur 1976) constitutes a major source of inspiration, innovation, and critique. Even if we concede that societies have to deal with specific functional needs and problems, there are always different ways to define and resolve them (Castoriadis 1998). Accordingly, the critique of social movements, intellectuals, artists, civic activists, etc. refers (more or less) to “visions of an alternative cultural and social order” (Eisenstadt 1982, 305). They reveal cultural tensions and point out that certain values and norms are not (yet) realized (Boltanski 2010, 228; Lepsius 1990, 278). These tensions result in conflicts and disputes on different levels of society.

Value Conflicts and Critique

Perhaps the most striking example for how cultural tensions and contradictions shape modern society is the ongoing process of modern rationalization in itself (cf. Münch 1995, 23). At its core, it carries the idea of a permanent transformation (and therefore: constant critique) of the social world. For instance, modern science will never reach the point at which the scientific community’s search for truth will be over. Every finding raises new issues (and criticizes our previous knowledge). The same holds for modern economy: Investors are always looking for new business opportunities, technologies and innovations that possibly lead to the “creative destruction” (Schumpeter 1975, 81-6) of established economic orders. For politicians, there will always be a strong need for reform as every political decision potentially produces new problems (and, hence, occasions for critique). For a sportsperson, there is always a record to break. For a journalist, there is always news to report (even during the “silly season”). These examples illustrate that the rationalization of each value sphere is an open-ended process. There are always “better” and “more effective” ways to reorganize “arrangements of conventions, objects, and cognitive formats” (Diaz-Bone 2017, in this volume). In this sense, critique is an ongoing phenomenon that is continually driving the process of rationalization.

However, the critical potential of the value spheres is not limited to ongoing tensions between the “real” social world and its ideal premises. As mentioned above, there is also a constant struggle *between* the different value spheres because each of them principally claims absolute validity (Weber 1958, 126). In most Western countries, politicians expect that science and technology contribute to the prosperity and wealth of society, for instance, in terms of technological innovations or expertise for the development of large infrastructures (Pruisken 2017, in this volume). According to their logic, scientific progress leads to economic growth (at least in the long run), which finally should improve the politicians’ prospects for reelection. However, scientists are not in-

terested in supporting the reelection of politicians: They demand a high degree of autonomy and (if possible) “unlimited” resources in order to raise new scientific questions and produce new findings.

This example of the struggle between “science” and “politics” illustratively highlights that the value spheres of society have different perspectives on the question of how “scientific performance” should be evaluated. With the rise of neoliberalism (cf. Diaz-Bone 2017, in this volume), scientific quality is increasingly assessed by management techniques that are rooted in economic “principal-agent models” of scientific work. The contribution of Schwarz (2017, in this volume) shows that this development has consequences at the micro-level of scientific practice: Individual scientists switch between adaption to and resistance against the claims of New Public Management. But the critics do not attack particular values such as truth, salvation, or economic performance. Instead, they focus on the forms and strategies regarding how these values are institutionalized (Swidler 1986). Therefore, empirical studies in the field of the sociology of critique stress the process of institutionalization and evaluation. For instance, Kusche (2017, in this volume) uses the case of democratic change in Ireland in order to show how the criteria for evaluating the political system slowly changed. One reason for this was that social scientists heavily attacked the “clientelism” of the Irish system, which – from their perspective – was not compatible with the normative ideals of democracy.

Distributional Conflicts and Critique

The ongoing rationalization and expansion of the value spheres also produces new forms of inequalities and *distributional conflicts*. The cultural legitimation of modern society rests on the idea of “full inclusion”, e.g. the promise that all citizens receive their fair share from the benefits of rationalization and differentiation (Marshall 1992; Parsons 1965; Schimank 2013). According to this ideal of equality, all members of society should have equal access to democratic participation, economic welfare, fair employment, health care, decent housing, leisure and recreation, etc. Therefore, most people expect that nobody should be excluded from “the elevator that goes up” (Schimank and Volkmann 1999, 42). However, as far as this consensus goes, there is substantial disagreement when it comes to the actual extension and comprehensiveness of social inclusion. The study of Patrick Sachweh (2017, in this volume) shows that believing in equality as an ideal sometimes means very different things: Whereas the equal distribution of civil rights and opportunities are widely considered as just, the distribution of economic or material goods is closely connected to the principle of merit: Those who work harder should be more rewarded. Although the interviewees regret that equality of opportunities is still not realized, they attribute existing inequalities to “natural” personal traits such as “greed” or “ambition” – and thereby legitimate them.

These findings support the common observation that in “real” society inclusion is always restricted and conditioned – and therefore a matter of critique and conflict. Unequal access to the benefits provided by the value spheres often unleashes highly problematic “chains” of deprivation and poverty: Poor education (which usually depends on the educational level and income of the parents) means poor employment opportunities, poor employment opportunities means poor consumption opportunities, from this follows poor housing, poor health care, poor marriage opportunities, poor legal representation, political disinterest, etc. Due to the growing dependence of individual “life chances” (Dahrendorf 1979) on political decisions that lack transparency, and market developments that are not predictable, economic, environmental, and political crises often directly turn into personal crises (Luhmann 1998, 762; Kern 2008). While in premodern times the negative consequences of social inequality were more or less compensated by local communities and kinship networks, modern individuals largely depend on an effective welfare state.

Consequently, distributional conflicts over the benefits and costs of social differentiation and rationalization have increasingly shifted to the center of the political process (Kern 2007; Rüschemeyer 1977). Social “closure” (Weber 1968, 43-6) and “rent-seeking” (Sorensen 2000) by different groups such as hereditary or functional elites, authoritarian governments, “old-boys” networks, WASPs, etc. exclude not only broad segments of the population from access to specific benefits of modern society, but they frequently become also the starting point for critique, protest, and demands for reforms. In this sense, Kern and Laux (2017, in this volume) study the role of mass protests in the democratization process in South Korea during the 1980s. The military regime had excluded the Korean people from the political process and denied their basic human rights. By focusing on the interaction between the military government and the prodemocratic movement, this article examines the temporal dynamics in the process of democratization and analyses the impact of the prodemocratic movement and its critique towards the authoritarian regime. The study of Dosdall and Rom-Jensen (2017, in this volume) also sheds light on distributional conflicts, but from a different point of view. The authors claim that the demise of Lehman Brothers should – at least in part – be conceived as a response to profound criticism in the public media. Intellectuals, journalists, and politicians criticized former bailouts for being too expensive, “socialist” (that is to say: “not merited”) and for burdening the tax-payers too much. Münnich (2017, in this volume) takes another approach to the same issue: By comparing the anti-financial protest movements of 1870-1930 and today, the study shows that both movements criticized the emergence of an elitist “cosmopolitan finance” class with too much political power.

Identity Conflicts and Critique

Although the limits of social inclusion result at least to some degree from the scarce availability of resources, that's only half of the story: In modern societies, questions of distribution (and inclusion) are inseparably linked to questions of solidarity. Durkheim (1964) expected that differentiated societies gradually move from mechanical to organic solidarity. Therefore, he believed that differentiation and rationalization would not lead to a decay, but to a new type of solidarity "where each element operates more independently and is not simply a miniature image or an appendage of a collective body" (Coser 1984, xvi). However, this social change has turned out to be more contentious than he probably expected. Societies

do not simply emerge out of thin air [...] as universalistic, constitutional entities. They are founded by groups whose members share certain qualitatively distinct characteristics, traits around which they structure their solidarity. (Alexander 1990, 268)

Consequently, *identity politics* have also moved into the center of public discourses (Benhabib 1999; Fraser 1997; Honneth 1994). Some scholars even claim that identity struggles and the search for collective identity have replaced the traditional class struggles of industrial society (Castells 2010; Melucci 1996; Touraine 1971; Touraine 1981).

This perspective shifts the analytical focus from the "right to be equal" to claims for recognition and the "right to be different" (Fraser 1997, 2). For example, Adloff and Pfaller (2017, in this volume) describe the difficult process of articulating critique on the individual level against the hegemonic claim of contemporary medicine on organ donation. In this study, the interview partners reluctantly articulate a right *not* to conform to the expectations of society. Three studies in this HSR Special Issue furthermore show how the formation of collective identities and the articulation of critique often oscillate between resistance against social inequalities, on the one hand, and identity claims, on the other hand. Wallmeier (2017, in this volume) analyzes how the identity formation of communes and intentional communities following an "alternative" lifestyle has changed over time ever since they have emerged in the United States in the 1960s. At that time, the withdrawal into intentional communities was a radical, emotionally and bodily felt critique against mainstream society. In contrast, communards today express a rather reformist critique of societal rules which aims to improve environmental care, the way people live together, and the global economic order. Centemeri (2017, in this volume) shows how the building of a large infrastructure project – the Malpensa Airport in Italy – led to changing forms of critique over a period of forty years. The study shows that recurrent attempts to expand the airport led to an increasing awareness of environmental values and the formation of collective identities. Münnich (2017, in this volume) concludes in his comparison of the anti-finance-

movements between 1870 and 1930 and today that whereas the critique of distributional inequalities remained the same, the demarcation of collective boundaries is now less connected to sectoral, socio-economic, or ethnic cleavages.

3. Critique as Cause and Effect

The last section has shown that the empirical analysis of critique encompasses a broad range of phenomena on different analytical levels: mundane judgments and justifications of individual actors in “critical moments” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 359) of their everyday-life, protest of social movements (Rucht and Neidhardt 1999, 68), social performances and expressions of public opinion (Alexander, Giesen and Mast 2006; Habermas 1992), etc. The contributions of this Special Issue draw their attention to various “performances” (Alexander 2004; Tilly 2008) of critique such as poems, photos, and songs (Centemeri), prodemocratic mass-protests (Kern and Laux), written statements of activists and press releases of the Occupy Wall Street movement (Münnich), acts of micro-resistance (Schwarz), critique voiced in political and media discourses (Doddall and Rom-Jensen; Kusche; Pruisken), acts of collective withdrawal from society (Wallmeier), individual resistance against normative expectations (Adloff and Pfaller), and, finally, ambivalent attitudes toward inequality at the individual level (Sachweh).

In order to understand how critique is related to *social change*, it seems to be helpful to clarify that the empirical inquiry of such performances can go in two analytically distinct directions: In the first case, studies focus on *critique as an effect* that is caused by cultural interpretations of perceived problems in a specific socio-historical context. Here, for instance, Alexander and Smith (2002) recommend “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) that hermeneutically map out and reconstruct the performances’ internal patterns of meaning. The aim is to show how an “analytically autonomous culture object” (Alexander and Smith 2002, 137) has come into being (from a range of possible alternatives). For example, Kern (2009) traced back relatively frequent cycles of protest between 1981 and 1987 in South Korea to the cultural identity of the democracy movement. Another example is Alexander’s (2002) analysis of the transformation of the Holocaust “from War Crime to Trauma Drama.”

In the second case, researchers primarily conceive *critique as a cause* looking for its effect on social change. They want “to discover in what ways culture intersects with other social forces, such as power and instrumental reason in the concrete social world” (Alexander and Smith 2002, 138). To this end, studies usually focus on the social and historical conditions that strengthen or weaken the effect of the performed critique on social change. A well-known example is Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) study about the new spirit of capitalism. In a similar vein, the social movement literature views critique and protest usually

as a cause for political and economic changes as outcomes (Akchurin and Lee 2013; Earl 2007; Giugni, McAdam and Tilly 1999; Laux 2015, 2016).

In the recent methodological debate, the concept of social mechanism has been established as a standard instrument for the analysis of causal relations in case studies (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennett and Checkel 2015; Collier 2011; Goertz and Mahoney 2012; Mahoney and Goertz 2006; Mayntz 2002, 2004). There is a broad consensus that in-depth analyses of single cases and their “causal reconstructions” (Mayntz 2002) are core requirements for drawing conclusions about the observed processes and mechanisms. According to Goertz and Mahoney, such “qualitative research is (often implicitly) rooted in logic and set theory” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 2). Its aim is to explain individual cases and their outcome by focusing on the causes of an effect (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 229-31).² Therefore, in this volume, process- and “case-oriented approaches” (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 246) are applied that offer the possibility to gain deeper insights in the interplay of critique and social change. The contributions thus develop historical, cultural, and institutional perspectives on critique and social change.

The Contributions of the HSR Special Issue

The following section briefly introduces the contributions of this Special Issue. The presentation of the contributions follows the distinction between critique as a cause or an effect of social change. The first part (seven contributions) looks at critique as an outcome of cultural and societal change; the second part (four contributions) focusses on the effects of critique.

Frank Adloff and Larissa Pfaller's study “*Critique in statu nascendi? The Reluctance towards Organ Donation*” explores the emergence of critique in the case of organ donation. Organ donation is not only extensively debated in politics and the media, but also may represent conflicts for potential organ donors. The study is based on the analysis of interview sequences and shows that the personal refusal of organ donation arises from the fear of losing their personal integrity. This “critique in statu nascendi” contradicts the cultural imperative (and value) of saving lives. Individuals who refuse organ donations are caught in a dilemma, because their personal attitudes are in conflict with the socially desired behavior. Therefore, Adloff and Pfaller focus on the difficult process of articulating the critique towards organ donation and trace it empirically. By applying theoretical insights from the work of Habermas (1995a, 1995b), this contribution sheds light on the emotional and bodily aspects that are sources of critique.

² In contrast, most quantitative techniques belong to the “effects-of-causes approach”, which “seeks to estimate the average effect of one or more causes across a population of cases” (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 230).

In her article “*Going Underground: Merging Collaboration with Micro-Resistance*,” *Christine Schwarz* relates insights about the dynamics of resistance from the sociology of critique with critical management research. Her study deals with the question of how university professors resist against the governance regime of new public management. Based on an interview sequence, Schwarz argues that the silent and hardly visible forms of protest need more attention from the sociology of critique. Resistance and collaboration coexist without being expressed publicly. This form of identity regulation keeps individuals capable of acting. The article furthermore contributes to higher education research by giving insight into an important aspect of institutional change: the (non-)adoption of management practices by researchers.

Patrick Sachweh’s study “*Criticizing Inequality? How Ideals of Equality Do – and Do Not – Contribute to the De-Legitimation of Inequality in Contemporary Germany*” asks for the justifications of social inequality by individuals from different social classes. The contribution points out that the respondents use the concept of equality in an ambivalent way because it merges two distinct aspects to justify inequality: the aspect of equal or unequal opportunities and the aspect of equal or unequal outcomes. While the equality of opportunities is widely approved, the equality of outcomes is highly contested. Equal opportunities as part of the “civic order of worth” are generally acknowledged, while the critique towards equal outcomes refers to the “industrial order of worth” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2014). The conflicting interpretations of equality are discussed in the light of Boltanski and Thévenot’s theoretical perspective.

Rainer Diaz-Bone presents a theoretical contribution to this volume with the title “*Discourses, Conventions, and Critique – Perspectives of the Institutional-ist Approach of the Economics of Convention*.” Diaz-Bone stresses that conventions are cultural principles understood as interpretative frames that infuse institutions with meaning, give orientation and provide means of coordination in “open” situations. Accordingly, the tension between institutions and conventions offers space for critique. In addition, the article examines the relationship between discourse theory (Foucault) and the Economics of Conventions (EC). Diaz-Bone emphasizes the discourse theoretical aspects of EC and suggests integrating Foucault’s program of archaeology of knowledge into EC. Using the case of Neoliberalism as an example, he shows how a combination of EC and discourse theory could look like.

The contribution of *Laura Centemeri* “*From Public Participation to Place-Based Resistance. Environmental Critique and Modes of Valuation in the Struggles against the Expansion of the Malpensa Airport*” studies the 40-year history of conflicts over the extension of the Malpensa airport in northern Italy. The aim of this contribution is to study transformations of environmental critique. Universal, local, and emplaced modes of valuation are distinguished. The universal mode of valuation is characterized by a high degree of objectification and acceptability in the public sphere. Emplaced valuation, in contrast, is pri-

marily aesthetical. In this mode, valuation is based on the personally and bodily connectedness with the environment. Local modes of valuation refer to a form of local common good. The level of generalization is, in contrast to the universal mode, rather low. The study shows that the resistance against the Malpensa airport shifted from a claim of the “right to participate”, to “denouncing the expansion as illegal” to a demand for “environmental care”. Centemeri shows that critique is rooted in bodily experienced feelings, which leads to changing protest repertoires, e.g. the sharing of photos, videos, poems, and songs.

In Sascha Münnich’s study on “*Outside Powers. The Moral Economy of Anti-Financial Movements 1870-1930 and Today*” the anti-austerity Occupy Wall Street movement is compared with the anti-financial protests between 1870 and 1930 in Germany and the UK. Münnich examines whether we are currently witnessing a “new Polanyian moment” that leads to the resurrection of conservative and authoritarian forces in succession of a period of economic turmoil since 2008. Using a content analysis of statements, the study discovers some similarities but also remarkable differences between the critique of the Occupy Wall Street movement and the anti-financial protests between 1870 and 1930. Faced with comparable financial and austerity crises, the Occupy Wall Street movement referred to old images of financial critique, but did not to relate to primordial codes in order to strengthen their collective identity.

Philip Wallmeier’s contribution “*Exit as Critique. Communes and Intentional Communities in the 1960s and Today*” focusses on “mute acts of withdrawal” as expressions of critique. He analyzes the communards and the commune movement that has emerged in the United States since the 1960s. The escapism of the communards is understood as an individual and non-verbal expression of critique towards society. By analyzing publications of the commune movement empirically, the study compares the similarities and the differences in the justification of this non-verbal expression of critique between the 1960s and today. This study contributes empirically and theoretically to the sociology of critique because Wallmeier introduces the “exit-option of critique” (Hirschman 1985). In addition, he connects the communards’ critique today with the different orders of worth from Boltanski and Thévenot (2014) by showing that their critique forms a compromise between the worlds of industry, inspiration, and fame.

The *second part* of this special issue discusses critique as one cause (of several ones) for social and institutional change. Critique is viewed as a *condition* for institution-building or institutional change and interplays with other conditions, notably critical junctures, shocks, or events. All four studies apply a process-oriented perspective on their cases and include a broad variety of empirical data such as parliamentary debates, newspaper articles, documents, and interviews.

Isabel Kusche looks at the critique of the democratic system in Ireland. Her article “*The Accusation of Clientelism: On the Interplay between Social Sci-*

ence, *Mass Media, and Politics in the Critique of Irish Democracy*” studies how clientelism in Ireland has been attacked by social scientists, the media, and politicians. The critique is in particular devoted to the peculiar relationship between public representatives and voters in Ireland, which is seen as being too particularistic. Kusche uses records of parliamentary debates and newspaper articles in order to reconstruct their critique over a period of thirty-years. The study points out that critique played a crucial role in the change of Irish democracy. By referring to the Economics of Conventions, she shows that Irish democracy is torn between two conflicting conventions, the domestic order of worth and the civic order of worth.

Henrik Dosdall and Byron Rom-Jensen focus in their study “*Critique, Social Change and the Demise of Lehman Brothers*” on the fact that Lehman Brothers was not saved by the US regulators. The authors show that mounting pressure from public opinion (critique) caused a shift in the risk perception of the regulators. The critique of the 2008 bailouts prompted regulators to weight the political risks of further bailouts over the economic risk of the bank’s collapse. Their empirical study builds on 45 articles from the Wall Street Journal and 41 articles from the New York Times that were classified based on their assessment of liability for the current financial crisis. The critique voiced by the media arose in response to the regulators’ bailout policy. The decision not to save Lehman Brothers was influenced by the critique of the former bailout policy of the US government.

The contribution of Insa Pruiskien “*Institutional Logics and Critique in German Academic Science. Studying the Merger of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology*” studies the interplay of critique, organizational change, and institutional logics by exploring the merger case of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. It is suggested that the international scientific competition has shifted from nation states as funders of research laboratories towards universities as organizational actors. By using a mix of data sources such as interviews, documents, and secondary literature, the study shows the role of public critique in the political discourse. The merger of KIT can, on the one hand, be explained by the rise of a new logic of organizational competition. On the other hand, the outcome of the merger process is in large parts influenced by the old logic of corporatist planning. Critique is viewed as an essential condition in that process because it provided the evaluative criteria for change.

Thomas Kern and Thomas Laux analyze in their study “*Revolution or Negotiated Regime Change? Structural Dynamics in the Process of Democratization. The Case of South Korea in the 1980s*” the impact of protest and critique on political regime changes on the case of the democratization of South Korea in the 1980s. South Korea underwent a negotiated regime change in 1987. Based on theoretical approaches from democratization research and a process tracing analysis this contribution develops a process model that captures the interplay between the prodemocratic mass movement and the authoritarian

military regime. The study particularly points to the contingencies and temporal dynamics of the democratization process. It shows how the democratization process shifted from sequences of non-cooperation to sequences of cooperation and back. On this basis, the authors develop an analytical process model that integrates two competing theoretical approaches in democratization theory and, thereby, provide a more comprehensive understanding of democratic regime changes.

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