

Angelika Pofert | Natan Sznaider [Hrsg.]

Ulrich Becks kosmopolitisches Projekt

Auf dem Weg in eine andere Soziologie

2., erweiterte Auflage



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Grußwort

Karl Martin Bolte

Lieber Ulrich,

Du hast als Student meine Lehrveranstaltungen besucht, bei mir promoviert und Dich unter meiner Betreuung habilitiert. Du bist als mein Assistent tätig gewesen. Wir haben über etliche Jahre in einem Team des Sonderforschungsbereiches 333 "Theoretische Grundlagen sozialwissenschaftlicher Berufs- und Arbeitskräfteforschung" gemeinsam mit Michael Brater gearbeitet und sind Freunde geworden (auch Wanderfreunde). Nach Deinen Professuren an den Universitäten Münster und Bamberg hat man Dich 1992 (ohne meine Mitwirkung, aber) zu meiner großen Freude als meinen Lehrstuhlnachfolger an die Universität München berufen. Seitdem stehen wir in vielfältigen Diskussionszusammenhängen.

Schon als Student, aber dann vor allem als Teamkollege im Sonderforschungsbereich, habe ich Dich als innovativen Denker kennen gelernt, der sich bemühte, eingefahrene Forschungspfade zu überwinden und neue, weiterführende zu erschließen. Du hast den Nationalstaat als Bezugsrahmen sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung als zunehmend unzulänglich kritisiert und Dich um die Entwicklung darüber hinausreichender Perspektiven bemüht. Deine Thesen zur Risikogesellschaft, zur reflexiven Modernisierung, zur Globalisierung und zur Idee einer kosmopolitischen Soziologie sind wichtige Ansätze dazu.

Mit Deinen Arbeiten und Gedanken hast Du seit Jahren über den Rahmen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland hinaus Aufmerksamkeit gefunden – sowohl Anerkennung als auch Kritik. Du bist heute in weltweite Diskussionszusammenhänge eingebunden und gehörst zu den bekanntesten Soziologen der Gegenwart. Politiker haben Dich um Rat gefragt, Du hast in Kommissionen mitgewirkt, die von 'der Politik' berufen wurden, hast aber der Versuchung widerstanden, selber als Politiker aktiv zu werden.

Für die kommenden Jahre wünsche ich Dir weiterhin ein ideen- und erfolgreiches wissenschaftliches Arbeiten. Ich glaube, dass Deine Initiativen zur Begründung des Sonderforschungsbereiches 536 "Reflexive Modernisierung: Analysen zur (Selbst-) Transformation der industriellen Moderne" sowie Deine aktive Mitarbeit daran wichtige Faktoren sind, die Dein Denken in Bewegung halten und auch das Deiner Mitforscher beflügeln.

Möge Deine Frau Elisabeth, die ja den gleichen Berufsweg eingeschlagen hat wie Du, Dir in Zukunft weiterhin eine so wertvolle Diskussionspartnerin und Mitautorin sein wie bisher.

In Freundschaft

Dein Martin

An Imaginary Dialogue on Modernity 2.2

Bruno Latour

He- I can't watch the news anymore; let's switch it off.

She- That reminds me of that guy, what's his name, the German sociologist, Becker.

He- You mean Howie Becker? But he is American.

She- No, that famous sociologist, who writes best-sellers proving that we live in a more risky society than our ancestors the Cavemen. Quite mad.

He- Ah, you mean Beck not Becker, Ulrich Beck... but he is not saying that at all, this is stupid.

She- Oh yes he is, he has written *Risk Society*, now I remember. Risks everywhere, in our food, in our bed, in our car, in our office, in our factory... Creepy really. As if the sky were going to fall on our heads.

He- But it is falling on our heads...

She- See how you are! You believe that crap about living dangerously? Come on. These are horror stories written by a German university professor. A guy who must drive to work in Mercedes, in a country where they live forever with fat retirement pensions? Would you say they live in a risk society? Be serious.

He- But Beck is serious. He doesn't mean we run into more dangers, he means that we can't control them any more; that we no longer share the belief that we can fully control them.

She- But see, this is just another case of German irrationalism... we do control factories, nuclear plants, missiles, subways, long logistics chains and we do that very well, very consistently – apart from the little odd accident now and then...

He- Yaah, like Chernobyl.

She- Come on, you are not going to gloat endlessly over Chernobyl: those were Russian engineers, and Soviets at that. I am talking about really good engineers. Science, technology and management work, my dear, they work. Don't give me all that crap about an increase in risks. We have never lived under such accurately controlled organizations. To say the contrary is just plain old anti-science. I hate those German forest males, like your friend Heidegger, loathing modern technology while walking quietly in the Black Forest, eulogizing jugs while spitting on steel Coca-Cola cans.

He- Beck is in Munich... Bavaria... and Heidegger is not a friend of mine at all... But you don't get it, it's not about risk as danger, it's about control: there is no way to limit the extent to which one piece of technology implies all the others any longer. It's modernism, which is finished, that's what he says, 'reflexive modernization' he calls it.

She- Oulalah! 'Modernism' no less, and it's 'finished'? That's grand theory indeed, very German, that's for sure. But you must be out of your mind! While the whole world aspires to modernization, to air-conditioning, education, democracy, market economics, health insurance, clean water? I want more modernism, more, my dear, not less.

He- I did not know you were really that much of an unrepentant, unreconstructed modernist. I would have thought women would be more sensitive to this tidal change...

She- Since when has the adjective 'modernist' become a stain? And what do 'women'

have to do with this? Do you imagine that I am going to veil myself and abandon the task of emancipation? You men are so funny: now that we share rationalism with you, you want to suddenly withdraw it from us and go back to the time of the Cave, to the good old days of wife-beaters...

He- No, dearest, I just want to be a tad more sensitive to the limits of modernism, that's all. Beck is rightly feeling that something is amiss in modernity, and he is not alone.

She- Alas, no, that's true, he is not alone, there is this other irrationalist in France. What's his name? He is named after a wine company. Oh, this one is a real anti-science guy: Latour, a catastrophe, he thinks we have never been modern. Fancy that. He takes 'rationalist' and 'modernist' as insults! I have heard it once, in a lecture, and couldn't make heads or tails of what he said.

He- Oh, that one is really spaced out, I'll grant you that, but they both have one thing right: modernism cannot continue along the same course.

She- You seem to have a weak spot for these guys who claim to be post-moderns, don't you?

He- They are not post-moderns, or at least they would both adamantly deny they are.

She- Denial, denial... if they say modernism is finished, then they are 'after' modernism, and thus they are post, post, post, and that's the end of it.

He- Careful, dear, you are in danger of turning obnoxious... The question is how 'post' you are. Beck simply says that the 'second modernity' in which we have entered will be reflexive, that's all, in the sense that we can no longer ignore all what was left outside by the first modernization, and which now comes back to us with a vengeance. We can no longer ignore, reject, externalize, and leave behind.

She- Like what?

He- You are so funny. Like the environment, to begin with, like the after-effects of technology, like the third-world, like... all the ghosts left behind.

She- But all the modernists will agree with this, and they will all say as I do: we will take care of it, too, in due course, just give us time; if there is one thing not to do, that's to change track in mid course and abandon the calling of modernity; if you do abruptly stop modernizing, then for sure, all that has been put aside by the 'first modernity', as you say, will be abandoned for good. The 'second' modernity is the first, simply amplified. More modern, not less, and certainly not 'post'. Modernism squared! Modernism to the power of two! If this is what Beck argues, then I am all for it.

He- I don't think that's what he says, no.

She- But you don't seem to be aware that if we, the educated, the wealthy, the rationalists, abandon the task of modernization, you will play into the hands of all the reactionaries, the obscurantists, the archaics who demand nothing other than to deliver us back to the hands of the Mullahs! I don't want to be sent back home with a veil on my head in the name of 'reflexive modernization'! Rationalism and modernism is our only hope, especially now, especially with the religious fanatics at our door.

He- Heck, you speak like a Roman proconsul watching the Barbarians threatening to cross the Rhine!

She- But they are! And they do come from the other side of the Rhine... And you don't see the danger, occupied as you are with making pacts with the various tribes of 'pomos' out there. Without modernization there is no future except the darkest past.

He- Is religion not a good case against you? It was left aside as if it belonged to an archaic past and it's now very much in everyone's heart, it seems, even in yours, I would say. What do we do with it? Keep denying its existence?

She- I am not a religious person.

He- Oh yes you are! There are many ways of being pious, my dearest, but anyway, that's not the point: you don't seem to realize that taking into account what modernism has forgotten requires a complete change of attitude. It's not modernism squared, it's modernism reanalyzed, cured of its hubris, rebuilt from top to bottom, defeated, burned to ashes. And maybe – yes, fine with me – reborn like the Phoenix; that's what 'reflexive' means.

She- But this is much too dangerous, too risky! It's really amusing, you always speak of risk but here is one that you and your Beck have overlooked: touch modernization and everything explodes... Apply your cherished 'principle of precaution', for God's sake, and don't tamper with our essential values.

He- Clever, even witty, but wrong, it's exactly the opposite: if you don't tamper with modernization, risks increase exponentially. But you are right, touch modernization and everything falls apart. Beck would agree, I think. And so would Latour: a certain idea of science, a certain idea of politics, a certain idea of God, a certain idea of time and progress, he calls that a Constitution, if I remember correctly, and there is one modernist Settlement, and certainly he would like to see it wrecked. Except that for him it has never been in effect, that's his twist. So it's easier to change course in the end: we simply have to recognize what we have never stopped doing. Beck requires a complete conversion from non reflexive to reflexive; Latour requires simply the recognition of our anthropological roots.

She- 'Simply'? There is nothing simple in that. Anyway, Beck is enough for our plate. Please, leave this mad Frenchman aside.

He- I still think it's a plausible alternative. It all depends on how we stick to the metaphor of the Enlightenment.

She- Don't talk about the Enlightenment! It sounds horrible in your mouth; you wish to switch off the Lights. Back to the future. You are for the Dark Ages.

He- Don't be silly. For someone who claims to be a rationalist, you should be able to listen to an argument. No? The question is not darkness versus light.

She- Is it not? I think that's exactly what is at issue.

He- I disagree: we are all the children of the Enlightenment. So is Beck. So, I'd say, is Latour. It's the metaphor that differs. Sloterdijk calls it 'explicitation', bringing the implicit out.

She- Good Lord, are you going to wheel in all the irrationalists one after the other? Now Sloterdijk, the arch-Heideggerian, a child of the Enlightenment?! You, as a man, don't seem to know too much about childbirth, do you? You confuse the healthy children of the Enlightenment with their aborted runts...

He- Unfortunate metaphor, my dear, Sloterdijk knows a lot about giving birth and raising children, his entire philosophy is about those life-sustaining envelopes... don't play the macho there, it's not becoming on you... Wrong gender... After all, you might agree that there are many ways to play the Kantian metaphors of 'What is Aufklärung'. One is to oppose Light and Darkness, the Queen of Night way. The other is to say that the veils that we have unveiled, we wrap ourselves in them ever

Living (Occasionally Dying) Together in a Full World

Zygmunt Bauman

This is not an attempt at a synthesis; it is too early for an integrated, not to mention comprehensive, model of the new human condition. Such a model, however carefully constructed, would start ageing well before reaching maturity, since the globalisation of human condition is far from complete and as the globalising process goes on decomposing one by one all the familiar settings of human life, together with the conceptual frameworks in which we have grown used to grasp them in order to tell their story. None of the descriptions of the mode of planetary togetherness and of the new dangers with which it is fraught, that are gradually gestating and will eventually emerge at the other end of a long, messy and haphazard globalising process, can pretend to be anything more than a 'career report', a story bound to be revised and retold no end. Wary of unavoidable immaturity of synthetic models, I would confine myself here to signalling rather than mapping three of the arguably most seminal among the globalisation-prompted departures in the pattern of planetary cohabitation; and then to the consideration of three, arguably most crucial, consequences of such departures that seem to bear on the changing shape of conflicts, the setting in which the conflict emerge and are played out and the strategies of power-and-domination contests.

DEPARTURES

The filling up of the planet

The planet is full.

This is, let me make myself clear, not a statement in physical or even human geography. In terms of physical space and the spread of human cohabitation, the planet is anything but full. On the contrary, the size total of the lands sparsely populated or depopulated, viewed as uninhabitable and incapable of supporting human life, seems to be expanding rather than shrinking. As *technological* progress offers (at a rising cost, to be sure) new means of survival in such habitats as were previously deemed unfit for human settlement, it also erodes many habitats' ability to sustain the populations they previously used to accommodate and feed, whereas the *economic* progress renders once effective modes of making a living unviable and impracticable, thereby adding to the size of the wastelands laying fallow and abandoned. 'The planet is full' is a statement *in sociology and political science*. It refers not to the state of the Earth, but to the ways and means of its inhabitants. It signals the disappearance of 'no man's lands', territories fit to be defined and/or treated as void of human habitation, devoid of sovereign administration, empty and thus open to colonization and settlement. Such territories, now largely absent, played for a greater part of modern history the crucial role of dumping grounds for human waste turned out in ever rising volumes in the parts of the globe affected by the processes of 'modernization'.

Production of 'human waste', or more correctly wasted humans (the 'excessive', 'redundant' population that either could not, or was not wished to, be retained and accommodated inside the modernized lands) is an inseparable accompaniment of moderniza-

tion. It is an inescapable side effect of order building (each order casts some parts of the extant population as 'out of place', 'unfit' or 'undesirable') and of economic progress (that cannot proceed without the devaluation of previously effective modes of 'making a living' thereby depriving their practitioners of livelihood). For most part of modern history, however, large parts of the globe ('backward', 'underdeveloped' parts, when measured by the free-markets' ambitions) stayed wholly or partly unaffected by the modernizing pressures, thus escaping their 'overpopulation' effect. Confronted with the modernized sectors of the globe, such ('pre-modern', 'under-developed') parts tended to be viewed and treated as lands able to absorb the excess of the 'developed countries' population; as natural destinations for the export of 'redundant humans', obvious dumping sites for the human waste of modernization. The disposal of human waste produced in the 'modernized' and still 'modernizing' parts of the globe was the deepest meaning of colonization and imperialist conquests – both made possible, and in fact inevitable, by the inequality of 'development' that is modernization confined to a 'privileged' section of the planet. Such inequality allowed the modern part of the globe to seek, and find, *global* solutions to *locally* produced 'overpopulation' problems.

This situation could last as long as modernity (that is, a perpetual, compulsive, obsessive and addictive *modernization*) remained a privilege. Once modernity turned, as was intended and bound to happen, into the universal condition of human kind, the effects of its by now planetary dominion have come home to roost. As the triumphant progress of modernization has reached the furthest lands of the planet, practically the totality of human production and consumption has become money-and-market mediated, and commodification, commercialisation and monetarization of human livelihoods has penetrated every nook and cranny of the globe – global outlets for local problems are no more available, while all localities (also, most notable, the highly modernized ones) have to bear the consequences of modernity's global triumph having been faced with the need to seek (in vain, it seems) *local* solutions to *globally* produced problems. To cut the long story short: the new fullness of the planet means, essentially, an acute crisis of human waste disposal industry. That industry is fast running short of refuse dumps and the tools of waste-recycling at the time when human waste production goes on unabated and, if anything, gains in efficiency.

End of the space era

Again, a caveat is called for. 'The end of the space era' does not mean that space 'no longer matters', that it has been annihilated or made null and void, as certain openly declared or latent technological determinists, bewitched by the virtual instantaneity of information transfer and steadily diminishing role assigned to physical distance in action-design and performance, suggest. The *importance* of physical space is indeed wading, but this process is coupled with an abrupt rise in the *significance* attached to the territory, to the place, to locality. The verdict of 'the end of the space era' is a reflection of the new extraterritoriality of power and of the substitution of mobility for engagement as the decisive strategic factor of power struggle. In the emergent global power hierarchy, those least space-bound, least tied to (that is, encumbered by) the place and most free to move, rule. In the 'space of flows', where global powers reside and operate, it is the *speed of movement and facility to escape*, not the size of *territorial possessions* (and

so responsibilities) that count and decide. Territorial entrenchment, everything that slows down the movement or disallows its contemplation, has turned from an asset into a handicap. It is to be avoided at all cost – and the high and mighty, resourceful enough to afford such cost, do their best to avoid it. New empires are not of this world – not of earthly, geographical world, not of the 'space of places'. On the other hand, the place lost its defensive capacity. Holding to the place, however tightly sealed and fortified, is no longer a warrant of security. Borders are eminently permeable. Liquid power respects few if any obstacles; it soaks through the walls however hermetic they are or are deemed to be, it leaks easily through the myriads of cracks, fissures, crevices, however narrow. There is no polyfilla capable to plug the holes and stem the flows. If invented, its sealing capacity would be quickly matched by the new and improved liquidity of free-floating power. It is under these unprepossessing conditions that the forces barred access to, and cut out from the global flow, the *glebae adscripti* forces, forces tied to the ground, burdened with the territorial sovereignty and with all the local responsibilities such sovereignty entails, have to seek local solutions to globally produced, and continuously globally modified, problems. The problems are gestated in the 'space of flows', but they need to be confronted and tackled in the 'space of places' – a task ultimately beyond the capacity of local powers holding local forts (for instance, the perpetual global erosion of livelihood and the unsettling and uprooting of ever new populations by the global spread of free trade are confronted locally as the 'problem of immigrants' and 'asylum seekers') The new significance of place is born of, and perpetually fed and reinforced by that hopelessness. The task cannot be fulfilled, and so it never stops to be a challenge stretching the imagination and prompting ever more zealous, though forever inadequate, efforts to stem the tide.

Divorce of power and politics

About two-centuries long marriage of power and politics, with the couple happily settled in the household of the modern nation-state and apparently resolute to stay there till death do them part, seems to be now heading towards a divorce, even if no petition has been sent to the courts and no decree nisi granted. Partners of the wedlock look in opposite directions: one of them finding the shared domicile too tight for comfort and cumbersome, and the other increasingly frustrated by the first partner's prolonged absences from home. Power develops distaste of the politics' embrace; while the lovingly open arms of politics hang in the void, empty. Having moved to higher floors, power has dismantled the staircase behind and placed security guards at the lifts' entry. Politics, left behind in the flat, has been barred access to the power's new domicile; with power's new address kept off-directory. Its calls and messages are not certain to reach the addressee and are answered, if at all, by the departed partner's whim. Deprived of power's partnership, its source of strength and confidence, politics must grin and bear it, while trying to make best of a bad job. It goes on flex-ing its muscles, or at least pretends that it does – hoping to hide how flabby its muscles have become once power has been lipo-sucked away; or it confines its flurry to the odd jobs with which even the flabbiest of muscles would cope. Other residents of the former power/politics home-stead leave home in droves; bereft of power, politics cannot guard properly the exit and would not wish to guard it even if could: the quarrelsome residents were two awkward