InterDisciplines

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Social History—Historical Sociology

On Interdisciplinary Research

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Social history—historical sociology

On interdisciplinary research

Ursula Mense-Petermann, Sebastian Matthias Schlerka, Thomas Welskopp

> Q: »Always makes me feel a little melancholy. Grand old war ships, being ignominiously hauled away for scrap … The inevitability of time, don't you think? What do you see?«
>
> James Bond: »A bloody big ship.«[1]

The *Fighting Temeraire Tugged to Her Last Berth to Be Broken Up, 1838*, is an 1839 painting by the English master artist Joseph Mallord William Turner. Located in the National Gallery in London, it was again voted the most popular work of art in the United Kingdom in 2005. It is an extraordinary piece of symbolism. Turner tells his story not just as a sentimental journey—he had not witnessed this last voyage in person, but took considerable license in arranging the scene. Nevertheless, his message is becoming ever more clear: modernity is in the process of scrapping premodern times in the very same overwhelming sense that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels dramatized in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Active in the Napoleonic Wars, the armed vessel earned her fame especially due to her performance at Trafalgar. She appears battle-ridden and battle-hardened, but is now portrayed as being unceremoniously tugged away to be cut up and scrapped. The painting thus symbolizes the historical demise of marine warfare artfully conducted by fleets of wooden sailing ships. The future was to be battleships made of steel and powered by steam. The overpowering might of modern times is exemplified by the soot-caked, squat, paddle-wheel steam tugboat with its tall smokestack,

1 *Skyfall*, directed by Sam Mendes (Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2012).

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its ugliness contrasting the shining beauty of the old three-masted sailing ship, highlighted by Turner's illumination in grim contrast to a dubious sunset, tugging the proud line-of-battle ship into a dark future which holds nothing for her but utter destruction.

One could interpret the painting as an allegory of the ascent of the coal- and steam-powered modern capitalist society with the shining past in helpless tow. The future lies in the gloomy sunset and not in the innocently shimmering past. The aesthetic contrast between the proud and beautiful, but shagged out and unrigged hull of the *Fighting Temeraire* and the stocky, smoke-belching tugboat bringing its machine-powered muscle to bear, is stark, leaving the impression that the future at this time would not necessarily lead toward a glorious dreamworld, but to a sweaty, sooty modernity fueled by the exploitation of mankind and the environment alike.

That remains, of course, our interpretation, and in this respect lies in the eye of the beholder, but we think that the painting represents the relationship between history and sociology that has developed over the past ten years at the BGHS in an almost ideal way. This does not mean that the *Temeraire* simply stands for history and the tugboat is a metaphor for sociology only. Nor should it convey the message that, because this is its final issue, *InterDisciplines* is bound for doom.

To the contrary: *InterDisciplines* can look back on a successful history of bringing the two disciplines into a productive communicative relationship again, as is exemplified by the interdisciplinary projects presented in the articles in this issue. The decisive aspects are connecting the past and the present, reaching an understanding that both disciplines have chosen society as their shared object of research, and the fact that modernity is loosely the main common focus—whereby the research questions diverge across a broad spectrum ranging from diagnosing current affairs and the complicated problems of determining the contrasts between premodern and modern times to disentangle the forces and processes of transformation. This final issue of *InterDisciplines* demonstrates that this new level of cooperation has been reached both by making history more sensitive to questions of systematization and theoretical reflection and by infusing sociology with a sense of historicity.

During its eight years of existence as an online (and selectively printed) interdisciplinary journal, *InterDisciplines* has come full circle. In its initial issue, the diagnosis of the relationship between history and sociology had been mixed to skeptical. Vol. 1, no. 1 (2010) was entitled »End of Messages? The State of Dialogue between History and Sociology,« and the question mark loomed large. The current issue »Social History—Historical Sociology: On Interdisciplinary Research,« in contrast, is a definite positive statement. Thus we venture to document that much has happened between 2010 and 2018, and that a productive and creative development has unfolded since this point of departure. There are now, after all, currents of messages flowing back and forth between the disciplines.

In consequence, we have decided to dedicate the last issue of *InterDisciplines* to the progress of the renewed cooperation between history and sociology and to take the opportunity to bring the journal's life cycle to its conclusion not with a melancholy whimper but with a bold statement of achievement. It is by no means thematic exhaustion or a lack of public attention that stop our journal's further development. The German federal government's excellence funding has been terminated for graduate schools in general as of October 2019. The fact alone that funding for 2019 has been cut to 30 percent of its previous level does not allow us to continue the journal. This means that the editorial office of *InterDisciplines*, which has its place at the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS), has to close down at the end of 2018. Confronted with this constellation, we will not be able to publish further issues of *InterDisciplines*. We can only hope that it will be possible to identify alternative options and sources of money in order to revive this journal in the not-too-distant future. The title of this (for now) final issue illustrates the self-understanding of interdisciplinary cooperation between history and sociology which has flourished in the lively discussions in *InterDisciplines* over the past eight years.

InterDisciplines has been published twice a year. This explains that a total of 18 issues have been published so far, including the current one. The journal's target group has been doctoral candidates, postdocs and professors—both as readers and as contributors. Thus we have been able to recruit a wide range of authors. This final issue is unique inasmuch as

it combines contributions by students, doctoral researchers, and professors. Our double-blind peer review process has always relied on international reviewers who have at least completed their doctorates.

The history of *InterDisciplines*—reflecting a revitalized dialogue between history and sociology—has been closely linked to the history of the BGHS. In recent years in particular, the BGHS itself has become more and more visible in the pages of *InterDisciplines*. One important reason for this is that the Annual Seminar of the BGHS, which has always been dedicated precisely to this dialogue, has used *InterDisciplines* as its main forum for publishing its discussions and findings. Two issues were direct follow-ups of Annual Seminars: »Done with Eurocentrism? Directions, diversions, and debates in history and sociology« (vol. 8, no. 2, 2017) and »Structures and Events—A Dialogue between History and Sociology« (vol. 7, no. 2, 2016). Notwithstanding the fact that conflicting perspectives on the dialogue between history and sociology will persist, it can be stated that our journal has decisively contributed to this dialogue no longer being questioned in principle.

Agnes Piekacz's article provides an inspiring example of what the merging of sociological and historical perspectives may look like in the future—not necessarily charting out a new and separate field of historical sociology, but making claims to clusters of projects that combine theoretical and methodological insights from more than one discipline. Her paper brings together not only history and sociology in general, but a broad spectrum of sub-disciplines, such as economic history, colonial history, imperial history, cultural history, and market sociology. It discusses concepts of »imagining markets« using a well-constructed case study of the sale of used clothes, especially of army and naval provenance, in Natal, a South African British colony, as the field of empirical description. It becomes clear how complex colonial economies were and how much they were fueled by emigration propaganda and expectations of an »imagined future.«

Chris Thornhill suggests using a historical-sociological approach to address the problem of the precarious foundations of constitutional law and, consequently, of the societal reserves of legitimacy. In his article »Historical Sociology and the Antinomies of Constitutional Democracy: Notes on a

Revised Approach,« he criticizes existing sociological accounts of the constitution for having simplified the legitimational functions of constitutions and shows that the most important shortcoming of such analyses is that they do not account for the inherent antinomies in constitutionalism. A discussion of six fundamental antinomies leads him to a more nuanced understanding of the constitution. Thornhill then traces the social origins of the norms incorporated in constitutional law and develops a model of modern constitutionalism grounded in a »modified systems-theoretical pattern of historical sociology.« Such a historical-sociological approach, the author argues, allows scholars to reveal and explain the precarious foundations of constitutional law.

Felix Bathon's article »Holding Doors for Others—A History of the Emergence of a Polite Behavior« examines this practice from the perspective of historical sociology. Asking *why* holding doors for others is considered polite and how, he poses the hypothesis that the increasing size of hoop skirts created a functional need for holding doors. In order to test this hypothesis, he reconstructs two historical sequences—a fashion sequence of the development of hoop skirts and a politeness sequence based on etiquette books—and then relates them to each other. Finding that »both sequences share a temporal intertwinement and content-related dimensions,« his analysis makes his hypothesis plausible.

In her article »Global Historical Sociology and *Connected* Gender Sociologies,« ***Heidemarie Winkel*** discusses the question of how global historical sociology matters for gender sociology. Building on a critical discussion of the marginal role that historical sociology, and particularly colonial histories, play for gender sociology, she argues that a global, decolonial historical sociology of gender can make visible the continuation of colonial epistemologies in today's societies as well as gender sociology's own rootedness in a colonial body of »white« gender knowledge. At the same time, she shows how such an approach can help decolonize the knowledge reservoir of gender sociology and contribute to a deeper understanding of the current (re)nationalization of gender.

Laura Benítez-Cojulún's article on »The History of Epigenetics from a Sociological Perspective« straddles the disciplinary boundaries in an

original and innovative way as it does not, as usual, merely add historical depth to the development of a scientific discipline—the history of knowledge in the field of epigenetics—but tests, from a sociological point of view, how this evolution and development of an important field of disciplinary knowledge can be explained in a systematic way. She does this by combining a sociological learning-theoretical framework inspired by the idea of communities of communication with an evolution-theoretical framework focusing on the process of how structures of aggregate learning are taken up by the functional system of science.

In his article »Secularization as Historical Struggle,« ***Sebastian Matthias Schlerka*** presents a historical-sociological approach to secularization phenomena. Building on Bourdieu's praxeology, he first outlines a conflict-centered approach according to which secularization is about the struggle for the legitimate meaning of religion, drawing on empirical research by other scholars for evidence supporting his approach. He then argues that »sociology alone cannot provide a sufficiently good account of phenomena of secularization,« which is why he supplements his approach with a historical perspective, using a reading of Bourdieu focused very much on change rather than on reproduction. In this way, he offers a framework for further study of religious change from the perspective of historical sociology.

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»Imagined markets«?

Long-distance trade in the British Empire[1]

Agnes Piekacz

Introduction

»The shadow of the coming time is already upon us«—to the editor of a colonial paper, quoted in »The New Colony of Port Natal: With Information for Emigrants« in 1850, the future of the South African colonies was not only close, but also fairly certain. »What, from present appearances,« he asked his readers, »is likely to be its future state, at a period within the compass of a lifetime?« He concluded his description of the future developments in the colonies with a proclamation of remarkable self-confidence: »To assure ourselves of this, we have only to make a proper use of our eyes—to read our histories, look about us, and then ›look ahead‹« (Methley 1850, 59–61). All the »speculations,« as he called them, »are not offered merely as conjectures of what may be hereafter, but as describing what, under circumstances like the present, can hardly fail to be« (ibid., 61).

Emigrant guides such as the one cited above have not been overlooked as historical sources. They were part of a considerable body of what James Belich termed »booster literature« (Belich 2009, 375), texts that »almost monopolized published information about emigration destinations,« segueing »into travel literature, official handbooks, history, geography, and even novels« (Belich 2009, 154; see also Wagner 2011). With regard to land speculation in the British colony of Natal in the nineteenth century,

1 On its interesting journey, this essay had the luck to meet benevolent readers. A very first draft of the essay was discussed at the 9th PhD Student Exchange Workshop Bielefeld/Notre Dame in 2018. I would like to thank the participants of the workshop and the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback, remarks, comments, and suggestions.

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Henry Slater pointed out that these guides published in Europe (and America) carried favorable accounts of the agricultural possibilities of the colonies that contributed to an »illusion […] of a flourishing community of white farmers in Natal« (Slater 1975, 261). The imagination of promising economic futures in Natal, produced and reproduced in emigrant guides and related newspaper articles between 1849 and 1852, fueled the economic imagination of British merchants, traders, and investors. In light of recent studies in New Economic Sociology and historical research on the establishment of communication networks in nineteenth century overseas trade, I propose that these images and imaginaries contributed to the construction of »markets of the future« (cf. Thackerey et al. 2018)—to »imagined markets.«

This essay is, thus, an »[exercise] in economic history« (Cain 2013, 98), an attempt to point to concurrent developments in research fields and interests of two disciplines whose relationship Thomas Welskopp described in the first issue of *InterDisciplines* as one of »irritating flirtations« (Welskopp 2010). Shortly afterward and regarding the history and sociology of markets, in 2011 Christiane Eisenberg drew attention to the need to embed markets in temporal structures. According to her critical overview of research on markets in both history and sociology, neither of the two disciplines had been able to accomplish this. Furthermore, due to mutual ignorance and several reasons inherent to each of their disciplines, historians and sociologists had—in Eisenberg's opinion—rather avoided each other (Eisenberg 2011). Seven years after Eisensberg's rather sobering evaluation it still seems pressing to follow her appeal for more interdisciplinary research spanning economic sociology and history. But—in the words of Peter Cain—»the tide might be turning« (Cain 2013, 98). In recent years, interest in the future as an object of study has reemerged in both sociology and history. As remarkable historical studies on past expectations of the future show, things rarely turn out as expected (see, for instance, Radkau 2017). Many »histories of the future« have been influenced by and have drawn on Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual couple »space of experience« and »horizon of expectations« (for an overview, see Engerman 2012; Graf and Herzog 2016). According to Koselleck, experience and expectation

embody the past and the future, while »the one is not to be had without the other« (Koselleck 2004, 257). Furthermore, history cannot be constituted independently without these categories as it is »produced within the medium of particular experiences and particular expectations« (ibid., 258).[2] With reference to Koselleck and in particular to Ulrich Bröckling, Benjamin Scheller has recently proposed distinguishing between a future that actors perceive as still contingent but more predictable (the »known unknown«) and a perceived future whose »place in the horizon of probability is completely undeterminable« (Scheller 2016, 16). Scholars in history have begun to systematically explore these »horizons of probabilities« as »horizons of possibilities,« thus stressing the plurality of actors' expectations of the future and their varying and multiple options for action (cf. Bernhardt et al. 2018).

Imagining economic futures

The nation as a political community, Benedict Anderson famously stressed in 1983, »is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their community« (Anderson 2006, 6). Benedict Anderson's well-known concept has had vast impact on research on ethnicity, identity, and particularly nationalism in history, sociology, political science, and anthropology. Scholars have acknowledged and praised Anderson's arguments, and rejected, criticized,

2 Koselleck's concept has been criticized by modern as well as premodern historians. First, Graf and Herzog (2016) question whether experience and expectation are indeed anthropological categories as—from the perspective of a sociology and history of knowledge of the twentieth century—experience and expectation are gradually losing their binding nature. Second, Benjamin Scheller argues that Koselleck's thesis of an increasing distance between »space of experience« and »horizon of expectation« during the »saddle period« (*Sattelzeit*, 1750–1850) has been interpreted as one argument for the »discovery« of contingency in Western modernity. Medieval and early modern historians criticize this master narrative and stress that premodern actors did not »passively« experience contingency. Furthermore, the semantics of contingency, e.g., coincidence, chance, risk, have their origins in premodern epochs (Scheller 2016).

and modified them. One way or another, many students and scholars have engaged and continue to engage with the notion of »imagined communities.« The lasting influence and contribution of his book is, however, no longer rooted in the provision of analytical tools to historically explain the origin and spread of nationalism. Rather, as Max Bergholz pointed out, »Anderson provided historians of nationalism with a fresh sense of processual verbs for examining ways of thinking that he believed were central to a sense of ›nation-ness‹—imagining, restoring, remembering, dreaming« (Bergholz 2018, 519).

Long before Benedict Anderson's »Imagined Communities« (2006), economist Joseph Schumpeter theorized that imagination was a key requirement for entrepreneurial success (Thackerey et al. 2018, 2). According to Schumpeter, »what has been done already has the sharp-edged reality of all the things which we have seen and experienced; the new is only a figment of our imagination« (Schumpeter [1911] 2012, 85). It is the involvement of this »new element« in economic action that characterizes the leadership of Schumpeter's entrepreneur. The entrepreneur's success in projected economic enterprises »depends on […] the capacity of seeing things in a way which afterwards proves to be true, even though it cannot be established at the moment« (ibid.). Whereas Schumpeter's ideal entrepreneur, however, has the capability to *correctly* forecast future economic outcomes, theorists in New Economic Sociology stress that economic action and market exchange are generally characterized by a high degree of uncertainty (Beckert 1996, 2009). The notion of imagined futures indicated by the ideal of Schumpeter's entrepreneur is addressed most prominently by social theorist Jens Beckert. In his inspiring publication on the interrelation between uncertainty, expectations, and capitalist dynamics, Beckert stresses that in economic action »[h]istory matters,‹ but the future matters just as much« (Beckert 2016, 6), because social events

> cannot be explained by the past alone. Actors' decisions are determined by more than existing structures and past experiences—they are shaped in equal measure by perceptions of the future. When making decisions, actors associate certain future results with

> the course of action they are contemplating, connecting numerous outcomes with different decisions. (ibid., 35)

These perceptions are, more specifically, expectations under the condition of uncertainty and fictional—they are images or imaginaries of »future states of the world« (ibid., 9). According to Beckert, fictional expectations are expressed by individuals, but they are formed in »historical, cultural, institutional and political contexts« (ibid., 86), influenced by opportunity structures, cultural frames, institutions, networks, cognitive devices such as economic theories, past experiences, and mass media (ibid., 87–93).

Beckert's insights place the question of temporal order and actors' temporal orientation at the core of economic action and therefore at the center of the analysis of market exchange and capitalism.[3] Financial markets in the twentieth century are one of the most striking and insightful examples for questions of temporality in relation to markets and market exchange. They are characterized by a high degree of volatility, time pressure, extreme temporal shifts, and temporal incongruity (Laube 2017; Miyazaki 2003). Moreover, Beckert's approach offers promising starting points for reconsidering the history of markets and historical actors' willingness to engage in market exchange *despite* the inherent uncertainty of economic action and the incalculability of its future outcomes (cf. Beckert 2016, 78). From this perspective markets are, thus, socially constructed (cf. Bühler and Werron 2014)—images of markets are produced and reproduced through specific and historically changing narratives and visualizations (cf. Crostwhaite et al. 2014; Tanner 2002). »Imagined markets« can, however, have very real consequences: an imagined market in capitalist economies

3 For a definition of markets see Patrick Aspers and Jens Beckert: markets are, essentially, »arenas of social interaction« that »provide a social structure and institutional order for voluntary exchange of rights in goods and services, which allow actors to evaluate, purchase, and sell these rights« (Beckert 2009, 248). The difference between trade and market exchange is marked by the involvement of at least one more party: while in trading situations two parties exchange rights, market exchange involves at least one more party and the possibility to compare at least two offers. Market exchange is, therefore, characterized by competition (ibid.; Aspers 2015, 22–23; Aspers and Beckert 2017, 215–16).

could turn out to be—in a way—a »self-fulfilling prophecy« (Welskopp 2017, 95).

The (im-)probability of »colonial markets«

Revived interest in the »British World« within global history has led to the publication of a series of studies that place strong emphasis on the importance of migration and settler societies in the British Empire.[4] The settler communities—most notably in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa—were constitutive for the rise of British exports to the Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Magee and Thompson 2010, 117–20; Bright and Dilley 2017, 555–56). The South African colonies, however, have been described by James Belich as »something of a laggard when it came to explosive colonization« (Belich 2009, 373). Socio-economic growth in nineteenth-century South Africa is usually related to the discovery of minerals—diamonds at Kimberley around 1872 and gold at the Rand in 1886. Belich states that the first economic boom, beginning in the 1850s, is often overlooked or, at the most, associated with the export of wool between 1850 and 1865 (ibid., 373–74; cf. Iliffe 1999; and Feinstein 2005). But, as he explains, during this period imports of goods increased, over 20 banks were founded, and a considerable amount of capital entered South Africa (Belich 2009, 375).

Although to British merchants, doing business with the colonies could be a promising opportunity to profit from the imperial project, it was, first and foremost, risky. Britain played an important role in the establishment of a global communication network (cf. Thackerey et al. 2018, 1–2; Wenzlhuemer 2012), but especially regarding the colonies of the British Empire, the business environment abroad was mostly unknown, market demand was difficult to estimate, and long sailing times between London and the colonial port cities slowed returns on investment (Mendelsohn 2015, 114–15). Given the risks and uncertainties of nineteenth-

4 For an overview of the literature and a critical discussion of the concept of the »British World,« see Bright and Dilley (2017).

and early twentieth-century overseas trade, historians stress the importance of personal communication networks. In their ambitious study »Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914« Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson argue that overseas trade developed more readily between actors with the same ethnic, religious, or political identity. British merchants and manufacturers built »trust networks« with actors overseas who provided them with information on business opportunities and conditions (Magee and Thompson 2010; cf. Markovits 2016; Gestrich and Schulte Beerbühl 2011). The »performativity« of these market relationships—the way networks connect actors willing to engage in market exchange by distributing information—is increasingly becoming a field of research for historians interested in long-distance trade in the nineteenth century and the emergence of global markets (Callon 2007; cf. Magee and Thompson 2010). For instance, missionaries such as Robert Moffat advertised demand for British goods and persuaded merchants to establish shops abroad or export their commodities to South African colonies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, 234–73).[5] Furthermore, investors in London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries paid close attention to information on political and economic conditions in specific regions that they obtained through personal correspondence, telegraphs, and travel accounts. These and other sources of information, e.g., the press, private and public discussions in clubs, at dinners, and at social events influenced patterns of thought that did not follow a general economic model. Andrew Dilley calls these patterns the »›unofficial‹ mind« of political economy in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London (Dilley 2012, 67–71; cf. Thackerey et al. 2018).[6]

5 His as well as other missionaries' efforts to attract merchants were linked closely to their objective to dress »the colonial subject« (ibid.; and Comaroff 1996).

6 Dilley distances himself from the coherent model of the »official mind of imperialism« by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, who argue that nineteenth-century Victorian imperialism was caused by the official thinking of London policy-makers who based their decisions on an idea—rather

These insightful historical and anthropological studies direct the attention to individual actors and their agency, to the importance of networks and the relevance of different sources of information in global trade and the establishment of new trade connections. Pointing to individual and collective expectations as the microfoundations of economic activity, the concept of imagined futures invites historians and sociologists alike to (re)discover actors' past expectations of the future. By stressing the social and cultural embeddedness of images of the future it (1) encourages historical research to (re)discover its source material, especially in cases where individual accounts of expectations of the future have not survived or cannot be obtained (for an exception cf. Nützenadel 2017). Collective images of economic futures can be found not only in expert groups (although, of course, their relevance and influence should not be underestimated), but also in contemporary discourses and accounts only indirectly related to them. (2) As the approach offered by New Economic Sociology discussed here further stresses the uncertainty of economic action, historians might find themselves asking different questions: the »horizon of possibilities« displayed, produced, and reproduced by the source material might not initially explain why historical actors eventually chose one course of action over another. The interplay of different sources of information and actors' choices for specific courses of actions might challenge scholars in history, for instance, to reevaluate questions of authority and legitimacy in public discourse. Lastly (3), the empathy expressed and stressed by the concept of imagined markets regarding the embeddedness of economic action in specific cultural and social contexts urges economic historians to consider approaches offered by cultural history and vice versa. Indeed, the relationship between economic history and cultural history can also be described as one of an »odd couple« (Welskopp 2010). Although Hartmut Berghoff and Jakob Vogel put forward initial systematic approaches with the publication of their programmatic anthology *Wirtschaftsgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte* (Economic history as cultural history) in 2004, more recent publications suggest that

than the reality—of situations in Africa (Robinson and Gallagher 1967, 21; for a discussion, cf. Thackerey et al. 2018, 2).

much work remains to be done (cf. Klein and Windmüller 2014; Dejung 2014).

»Promising futures«—Natal, 1849–1952

In 1824, a small group of merchants from the Cape Colony led by the British officer Lieutenant George Francis Farewell established a trading outpost at Port Natal, which was renamed Durban in 1835. The initial objective of their exploratory journey was to establish trading connections with ivory traders from the interior (Eldredge 2014, 142–43). It also marked the beginning of the British conquest of Natal. Already during the 1820s and 1830s the Cape merchant community with strong ties to the small but influential trading outpost in Port Natal urged the British government to annex the port. When from 1837 onward emigrant Boers (*Voortrekker*) streamed into the region, attempting to seize territory from the Zulu kingdom, however, the London Colonial Office did not consider the port's economic significance or potential important enough to intervene until the 1840s. British officials were alarmed by the establishment of the Voortrekker Republic of Natalia, the conflicts between Boers and the Zulu king Dingane, as well as the growing *Voortrekker* power that threatened the trading community in Durban. In 1843, the Colonial Office authorized the annexation of Natal (cf. Lambert 1995, 7–8; Mahoney 2012, 48–53; Etherington, Harries, and Mbenga 2010, 358; Ross 2008, 43–45).[7] Shortly after the annexation of the region, Natal became a center of interest for British emigration agents. On November 23, 1849, the »London Evening Standard« reported »an entertainment of somewhat novel character«: Joseph Charles Byrne had invited his »friends, shipowners, merchants, and others interested in« the colonialization of Natal to a dinner. According to the article, Byrne gave talks on the success and prosperity of the colony of Natal which were met with »thunders of applause« and »loud cheers.« A Mr. Randall acknowledged Byrne's efforts »in promoting the comfort and accommodations of emigrants proceeding to Natal.« The evening was reported to have been a great success, »with the proceedings of which all present appeared

7 On the significance of Durban as a port city cf. Feinstein (2005, 31).

to be highly gratified and interested.«[8] At the time of the event the Irish land speculator Joseph Charles Byrne had written one travel account—allegedly based on his experiences in British colonies—and three emigrant guides (cf. Byrne 1848a, 1848b, and 1848c); the sixth edition of his »Emigrant's Guide to Port Natal« was published in 1850. During the late 1840s, Byrne gave several »lectures« on the colony, which were summarized and commented on in British newspaper articles.[9] Byrne's immigration scheme was in fact the most important one in the history of British emigration to Natal around 1850. His efforts in promoting the colony of Natal as a promising destination for British emigrants proved successful: over 4,000 British immigrants arrived in Natal between 1849 and 1852 (cf. Lambert 1995, 8–9; MacKenzie and Dalziel 2007, 138).[10]

Emigrant guides included information on climatic conditions, recommendations on cattle farming, as well as descriptions of the value of land, the quality of the soil, and its suitability for agriculture. The authors quoted official government statements, reports, and private letters written by settlers who, allegedly, had had positive experiences in the colony (e.g., Byrne 1850, 86–89) to support their narratives of promising futures in Natal. Besides providing rather »practical« information on the cultivation of land or the prospects of breeding sheep or goats, the authors of these guides rhapsodized about breathtakingly beautiful landscapes. James Methley stated that »there are but few descriptions or paintings of the beauties of Natal, although its scenery immeasurably surpasses that of our own country. In England it is an almost *terra incognita*, yet it is covered

8 *London Evening Standard*, No. 7888, Nov. 23, 1849, 1.

9 Cf. *London Evening Standard*, No. 7702, Apr. 20, 1949, 2; *London Evening Standard*, No. 7906, Dec. 14, 1849, 3; *London Evening Standard*, No. 8002, Apr. 5, 1850, 1.

10 Estimates of the number of British emigrants that arrived in the colony between 1849 and 1852 range between 3,500 and 5,000 settlers. Based on the numbers presented by the *Natal Blue Book* of 1852 Henry Slater states that by 1852 the settler population increased to about 7,500 people (cf. Slater 1975, 262). John Lambert places the number of British settlers that immigrated in the context of Byrne's scheme at 5,000 (cf. Lambert 1995, 8).

with scenes which will one day employ the pencil of the painter, and over which the artist will linger with delight« (Methley 1850, 1). In his highly romanticizing description of the landscape in Natal he spoke of an »immense extent of hill and dale,« »myriads of gorgeous flowers, that glow like gems,« »vast primeval forests […] of the deepest green,« and »rivers, strong and deep« (ibid.). John Burton Hill—presumed author of an American emigrant manual that was published in America around 1850—warned his readers that the colony had »not thus furnished any practical experience of its capabilities as an emigration field« (Burton 1850, 99). In his view, »the statements as to the salubrity of the climate, made by persons who have had experience of colonies« (ibid.) tended to exaggerate the positive effects of the climatic conditions in Natal (cf. Methley 1850, 19; and Byrne 1850, 44–46). Although overly positive accounts of—in this case—the climatic conditions in the colony did not go entirely unchallenged, Burton eventually drew the same conclusion as Methley and Byrne: to them, the colony's »promises [were] large, and well supported« (Burton 1850, 99).

The depictions of Natal's landscapes and climate were related to promises of the colony's agricultural possibilities. As Byrne stated, »the soil is extremely fertile, and capable, with the aid of the climate, of producing all descriptions of cereal produce, as well as tropical plants and fruits, besides many articles peculiar to temperate climes« (Byrne 1850, 46). Narratives of successful cultivation were reproduced in newspaper articles. For instance, on May 19, 1852 the »London Evening Standard« reported that »as it appears that the soil and climate of Natal Coast is well adapted for the extension of sugar cane cultivation, it is not improbable that that colony may ere long become an exporting country.«[11] Successful cultivation of land, however, required the willingness to adapt to the specific conditions in the colony:

11 *London Evening Standard*, No. 8666, May 19, 1852, 2; see also *London Evening Standard*, No. 8252, Jan. 22, 1851, 2; and *London Evening Standard*, No. 8657, May 8, 1852, 2.

> New comers must be content to follow the ordinary plans till they have acquired experience, and learn how far they can practically bring better systems into operation. What may be feasible in the old, may be impracticable in the new country. Preconceived notions or theories, even though they may have not been borne out of practice at home, will avail just nothing here. (Methley 1850, 35; see also Burton 1850, 107–8)

The ideal emigrant possessed the »knowledge and abilities for taking advantage of new openings and capabilities« (ibid., 107), was »industrious« (ibid., 117; and Byrne 1850, 42), »bold and energetic« (Methley 1850, 33), and brought with him some capital:

> A strong desire has been expressed, in various quarters, to make Natal a settlement for people of some, but moderate, means. It is felt that it is not a very suitable one for labourers […]. It is stated in government information to emigrants, that ›the most valuable emigrant for Natal is the practical farmer, possessing a small capital […] and steady habits.‹ (Burton 1850, 116–17)

Given these requirements of individuals and the promising climatic and agricultural preconditions, success for the settler in the colony seemed certain: »honest, preserving labour will not go unrequited, […] the difficulties of the country, whether physical or social, are not of insuperable character« (Methley 1850, 33). Letters from the colony printed in newspapers added to this image of the ideal settler. An anonymous author noted in a summary of letters from Natal that they »contain a variety of particulars regarding the progress of the colony, which are upon the satisfactory, although they demonstrate the usual fact […] that persons without energy had better remain at home.«[12] Methley further predicted to his reader: »Each morning finds you a richer man; your land is rising in value; your flocks are multiplying, and comforts increasing« (Methley 1850, 40).

12 *London Evening Standard*, No. 8019, Apr. 25, 1850, 2.

To the future settler, Natal's landscapes were depicted as extensive, easily accessible farming lands, ready—almost just waiting—to be cultivated by the settler's skilled but also teachable hands. These images of the seemingly untouched, wild but not untamable fauna that offered limitless agricultural possibilities were aspirational for those whose utopian vision of an idealized countryside was not realized in Britain and who wanted to be »removed from the misery of a crowded population« (Methley 1850, 35), an image usually associated with Britain's large cities (cf. Comaroff 1997, 172–74). Unsurprisingly, but no less remarkable, the guides and articles did not offer in-depth analysis on the region's variety in terms of its suitability for agriculture and keeping livestock. Large portions of the coastal hinterlands, for instance, were inaccessible due to their mountainous nature and the unavailability of roads. Suffering from low annual rainfall and summer droughts, these and other areas were unsuitable for agriculture. In fact, only parts of the region were promising to the future farming settler, mainly in the coastal region (cf. Lambert 1995, 11–12).

The indigenous population of the colony were merely present in the accounts as prospective laborers, however, »that the natives should become mechanics or skilled workers [seemed] out of the question« (Burton 1850, 123): »They will certainly not be able to perform finer works; […] but the advantages of having them are invaluable« (Byrne 1850, 64). Although the colonial government and the merchant community came to rely increasingly on the African homestead economy from the late 1840s on for food and revenue (cf. Lambert 1995, 10–14), the emigrant guides excluded African competition from their descriptions of both supposedly present and future developments.[13] As to the future developments of trade in the colony and beyond, the guides presented lists of commodities that were expected to be produced in Natal and ascribed either present or future values to the products (e.g., Burton 1850, 114–15). Moreover,

13 An important exception can be found in Methley's emigrant guide, where he describes that varieties of vegetables »are brought into town for sale by the natives, who, having no European competition to contend with, are beginning to find that the trade of a market gardener is one of the most lucrative« (Methley 1850, 24; cf. Lambert 1995, 10).

Byrne prognosticated that »there is no question, if an industrious white population were settled at Natal, the Colony would soon beat all competitors out of the market, and monopolize a considerable portion of the Mauritius trade; the vicinity of Natal to the Mauritius, and its fertile soil, would give it numerous advantages« (Byrne 1850, 42–43). »A trade in many products has already been opened between Natal and the Mauritius,« Byrne continued, »and it only requires a civilized population at the former place to extend immensely this commerce« (Byrne 1850, 43–44). »Direct trade between England and Natal will also soon commence,« Mr. T. Morewood, »one of the oldest residents in Natal,« agreed in a letter to his brother in London (quoted in Byrne 1850, 52). Although Burton, for example, cited a report offered by the emigration commissioners that warned immigrants to »be careful how they invest their money in goods for sale in the country, as the market is liable to great fluctuations« (Burton 1850, 118), increasing trade and commerce were usually depicted as certain future developments in the colony. Competition, however, was not be expected, on the contrary: »A person also is removed from […] the pressures of competition« (Methley 1850, 35).

Although markets were imagined specifically only to a certain degree in these emigrant manuals and guides and their imaginative construction of future developments in the colony, the guides did depict almost limitless economic opportunities in a region that was geographically clearly mapped out, but still endless, peaceful, untouched, and with never-ending resources that just needed to be »harvested.«

At first glance it might seem ironic that one of the promoters of great business opportunities and prosperous futures in Natal and other colonies was among the first to fail in his own business. The activities of Joseph Charles Byrne's »Natal Emigration & Colonisation Company« were based on a scheme through which Byrne acquired land in Natal. Byrne's »imagined« future land market, however, eventually collided with the unfolding reality in the colony. Many immigrants were dissatisfied with the conditions in Natal on their arrival, e.g., the lack of accommodation, the amount of land that was inadequate to support their existence, and the quality of the soil, which in many cases—and against all promises—

proved to be completely unsuitable for agriculture.[14] By the time Byrne decided to sell his surplus land, he was unable to find buyers. Unlike Schumpeter's ideal entrepreneur, Byrne—like many other migrant entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century—miscalculated. He was declared bankrupt and emigrated to Australia in 1851 (Du Bois 2015, 7–9; MacKenzie and Dalziel 2007, 138–40; on the relation between Byrne and the speculations of the Natal Land and Colonisation Company see Slater 1975, 262). But just as fictional expectations are the core driving forces of capitalist dynamics, so are false promises, disillusion, miscalculation, misinterpretation, and—ultimately—failure.

Conclusion

Emigrant manuals and guides as well as the newspaper articles published in relation to the wave of British immigrants that entered the colony around the 1850s provide merely one starting point, e.g., for further inquiries into Belich's thesis that the first economic boom in South Africa occurred in the 1850s and 1860s. The small sample of »booster literature« analyzed here surely displays a »paradise complex« of emigration propaganda described by Belich (2009, 154). But as Jan De Vries points out, Belich's claim that the economic booms in the settler process »were driven by a collective fervor akin to the delusion of crowds, or that commodity exports were unforeseen and unintended« (De Vries 2011, 568) might be exaggerated. The imagination of endless economic opportunities eventually had to be translated into action (cf. ibid.). As Stephan Tuffnell argues with regard to American trade in South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century, »conducting economic activity depended on reliable information.« American merchants, for instance, turned to their consuls to obtain information they regarded as credible (Tuffnell 2018, 57). But the relation of different sources of information to one another and actors' assessments of the credibility of such information require further investigation, as does the interplay of economic imagination and its institutionalization, e.g., via market regulation.

14 For an in-depth analysis see Lambert 1995, 11–14.

Emigration guides offer a conglomeration of mirrors into what propaganda agents such as Byrne believed to be collective hopes and dreams of potential British settlers. This makes these guides as well as other texts considered booster literature difficult sources. Still, these »image-makers« (Powell 1977) in emigration propaganda and their »imagined markets« might prove helpful for the analysis of actors' decisions to engage in uncertain and risky endeavors that could help to further explore—and explain—their willingness to engage in market exchange beyond Britain. Looking forward to—and expecting—further research (cf. Nützenadel et al. 2018; forthcoming), I can only imagine how fruitful and insightful interdisciplinary studies in the history and sociology of markets will become.

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Historical sociology and the antinomies of constitutional democracy

Notes on a revised approach

Chris Thornhill

Introduction

This article is intended to fulfil two functions, one of a methodological, one of a more substantive nature, both of which are focused on the use of historical-sociological approaches in the context of legal research.

First, this article outlines ways in which the use of historical-sociological methods can be productively extended in legal inquiry, especially in the analysis of constitutional law. To be sure, sociological approaches are not unknown in the field of constitutional law, and sociological methods have played an important role in different avenues of reflection in public-legal inquiry. On one hand, constitutional theorists have deployed sociological methods to explain the normatively binding force of constitutional law. For example, Carl Schmitt and Hermann Heller both invoked a sociological method as a central element in their critique of formal legal positivism, arguing that the foundation of constitutional law in social processes and motivations form an essential source of its normative authority (Schmitt 1923, 45; Heller 1971, 49). Léon Duguit pursued his inquiries into the organic associational realities underlying legal phenomena as an endeavor to write a sociology of public law, and he also implied that the authority of constitutional law is inseparable from its social substructure (Duguit 1889, 502). More recently, Gunther Teubner has argued that contemporary global society is shaped by multiple patterns of constitutional norm formation, and legal norms created by sectorally localized modes of social agency, outside classical processes of public-legal norm construction, have acquired particular normative power (Teubner 2012). On the other hand,

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historians and sociologists have used sociological methods to elucidate the broad contextual foundations of constitutional law. Some important sociologists have adopted a cultural-historical approach when analyzing the rise of constitutionalism, explaining how the growth of constitutionalism is linked to variable patterns of citizenship practice in different national societies (Münch 1984, 311). Of course, elements of a historical-sociological approach to constitutional norms can be found in some of the historical research that has emanated from Bielefeld. In particular, exponents of *Begriffsgeschichte* have observed both that the basic norms in which constitutional expectations are formulated need to be viewed as embedded historical constructs, and that society, of itself, evolves a distinctive constitutional order which cannot be interpreted in solely legal categories (see Koselleck 2006, 370). Moreover, historical-sociological accounts of constitutional norms are visible in lines of systems-theoretical analysis, also pioneered in Bielefeld, in which Niklas Luhmann, centrally, explained the reality of constitutional norms as articulations of evolutionary processes in society (Luhmann 1990). This article builds on foundations set, diversely, in Bielefeld, and it is designed further to substantiate the claim that historical-sociological method can clarify principal questions of constitutional law.

Alongside this, second, this article responds critically to other sociological accounts of constitutional law, and it pursues a historical argument to show that many such accounts have only insufficiently reflected the social origins of the norms incorporated in constitutional law. Despite their sociological emphasis, most such analyses of constitutionalism have, at least implicitly, replicated aspects of more classical legalistic theories, against which they intentionally reacted, and in so doing they have greatly simplified the legitimational functions of the constitution. Central to classical legal analyses of the constitution is the postulation of a simple binary relation between the legal system and the political system of society, and the constitution is envisaged as a textual document that stabilizes a legal order for the political system, creating a medial order of formal norms to simplify the general acceptance of political power by actors in

society.[1] In this process, the constitution acquires legitimational importance as a text that imprints a legal-normative form on political power, and it constructs a condition of interaction between law and politics in which each system frames the authority of the other. In many respects, this binary textual model of the constitution has been carried over into sociological inquiry. Sociological research has widely internalized the idea that the medial translation of political decisions into legal form is a feature of all complex societies, and that modern societies have shown distinctive reliance, historically, on the evolution of constitutions as legal-textual orders that enshrine the procedures for the transposition of power into law, such that, through this transposition, power becomes publicly constructed and symbolically endorsed. On such accounts, the constitution is constructed a priori as a text that performs quite specific functions, in predictable fashion, which are commonly inherent in the inter-systemic relation between politics and law. Indeed, such constitutional analysis is often implicitly underpinned by the presumption that modern society has a fixed propensity to organize this inner-systemic relation in constitutional form. The material sociological emergence of the constitution, however, is not deeply reflected.

We can find examples of such sociological replication of conventional legal constructions of the constitution in the works of Durkheim (1950, 92) and Parsons (1969, 339), to each of whom the constitution appeared as a document that internally stabilizes the legitimacy of the political system and promotes processes of normatively secure legal inclusion through society. For Habermas, similarly, the constitution needs to be observed as the cornerstone of a procedural order in which political power is placed on normatively acceptable legal foundations (Habermas 1992, 362–65). Paradigmatic for this approach, however, is the systemic analysis of constitutional law proposed by Luhmann. Luhmann interpreted the historical formation of constitutional law as the textual articulation of a *structural coupling* between the legal system and the political system of

1 See classical variants on this theory in Kant ([1795] 1976, 205); Kelsen (1920, 12).

modern society. On this account, law and politics exist as social systems, which are formally differentiated from each other and from other systems, and constitutional law has the function that it stabilizes communications in both law and politics as it allows each system to reduce its inner legitimational insecurity by transporting principles from the other system into its exchanges (Luhmann 1993, 478). In a constitutionally ordered polity, thus, the legal system is able to support its communications by describing its authority as supported and vindicated by politically formulated, collective decisions. At the same time, the political system is able to envision its authority as legitimated by the fact that political power has obtained legal sanction, and it is underscored by legal norms of a foundational nature. On this analysis, the textual form of the constitution brings the great systemic benefit to modern society that it dramatically elevates the degree of contingency at which the systems of law and politics can conduct their communications, and it insulates each system against direct exposure to its own contingency—it expresses a paradoxical moment of self-authorization for both systems (Luhmann 1990, 202; 1993, 478–79). On this analysis, further, the constitution allows the political system to translate its raw power into legal form, so that resistance to power becomes less probable, and power can be circulated evenly, and progressively extended in its reach, throughout society.[2] In Luhmann's description of this process, the constitutional structuring of exchanges between law and politics occurs very smoothly, as a necessary evolutionary occurrence. He explains this through use of the term *Zweitcodierung*, which suggests that the law necessarily imprints its medial form on political power in order to facilitate the societal transmission of power, and the constitution assumes a core role in fulfilling this goal (Luhmann 1997, 357). Importantly, in outlining his theory of *Zweitcodierung*, Luhmann indicated that the degree of interpenetration between law and politics is greater than that between other systems, and that political power is structurally reliant on legal form for its construction as »effective power« (Luhmann 1984, 40): that is, as

2 See early discussion of this in Luhmann (1969).

power that can be circulated in a form proportioned to, and easily generalized across, the complex interfaces of a modern society.[3]

Against this background, this article argues that existing sociological models of the constitution are undermined by the fact that they adopt an overgeneralized model of constitutional formation, which both simplifies the linkage between politics and law and interprets the functions of the constitution in excessively literal, textual fashion. To some degree, of course, the broader sociological claim that the constitution creates conditions for the generalized legitimation and distribution of political power can be, in part, historically verified. For example, we can observe that the historical growth of constitutional law in the eighteenth century had the manifest societal outcome that it promoted the elaboration of the political system as a relatively free-standing, formally differentiated set of institutions, authorized to apply power across society, in legal form, above the local organizations and corporations that had claimed legal and political authority in pre-modern societies.[4] The fact that constitutional law instilled a series of founding or higher-order norms within the political system meant that acts of legislation could be distinctively authorized through reference to such norms, so that the emergent constitutional state could explain its legislative functions as having primacy over rival legal sources, thus solidifying the position of the political system as a center of societal power. In addition, we can observe that, as it became founded in higher-order legal norms, the constitutionally formed political system was able to penetrate more deeply into society, and it was able to include persons at different societal locations in a legal order centered around formal public institutions. In principle, the fact

3 In contrast to the welfare state, Luhmann described the constitutional state as a »shining example of theory which has become practice« (Luhmann 2009, 109).

4 On processes of political centralization under early constitutions see for example Church (1981). To explain this, see Charles Tilly's simple claim: »Strong citizenship depends on direct rule« (1995, 228). This implies—quite accurately—that formal constitutional citizenship necessarily reinforces state power.

that legislative bodies in the political system were able to extract authority from higher-order norms cemented in the text of a constitution meant that acts of law generated by the political system could be distributed at a high degree of reproducibility across society, and law could presuppose authority and recognition in relatively secure and consistent fashion, in different spheres of societal exchange.[5] In consequence, the rise of constitutional law established the political system as the central legitimational focus of society, and this meant, in turn, that the uniformity of society's legal form increased dramatically, and different spheres of legal regulation, including private law, were supported by relatively stable principles (see Grimm 2017, 4).

Nonetheless, the aspect of constitutionalism that consolidates the legitimacy of the legal and political system is always limited. Analyses that accentuate this aspect tend to simplify the legitimational functions of constitutions, and, in particular, they obscure some of the deeply conflictual aspects of constitutional law. As an alternative, this article describes the inherent antinomies in constitutionalism. It then explains, using a modified systems-theoretical pattern of historical sociology, that historical methods bring greatest benefit in constitutional analysis because they allow us to look beyond express constitutional functions, and so to explain the reasons why, in its classical form, constitutionalism *did not* provide simple and reliable foundations for the legitimation of politics and law. Historical analysis of constitutions in fact has particular value in that it brings to light and explains the deep antinomies in constitutional patterns of government, and it illuminates the ways in which constitutionalism often reflect a deeply conflict-laden mode of legitimacy formation. At the core of this analysis is an attempt to question the binary model of the law/politics relation in sociological constitutionalism, implying that, to be fully sociological, such analysis needs to renounce this essentially legal, textual precondition.

5 For example, early constitutionalism usually gave rise, almost immediately, to the codification of civil and criminal law.

The antinomies of constitutional democracy

It is widely argued that constitutionalism in its modern form revolves around a series of core antinomies, and even that constitutionalism is *in essence* an under-evolved doctrine of political legitimacy, which ties the legitimacy of the governmental system to conflicting principles (see Sunstein 1993). If we interpret constitutionalism, broadly, as a legal/political doctrine that defines the basic legal order in which the political system can produce generalized legitimacy for single acts of legislation, so that laws are widely accepted and likely to meet with compliance through society, we can indeed observe that constitutional doctrine is based on a fine balance between sets of principles which, if conceived in radical terms, necessarily conflict with each other. The analysis below aims to pinpoint the core antinomies in constitutional thinking.

The general will or political participation

From the outset, modern constitutional thinking was defined by the fact that it invoked *the will of the people* as the original foundation for the legitimacy of the system of government in society. As a result, constitutional reflection adopted the idea that compliance with the popular will needs to be constructed as the main criterion for measuring whether governmental institutions can, or cannot, claim binding authority in society, and whether laws implemented by such institutions have obligatory force. Across different positions, it was implied that law acquires legitimacy through its general applicability, and the general validity of law results from the fact that it reflects the will of society in its entirety. Despite this basic consensus, however, this idea appeared in marked variations across the outlooks that emerged in different early constitutional theories. In some cases, the construction of the will to underpin the legislative system specifically presupposed that individual citizens actively participated in the production and endorsement of law, so that the general will only became manifest through acts of participation (see Robespierre 1789). In some cases, by contrast, it was presumed that this will cannot be declared through rational patterns of binding legal norm construction, which do not necessarily require the actual engagement of material citizens in the

political process.[6] At the conceptual core of modern constitutionalism, consequently, was a split between interpretations of the popular will which viewed this will as a normative construct, or, in Kantian terms, a regulative idea, and interpretations that viewed it as the *real will* of *real people*. Constitutional theorists diverged in deciding whether the will of the people informing government should be seen as the will of factually existing agents, or as the will of people as they ought to be—as a *pure will*. This antinomy is perennially expressed in the fact that some theorists of constitutionalism view the constitution itself as the primary source of governmental legitimacy, so that the legal order of the constitution forms the point of attribution for legal authority,[7] whereas other theorists of constitutionalism view the constitution as a mechanism for channeling the factual will of the people into acts of legislation.

Popular sovereignty or representative government

This original constitutional antinomy is further reflected in the fact that the earliest theories of modern constitutionalism were sharply divided between theories of legitimacy based on pure popular sovereignty, which aimed at institutionalizing a close connection between citizens and government, and theories that viewed constitutional rule as a model of delegated or representative government, in which governmental authority was bestowed on persons with a merely delegated mandate. This antinomy was reflected in the early period of constitution-making in revolutionary America. In this setting, the insistence on full popular sovereignty was initially declared as a principle of revolutionary legitimacy, embodied in the emphasis placed on legislative authority in early state constitutions,

6 See for one example Kant's theory of the constitutional contract in Kant ([1793] 1976, 153).

7 This view became axiomatic in the USA in the jurisprudence of John Marshall, who argued that the constitution was a superior, paramount law for the American nation, and that on this basis the Supreme Court was authorized to speak for the »original and supreme will« of the people (Hobson and Teute 1990, 182). For the classical theoretical version of this view see Kelsen (1922, 93–94).

but it became attenuated through the revolutionary period (Lutz 1980, 68). This antinomy was also expressed in revolutionary France, where different factions in the revolutionary order were separated by the extent to which they favored either popular or representative government.[8] At the core of this antinomy is a debate regarding the factual location of sovereignty and the factual source of legitimacy in the constitutional polity. Perspectives on different sides of this antinomy view the legitimacy of the state as emanating either from the sovereign people or from the electoral people. In the longer wake of the revolutionary *époque*, of course, constitutional democracy became almost synonymous with representative democracy (see Rosanvallon 1998). In its origins, however, constitutionalism was not clearly separable from a radical doctrine of popular sovereignty.

Liberalism and republicanism

In each of these respects, constitutional thinking moves on the line that separates liberalism from republicanism, and it expresses an, at times, rather awkward fusion of principles derived from both theoretical outlooks.[9] On one hand, constitutionalism expresses a classical republican approach to the construction and legitimation of the political system. This is reflected in the fact that it views a legitimate polity as one that, if it is actively formed by citizens, is able to embody conditions of relative freedom for all actors in society, and even to foster conditions of good life throughout society. In this respect, constitutionalism can be seen as a doctrine that is committed, in classical republican fashion, to an emphatically politico-centric worldview, in which human life reaches its highest fulfilment in political actions, which, through their concentration in the government, resonate through, and generate liberties for people in, society in its entirety. On the other hand, constitutionalism is deeply bound by

8 In contrast to Robespierre, Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès argued that only those with »active rights« (rights of property) were allowed to play a role in political will formation (1789, 19, 21). Eventually, in 1795, he also proposed the establishment of a constitutional jury, to oversee conformity of statutes with the original norms of the constitution.

9 See for discussion Bellamy (2011).

liberal constructions of political liberty, reflecting a far more cautious and skeptical analysis of the political system and the position of political institutions in society more widely. This skepticism is seen in the most basic feature of constitutionalism—namely, that it is designed to balance powers within the state, to offset tendencies toward the concentration of power at one point in the political order, and to separate power from personal monopolies. To this degree, constitutionalism expresses an essential endeavor to control state power. Indeed, it is fundamental to constitutionalism that it is inclined to place prior limits even on the exercise of power by political majorities elected through democratic procedures, and it clearly negates simple democracy. This skepticism is also evident in the fact that much, although not all, constitutional theory attaches elevated importance to institutional provisions for the protection of constitutional rights, which are usually seen as normative institutions requiring particularly strong legal guarantees in the constitutional order. Constitutional rights typically assume the function that they elevate some normative principles to such a high degree that they determine the inner content of all acts of legislation. In this respect, constitutionalism clearly aims at the entrenchment of pre-commitments, external to the political system itself, by which the legitimacy of the political system is subject to prior construction and circumscription. Constitutional rights also assume the broader sociological function that they provide protection for liberties that are primarily exercised outside the state, and they designate such liberties—perhaps of an economic, confessional, communicative, or scientific nature—as immune to encroachment, except for proportionately justifiable reasons, by persons acting in public office. In this respect, constitutionalism subscribes to the core liberal precondition that many key freedoms in society are not of an eminently political nature, and such freedoms are commonly imperiled by political institutions. Constitutionalism thus reposes on a partly squared circle, in which highly political patterns of will formation and societal centration sit alongside deeply anti-political sentiments. This implicitly means that, in constitutional theory, the political system is perceived as a threat to the liberties that, at the same time, it is intended to guarantee.

Constituent power and constituted power

These ambiguities are distilled in the core model of institutional formation at the center of classical constitutionalism—namely, in the doctrine of constituent power. Following this distinction, it is fundamental to a legitimate constitution that it is willed into effect by the people acting in the capacity of an original *pouvoir constituant*, whose decisions establish the highest norms of the polity and form a point of normative regress, by which subsequent acts of law-making, within the constitutional polity, are originally legitimated. In recent years, the concept of the *pouvoir constituant* has become rather diluted, and it is sometimes used as a short-hand term to describe quite broad processes of democratic norm construction, giving rise to legal-legitimational ideals shared by members of the polity (see Habermas 2014; Patberg 2017). Strictly, however, the exercise of constituent power is an original act in which a national will is expressed that defines the highest normative provisions in the constitution of state, of which all other political functions and subsequent procedures are the necessary corollaries.[10] On this foundation, it is central to a legitimate constitution that most day-to-day functions of the state are exercised by bodies whose powers are defined as *pouvoirs constitués*: that is, which perform responsibilities allocated to them by the constitution, and whose proper legitimation is not reliant on constant or immediate authorization by the will of the people. As a result, in the constitutional polity, most political functions are carried out by agents and institutions whose connection to the original will of the people is highly mediated, and most institutions are legitimated simply by the fact that they do not act outside the scope of the powers originally accorded to them under the constitution. In this respect, constitutionalism balances an intensely politicized construction of legitimacy—reflecting the original force of the constituent power—with a more attenuated or mediated concept of legitimacy, enabling constituted institutions to assume a high degree of autonomy in relation

10 In this theory, Sieyès defined the nation (people) as »the origin of everything […] the law itself« ([1789] 1839, 79). Dieter Grimm (2012, 223) observes the »distinction between *pouvoir constituant* and *pouvoir constitué*« as »constitutive« of modern constitutionalism.

to the original will of the people. On this basis, governmental legitimacy can inevitably be claimed by institutions that assume a simple representative mandate, and the origin of delegated powers is remote from actors exercising such powers.

The two faces of rights

Owing to the above conceptual conflicts, the basic subject of constitutional democracy appears in two quite distinct ways within the political system, and this subject brings legitimacy to the political system on two quite separate foundations. Vitally, these two forms of legitimational subjectivity are connected with the content of different sets of constitutional rights, so that different models of subject construction are reflected in variations between provisions for different rights. On one hand, the basic subject of the constitutional polity is envisioned as a subject that holds rights of a formal-legal nature, which protect this subject, in certain activities, from the depredatory acts of other parties, in particular of parties using the authority of the state itself. In this regard, the essential subject of the constitutional polity is configured as a relatively static subject with certain core predetermined entitlements, and this subject confers legitimacy upon the state to the extent that these entitlements are not violated. In some ways, this subject is positioned *at the end of the law*—a government acquires legitimacy to the extent that its laws are proportioned to the normative form of this subject, and to the freedoms claimed on a priori grounds by this subject. It is essential to the quality of this political subject that its existence is pre- or extra-political, and the rights that it claims make it possible to evaluate the legitimacy of the state because of their essentially static and immutable nature.[11] On the other hand, the basic subject of the constitutional state is construed as a holder of rights of an eminently political nature, such that it constructs the legitimacy of the state by exercising participatory rights, which allow it to shape the form of the state and actively to influence the content of individual laws. In this respect, the subject of constitutional democracy generates legitimacy insofar as it

11 This idea of course originates in the work of Locke.

acts through and within the state, and it shapes the content of government from inside. The rights claimed by this subject are naturally variable, dependent on circumstance, and they add content to laws in contingent fashion. Most importantly, this subject is positioned *at the beginning of the law*, and the government acquires legitimacy by translating the changing requirements of this subject into legal form. Overall, the constitutional state is configured by two sets of rights, which are formative of the law in diametrically opposed ways, and which raise conflicting legitimational expectations. Clearly, the rights exercised by the participatory political subject can easily give rise to claims that militate against the effective exercise of rights claimed by the formal, static subject.

Individual and collective subjects

Of fundamental significance in this regard is the fact that these divergent sets of rights stimulate patterns of subject formation which vary in respect of the degree to which they claim rights of a singular or of a collective nature. To some degree, the subject of the constitutional polity is always a collective subject, or at least it reflects the compression of all societal actors into an aggregated subjective form, able to simplify the complex production of legitimacy into the form of one actor. However, it is a feature of the constitutional subject in its extra-political construction that it tends to acquire a distinctively individualized form, and it confers legitimacy on political institutions insofar as these recognize and protect rights of singular subjects. In principle, this subject need not present itself to the political system as a real collective actor, and the legitimacy extracted from this subject merely presupposes that laws passed by the state recognize certain rights that inhere in all individual persons, simply in their capacity as singular repositories of human subjectivity. In practical terms, rights attached to this subject are usually rights exercised by persons in distinction from other persons, and they sanction practices and liberties that do not presuppose human association. As mentioned, rights of free inquiry, movement, contractual exchange, labor, and investment might be seen as core examples of such rights. By contrast, it is particular to the constitutional subject in its more active, political/participatory construction that it tends to enter concrete organizations and associations in order to

establish rights; indeed, the enactment of participatory rights often presupposes that many particular subjects combine their actions to shape the content of laws. In attaching its legitimacy to this construction of the subject, the constitutional polity necessarily incorporates other organizational forms, and it derives legitimacy from secondary political associations, such as representative bodies, political parties, trade unions, and social movements. Insofar as social agents act as subjects at the beginning of the law, they tend to appear in associational form, and the rights claimed in this regard are almost invariably rights oriented toward the production of law to be applied to collective material subjects.

Overall, the legitimational structure of the modern constitutional polity is ordered around a set of norms that sit uncomfortably beside each other. In particular, constitutionalism is a doctrine marked by a clear unease in the relation between *legal* processes of norm production and *political* processes of societal engagement.[12]

This unease is clearly manifest at the level of first principle. In each of the above sets of antinomies, norms arising from one construction of legitimacy can easily enter into conflict with one or more norms arising from an alternative construction of legitimacy. For instance, expressions of the popular will can be blocked by representative institutions; demands for constituent power can be offset by actors exercising constituted power; laws constructed through participation can conflict with laws proportioned to formally acceded rights; rights of collective subjects can run counter to rights attached to singular legal personalities. When such legitimational conflicts arise, they need to be resolved through an act of adjudication that privileges one or other element of constitutionalism.

This unease is also manifest in different historical patterns of constitutional practice. In some historical settings, the political/participatory or mobilizational aspect of constitutionalism has deeply unsettled the formal normative aspect of constitutionalism. In many settings, for example, the establishment of a system of constitutional rule has released processes of

12 See diverse analysis in Schmitt (1928); Bellamy (2007); Loughlin (2010).

mass-political mobilization which the formal constitutional order has not been able to withstand. Where this has occurred, typically, the political system has experienced institutional collapse, defined either by mass sabotage of the governance system or (more commonly) by eventual reactionary clampdown by potent elites against mobilized social groups.[13] In other historical settings, alternatively, constitutional government has created a polity in which sitting elites have been able to monopolize the application of constitutional rules to avert, or at least strictly control, the incorporation of mass-political subjects in governmental functions. In such cases, the legal aspect of constitutionalism has impeded full expression of the participatory aspect of constitutionalism. Until quite recently, of course, constitutional law was commonly used as an effective instrument, selectively to withhold full rights of political engagement from certain societal constituencies, and thus politically to immobilize particular groups—especially where such groups contested the stability of singular rights otherwise guaranteed under the constitutional system. Until relatively recently, most constitutional systems merely institutionalized a pattern of selective or partial democratization in which participatory subject formation was curtailed, and some societal sectors were routinely excluded from participation on grounds of ethnicity, class affiliation, or gender.[14]

Both at a conceptual-normative level and at a practical-organizational level, therefore, the basic structure of constitutional law has not produced

13 The key examples of this are European democracies created through processes of mass mobilization after 1918, most of which had, owing to elite retrenchment, collapsed by the early 1930s. Other examples of this are democratic experiments in Latin America from 1945 onward, most of which ended in elite retrenchment.

14 Most constitutional polities excluded, or gave only reduced recognition to, some socio-economic groups until 1945. More importantly, it was only in the 1960s that exclusion of social groups from the exercise of electoral rights on ethnic grounds was generally seen as illegitimate. Such exclusion was terminated in Australia, Canada, and the USA in the first half of the 1960s. Of course, it persisted much longer, formally, in South Africa and Rhodesia, and, informally, in some African and Latin American societies.

a reliable model for the legitimation of political systems in societies marked by high levels of legal/political inclusion. Constitutionalism tends to create political systems in which either one side of the normative system prevails or in which the possibility of factual legitimational crisis remains high and deeply unsettling. This is underlined, most emphatically, by the fact that few societies developed enduring constitutional democracies until after 1945. After 1945, democracy was widely promoted and sustained by the fact that, either directly or indirectly, global human rights norms penetrated into national constitutional systems, which altered the classical relation between the different principles of constitutional rule. In most cases, the domestic assimilation of global human rights law after 1945 had the effect that it projected a set of norms that were hyper-entrenched against the momentary will of national democratic actors, and it constructed legitimacy for laws on the basis of externally projected normative premises. In other words, national constitutionalism only became an enduring reality through the fact that national constitutions were joined to a global normative order. This process brought stability to domestic constitutional systems because it softened the contradiction between the antinomies inherent in national constitutional law. Most importantly, the inner-societal hyper-entrenchment of global human rights limited the extent to which the participation of factual political subjects defined the basic principles of governmental legitimacy, and, at the same time, it limited the extent to which elite actors could close off constitutional participation to minority subjects.[15] National constitutionalism thus only evaded its own inner antinomies as it was placed on premises originating outside national constitutional law.[16]

15 Indicatively, consider the impact of global rights on the end of the de facto apartheid regime in the USA in 1964–65. See discussion in Skrentny (1998).

16 It is not accurate to claim, as does Habermas, that all constitutions before the formation of the EU were based in national patterns of self-legislation styled on the constitution-making events in the USA and France in the 1780s (Habermas 2014). This paradigm had been thoroughly revised after 1945, by which time it was not the *primary activation*, but the *material*

On balance, the classical assumption that the constitution forms a simple system of normative conversion between law and politics is hard to sustain. The capacity of constitutions for generating universally accepted norms for national political systems is far weaker than commonly imagined, in both legal and sociological inquiry. Rather than converting political power to secure and generalized legal-normative form, constitutions have typically established deeply conflictual articulations between the systems of law and politics.

Historical foundations of constitutional crisis: Law and war

On this basis, the remainder of this article is designed to show that, if applied to constitutional law, historical-sociological analysis can help us to understand, specifically, why constitutional law has remained centered around deep antinomies. In particular, it explains that an accurate understanding of constitutional law can be best obtained if we add greater nuance to the concept of the political system implied in sociological analysis of constitutionalism. As mentioned, for all their differences, existing attempts to provide a historical-sociological construction of constitutional norms proceed from a generalized understanding of the political system, as a set of institutions that are internally proportioned to the law. Contra such outlooks, we can understand constitutional law more accurately if we observe its emergence as part of a very distinctive set of historical occurrences within the political system. This also allows us to reach a more fully founded comprehension of modern constitutionalism and the antinomies that it contains, and it makes it possible to interpret the deep crisis potentials embedded in modern constitutional law.

The antinomies of constitutional law are most effectively explained if we look in greater detail at the exact ways in which constitutional law mediates between law and politics, and if we disentangle the complex normative claims that are condensed in this coupling. To achieve this, we

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secondarization, of the national constituent power that formed the core legitimational source for the national polity.

need to examine the constitution as part of a multi-structural process of interaction between law and politics, in which law and politics are linked to each other in often contingent fashion, in a manner intensely affected by societal occurrences that accompanied the broader construction of the modern legal and political systems. To comprehend the form of the constitution, it is essential to strip away the purism of textual analysis and to examine the constitution as a series of interlinked and variably constructed semantic threads, which cannot be restricted to a simple or mono-dimensional medial law/power coupling.

The complex nature of the coupling formed between law and politics by constitutional law is already evident in the fact that the constitution contains a number of secondary couplings between these systems, and the functions of the constitution in generating legitimacy for law and politics are not articulated solely in formal constitutional norms. Importantly, the constitution is itself underpinned by a secondary legitimational figure, which, beneath the level of pure legal normativity, mediates in vital fashion between politics and law. That is to say, within the complex of norms which form the constitution, the essential responsibility for constructing legitimacy falls, not to the constitution as a text, but rather to the figure of the citizen (*citoyen/Staatsbürger*), which underpins the legitimacy of the constitutional text, and in fact condenses the coupling of law and politics at the deepest level. Notably, the dual legitimational function that Luhmann ascribes to the constitution, generating legal legitimacy for politics and political legitimacy for law, is not performed by the constitution as a simple textual configuration of norms. Instead, this function is performed by the citizen, who always acts though the constitution as the agent that connects the systems of politics and law. At one level, the citizen appears in constitutional law as a figure that transmits legitimacy *in political form* into the legal system. The citizen does this insofar as he or she engages, as an active citizen, in the production of laws by means of organized political participation. Such participation means that laws radiated across society are legitimated by the principle that they have an eminently volitional political origin. At a different level, the citizen appears in constitutional law as a figure that generates

legitimacy *in legal form* for the political system. The citizen does this insofar as it presents itself as a holder of invariable rights upon the recognition of which the legitimacy of law depends; the fact that the citizen is projected as a formal rights holder means that political power can only be translated into law if it is adjusted to a precise and pre-stabilized legal form, which means that the authority of political power is guaranteed by its internalization of certain legal norms. The text of the constitution, therefore, is merely the formal-normative order in which the citizen produces political legitimacy, and the legitimational functions of the constitution are in essence secondary formalizations of the primary legitimational functions of the citizen.

If we cut through the legitimational semantic of the constitution in this way, however, we can see that it was never the case that the constitution, in which the citizen is embedded, generated mutually transferable reserves of legitimacy for both politics and law. Indeed, if we look at the historical formation of citizenship, in its coincidence with the emergence of modern constitutional law, we can observe that the coupling of law and politics expressed in the constitution was never merely a simple bilateral coupling. On the contrary, modern constitutionalism, in which the citizen was embedded, always expressed a *trilateral coupling*, mediating, not only between law and politics, but between three separate sub-systems of modern society. It is through analysis of the *third element* in this coupling that we can approach the reasons why constitutionalism, alongside its legitimational functions, often acts as a highly unsettling premise for legal and political communications. Indeed, it is through investigation of this third element that we can begin to understand the basic antinomies inscribed in constitutional law that were presented above. The historical-sociological construction of constitutional law acquires particular explanatory importance as it focuses on this third element.

In many respects, the history of modern citizenship was always a history of warfare. In classical societies, military engagement and citizenship were deeply connected. In medieval societies, rights of political participation were strongly determined by military service, and, to the extent that citizenship existed as a recognizable legal category, it often presupposed

voluntary military service.[17] Through the formation of modern constitutional systems, however, the connection between citizenship and military conflict was greatly intensified. In fact, in the later eighteenth century, the nexus between citizenship and military affiliation moved to the epicenter of the legitimational structure of society, and it had a profound impact on the constitutional articulation of political legitimacy.[18] In many cases, classical modern societies formulated their basic legitimacy in constitutional norms that were created through revolutions, which meant that rights of citizenship were constructed through the inner-societal militarization of citizens.[19] Later, this connection was intensified as many societies acquired their modern constitutional form through anti-colonial uprisings. Even in societies in which constitutional citizenship has not developed through actual revolution, the formation of democratic constitutions has usually resulted either from civil war,[20] or from war with external enemies, in which overarching patterns of affiliation were cemented and intensified through collective adversity.[21] Across most cases of modern constitutional formation, therefore, the citizen became the legitimational center of the political system in a form that was saturated with military conflict, and in which the obligations of citizenship had been at least partly formed by war. This means, in short, that the constitutions that formed

17 This is clear in the works of Machiavelli, who, in *Il Principe* (1532), saw the presence of good laws as connected with the presence of a good army.

18 See general discussion in Bradburn (2009).

19 In both the American Revolution and the French Revolution, citizenship and military engagement were closely associated (see Thornhill 2018a, 12–13).

20 The key example of this is the construction of black citizenship in the USA. This occurred through the long and intermittent civil war that lasted from the 1860s to the 1960s.

21 The most dramatic processes of citizenship formation in recent history occurred after 1918, reflected in the general enfranchisement of most men in Europe, and after 1945, reflected in the emergence of democratic government as a global normative expectation.

the legitimational couplings between law and politics in modern societies actually formed tripartite couplings—between law, politics, and war. It is, in consequence, not possible to speak of constitutional law as a binary link between the legal system and the political system; constitutional law is a coupling between the legal system, the political system, and the military system. In fact, constitutional law usually originates in situations in which the political system and the military system are closely fused.

The basic antinomies in constitutional law are explicable on these grounds. Indeed, this perspective enables us to appreciate the deeply conflictual aspects of constitutionalism, and to understand why it is often more likely to destabilize the political system than to generate more robust principles of legitimacy. In essence, the formation of constitutional law, in which the legitimational fulcrum of society is condensed, has been constructed through the expectation that demands and experiences of an essentially military nature can be distilled in a formal normative order. The form of the citizen that underlies the constitutional interaction between law and politics is that of the citizen claiming constitutional rights that reflect highly incubated, conflictual, and collectivized conditions of political affiliation.[22] This lies at the core of the tension between the legal and political elements of constitutionalism addressed above. In this tension, the emphatically political dimension of constitutionalism is clearly transparent to experiences of intense mobilization, to expectations of full identity with the system of social command, and to notions of collective identity, which are usually engendered among citizens by war. This fusion of war and law in the constitutional system of the modern polity has imprinted on contemporary society an acutely militarized form, in which still today, patterns of citizenship and rights assertion are not easily separable from military organization.[23] In particular, this has stimulated patterns of political subject formation that are not easily represented in stable constitutional form, and whose demands are not easily secured in

22 This was of course intuited in the wake of the French Revolution (see Constant [1819] 1997).

23 See for discussion of this Thornhill (2018b; forthcoming).

simple constitutional rights. The basic legitimational standard of democratic constitutionalism, therefore, is the product of a highly contingent construction of the political system. Inevitably, the form of the constitution constructed under such circumstances does not create reliable or stable reserves of legitimacy to support society's legal and political exchanges.

Conclusion: Resolving constitutional antinomies

Overall, a historical-sociological approach to constitutional law teaches us, primarily, that constitutions have developed through very contingent processes, they do not peacefully or formally mediate between politics and law, and they place society's legitimational resources on precarious foundations. Before we seek to overcome the antinomies in constitutional law, it is vital to observe how such antinomies have been historically constructed. Importantly, one highly influential account of citizenship has argued that a full understanding of political legitimacy requires a theoretical analysis of ways in which the citizen might be released from its historical attachment to national society (Habermas 1991, 22). However, a more fundamental, more pressing task might be to explain the legal forms through which the citizen can be released from its attachment to military society. This has of course partly been achieved through the recent hyper-entrenchment of global human rights law. Further historical-sociological research is required now to explain global law from the perspective of societal demilitarization, examining the entrenchment of such norms as a necessary dislocation of citizenship from its own military origins.

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Holding doors for others

A history of the emergence of a polite behavior

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Holding doors for others as polite behavior

> »A young woman and a young man, total strangers to each other, simultaneously reach the closed […] door. She steps slightly aside, stops, and waits. He positions himself, twists the handle, pulls open the door and holds it while she enters. Once she is safely across the threshold, he enters behind her« (Walum 1974, 506).

Holding doors for others is an everyday ritual that differs according to gender, age, social status, and stigmatization; it is signified by a spatial boundary—a door—which highlights these differences. As a non-verbal act, holding doors for others is a local and situational form of politeness. It is often accompanied by an expression of gratitude such as »Thank you,« or an invitation such as »Please, after you.« The gesture can be considered a conventionalized and ritualized behavior which also accesses reflexive knowledge.[1]

This formal classification of the gesture does not at this point indicate *why* holding doors for others is considered polite. One could argue that as a voluntary act that requires effort, it is courteous. Holding doors for others thus relates to social cooperation in the form of avoiding physical exertion, according to which the amount of work promotes altruistic

1 While both areas of research relate to micro-sociological concepts, there is a distinction between a sociolingusitic approach (cf., e.g., Watts 2003; Lüger 2001) and a pragmatic approach to politeness (cf., e.g., Goffman [1967] 1982).

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behavior (Santamaria and Rosenbaum 2011).[2] Alternatively, the gesture could be marked as polite if it is viewed as a gesture of priority relating to privileges which are respected.[3]

If we consider the pattern of the gesture, rather than the various possible reasons behind it, holding doors for others appears to be a sequence of coordinated body movements and communicative actions that take place both spatially and temporally. The gesture is directed at the problem that X and Y cannot walk through the door at the same time and it hence refers to situational contingency as subsequent communications are uncertain at the given moment: who should go through the door first? Following this line of thought, holding doors for others can be described as part of an interaction ritual (Goffman [1967] 1982) that reduces this uncertainty in the form of expected reciprocity. For this to be anticipated, specific sequential bracketing is required, which marks the act as a form of polite behavior (cf. Sacks 1992, 521–23). Firstly, there is a need for mutual understanding and for the act of holding the door open. Secondly, the action of holding the door must not convey the impression to the other person that it is done to attain strategic goals or to cement prescriptive asymmetries. Furthermore, the closing of the bracket by uttering a »Thank you« should not appear to be a mere norm compliance (cf. Haferland and Paul 1996, 49–50). However, if the act is merely associated with age, gender, or a difference in socioeconomic status, it does not appear to be voluntary and does not therefore seem an expression of politeness. This applies when it is associated with motives such as being the initial phase of an intimate relationship. Y's gratitude in the form of reciprocal behavior restores the symmetry following the expenditure of time and effort; an inauthentic »Thank you« or the absence of an expression of gratitude could hence lead to a ritual inequality and subsequently to an affront (cf. Blau 1964, 91–93).

2 Santamaria and Rosenbaum (2011) point out that doors will be held open when the total effort of all those involved is reduced by a single effort, and if a critical distance between persons is maintained.

3 For a unique and brilliant insight into the complex phenomenon of doormen, see Bearman (2005).

Holding doors for others therefore often requires careful consideration and reflection. Knowing when, how, and for whom to use the gesture is subject to normative expectations about self-image and the roles of those involved; it therefore requires renegotiation if these identity factors change (Goffman 1956). This becomes particularly clear when looking at the constellation of men and women: holding a door can be interpreted as preferential treatment on the basis of physical characteristics such as strength and weakness, which reflect outdated gender roles (cf. Renne and Allen 1976; Yoder et al. 2002; McCarty and Kelly 2013). Nowadays, this asymmetry is less significant in relation to the self-representation and role expectations which affect how this gesture is negotiated—women also hold doors open for men, and both genders need to reflect on whether they do this for their own or opposite gender.[4]

As a polite behavior, holding doors for others appears to create a context which obviously restricts behavior, and which has the capacity to either reduce or increase complexity. It transforms and mediates the (content-based) incommensurability of the more or less obvious asymmetries of different individuals into a (formal) social coexistence, and thus also facilitates social togetherness in situations where unfamiliarity and diversity could otherwise lead to aggressive confrontations; it hence provides a structure to certain situations and expected outcomes (cf. Rang and Süßmann 2009, 160, 164).

Whether based on age, gender or socioeconomics, theories about the origins of holding doors for other always seem based on a difference in

4 Therefore, contingency does not necessarily have to be neutralized. Another example would be if X refers to age whilst Y refers to gender and both give each other priority. In this respect, the literature on politeness recommends that, no later than the second time, one should accept the prerogative offered, according to which the problem will be solved in time (cf. Kamptz-Borken 1951, 38). With regard to stigmatized individuals, the question also arises as to whether, for example, holding the door for a wheelchair user is an affront to the fact that he is disabled. Whatever decision is taken, holding or not holding a door can potentially be considered polite or impolite.

status (e.g., according to age, gender or socioeconomics). In contrast, this paper views this phenomenon as an empirical puzzle and suggests that the emergence of the gesture as a polite behavior is the result of a complex temporal sequence in which factual and social dimensions of meaning are intertwined. The contingent-causal understanding of sociological explanations is guided by a procedural methodological approach, as presented by Aljets and Hoebel (2017) under the title »Methodology of Processual Explanation« (MPE). The basis of MPE can be represented as a three-step process; each step has its own key concepts of basic reconstruction (event, concatenation, and sequence), complex reconstruction (multi-sequentiality, intertwinement, and inference), and temporal explanation. The basic reconstruction describes the sequentiality of events, while the complex reconstruction describes the inference of sequences and therefore serves as a form of narrative explanation (Morgan 2017; Roth 2017).

In the next section, two sequences are basically reconstructed: the factual material fashion sequence and the social politeness sequence. The material fashion sequence describes the formation, development, and eventual disappearance of the hoop skirt as a dynamic, recursive process between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries; the different shapes of the skirts serve as events. Evidence can be found in Georg Simmel's fashion theory and the historical debate is illustrated using newspaper articles, drawings, and other images. The hypothesis is that the increase in the size of hoop skirts created a functional need for doors to be opened and held for women wearing such clothing. The social politeness sequence is characterized by Norbert Elias's theory of civilization as a dynamic process, which began in about the eleventh century and has more or less continued until the present day; it is strongly connected to differentiation within society. A number of books on etiquette, which document this history, serve as events for this process.

In the complex reconstruction, both sequences are related; the underlying questions about the emergence of the practice of holding doors for others as a polite behavior can be answered historically in temporal order. These two sequences can therefore be considered to be intertwined and they

influence each other. It is not suggested that the gesture of holding doors did not exists prior to the introduction of wide hoop skirts: it is unlikely that monarchs ever had to open doors for themselves. There have always been hierarchies and complex rules which govern them, however, it can be assumed that these more formal behavior rules were not considered a matter of politeness. This paper suggests that in certain historical contexts, namely the emergence of the bourgeoisie, this practice came to be viewed as a polite behavior. In order to establish an argumentation which is (contingent) causally plausible, but which is not causally necessary, this paper examines conduct books in which this gesture is discussed. To explain the origins in a time-sensitive manner, it is necessary to refer to holding doors as a polite behavior (shortly) after the disappearance of the hoop skirt. As time is not the only dimension of meaning which structures society, this article also discusses the content and the similarities between the fashion and politeness. The concluding section reflects on the approach and limitations, and above all, proposes further exploration of the intertwinement of materiality and sociality.

Fashion and politeness as sequences—A basic reconstruction

The subsequent sections present the history of the hoop skirt and of politeness as sequences following a basic temporal order (cf. Aljets and Hoebel 2017, 8–9). Both sequences are reconstructed as dynamic, recursive processes. This enables the time period to be determined in which the polite gesture of holding doors for others established itself due to the size of hoop skirts and to the emerging bourgeoisie.

Crinoline—Dangerous fashion

The hoop skirt is a women's undergarment; it is a frame made from different materials, such as reeds or whale bone, which is covered by fabric in order to create a particular form. As a mimetic reproduction, the hoop skirt emphasizes the lower half of the female body and its extensive physiognomy; it also has architectural connotations and can be understood as a caricatured exaggeration of the female body (cf. Lehnert 2013, 76). Hoop skirts can be assigned to different eras according to the

shape and materials used; these can be regarded as events and, on closer examination, as sequences of particular events. They establish the temporal order, which »makes a difference« (Abbott 1983, 129), and places them in particular contexts: the *verdugado*, the *pannier*, the *crinoline*, and the *tournure*.[5]

The *verdugado*, a cone-shaped variant, appeared in Spain in around 1470. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the *vertugadin*, a similar skirt with a barrel-shaped form, was also worn in France. The *pannier* (French: *panier* meaning basket) is a spherical variant which was worn in the eighteenth century. The hoop skirt disappeared before the French Revolution and evolved into the *cul de Paris*, which had cushioned padding at the rear (cf. Boehm 1963, 116). This was followed by the crinoline, which occupied a special status, as will become evident later in this paper. Finally, the center of gravity of the female figure shifted to the back and the hoop skirt became shorter and smaller again. The tournure, which surrounded a small part of a woman's bottom, originated from the *crinolette* or *semi-crinoline*; this is regarded as the final phase of development of the hoop skirt. There were, however, brief reemergences in the twentieth century as the *war crinoline* in around 1915–16 and the layered petticoat in the 1950s (cf. Lehnert 2006, 103).[6]

5 For a depiction of the *verdugado*, see the painting by Frans Pourbus the Younger, *The Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia*, ca. 1598–1600, oil on canvas, 217.5 x 131.0 cm, Royal Collection, London, https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/407377/the-infanta-isabella-clara-eugenia-1566-1633-archduchess-of-austria; for the *pannier*, see Diego Velázquez, *Infanta Margarita Teresa in a Blue Dress*, 1659, oil on canvas, 125,5 × 106,0 cm, Museum of Art History, Vienna, https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/2027/; for the *crinoline*, see Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *L'impératrice Eugénie entourée de ses dames d'honneur*, 1855, oli on canvas, 300,0 x 420,0 cm, National Museums and area of the palace of Compiègne, https://en.palaisdecompiegne.fr/node/249; for the *tournure*, see James Tissot, *The Bridesmaid*, 1883–85, oil on canvas, 147.3 x 101.6 cm, Leeds Museum and Galleries, Leeds, http://www.leedsartgallery.co.uk/gallery/listings/l0031.php.

6 The changes in the hoop skirt show that fashion is oriented towards a historically contingent body image, but that it also created body images through a process of grotesque exaggeration (cf. Lehnert 2013, 67). The

The emergence and disappearance of different forms of hoop skirt and the duration of particular design variants reflects the temporal process of the sequence. While the fashion sequence spans the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, individual events, such as the *verdugado*, were prevalent for different periods of time. However, the length of each process was similar as each type of hoop skirt was worn for several decades. The fact that the hoop skirt changed at all is a central feature of a dynamic fashion process referred to by Georg Simmel ([1905] 1986) as a fashion carousel. The process is driven by the fact that individuals strive to be part of a group and dress similarly to others (integration). At the same time, fashion highlights differences from other groups (differentiation) (cf. Simmel 1992, 107). It is a carousel in the sense that the upper classes introduce innovations and new fashions, while the lower classes adapt to and imitate them. In response, the upper classes react with new fashion ideas in order to individualize and differentiate themselves again (cf. ibid., 106–8). Thus, the evolution of fashion is an unplanned, trickle-down process; it is hierarchically organized and is based on a symbolic, consensual prestige structure of class differentiation.[7]

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history of the hoop skirt can therefore also be described in terms of male supremacy as this clothing emphasized the differences between the sexes. These garments reduced women's mobility, while the accentuated hips punctuated female fertility and created a physical distance from others.

7 In terms of its stability, fashion as a process can represent a device against the unexpected; it can exclude chance and favor a particular direction (path). It is a mutually binding and thus central schismogenetic process (Batson 1936). The more the lower classes adapt, the more intensively the upper classes attempt to distinguish themselves by differentiation (see Mayntz and Nedelmann 1987). In the present, finer distinctions than that of class are necessary in order to describe changes in fashions. For more on this discussion, see Davis (1992, 110–12) and Blumer (1969). The ambiguity of status is a key issue as it cannot be clearly determined; after all, one can dress in a particular way regardless of one's actual status and thus pretend to belong to a particular group. Moreover, class-related theory does not explain why a specific fashion becomes popular and spreads. This theory is therefore limited to a functional maintenance of society's social stratification system and it makes little reference to institutional,

The changing shape of and materials used in hoop skirts are evidence of this process as these garments evolved from a round, barrel-shaped form to a more spherical shape at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Boehm (1963, 205–7) describes the vertical progression of the hoop skirt—from the courtiers to the bourgeoisie, and the horizontal progression from England and Spain to Germany via Paris. The progression of certain types of hoop skirt from higher to lower classes was also influenced by price differentiation as such garments would have been beyond the budget of some social groups (cf. ibid.).

The crinoline marked a significant epoch of the hoop skirt fashion sequences and spanned a period of ten to 15 years. Crinolines were initially made from horse hair (French: *crine*) and linen (French: *linge*). They were later constructed using whale and fish bones (cf. Anonymous 1858), which were eventually replaced by steel hoops (cf. Brooke and Laver 2000, 96). While other forms of hoop skirt were part of the standard repertoire of courtly society and were thus widespread across all of the upper classes, the crinoline was also worn by lower class women. This may have been due to the use of lighter materials and industrial manufacturing, which made these garments more affordable (cf. Lehnert 2006, 115). This lighter material increased the popularity and prevalence of hoop skirts, and led to the derisive term *crinoline mania* (ibid.), which dates from about 1857–67. The term referred to the excessive size of the skirts: at the height of the craze in the 1860s, some hoop skirts were up to ten meters wide.[8] This led to huge temporal, social and factual restrictions, inconveniences and bizarre situations in daily life. In order for a crinoline to sit properly, it usually took two people and sometimes several hours to put the frames together. The ladies who wore them

economic, and political complexities. See Aspers and Godart (2013) for an excellent overview of past and recent research on the sociology of fashion and interdisciplinary approaches.

8 »[…] there was never a fashion invented that was more sexy […]. How great to come into a room and occupy six feet of space« Vivienne Westwood cited in Fred Vermorel (1996).

> »could only walk sideways through the doors, the gentleman who led them had to stay one step ahead of or behind them. When they sat down or several of them were together, they took up three times as much space as before« (Boehm 1963, 122; my translation).

Stairs and carriages were enormous obstacles so women had to be accompanied when using them and assisted in entering and leaving the carriage.[9] The sprawling skirts could even have life-threatening consequences: the Sept. 16, 1861 issue of the *Daily Dispatch* reports that during the first act of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the voluminous dress of the dancer Cecilia Gale caught fire. As her fellow dancers attempted to help her, their dresses also caught alight. Furthermore, some women fell down the stairs, others fell on the street; in total nine women died and dozens more were injured. It is estimated that around 3,000 women died in England at the time of crinoline mania, mainly because their clothes caught fire or got caught in carriages and machines.[10]

From an analytical perspective, the evolution of the hoop skirt should make it possible to identify the point at which the gesture of holding doors for others emerged as a polite behavior. It can be assumed, in particular at the peak of crinoline mania, that women's skirts were simply too wide for them to open doors unassisted; this made it necessary for

9 Photographs from that time show that it involved great effort to put on a crinoline, not to mention move around and perform everyday tasks wearing one; see the Howarth-Loomes Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, in particular the exhibition *Photography: A Victorian Sensation* (June 19–Nov. 22, 2015). Cartoonist frequently made fun of this fashion; see, for example, Paul Sorene, »Scenes from Ladies Dressing Rooms: The Crinoline Craze in the 1850s and 1860s,« Flashbak, digital collection, May 19, 2015, https://www.flashbak.com/scenes-from-ladies-dressing-rooms-the-crinoline-craze-in-the-1850s-and-1860s-35132/; »Crinolinemania—10 Fascinating Facts About the Crinoline,« 5-Minute History, accessed Feb. 5, 2018, http://www.fiveminutehistory.com/crinolineomania-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-crinoline-empire/?cn-reloaded=1.

10 See Christian Neeb, »Reifrock-Mode: Zum Sterben schön,« *Spiegel*, June 30, 2015, http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/reifrock-diekrinoline-eine-mode-die-sogar-leben-kostete-a-1040604.html.

others to hold doors for women. The gesture hence fulfilled a functional need and, as such, had nothing to do with a person's status or gender. According to the research question, this *built-in* precedence thus arose from a rational-functional structure and only later developed into a polite gesture. In order to examine this thesis, a basic reconstruction of the development of politeness is presented in the following section and serves as the second sequence. This enables us to specify the particular time period—corresponding with the emergence of the bourgeoisie—during which the gesture appeared as an interference between these two sequences. Furthermore, this reconstruction makes it possible to identify significant meaning in the content of both processes. The inferences can thus be linked more abstractly and specified theoretically beyond a parallelization of the times when these sequences occurred.

Politeness—Integrative behavior

The evolution of the sociocultural phenomena of politeness can be analyzed according to the theories of Norbert Elias (1980) as a process of filtering the impact of the coarse, violent and feudal world beyond the court.[11] This unplanned process involves social developments (sociogenesis) and changes in personality structure (psychogenesis). Both developments can be described as mutually productive autocatalytic processes of network-like interdependencies (cf. Elias 1980, 142–44); they lead to a pluralizing of sociocultural experiences and are therefore evolutionary (cf. e.g., Haferland and Paul 1996, 26–28; Linke 1996, 72–74). Sociogenesis comprises three stages; feudalization, monopolization of means of violence and power,

11 The term *sociocultural* is understood as a coding system of cultural values; hence, when social order changes, so do the cultural values of the system. A change in politeness is thus subject to inherent systemic factors (cf. Ankenbrand 2013, chap. 6, 7). On different stages and epochs of politeness, see Fidancheva (2013, 37–39); Rang and Süßmann (2009, 165–67); Machwirth (1970, 17–19); Haferland and Paul (1996); and Linke (1996). For criticism of Elias, see Duindam (1998); La Vopa (2000); Schnell (2004a, 2004b); Kuzmics (2000); and above all, Dürr (1988, 1999, 1993, 1997, 2002). Hinz (2002) also writes about this debate; and Goudsblom and Mennell (1997) disagree with Dürr's ideas.

and socialization of those monopolies (cf. Elias 1980, 298–99). Psychogenesis also involves three stages: medieval courtesy, courtly civility, and modern civilization. It leads to self-monitoring, self-discipline, restraint of instincts and emotional distance, as well as to a transformation of external constraints into internal constraints in the form of embarrassment and shame (Elias 1980, 174, 313).

Following population migration in the tenth and eleventh centuries, territorial centers of domination emerged, which in turn led to the development of the nobility during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (cf. Wenzel 1988, 106). As the seat of government and the political decision-making authority, the court was the visible form of direct rule and the highest level of society; furthermore, it represented the unity of society (cf. Siefer 1988, 130). As a figuration, the court acted as a demarcation, detached from the outside world, but it also created internal structures and integration. Courtly socialization incorporated standards of behavior, language, and ceremonies; this courtoisie formed the foundations of a society par excellence (cf. Elias 1980, 60).

This article considers language to be a means that is flexible enough to map complex dynamics and thus decipher evolving standards of behavior (cf. Krumrey 1991, 228). Conduct books hence enable a version of the history of politeness to be reconstructed. Accordingly, such books can be regarded as catechisms of the socially relevant behaviors of particular social classes and circles; they can also be seen as events that influence the sequence of evolving politeness (cf. Linke 1996, 72).[12] In the fifteenth

12 The history of the genre of books on decency, etiquette, mannerism, conversation and courtesy is a prescriptive history of normative rules, which have been recorded in writing (Häntzschel 1986; Beetz 1990; Montandon 1991; Döcker 1994). In this respect, they reflect social change and new patterns of behavior (cf. Elias 1984, 14; Häntzschel 1991, 200; Haferland and Paul 1996, 10). It cannot be denied that these books only describe ideal types of behavior and do not correspond to real behavior in the respective periods; these texts often present a contrast to actual society, as they cultivate their own images (cf. Linke 1996, 72–74; Linke 1988, 126–28; Jhering [1881–82] 2004, 49). However, the high number of editions and translations into different languages indicate that these standards of conduct

and sixteenth centuries, courtiers began to deviate from courtly codes of conduct and turn to the ancient humanistic ideal of virtuous behavior embodied as an art (cf. Fidancheva 2013, 39). The concept of courtoisie slowly declined and was partially replaced by that of civilité, which was particularly important in France in the seventeenth century (cf. Elias 1978, 181). *De Civilitate Morum puerilium* by Erasmus (1534) can be regarded as a courtly conduct book describing this era. While courtoisie was generally attributed to the court, civility was, above all, attributed to the emergence of the bourgeoisie. This can be understood as a two-layered counter-movement within the same society, as these two groups developed different standards of behavior and language (cf. Elias 1992, 171).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the readership of conduct books changed from courtly society in the seventeenth-century to a more class-defined approach, which addressed the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeois circles (cf. Linke 1996, 77). Courteousness became rigid rules of etiquette according to protocol, while empty formalities were replaced by empathy; in nineteenth and twentieth century conduct books, this was referred to as politeness of the heart (cf. Wenzel 1988, 119). According to Locke's ([1693] 1990) *Gedanken über Erziehung*, an openness to others is preferable. Rather than codified, contrived interaction, this form of politeness should result in genuine, sincere behavior (cf. Krumrey 1984, 1991).

In the late eighteenth century, the readership of etiquette books changed again from aristocratic and courtly bourgeois circles to a specifically bourgeois class. With the economic and political emancipation of this class, certain behaviors became an expression of self-confidence; the bourgeoisie taught themselves the etiquette of their class consequently creating an identity (cf. Fidancheva 2013, 41; Siefer 1988, 132). The virtue, equal opportunities, and moral superiority promoted by bourgeois society are reflected in Adolph Knigge's writings on the principles of human relations in *Über den Umgang mit Menschen* (1788). Politeness was now based on a

were widespread: Montandon (1991, 230) mentions 700 to 800 books available in the nineteenth century.

responsibility to act morally according to an *ethica complementoria* (cf. Jhering [1881–82] 2004, 49).

As distinctions between social classes diminished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attitudes to politeness became more socially ambivalent. The flexibility and learnability of the forms of politeness which had been created by the bourgeoisie became problematic, since politeness was understood as a form of strategic interaction rather than a protective façade (cf. Machwirth 1970, 30–31). Following Elias's line of thought, Wouters (1986, 1999) describes a process of informalization between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; this term can be compared to Elias's references to permissiveness. There is a general consensus that in certain social contexts, such as in business, a high level of politeness endures.

As this brief history of politeness has shown, this sociocultural phenomenon is closely linked to social history and differentiation in society. Hence, concepts of politeness are constantly changing; as a result, prescriptive and descriptive interpretations also change according to the historical context. The basic reconstruction of the hoop skirt fashion sequence related to the period in which the bourgeoisie emerged. During that period, this receptive class developed their own language and behavior in order to differentiate themselves from lower classes, and above all, from courtly or noble society. It could be argued that holding doors for others is an element of this unplanned process. In the following section, the two basic reconstructions of the fashion and politeness sequences will be reconstructed in a complex manner to plausibilize this argument in a causal contingent way.

Temporal and social dimensions of the emergence of a polite gesture—A complex reconstruction

The following section examines the thesis that the emergence of holding doors as a polite gesture coincides with the development of the hoop skirt. It is therefore assumed that the basic reconstructed sequences of events are intra-sequential and the complex reconstructed sequences are inter-sequential in relation to the development of the polite gesture (cf.

Aljets and Hoebel 2017, 11–13). The MPE suggests that the two sequences are reconstructed in a complex manner by outlining a temporal causal inference, in this case by interweaving the history of materiality and sociality; references to social meaning serve as the content of this intertwinement. Thus, the focus is *not* on a causal necessity, but rather on the *proximity of meaning of unlikely events*.[13] Hence, although the gesture of holding doors may have existed as a general behavior before the crinoline fashion, it was identified as polite behavior after the emergence of the crinoline. With reference to the politeness process, holding doors for others therefore emerged as a new element or event. This can be seen as a fusion rather than a turning point (cf. ibid., 16–18; Abbott 2001, 240–60), since one process provides the other with a means of reproduction.

Temporal inference processes

Changes in the meaning of gestures usually occur when there are processes of social differentiation and, above all, of demarcation, as has been shown earlier in this article. The fashion and politeness sequences are linked within the context of the emergence of the bourgeoisie. This intersection acts as the temporal concatenation of the sequences and establishes a weak or plausible temporal causation in the changed attitude towards the gesture of holding doors (cf. Aljets and Hoebel 2017, 11). The sequences are interlinked: the introduction of hoop skirts, the middle phase of crinoline mania, and the eventual disappearance of these garments. A precise period can be specified for the disappearance of the hoop skirt thus concluding the fashion sequence. This relatively short period of time can be narrowed down even further to the time of crinoline mania: from 1857–67. As described earlier, during this period, skirts became so wide that holding doors became a rational-functional act as it was simply

13 As Elias showed in relation to other gestures, such as spitting and sniffing, gestures are always subject to a change in meaning according to attitudes, among other things: »[T]he transformation of a piece of action that serves in all its details as a pattern for something else« (Goffman 1977, 98). If that action is endowed with additional meaning, in this case with politeness, it can create new contexts (cf. Haferland and Paul 1996, 34, 53–54).

impossible for women wearing them to reach a door handle. In order to provide temporal empirical evidence for this, 78 German and English conduct books published between 1800 and 1900 were examined.[14] As the question is whether holding doors for others as a polite form emerged during this time span, the phenomenon is regarded as a weak form of causality.

Two findings are central: firstly, differences could be found between the act of holding doors for higher ranking persons and for women. This gesture is only considered in the thematic context of gender (e.g., Anonymous 1859, 319). The conduct books examined do not mention the gesture in relation to higher ranking persons. This is regarded as a form of evidence for the hypothesis that the hoop skirt led to the emergence of this gesture because they were only worn by women. It should be mentioned that holding doors for others is often referred to in relation to servants (e.g., Anonymous 1870, 24; Hartley 1873, 242–44). While this could be seen to relate to differences in rank, it could be argued that holding doors for others is not a matter

14 The examined books were analyzed by means of a basic form of content analysis using the search function in the pdf files to identify the following German terms: *Tür*, *Aufhalten*, *Aufmachen*, *Vortritt*, *Vorrecht*, and the old German expressions for door, *Thur*, *Thüre*, and *Turi*. In the English publications, a search was carried out for the English translations of these terms: door, holding, hold, open, prerogatives, preferential, primacy and privilege. The books were selected according to their availability. Fortunately, an amazing plethora of conduct books are digitalized. The central sources were the internet sites archive.org; zeno.org; hathitrust.org; and the British Library Catalogue: explore.bl.uk/. Unfortunately the gutenberg.org website was inaccessible for German IP addresses for copyright reasons at the time the research was carried out. See Krumrey (1984, chap. 4 and 15) on editors, publishers and readers of conduct and etiquette books, and on the number and size of editions. Several editions with changes in approaches to holding doors could be seen as indications that this gesture was considered as a new form of politeness. Unfortunately, only the books by De Valcourt (1855, 1865), Conkling (1863, 1868) and Hartley (1860, 1873) could be found in multiple editions, but these were not published before and after crinoline mania or there were no changes concerning the issue of holding doors.

of politeness if the person doing it is being paid for carrying out this duty and it is therefore not a voluntary act.

The second finding which directly relates to the temporal dimension of the hypothesis put forward here is that in the 31 conduct books published from 1751 to 1855, there is no mention of the practice of holding doors for others. Even more significantly, in the English conduct books published in around 1855 (e.g., Wells 1857, 97; Anonymous 1859, 319; Hartley 1860, 184, 203; Conkling 1863, 131) and in the late 1800s (e.g., Bloomfield-Moore 1878, 240; Philputt 1882, 101, 122; Smiley 1889/1892, 34), the gesture of opening and holding doors is mentioned more frequently. In the German conduct books which were examined, this gesture is only mentioned at the end of the eighteenth century (e.g., Ernst 1884, 133; Calm 1894, 251–52; Kistner 1886, 62). From the beginning of the twentieth century, it is frequently mentioned in books in both languages (e.g., York 1893, 312–13; Vogt 1894, 156; Berger 1895, 65; Sandison 1895, 17; Cooke 1896, 31; Wedell 1897, 299; Schramm 1897, 30, 32; Holt 1904, 377; Pilati 1907, 29–30; Schütte 1934, 33). In American conduct books, holding doors for others, especially for women, is mostly mentioned in relation to attending church (Wells 1857, 97); it was also addressed prior to 1855 (e.g., Bayle-Mouillard 1833, 4; Hervey 1852, 116–17). No link to holding doors at church as polite behavior was found in German conduct books.[15]

In German encyclopaedias, there are earlier references to holding doors for others in relation to order of precedence (ger.: *Vortritt*).[16] However,

15 For an amusing example of how troublesome doors are and how important reflexive knowledge was in this regard, see De Valcourt (1865, 401). He refers to the reader as a »poor friend« if he thinks entering a room is a simple matter; he then goes on to describe which foot one should enter a room with if the door opens to the right or the left, as well as what one should do with one's hat and how one should observe others during this process.

16 See *Pierer's Universal-Lexikon*, 4th ed. (Altenburg: Pierer, 1864), s.v. »Vortritt«; and *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Sohn, 1801), s.v. »Der Vortritt.« At the time, the word was rarely used in standard German.

since this study is not about the privilege, but about the explicit act of opening and holding doors, and its normative role as polite behavior, these factors can be disregarded. The simple act of holding doors for others was first referred to at around the time wide hoop skirts were introduced.

Considering social strata

While the temporal intertwinement shows that the events in the fashion sequences can serve as elements reproducing the politeness process, the content of both processes has a similar social dimension and therefore has further content-related compatibilities. Firstly, both fashion and politeness—as well as the theories discussed earlier, which describe their development—refer to times when different social classes viewed each other with skepticism. Simmel and Elias respectively describe recurrent fashions and politeness processes as forms of mutual adaptation and as the distancing of two social groups: the upper and lower classes. While the upper classes developed their own fashion combinations, standards of behavior, language, and ceremonies, the lower classes strived to adopt these practices. This brings about the creation of new combinations and behavioral forms among the upper classes and leads to negotiation, rejection and differentiation between the two groups.

The second shared reference, which is closely linked to this mechanism of progress, is the negotiation of membership in the form of inclusion and exclusion (cf. Felderer and Macho 2002, 19). The mechanisms of adaptation and differentiation lead to identification with the establishment or the outsiders (Elias and Scotson 1965). Clothing, as well as language and behavior, indicates which group people belong to, so individuals from both classes negotiate their membership to particular social groups and classes, and thus also their place as individuals in society. Both groups play significant roles as they demonstrate an individual's need to dress, act, and speak differently in different groups, but also in different social contexts, such as business, family, or politics.

Fashion and politeness both have a public face. According to the theories of von Jhering ([1881–82] 2004, 7–8), in a third shared social reference, the two phenomena are connected by means of deviation. Impolite

behavior or an extravagant appearance can lead to contempt and, in extreme cases, to exclusion from a social group. This puts pressure on individuals to adapt both these forms of behavior. Unsociability and an over-individualized appearance increase contingency, perhaps even leading to the expectation of rude behavior from an individual who has a particularly eccentric appearance. Through their communitizing functions, both fashion and politeness share a prophylactic purpose. They allow for unconventional, but not harmful behavior; transgression from norms leads to exclusion and improper behavior is treated as a disturbance (cf. ibid., 10). As both fashion and polite behavior involve personal acts: an individual needs to ensure that they do not to look too similar to others or behave too differently in relation to their social group. Hence, both these phenomena also generally bind the individual to society in a way which primarily relates to the fundamental concepts of subjectivity and social self-observation (cf. Elias 1980, 351–52).

The distinctions between behavior and appearance, and between actual and simulated politeness, cast doubt on the clear differentiation between group memberships; it can be assumed that there are motives and intentions behind actions (Weinrich 1986). A permanent suspicion of motives is therefore a fourth shared reference, since behavior is oriented towards external expectations and staging (cf. Fidancheva 2013, 28–30). The unclear boundary between upper and lower class groups tends to create metastases in the dichotomy of natural being and artificial appearance, both of which distinguish themselves through deviation (cf. Kimmich and Matzat 2008, 10–12). This also applies to fashion since one can dress in a way that implies membership of a particular social group and hence become part of that group. Both fashion and politeness processes can therefore lead to skepticism and reservations as they can be viewed as calculated actions (Stäblein 1997).

To summarize the arguments for the content-related similarities between the two processes, both sequences share a temporal intertwinement and content-related dimensions. It can be concluded that the emerging bourgeoisie adopted the practice of holding doors as a polite gesture and as a behavioral expectation *during* and *after* the emergence of the hoop skirt.

The data examined does not provide conclusive evidence for a strong causal explanation. In general, it is simply too difficult to establish such a causal connection, however, what this analysis does is to offer plausibility. In this regard, it presents a case for how materiality and sociality are intertwined and how such cases can be investigated.

Holding doors for others—An example of the complex intertwinement of sociality and materiality

This article presented the practice of holding doors as a polite gesture and explored its origins. It pursued the thesis that the gesture arose from a functional need, due to very large hoop skirts, which was later coded as politeness. This was discussed using a methodology of processual explanation. In order to examine the development of the hoop skirt and politeness, first a basic reconstruction was created. This was followed by a complex reconstruction, which looked at these two sequences as temporally intertwined and as content-related processes. It became apparent that the gesture of holding doors as polite behavior appeared in conduct books during and after the period in which the widest hoop skirts were worn. It is also evident that the two processes share various references in terms of their content. The analysis offers an explanation that is plausible, but calls for further study to confirm it.

In order to establish with greater certainty that the central time of origin for the gesture of holding doors as a polite form was during the popularity of the hoop skirt, in particular at the time of crinoline mania, further sources could be analyzed, such as novels, essays, diary entries, letters, notes, and newspaper articles written at that time. Furthermore, French, Spanish and Italian etiquette books should be examined since the hoop skirt was also widespread in those countries. As this research was concerned with establishing what may have happened and is therefore about counterfactual or transformational approaches (Beatty 2017), it would be interesting to examine whether the gesture also emerged as a polite behavior

in other cultures where fashions for particularly large items of clothing can be found.[17]

As differentiation of society (Luhmann [1997] 2012) played a central role in these arguments, one could investigate the emergence of the semantics of love, which occurred during the same period of history. Due to the dissolution of social classes, the question arose as to how and which romantic partners should to be selected since this was no longer determined by social class structures (Luhmann 1994). Newly adopted gestures served as a function to reduce contingency and could be considered signs of a good male partner; women who knew how to behave in response to such rituals could also be viewed as worthy. In this regard, one final speculation can be made: the adoption of the gesture of holding doors can be regarded as a form of problem solving, since the emerging bourgeoisie had difficulties recruiting members. Guaranteed membership by birth was excluded, therefore recruitment was only possible from *below*. This created a permeable demarcation line and therefore an uncertainty about status (cf. Links 1996, 91). This new form of polite behavior may therefore have helped individuals to differentiate and emancipate themselves while at the same time stabilizing their own identities.[18]

Furthermore, the theoretical conciseness with regard to the contents of the sequences could provide information about the similarity between the phenomena of fashion and politeness. This calls for a more precise

17 In order to show a further concatenation of the sequences, other fashion objects could be analyzed as well. The creation and disappearance of white lace gloves as fashion accessories would be interesting, for example, as it can also be assumed here that women avoided touching dirty door handles in order to protect their hands. In addition, another form of hoop skirt, the tournure, could be investigated with a similar procedure to establish the extent to which these skirts contributed to the polite gesture of pushing in chairs for women. It might also be interesting to consider the question of the width and weight of doors, which would consider architecture as another material *actor*.

18 Walum (1974, 506) refers to holding doors as a gesture of »middle-class society.« For Mills (2003, 206), it is a gesture of »white, middle-class men to white, middle-class women.«

investigation of the theories of Georg Simmel and Norbert Elias from a relationist perspective (cf. Ebers 1995; Neckel 1997; Häußling 2010; Waizbort 2013). However, the theoretical aim of this research is primarily based on the factual dimension: This paper implicitly represents an attempt to formulate an example of the influence of objects on the emergence of (politeness) norms and expectations par excellence. The relationship between sociality and materiality has been explored in many ways in recent decades (see for example Samira et al. 2014; Kalthoff et al. 2016). The case examined here suggests an actor-network perspective since the hoop skirt can be viewed as an actor that intervenes in the social sphere. In his studies on the Berlin key (1996) and the Italian hoteliers' key (1991), Latour showed, for example, that objects have translation capacities as well as the ability to act and to structure social expectations. One criticism of Latour is that he does not consistently follow the symmetry he suggests, and that the programs of action are still put into practice by actors. This research could be seen as a case that meets this criteria, as the hoop skirt establishes its own program of action and translation capacities towards differentiation of society. It is a contingent moment because the material and social aspects are symmetrical, i.e., they enter into a relationship which is unpredictable, hence introducing expectations to the act of entering a building or a room. Social change cannot therefore be explained by non-societal causes, but rather by man-made artifacts that affect society in a way that could not have been foreseen (Hahn 2015). It is the result of reciprocal processual relations between a network of humans and objects, a practice in which things »borrow their steel-like quality from a fragile society« (Latour 1986/90, 266; my translation).

The question of how expectation structures are formed and stabilized in a complex historical setting is closely connected to this. If current expectations are related to the constellations in which they arise, this can shed light on how such structures change, as well as on the variations that can develop, and the limitations and exaggerations which they are subject to. With regard to this topic, closer links between historical and social science research are not only desirable, but would be invaluable. Research on politeness is significant since it allows for interdisciplinary cooperation

between historians, sociologists, literary and communication studies scholars, and other disciplines in equal measure (Boothe 2007).[19]

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Global historical sociology and *connected* gender sociologies

On the colonial legacy and (re)nationalization of gender

Heidemarie Winkel

At first glance, the relevance of historical sociology for gender sociology is evident; the temporal and spatial confinement of gender relations is a basic gender-theoretical concern (Fraisse 1995). But while the relation between social theory—that is, the analysis of causal agents and mechanisms (Calhoun 1998; Mahoney 2004)—and historical perspectives has been deepened since the 1970s and resulted in a renewal of historical sociology in the US,[1] »the ›engagement‹ of feminism and historical sociology has been marked by neither romance nor passion« (Adams 1997, 5). Gender sociology has primarily aimed at placing gender as an analytical category in the mainstream of social theory (Smith 1989; Brück et al. 1992; Wharton 2005; Gildemeister and Hericks 2012). Accordingly, gender sociologists have focused on varying social mechanisms that contribute to the reproduction of gender as a central category of social inequality and power asymmetry in different fields of social life like labor, politics or education; for example, on the micro-level of gendered practices, on the meso-level of gendered organizations, or on the macro-level of gendered structures, institutions, and discourse constellations. The (comparative) reconstruction of gender-historical developments as—institutionally and socio-culturally—sequential processes, or as historical

1 This new historical sociology ranges from comparative approaches and theories of social change to new institutionalism, network analysis, and culture-theoretical approaches. Although classical historical sociology had developed in Germany, there is no corresponding research program today (Mikl-Horke 1994; Spohn 1996, 1998, 2000; Schützeichel 2004, 2013).

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figurations and their causal mechanisms, is not a major research agenda in gender sociology, neither in the US nor in Germany. As a result, the relevance of gender in colonial history—which I consider pivotal for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary societies, particularly in times of global migration—is relegated to a back seat.

This lack of interest in historical approaches in gender sociology is reflected by the way current political controversies about gender in European societies are discussed in terms of theory. These controversies are characterized by fierce opposition to various gender-political agendas, for example, gender equality policies such as gender mainstreaming, or queer sexual politics (Kováts and Põim 2015; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tuczu, and Winkel 2018). In Germany, the public debate has been shifting in a new direction particularly since 2014.[2] At that time the Dresden-based populist movement *Pegida*[3] started its anti-Islamic protest against asylum policies; right from the beginning, gender and sexuality were cornerstones of othering migrants and asylum seekers.[4] This is also evidenced by debates ranging from the securitization of migration (Lazaridis and Wadia 2015) to »Arab men's sexuality.«[5] What surprises many gender researchers

2 Juliane Lang and Ulrich Peters (2018, 13–15), Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa (2015), and Imcke Schmincke (2018) date a first wave of the new anti-feminism in 2006, when gender politics were increasingly discussed in various German print and online media, including right-wing forums, and in the growing anti-feminist men's movement, the so-called masculinists (Gesterkamp 2010; Rosenbrock 2012; Kemper 2011; 2012; Claus 2014).

3 Pegida is an acronym for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) (Heim 2017).

4 This is expressed in the assertion of a categorical »cultural incommensurability« of gender beliefs that is based on a supposed contrast between »the liberal-emancipatory bourgeois gender model« on the one hand and »migrants' questionable gender beliefs« on the other, for instance in terms of human rights (Rumpf, Gerhard, and Jansen 2003; Winkel 2017a).

5 A controversial debate about »Arab sexism« and »sexually aggressive Muslim men« arose after the incidents in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015. The contrasting contributions of Kira Kosnick (2016), who identified culturally

about this new wave of anti-feminism, is less the intersection of sexism and racism. This seems to be a »known feature« whose mechanisms were, for instance, discussed in the »headscarf debates« in France and Germany in the early 2000s (Weber 2004; Delmas 2006; Amir Moazami 2007; Amiraux 2016; Korteweg and Yurdakul 2016). It is rather the vehemence with which anti-feminism is directed against gender politics in general and gender studies in particular that has shaken the interdisciplinary research field (Frey et al. 2013; Hark and Villa 2015; Bauschke-Urban et al. 2016; Dreier, Schmincke, and Wolff 2017). It seems that not only the societal consensus about gender equality as a legal standard (expressed in the notion of gender mainstreaming) and about sexual diversity as a human rights norm have been dismissed by positions claiming themselves »critical of genderism,«[6] but the field of gender studies itself is discredited. In the program of the extreme right-wing party *Alternative for Deutschland* (AfD), gender studies are identified as a central representative of »the gender ideology« (AfD 2017, 41) that is accused of being »unconstitutional, as it »marginalizes the natural differences between the sexes« (AfD 2017, 40).[7]

Historically, this anti-genderism is the latest socio-historical expression of several waves of anti-feminism since the nineteenth century, not only in Germany, but also in other European contexts. Like their predecessors, the new anti-feminists mount their argumentation on the assumed naturalness of the gender order based on two allegedly incommensurable sexes.[8] And like nineteenth-century anti-feminism, anti-genderism is strongly intertwined with extreme right-wing, nationalist ideologies (Decker et al. 2010;

racist positions in the Germany-wide media debate, and Susanne Schröter (2016), who demanded that gender norms legitimating violence be named, are characteristic examples.

6 This term is used on the anti-feminist website WikiMANNia, whose style is polemic, not popular scientific.

7 Translated from German into English by the author.

8 However, studies in genetics and developmental biology demonstrate that bodily structures are anatomically and physiologically flexible (e.g., neuronal plasticity), formed by an interplay between active use, societal influence, and genetically based processes (Palm 2016).

Zick et al. 2011) and with racist worldviews (Planert 1996, 1998, 2010; Bruns 2003). In the background of these political shifts are the socioeconomic ruptures that have become visible particularly since the finance and banking crises of 2008/2009 (Crouch 2011; Kurz-Scherf and Scheele 2012). Although neo-liberal capitalism is a primary cause for the (global) consolidation of sociopolitical and economic inequalities, the language in which criticism develops is largely nationalist, right-wing extremist, and populist; it includes not only opposition against gender equality and diversity politics, but also turns against migrants, and unfolds in the form of the normalization of racist identity politics and the »protection« of borders, families, and the nation (Wodak 2016; Grigat 2017; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tuczu, and Winkel 2018).

The socio-historical parallel to nineteenth-century nationalism and crises debates in the German Empire is remarkable; around 1900, »the gender and women's question« was considered to be a »central cultural problem« of its time (Lichtblau 1996, 281). This was embedded in pessimistic discourses about the »fragility« of national-cultural identity and women's symbolic relevance for the nation's consolidation (Koselleck 1959; Yuval-Davis 1997), which resulted from the political revolutions and from the large-scale economic, political, and social changes in the course of industrialization. The relevance of »the women's question« was also reflected in debates about »the colonial question« and the way colonialists approached gender issues in the colonies (Dietrich 2007); it was characterized by a categorical differentiation between colonized and *white*,[9] European women. Accordingly, the classification of the colonized in terms of race became »a necessary condition« of the bourgeois gender order; overall, this order is part of a colonial gender system (Lugones 2007, 202). In the further course of history, gender-centered notions of nationhood were reproduced and recoded in Nazi Germany in terms of its fascist ideology (Koonz 1991; Räthzel 1995). After the Nazi dictatorship had been defeated, a new wave of nationalism and racism burgeoned in

9 The term *white* is italicized throughout the text; it does not denote a color, but the power asymmetry that privileges *white* persons in relation to *non-whites* (Dietze 2010).

the early 1980s. Xenophobia increased, primarily due to the growing number of migrants in Western industrial countries; in Germany, »constructions of the German nation and of ›*Ausländer*‹ (foreigners) were reformulated« (Räthzel 1995, 161–62). In this regard »gender was inserted into national discourse« (Räthzel 1994, 81) as a medium that allows for the assertion of cultural differences between »us« and »them« as an own type of racism (Hall 1994). After Germany's so-called reunification, a new, European nationalism emerged in the early 1990s (Brah 1993) in which women's symbolic role once more became central (Lutz, Phoenix, and Yuval-Davis 1995; Hobsbawm 1991, 1994; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). The symbolic relevance of gender was taken up again in the »headscarf debates« in the early 2000s; this was also the time when the NSU terror spread.[10]

Against this backdrop, it is plausible that current gender-sociological analysis prioritizes a post-structuralist, discursive diagnosis of the times within the boundaries of European nation states (e.g., Hark and Villa 2015, 2017). But it is noteworthy that neither is the intersection of nationalism, sexism and racism examined as a continuous process throughout the twentieth century, nor are gender-*historical* approaches (systematically) consulted in the analysis of anti-genderism, with rare exceptions, such as Ute Planert's study on anti-feminism in the German Empire (Planert 1998). Likewise, historical or postcolonial studies about the relevance of the bourgeois gender order for colonization and imperialism are not (re)considered (Schiebinger 1993; McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Pratt 2008).[11] I assume that this lack of interest in historical development paths reflects the »status« of post- and decolonial theories in gender

10 NSU is an acronym for *Nationalist Socialist Underground*. It is a group of Neo-Nazis that is responsible for the murder of nine immigrants of Turkish, Greek and Kurdish descent between 2000 and 2006 (Schmincke and Siri 2013).

11 The relevance of intersectionality itself has been discussed widely, but mainly against the backdrop of migration in European societies (Gümen 2001; Davis 2008; Winker and Degele 2009; Lutz, Herrera Vivar, and Supik 2011).

sociology. Postcolonialism has developed as a theoretical formation of critique since the 1950s and 1960s and became prominent in Germany in the 1990s as a research stream within *transdisciplinary gender studies* (Kerner 2009, 2012). But just like mainstream sociology, gender sociology in Germany has not engaged with postcolonial thinking in a differentiated manner.[12] Against this backdrop, I suppose that gender sociology is losing track of the colonial shape of nation(alism) and its intersection with gender; the same applies to post- and decolonial approaches that aim to uncover the continuity of colonial knowledge and meaning structures as a specific mode of power asymmetry in the present. Colonial patterns are not only entrenched in the socio-historical constitution of European societies' and their self-conceptions, but also in the way this has been studied and reflected in sociological thinking (Go 2013, 2016). Accordingly, I understand anti-genderists' stance as an indicator of European societies' and sociology's colonial legacy; it is a result of the consistent (re)nationalization of gender throughout the twentieth century, rooted in nineteenth-century nationalism and colonialism. This anti-genderism affects *white* women and women of color alike, albeit in very different ways; but first and foremost, anti-genderism involves *white* women *against* women of color: the heteronormative agenda turns against equality and sexual diversity politics *and* women of color. This insight can be strengthened by a systematic consideration of *global* historical sociology and its current further development toward postcolonial sociology (Boatcă, Costa and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; Bhambra 2014; Go 2013, 2016; Go and Lawson 2017).

Hence, the aim of this contribution is not to analyze the anti-genderist attacks and polemics in detail, but to take anti-genderism, and the legacy of nationalism and colonialism, as a starting point to discuss the impact of historical sociology's recent shift toward post- and decolonial approaches

12 This holds true despite the works of Reuter and Karentzos (2012), Boatcă, Costa, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2010), Go (2013), and Bhambra (2014), which have no specific gender focus. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez's (1996, 1999) and Manuela Boatcă's writings (Boatcă 2015; Boatcă and Roth 2016) are exceptions.

in gender sociology. My observation that historical approaches seem to be of only minor interest in gender sociology leads to two working assumptions: first, although gender history has always played a decisive role in understanding the social constitution of the bourgeois gender order in the transition process to the modern era, gender sociology's relation to (global) historical sociology can be characterized as a loose coupling. This has caused a blind spot regarding gender sociology's own imperial standpoint in the system of knowledge production and its enmeshment with colonial epistemic legacies (Go 2016, 8f.). Against this backdrop, anti-genderism comes into view as signifier of a critical juncture in the developmental paths[13] of current Western, European societies that—once again—are »reinventing« themselves with recourse to nationalism, racism, and related (colonial) gender ideologies. This leads to the second working assumption: taking the socio-historical legacy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century struggles about (anti-)feminism, nationalism, racism, and colonialism into consideration will shed a different light on current controversies only if this is embedded in an approach that takes connected, entangled colonial histories (Randeria 1999; Bhambra 2007, 2014) and decolonial thinking systematically into account (Go 2013; Connell 2014, 2018). A global, decolonial historical approach reveals the legacy of colonial knowledge structures in the present and how they are based on nationalism and gender as well as related epistemes of difference and hierarchization (Mignolo 2002).

This is not meant as a fundamental critique of poststructuralist approaches and diagnoses of the time; it is rather an indication that mirrors the sociopolitical pressure, the cultural hegemony, and the enduring legacy under which gender researchers can unfold their research agendas.[14] As

13 The notion of the critical juncture in developmental paths is discussed by Thelen and Steinmo (1992) and Katznelson (1997).

14 The political vehemence with which anti-feminism is directed against gender research (and politics) nourishes a situation in which gender studies have long been part of a gender dispositive and have become absorbed by the dispositive's discursive powers, which gender studies actually aim to deconstruct. The notion of the dispositive is borrowed from Foucault (1978).

in the debates at the turn of the nineteenth century and in the second half of the twentieth century, gender takes center stage in contemporary controversies as a core element of a worldview according to which gendered national societies continue to be a fundamental institutional frame of the social order. In this regard, the agenda-setting that anti-genderist discourses pursue unfolds in the national(ist) domain of *white*, colonial knowledge production. On the surface, the focus of attention is on »the natural order« and on liberal rights, but at the core is a *white* nationalist, heteronormative and racialized gender code. In this regard *white/ness* denotes the power asymmetry that privileges *white* persons, veils their claim to superiority, and accordingly subordinates *non-whites* (Dietze 2010). Consequently, this contribution aims to reflect the extent to which gender sociology is built on a colonial body of *white* gender knowledge. The central question is how a global historical sociology approach can enable gender sociology to decolonize its knowledge reservoir and to decode the permanent (re)nationalization of gender as a *white* nationalist and colonial legacy throughout modern social history. This includes the conviction that knowledge production is always socially situated and that there is no universality, but a social reality of multiple cognitive models and epistemic possibilities. Finally, a deeper understanding of the present hostility to gender studies and gender politics can be achieved if gender sociology broadens its theoretical, epistemological, and empirical scope concerning the colonial legacy of the *white* nationalist gender code in the direction of entangled, *connected* sociologies (Randeria 1999; Conrad and Randeria 2002; Bhambra 2014; Patel 2006, 2014, 2015). This is based on the assumption that the anti-genderist agenda is not primarily based on the renaturalization of sex, for example due to its focus on reproductive rights, but rather on the renationalization of gender. This will be discussed exploratively in the following steps: First, I will sketch historical sociology's marginal role for gender sociology in contrast to the relevance of gender history; in this regard, I will also reflect on the extent to which colonial histories have been of secondary analytical relevance in gender sociology up to now. In a second step, I will discuss how far gender sociology developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that continues to nourish the colonial legacy of gender until

today. Third, I will touch on the question how a global, decolonial historical sociology of gender makes the continuation of colonial epistemologies in present-day societies visible and to what extent this furthers a deeper understanding of the current (re)nationalization of gender. All in all, this contribution aims at providing a broader understanding of how global historical sociology matters for gender sociology.

Historical sociology and gender sociology: Loose coupling and the nationalist gender code

Until today, gender sociology has benefited tremendously from gender history's contribution to the analysis of structural transitions and the recoding of gender beliefs in the modern era as a social process of women's political and economic exclusion in European nation states. Gender historians illustrated how the social positioning of women in the private sphere developed and how the semantics of the »natural division of labor« was legitimated by the notion of two categorically different sexes (Laqueur 1992), the tropes about women's distinct character (Hausen 1976), and the impropriety of female labor (Scott 1994).[15] While women were assigned to unpaid reproduction work and legally confined by the marriage contract (Gerhard 2005), the private sphere of the family was politically revalued as an integral element of the nation (Planert 2000). Gender historians paved the way for a substantial understanding of how the gender contract based on the differentiation between the private and the political sphere was institutionalized (Pateman 1988) and how it was reasoned by concepts such as traditional domesticity, intimacy, and »work out of love« (Bock and Duden 1977), as if this had been the »traditionally« legitimated order of life that had always existed (Winkel 2017b). These gender-historical insights are basic pillars of macro-sociological accounts, for example of knowledge-based studies on the differentiation of the heteronormative, bourgeois gender order. Claudia Honegger's analysis (1991) of the shifting of anthropological knowledge in the late eighteenth

15 For further studies on nineteenth-century transformations see Ute Gerhard (1978, 1990, 2005), Ute Frevert (1986 and 1995), Rebekka Habermas (1992), or Gisela Bock (2000).

and nineteenth century is a paradigmatic example, as are Michel Foucault's studies (1978, 1983) on the growing interest in sexuality as an object of knowledge production and social control or Sabine Hark's reconstruction (1996) of lesbian subjectivity as a social product of specific forms of seeing, knowing, and experiencing the world around 1900.

Despite the importance of gender history for gender sociology, the latter has never developed an intimate theoretical relationship with historical sociology. This also holds true for general sociology in Germany, although it was the birthplace of classical historical sociology. In contrast to the US, where a new historical sociology had developed since the 1970s, historical sociology emerged only slowly in Germany; accordingly, a common theoretical program is lacking (Mikl-Horke 1994; Spohn 2000; Schützeichel 2013). Following Theda Skocpol's reconstruction (1984) of historical sociology in the US, three approaches are usually differentiated (Spohn 2000; Schützeichel 2013): first, model-theoretical approaches such as Charles Tilly's studies (1978, 1984, 1993, 1994, 1996) on state formation and democratization, and second, causally determined, comparative analyses, for example the study by Rueschemeyer, Huber-Stephens, and Stephens (1992) on varying political modernization paths (including fascism) or Theda Skocpol's (1992) historical-sequential analysis of state-formation processes that focus on political institutions or labor markets and welfare systems, including gendered welfare policies. The third approach includes interpretive historical analyses, which have been strongly influenced by neo-institutionalism and cultural studies, such as Shmuel Eisenstadt's multiple modernities perspective (2000, 2006a, 2006b) or Anthony Smith's (1986) prominent study on the ethnic origin of nations; it examines developmental paths of ethno-national *Gemeinschaft* within nation states. Post- and decolonial perspectives have been »added on« to these three approaches for roughly the past decade (Bhambra 2007, 2014; Boatcă, Costa, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; Go 2013, 2017).[16]

Gender relations have primarily been studied in causally determined approaches of historical sociology; for example, the gendering of welfare

16 I thank the reviewers who encouraged me to point this out.

systems. A main focus within this research field is the making of North American and European welfare systems, maternity, and labor politics.[17] This is embedded in analyses of the rise of capitalism and the nation state as a typical macro-feature of historical sociology. These studies demonstrate that gender indeed is important for understanding the origins and the development of institutional arrangements in national welfare systems, for example, when women are not (only) addressed as workers, but as potential mothers (Skocpol 1992; Skocpol and Ritter 1991). But this did not lead into a distinct historical sociology of gender, although a number of highly influential works has been published since the 1990s in this field.[18] In general, historical sociology has been gender-blind until today, while gender sociology has never experienced a historical turn, particularly in Germany—not to mention on a global scale, except for rare examples.[19] In the last three decades, gender sociology has predominantly been structured by the micro turn and the poststructuralist turn, but historical sociologists doubt that social transformation can be approached as a set of discursive arenas only. According to Julia Adams (1997, 4), »feminist methodologies—from the discourse theoretic to standpoint variants—are too narrow to grasp the sorts of social and cultural transformations that interest historical sociologists.« Adams suggests that large-scale socio-historical processes could be broken down into narrative elements and reassembled in analytical sequences, but this would also require a historical contextualization and—what is equally

17 With the exception of Mounira Charrad (2001), who focuses on the MENA region.

18 For example, Jane Lewis (1980, 1991), Theda Skocpol (1992), Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (1990, 1993), Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (1991), as well as Gisela Bock and Susan James (1992), or Ann Shola Orloff (1993); cf. O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver (1999) and Julia Adams (2005); cf. Clemens, Adams, and Orloff (2005), Adams and Charrad (2015).

19 Cf., for example, Nitza Berkovitch (2001) or Bettina Heintz and Annette Schnabel (2006).

important to her—»an analysis of bounded institutional sites and system-specific institutional mechanisms« (ibid.).

But gender sociology does not only differ from historical sociology in terms of the latter's systematic interest in the origin of institutional settings and their transformation. In the past two decades, historical sociology has also broadened its scope of interest increasingly in a global direction, while gender sociology, for example in Germany, seems to be strengthening its focus on Western, European contexts, particularly with regard to the neoliberal regime change of the last decade.[20] Since 2008–9, the effects of the global financial and economic crises on national welfare and labor market policies, particularly austerity politics and neoliberal labor regimes, have taken center stage in gender-sociological analysis (Aulenbacher, Riegraf, and Theobald 2014; Walby 2015; Aulenbacher, Riegraf, and Völker 2015). The hegemony of global economic regimes has, of course, not been neglected, but the hegemony of »the global North« is primarily envisioned as a discursive phenomenon in global capitalism. As a result, one of the challenges that gender sociologists are currently focusing on is the renewal of the structural dependency between reproductive work (now conceptualized as care work) and labor as a main line of inequality in Western, European nation states. This is indeed the place where heteronormative gender-political agendas are consistently being reinstitutionalized, e.g. in the form of welfare and family policies. But accordingly, there is a priority for the analysis of institutional settings and cultural persistence in specific state formations without a systematic historical sociological agenda.

In comparison, the relevance of global institutional settings and developments, for example of equality rights (Heintz and Schnabel 2006) or of global care chains and transnational female migration, are not neglected (Lutz 2009, 2011; Kerner 2009). But these discussions also reveal once more the relevance of national institutional parameters: The empirical reality of global care chains, for example, does not undermine the gendering of institutional frameworks in national labor, family, and

20 Raewyn Connell (2010, 2011) is an exception.

welfare policies—or in national migration policies. The same holds true for the supranational level of the European Union. The cases in which European national governments avoid or subvert European regulations are generally increasing; gender mainstreaming is a striking example (O'Connor 2014).[21] As a result, both the global and the supranational level mirror the continuing relevance of national policy frames. Overall, although gender has been discursively weakened in its function as a universal category of belonging and social positioning in the last decades of the twentieth century, and although it is highly disputed and negotiated on the micro-level, which has even led to a shift of the symbolic order, as Tomke König (2012) has argued, gender seems to be experiencing a renaissance as an institutionally »well-embedded« category of social difference and inequality in the framework of the nation-state.

As a consequence of this situation, a particular gender-historical insight fades into the background. For nearly three decades, gender historians have shown that the bourgeois gender order in Western, European societies is not only constituted on the principle of sexual difference and the denigration of homosexuality, but rather on racialized difference in relation to the colonial Other, who is categorized as »oppressed and requiring liberation« (McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Schiebinger 1993). Consequently, the bourgeois gender order has to be seen as a threefold hegemonic project, not only in terms of the hetero-normative gender matrix which ensured women's position in the domestic sphere within the heterosexual marriage contract (Gerhard 2005), while homosexual love was pathologized as deviant (Hark 1996). The bourgeois gender order also signifies the continuing existence of a *white,* colonial body of gender knowledge (Winkel 2018a, 2018b). In the societal, but also in the (gender-)sociological consciousness, this equally important third pillar of the national, bourgeois-capitalist society stayed on the sidelines, but is now very visible in the extremist nationalist debates. The way gender is disputed by anti-genderists signifies its continuing relevance as

21 The unsuccessful endeavor to govern migration is another example, not just since 2015 (Lesińska 2014).

a cornerstone of the nationalist agenda[22] throughout the second half of the twentieth century; or in other words: it signifies the (re)nationalization of gender and its *white*, colonial legacy in view of growing globalization and migration. Gender never lost its relevance as a colonial, nationalist code throughout social history. How gender sociology developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that nourishes the coloniality of gender will be deepened below.

Gender sociology and the coloniality of gender

In the 1990s, a paradigm shift toward the inclusion of further axes of social differentiation besides gender, such as ethnicity and national belonging or class, was put into effect in gender sociology (Gümen 2001). In parallel, women of color, and here particularly Afro-German women, had started to discuss racism (and anti-Semitism) in the public realm as well as in women's and gender studies (Mamozai 1982; Hügel et al. 1993; Gümen 1996; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1996; Oguntoye 1997; Ayim 1997).[23] While »classical women's sociology« had focused on the gender binary only—with the effect of its methodological reification, as Regine Gildemeister and Angelika Wetterer summarized the situation in 1992—the conceptualization of women as one homogenous category (in contrast to men) was now criticized as ignorant regarding inequalities and (structural as well as institutional) racism *among* women. This criticism furthered a conceptual pluralization of gender as a sociological category of analysis, which has been expressed in the notion of intersectionality. Intersectionality

22 This insight is inspired by Michiko Mae (2014) who describes this as the nexus of nation, culture, and gender from a cultural studies perspective, taking the shifting of gender relations in Japan as empirical example.

23 A list of more than 70 publications (both academic and political) on »Early Debates on Racism and Anti-Semitism in the (Women's and) Lesbian Movement in West Germany in the 1980s, collected by Christiane Leidinger (2010) for the history brochure 2 of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (edited by Marcel Bois and Bernd Hüttner) is published on the website of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; accessed Nov. 20, 2018, https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/3860/fruehe-debatten-um-rassismus-und-antisemitismus-in-der-frauen-und-lesbenbewegung-in-den-1980er-ja/.

has predominantly been analyzed as the entanglement of multiple oppressions on the level of the individual. But the concept also denotes that women do not constitute a homogenous category and that *white* women are part of racism (Davis 1981; Hill Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991; Barkley Brown 1992). As a result, the structural inequality between *white* and *non-white* women slipped from (analytical) attention; in other words: *white* women's share in structural, institutional, or everyday discrimination has been made theoretically invisible. Instead, *white* women are considered to represent the norm(ality).

This is a core element of critical whiteness theory, where *whiteness* is understood as a hegemonic position in a power relation in which being *white* is usually un-thematized, while *non-whiteness* is problematized (Dietze 2010, 222). This is reflected in the way »the German Nation« and nationalism were reconstructed in the early 1980s (Räthzel 1995, 169). As Nora Räthzel points out, this is expressed in terms of a »threshold of tolerance« or of »fear of *Ausländer*« as a »natural reaction« (Räthzel 1995, 175–76). Sociopolitical conflicts such as unemployment, housing, schooling, or social order are discussed »in connection with ›*Ausländer*‹, namely as a »conflict between the ›internal‹ and the ›external‹« and as a question of loyalty to the nation (Räthzel 1995, 177). This New Racism finds multiple expressions all over Europe within discourses of the New Right, for example as anti-Jewish, anti-Turkish, or as anti-Muslim sentiment in the 1990s. A characteristic feature of racism is the reference to cultural difference as a means of symbolic boundary making. Furthermore, »racism is always (.) gendered« (Brah 1993, 12). Typically, men and women from racialized groups are differentiated from »the nation« and its gender order. I argue that these patterns follow a colonial matrix that can be retraced to colonialism (Dietrich 2007). According to Avtar Brah (1993, 17), these cultural inscriptions follow a particular political economy: they »develop against a background of economic restructuring such as high levels of unemployment« or austerity politics, namely in the name of a free-market philosophy that is combined with social authoritarianism centered on the nation, presumed dangers of cultural decline, and so-called gender values. This allows for both: the denigration of »foreigners' gender

views« as well as of feminism, where necessary. Anti-genderism is a telling example in this regard that mirrors the socio-historical continuation of nationalism, racism, and related gender ideologies in its own way.

What does this mean for gender sociology? It points to the necessity to reconsider how far the socio-cultural construction of gender as a category of knowledge and meaning has been (re)produced as a *white*, asymmetric cognitive frame of explanation, so that its ongoing relevance as part of the nationalist code was relegated to the backstage until the anti-genderists put it in center stage. This also means reconsidering how gender was (whether unintentionally or not) reproduced as a *white* colonial knowledge category based on a matrix of multifold intersecting differences. This includes, first, bringing to mind the relevance of »the gender question« for colonialism and *white* women's participation in this regard. Second, it means considering colonial continuities on the epistemic level, that is, on the level of our ways of knowing and experiencing the world, for example in gender-sociological terms. Before I discuss the issue of decolonization (gender) sociology more deeply, I will sketch in an excursus why gender and ethnicity are two cognitive cornerstones within the institutional frame of the nation-state that finally furthers the status of gender as a *white* and colonial analytical category. This will be done from a historical institutionalism perspective.

Excursus: Gender and ethnic differentiation as interpretive cornerstones of the nation state

Like gender, ethnicity's legitimacy as a category of belonging and differentiation is not only a result of its naturalization in the »inventive« natural sciences (Schiebinger 1993, 2004; Tucker 1996). Its relevance also burgeoned against the backdrop of the emerging nation states in the nineteenth century as the new, primary institutional—that is: cognitive and interpretive—frame of conceiving the world in the transition to »modernity« (Müller 2012). Ethnic community formation—or *Vergemeinschaftung* as Max Weber denoted it—based on symbolic boundary making is a pivotal social mechanism of nation building up to now. In this regard, ethnicity and gender are two vital cultural frames of interpretation within which

European nations define and distinguish themselves from »the rest« of the world (Hall 1994). In postcolonial theory this pattern of binary differentiation of social objects has been described as a colonial episteme of difference based on an antithetical typification of social groups in terms of »we« and »the others« (Anzaldúa 1987).

Gender and ethnicity can be understood from the new historical institutionalism perspective as two central institutional pillars in the cognitive conceptualization of »the nation« that allow for an ongoing antithetical typification and boundary making in socio-historical processes. The idea of the nation embodies »shared cultural understandings (›shared cognitions,‹ ›interpretive frames‹) of the way the world works« (Thelen 1999, 386). This is differentiated by ethnicity and gender as the two central cognitive frames. They endure dramatic changes, for example, revolutions, social protest, and a change of institutional scripts. As Kathleen Thelen (ibid.) explains »specific organizations come and go, but emergent institutional forms will be ›isomorphic‹ with (i.e. […] similar in logic to) existing ones because political actors extract causal designations from the world around them and these cause-and-effect understandings inform their approaches to new problems.« Namely even when institutionally based rules are revised and a change of the institutional script is initiated, like in the case of *marriage for all* (for homo- and heterosexuals alike) which was established by law in Germany in 2017. As Thelen argues, new scripts are nevertheless »similar in logic to« the central cognitive pattern of the institutional core—here the binary gender code. *Marriage for all* seems to signify a paradigm shift at first glance—or in Thelen's terminology: it marks a change in the institutional script that seems to cut across the binary model's institutional core. But it is the strong emphasis on cognition in the new sociological institutionalism that explains why the binary pattern persists over time—despite the change of institutional scripts (Thelen 1999, 387). This is mirrored in the public sociopolitical conflicts about the institutional change in marriage law. The reason for institutional persistence is—according to Thelen—that the public conflicts do not undermine, but rather mirror the unabated relevance of central cognitive patterns of interpreting and understanding

the world. Accordingly, I argue that the conflicts confirm the basic cognitive status of gender—as the conflicts about asylum law in Germany confirm the basic cognitive status of ethnicity as a second central interpretive frame of the nation's social coherence—in the logic of anti-genderists. How the relevance of gender as a cognitive, epistemic pillar of the nation can be traced to colonialism will be sketched in the following step.

Gender as the *white* interpretive frame of the nation

For a long time, colonialism has been understood as a purely male history of conquest (Dietrich 2007, 8). Women's participation in colonialism was thus a marginal issue in academia until the 2000s; colonial mission has partly even been understood as an emancipatory project, for example in mission studies (Nyhagen Predelli and Miller 1999; Walgenbach 2005; Dietrich 2007, 16–17.). In gender sociology, the primary focus of interest was on women's loss of political rights in the aftermath of the French Revolution as well as on the sexual division of labor, the question to what extent women were able to make up for modernization in the second half of the twentieth century and to realize equality on the labor market as well as at home.[24] As a result, the relevance of gender as a core element of »cultural imperialism« (Planert 2007, 197) in the colonial politics of the German Empire, and later in German fascism, had not been acknowledged for a long time. In this regard it has also been underestimated that women profited from *white* superiority in the colonies, and that they had actively participated in maintaining the *white* order, whether in the colonies or »at home.« Around 1900, »the women's question« was a constitutive pillar of the national order (Planert 2000, 2005).

As part of the differentiation of industrial-capitalist societies, gender had experienced a cultural recoding (Honegger 1991), namely in the framework of nineteenth-century nation building. This was embedded in a literary and political discourse about »modernity« in Germany. It was

24 This interest unfolded into a huge research field; see, for example, Birgit Geissler and Mechthild Oechsle (1996, 1998).

characterized by strong cultural pessimism, described by Reinhard Koselleck (1959) as the pathogenesis of the bourgeois world. The cultural pessimism was directed toward the antinomies of societal development at large; this included the issue of national-cultural identity. Against the backdrop of the political revolutions and the massive socioeconomic changes, social transformation was fundamentally perceived as crisis. In this regard, no egalitarian, emancipatory vision of women's participation was developed, but the »binary gender philosophy« became a cornerstone in normative theories about the modernization of societies (Lichtblau 1996, 282).[25] The women's question was considered to be a cultural essential of the nationalist project (Lichtblau 1996, 281; Planert 2007, 193). This included women's responsibility not only for the biological reproduction of the nation, but also for its cultural and moral order. This nation-culture-gender nexus (Mae 2014) is mirrored in colonialism. The colonies functioned as a negative foil for the ideal of the *white*, bourgeois gender order in Europe (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1988; Spivak 1990; Stoler 1995). Consequently, colonization was directed toward the control of *non-white* gender arrangements in the colonies (McClintock 1995). This included, for example, the enforcement of notions of orderliness in terms of domesticity and marriage as a central tool of colonial rule; the *white* gender order was a central facet of nationalist hegemony. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (2002) demonstrate, for example, how gender was implemented as a cognitive frame based on bourgeois ideas of sexuality, femininity, and domesticity in the south of Africa (today Botswana). They not only show how bourgeois gender ideals were enforced by means of physical and epistemic violence; they also demonstrate how the transformation of the social order in Europe was mobilized by notions held by social reformers who painted »Africa« as a wasteland without history or mores (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 251–52).

25 In contrast, the *Querelles des Femmes et des Sexes* that had developed in the fifteenth century were openly controversial about the question »what or how women and men are, ought to be, can be« (Bock 2000, 13; cf. Bock and Zimmermann 1997).

In this regard, the bourgeois, heteronormative gender regime functioned as a colonial interpretative frame; racialized bodies were denied the »normativities« addressed to and the »protections« granted to *white* women, for example in the case of sexual violence (Patil 2017, 144). In accordance with María Lugones (2007), Vrashuli Patil emphasizes that the gender system enforced by colonists was different from the *white* one. She denotes this as a dual gender framework according to which »only *bourgeois white* Europeans were gendered, and so civilized and fully human, while »the enslaved and colonized were judged as excessively sexual and improperly gendered« (Patil 2017, 144). The trope of *non-white* women's »sexual and bodily deviance« was a topic of wide discussions. In this way, the dual framework strongly contributed to the *white*, bourgeois (gender) order. It was effective in stylizing one's own image in contrast to »the other«; women in the German Empire, for example, constituted themselves as superior bourgeois subjects in the frame of the »colonial question« (Dietrich 2007, 17). Women viewed their national commitment, whether in the context of colonial societies or in the colonies, as an opportunity to save »the white German culture, the white masculinity and the white identity in the colonies« (Dietrich 2007, 247). All in all, women in the German Empire placed themselves in a hegemonic position, and gender was a fundamental element of the *white* interpretive frame of the nation within the binary social order. This episteme of gendered colonial difference continues until today, including in academia (Sousa Santos 2012; Mignolo 2007, 2012). This will be briefly outlined against the background of developments in gender research since the 1980s.

The continuity of colonial interpretation frames in gender research

In the 1990s, racism as well as other social differences and hierarchies among women started to come into the view of gender sociology. This was first inspired by the reception of feminist-colonial studies, with Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak leading the way. Second, the political, literary and academic movement of Black Feminism, including historians and sociologists such as Elsa Barkley Brown and Patricia Hill Collins, attained distinction in academic contexts (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1996, 166–67). They criticize *white* women's focus

on patriarchal power as a commonly—that is, as a universally—shared experience of oppression and—as discussed above—that gender is mistakenly conceptualized as a homogenous category of inequality and difference. Kimberlé Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality (1991) seizes on the problem of multiple, intertwined forms of discrimination. The concept has been widely adopted in German sociology, but the relation between non-*white* and *white* women has only partly been reflected. As Mariá Lugones (2007, 203) states, *white* women »did not understand themselves in intersectional terms« and this means that they did not see themselves as involved in the intersection of race and gender. In the background is a very narrow concept of gender, as Lugones (2007, 202) explains, narrowed to the nineteenth-century image of »white bourgeois womanhood«:

> feminism centered its struggle and its way of knowing and theorizing against a characterization of women as fragile, weak in both body and mind, secluded in the private, and sexually passive. But it did not bring to consciousness that those characteristics only constructed white bourgeois womanhood.

Overall, this construction of gender mirrors the situatedness of knowledge production in gender theory, that is its eurocentrism, and it hides its contribution to epistemic hegemony. This situation developed into a kind of paternalism among gender researchers in Germany, which was paralleled by paternalism in the women's movement, as Annita Kalpaka and Nora Räthzel (1985) state. The power imbalance in both the movement and gender research have mainly been named, criticized, and analyzed by women of color (Mamozai 1982; Hügel et al. 1993; Gümen 1996, 2001; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1999; El-Tayeb 2001). As a result, the devisualization of non-*white* positions continued, also in academic knowledge production, accompanied by the epistemic reproduction of social hierarchies (Steyerl and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2003; Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005), for example in the categorization of »the Third World Woman« as »a singular, monolithic subject« (Mohanty 1997, 255). The Bielefeld approach of the 1970s and 1980s is a paradigmatic example in this regard; Bielefeld's gender sociologists intended to develop a

feminist perspective on the global division of labor and consider global inequalities; but this approach also included a homogenous perspective on women, who were conceptualized »together with indigenous people and farmers on one level of oppression and exploitation of their (re)productive abilities within one worldwide economic system« (Giebeler 2005, 47). In this perspective, the contribution of *white* women to global inequality and racism remains invisible.

Today, coloniality continues in the frame of global capitalism, first materially and second as the hegemonic power-knowledge nexus. Hypercapitalism is the new colonialism; it »imposes market domination […] over diverse epistemologies around the world as if a superior and therefore legitimate authority. Underlying this domination is a reconceptualized and institutionalized matrix of racism, sexism and classism that has become invisible« (Canella and Manuelito 2008, 48). In this context, gender has not only been reinforced as a category of structural inequality across the globe (Walby 2009), it has also become a fundamental dimension of neo-imperial politics. This is mirrored, inter alia, by the global gender equality regime that has emerged from transnational feminist activism (Kardam 2004; Bernal and Grewal 2014; Carty and Mohanty 2015). Consequently, (migrant) women of color continually criticize the conceptualization of racism as a secondary type of discrimination in Germany (Gümen 1996), while indigenous feminisms in the Americas focus on the ongoing coexistence of imperialism, racism, and sexism (LaDuke 1999; Barker 2015). A first step toward a decolonialization of thinking is the insight that gender is a *white*, colonial knowledge category. The extent to which a global historical sociology approach is meaningful in this regard is the subject of the next section.

Decolonizing gender sociology: Why global historical sociology matters

The previous discussion demonstrates that gender sociology is biased. Gender is conceptualized as an analytical category whose primary explanatory power is derived from European transition processes in the industrial and political revolutions. That is, gender is conceptualized on the basis

of *white* women's social experiences in European nation states without conceptually considering their colonial legacies and the effects for the bourgeois gender order, for example, in the German case (Conrad 2008; Dietrich 2007). This is mirrored by the disciplinary formation of sociology in general: the differentiation of sociology is nurtured by the very existence of European modernity and resulted in sociology's self-conception as science of reflexivity, while Europe appears as both a starting point and as an endpoint of analysis. In this perspective, finally, also »the global is a consequence of ideas and practices« that originate in Europe (Bhambra 2014, 7); this modus operandi has, for example, been stabilized in approaches whose argument is based on Europe's exceptionalism that simultaneously signals its relevance for global history:

> The »global,« insofar as it can be inferred from the writings of Marx and Weber, was the space in which processes initiated in Europe *came to play out as »world–historical.*« There was little discussion of how the global might be understood in terms of processes not directly identified as *capitalist* but nonetheless contributing to modernity (for example, colonial settlement, dispossession, enslavement and other forms of appropriation). (ibid.)

Postcolonial and decolonial approaches point to this hierarchy of knowledge and recognition (Bhambra 2014, 5). They indicate that knowledge formation—as in the case of sociological thinking—is imperial; and as an imperial knowledge institution, sociology became a key site of intellectual hegemony (Connell 2018). In a first step, postcolonial approaches demonstrated that the asymmetry results from the invisibility and subordination of colonialism in the conceptualization of modernity. This blind spot has been characterized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 2014) as the sociology of absences (Seidmann 2013). Until today, colonialism and slavery are »not a major feature of sociological accounts« (Bhambra 2014, 9), or are either conceptualized as inferior, as in Max Weber's notion of adventure capitalism, which he used to characterize forms of capitalism other than the European standard of rational capitalism (Boatcă 2013). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012, 45) explains this as the failure of Western epistemologies to identify non-Western realities

and instead produce their non-existence, invisibility, or non-intelligibility—with particular effects for non-Westerners in terms of social and mental alienation.[26]

Frantz Fanon was one of the first to denote the colonization of the mind as a central facet of colonization: »Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. […] it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it« (Fanon 1963, 210). In the same vein, ex-slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth had already asked hundred years earlier, in 1851, »Ain't I a Woman?« in her famous speech in an US civil rights meeting and pointed that way at the hegemonic politics of knowledge production and racial inferiority (Gray White 2007). As Edward Said (1978) emphasized, hegemonic knowledge production includes representations that first and foremost mirror Western imagination, although they aim at describing the non-European world, like the term »the Orient.« In the notion of orientalism, Said characterizes the social construction of representations as a form of knowing and understanding the world based on a dualistic differentiation between »us« and »them, also characterized as othering[27] in postcolonial theory. Edward Said describes how this representation of reality shapes the social existence and outlook of othered persons, although they do not envision themselves in this reality. In other words, orientalism constructs others by locating them in their supposed otherness, thus producing the social reality of cultural difference and peculiarity.

26 According to Sousa Santos, this is not only an epistemological question, but an ontological one: »movements in different continents construct their struggles on the basis of ancestral, popular and spiritual knowledge that has always been alien to Eurocentric critical theory. Moreover, their ontological concepts of living and being are quite distinct from Western individualism« (Sousa Santos 2012, 50).

27 The term signifies the »process, by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes. It locates its ›others‹ by the process in the pursuit of that power within which its own subjectivity is established« (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 2007, 173).

Decolonial thinking seeks to go a step further in order to move beyond colonial knowledge structures; this takes shape as an independent formation of critique, for example in Latin American subaltern studies (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2007, 2012; Lugones 2007; Sousa Santos 2012; cf. also Samman 2012). At the center of criticism is the *coloniality of difference;* the term denotes the consequences of Western capitalist expansion, which was accompanied by the prevalence of European epistemologies and knowledge structures, for example in terms of social sciences, while knowledge emanating from non-Western contexts was erased with colonization. The *coloniality of power*, as Anibal Quijano (2000) named it, imposes a whole new social order on people, including worldviews, values, and expectations, for example in terms of gender (Lugones 2008). Additionally, the notion of *coloniality of difference* reveals the structural axis of inequality and renders the dichotomization of knowledge visible as epistemic violence. The *coloniality of difference* is reproduced in many ways: through the »re-construction and […] restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages« (Mignolo 2007, 451). According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 1990) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012), ignorance and lack of understanding are the result of ontological distance and the inability to identify non-Western reality.

For sociology, this means reconsidering its theorizing about European modernity itself, namely as an expression of the coloniality of power. As put in a nutshell in Sujata Patel's (2014, 2015) notion of colonial modernity or in Anibal Quijano's (2007) concept of modernity/coloniality, colonialism is the core of European modernity (Mignolo 2007): European modernity is intrinsically colonial and authoritarian (Bhambra 2014), including the gender order that is a central cognitive pattern of this repressive cognitive structure (Lugones 2008). According to Julian Go (2016, 8), this entails first recognizing sociology's imperial standpoint and second »transcend[ing] the very oppositions between Europe and the Rest, or the West and the East, which colonialism inscribed in our theories.« As Go explains, colonialism is not just another variable that has to be added to sociology's standard accounts, but the analytical task

is to transcend analytical bifurcation—as in the case of European nation states that have to be conceptualized as »empire-states: coercion wielding organizations governing expansive regions« (Go 2016, 15). It has to be taken into consideration that these nation states are structured by a hierarchy of political divisions and citizens/non-citizens, and by a specific gender regime. The bourgeois gender order is rooted in the ideology of nationalism, and as such it is a central facet of the episteme of colonial difference.

This indicates the need to reconceptualize gender sociology as well. Following Gurminder Bhambra, it is not enough to reconstruct the sociological understanding of social gender history in Europe as authoritarian. As Bhambra (2014, 142) argues, there is a need for an »alternative understanding of the emergence of the global within sociology«; accordingly, there is also a need for an alternative understanding of the emergence of gender within sociology—followed by a revision of the history of gender sociology. Bhambra's approach aims at rethinking sociological thinking and societal histories as not only shared, but as inherently connected. She envisions *connected* social histories that result in *connected* sociologies beyond ideal types[28] as a possibility to overcome the social exclusion of exactly those parts of European history, namely colonialism, empire, and enslavement, »that constitute the conditions of [Europe's] very possibility« (Bhambra 2014, 152)—instead of a perception that highlights societal history as national history in territorial boundaries. For gender sociology, this means rethinking societal gender histories as inherently connected beyond the ideal-typical portrayal of the capitalist, bourgeois gender order and heterosexism as the universal key explanation of gender, including contemporary societies. Vrashuli Patil urges us to realize that this is »a deeply ahistorical framework of analysis, as the heterosexual gender arrangements, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other« (2017, 144).

28 Bhambra (2014, 147) criticizes ideal types as necessarily selective; she argues that they usually function as evaluative and prescriptive matrices, as in the case of European modernity, whose narrative is based on exclusive narratives.

This also includes realizing that it is misleading to conceptualize gender against the background of European history only, »as if all women were white« (Lugones 2007, 202) and as if the relation to the gender regimes in the colonies were of secondary relevance. As María Lugones (2007, 186) argues, colonialism created a new gender system with two »very different arrangements for colonized males and females than for white bourgeois colonizers. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations, for example in the realm of production. The gender system constituted by colonial modernity is characterized by being permeated by race (and nation, as one might add) and by a persistent absence of gender analysis, as Lugones argues. But the colonial/modern gender system is based on »the classification of the population in terms of race« as »a necessary condition of its possibility« (Lugones 2007, 202). Thinking gender only in terms of dimorphism and the sexual division of labor would miss the point that race is deeply gendered and gender deeply raced, namely »in particularly differential ways for Europeans/white and colonized/nonwhite peoples« (ibid.). As a consequence, colonized women were characterized as categorically different from *white* women. Consequently, gender is a colonial category based on *white* superiority and the capitalist bourgeois gender order cannot be explained on its own terms. In this regard, global historical gender sociology can shed a different light on the parochialism of the gender notion.

Against this backdrop, the current anti-feminist debates are discernable as a result of racialized gender notions bound to nationalist »visions« of society, and as a reproduction of the coloniality of gender, namely in contrast to non-*white* people whose sexuality is vilified and vulgarized (Winkel 2018b), while global inequalities are totally absent in these nation-oriented debates. When anti-genderists combat the change of the national order, they address its gendered constitution which they believe is in danger. As a consequence, non-*white* women (and men) are once more denigrated and signified as others. Thus, it is insufficient to discuss anti-genderism as an anti-feminist confrontation about the shifting of gender relations and equality standards within European societies only;

this furthers *white* perceptions of gender and causes the disappearance of its effects for racism and nationalism. The debates that anti-genderists pursue unfold in the national(ist) domain of *white* knowledge production. They are deeply racialized, and they mirror the understanding of gender as a *white*, colonial interpretive frame and its relevance for *white* European nations. Gender sociology can deepen its understanding of these processes with the support of a global, decolonially inspired sociology of gender approach.

Conclusion

This contribution started from the question to what extent a *global* historical sociology can enable gender sociology to decolonize its body of knowledge and to decode the continuing renationalization of gender as a colonial legacy in contemporary societies. This includes the interest in reflecting the extent to which gender sociology is built on a colonial body of *white* gender knowledge and how gender can be made visible as a colonial category of knowledge production. The discussion developed in an explorative way from the assumption that global historical sociology has played only a marginal role for gender sociology—up to now. The argument unfolded against the background of gender history's particular relevance for the understanding of the gendered organization of social life. I reflected on the secondary relevance of colonial histories in gender sociology in this regard, and assumed that this has caused a blind spot regarding gender sociology's own imperial standpoint and its enmeshment with colonial epistemic legacies in the system of scientific knowledge production as well as in the context of political feminism.

It becomes visible against this backdrop how gender sociology has developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that has nourished the coloniality of gender. While historical sociologists have started to go beyond national boundaries, and to shed light on entangled colonial histories, gender sociological research has not shared this interest in *connected* social histories in the same way. Instead gender has been conceptualized as an analytical category whose primary explanatory power is derived from transition processes in the industrial and the political

revolutions only. Accordingly, I introduced global historical sociology as a theoretical bridge toward a historical sociology of gender that considers the colonial legacy of the past as well as postcolonial realities in its theoretical model of the capitalist, bourgeois gender order more closely. This also includes the insight that *white* women were actively taking part in the production of a colonial body of gender knowledge that is effective until today. This is mirrored by the current anti-genderist debates that are not only anti-feminist but aim at reproducing gender as a core element of cultural imperialism both within Western, European societies and beyond. Accordingly, the capitalist, bourgeois gender order (that emerged in the frame of the nation-state and associates women with reproductive issues) is a paradigmatic facet of *white* knowledge production. I argued that a global historical sociology of gender that is inspired by post- and decolonial approaches will not only make the continuation of colonial epistemologies in present-day societies visible, but will make gender discernible as a colonial category of analysis.

Finally, I argued that considering post- and decolonizing perspectives in gender sociology contributes to a deeper understanding of how colonial structures of knowledge and meaning continue to proceed and reproduce power asymmetries until today. Decolonial thinking reveals how classifications in terms of race and nation are unfolding as a cornerstone of the bourgeois, heteronormative gender order and how this is fostering the coloniality of gender, namely as part of (re)nationalization processes throughout the twentieth century. As a consequence, anti-genderism affects *white* women and women of color alike, but anti-genderism »involves« *white* women in a different way, namely *against* women of color. Women should not allow themselves to be divided against each other.

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The history of epigenetics from a sociological perspective

Laura Benítez-Cojulún

Introduction

Epigenetics is a research area within »biomedical and biological research« (Landecker and Panofsky 2013, 336) often defined as »the study of mitotically and/or meiotically heritable changes in gene function that cannot be explained by changes in DNA sequence« (several authors quote this definition from Riggs, Martienssen, and Russo 1996; for instance, Haig 2004). Both the use of the term »epigenetic« and the development of the research area have seen remarkable and accelerated growth since the 1990s. This phenomenon is often analyzed from perspectives coming from the history and philosophy of science, e.g., under the influence of Thomas Kuhn's theory; this latter point explains the occurrence of expressions such as »epigenetics revolution« (Meloni 2015, 141), »epigenetic turn« (Nicolosi and Ruivenkamp 2011), or »epigenetic shift« (Willer 2010, 13). Here, the main purpose is to adopt a sociological perspective in response to the question »What could a sociological account of this development look like?« Nevertheless, it is useful to keep in mind that these expressions evoke a substantial transformation.

Before shedding some sociological light on the subject, I will present the object of analysis, the rise of epigenetics, in more detail in the next section. The history of epigenetics is complex; it can be related to the old debate between »preformation« and »epigenesis« and traced back to Aristotle (Hall 2011, 9). However, to limit my analysis, I chose the coining of the term »epigenetics« as its starting point, an event that is thought to have occurred in 1942, when Waddington proposed the term for a »branch of biology which studies the causal interactions between genes and their products, which bring the phenotype into being« (cited by several authors,

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for instance, Goldberg, Allis, and Bernstein 2007, 635; although the actual original source of the quotation seems uncertain, given the lack of consensus about it). The noticeable difference between this older definition and the one previously cited deserves clarification, to which some elements in the following section will contribute.

In the next two sections, some of Mölders's (2011) ideas are applied which facilitate thinking about a sociological sense of »learning« within science as a function system. Mölders's ideas on which I base my analysis are themselves based on two main theoretical frameworks related to a sociological sense of »systemic learning« at two different levels: (1) a sociological learning-theoretical perspective strongly inspired by conceptualizations coming from Piaget, useful for accounting for learning at the level of a *disciplinary communication community*,[1] as an »equilibration« process where some of its theoretical and/or methodological structures suffer an »accommodation«; and (2) an evolution-theoretical perspective, pertinent for accounting for the way in which learned structures can reach the general level of science as a function system (in a Luhmannian sense). The two sections alluded to correspond to each of these perspectives in an attempt to answer the questions: (1) Does the emergence and development of epigenetics correspond to a learning process at the level of a disciplinary communication community in the sense of a Piagetian equilibration process? and (2) Does the spreading of epigenetic knowledge constitute a case of (re)stabilization of learned structures reaching a higher level, the level of the function system of science, i.e., going beyond the »dominant internal differentiation« (Mölders 2011, 175) of this function system? Each of these sections is in turn subdivided in two subsections: the first one presents some theoretical elements proposed by Mölders in more detail, and the second one constitutes an attempt to apply them to the case of epigenetics.

The final section shows how, by following a historical thread running through my sociological framework, I found Waddington, Piaget, and a

1 My attempt to translate »*disziplinäre Kommunikationsgemeinschaften*« (Mölders 2011, 169).

sociological learning-related evolutionary line of thought to be related in a totally different way.

Epigenetics: From the neologism being coined twice to the multiplicity of its meanings

As already mentioned, the term »epigenetics« was first coined in 1942. »First coined« could seem redundant, yet this neologism actually had »at least two semi-independent origins during the 20th century« (Haig 2004, 67).

As said above, the first proposal of this term is attributed to Waddington, who has been considered a developmental biologist (Meloni and Testa 2014, 433) as well as a geneticist (Hall 2011, 10). According to Van Speybroeck (2002a, 61), Waddington meant that »epigenesis + genetics = epigenetics.« Waddington linked embryology to epigenesis and genetics to preformation: two sides of an old debate. As Hall (2011) puts it, the concepts of »epigenesis« and »preformation« have their origins in two old hypotheses about animal embryogenesis, the first corresponding to »the successive differentiation of features during development leading to increasing complexity and the formation of the adult form« and the second to »the gradual unfolding through growth of features preformed in the egg or sperm« (Hall 2011, 9). One can infer that Waddington expected epigenetics to overcome the presupposed contradiction between these two hypotheses as well as the separation between embryology and genetics.

Waddington established an Epigenetics Research Unit (Holliday 2006, 76), but the growing popularity of the term »epigenetics« in life sciences since the 1990s does not seem traceable to Waddington's proposal. Rather the second »semi-independent« origin of the term seems more closely related to this increase. Nanney was responsible for it in 1958, with his paper »Epigenetic Control Systems« (Haig 2004, 68; Haig 2012, 14; Meloni and Testa 2014, 433), where he restricted the use of the adjective »epigenetic« to refer to »cellular control systems« (Nanney 1958, 712; my italics) which were not genetic. According to Nanney,

> [o]n the one hand, the maintenance of a »library of specificities,« both expressed and unexpressed, is accomplished by a template replicating mechanism. On the other hand, *auxiliary mechanisms with different principles of operation are involved in determining which specificities are to be expressed in any particular cell.* […] To simplify the discussion of these two types of systems, they will be referred to as »genetic systems« and »*epigenetic* systems.« (Nanney 1958, 712; my italics)

In other words, as paraphrased by Haig (2012, 14), epigenetic systems would relate to »which volume in the library of genetic specificities was to be expressed in a particular cell.«

Apparently, Nanney's distinction started a tradition in the use of the terms »epigenetic« and »epigenetics,« with their meaning restricted to cellular mechanisms controlling which genes are expressed, a tradition closer than the Waddingtonian one to the current field of epigenetics (Haig 2004). Nevertheless, another tradition has survived until the present, more closely linked to the original Waddingtonian distinction and implying a broader meaning of »epigenetic.« New definitions along these two lines have appeared, and still others merge the two trends, creating a multiplicity of definitions and making epigenetics an ambiguous research area (Haig 2004, 69; Hallgrímsson and Hall 2011, 2; Morange 2013; Meloni and Testa 2014). As a result, there is no unique or clear answer to the question »What is epigenetics today?«

Despite this ambiguity—or thanks to it—the research area of epigenetics, especially molecular epigenetics, is said to be »a scientific success story« (Meloni and Testa 2014, 432) since »[w]e have recently witnessed an explosion of research efforts, meetings and symposia, international initiatives, internet resources, commercial enterprises […] dedicated to epigenetics« (Goldberg, Allis, and Bernstein 2007, 635) and

> [s]imilar efforts aimed at computing the rise of epigenetics in terms of new networks, institutes, conferences, curricula and journals confirm the vertical growth of the field across the full range of academic indicators.

> Within a few years ambitious large-scale projects, such as the International Human Epigenome Consortium […] have been launched worldwide. (Meloni and Testa 2014, 432)

Waggoner and Uller (2015, 177) even claimed that »[t]he epigenetic ›revolution‹ in science cuts across many disciplines, and it is now one of the fastest-growing research areas in biology.« One is thus tempted to affirm that the case of epigenetics illustrates a kind of learning in the function system of science. What, then, could a sociological account of this learning look like?

Learning at the level of disciplinary communication communities: The case of epigenetics

An equilibration-theoretical framework

As mentioned, Mölders (2011) proposed a sociological framework which can be employed to reflect on how learning in a »supraindividual« sense—to take Miller's term up again (Miller 2002; 2006, 195)—occurs in the function system of science.

As Mölders noted, sociological learning theories are based on Piaget's cognitive-theoretical concepts, despite the fact that the latter concerned individual learning (Mölders 2011, 23). Mölders's sociological proposal is an equilibration-theoretical one inscribed in a line of thought related to the Piagetian conceptualization of »equilibration.« It is thus useful to understand some important aspects of Piagetian theory which have been influential in the development of sociological learning theorizations. Some important Piagetian concepts are »schema,« »assimilation,« and »accommodation.«

As he explained in *Biology and Knowledge*, Piaget took the term »assimilation« from biology and applied it to cognition by using it »in the wide sense of integration into previous structures« (Piaget 1982, 4). Such previous structures are directly related to the concept of schemata; Piaget decides, for instance, to »[…] apply the term »action schemata« to whatever, in an action, can thus be transposed, generalized, or differentiated from one situation to another: in other words, whatever there is in common between

various repetitions or superpositions of the same action« (Piaget 1971, 7). As to accommodation, he applied the term »to any modification produced on assimilation schemata by the influence of environment to which they are attached« (Piaget 1971, 8).

As Mölders shows, assimilation implies the integration of new information in a previous schema (without modifying the latter), whereas accommodation implies an inadequacy of the previous schema to assimilate a certain new information, requiring a structural modification of the schema (Mölders 2011, 25). Piaget distinguished three phases which constitute an equilibration process: the »alpha,« »beta,« and »gamma« phases. Relevant aspects of these phases, both for the understanding of an individual cognitive process and as a source of inspiration for the analysis of a supraindividual learning process, include: during the alpha phase, a disturbance is just ignored or repressed; during the beta phase, the original schema is kept, but additional schemata are developed as a response to an assimilation disturbance; during the gamma phase, the original problematic schema is accommodated, i.e., transformed into a new assimilation schema so that the disturbance ceases to be one (Mölders 2011, 26–27).

Keeping this Piagetian conceptualization in mind, it is easier to grasp Mölders's proposal of a sociological understanding of learning. In cases where supraindividual learning takes place within the function system of science, Mölders shows that this system as a whole is not an entity capable of learning in a strict sense, but disciplinary communication communities do have this capacity. Following Mölders, it would be proper to say that a disciplinary communication community has learned something when its structural schemata have suffered an accommodation in response to an »irritation« triggered by a problem in such a way that the problem is solved (Mölders 2011, 169). Regarding the Luhmannian notion of irritation, one can say, with Borch (2011a, 31), that »[*i*]*rritation* should be understood here not as annoyance, but rather as an itching that calls for action.« This kind of learning could be thus conceptualized as an equilibration process.

One can thus ask if this equilibration-theoretical framework could shed light on how epigenetic knowledge and epigenetics as a research area arise. Is it possible to identify disciplinary communication communities which

have »learned« thanks to epigenetics? Can the history of epigenetics be considered a story of problems that were solved thanks to the accommodation of structural schemata?

The case of epigenetics as structural learning

Looking at the case of epigenetics through the lenses of the presented frameworks, one can identify an original problematic schema which could be said to have gone through an equilibration process. Meloni and Testa (2014, 434) find that both the broad meaning of epigenetics going back to Waddington and the rather molecular one going back to Nanney »deflate the role of genes as causally privileged determinants of phenotypes.« Indeed, the multiple and »partially overlapping« (as several authors qualify them) forms of epigenetics occurring within the function system of science seem to threaten a schema which was dominant in life sciences or biosciences during the twentieth century, which denied that the evolution of biologically hereditable material—i.e., the genetic material, for some time conceived mainly as DNA—was open to informational inputs coming directly from the environment. In other words, the variation of the biologically hereditable material was supposed to be random and »then« selected, with a resultant increasing correspondence between phenotype and environment, but without a straightforward injection of information from the environment into the genetic material. Thus, epigenetics constitutes a weakening of »gene-centrism« in biology (Meloni 2015, 141; Meloni and Testa 2014; De Tiège et al. 2013; Van Speybroeck 2002a, 80; 2002b, 743).

In this respect, Van de Vijver et al. (2002) show that epigenetics can be conceived as incorporating »a developmental and an evolutionary approach as legitimately as a genetic approach« (Van de Vijver, Van Speybroeck, and de Waele 2002, 3) and find that »[e]pigenetics in this broad sense challenges the metaphysics and epistemology of a gene-centric viewpoint« (Van de Vijver, Van Spebroeck, and de Waele 2002, 4).

De Tiège et al. (2013), employing a more restricted—molecular—meaning of »epigenetic,« present the findings of epigenetics (understood as the

field dealing with the relationship between the genome and the epigenome)[2] as having contributed to a general defeat of gene-centrism »in its DNA-centric form« (De Tiège et al. 2013, 58):

> Due to the discovery during the past few decades of complex post-genomic, *epigenetic* and extra-genetic processes and mechanisms in which genes and the genome are causally integrated and contextualised, the *gene-centric paradigm of life* has lost its popularity among a number of bio-philosophers and bio-theorists. (De Tiège et al. 2013, 66–67; my italics)

De Tiège et al. find that although a »modest« form of gene-centrism (namely, »NA-centrism«) is still defendable in the »subcellular level of NA/protein-based biochemistry,« the epigenetic level (in the restricted sense in which they understand it) is precisely the first one (from »lower« up to »higher« levels) where even this »modest« form of gene-centrism becomes »dubious« (De Tiège et al. 2013, 67).

For his part, Robison (2014) highlights the »challenges« posed by epigenetics, this time not to gene-centrism, but to the »Modern Synthesis.« This opinion is not surprising, taking into account that gene-centrism is closely related to neo-Darwinism. De Tiège et al. (2013, 57) find that the former »was, and still is, basic to neo-Darwinian evolutionary biology.« As a matter of fact, epigenetics is often associated with a broader paradigmatic shift (Nicolosi and Ruivenkamp 2011, 309; Van de Vijver, Van Speybroeck, and de Waele 2002) in life sciences in which the contributions of researchers Jablonka and Lamb play an important role. As Haig (2006, 418) claims,

> Jablonka and Lamb […] see a continuity of error from Weismann's neo-Darwinism (with its separation of germ-line and soma) through Modern Synthesis neo-Darwinism (with its separation of genotype and phenotype) via Molecular neo-Darwinism (with its »central

2 In part quoting Dolinoy and Jirtle 2008, Meloni (2015, 126) define the epigenome as »the set of the potentially ›heritable changes in gene expressions that occur in the absence of changes to the DNA sequence itself.‹«

> dogma« of a one-way flow of information from DNA to protein) into Selfish Gene neo-Darwinism (with its separation of replicators and vehicles).

In all these cases, »theoretical barriers […] have been erected to deny information flow from the second to the first components of these dichotomies« (Haig 2006, 418).

Robison finds that epigenetics threatens the main assumptions of the Modern Synthesis:

> (1) that populations evolve by changes in gene frequency through random genetic drift, gene flow, and especially natural selection; (2) that genetic variation arises by random (i.e., not adaptively directed) mutation and recombination; (3) and that most individual phenotypic effects are very slight, so that most phenotypic changes are very gradual. (Robison 2014, 2)

It thus seems feasible to conceive of epigenetic knowledge as a response to irritations, which points to the problematic inadequacy of the gene-centric neo-Darwinian theoretical framework. As Willer (2010, 19) puts it, »biologically speaking, epigenetics examines what happens outside the genes; whereas, historically speaking, epigenetics is what happens after genetics.« Morange (2002, 50) even explains the multiplicity and variability of definitions of epigenetics by claiming that »epigenetics cannot be defined per se, but only as an evolving opposition to the piecemeal, reductionist approach of genetics.«

Indeed, the brief history of epigenetics can be told as a story of rebellion going back to Waddington himself—in *The Strategy of the Genes* he wrote:

> The *reigning modern view* is that, in nature, the direction of mutational change is *entirely at random*, and that adaptation results *solely from the natural selection* of mutations which happen to give rise to individuals with suitable characteristics. I want to argue that this theory is an *extremist* one […]. (Waddington [1957] 2014, 151; my italics)

The second, »semi-independent« origin of epigenetics can also be understood as a reaction to a dominant theoretical framework. According

to Haig (2006, 420), »Nanney was a critic of the triumphalist molecular genetics of his day.«

As a matter of fact, the disappointment produced by the unexpected results of the Human Genome Project is sometimes related to the growth experienced by epigenetics in the twenty-first century (Meloni 2015, 126); this disappointment could be viewed as one of the irritations pointing to the inadequacy of the gene-centrism dominating in the twentieth century.

Could one say that these irritations triggered a Piagetian equilibration process? One can indeed find views in the literature about epigenetics reminiscent of Piagetian alpha, beta, and gamma phases, but they are far from consensual, so that it is impossible to trace a unique story of one disciplinary communication community going through an alpha-like phase, then a beta-like phase, and then a gamma-like phase. Rather, depending on who is speaking, it appears that a particular disciplinary communication community working on epigenetics—or a part of it—is going through an alpha-like phase, or that the arising of epigenetic knowledge constitutes a beta-like phase, or that it constitutes an accommodation phenomenon in a gamma-like phase. Only in this last case would it seem proper, under Mölders's framework, to speak of supraindividual learning at the level of a disciplinary communication community.

For instance, in her science studies paper, Tolwinski classified researchers in epigenetics in three categories »based on the claims they make about the impact and future of their field: champions, those who take the middle ground, and skeptics« (Tolwinski 2013, 366); one might relate these categories to the three Piagetian phases. If one is to believe Tolwinski's champions, epigenetics amounts to a »paradigmatic shift« in which the genetic framework has been superseded, resulting in a new »revolutionary« one, »incommensurable« with the old one—and all this Kuhnian vocabulary comes from the »champions« themselves (Tolwinski 2013, 372–73). This is reminiscent of an accommodation. If one is to believe Tolwinski's middle-ground researchers, however, epigenetics constitutes an additional assimilation schema, complementary to the genetic one, without this latter one being modified; it would be a beta-like phase. Listening to Tolwinski's skeptics, one gets the impression that epigenetics does not

respond to any fundamental problem of the original schema; rather, that the knowledge produced by epigenetics can be assimilated without major difficulties by the main schema constituted by the genetic framework. Indeed, some attitudes held by these »skeptics« make one think of an alpha-like phase; for instance, transgenerational epigenetic inheritance in humans (implying that environmental factors could affect non-germ line cells in adult bodies in such a way that their traces could affect future descendants) was »widely dismissed« by Tolwinski's skeptics, despite the fact that some studies suggest its plausibility. Besides, they »refute champions' claims in contingent terms, emphasizing ›errors‹ in their scientific methods and interpretive work.« In response, Tolwinski's champions find that »insiders« (i.e., researchers aligned with the mainstream perspective) are »*blinded* by a dogmatic scientific culture« (Tolwinski 2013, 376; my italics). This could be related to an alpha phase in which a problem is ignored or repressed.

If these three positions on epigenetics coexist among researchers within the field itself, it is no surprise that one can find them in other disciplinary communication communities as well. Griesemer (2011) sheds light on the lack of consensus about the significance of the possible role of epigenetic inheritance in evolution. He distinguishes »risk-averse« or »conservative« research from »risk-tolerant« or »transformative« research—which he relates to Kuhnian »normal science« and »new paradigms« (Griesemer 2011, 32), respectively. »Research is conservative if it involves empirical work to support the specification of current theory […]. Research is transformative if it forces change in what we already understand« (Griesemer 2011, 24). Thus, »conservative« or »risk-averse« research could be related to an unaltered schema (assimilation), while »transformative« or »risk-tolerant« research would imply accommodation. On that basis, Griesemer shows that epigenetic implications for inheritance and evolution are perceived differently by »mechanistic molecular sciences (MMS) and quantitative dynamical evolutionary sciences (QDES) because these sciences construct models and theories in very different ways« (Griesemer 2011, 16). Acknowledging a role of epigenetic phenomena in transgenerational inheritance and evolution can result in conservative, low-risk research in

the former, while provoking transformative, high-risk research in the latter. That could help explain why »[m]olecular and cellular biologists have claimed for 20 years that epigenetic phenomena have significant implications for evolution, not only as adaptations but also as inheritance systems that could fuel evolution at a level above the genetic level« while »[e]volutionists sometimes support and sometimes doubt the implications claimed« (Griesemer 2011, 15). In turn, Griesemer's framework helps understanding some alpha-like and beta-like episodes in the history of genetics regarding what are now considered epigenetic phenomena:

> Jablonka and Lamb (1995), in their argument for the significance of epigenetic inheritance in evolution, reviewed many cases of variable expression from classical genetics experiments and argued that the conservative strategy swept the epigenetic phenomena under the rug rather than faced up to the need to transform genetic theory. (Griesemer 2011, 30)

After reading authors such as Graham (2016), it is possible to find ideological reasons which might also be linked to such alpha-like reactions:

> Established Russian geneticists, who know that Lysenko was a poor scientist, have been somewhat unwilling to explore transgenerational epigenetics because of their concern about the attempted rehabilitation of Lysenkoism. Given their experiences and history, they are a little frightened of epigenetics. […]
>
> Some of the best university textbooks on genetics in Russia, written by fully qualified scientists who are critical of the recent upsurge in Lysenkoism, avoid extended discussions of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. They fear saying anything that might be used by Lysenko's supporters. (Graham 2016, 268)[3]

3 It may be helpful to remember that an »exponent of the inheritance of acquired characteristics in the twentieth century was Trofim Lysenko, the agronomist who ruled Soviet biology for several decades. With Stalin's support, he purged the field of his critics. […] In the West, ›Lysenkoism‹ became synonymous with ›pseudo-science.‹ It was a prime example of

In any event, it seems possible to reconstruct the history of epigenetics as an equilibration process going through Piagetian phases. But in order to speak of learning within the function system of science as Mölders proposes, it would be necessary to clearly identify disciplinary communication communities going through this learning process. Yet in an ultra-specialized scientific world, which is at the same time rich in interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary research, it is no easy task to identify which disciplinary communication communities are learning about epigenetics during its development, because it is not easy to delimit the implicated communities in the first place. A note by Niewöhner (2011, 283) about environmental epigenetics is particularly illustrative:

> This field of research in formation is too heterogeneous to have received a single name or label as yet. Environmental epigenetics is sometimes used by those in the field to describe their own work, yet other labels such as developmental epigenetics or behavioural epigenetics are used interchangeably.

To begin with, it is not easy to identify in which community this knowledge was first learned, since it seems to have arisen precisely in a void where a discipline was lacking, as a bridge between developmental biology and genetics.

Nor is it easy to say if a particular disciplinary communication community could be identified as the »epigenetic« one because this area is considered by some to be a subfield of biomedical sciences and by others a subfield of biology; and in this latter case, it can be considered a sub-branch of different branches, for instance, a »subfield of molecular biology« (Niewöhner 2015, 221) or »of systems biology« (Hallgrímsson and Hall 2011, 1) because biosciences are constituted by »partially overlapping« subfields themselves.

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the ruinous effects of political rule over science.« (Graham 2016, 266). Ideological reasons may also »encourage« epigenetic research but, ironically, this is valid not only for Lysenkoists but also for neoliberals, given the kind of links highlighted by authors such as Lupton (2013) between some implications of the field regarding health and ideas about self-responsibility.

In any event, it is possible to identify isolated cases in which a disciplinary community seems to have learned an epigenetic structure. For instance, the following narration suggests that developmental biology learned »to talk and think in terms of complex gene networks and interactions« (Jablonka and Lamb 2002, 85):

> The distinction between epigenetics and developmental genetics was […] a difference in focus, with epigenetics stressing complex developmental networks […], while developmental genetics was more concerned with the hierarchies of actions that led from a gene to its effects on the phenotype. Today, the situation is different, since all developmental biologists tend to talk and think in terms of complex gene networks and interactions; the epigenetics perspective has to a large extent replaced that of classical developmental genetics. (Jablonka and Lamb 2002, 85)

However, in part because of the difficulty of identifying isolated disciplinary communication communities learning epigenetic structures, and in part because epigenetic expansion concerns so many disciplines, another level of analysis would now be enlightening: the level of the function system of science.

Novel structures spreading at the level of the function system of science: The case of epigenetics

A sociological evolutionary framework

As Mölders (2011) shows, when it comes to the enforcement, at the level of the function system of science, of what is learned at the level of disciplinary communication communities, the systemic learning-theoretical framework is no longer the most appropriate one. Instead, it is pertinent to turn to a sociological evolution-theoretical framework—a framework to which sociologists such as Klaus Eder contributed. When Mölders claims, for instance, that the learned structures of a theory or a method constitute a source of variation for the function system of science (Mölders 2011, 171), this claim is reminiscent of Eder's statement that

»[l]earning […] does not guarantee evolution but provides the mutations for evolutionary processes to take place« (Eder 1999, 195).[4]

According to the sociological evolutionary perspective proposed by Mölders, one may speak of the »(re)stabilization« of »learned structures« if, after figuring in a scientific publication, they are »selected« in the sense that they are employed in other publications. Now, to set a sort of threshold to detect if such (re)stabilization has reached the level of the function system of science, Mölders proposes the moment when the corresponding learned structures are selected by »other« disciplinary communication communities beyond the »dominant internal differentiation« of the function system of science (Mölders 2011, 175). In other words, structural learning »within« disciplinary communication communities does not guarantee that the learned structures in question have reached the general level of the function system of science. In the following, I analyze the spreading of epigenetic knowledge looking for signs of such (re)stabilization.

Novel epigenetic structures reaching the level of the function system of science

As shown above, the history of epigenetics is in large part a story of linking separate disciplinary communication communities. Attempts have been made to identify an equilibration process at the level of such communities, yet it would be easier to conceive of epigenetics as the accommodation of the broad schema of the structure of biosciences, i.e., as a response to irritations pointing to the systemic problem of the isolation of some of its subfields. Just as Waddingtonian epigenetics was a response to the separation between developmental biology and genetics, the more contemporaneous version, more closely related to Nanney's argument, seems to correspond to such an accommodation as well: as Morange (2013, 453) shows, for several decades there was a »total absence of communication between researchers working on histone modification

4 »Societies Learn and Yet the World Is Hard to Change« (Eder 1999) is actually frequently cited, and thus presumably influential.

and those studying DNA methylation.« Despite the fact that »[d]escription of these marks and speculations on their […] role were initiated at the beginning of the 1960s for histones and in the middle of the 1970s for DNA methylation« (Morange 2013, 451), »the two lines of research converged at the end of the 1990s« (Morange 2013, 453). The fact that the impressive growth of epigenetics started precisely in the 1990s, which constitutes its emergence as a new field (or subfield) of research, could be read as a response to the previous lack of connection between these two communities.

Now, is it possible to apply to the case of epigenetics elements of analysis from the sociological evolutionary framework presented? Yes: first, it transcends the dominant internal differentiation of the function system of science; and second, it is precisely about the selection—through citation—of new, published structures. The following statement by Hallgrímsson and Hall (2011, 2) is illustrative of both points: »[t]he term epigenetics has increased in use in the molecular, evolutionary, and developmental literature in recent years.«

As to the first point, the following quote from Meloni and Testa (2014, 432) shows that the phenomenon goes beyond biosciences:

> Even beyond the boundaries of biomedicine, various other disciplines have started to signal the impact of epigenetics on some of their fundamental tenets: from bioethics (Dupras et al., 2012) to human geography (Guthman and Mansfield, 2013), from political (Hedlund, 2012) to legal theory (Rothstein et al., 2009), from epidemiology (Relton and Davey Smith, 2012) to the philosophy of identity (Boniolo and Testa, 2011).

It may even be possible to identify the successful publication from which a massive »selection« of the term »epigenetic« started. Haig (2004, 69) suspects »that ›The Inheritance of Epigenetic Defects‹ (Holliday 1987) was the critical paper that lit the fuse for the explosion in use of ›epigenetic‹ in the 1990s.«

Now, the fact that more and more publications speak of »epigenetics« does not suffice to claim that some learned theoretical or methodological

structures coming from epigenetics have reached the function-systemic level of science, especially when it comes to science studies. For instance, if an anthropologist or a sociologist were to run a laboratory study about epigenetics researchers, this external perspective would not imply that her/his disciplinary communication community had learned epigenetic theoretical or methodological structures. One could intuitively claim that the spread of some learned structures coming from epigenetics would imply that other disciplinary communication communities took theoretical concepts or methodological innovations coming from this novel area seriously enough to incorporate them within their own theoretical or methodological frameworks. Well, it seems that this is in fact taking place.

For example, according to Meloni, even »*political theorists* and bioethicists have already started to reflect upon the ›collective responsibility‹ to protect the vulnerable *epigenome*« (Dupras, Ravitsky, and Williams-Jones 2014; Hedlund 2012; both cited in Meloni 2014, 7; my italics). This constitutes an obvious case of a selected theoretical structure.

As to novel methodological epigenetic structures, it seems that some of them are also being selected at the level of the function system of science. In the paper »From Social Structure to Gene Regulation, and Back: A Critical Introduction to Environmental Epigenetics for Sociology,« Landecker and Panofsky (2013, 345) explain how one outcome of epigenetics is the notion of a »bio-dosimeter«: an »empirically measurable« indicator of the impact of certain environmental—including social—factors. One example would be methylation levels as a bio-dosimeter for socio-economic status. Now, the same paper reveals more examples of epigenetic structures being selected by other communities: »[*s*]*ocial epidemiologists* tracking *what they call* the *epigenetic* signature of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have sought similar demonstrations of the feasibility of using blood samples for studying epigenetic profiles associated with mental disorders« (my italics). In turn, the link between epigenetics, depression, and trauma as a theoretical structure has reached the field of psychoanalysis:

> […] the convergence between clinical-psychoanalytical results from the field of early prevention and from psychotherapy and the results

> from epigenetic studies on depression and trauma is fascinating and opens up new opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue. Results from epigenetic research can support the psychoanalytical experience in new ways. (Leuzinger-Bohleber and Fischmann 2014, 84; my translation)

It can be thus concluded that some novel epigenetic structures are reaching the level of the entire function system of science. A final example is constituted by the social sciences, where one can already find texts referring to epigenetic phenomena as objective phenomena, i.e., discursively alluded to as if their existence were already taken for granted: »[a]lthough molecular epigenetic research is highly biochemical, it is of interest to sociologists because some epigenetic changes are environmentally mediated and can persist across the life span or into further generations« (Landecker and Panofsky 2013, 334).

In the final section, I will comment on a completely different relation between epigenetics and sociology. Taking inspiration from Landecker and Panofsky's title (»From Social Structure to Gene Regulation, and Back«), I could have entitled this section »From a Waddingtonian epigenetic perspective to an Ederian epigenetic perspective, and back.«

An epigenetic thread from Waddington to Eder, via Piaget

A bibliographical search on relationships between the social sciences and epigenetics yields a publication titled »Learning and the Evolution of Social Systems: An *Epigenetic* Perspective« (my emphasis), written by Eder and published in 1987. Since the boom in the use of the terms »epigenetics« and »epigenetic« started in the 1990s, it is intriguing to find this occurrence of the adjective »epigenetic« in a sociological text dating from the 1980s. Because it includes some rather obscure sentences like the one claiming that »[t]he theory of epigenetic developments in evolution […] refers to developmental processes that decouple biological from genetic evolution« (Eder 1987, 1), the reader can get the impression that the author was not sufficiently familiar with the use and evolution of the term »epigenetic« in the biosciences. The sentence quoted here is troubling because of the odd expression »genetic evolution« and because everything which is

genetic can be considered to be a part of biology; it is thus difficult to understand how »biological« and »genetic« evolution could be decoupled. In any event, this understanding of the so-called theory of epigenetic developments in evolution seems to have inspired Eder to reflect on sociological evolutionary theory: he claimed that »[d]ecoupling evolutionary processes from genetic evolution is even more important for social evolution« (Eder 1987, 1). A paragraph later, Eder provides a reference which seems to be the origin of these reflections: Ho and Saunders, 1982.

The cited text, »The Epigenetic Approach to the Evolution of Organisms—With Notes on its Relevance to Social and Cultural Evolution« turns out to be a chapter of the book *Learning, Development and Culture* (Plotkin 1982a), and it does not seem an irrelevant coincidence to find in the same book, among what the editor »judge[d] to be classic pieces of writing« (Plotkin 1982b, x), an extract of Piaget's *Biology and Knowledge* (1971) as well as a text written by Waddington.

Returning to Ho and Saunders, their text sheds light on Eder's. For instance, the rather obscure »developmental processes that decouple biological from genetic evolution« seems to be a paraphrase of Ho and Saunders' claim that »[t]he existence of the epigenetic landscape is fully consistent with the effective *decoupling of genic from organismic evolution*« (Ho and Saunders 1982, 349; my italics), a sentence which makes so much more sense since it refers to the fact that, contrary to the gene-centric view of heredity and evolution, changes in genes do not always match changes in the organisms involved. Now, the »epigenetic landscape« to which they refer is a Waddingtonian invention (Goldberg, Allis, and Bernstein 2007). Indeed, in their presentation of »the epigenetic versus the genetic approach,« they seem quite informed about these two traditions of thought in the life sciences, and they refer to Waddington several times. It is then curious to find a theoretical thread from Waddington's (biological) epigenetics to Eder's (sociological) way of conceiving an »epigenetic« approach, via Ho and Saunders.

But this is not the end of the story. By claiming that there is an »analogy between evolution and cognitive processes,« Ho and Saunders (1982, 353) cite Piaget (1979). Thus, not only is their text an original contribution to

a book containing reprinted fragments by Waddington and Piaget: they cite these two thinkers, manifesting a theoretical thread between a biological Waddingtonian approach, via a learning-related Piagetian approach, to their text, which Eder used as a bridge to arrive at his sociological perspective.

Yet there is even more to the story, for there are three important points to be made about the text by Piaget included in the same book. (1) It is explicitly based on Waddingtonian ideas: Piaget applies, for instance, the concepts of »genetic assimilation« (Piaget 1982, 150), explicitly taken from Waddington (Piaget 1971, 4), and »epigenotype« (Piaget 1982, 148), coined—or at least used earlier—by Waddington (Haig 2004, 67). (2) It reveals a connection between Piaget the biologist influenced by Waddington on the one hand and Piaget the cognitive theorist on the other (it is not simply a coincidence that the book in which this text was first printed was *Biology and Knowledge*). And (3) it reveals the origin of such Piagetian notions as »assimilation,« »accommodation,« »equilibrium,« or »adaptation,« which were all influenced by Waddington, and which Piaget was going to employ both in his biological evolutionary reflections and in his learning theory. As already pointed out, the link between these notions and the realm of cognition and learning was to be influential for a sociological equilibrium theory of systemic learning and evolution. The following quotes are particularly illustrative regarding points (1) and (3). By criticizing Lamarckism and its »indefinite power of accommodation,« as well as what Piaget called »mutationism,« implying »assimilation without accommodation,« Piaget claimed that a »third solution at last appeared in the form of *Waddington's* synthesis; now the genetic system is seen as being *adaptive* in itself, in the precise sense that there is an *equilibrium* between *assimilation* and *accommodation*« (Piaget 1982, 148; my italics). The following quote about »differentiated and more or less refined mechanisms of *equilibration*« illustrates point (2): »[t]hese are, in fact, regulations which, even in their details, present *striking isomorphisms between the organic and the cognitive domains*« (Piaget 1982, 150; my italics).

The thread from the Waddingtonian biological epigenetic perspective to the Ederian sociological epigenetic perspective is then complete, going

via Piaget's biological and learning-related epigenetic perspective. Eder actually employs the term »epigenetic« in more recent sociological texts related to learning in such a way that its divergence from the current field of epigenetics is evident (e.g., Eder 1999,[5] 2006). Eder himself was probably the diverging point between the line of reflection by thinkers such as Ho and Saunders on the one hand and Eder's own understanding of »epigenetic« on the other. Nevertheless, the idea that the sociological framework employed here to examine epigenetics could share an origin with epigenetics itself invites one to point out this almost playful circularity.

Conclusion

In this paper, I adopted a sociological perspective to reflect on the history of epigenetics. I drew upon some theoretical insights provided by Mölders (2011): (1) a sociological learning-theoretical approach about learning in the function system of science conceived as an equilibration process at the level of disciplinary communication communities, and (2) an evolution-theoretical approach about the way in which learned structures reach the level of the entire function system of science, in an attempt to answer the questions »Is it possible to identify disciplinary communication communities learning about epigenetics?,« »Does the development of epigenetics correspond to a Piagetian equilibration process?,« and »Have novel epigenetic structures reached the level corresponding to science as an entire function system?«

Despite the plausibility of identifying disciplinary communication communities which have learned epigenetic structures, and interpreting some episodes of their history as Piagetian phases, in the case of epigenetics a sociological evolutionary analysis concerning the entire systemic level of science seems more feasible and pertinent for the following reasons. First, the realm of biosciences, constituted by rapidly diversified and »partially overlapping« subfields, makes the task of delimiting disciplinary commu-

5 »This evolution is based—in contrast with natural evolution which rests on genetic evolution—on ›epigenetic‹ processes which we call cultural evolution. Epigenesis is a concept that refers to learning as a mechanism secondary to natural evolution« (Eder 1999, 195).

nication communities difficult. Second, the kind of knowledge associated with the term »epigenetics« seems to have emerged outside of any preexisting disciplinary communication community: epigenetics could even be said to be a response to a problematic void between certain disciplinary communities. Finally, epigenetics seems to concern the entire systemic level of science from the very beginning because it has always transcended the dominant internal differentiation of this system.

From an evolution-theoretical perspective inspired by the one proposed by Mölders, one can claim that several (theoretical and methodological) structures coming from epigenetics have been successfully selected beyond the boundaries of disciplines, both within biosciences and beyond, through citation in scientific publications. In this sense, it can be claimed that an epigenetic shift has reached the function system of science. Actually, some novel structures drawing upon Waddingtonian epigenetics seem to have been selected by a chain of authors reaching sociologists such as Eder, nourishing in turn the learning-related evolution-theoretical line of sociology. In this sense, one can say that it is possible to apply an »epigenetic« (sociological) approach when analyzing the way in which science has selected epigenetic structures.

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Secularization as historical struggle

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Debating the term secularization

At the latest with the rise of Islamist terrorist groups, religion has again become one of the most-debated topics in Western public discourse. This was not always the case. For a long time, it was supposed that religion would decline and eventually vanish completely in the course of modernization. This assumption is known as secularization, and it may well be one of the oldest master narratives in the humanities. Having existed in sociology since the very beginning in Comte's law of the three stages, albeit under different names and versions, the concept can be found in the works of almost all of the founding fathers of the discipline. Hans Joas even goes so far as to critically understand the paradigm of »modernity without religion« as one of the founding myths of sociology (Joas 2012, 605–6).

However, secularization theory has recently been put on the defensive. As again Joas puts it, even those who still support the hypothesis of a causal relationship between modernity and secularization have to admit that they are the minority (Joas 2012, 606–7). The critiques are manifold. Indeed, doubt about the concept was already voiced in the 1960s, and in the ensuing debate an immense variety of theories was developed instead. Even some explicit theories of de-secularization have emerged (e.g., Berger 1999). One might follow Gorski (2000) in distinguishing an »old paradigm« of secularization from a »new paradigm« of religious vitality. As a result, there is such a confusing multitude of meanings of the terms secularization and secularity that it is hardly possible to get an overview. The three very different approaches to systematizing the use of the term by José Casanova (1994), Karel Dobbelaere (2004), and Friedrich Fürstenberg (1994) may

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give an impression of the huge and diverse body of scholarship produced under the banner of secularization.

The stances taken against and in favor of the secularization theorem are legion.[1] Two things are remarkable about the debate. First, it often seems as if empirical observations are passed off as theory (e.g., this seems to be the case in Berger 1999). Second, the debate is often polarized. As Fox (2008, 30) rightly notes, »the past prominence of modernization-secularization theory can easily place any discussion of the changing role of religion in modern times into a simplistic format where secularization is occurring or it is not. Yet, there seems to be a growing realization that this dichotomy does not reflect reality.«[2]

Several scholars have proposed studying secularization from a conflict-centered perspective in recent years as a way to overcome the secularization/sacralization dichotomy. Smith (2003) proposes examining secularization from the perspective of social movement theory. Karstein et al. (2006) and Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux (2009) study the relationship between the state and religion in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the perspective of a struggle over ideology. For Borutta (2010, 347), »secularization was a product of the European Culture Wars.« Stolz (2013) proposes a »theory of religious-secular competition.« Quack (2013) suggests constructing a religion-related field in order to grasp the competition between religious and non-religious actors. And Fox (2015)

1 To cite only a few examples: Berger 1999; Bruce 2011; Casanova 1994, 2006, 2009; P. Jenkins 2002; Pollack 2013, 2003; Riesebrodt 2001; Stark 1999; Thomas 2007.

2 Maybe this polarization of the debate corresponds with the phenomenon that religion itself is fundamentally ambivalent (cf. Appleby 2000; cf. Schäfer 2004). This ambivalence is also reflected outside academia and even outside of the religious field, for instance in the 1983 German punk rock song »Religion« by Slime and its 2004 cover by Jesus Skins, with Slime stating that »religion means oppression, religion is opium for the people, religion has killed millions of people« [trans. SMS] and Jesus Skins asserting that »religion is no oppression, religion is like free beer for the people, religion has saved millions of people« [trans. SMS].

takes a competition perspective on the relation between politics and religion in the context of an impressive *World Survey of Religion and the State* (Fox 2008).

Each of these approaches focuses on different »aspects of religion« (Fox 2008, 2). While Karstein et al. (2006), Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux (2009), and Fox (2008, 2015) take a close look at the relation between the state and religion, Smith (2003) and Borutta (2010) mainly take a historical perspective on conflicts between intellectuals and religious actors for public influence.[3] Stolz (2013) focuses on the individual demand for religious goods, which is challenged by non-religious suppliers, and Quack (2013) tries to grasp, among other things, the relation between actively atheist groups and religious convictions.

If a conflict-centered approach can fruitfully be applied to such a diverse range of aspects, then it seems likely that a more comprehensive approach to secularization based on the conflict perspective can be of some use in order to understand the complex phenomenon of religious change with its different aspects and regional specificities. In the first section, I will present such an approach quite briefly (cf. for the detailed development of the approach Schlerka 2016). Then, I will show that the approach itself is not complete until it is historicized. Finally, I will look back, draw some conclusions, and point to perspectives for further research and possible theoretical byproducts of empirical studies based on the approach presented here.

Conceptualizing secularization as struggle

Bourdieu's praxeology is a suitable option as the theoretical basis of a general approach on secularization from the conflict perspective for three reasons. First, it has a keen eye on social conflict, most notably in the field concept (cf. particularly Bourdieu 1988, 1995, 1996; for religion particularly Bourdieu 1987, 1991, 2011). Second, in light of studies revealing

3 This, however, does not mean that they practice what Smith (2003, 14) criticized as »an orientation (primarily among historians) of idealist intellectual history.«

that the religious landscape in the Global South is not only flourishing more than in the West (Norris and Inglehart 2004), but even expanding (P. Jenkins 2002), general social inequality seems to play a major role for secularization. Accordingly, praxeology not only accounts for power struggles in eigenlawful[4] fields, but—by means of the space model—also for social inequality in society as a whole (cf. particularly Bourdieu 2010, 1998). Finally, praxeology can be operationalized well for empirical research. This is evidenced by numerous research works based on a praxeological approach (a small selection of studies focusing on religion: Bremer, Vester, and Vögele 2002; Fer 2010; Kaden 2015; Karstein et al. 2006; Karstein 2013; Köhrsen 2016; Maduro 2005; Reddig 2012; Reuter 2014; Rey 1999; Seibert 2018; Schäfer 2015b; Suárez 2015).

An interesting starting point in praxeology is Bourdieu's little-known text about »the dissolution of the religious.«[5] In this text, Bourdieu describes—in some aspects quite similarly to Luckmann (1967)—the dissolution of institutionalized religion which takes place through a blurring of the borders of the religious field. According to him, »nowadays there is an imperceptible transition from the old school clergymen […] to cult members, psychoanalysts, psychologists, physicians (experts in psychosomatics, alternative practitioners), sexologists, teachers of diverse forms of bodily expression and of Asian martial arts, life counselors, social workers« (Bourdieu 2011, 245; trans. SMS). This, in turn, is the result of »struggles for the enforcement of a legitimate definition of both the religious and the different ways of fulfilling the religious role« (Bourdieu 2011, 243; trans. SMS).

Based on this short text, Astrid Reuter (2014) conducted a detailed study on legal conflicts over religion in Germany that interprets such legal

4 The term »eigenlawfulness« as a translation of Weber's Eigengesetzlichkeit was proposed by Seibert (2018, 135n150).

5 Originally, the text was a conference talk given in 1982. The French original was first published as »Le champ religieux dans le champ de production symbolique« in 1985 (Bourdieu 1985). To the best of my knowledge, there is no English translation. Thus, in the present article I refer to the German translation (Bourdieu 2011).

conflicts and public controversies as struggles about the boundaries of the religious field. In a theoretical conclusion (Reuter 2014, 284–93), she rightly states that not only religious actors are involved in struggles about the boundaries of the religious field, but actors from a diverse range of fields, e.g., the fields of politics, science, and law. Furthermore, she states that those actors not only stem from different fields, but also from »different social levels: as representatives of state order and civil society dynamics, as private individuals or as representatives of religious communities or political coalitions of interests, as pupils or teachers, as scientists or as journalistic observers and reporters, as judges, lawyers, etc.« (Reuter 2014, 286; trans. SMS). She criticizes that the two-dimensional field model as proposed by Bourdieu is not suitable for portraying field-external actors and the different social levels. In consequence, she proposes developing the field model into a three-dimensional religious space, similar to Bourdieu's social space.

However, Reuter stays quite vague at this point and does not give concrete advice for empirically modeling such a religious space, which is why it is difficult to assess her proposal. While it is certainly true that the field model as such cannot represent either the actors external to the field or the different »social levels,« this is not even necessary. The scope of the field model is to give an account of the state of power relations between actors involved in eigenlawful »games« at a given moment in time. Its purpose is not to model each and every aspect of the social, nor—as a synchronous model—is its purpose to model the struggle dynamics between the actors (cf. Schäfer 2018; forthcoming). Both aspects are better captured by qualitative work focusing on the concrete dynamics of the struggle between religious and non-religious actors. This is what Reuter herself does in the quoted study. Furthermore, including the actors external to the field in the model would probably run into the very same problem that Wohlrab-Sahr and Kaden (2013, 200–201) criticize in Karstein et al. (2006) and Quack (2013). This problem lies in the difficulty of identifying an *illusio* and *nomos* that is common to all actors in this field and at the same time distinct from the ones of their respective »home

fields.« In consequence, it seems more reasonable to me to stay with the two-dimensional religious field.

In field-theoretical terms, what Bourdieu means in his above-quoted text when referring to »the legitimate definition of both the religious and the different ways of fulfilling the religious role« (Bourdieu 2011, 243; trans. SMS) is most probably the *nomos* concept. However, this term does not appear in Bourdieu's own take on the religious field as developed in two articles from 1971 (Bourdieu 1991, 1987; original: Bourdieu 1971a, 1971b). These two articles represent a rather early stage of the field concept, its »first rigorous formulation,« after which »the theory of fields […] was thus gradually elaborated« (Bourdieu 1995, 182). The most sophisticated and complete formulation of the field concept can be found in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1995), where Bourdieu writes about the French literary field in the nineteenth century. Here, the *nomos* plays an important role. It is defined as »the fundamental law of the field, the principle of vision and division (*nomos*) defining the artistic field (etc.) *as such*, meaning as the site of art as art« (Bourdieu 1995, 223).

Building on this version of the field concept, Leif Seibert (2010, 2018) developed a reconceptualization of the religious field. In line with Bourdieu's advice to »avoid the positivist mistake of pre-definition« (Bourdieu 2011, 244; trans. SMS), Seibert refrains from giving a final definition of religion in order to develop a working concept as a tool »to decide what to look for and what to ignore« that is at the same time »open for revisions on the grounds of the empirical data« (Seibert 2018, 38). Besides three other aspects, he derives from Juergensmeyer (2003) »the reference of transcendent causality« as a »criterion that allows to distinguish religious and irreligious practice« (Seibert 2018, 39–40).[6]

6 The other three aspects in contrast serve to further understanding: »systematicity, reflexivity, and esteem are criteria that foster sociological understanding of the believer's accounts; the consideration of the aesthetical fit of interpretations and experiences aims for conclusions on the guiding principles of these accounts; and the potential for contingency management allows for a functional explanation« (Seibert 2018, 40).

As I already mentioned above, a field is a model for the analysis of eigenlawful conflicts. This immediately leads to two questions: Who is struggling, and what are they struggling about? In order to answer both questions, it is important to distinguish between specialists or performers and laypeople. Seibert (2018, 218) notes in this regard that »the combatants—or players—of the field are the religious performers, i.e., functionaries and specialists in control of the means of religious production,« while »the religious audience is excluded from the actual game.« However, even without directly participating the laypeople still play an important role, since their belief is the object of the struggle. Thus, religious capital in Seibert (2018, 221–34) is conceived as a sort of social capital that is composed of two aspects, »complexity« and »credibility.« Both of these aspects can be constructed as statistical variables from survey data. The former refers to the »logarithmic proportion between performers and audience« (Seibert 2018, 224). The latter refers to »religious authenticity« (Seibert 2018, 227), that is, closeness to the actual semantic content of the religious *nomos*.

The »question for the actual content of the religious *nomos* is synonymous with the question for ›true‹ religion« (Seibert 2018, 228). In empirical work, this content can be assessed by qualitative analysis. Since the field is actually a battlefield, its *nomos*—and thus the very definition of what is at stake—is always the object of struggles. Thus, »the demarcations between legitimate religion and illegitimate superstition« (Seibert 2018, 228) are by no means static in a given society, but always subject to change, depending on the struggles fought around these demarcations. In other words, what we arrive at here is exactly what Bourdieu stated in the text on the »dissolution of the religious« discussed above. In contrast to Bourdieu's short text as well as other studies that are based on it, however, the foundation in Seibert provides not only a consistent theoretical framework that goes beyond a merely metaphorical use of the concepts, but also a good deal of operationalizability for empirical work.

However, religious specialists are not the only ones interested in the definition of religion. Put in Bourdieusian terms, »the *illusio*, i.e. the belief in the relevance of the religious game […] applies to both participants of

the game and non-participants—though, of course, not in the same way« (Seibert 2018, 386). And if laypeople—who can be specialists in any field other than the religious—deem religion relevant, then they will likely also develop their own ideas of what legitimate religion looks like. Notably, those ideas might differ from those held by religious specialists. Having an idea about what religion looks like also implies having an idea of what religion does *not* look like, which means that we are dealing with the boundaries between religion and non-religion. In other words, what we arrive at here is precisely what Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2012) refer to with their conception of secularity.

Following these considerations I define secularism as normative ideas that non-religious actors[7] have about what legitimate religious praxis ought to look like.[8] Furthermore, they try to impose those secularist ideas on the religious actors (cf. Schlerka 2016, 124). It is important to note that at this point, I go beyond the first formulation of the approach, in which I used this definition to define the term »secularity.« However, for reasons of conceptual clarity and in reference to Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2012), »secularism« seems to fit better. This shift in terms opens the space for defining secularity in a way that is closer to both Bourdieu's relational epistemology and, at the same time, the »multiple secularities« approach (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012; Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr, and Middell 2015; Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2017), namely as the actual power-laden relation between secularist and religious actors, if and insofar as the religious actors in question have adapted their praxis to

7 It is important to keep in mind that the term »religious actor« refers to specialists. Thus, the term »non-religious actor« does not mean that the respective actor would not hold any religious beliefs—it merely means that they are not professionals participating in any kind of religious production.

8 For reasons of academic honesty, it has to be mentioned that this is a modified version of Luhmann's concept of secularization, according to which the question of religion and secularity depends on the observer. Secularization, according to Luhmann, is the mode in which religious observers perceive their non-religious environment under conditions of functional differentiation (cf. Luhmann 1977, 225–71).

secularist ideas. Secularization, then, can be defined as the (voluntary or forced) adaptation of a single actor's religious praxis to secularism (cf. Schlerka 2016, 124).

Empirical examples of such struggles about the definition of legitimate religious praxis can be found in Manuel Borutta (2010) and Astrid Reuter (2014). Writing about the cultural struggles (*Kulturkämpfe*) between liberals and the Roman Catholic church in Germany and Switzerland during the nineteenth century, Borutta (2010, 376; trans. SMS) concludes that most liberals »stood up for a particular understanding of religion that assigned it a specific place and a defined meaning. They declared religion to be a private matter and demanded a separation of politics and religion into autonomous spheres in which reason and knowledge or belief should be dominant.« Similarly, Reuter (2014)—with explicit reference to Bourdieu's above-quoted text »the dissolution of the religious«—interprets legal conflicts about religion in Germany (namely about crucifixes, female teachers wearing the Muslim headscarf, and denominational religious education in public schools) as »definitional political disputes about what religion is and what its societal role is« that were fought by »actors from different societal fields« (Reuter 2014, 271; trans. SMS).

If secularization is about the legitimate meaning of religion, then this meaning as well as the ideas of the actors can be assessed for different aspects of religious praxis. Probably the most relevant aspects for secularization are the three meanings of the term identified by Casanova (1994), namely differentiation, privatization, and religious decline. I understand these three terms as different dimensions of secularization. In all three dimensions, what is considered as legitimately religious and what is not depends on the religious *nomos*. As a result, secularisms as well as religious praxis may be analyzed according to the dimensions in which they make claims. From a discussion of several approaches, each of which focuses mainly on one of these dimensions,[9] I drew the conclusion that each of

9 I examined Luhmann (1977) and Habermas (2001) concerning differentiation, Luckmann (1967) and Casanova (1994) regarding privatization, and finally, for religious decline, Thomas (2007) and Riesebrodt (2001). See the first chapter of Schlerka 2016, 5-47.

these three terms has to be differentiated further. More specifically, it is possible to distinguish two aspects of each dimension (Schlerka 2016, 81–127).

First, differentiation has to be differentiated further. Its first aspect is the autonomy of the religious field. This aspect refers to the degree of freedom from non-religious influences, for example, secularist politics that try to regulate religious praxis by means of law. A good example of the effects of secularism targeting autonomy is the largest German mosque association, DİTİB (*Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği*). Founded in 1985, it stands in a complex relationship of dependency to the Turkish state's Presidency for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), which was founded in 1924 as a means of establishing state control over religion (cf. for DİTİB and its relationship to Diyanet Gorzewski 2015; cf. for Diyanet Zürcher 2017, 188–196; Fox 2008, 246–247) that is difficult to assess. As Theresa Beilschmidt (2015, 180–183) has shown, this entanglement with the state corroborates DİTİB's credibility in the eyes of the laity of Turkish origin in Germany. In relation to the German state, however, it is rather problematic, since the German state requires religious organizations to have a high degree of autonomy and independence from state influence if it is to support them. The consequences for DİTİB can be seen, for instance, in the issue of religious education in public schools. Since in Germany, according to the Basic Law, the state cannot set a curriculum for religious education, it is argued that allowing DİTİB to do so could possibly mean granting the Turkish state rights in Germany that the German state itself does not possess (cf. Gorzewski 2015, 51–53 and 181–183). Other examples include the concepts of »government involvement in religion« and »separation of religion and state« used by Fox (2008), as well as the »dilemma of the right to religious freedom« described by Reuter (2014, 88–99).

The other aspect of differentiation comprises the expansivity of religious sociodicies. I conceptualize the term »sociodicy« more broadly than

Bourdieu himself[10] as a normative principle of capital distribution that may work either as a legitimatizing myth or as a promise of social ascent (cf. Schlerka 2016, 97–105). Examples of sociodicies could be »billionaires are what they are because of their hard work,« »good education leads to professional success« or, in a religious context, the Calvinist predestination doctrine described by Weber ([1920] 2001). Sociodicies may be analyzed according to the three criteria of (1) the *agency* they grant the individual to ascend, (2) their *inclusivity*, that is the premises they postulate for social ascent, and (3) their *expansivity* toward other capital sorts, that is, whether they are prone to be transferred to other fields by means of homology or metaphor (Schlerka 2016, 103–4). In the context of the secularization debate, perhaps the most striking issue in this regard is militant fundamentalism, which, according to Fox (2008, 24), »can be traced to this desire to reform the world in their religion's image.« This means nothing else than expansivity of a religious sociodicy toward all other capital sorts. Since in other fields an expansive sociodicy is a heterodox claim to power, this operation very likely leads to further conflict.

The privatization dimension can be disaggregated in a similar way. Here, the first aspect would be the individualization of contents of faith. This refers to what Luckmann (1967, 99) suggested when he wrote that »the individual may choose from the assortment of ›ultimate‹ meanings as he sees fit.« At the other end of this spectrum, there are the church or church-like organizations that prescribe a set dogma. The tension between the two poles is shown by Hubert Knoblauch (2003), for instance, who gives an example of this when writing that, since churches in Europe often are powerful enough to define what is considered religion and what is not, »alternative forms of religion« are often »classified under the label of New Age« (Knoblauch 2003, 271).

The other aspect of privatization is the private/public distinction, which Casanova (1994) referred to with his term »public religion.« Besides Casanova himself, there are plenty of empirical examples of this aspect.

10 To him, a sociodicy is a »justification of society, of the established order« (Bourdieu 2000, 71n18).

Consider for example the quotation from Borutta (2010, 376) given above, stating that in the *Kulturkämpfe* most liberals strove to restrict religion to the private sphere. Or Reuter (2014), who interprets the legal conflicts that she analyzed in terms of which role religion should play in the public sphere. A further example can be found in Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux (2009, 299–301) where they emphasize that in the GDR the boundary between the private and public sphere also marked the boundary between what could and could not be spoken about.

Finally, for religious decline it is important to note that I conceptualize the performance of religious praxis as solving laypeople's problems.[11] The definition of *what* those problems may be and *which* solutions are available for them depends empirically on the semantic content of the religious *nomos*. Thus, it is intentional that the two terms are not defined more closely. What is important for the secularization issue, however, is the fact that problems, whatever they may consist of, are neither historically invariant nor do religious actors enjoy a monopoly on offering solutions. Rather, laypeople's problems may change, and there may be other, non-religious specialists (e.g., philosophers, psychologists, the welfare state) that offer solutions to the same problems. Thus, when looking at religious decline there are two aspects: first, changing problems and second, competition by non-religious actors. Those two aspects are well-established in the sociology of religion. Besides Stolz (2013), who focuses on the aspect of competition between religious and non-religious actors, there are many more examples for both aspects. First, from an explicitly conflict-centered perspective, Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux (2009) emphasize

11 Here, I am again very close to Luhmann, for whom the performance of religion is to claim »responsibilities for ›residual problems‹ or personal burdens and fates […] that are produced but not dealt with in other functional systems« (Luhmann 1977, 58; trans. SMS); original: »Zuständigkeiten für ›Restprobleme‹ oder Personbelastungen und Schicksale […], die in anderen Funktionssystemen erzeugt, aber nicht behandelt werden.« (ibid.)

the role of the *Jugendweihe*[12] in the conflict between the churches and the socialist state in the GDR. Another interesting example of both aspects is given by Andrew Abbott (1980), who describes for America in the period 1875–1935, first, a shift in the interpretation of everyday problems in the direction of psychiatry and, second, the competition between psychiatrists and pastoral counseling. Still another example can be found in Schäfer (2015b), who analyzes the role that Pentecostalism played as well as the problems and solutions offered by religious praxis for different social strata in the Guatemalan civil war.

To summarize briefly, all three dimensions of secularization mentioned by Casanova (1994)—differentiation, privatization, religious decline—are covered by the *secularization as struggle* approach. Further, each of them can be disaggregated into two aspects. Differentiation may either indicate the religious actors' freedom from field-external compromise, their autonomy, or it may indicate the confinement of religious sociodicies to the religious field. Privatization can mean an individual compilation of contents of faith, or it can denote a limitation of religious praxis to the private sphere. Religious decline finally may be due to laypeople's changing problems or it may be caused by competition between religious and non-religious actors. For all of the aspects mentioned, what is considered legitimate and what is not depends on the actual semantic content of the religious *nomos,* which is always an object of struggle.

Since the direction these struggles take depends on the actual power of the actors involved, it is difficult to make predictions about their outcomes. It is, however, possible to pose hypotheses. First, social structure is one of the key elements giving the struggles their context. As both Norris and Inglehart (2004) and P. Jenkins (2002) conclude from their empirical findings, religion »is flourishing wonderfully among the poor and persecuted, while it atrophies among the rich and secure« (P. Jenkins 2002, 220). Thus, it seems reasonable to pose the hypothesis that secularist

12 The *Jugendweihe* was a non-religious *rite de passage* for young people, which in the GDR was offered by the socialist state as an alternative to Christian confirmation.

actors enjoy better opportunities in wealthy societies. Second, with a view to America as described by Smith (2003) and Germany as described by Borutta (2010), it seems that a coalition of intellectuals and mass media can act as powerful secularist actors. This is hardly surprising, since those two sectors today play the main role in maintaining and transmitting cultural values. Third, the role of the state is somewhat ambivalent. While a glance at the example of the GDR (cf. Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux 2009; Karstein et al. 2006; Karstein 2013) might suggest that the state can be an extremely powerful secularist actor, things become more complicated on closer inspection. In terms of theory, in Bourdieu it is not clear whether the state may count as an actor at all. In contrast, in his lectures *On the State* (Bourdieu 2014) he speaks of the state as a »principle of orthodoxy,« as »that which founds the logical conformity and moral conformity of the social world, and in this way, the fundamental consensus on the meaning of the social world that is the very precondition of conflict over the social world« (Bourdieu 2014, 4). Seen like this, the state could rather be understood as a powerful tool that secularist actors may use.

In the preceding paragraphs, I outlined a conflict-centered approach on secularization phenomena based on praxeological field theory. From a discussion of Bourdieu's text on the »dissolution of the religious« (Bourdieu 2011), I took as a starting point the idea that secularization is a matter of the legitimate meaning of being religious, or in field-theoretical terms: of the religious field's *nomos*. Then, I outlined Seibert's (2018) reformulation of the religious field based on Bourdieu's most elaborated take on the field in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1995), which serves as the basis for the »secularization as struggle« approach. According to this approach, the three dimensions of the term secularization as formulated by Casanova (1994)—differentiation, privatization, and religious decline—are seen as aspects of religious praxis. Thus, they all depend on the legitimate meaning of religion, the religious field's *nomos*, which is always the object of struggle not only between religious specialists, but also between religious and non-religious actors. Seen like this, secularization can be conceptualized as the adaptation of a religious actor's praxis to

the normative ideas that non-religious actors have about the legitimate meaning of religion. This conceptualization implies that what not only religion but also secularity actually mean is not fixed once and for all but an object of struggle. This is very much in line with the »multiple secularities« approach formulated by Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2012), who claim that the meaning of secularity varies between different societies. In contrast to the latter approach, however, »secularization as struggle« makes use of the term secularization. In other words, it refers to a process without specifying its actual content. This, in turn, means that the approach must be taken on a diachronic level.

Combining sociological theory with historical research

In the previous section, I focused on sociological theory and exemplified the »secularization as struggle« approach by reference to empirical research. However, sociology alone cannot provide a sufficiently good account of phenomena of secularization. Rather, it has to be supplemented with a historical perspective. Originally, I treated the issue of history only marginally in the context of religious decline because of laypeople's problems changing over time (cf. Schlerka 2016, 112–13). However, a closer look at the approach reveals that the historical aspects reach deeper. There are at least three reasons for a historicization of the approach presented.

The first reason to adopt a historical perspective is that often an illusionary past is used in a kind of straw man argument. One critique of such tendencies in secularization theory can be found in Smith (2003, 17–19), who names the »strong tendency to romanticize a religious past as a ›golden era‹ from which modern religious and nonreligious actors have fallen« (Smith 2003, 17) as one shortcoming of traditional secularization theory. As Gorski (2000, 143) shows, another version of this, claiming a less religious past, can be found in rational choice-influenced research postulating increasing religiosity in modernity. However, as Gorski argues, historical reality is more complex and shows ambivalent trends in different aspects of religion. In order to detect these different facets, he pleads for a historicization of the research on secularization. In a similar

vein, Pollack (2010) criticizes that both advocates and adversaries of the secularization hypothesis tend to construct an image of history in favor of their »side« in the secularization debate. Thus, in order to advance research on secularization, he also demands historicization.

Second, there is the conflict-centered perspective that strongly calls for historicization. The field model, as Seibert (2018, 251–53) rightly states, can only account for the synchronous configuration of power relations between actors. While this does not mean that the aspect of time is irrelevant in the model—rather, credibility as the potential for further mobilization points toward the future, complexity as the result of accomplished mobilization to the past, and the actor's positions to the present state of affairs—»a truly diachronic perspective could only be gained via longitudinal studies, i.e. a succession of different field models« (Seibert 2018, 251). However, »it is in the very struggle that the history of the field is made; it is through struggles that it is temporalized« (Bourdieu 1995, 157). Since Bourdieu's work is often received as rather static, further theoretical work is necessary.

The third reason is a little more complex. It is a result of the definitions of secularism, secularity, and secularization I gave above. In order to avoid historical teleology and to open the space for a dynamic, conflict-centered perspective on secularity and secularization, I defined each of the terms formally. The actual semantic content of the religious field's nomos, of secularist ideas, and of the adaptation processes that do or do not happen between the two is not inscribed in the terms themselves and thus has to be determined empirically. For example, from the theoretical terms alone it is intentionally impossible to tell whether complete autonomy of religious actors or state control over religion is »more secular.« This is also true of the other dimensions: the meaning of which concrete praxis counts as secular and which one does not is not covered by the theoretical approach itself, but must be determined empirically. This enables one to take not only privatization and religious decline as options, but also even differentiation itself. Thus, this approach avoids conceptualizing differentiation in the way that Hans Joas (2012), echoing David Martin, criticized as being a »dangerous noun of process.« This need to fill the

formal terms with empirical content, however, has some consequences at the theoretical level.

In order to go into these consequences, it makes sense to begin by examining the relations between the terms. This can be done in one sentence: *Secularity* is the result of secularization, and *secularization* is the adaptation of religious praxis to *secularism*. What becomes visible here is that each of the three terms derives its meaning from its relation to other terms. Following this perspective, one may ask about the consequences of removing terms from the formula. (1) Analyzing *secularity without secularization* would risk running into a problem: even if a perfect fit between secularism and religious praxis were the result of such an analysis, it still would remain unclear whether religious praxis adapted to secularism or vice versa (a possibility that always has to be taken into account as well). Thus, it would remain unclear what makes this secularity specifically secular. (2) Studying *secularization without secularity*, in contrast, would be possible—although this would require a rather strange research design taking account of transformation processes while ignoring their results. (3) Research on *secularization without secularism* would blindly run into a severe problem: it would be unclear by what virtue this alleged secularization is secular. The reason is that the term secularization is defined as a process of adaptation toward secularism. Thus (4) *secularism without the other two terms*, finally, can be studied well, for example by means of discourse analysis. However, it is doubtful whether such an endeavor would be reasonable, since in this case the question of secularism's societal effectiveness would have to be left aside.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this short discussion of the relations between the terms: (1) The term secularity depends on both of the other terms; (2) the term secularization depends on secularism; and (3) the term secularism might be used as a standalone concept, but in this case research would run the risk of becoming an academic end in itself. The term that lies at the very heart of the approach is clearly secularization: it relates secularity and secularism and thereby, though in different ways, gives meaning to both. It makes secularity secular, and it accounts for the effects of secularist actors' actions. But since it refers to a process

in time, synchronous research based on the approach—the classic domain of empirical sociology—is at least problematic, since one cannot tell on a synchronous basis whether religious praxis adapted to secularism or vice versa. Thus, if the »secularization as struggle« approach is taken seriously, it calls for historical research by sociological means.

As a result of those three reasons that call for taking the approach on a diachronic level, the inability to supplement the approach with a historical perspective would mean that the »secularization as struggle« approach has failed. And the reader might indeed doubt whether it is possible to actually do the theoretical work necessary to incorporate a historical, truly diachronical perspective. After all, as was already mentioned, we are dealing with a theory of religious change based on Bourdieu, whose theory is often received as leaving little room for societal change (cf., most prominently, R. Jenkins 1992; for the reception in this regard see also Gorski 2013).

In contrast, I argue that there are at least three levels in Bourdieu in which change is possible (cf., in far more detail, Schlerka 2018). First, if the habitus concept is read in a dispositional way and related to concrete experiences (cf. Schäfer 2015a, 2018; forthcoming), the idea of constantly changing dispositions is much more plausible than the idea of a habitus fixed once and for all. Since Bourdieu clearly writes that the dispositions of the habitus are formed by experiences (cf. Bourdieu 1990, 53–60), in order to have a static conception of habitus one would have to specify a point in life when having experiences ends. Since such a point in life does not exist, I argue that habitus is in fact a dynamic concept (cf. Schlerka 2018, 6–8).

Second, the passing on of dispositions to younger generations and thus the reproduction of habitus in Bourdieu's theory is more problematic than often alleged. Rather, what is often referred to as »inheritance« of dispositions is the result of educational labor that never leads to perfect reproduction. Rather, there are always certain degrees of freedom that allow for intergenerational change. The two most important ones derive from the experience-centered conceptualization of habitus as well. First, children never have the exact same experiences as their parents and

teachers, and second, they experience a whole world apart from their parents, mainly through friends. Both of these factors mean that despite educational labor, dispositions, let alone entire configurations of dispositions (read: habitūs), can never be exactly reproduced. Even though the changes that happen in this way between different generations may be small, they exist and become more visible in long-term studies (cf. Schlerka 2018, 8–13).

Third, the potential for change is most obvious in the field concept with its strong focus on struggle. As I already mentioned, however, the field model itself cannot account for diachronic dynamics. Therefore, I propose modeling struggle as a series of events. In this conceptualization, an event is defined as anything that happens as long as an actor perceives it as an »invitation or threat« (Bourdieu 2010, 469) and reacts to it. The actor's reaction again may be perceived and reacted to by other actors, and so on. The concept of the event is related to the social structure through the concept of capital. Actors are located in social structures, which in Bourdieu are commonly modeled by field and space. Both models depict the distribution of different capital sorts. Thus, occupying a position in social structure means having a limited stock of capital at one's disposal. In order to act, and thus to (re-)act to an event, one must invest capital. This means that every (re-)action and thus every event in the series is endowed with a certain amount of capital. As a result, the series of events can also be read as a series of capital transfers, and thus as a series of changes in social structure (cf. Schlerka 2018, 13–19).

This way of reading Bourdieu can be made fruitful for »secularization as struggle.« While the change in dispositions, at least at first glance, seems to be of comparatively little interest for secularization, intergenerational change and especially the struggles are of great interest. Regarding the former, the empirical examples once more stem from Germany. First, there are Germany's two largest mosque associations of Turkish origin: the above-mentioned DİTİB and *Islamische Gemeinschaft Millî Görüş* (IGMG). Both Schiffauer (2010) for IGMG and Gorzewski (2015) for DİTİB evidence that there was a change in the scope and structure of services offered as well as the aim of the organizations. Both relate those changes

to the emergence of the »second migrant generation,« born in Germany and not having experienced migration themselves. Their findings indicate that intergenerational change may bring about profound changes in the religious praxis of actors. Second, the excellent work on the conflict between state and churches in the GDR by Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt- Lux (2009) has to be mentioned. They conducted interviews with three different familial generations and found a considerable difference in religiosity between them, even if a certain »secularity« is passed on to the next generation (cf. Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux 2009, 137–66). Furthermore, especially their findings on the oldest generation, which had to adapt to the new conditions in the GDR, and the youngest, which had to do the same in united Germany after the end of the GDR indicate that dispositional change—or ageing—is more relevant for secularization than it first seemed.

All these examples point to two issues: events and struggle. To begin with, the two mosque associations changed in order to be more attractive for laity belonging to the »second migrant generation,« which is differentiated from the »first generation« by reference to an experienced event, namely migration. Also, the family generations in the study on the GDR differ according to events that they experienced: the establishment and fall of the GDR, and the conflict between the socialist state and the churches. This conflict could be modeled as a series of events. However, constructing such a model would require the collection and evaluation of a lot of additional data, for instance a detailed sequence of actions or data on the capital stock of the actors, and hence would easily go beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, the construction of a model of secularization as a series of events has to remain a desideratum for now.

Concluding remarks

In the first section of this paper I presented my approach of »secularization as struggle.« Based on Bourdieu's praxeology, it provides a conflict-centered perspective on secularization processes that incorporates the aspects of several other approaches that view secularization from a conflict-centered perspective (Borutta 2010; Fox 2008, 2015; Karstein et al. 2006; Karstein

2013; Quack 2013; Smith 2003; Stolz 2013; Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux 2009). I provided consistent definitions of secularism, secularity, and secularization that, true to Bourdieu's relational epistemology, derive their theoretical meaning from their interrelatedness. The central aspect of the approach is the struggle for the nomos of the religious field, that is, the principle of legitimate religious praxis. For this central aspect, I gave the examples of Reuter (2014), who focuses on legal conflicts about religion in Germany, and Borutta (2010), whose subject is the *Kulturkämpfe* in nineteenth-century Germany and Switzerland. Then, I argued that religious praxis—and thus also secularisms—can be assessed referring to the three modes of use of the term secularization given by Casanova (1994): differentiation, privatization, and religious decline. Next, I put forward that each of those three »dimensions of secularization« (Schlerka 2016) can be further differentiated, and I gave empirical examples of each of those aspects. This differentiation serves not only to cover a wide range of meanings of the term secularization, but also to provide a clearer view of complex phenomena such as government-controlled religion that is not used for political legitimation but refrains from making statements about anything other than affairs internal to the religious field. Without distinguishing between autonomy and expansivity and relying on a single term of differentiation, such a configuration could seem quite paradoxical.

In the second section I showed that »secularization as struggle« has to be supplemented with a historical perspective. I showed that there are three reasons to do this. First, in order to avoid historical generalizations and over-simplification; second, to take seriously the dynamics implied in a conflict-centered perspective; third and finally, as a result of the relational framework of terms in the approach. By discussing the relations between the terms, I showed that the heart of the concept is the term secularization, since it gives meaning to both of the other terms, namely secularity and secularism. As a consequence, the advantages of »secularization as struggle« come at the price of the necessity to combine sociological theory with historical research. Although there might be doubts whether the anchoring in Bourdieu's praxeology allows for such an endeavor, I

argue that in fact the transformational aspect in Bourdieu's theory is stronger than the reproductional, and that the latter is rather an empirical result than a theoretical property. Again, by reference to other scholars, I gave examples of change in dispositions, of intergenerational change, and finally I referred to the modeling of a series of events with a focus on secularization, albeit without being able to present such a model in this paper.

The approach to historicizing research on secularization from a conflict-centered perspective that I sketched here opens one's view for further questions that bear some relevance for the analysis of secularization processes. There are three issues that in my opinion deserve particular attention. The first one is the question whether the eigenlawfulness of fields implies what one might call *eigentemporalities*. Even if the passages on this are scarce and quite obscure, Bourdieu himself provides some indications on this. One of these passages is *in Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1995, 255–56), where he writes about different »life-cycles« that characterize fields. Following this indication, one might ask about the actors' capability to quickly adapt to changes in their environment. For secularization it could prove quite significant if, for instance, scientific, mass media, or political actors were able to change and adapt more quickly than religious actors to changes in society overall. The second issue directly follows from the first and concerns the question for temporal strategies. This aspect is also mentioned in Bourdieu, especially in those passages that deal with gift exchange (e.g., Bourdieu 2000, 191–202). However, without a truly diachronic model, it is difficult to assess the scope and effect of such temporal strategies. In contrast, the model of the series of events might be of some help here. This issue could become meaningful for secularization, for example when it comes to strategies of delaying the proceedings in legal conflicts. Third and finally, generational conflicts are of interest. While in the approach on historicizing Bourdieu that I presented above the focus lies clearly on family generations and the passing on of dispositions through education, there may also be conflicts *between* different generations. To make things even more complex, there may be generations in a more Mannheimian sense, i.e., groups that conceive of themselves as

a generation, defined by the common experience of a certain historical macro-event, such as a war or a revolution. For secularization, again Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux (2009, 57–116) point to interesting issues. As I argued elsewhere (Schlerka 2018, 9), for the conceptualization of Mannheimian generations in a praxeological key the approach of Semi Purhonen (2016), whose concept of generations is similar to Bourdieu's concept of classes, seems promising to me. According to Purhonen, generations first have to be mobilized by a spokesperson in order to exist as a group (2016, 106).

Also, it should be mentioned that research based on »secularization as struggle« might bring about some theoretical byproducts. Such research might shed light on two issues. The first was already mentioned above and concerns the role of the state. As several works discussed in this paper show (mainly Borutta 2010; Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein, and Schmidt-Lux 2009; Karstein 2013; Reuter 2014; Fox 2015, 2008; but also Norris and Inglehart 2004; P. Jenkins 2002), the state plays a major role in secularization processes. Hence, research on these processes could illuminate further the issue of how to adequately grasp the state in a praxeological key. The second possible byproduct regards what one might call »relations between fields.«[13] Since, when speaking about secularism, we are dealing with demands placed on religious praxis by actors that actually play different eigenlawful games, research on secularization inevitably deals with those phenomena.

All in all, I showed that »secularization as struggle« is indeed an approach of historical sociology.

13 However, speaking of relations between models might insinuate the false impression that fields are some kind of entity in social reality, while actually they are merely models constructed by the researcher.

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