Moving the Social · 70/2023

Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements

glz. Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen

KLARTEXT

Moving the Social – Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements
glz. Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 70/2023

Layout and typesetting Satzzentrale GbR, Marburg
Cover design Volker Pecher, Essen
Cover image Post-industrial Chic (2023); used with permission of the photographer.
Printing house Totem, ul. Jacewska 89, 88 – 100 Inowrocław, Poland
Publishing and distribution

KLARTEXT
Jakob Funke Medien Beteiligungs GmbH & Co. KG
Jakob-Funke-Platz 1, 45127 Essen
info.klartext@funkemedien.de
www.klartext-verlag.de

Purchase and subscription
Individual: A single copy is 14 €, plus shipping. An individual subscription (minimum two journals per year) is 25 €, incl. shipping within Germany, plus 6 € for foreign countries. Subcriptions include full online access.
Institutional: 140 € per year (minimum two journals per year), including full online access as well as print copies. Institutional online access only: 115 € (minimum two issues per year).
The journal can be ordered via Klartext <info@klartext-verlag.de>, bookstores and the Institute for Social Movements (www.isb.rub.de).

ISBN 978-3-8375-2652-3 ISSN 2197-0386 (Print) ISSN 2197-0394 (online)

We are grateful for the support of the *Verein zur Förderung des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen*

Content

Articles

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Trust Through Publicity? Some Reflections and Research Perspectives on Political Discourse from the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century

Abstract

The relationship between political trust, the public sphere and transparency or publicity has thus far been analyzed mainly from the perspective of political philosophy and the political and social sciences. Within historical research, however, it is rarely discussed. This article combines systemic and historical approaches to this complex and ambivalent relationship and places it in the context of the development of public spheres. From the perspective of the history of ideas and discourses, the article argues that the emergence, shifts and ambivalences of political public spheres played a significant role in the development of the relationship between trust and transparency in the modern age. Using examples from the epoch of the Enlightenment and liberalism, particularly with regard to constitutional debates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the contradictory place of trust and control in publicity demands and the political discourse can be demonstrated. It becomes apparent that, in the development of constitutional democracy, an institutionalized distrust—among others, by means of publicity or transparency—established a basis whereon political trust could emerge. Thereby, a primarily problem-oriented, genetic perspective proves to be particularly fruitful in examining the relationship between political trust, publicity and transparency, including its structural complexities and ambivalences.

Keywords: *trust, distrust, control, publicity, transparency, public sphere, political ideas, constitutional order, power*

The relationship between political trust, the public sphere and publicity or transparency has thus far been analyzed mainly from the perspective of the political and social sciences or political philosophy. Within historical research, in contrast, it is rarely dis-

DOI: 10.46586/mts.70.2023.5-27 Moving the Social · 70 (2023) · p. 5–27

cussed.[1] Simultaneously, increased transparency is often regarded in public and scientific debates—especially within the context of the spread of transparency discourses from the 1970s and 1980s onwards—as a factor that can contribute to regaining trust in political institutions. This concept of transparency thereby implies primarily not only disclosure and the availability of information, but also the ability to comprehend and reconstruct decisions, structures and processes in the political realm. In addition to this "affirmative" approach to transparency, a critical perspective has for some time become apparent in the political and social sciences, contesting or relativizing the positive connection between (increased) transparency and (rising) trust.[2] Corresponding research has demonstrated that measures to increase transparency do not necessarily lead to a gain in trust, but can, on the contrary, result in an increase of distrust and uncertainty—for instance due to information overload—or greater doubts about the reliability and credibility of information. At the same time, the emergence of trust in institutions seems to be possible even if those institutions are largely non-transparent.[3]

These ambivalent effects are often explained by means of systems theory. Accordingly, distrust is not merely the opposite of trust, but its functional equivalent, which

1 On the history of trust, see Ute Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen. Eine Obsession der Moderne* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013); Ute Frevert, ed., *Vertrauen. Historische Annäherungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Geoffrey Hosking, *Trust. A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); from the angle of the history of political ideas: László Kontler and Mark Somos, eds., *Trust and Happiness in the History of European Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). On the history of transparency, see Jens Ivo Engels and Frédéric Monier, eds., *History of Transparency in Politics and Society* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020); Stefan Berger and Dimitrij Owetschkin, eds., *Contested Transparencies, Social Movements and the Public Sphere. Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Michael Schudson, *The Rise of the Right to Know. Politics and Culture of Transparency 1945–1975* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

2 As an overview of transparency research in social sciences and its different—"affirmative", "dismissive", "asymmetrical"—perspectives, see Vincent August and Fran Osrecki, "Transparency Imperatives: Results and Frontiers of Social Science Research," in *Der Transparenz-Imperativ. Normen – Praktiken – Strukturen*, ed. Vincent August and Fran Osrecki (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 1–34. On the relationship between trust and transparency in broader contexts, see Lora Anne Viola and Paweł Laidler, eds., *Trust and Transparency in an Age of Surveillance* (London: Routledge, 2022).

3 Vincent August, "Theorie und Praxis der Transparenz. Eine Zwischenbilanz," *Berliner Blätter, Special Issue* 76 (2018): 129–156, 131–132, 139–140; August and Osrecki, "Transparency Imperatives," 13–14. See Onora O'Neill, *A Question of Trust. The BBC Reith Lectures 2002* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 63–79 and Sandrine Baume, "Does Transparency Engender the Confidence of the Governed? A Contribution to Political Thought," in *Economics and Other Branches—In the Shade of the Oak Tree. Essays in Honour of Pascal Bridel*, ed. Roberto Baranzini and François Allisson (London: Routledge, 2014), 425–433, 431–433.

implies an inherent tendency to self-reproduction and self-reinforcement.[4] If distrust constitutes a motivational basis for transparency measures, it can therefore potentiate itself and thus not only foil the purposes of transparency, but also restrict the room for manoeuvre of the actors involved.[5] Such interpretations on the abstract level thus focus mainly on the functional and instrumental aspects of the relationship between political trust and transparency. However, the problem of the historical genesis and conditionality of this relationship—as expressed, for instance, in political discourses and constitutional debates beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—remains insufficiently considered.[6] Yet, by historicizing this relationship, its connection to the development of social and political conflicts—and the formation of public spheres in which those conflicts were settled and reflected—becomes apparent.

Against this backdrop and from the perspective of the history of ideas and discourses, this article argues that the emergence, shifts and ambivalences of political public spheres played a significant role in the development of the relationship between trust and transparency (or publicity) in the modern age. As we shall see, further research possibilities—much of it fruitful for the social and cultural history of social movements—arise from the combination of both these sets of historical problems. After a brief overview of the systemic aspects of the concept of trust, the contradictory place of trust and control in publicity demands and the political discourse of enlightenment and liberalism, particularly with regard to constitutional debates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, will be analyzed, followed by a discussion of the historical shifts in the public sphere and its semantics as well as its normative content. In the conclusion, historical and systemic perspectives on the relationship between trust, publicity and the public sphere will be interconnected in order to reveal possible implications and consequences.

4 Niklas Luhmann, "Trust," in idem, *Trust and Power*, ed. with a revised translation and new introduction Christian Morgner and Michael King. Original translation by Howard Davis, John Raffan and Kathryn Rooney (Cambridge: Wiley, 2017), 1–114, 79–85.

5 August, "Theorie und Praxis der Transparenz," 139–140; see also Caspar Hirschi, "Regulation of Transparency as Rituals of Distrust. Reading Niklas Luhmann against the Grain," in *Transparency, Society and Subjectivity. Critical Perspectives*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 225–241. On effects of distrust, see Constantin Goschler, "Intelligence, Mistrust and Transparency: A Case Study of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution," in *Contested Transparencies, Social Movements and the Public Sphere. Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Stefan Berger and Dimitrij Owetschkin, 153–171.

6 See, however, references to the history of political thought, for instance in Baume, "Does Transparency Engender the Confidence of the Governed?," or August, "Theorie und Praxis der Transparenz." In broader contexts of political theory and history, see also Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy. Politics in an Age of Distrust*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Trust from a Systemic Point of View

The ambivalences in the relationship between trust and transparency outlined above are essentially due to the fact that they both constitute complex and multidimensional phenomena with their own specific normativity.[7] In the case of trust, this multidimensionality becomes manifest not only in the differentiation between trust and confidence,[8] or between personal trust, trust in institutions and trust in "abstract systems,"[9] but also in trust's ambivalent relationship to power and power asymmetries—as well as to democracy and politics writ large.[10] Following a systems theory approach, trust appears primarily as a mechanism for the reduction of social complexity.[11] From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas's concept of communicative action, in contrast, trust is instead considered as a basis or source for a generalized communication medium, such as influence or prestige.[12] These media serve, under "the growing pressure for rationality," as "relief mechanisms" for the coordination of actions. Based on "rationally motivated trust," they thereby can "condense" processes of "mutual understanding in language" and "reduce the expenditure of communication and the risk of disagreement."[13]

With regard to such complexity, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel distinguished trust as a form of knowledge from trust as "faith" or

7 See Martin Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2011); Emmanuel Alloa, "Transparency: A Magic Concept of Modernity," in *Transparency, Society and Subjectivity. Critical Perspectives*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä, 21–55.

8 According to Luhmann, trust as an expectation is connected to risk in terms of the results of one's own action, whereas confidence relates to processes and issues that cannot immediately be influenced by this action. Unlike trust, confidence does not imply any alternatives of action being considered. See Niklas Luhmann, "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives," in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, ed. Diego Gambetta (New York: Blackwell, 1988), 94–107, 97–99; with critical accents regarding Luhmann, see also Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 30–33.

9 Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 79–88; Luhmann, "Trust," 43–67.

10 Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, 13–14, 399–405. See also Mark E. Warren, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

11 Luhmann, "Trust."

12 This conception is based on the reception of Parsons' theory. See Talcott Parsons, "On the Concept of Value-Commitments," *Sociological Inquiry* 38 (1968): 135–159, 155; see also Talcott Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 188–191, 198–202.

13 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 2, transl. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 181.

"feeling."[14] As a form of knowledge, trust appeared in Simmel's theory as "the hypothesis for future behaviour, which is certain enough to thereby ground practical action," and correspondingly as "a middle position between knowledge and the ignorance of others."[15] Modern society, "modern life," was regarded by him as "in a much broader than economic sense a 'credit economy.'"[16] Similar to his contemporary Max Weber, Simmel also noted the growing significance of trust's non-personal, objectified forms and its increased linking to functions, positions and performances.[17]

In modern times, this trend also corresponded to a shift in trust semantics. Trust in God, considered first by Martin Luther and more widely into the eighteenth century as the only legitimate and robust form of trust, retreated more and more in favour of social trust, wherein its relational and reciprocal aspects became increasingly relevant. At the same time, trust was also increasingly generalized beyond close social relationships.[18] In the nineteenth and particularly in the twentieth century, finally, the semantics of trust experienced a boom, spreading nearly ubiquitously—and to some extent inflationary—in different social fields.[19] In this respect it was not dissimilar to the time-delayed early boom of the concept of transparency. Since trust in modern societies seemed to become a guiding theme of social action, it could be perceived as a "signature of the time" and, in some ways, as an "obsession" of modernity.[20]

Within this context, trust in general proved to be a social resource for enabling the coordinated action of actors who were largely anonymous to each other.[21] From a sociological angle, trust, in its fact dimension, reduced complexity; in the social dimension, it guaranteed stable framework conditions for actions and interactions,

14 Georg Simmel, *Sociology. Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, vol. 1, transl. and ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs, and Mathew Kanjirathinkal (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 315; Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. David Frisby, transl. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004), 177–178. On the differentiation of trust concept in Simmel, see Martin Endreß, *Vertrauen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2002), 13–16.

15 Simmel, *Sociology*, 315.

16 Simmel, *Sociology*, 312.

17 Simmel, *Sociology*, 316; Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 485–486; on Weber, see Endreß, *Vertrauen*, 16–17, 26.

18 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 29–43; Ute Frevert, "Vertrauen – eine historische Spurensuche," in *Vertrauen. Historische Annäherungen*, ed. Ute Frevert, 7–66, 13–20, 55–60. On trust in God, see Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, 355–374.

19 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 24–25.

20 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, cit. 24, 26; see also Baume, "Does Transparency Engender the Confidence of the Governed?," 430. In this regard, too, there were similarities to transparency which sometimes appeared as "major obsession of our time." See Alloa, "Transparency: A Magic Concept of Modernity," 47.

21 Martin Hartmann, "Einleitung," in *Vertrauen. Die Grundlage des sozialen Zusammenhalts*, ed. Martin Hartmann and Claus Offe (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001), 7–34, 14.

and, in the temporal dimension, ensured the building or maintenance of steady social relations and thereby the continuation of social orders.[22] In the political realm, trust implied further specifics that were also reflected in its relationship to the emergency of a bourgeois public sphere and to demands directed toward the "publicity" of state action, state administration and state establishments, as well as political decision processes as a whole. In this respect, the possibility for the durable stabilization of these orders by means of reciprocal trust relations and for the creation of the conditions necessary for generating and providing such relations by these orders themselves became a central question of political thought and political action, beginning with the transition to early modern and modern political orders.[23]

Between Trust and Control: Domination, Publicity and Constitutional Order

Against this backdrop, the age of bourgeois revolutions and enlightenment, particularly in terms of the struggle of the "third estate" against the feudal-monarchic domination, proved to be crucial in the historical development of political trust—as an idea and as practice. In this era, conceptual patterns, constellations of political forces and practices emerged that entailed the increasing political role and growing significance of political trust. It was primarily the English Revolution and the Civil War in the 1640s during which trust became a significant factor in the distribution and exercise of power. From the perspective of Parliament, trust appeared as a means to encourage the monarch to fulfil his duties—conceived in the form of contract—in relation to the people. Such trust was tied to conditions, in particular to the conduct of the rulers in terms of existing laws and agreements. An infringement of these conditions resulted in sanction mechanisms and trust thus implied a delegation of power that remained revisable and reversible.[24]

At the end of the seventeenth century, in the aftermath of the Civil War, such forms of trust obtained a theoretical foundation in John Locke's concept of the polit-

22 Endreß, *Vertrauen*, 11, 80. On the differentiation between the fact dimension, the temporal dimension and the social dimension within the scope of the concept of meaning dimensions, see Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, transl. John Bednartz Jr., with Dirk Baecker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 74–92.

23 Daniel Schulz, "Vertrauen und Kontrolle in der politischen Theorie des Republikanismus," in *Vertrauen*, ed. Martin Kirschner and Thomas Pittrof (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2018), 67–93, 75.

24 Frevert, "Vertrauen – eine historische Spurensuche," 21; Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 147–148.

ical order.[25] Within the scope of this concept, the government—or more specifically the legislature—was understood as recipient of a mandate. Compliance with this mandate was to be evaluated by the people. On the part of the people, trust indeed meant a transfer of power to parliament and government. This transfer, however, took place only on the condition that the government or the rulers aligned with the common good. Correspondingly, in the case of a breach of trust by the rulers—if they defaulted their mandate, for example—the power transferred to them could be revoked: "For all *Power given with trust* for the attaining an *end*, being limited by that end, whenever that *end* is manifestly neglected, or opposed, the *trust* must necessarily be *forfeited*, and the Power devolve into the hands of those that gave it, who may place it anew where they shall think best for their safety and security."[26]

In such a concept of trust, a kind of "democratization" of trust became manifest, since trust in this respect—unlike in Thomas Hobbes's mid-seventeenth century conception—did not imply a complete renunciation of power. From the perspective of Hobbes, in the state of nature trust was impossible. A lack of trust must thus be compensated by an absolute power of the ruler who, in return, guaranteed security.[27] In the "democratized" model, on the contrary, power asymmetries were partially evened out, as the governed, the people, retained a certain power with regard to their representatives—due to the possibility and the right to check and control the exercise of power on the part of those agents.[28] A century later, during the French Revolution, the abolition of the venality of offices also partially resolved the distance between the governed and their rulers, the "administrated" and the "administrators." Due to the principle of the election of officials, established in 1789, the authority of officeholders

25 John Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government. An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government," in idem, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. with an introduction and notes Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 265–428.

26 Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government," § 149, 367. See also Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, 441–445; Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 148–149.

27 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See Schulz, "Vertrauen und Kontrolle in der politischen Theorie des Republikanismus," 79–80; Gary S. Schaal, *Vertrauen, Verfassung und Demokratie. Über den Einfluss konstitutioneller Prozesse und Prozeduren auf die Genese von Vertrauensbeziehungen in modernen Demokratien* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 64–67. On Hobbes, see Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, 406–439; for a comparison between Hobbes and Locke, see Peter Schröder, "Fidem observandam esse—Trust and Fear in Hobbes and Locke," in *Trust and Happiness in the History of European Political Though*, ed. László Kontler and Mark Somos, 99–117.

28 Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*, 460.

should primarily be founded on trust. In this way, the state itself would also be fundamentally democratized.[29]

In this regard, trust proved to be a means of securing the participation of the bourgeois middle classes in power, or as a medium in which the relationship between the governed and their rulers, or between different political powers and institutions, could be regulated. No later than the enlightenment era, however, it was increasingly included in the context of demands for publicity and transparency of state action, within legislative and administrative structures and across political and judicial matters.[30] In these demands, the claim to power on the part of the rising bourgeois classes, became strikingly manifest.[31] A basic precondition for this process was the formation of a bourgeois public able to critically debate and thus constituted a subject of the public sphere. In this way, this public became a carrier of public opinion, and "publicity" accounted for a critical function of that opinion.[32]

Like enlightenment itself, publicity was constructed as deeply normative, often using the metaphor of light. It was associated with virtue and morality, with truth and the good.[33] Notably, for Immanuel Kant, publicity constituted a norm and a general

29 Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'État en France: de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 49–50.

30 On possibilities of distinguishing between transparency and publicity, see Sandrine Baume, "Publicity and Transparency. The Itinerary of a Subtle Distinction," in *Transparency, Society and Subjectivity. Critical Perspectives*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa and Dieter Thomä, 203–224. See also Sandrine Baume, "Transparency in Public Affairs: The Rise of a Successful Political Metaphor," in *Cultures of Transparency: Between Promise and Peril*, ed. Stefan Berger, Susanne Fengler, Dimitrij Owetschkin, and Julia Sittmann (London: Routledge, 2021), 17–29; 18–19. From a critical perspective on the relationship between transparency and enlightenment, see Emmanuel Alloa, "Why Transparency Has Little (If Anything) To Do with the Age of Enlightenment," in *This Obscure Thing Called Transparency. Politics and Aesthetics of a Contemporary Metaphor*, ed. Emmanuel Alloa (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022), 167–187. For an overview of the historical development of the idea of transparency in the political realm, see Dimitrij Owetschkin and Stefan Berger, "Contested Transparencies: An Introduction," in *Contested Transparencies, Social Movements and the Public Sphere. Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Stefan Berger and Dimitrij Owetschkin, 1–32, 8–14.

31 See the classic work by Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, transl. Thomas Burger & Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

32 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 2, 26.

33 Bernhard Wegener, *Der geheime Staat. Arkantradition und Informationsfreiheitsrecht* (Göttingen: Morango, 2006), 122–138; Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann, "Das Geheimnis und die Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation. Einführende Bemerkungen," in *Schleier und Schwelle. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation V,* vol. 1: *Geheimnis und Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann (Munich: Fink, 1997), 7–16, 13–14; Volker Gerhardt, *Öffentlichkeit. Die politische Form des Bewusstseins* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012), 142–144.

principle of law, by which an "agreement of politics with morals" could be achieved.[34] From such a point of view, publicity served first as criterion for the legitimacy of political action. In Kant's conception, two sides of publicity—as a duty of state power and as a right of citizens—were interconnected and tied to the idea of progress and enlightenment.[35] During the French Revolution, publicity and openness, as a legal claim with regard to parliament, were thus realized. The openness of parliamentary proceedings to the public, substantiated among others by the abbé Sieyès, was regarded by the bourgeois classes as a symbol of representation and a means for emancipation of the parliament. It was codified in the French constitution of 1791.[36]

At the end of the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century, publicity was increasingly considered as a means to (re)gain trust in politics and to dissipate distrust, through which trust again took on conditional traits. Whereas state arcanum politics as well as secrecy on the whole were presumed to be a source of distrust, publicity was considered to generate trust and work against distrust.[37] Accordingly, Kant also linked publicity to "the removal of all distrust toward the maxims of politics."[38] Jeremy Bentham, a founder of Utilitarianism, also considered publicity as an effective instrument "to constrain the members of the assembly to perform their duty" and "to secure the confidence of the people, and their assent to the measures of the legislature," as well as "to enable the governors to know the wishes of the governed" and "to enable the electors to act from knowledge."[39] Similarly, for Benjamin Constant in France, publicity appeared to counteract doubt and suspicion in relation to governing persons.[40]

34 Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Project," in idem, *Practical Philosophy*, transl. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 311–351, 347–351.

35 On Kant, see Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 102–117; Gerhardt, *Öffentlichkeit*, 161–187.

36 Alexander Weiß, *Theorie der Parlamentsöffentlichkeit. Elemente einer Diskursgeschichte und deliberatives Modell* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010), 43–64. See also Pierre Rosanvallon, *Good Government. Democracy Beyond Elections*, transl. Malcolm DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 150–151.

37 Frevert, "Vertrauen – eine historische Spurensuche," 27; Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 162.

38 Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," 351.

39 Jeremy Bentham, *Political Tactics*, ed. Michael James, Cyprian Blamires, and Catherine Pease-Watkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29–33.

40 Benjamin Constant, "Principles of Politics Applicable to all Representative Governments," in idem, *Political Writings*, transl. and ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 171–305, 232–234. See also Baume, "Does Transparency Engender the Confidence of the Governed?," 428–429; Rosanvallon, *Good Government*, 161–162. On Constant, see Peter Geiss, *Der Schatten des Volkes. Benjamin Constant und die Anfänge liberaler Repräsentationskultur im Frankreich der Restaurationszeit 1814–1830* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011); Florian Weber, *Benjamin Constant und der liberale Verfassungsstaat. Politische*

In Germany, during the Restoration and *Vormärz*, many liberal intellectuals, including, among others, Jena historian Heinrich Luden and Leipzig publisher Heinrich Brockhaus, advocated for a realization of publicity in all state issues, using similar arguments to Bentham and Constant. The implementation of publicity became a central liberal demand in constitutional debates in the German Confederation.[41] Nevertheless, publicity and openness, connected with trust, could also be used by rulers and governments as a means to stabilize and legitimize their domination—the more so as the emergency of publicity claims and demands for openness could ostensibly appear as an indication of a crisis of legitimacy.[42] In France, on the eve of the 1789 revolution, temporary finance minister Jacques Necker pointed out that a disclosure of state finances was an effective measure to create trust in state and administration, as well as being beneficial for the state itself.[43] In the states of the German Confederation, publicity was also regarded—after the wars against Napoleon and during the transition to constitutional orders—as an expression of trust between the authorities and citizens.[44]

Similarly, the Congress of Vienna sparked the establishment of publicity for parliamentary debates in assemblies in German states, with the exception, however, of Prussia and Austria, where parliamentary publicity was either not implemented or only in a limited fashion. Publicity of parliamentary sessions was allowed, among others, in Württemberg (1817–19), Baden (1818), the Grand Duchy of Hesse (1820), the Kingdom of Saxony, Hannover, the Electorate of Hesse and in Brunswick (all in 1831).[45] In essence, the permission for the publicity of parliamentary debates in assemblies—in contrast to revolutionary France, but also to parliamentary-monarchic England—turned out to be a paternalistic benefit of the rulers in the German Con-

Theorie nach der Französischen Revolution (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

41 Lucian Hölscher, *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Entstehung der Öffentlichkeit in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), 120–121, 126–127; Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 162; Christoph Jahr, "Parlament, 'Publicität' und Versammlungsöffentlichkeit. Überlegungen zur politischen Theorie und historischen Praxis in Deutschland bis 1933," in *Zerfall der Öffentlichkeit?*, ed. Otfried Jarren, Kurt Imhof and Roger Blum (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000), 39–48, 40.

42 Using the example of the English Parliament in the early nineteenth century, see Andreas Wirsching, *Parlament und Volkes Stimme. Unterhaus und Öffentlichkeit im England des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

43 Rosanvallon, *Good Government*, 148–149; Rosanvallon, *L'État en France*, 27–28; Geiss, *Der Schatten des Volkes*, 138–139.

44 Hölscher: *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis*, 126.

45 Hölscher: *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis*, 166–167; Lucian Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland,* vol. 4, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 413–467, 458–459.

federation. In return, citizens, for their part, were required to prove their "maturity," that is trustworthiness.[46]

Hegel's philosophy of right—as "the philosophy of middle-class society come to full self-consciousness"[47]—is exemplary of such a constellation. In contrast to Kant, Hegel did not consider publicity to be a principle of enlightenment or an instrument of critique. Moreover, publicity and public opinion revealed a deep split in bourgeois society, which, from Hegel's perspective, accounted for a kind of Hobbesian "battlefield where everyone's individual private interest meets everyone else's."[48] Under these conditions, publicity became a means of state integration.[49] He regarded the openness of Estate assemblies to the public as "a great spectacle and an excellent education for the citizens," or even "the chief means of educating the public in national affairs,"[50] whereas confidence and trust in deputies of the Estates—as the basis of representation—could only emerge within the scope of corporative order, specifically within corporations.[51] In this respect, Hegel also considered elections not so much as an expression of trust but rather "either [as] something wholly superfluous or else reduced to a trivial play of opinion and caprice."[52]

46 Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 458–459; Hölscher, *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis*, 126–127. With respect to debates in the *Vormärz*, see Philipp Erbentraut, *Theorie und Soziologie der politischen Parteien im deutschen Vormärz 1815–1848* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 203–205. On the development of parliamentary publicity in Germany, see Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 223–257.

47 Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 183.

48 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "The Philosophy of Right," in idem, *The Philosophy of Right & The Philosophy of History*, transl. T. M. Knox and J. Sibree (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britanica, 1952), 1–150, 97 (§ 289).

49 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 120.

50 Hegel, "The Philosophy of Right," 148 (§ 315, addition).

51 Hegel, "The Philosophy of Right," 97 (§ 288), 103 (§ 309), 148 (§ 309, addition). See also Andreas Wirsching, "Das Problem der Repräsentation im England der Reform-Bill und in Hegels Perspektive," in idem, *Demokratie und Gesellschaft. Historische Studien zur europäischen Moderne*, ed. Magnus Brechtken et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019), 21–39, 33–34. On Hegel, see Thomas M. Schmidt, "Vertrauen und Anerkennung. Hegels Konzept politischer Vertrauensbildung," in *Politisches Vertrauen. Soziale Grundlagen reflexiver Kooperation*, ed. Rainer Schmalz-Bruns and Reinhard Zintl (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2002), 143–153; Weiß, *Theorie der Parlamentsöffentlichkeit*, 64–80.

52 Hegel, "The Philosophy of Right," 103 (§ 311), see also 148 (§ 309, addition). In this regard, see Karl Marx's critique of Hegel's concept of representation. As Marx wrote, for Hegel, on the one hand, "representation is grounded on trust." On the other hand, however, "the actual election, this realization of trust, its manifestation and appearance, is either something wholly superfluous or else reduced to a trivial play of opinion and caprice." Hence, "in one breath Hegel establishes the absolute contradictions: Representation is grounded on trust, on the confidence of man in man, and it is not grounded on trust." See Karl Marx, *Critique*

In contrast, for the liberals of the *Vormärz*, publicity and the public sphere proved to be at once an instrument and a programme.[53] Publicity of parliamentary debates, from their perspective, should make possible the realization of representation as well as the participation of citizens in the arrangement, discussion and improvement of state order and legislation.[54] As Karl Theodor Welcker highlighted, all public affairs should be open to the public [*das Öffentliche soll öffentlich sein*].[55] Welcker—co-editor of the influential *Staats-Lexikon* together with Karl von Rotteck which "became the book that every educated liberal household in south Germany had on its shelves"[56]—thus referred to the different meanings of the concept of public. For Welcker, the concept of "public" signified first the political, or that which concerns the state and the commonwealth [*Gemeinwesen*], second, that which concerns all individual citizens, all participants of a collective and their common rights and duties, and finally, that which is not secret.[57]

During the revolution of 1848/49 in German states, those demands for publicity and openness were expressed in the concepts of constitutional order being discussed in the National Assemblies in Frankfurt and Berlin. In their relation to trust, such demands were reflected in the notion of a "state of trust" [*Vertrauensstaat*], coined by Königsberg democrat and deputy of the Prussian National Assembly Johann Jacoby.[58] This notion also reflected a wide-ranging demand for publicity and the political participation of citizens. Whereas fulfilling demands for publicity and openness was considered to be a precondition for the trust of citizens in the state, this form of relationship between the state and its citizens remained reciprocal. Accordingly, political rights and power participation as well as the renunciation of secrecy should serve as

of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right", transl. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley, ed. with an introduction and notes Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 126.

53 Hölscher, *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis*, 165.

54 Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 229–233.

55 Carl Theodor Welcker, "Öffentlichkeit," in *Das Staats-Lexikon. Enzyklopädie der sämtlichen Staatswissenschaften für alle Stände*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, ed. Carl von Rotteck and Carl Welcker (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1848), 246–282, 249.

56 Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck 1800–1866* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 261. On Welcker and Rotteck, see Hans-Peter Brecht and Ewald Grothe, eds*., Karl von Rotteck und Karl Theodor Welcker. Liberale Professoren, Politiker und Publizisten* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018).

57 Welcker, "Öffentlichkeit," 249. One is faced with a number of difficulties in translating the German term Öffentlichkeit into English. See, among others, Stefan Berger and Dimitrij Owetschkin, "The Idea of the Public Sphere and Social Movements as Agents of Transparency: Historical Perspectives," in *Cultures of Transparency: Between Promise and Peril*, ed. Stefan Berger, Susanne Fengler, Dimitrij Owetschkin, and Julia Sittmann, 205–224, 218 (note 4). Broadly, Öffentlichkeit can be translated as "publicity," "publicness," "public sphere" or "public."

58 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 160.

proof of the state's trust in its citizens. Conversely, citizens should also be able to demonstrate their trust by means of the free election of their representatives.[59] Due to the defeat of the revolution, such far-reaching publicity demands were initially not put into practice. However, the principle of parliamentary publicity—although within the scope of "the development of a state based on the rule of law but without democracy"[60]—essentially prevailed in German constitutions beginning with the Frankfurt Constitution of 1849.[61]

The classic bourgeois concept of publicity and the public sphere also comprised a further, significant dimension. As shown above, the idea of the public sphere, formed in the contestation between the bourgeois classes and the absolutistic state and in their struggle against its previously unquestioned secrecy claims,[62] was not limited to the creation of trust relations and conditions. Moreover, the public sphere, including its constitutive principle of publicity, proved primarily to be an instrument of critique and control of power and domination.[63] In this respect, publicity demands implying such a control mechanism also contained an element of distrust towards the rulers and their politics. A specific tension thus resulted that reflected a "duality of trust and distrust." [64]

Such a "duality" had already become apparent during the English Revolution and the Civil War. For instance, in the 1640s, "An Agreement of the People," which was to a certain extent "the first modern democratic manifesto," implied not only a guarantee of civil and electoral rights and universal access to public offices, but also determined conditions for the legitimacy of power and thereby included—in the face of possible dangers resulting from prevailing of interests or misuses of power—a "reserve of mistrust."[65] In the eighteenth century, during the French Revolution, the principle of control over power and its representatives was linked to the idea of a bond between the

59 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 160–170; Frevert, "Vertrauen – eine historische Spurensuche," 26–27; Ute Frevert, "Vertrauen in historischer Perspektive," in *Politisches Vertrauen. Soziale Grundlagen reflexiver Kooperation*, ed. Rainer Schmalz-Bruns and Reinhard Zintl, 39–59, 55–56.

60 Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 421–479, 431.

61 Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 239–240.

62 On the relationship between state and secrecy, see Jörn Knobloch, ed., *Staat und Geheimnis. Der Kampf um die (Un-)Sichtbarkeit der Macht* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019); Rüdiger Voigt, ed., *Staatsgeheimnisse. Arkanpolitik im Wandel der Zeiten* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017); Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*; Andreas Mix, *Die Ambivalenz des Geheimnisses. Zum Verhältnis von Demokratie und Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2020).

63 See Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

64 Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*, 2.

65 Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*, 2–3.

citizens and the constitution or between citizens themselves that rested upon trust. In this way, a close entanglement of trust and control was also expressed symbolically.[66]

Similarly, in the political thought of enlightenment and liberalism, distrust and control in connection with publicity and the public sphere appeared as an essential component of order. On that score, the institutionalization of parliamentary publicity should serve—in addition to strengthening trust—to control government actions and to supervise the elected representatives of the people.[67] In this regard, Bentham's "régime of publicity," which should provide, among other things, "securities against misrule," was already a "system of distrust."[68] Indeed, Bentham considered a "public opinion tribunal" to be a significant instrument of control. In such a "tribunal," the governed should quasi take on the role of "judging" the governing and in this way establish a counterforce and a moral sanctioning entity.[69] Following Bentham, German liberals, such as Welcker, also highlighted not only publicity and public opinion's control function with respect to a possible misuse of state power, but also the crucial importance of press freedom.[70] The backdrop of liberal concepts was thus built by the principle of institutional guarantees for trust in parliament, government or the political order that were to be created by the institutionalization of distrust.

In this regard, the German liberal discourse in the *Vormärz* was also influenced by Constant,[71] for whom public opinion played the role of "tribunal." According to Constant, publicity was also linked to the accountability of the governing,[72] which he considered to be a protection against the state and its authority.[73] As such, trust or confidence in democracy was something that itself needed to be limited.[74] Constant thus followed the tradition of a "liberal" distrust of power, which can be traced back to Montesquieu and the making of the American constitution. In this form, distrust

66 Schulz, "Vertrauen und Kontrolle in der politischen Theorie des Republikanismus," 83–84.
67 Hölscher, *Öffentlichkeit und Geheimnis*, 165.
68 Bentham, *Political Tactics*, 37; Jeremy Bentham, "Securities against Misrule," in idem, *Securities against Misrule and other Constitutional Writings for Tripoli and Greece*, ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 23–111.
69 Bentham, "Securities against Misrule," 27–29, 54–73; Jeremy Bentham, *Constitutional Code*, vol. 1, ed. F. Rosen and J. H. Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 35–39; Jeremy Bentham, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56–59. See also Baume, "Publicity and Transparency," 215–216.
70 Welcker, "Öffentlichkeit," 273–278; see also Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 180–185.
71 On the influence of Constant, see Lothar Gall, *Benjamin Constant. Seine politische Ideenwelt und der deutsche Vormärz* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1963).
72 Constant, "Principles of Politics Applicable to all Representative Governments," 227–242.
73 Baume, "Publicity and Transparency," 215.
74 Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*, 7.

was aimed at limiting authority and preventing the concentration of power, working as a kind of "preventive power."[75]

The ambivalent and complex effects of the institutionalization of distrust became evident in the establishment of parliamentary committees, designed to control the executive and their codification in the constitution. In Germany, corresponded parliamentary rights to information were included in the Frankfurt Constitution of 1849 as well as in the constitutions of certain German states after 1848, in single cases also prior to this. In the 1871 Constitution of the German Empire, however, these rights were missing. Moreover, in Germany, they remained in many cases informal and to a greater extend ineffective.[76] Before the First World War, namely in 1891 and in 1913, proposals by the Social Democrats in the *Reichstag* to include the right to establish parliamentary committees of enquiry in the constitution—or more specifically to provide a legislative basis for such committees with extended competences—failed.[77] In 1917–1918, Max Weber intensively advocated for the parliamentary right to investigation—as a mandatory and minority right.[78] The focus of the demand for publicity thereby shifted from citizen control of the parliament to the control of administration and government by parliament, bringing about an increasing professionalization and thus a growing opacity to the parliament itself.[79]

The legislative institutionalization of the right to parliamentary investigation took place over the course of the inclusion of enquiry committees (in line with Weber's sug-

75 Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy*, 6–7. Rosanvallon also distinguished from this "liberal" form of distrust a "democratic" distrust used to check and control the compliance of elected representatives with their promises and to prompt the government to serve the common good. In this regard, such distrust, in its institutionalized form, constituted an integral part of "counter-democracy." For Rosanvallon, "counter-democracy" accounted for a democracy form which should reinforce the traditional electoral democracy and—as a "democracy of indirect powers"—complement the established democratic institutions as well as extend their effects. See ibid, 8.

76 Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 241–243. See Johannes Masing, *Parlamentarische Untersuchungen privater Sachverhalte. Art. 44 GG als staatsgerichtetes Kontrollrecht* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 7–43.

77 *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags. 8. Legislaturperiode, I. Session 1890/91, Erster Anlageband* (Berlin, 1890), 237 (proposal no. 39); *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags. VIII. Legislaturperiode, I. Session 1890/92, Fünfter Band* (Berlin, 1892), 136. Sitzung, 9. Dezember 1891, 3288–3297; *Verhandlungen des Reichstags. XIII. Legislaturperiode, I. Session. Stenographische Berichte*, Bd. 289 (Berlin, 1913), 147. Sitzung, 23. April 1913, 5045–5060.

78 Max Weber, "Parliament und Government in Germany under a New Political Order. Towards a Political Critique of Officialdom and the Party System," in idem, *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speiers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130–271, 177–196. See also Wegener, *Der geheime Staat*, 244–246, 347–352.

79 Weiß, *Theorie der Parlamentsöffentlichkeit*, 89–99.

gestions) into the Weimar Constitution of 1919 (article 34).[80] For Hugo Preuß, whose draft was a basis for the constitution text, political institutions of control and prevention, as "institutions of distrust," however, must not "overgrow" and thus hinder democratic government by making an important function of parliamentarism—the "selection of democratic leaders"—impossible.[81] Notwithstanding, in the crisis-ridden Weimar period, parliamentary enquiry committees were often used as political weapon. They could thereby, depending on political orientation, be interpreted both as an instrument for transparentizing or for obscuring. In this way, they could themselves lead to a strengthening of distrust.[82]

Nonetheless, following constitutional discussion during the Weimar period, parliamentary enquiry committees were also included in the 1949 Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany (article 44).[83] Hence, distrust and control were also institutionalized. Similarly, by the first Federal President Theodor Heuss, distrust was regarded as an essential element of democracy, whereas he considered political trust in general to be indispensable.[84] This historical "duality of trust and distrust," or a "controllable trust"[85]—with its inherent tensions—would become intrinsic to liberal-democratic constitutional principles. In a democratic constitutional state, such an entanglement resulted in a kind of "sociomoral balance between trust and control" which simultaneously guaranteed stability and legitimacy.[86]

80 Masing, *Parlamentarische Untersuchungen privater Sachverhalte*, 44–48.

81 Hugo Preuß, "Das Verfassungswerk von Weimar," in idem, *Staat, Recht und Freiheit. Aus 40 Jahren deutscher Politik und Geschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926), 421–428, 426.

82 Sandra Zimmermann, "Between 'clarity' and 'darkness.' The role of public disclosure in the Barmat-Parliamentary-Committees (1925)," in *History of Transparency in Politics and Society*, ed. Jens Ivo Engels and Frédéric Monier, 71–87; Sandra Zimmermann, *Transparenz durch Ausschüsse? Parlamentarische Untersuchungsausschüsse als Reaktion auf Korruptionsskandale in Deutschland (1873–1973/74)* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2023), 79–159. See also Franz Kohout, "Der Reichstag," in *Aufbruch zur Demokratie. Die Weimarer Reichsverfassung als Bauplan für eine demokratische Republik*, ed. Rüdiger Voigt (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020), 493–509, 499–501.

83 Masing, *Parlamentarische Untersuchungen privater Sachverhalte*, 63–70.

84 Theodor Heuss, "Zum Geleit," in *Die Volksvertretung. Handbuch des Deutschen Bundestags*, ed. Fritz Sänger (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1949 [reprint: Rheinbreitbach 1985]), 5–9, 8–9. See also Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 195.

85 Winfried Steffani, *Parlamentarische und präsidentielle Demokratie. Strukturelle Aspekte westlicher Demokratien* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1979), 176.

86 Schulz, "Vertrauen und Kontrolle in der politischen Theorie des Republikanismus," 86. On the relationship between trust, constitution and democracy, see Schaal, *Vertrauen, Verfassung und Demokratie*.

The Dissolution of the Public Sphere and the Autonomous Public Spheres: Between Critical and Manipulative Publicity

Meanwhile, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, perceptions and conceptions of the public sphere also shifted in notable ways. The classical liberal idea of the bourgeois public sphere increasingly retreated in favour of pessimistic versions that no longer regarded the public sphere and publicity as sources of emancipatory power.[87] Rather, following in the tradition of Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, publicity and, in particular, public opinion—in connection with the "tyranny of the majority"[88]—appeared more and more as a coercive force and a mechanism of censorship, social discipline and conformity.[89] Hence, the public sphere, previously an antagonist of feudal and absolutist authority and domination, quasi replaced them in their role as the target of criticism.[90] Distrust was now turned against the public sphere itself. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the concept of publicity or the public sphere was—also in Germany—increasingly connoted with influenceability and manipulability.[91] At the time of the German Empire, publicity and public opinion were linked to socio-psychological theories of "mass."[92] Yet in the Weimar Republic, the concepts of public opinion were dominated by the perception of the systematic steering of that opinion by the press and public relations, as well as—from an antiliberal perspective, as for instance that of Carl Schmitt[93]—by the notion of the acclamatory functions of publicity and public sphere.[94]

87 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, ed., *Öffentlichkeit. Geschichte eines kritischen Begriffs* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), 75.

88 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, transl. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Library of America, 2004), 283–318; John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in idem, *On Liberty and other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3–128, 8–9.

89 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 129–140; Hohendahl, ed., *Öffentlichkeit*, 42–43, 66–72.

90 Hohendahl, ed., *Öffentlichkeit*, 75.

91 Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 464–465.

92 Exemplarily: Wilhelm Bauer, *Die öffentliche Meinung und ihre geschichtlichen Grundlagen. Ein Versuch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1914). See also Hohendahl, ed., *Öffentlichkeit*, 69–72; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 240; Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 464–465.

93 Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, transl. and ed. Jeffrey Seitzer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 272–279.

94 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 196; Hohendahl, ed., *Öffentlichkeit*, 85–88.

A similar trend also continued, from the experiences of the Nazi era into the early postwar period and beyond. In West Germany, the public sphere was yet again interpreted from the perspective of its dissolution, mirroring the culturally pessimistic atmosphere of the Adenauer era, expressed, in part, in the critique of "mass," "technology" and "alienation."[95] Within the tradition of the Frankfurt School, it was primarily Jürgen Habermas who—in addition to Theodor W. Adorno[96]—regarded this decline as a consequence of the dissolution of the separation between the public and private realm, as well as an effect of increasing commercialization, the concentration of the media and the rise in cultural commodification. The result of this process, according to Habermas, was the emergence of a "power-penetrated" public sphere, which, due to the impact of private interests and mass media, lost its political function of control and critique of authority and domination to a large extent. Such a "refeudalized" and depoliticized public sphere, shaped by "public relations," instead fulfilled "advertising functions" and became "a vehicle for political and economic propaganda."[97]

Within this context, the role and function of trust in political discourse and political practice changed as well. While trust increasingly applied to the relationship between electors and elected,[98] it also became a target of "public relations" and "political marketing" strategies borrowed from consumer advertising.[99] This became apparent, for instance, in West German election campaigns.[100] Thus, such creation of trust—within the scope of influencing voting decisions analogous to advertising pressure on buying decisions[101]—appeared as one of the functions of the "power-penetrated" and manipulative public sphere. Notwithstanding, during the early 1960s, the outcome of "the struggle between a critical publicity and one which is merely staged for manipulative purposes," remained "open" for Habermas.[102] In this period, the examination of publicity and the public sphere was associated with the emergence

95 Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten. Freizeit, Massenmedien und "Zeitgeist" in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre* (Hamburg: Christians, 1995), 324–350.

96 Theodor W. Adorno, "Opinion Research and Publicness," in *Group Experiment and Other Writings. The Frankfurt School on Public Opinion in Postwar Germany*, by Friedrich Pollock, Theodor W. Adorno, and Colleagues, transl., ed. and introduced Andrew J. Perrin and Jeffrey K. Olick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 179–183.

97 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 175. On the development of Habermas's concept of the public sphere, see also Berger and Owetschkin, "The Idea of the Public Sphere and Social Movements as Agents of Transparency," 212–216.

98 Frevert, "Vertrauen in historischer Perspektive," 56.

99 Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen*, 199–206; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 216.

100 Thomas Mergel, *Propaganda nach Hitler? Eine Kulturgeschichte des Wahlkampfs in der Bundesrepublik 1949–1990* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010).

101 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 216.

102 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 235.

of democratization discourses and the early liberalization of West German society.[103] Against this backdrop, the debate surrounding publicity and the public sphere was part and parcel of a wider discursive orientation about political values.[104] Correspondingly, for Habermas too, the extent to which critical publicity could prevail against manipulative publicity, represented an indicator for "the degree of democratization of an industrial society constituted as a social-welfare state."[105]

Over the course of the democratization processes and the shifts in political culture and forms of participation in West Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s, aspects of pluralization and differentiation as well as the emergence and effects of alternative or counter public spheres increasingly came to the fore in debates surrounding the public sphere.[106] Under changed historical conditions, in particular in connection with the soaring expansion of communication technologies, the crisis of the welfare state, the rise of new social movements and a "new obscurity,"[107] Habermas's concept of the political public sphere was modified and interconnected with notions of lifeworld and civil society. The public sphere henceforth was understood as a highly complex, differentiated network of manifold, autonomous partial public spheres, in which "processes of opinion and consensus formulation" were institutionalized.[108] Such autonomous

103 Moritz Scheibe, "Auf der Suche nach der demokratischen Gesellschaft," in *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945–1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 245–277; Ulrich Herbert, "Liberalisierung als Lernprozess. Die Bundesrepublik in der deutschen Geschichte – eine Skizze," in *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945–1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert, 7–49. On concepts of the public sphere in the post-war period, including generational aspects, see Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945–1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 31–86.

104 Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 86.

105 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 232.

106 Karl Christian Führer, Knut Hickethier, and Axel Schildt, "Öffentlichkeit – Medien – Geschichte. Konzepte der modernen Öffentlichkeit und Zugänge zu ihrer Erforschung," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 41 (2001): 1–38, 4–7. As a classic example for "counter public spheres" within the scope of "1968" in West Germany, see Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience. Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, transl. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

107 Jürgen Habermas, "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," in idem, *The New Conservatism. Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and transl. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 48–70.

108 Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, transl. Frederic Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 359–360; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, transl. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 373–374. On the most recent modifications to Habermas's concept, see Jürgen Habermas, "Reflections and Hypotheses on a Further Structural

public spheres carried by civil society actors and structures could, to a certain extent, influence administrative power by exercising a "communicative," discursive generated power, thereby also fulfilling a critical function.[109] However, within the political public sphere as a whole, according to Habermas, these processes were overlaid by "the manipulative deployment of media power to procure mass loyalty, consumer demand, and 'compliance' with systemic imperatives."[110] This constellation thus appeared to be a new version of the "antagonism between critical publicity and manipulative publicity" described in the 1960s.[111]

From a wider historical perspective, the tension between publicity as a manipulative influence on the public sphere and its critical participatory function,[112] as reflected in the political discourse in Germany from the *Vormärz* to the Bonn Republic, was an essential factor in the emergence and development of democratic constitutional orders, shaped by the entanglement of trust and control discussed above. At the same time, a far-reaching normative potential also became manifest in this historical process. Such a normative potential was, moreover, inherent to the conceptions of the public sphere themselves. It thus also played a central role for political actors and movements associated with these concepts and, to a greater extent, accounted for their historical impact.

Conclusion: The Dialectic of Trust and Publicity

After this cursory overview of the development of the relationship between trust, publicity and transparency in political discourse, certain historical and systemic aspects can be interconnected, revealing essential issues and interrelations that underline the historical persistence of the ambivalences within that relationship. First, it becomes apparent that, in the development of constitutional democracy, an institutionalized distrust—among others, by means of publicity or transparency—established a basis whereon political trust could first emerge. From the bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the enlightenment and liberal conceptions

Transformation of the Political Public Sphere," *Theory, Culture & Society* 39, no. 4 (2022): 145–171.

109 Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," 452. On the opposition of "communicative" or "communicatively generated" versus "administrative" or "administratively employed power," see Jürgen Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," in idem, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, 463–490, 483–490.

110 Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," 452; Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," 483.

111 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 295 (note 126), 232–235.

112 Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 465.

of the political order, such trust was, to a certain degree, the result of negated and dissipated distrust.[113] In response to this dialectic, institutionalized distrust and control mechanisms proved primarily to be an enabling condition for trust in the democratic constitutional order—for its trustworthiness—thus also guaranteeing the legitimacy of this order and the stability of the rule of law.[114] This revealed a wider paradox within the requirements for legitimacy in democracy: Institutionalization of distrust should serve to create and strengthen trust in a democratically organized political system and thereby provide the prerequisites and resources for trust building.[115]

In addition, the creation of trust could also be regarded as a kind of compensation for the effects of distrust and its institutions. As mentioned above, distrust—by reason of its inherent tendency to self-reinforce—could have a paralyzing impact and thus become dysfunctional.[116] A certain degree of trust thereby appeared to be a necessary precondition for the functioning of any political order based on institutionalized distrust. Correspondingly, the potentialities of this distrust must not be completely exhausted.[117] Beyond these dialectic relations, a historical examination of the relationship between trust and publicity illuminates a further crucial factor, which has thus far remained unaccounted for, but which nonetheless provides a starting point for further research. From the beginning, the idea of the public sphere, with its critical principle of publicity as represented by Kant and the *Vormärz* liberals, implied a utopian moment. Due to its normative claim to universal access, participation and enlightenment, it transcended the institutional boundaries of existing constitutional orders.[118]

Such a contradiction between idea and reality, on the one hand, potentially enabled a de-legitimization of these orders, by becoming a source of endeavours—such as the labour movement or other social movements, for instance—aimed at the far-reach-

113 Rainer Schmalz-Bruns, "Vertrauen in Vertrauen? Ein konzeptueller Aufriss des Verhältnisses von Politik und Vertrauen," in *Politisches Vertrauen. Soziale Grundlagen reflexiver Kooperation*, ed. Rainer Schmalz-Bruns and Reinhard Zintl, 9–35, 11.

114 Schulz, "Vertrauen und Kontrolle in der politischen Theorie des Republikanismus," 86–90.

115 Endreß, *Vertrauen*, 77–79; Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 139–148. See also Piotr Sztompka, "Does Democracy Needs Trust, or Distrust, or Both?," in *Transparenz. Multidisziplinäre Durchsichten durch Phänomene und Theorien des Undurchsichtigen*, ed. Stephan A. Jansen, Eckhard Schröter and Nico Stehr (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 284–291, 287–290.

116 August and Osrecki, "Transparency Imperatives," 13–14; August, "Theorie und Praxis der Transparenz," 139–140.

117 Gerhard Göhler, "Stufen des politischen Vertrauens," in *Politisches Vertrauen. Soziale Grundlagen reflexiver Kooperation*, ed. Rainer Schmalz-Bruns and Reinhard Zintl, 221–238, 222; Schaal, *Vertrauen, Verfassung und Demokratie*, 153.

118 Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 458; Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," 442.

ing change of the existing order.[119] Yet for the protagonists of the French Revolution of 1789, the new—"transparent"—society to be established required a social order without power privileges, political arbitrariness and injustice, but completely, roundly, visible and obvious to everyone.[120] Correspondingly, in the face of the discrepancy between the possible and the real, a critical, transformative social impulse also emerged from the universal utopian substance implied in "the transparency of a better world."[121] On the other hand, the discrepancy, or "normative gradient [*normatives Gefälle*]"[122] between constitutional claim and constitutional reality—if the existence of a wider trust in the constitutional order per se is presupposed—could itself become a target of criticism within the scope of this order, as well as a starting point for demands for reform and efforts at rearrangement. Such efforts could thereby be regarded as steps towards improving and perfecting that order and its publicity dimension.[123] A characteristic example, in this respect, was reflected in the liberal discourse on the *Charte constitutionnelle* during the Restoration period in France.[124] Yet, different social movements pushing demands for equality and justice and asserting claims for inclusion and recognition could also be considered, in the participatory senses, in the continued realization of constitutionally fixed basic rights still not exhausted, but "already enjoy(ing) positive validity".[125] To speak through Habermas, "it is only as a historical project" that the democratic constitutional state, as it was established over the course of its development, pointed "beyond its legal character to a normative meaning—a force at once explosive and formative."[126]

Altogether, against this backdrop, a primarily problem-oriented, genetic perspective proved to be particularly fruitful in examining the relationship between political

119 Berger and Owetschkin, "The Idea of the Public Sphere and Social Movements as Agents of Transparency."

120 Michel Foucault, "The Eye of the Power. A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot," in idem, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, transl. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (Brighton: Pantheon Books, 1980), 146–165, 152–154. See also Baume, "Does Transparency Engender the Confidence of the Governed?," 426; Stefanos Geroulanos, *Transparency in Postwar France: A Critical History of the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 117–119.

121 Jürgen Habermas, "Between Philosophy and Science: Marxism as Critique," in idem, *Theory and Practice*, transl. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 195–252, 239.

122 Habermas, "Reflections and Hypotheses on a Further Structural Transformation of the Political Public Sphere," 147.

123 Hölscher, "Öffentlichkeit," 458.

124 Fabian Rausch, *Konstitution und Revolution. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Verfassung in Frankreich, 1814–1851* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), particularly 127–135.

125 Habermas, "Reflections and Hypotheses on a Further Structural Transformation of the Political Public Sphere," 148.

126 Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," 471.

trust, publicity and transparency, including its structural complexities and ambivalences. Such a perspective increasingly seeks to implicate an interplay and interdependence between political ideas and political practice—as an expression of social struggles and conflicts. In this way, it can provide fruitful approaches for further research, especially with respect to comparative aspects within different cultures and periods, and thereby extent contribute to a better understanding of the function and modes of reflection of the political in modernity.

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Carsten Nickel

State Formation from Below—Subsidiarity and the Origins of Coordinated Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*

Abstract

In late-nineteenth century Germany, the new public services required under rapid industrialization could not be provided in a top-down manner, despite Bismarck's authoritarian aspirations. Lower-level actors therefore pushed for an alternative—well-established during centuries of internal state formation—based on the principle of subsidiarity (Latin for "assistance"): the coordination of mutual assistance, from local auxiliary funds to new electoral systems. The article theorizes the initially ecclesial programme of subsidiarity in the terms of modern politics and economics, and proposes a five-stage model for the rise of coordinated institutions from the private to the public level in late nineteenth-century Germany, based on an analysis of historical sources.

Keywords: *Varieties of Capitalism, State formation, Decentralization, Germany*, *Subsidiarity, Coordinated Capitalism, Nineteenth Century*

Despite reunified Germany's continuing evolution beyond its postwar West German "social market economy,"[1] the origins of its traditional model of coordinated capitalism[2] continue to attract the interest of political economists and historical sociologists.

* For our many detailed discussions of earlier versions, I am deeply indebted to Rutger Kaput, Philip Manow, and, above all, David Soskice. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

1 Kathleen Thelen, *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Pablo Beramendi et al., eds., *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

2 Peter Hall and David Soskice, "An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism," in *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, ed. Peter Hall and David Soskice (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–68.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.70.2023.29-54 Moving the Social · 70 (2023) · p. 29–54

What processes, during the nineteenth century, brought about a system of non-market mechanisms for organizing economic production (including collective bargaining, "conservative" welfare provision via social insurance funds, worker-employer cooperation in the economic realm, and grand coalition politics in parliaments)?

The literature on political economy and on the welfare state dealing with these questions, however, continues to struggle with the German case—with its lack of top-down political steering, it does not fully fit into the often-two-dimensional typologies of capitalism differentiating between (decentralized) liberalism and (centralized) coordination.[3] In much of the existing scholarship, Bismarck's top-down aspirations serve as the starting point for coordinated capitalism. At the same time, more recent accounts have all raised the question as to why, despite the Iron Chancellor's role, the momentous challenges of industrialization ultimately motivated greater centralization elsewhere, *but not in Germany*. While some have argued that any centralized solution faced serious difficulties in implementation, as diverging inheritance patterns had fostered rivalling local production regimes within a single national economy,[4] others believe that the specific risk profiles of large manufacturing producers led them to oppose centralized social insurance institutions.[5] Other possible explanations include the notion that the survival of the traditional artisanal economy created competition with the new industrial sector over crucial issues such as skill formation regimes;[6] that religious cleavages led to the emergence of Christian Democracy, which vetoed centrally funded social insurance;[7] or that earlier traces of "proto-coordination" facilitated the provision of public goods, freeing German elites—unlike their counterparts in Britain and France—from the need to turn to democratic central states to manage industrialization.[8]

3 Philip Manow, *Social Protection, Capitalist Production: The Bismarckian Welfare State in the German Political Economy, 1880–2015* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 6.

4 Gary Herrigel, *Industrial Constructions: The Sources of German Industrial Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

5 Isabela Mares, *The Politics of Social Risk: Business and Welfare State Development*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

6 Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

7 Philip Manow and Kees van Kersbergen, "Religion and the Western Welfare State—The Theoretical Context," in *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*, ed. Philip Manow and Kees van Kesbergen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

8 Torben Iversen and David Soskice, *Democracy and Prosperity: Reinventing Capitalism Through a Turbulent Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); see also Mark Hewitson, "The Wilhelmine Regime and the Problem of Reform: German Debates about Modern Nation-States," in *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies. German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890–1930,* ed. Geoff Eley and James N. Retallack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 73–90.

This article proposes a more structural explanation for the link between decentralization and coordination in Germany. It argues that key institutions in nineteenth-century Germany emerged as part of a process that ran in the opposite direction from existing, often still prominent, top-down explanations: state formation from below. In making this claim, the article draws a parallel with subsidiarity, a principle that had acted as a counterbalance to the impact of absolutism in German state formation since at least the early modern period. Through representational linkages and shared sovereignty, subsidiarity involves the provision of mutual support and higher-level assistance (lat. *subsidium*) among nonetheless still self-administered groups. Crucially, this entails coordination between the interests of different societal groups and actors. This historical German experience of state formation through "densification" grew out of a setting in which political decentralization had long prevented any top-down imposition;[9] its nineteenth century variant was a bottom-up process in which lower-level actors themselves, faced with rapid industrialization, pushed for the provision of mutual assistance through the creation of a national, coordinated political economy.[10] The result was the creation of coordinated institutions both prior to full democratization and in the absence of political centralization.[11]

To substantiate this argument, the article draws on historical evidence of interventions by specific political actors and interest groups. Thanks to the diligent work of numerous historians, the relevant sources are easily accessible; nonetheless, they have not been comprehensively drawn upon by political economists working on these questions. By systematizing this evidence temporally and hierarchically, the article argues for a five-stage process in which coordinated institutions emerged from the bottom-up—from the local and private to the national and public level. Beginning

9 Peter Moraw, "Cities and Citizenry as Factors of State Formation in the Roman-German Empire of the Late Middle Ages," *Theory and Society* 18 (1989): 631–62.

10 See the wider re-interpretation of Imperial Germany in Oliver Haardt, *Bismarcks Ewiger Bund: Eine Neue Geschichte des Deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Theiss, 2020).

11 Compatible with the idea of comparably egalitarian elections before the turn to democracy, as presented in Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Brett Fairbairn, "Membership, Orgnization, and Wilhelmine Modernism: Constructing Economic Democracy through Cooperation," in *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies. German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890–1930*, ed. Geoff Eley and James N. Retallack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 34–50; ultimately, the argument presented here ties in with recent reassessments of more teleological takes on German history in the 'Sonderweg' tradition as summed up in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Bd. 3: Von der 'Deutschen Doppelrevolution' bis Zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges 1849–1914* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995); however, the argument does not push this reassessment as far as Hedwig Richter, *Aufbruch in die Moderne: Reform und Massenpolitisierung im Kaiserreich*, Edition Suhrkamp 2762 (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021).

with local auxiliary funds around the middle of the nineteenth-century, this process culminated in a development as part of which political economists have, in recent years, highlighted the role of lower-level, private interests: the reform of electoral systems to facilitate cooperative politics in some German regional states just before the outbreak of the First World War.

In terms of implications, the article locates the rise of coordinated capitalism in the context of state formation,[12] linking it to the emergence of broader patterns of political organization, representation, and sovereignty—including, but by no means limited to, democracy, electoral systems and party politics, which have become very influential in the recent political economy literature.[13] As such, it connects to recent works highlighting the strategic complementarities between welfare states and production regimes.[14] However, by analyzing coordination and decentralization as structurally versus unintentionally linked, the article moves beyond theoretical treatments of the German model as a curious anomaly. The schematic perspective proposed here is instrumental for this understanding, even if historical dynamics may, in practice, have been more intricate at—and in between—each stage and in relation to other developments beyond the five stages representing key the institutional characteristics of modern coordinated market economies.

Conceptualizing the Emergence of Subsidiarity

In studies on the origins of coordinated capitalism, subsidiarity is usually considered a (paternalistic) idea developed out of late nineteenth-century Catholic social teachings.[15] Indeed, in 1891, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* presented the concept as the papal response to the challenges of industrializing society. This was, however, an unlikely revival of a normative programme of ecclesial governance initially developed by Calvinist thinkers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During that period, subsidiarity had emerged in the Holy Roman Empire in reaction to the early modern (Habsburgian, Catholic) agenda of centralization. Safeguarding local patterns of community organization was a goal that united Calvinist theoreticians,

12 See also Stefan Berger and Thomas Fetzer, eds., *Nationalism and the Economy: Explorations into a Neglected Relationship* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2019).

13 Beramendi et al., *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*, 2015.

14 Manow, *Social Protection, Capitalist Production*.

15 See Kees van Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

such as Johannes Althusius (ca. 1563–1638), with their nineteenth century Catholic counterparts as they confronted Bismarck's anti-clerical *Kulturkampf*.

The concept of subsidiarity was built around the idea that local, lower-level units—whether individuals, families or church parishes—should self-organize and practice self-help, unless and until they require assistance (lat. *subsidium*) from hierarchically higher levels.[16] The underlying argument was that—as the smallest units of societal life—families and local communities are "governed by special sets of rules specific to them, and not by a general rule of sovereignty."[17] While local units could receive help where necessary, they could not be replaced by distant political centres. Instead, it was "the state's function to guarantee and facilitate the steady and orderly proficiency of the lower social organs up to a point where these components can operate independently of political arbitration."[18] Subsidiarity was thus concerned with the bottom-up management of multi-level interaction and complexity, in particular the constantly negotiated allocation of political power among plural communities.[19] In Germany, notions of subsidiarity had long been influential. The earliest processes of early modern state formation were already fundamentally driven from below by "densification"[20]—in short, by the *coordination* of political and economic interests through patterns of decentralized representation. During the integration processes of the late nineteenth century, centralization remained limited, resulting not only in the empire's federal constitution, but also in the relatively democratic Reichstag suffrage with which Bismarck hoped to counter liberal forces. Hierarchically higher levels of authority were built on representative elements and focused on assistance to locally self-administered institutions, rather than on the top-down provision of services.

As a normative programme, therefore, subsidiarity emerged in a historical setting where centralization was traditionally absent, local patterns of organized production survived, and processes of institution-building were driven from below, via the coordination of mutual assistance. As such, subsidiarity challenges implicit notions of a necessary nexus between political centralization and non-market mechanisms for organizing production. Instead, under subsidiarity, the independent agency and self-administration of a community's constituent parts appear as *preconditions* for organized approaches to social relations within it, including in economic production regimes.

16 Johannes Althusius, *Politica. An Abridged Translation of Politics Methodologically Set Forth and Illustrated with Sacred and Profane Examples,* ed. and transl. with an Introduction by Frederick S. Carney (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995).

17 Thomas Hueglin, "Federalism at the Crossroads: Old Meanings, New Significance," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 36, no. 2 (2003): 279.

18 van Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism*, 182.

19 Hueglin, "Federalism at the Crossroads: Old Meanings, New Significance."

20 Moraw, "Cities and Citizenry as Factors of State Formation in the Roman-German Empire of the Late Middle Ages."

The prisms of political science and political economy yield a theoretical explanation for the link observed: subsidiarity combined negotiated (namely: organized) variants of political decentralization with self-managed (namely: decentralized) forms of organized production. In other words, each concept mirrored central characteristics of the other, as key actors formulated subsidiarity as a normative programme wherein neither the top-down imposition of mechanisms for organized production, nor unmitigated decentralization were viable. This led to very distinct patterns of political decentralization and organized production, overlapping in the specific manner in which public goods were provided: if public goods are not simply allotted by centralized authorities from above, their supply must be *coordinated* as mutual assistance among decentralized units. This is how state formation under subsidiarity led to the emergence of coordinated capitalism (see Figure 1 for a graphic representation of this relationship).

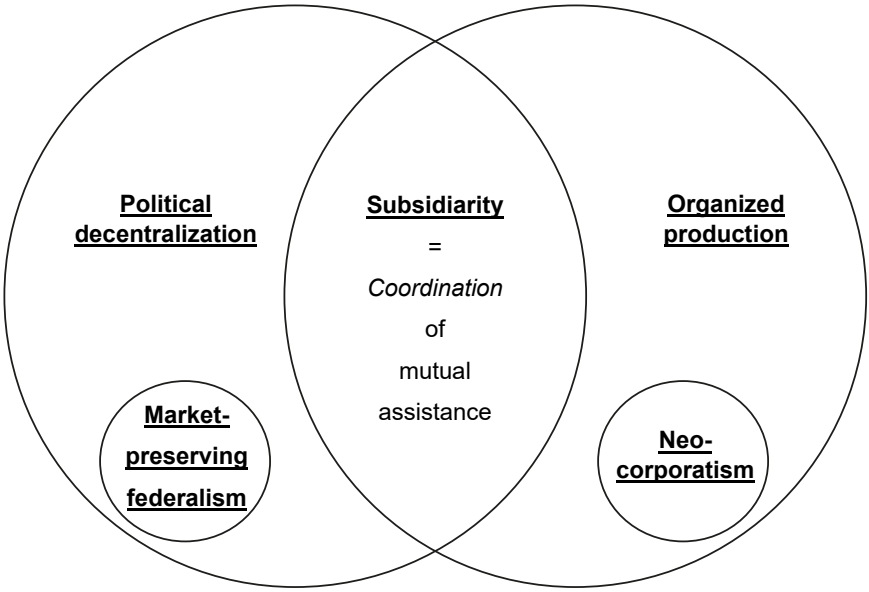

Figure 1: *Conceptual relationships between subsidiarity, political decentralization, and organized production*

In the terminology of political science, the decentralization foreseen under subsidiarity does not equal the rights-based division of powers as in, for instance, Barry Weingast's "market-preserving federalism."[21] There, a clear-cut division of rights tends to limit

21 Barry R. Weingast, "The Economic Role of Political Institutions: Market-Preserving Federalism and Economic Development," *Journal of Law, Economics & Organization* 20, no. 1 (1995): 1–31.

state involvement, preserving less regulated markets by inhibiting coordination across sub-units.[22] The modern reference model for political decentralization—the rights-based federalism of the United States[23]—never saw the emergence of self-administered institutions of worker-employer coordination. In contrast, the decentralization envisaged under subsidiarity helped maintain non-market mechanisms for organized production; in the nineteenth century, this form of coordinated decentralization was arguably what made the political construction of an integrated market through the German Customs Union possible. Subsidiarity entails consensual exchange by means of cross-level representation, as in the decentralization theorized, for instance, under Gerhard Lehmbruch's "managed co-existence of representational monopolies."[24]

Indeed, the focus on self-administration in subsidiarity highlights that economic production can only be coordinated among actors whose views and interests exist in relative autonomy from each other; this requirement lends itself to decentralized politics. As such, it also points to an understanding of organized production that is different from the one expressed in studies in the corporatist tradition, wherein organized production was "an ideology of social partnership expressed at the national level; a relatively centralized and concentrated system of interest groups."[25] Subsequently, respective top-level bargains were thought to be matched in the political realm by a similar centralization, often through the establishment of strong roles for political leaders and bureaucrats.[26] These views, however, do not seem very compatible with the prioritization of self-help and a merely supportive role for higher levels in the hierarchy under subsidiarity.

In contrast, later political economic approaches have explained organized production by reference to theoretical premises that are, despite their differences, more open to bottom-up dynamics such as individual firms interested in coordination with

22 See also Cathie Jo Martin and Duane Swank, "The Political Origins of Coordinated Capitalism: Business Organizations, Party Systems, and State Structure in the Age of Innocence," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 2 (2008); "Gonna Party Like It's 1899: Party Systems and the Origins of Varieties of Coordination," *World Politics* 63, no. 1 (2011): 78–114.

23 William H. Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*, LB Basic Studies in Politics (New York: Little, Brown & Co, 1964).

24 Gerhard Lehmbruch, "From State of Authority to Network State: The German State in Developmental Perspective," in *State and Administration in Japan and Germany. A Comparative Perspective on Continuity and Change*, ed. Frieder Naschold and Michio Muramatsu, De Gruyter Studies in Organization 75 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 56.

25 Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 32.

26 Colin Crouch, *Industrial Relations and European State Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 52, 55; Martin and Swank, "The Political Origins of Coordinated Capitalism: Business Organizations, Party Systems, and State Structure in the Age of Innocence," 185; "Gonna Party Like It's 1899: Party Systems and the Origins of Varieties of Coordination."

workers.[27] More recent work has moved even further, highlighting the role of electoral politics in shaping different models of economic and welfare system governance in advanced capitalist democracies.[28] Subsidiarity, as a theoretical concept, provides a structural framework for understanding the bottom-up emergence of patterns of organized economic production in a setting of sustained political decentralization. The underlying idea is that, for private preferences to be able to coordinate mutual assistance from below, decentralized actors need to be engaged in self-management in the first place.

Nineteenth Century Implications: Five Stages to Coordination

The well-established limits to centralized steering in contemporary German capitalism do not in and of themselves prove that decentralized patterns drove the emergence of coordinated capitalism in the nineteenth century.[29] Indeed, the logic of unintended consequences has long played a prominent role in historical accounts. Most famously, Bismarck's initial state-corporatist plans for social insurance legislation ended up providing his biggest adversary, the workers' movement, with an administrative stronghold in the evolving system of economic governance.[30] Following this logic, much of the political economy literature analyses how twentieth-century democratic politics came to underpin the coordinated institutions that emerged out of authoritarian imposition.

The alternative argument—that coordinated capitalism emerged as part of processes of state formation from below—becomes more tenable, if Bismarckian social insurance legislation is situated as a specific episode in the context of a larger bottom-up process. Undoubtedly driven by staunchly illiberal aspirations, the Iron Chancellor's state-corporatist initiatives, and even their unplanned consequences, appear less awe-inspiring from such a perspective. Unintended as they certainly were by Bismarck himself, the setbacks to his state-corporatist agenda point to the long-term influence of decentralization patterns. New stages in the continued bottom-up process

27 Hall and Soskice, "An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism"; Thelen, *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity*.

28 Beramendi et al., eds., *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

29 Kathleen Thelen, *Union of Parts: Labor Politics in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Peter Hall, "Central Bank Independence and Coordinated Wage Bargaining: Their Interaction in Germany and Europe," *German Politics and Society* 31 (Spring 1994): 1–23.

30 Gerhard A. Ritter, *Sozialversicherung in Deutschland und England: Entstehung und Grundzüge im Vergleich* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1983).

reflected the desire of lower-level actors for the coordination of mutual *assistance* on hierarchically higher—but not very centralized—levels, as rapid industrialization required solutions that continued to transcend established local political economies. Subsidiarity was, as Kees van Kersbergen aptly put it, "a crucial parameter of what might be called community production."[31] The relevant actors included artisans, craftsmen, and medium-sized businesses, but soon also skilled workers in larger companies, their employers, local administrations and, later, increasingly pragmatic political parties. To many of them, Bismarck's nineteenth-century East-Elbian authoritarianism was as challenging as the Habsburg's fifteenth and sixteenth-century centralization attempts. Just like the embattled Protestants of early modern times, Germany's nineteenth century Catholics, targeted by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, again invoked subsidiarity as a normative concept. Meanwhile, rapid industrialization was indeed *res nova*—the "new thing" invoked in the title of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, motivating demands for coordination and assistance on the higher, geographically broader levels of the quickly emerging national political economy. Bismarck and his central-state elites were of course important, for instance for the social insurance legislation of the 1880s. Yet the subsequent decade, during which the chancellor attempted to utilize his social insurance plans as a tool against the rise of social democracy, was only one stage in a much longer process of state formation. As a result, coordinated capitalism developed on a trajectory from lower (private) to higher (public) levels, or, following Johannes Althusius, from the particular to the general.[32]

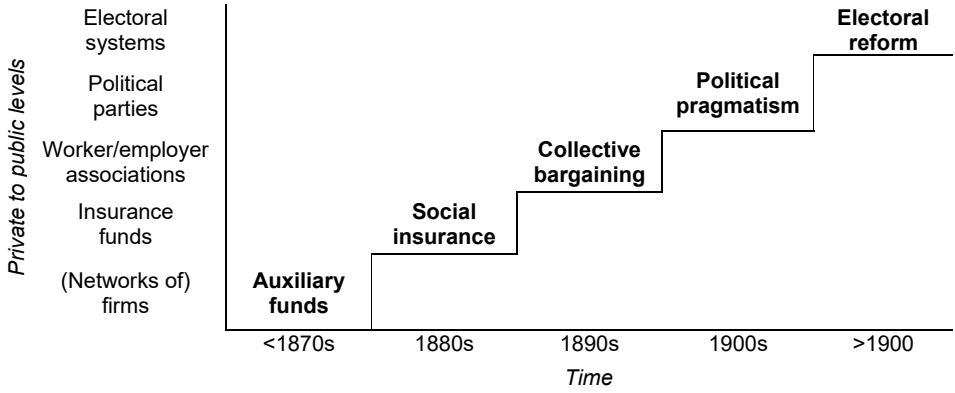

Figure 2: *Five stages to coordination in nineteenth-century Germany*

31 van Kersbergen, *Social Capitalism*, 189.

32 Hueglin, "Federalism at the Crossroads: Old Meanings, New Significance," 278.

This argument reveals a five-stage process within Germany's turn to coordination (see Figure 2). Growing out of centuries of early coordination in miners' brotherhoods, craft guilds, journeymen associations and their successor organizations, the first stage of this process began in the 1870s, when (1) auxiliary funds began to provide basic welfare coverage in cities and at the level of large volume producing companies. In the 1880s, the introduction of (2) social insurance saw workers and employers involved in the administration of the schemes—building on pre-existing local institutions and initiatives. The increase in (3) collective bargaining in the 1890s subsequently sparked greater coordination between organized labour unions and employer associations. This was not without consequence for party politics, where around 1900, the evolution of modern interest parties away from parties of notables triggered a rise in (4) political pragmatism and coordination across the new, capitalist cleavage. Interest parties took this evolutionary process to its final stage, the (5) electoral reform in some regional legislations just before the outbreak of the First World War—a topic recently much debated by political economists, and a first hint at the turn to democracy yet to occur.

From Auxiliary Funds to Social Insurance

An announcement from the very top of the Wilhelmine state is often portrayed as the starting point for the emergence of coordinated capitalism in Germany: the imperial message (*Kaiserliche Botschaft*) of 17 November 1881, outlining the government's programme for social insurance legislation and complementing the repressive anti-socialist laws enacted three years earlier.[33] However, as early as 1993, Florian Tennstedt—lead editor of the multi-volume collection of sources on the history of German social policy that has become the standard in the field and upon which this section draws—quipped: "Only without knowledge of the prehistory, well-documented in the primary sources, can one arrive at the perception that social policy was designed on the basis of the programme presented [in the imperial message]."[34]

In the years preceding the imperial message, local political and economic actors coordinated assistance in response to the increasingly insufficient fault-based liability laws and local poor relief schemes. Under the liability law of 1871, an employee could only be compensated for a workplace accident, if he could prove that the accident was the employer's fault. But in the context of steam-driven heavy industrialization, and

33 Ritter, *Sozialversicherung in Deutschland und England: Entstehung und Grundzüge im Vergleich*.

34 Florian Tennstedt, "Sozialpolitik und Innere Reichsgründung. Politische Rahmenkonstellationen in Europa Als Ausgangspunkt für Deutschlands Aufbruch Zum Sozialstaat," in *Soziale Sicherheit in Europa: Renten- und Sozialversicherungssysteme im Vergleich*, ed. Günther Lottes (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 1993), 64.

thus accident-prone factories such as steelworks, this practice became untenable. It overburdened the basic poor relief schemes of local communities into which injured workers fell, and thereby cast doubts on the paternalist ambitions of employers for workplace relations. Political economists have highlighted how employers recognized the limits of managing the risks of rapid industrialization through private law. This search for solutions was a driving force behind the 1880/81 proposal for public accident insurance.[35]

However, employers were more than the mere providers of blueprints for Bismarck to turn to, but key *instigators* of social insurance legislation. Among the business representatives—rather than authoritarian government officials—unsuccessfully pushing these ideas, between the 1848 revolution and the 1869 North German industrial code, were Ruhr heavy industrialist Friedrich Harkort, his Saar counterpart Karl Fredrich Stumm, and Eupen factory owner August Wilhelm Hüffer.[36] Reacting to their demands, Bismarck had, in a 1863 letter to the interior ministry, still inquired about the potential prospects for pension funds. Nonetheless, Bismarck's interest in the "workers' question" during the period of conflict over the Prussian constitution had given way to a rather obstructive positioning by the late 1870s.[37] Instead, lower-level actors led the way during the 1870s. A 1875 newspaper contribution by Ruhr heavy industrialist Louis Baare, for example, lambasted the shortcomings of the liability law.[38] One year earlier, as part of a publication by Gustav Schmoller's *Verein für Socialpolitik*, Wiesbaden chemicals producer Fritz Kalle made the case for compulsory auxiliary funds,[39] which became the official policy of the industrialists' association *Centralverband Deutscher Industrieller (CDI)* after its foundation in 1876.[40] In 1878, as a member of the imperial diet, Stumm reiterated his calls for compulsory invalidity and pension funds for factory workers, modelled on miners' brotherhoods (*Knappschaften*). In contrast, in 1878, Bismarck's office notified the Prussian trade ministry that the

35 Mares, *The Politics of Social Risk: Business and Welfare State Development*, 65.

36 Heinrich Volkmann, *Die Arbeiterfrage im Preußischen Abgeordnetenhaus, 1848–1869*, Schriften zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte 13 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968).

37 Florian Tennstedt and Heidi Winter, eds., *Grundfragen Staatlicher Sozialpolitik. Die Diskussion der Arbeiterfrage auf Regierungsseite Vom Preußischen Verfassungskonflikt bis zur Reichstagswahl von 1881*: *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik, I. Abteilung (1867–1881)*, vol.1 (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1994), 14.

38 Florian Tennstedt and Heidi Winter, eds., *Von der Haftpflichtgesetzgebung zur ersten Unfallversicherungsvorlage*: *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik, I. Abteilung (1867–1881)*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Fischer, 1993), 50.

39 Fritz Kalle, "Eine Deutsche Arbeiter-Invaliden, Wittwen- und Waisen-Casse. Gutachten," in *Ueber Alters- und Invalidenkassen für Arbeiter* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1874).

40 Ute Frevert, *Krankheit als Politisches Problem, 1770–1880. Soziale Unterschichten in Preußen Zwischen Medizinischer Polizei und Staatlicher Sozialversicherung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 181.

chancellor saw no need to "approach the matter" of liability law reform.[41] Meanwhile, liberal politicians were among the most outspoken advocates of local wide-ranging public services—from vocational training institutes and water works to savings banks—as described by the German term *Daseinsvorsorge* ("providing for existence"). The local auxiliary welfare funds within this setup were more than mere templates for the subsequent social security legislation. Their own substantiveness is reflected in the gradual processes of legislative expansion and regulatory tightening in Prussia before 1870.[42] The ambitiousness behind the local *Daseinsvorsorge* project was summed up by one of its flagbearers, Frankfurt's liberal mayor Johannes von Miquel. Upon leaving his post in 1890, Miquel called for the boundaries still constraining communal powers in public services provision to be pushed ever further afield.[43]

Despite these desires for horizontal expansion, however, the model had reached its vertical limits. Existing liability and poor relief arrangements were under pressure, for instance, from the increased spatial and professional mobility of workers under rapid industrialization.[44] But even the proposals of ambitious Prussian trade ministry official Theodor Lohmann as of early 1878 still contended themselves with an expansion of the fault-focused logic under the existing liability law, via a new, standard presumption of employer fault.[45] Facing the real limitations of existing arrangements, local businesses provided the impetus for social insurance. The protocol of a January 1880 board meeting at Baare's Bochumer Verein steelworks points to preparations for an accident fund covering the plant's entire workforce; Negotiations with an insurance company had been underway since 1878.[46] After a chance encounter in Berlin in early February 1880, Baare sent a report to trade secretary Karl Hofmann in April, suggesting an expansion of his Bochum model to all of Germany: an accident insurance covering all workers, which, in turn, would largely release employers from their liability for workplace accidents.[47] Three months later, in a draft paper to trade secretary Hofmann, Lohmann followed suit and also dropped the fault dogma. Instead, he

41 Tennstedt and Winter, *Von der Haftpflichtgesetzgebung zur ersten Unfallversicherungsvorlage,* XXV, 73.

42 Volkmann, *Die Arbeiterfrage im Preußischen Abgeordnetenhaus, 1848–1869*, 59.

43 Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 200.

44 Volker Berghahn, "Demographic Growth, Industrialization and Social Change," in *Nineteenth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society 1780–1918, 2nd ed.*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 186; Toni Offermann, *Arbeiterbewegung und Liberales Bürgertum in Deutschland, 1850–1863*, Reihe Politik und Gesellschaftsgeschichte 5 (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1979), 142.

45 Tennstedt and Winter, *Von der Haftpflichtgesetzgebung zur ersten Unfallversicherungsvorlage*, 57.

46 Ibid., 120.

47 Ibid., 125, 161.

proposed a voluntary accident insurance under private law, based on a new, general assumption of employer liability for workplace risks (*Gefährdungshaftung*), to be co-financed jointly by the workers.[48] But such was Bismarck's obstructionist reputation, that Hofmann feared the chancellor would not accept this plan. Instead of proposing the new *Gefährdungshaftung* plan, he thus reinserted the older, seemingly less radical fault presumption idea before passing the draft on to the chancellor. This, however, backfired spectacularly. Bismarck reacted furiously, rejecting the presumption idea as an institutionalized mechanism for blaming employers. Hofmann was removed from his post, and Bismarck took on the role of Prussian trade secretary himself.[49] It was only during his parting visit later in the summer of 1880 that Hofmann handed Baare's initial report to Bismarck. Only now did the chancellor realize that what he had considered a threat to large employers largely reflected their preferences. This was the turning point. Working through Baare's report, Bismarck manually highlighted the idea of a public insurance authority under imperial auspices. But rather than reinstating Hofmann, Bismarck made the Bochum-born idea his own, asking its initial author, Baare, to turn his proposal into a draft bill.[50]

By setting up a competition for the best draft bill between public servants and private industrialists, Bismarck ensured that the outcome was a solution under public rather than private law, an "imperial or state insurance" without workers' monetary contributions. Baare and Lohmann were unhappy with this top-down path towards welfare state formation in line with older, paternalistic visions for centralized insurance demanded by industrialists like Stumm since the 1860s. The Reichstag—elected under relatively democratic suffrage—removed Bismarck's main paternalistic tools, including a financial contribution from the federal government and an imperial insurance authority. This, in turn, prompted Bismarck to engineer an upper house veto against his own, severely altered bill in 1881.[51] Central state authorities were constrained, not least by a lack of the required tax revenues—the quest for which was repeatedly blocked by the traditionally powerful regional states. This further increased the role of contributions from workers and employers and, in turn, the influence of these groups.[52]

48 Ibid., 189.
49 Ibid., 214.
50 Ibid., 161, 239.
51 Florian Tennstedt and Heidi Winter, "'Der Staat hat wenig Liebe – activ wie passiv': Die Anfänge des Sozialstaats im Deutschen Reich von 1871. Ergebnisse Archivalischer Forschungen zur Entstehung der Gesetzlichen Unfallversicherung," *Zeitschrift für Sozialreform* 39 (1993): 390.
52 Jürgen Kocka, "Bismarck und die Entstehung des Deutschen Sozialstaats," *Francia* 43 (2016): 404.

The accident insurance would only come into force in 1884. Like the health insurance passed in the previous year and the pension insurance completing the edifice by 1889, the groundbreaking accident insurance ended up taking a more decentralized shape than Bismarck had intended. Yet, this also meant that social insurance came much closer to what its local instigators had initially intended. Neither Bismarck's disinterested obstruction in the 1870s, nor his authoritarian enthusiasm in the decade that followed proved very durable within the context of ultimately limited central state powers. Instead, social insurance emerged in a process of state formation from below, a densification process in which differentiated interests—from factory owners to municipal administrations, insurance companies and the imperial government—coordinated the provision of social insurance as a new type of higher-level assistance required under rapidly industrializing capitalism.

From Social Insurance to Collective Bargaining

The institutional architecture of the new social insurance bodies famously included elected worker representatives. This benefitted labour union centralization, an organizational stabilizer that would turn out to be crucial for the further development of Germany's welfare state.[53] However, the limitations and shortcomings were just as important. As of the 1890s, lower-ranking actors coordinated the provision of assistance through a self-administered industrial relations system that neither existing administrative bodies of social insurance nor the central government could or wanted to provide. The context was provided by the end of the anti-socialist laws in 1890. The share of workers organized in free unions rose from 5 to 18 percent between 1895 and 1903.[54] As the economy continued to expand by the mid-1890s,[55] one result was a significant increase in strike activity.[56] The anti-socialist laws had slowed the development of a functioning industrial relations system from below, but an 1889 report by the Berlin police president to the Prussian interior minister still counted some 240,000 union members.[57] A decade of restrictive measures seemed to have

53 Manow, *Social Protection, Capitalist Production*.

54 Klaus Schönhoven, *Expansion und Konzentration. Studien zur Entwicklung der Freien Gewerkschaften im Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890 bis 1914* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980), 114.

55 Gerhard A. Ritter and Klaus Tenfelde, *Arbeiter im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871 bis 1914*, Geschichte der Arbeiter und der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts 5 (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1992), 65.

56 Klaus Tenfelde and Heinrich Volkmann, *Streik. zur Geschichte des Arbeitskampfes in Deutschland während der Industrialisierung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), 295.

57 Wilfried Rudloff, ed., *Arbeiterrecht*: *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik, II. Abteilung (1881–1890)*, vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 415.

left business and state elites with the worst of both worlds: a labour movement that remained well-organized, but had little incentive to cooperate with the authorities that had criminalized it. Well-organized workers threatened to disappear into the wilderness of unregulated industrial action. Assistance was required in the form of an industrial relations framework.

An 1890 bill introduced special courts staffed equally by workers and employers, to help with the resolution of industrial conflicts, while the 1891 industrial code reform paved the way for the introduction of company-level work charters and worker councils.[58] The underlying *Neuer Kurs* (new path) agenda had been announced in Wilhelm II's 1890 February decrees. Under pressure from shifting Reichstag majorities, he connected to older and much longer lasting coordination efforts by lower-level actors, which had thus far been obstructed by authoritarian elites. Employers, including even some conservative heavy industrialists, had begun to discover the value of coordinated industrial relations, of co-determination and the expansion of employment laws, as an effective tool for preventing the organizational disintegration of their work forces and, consequently, "wild" strikes. As early as 1886, newspapers reported that the small-business *Deutsche Volkspartei (DtVP)* had publicly called for the introduction of industrial courts staffed by workers and employers.[59] Where such courts already existed, employers reverted to them to get workers to end their strikes, as indicated by court reports from industrially advanced regions such as Leipzig.[60] In an 1887 report to Bismarck, Düsseldorf district president Hans von Berlepsch highlighted the courts' role as arbitration boards in the local small iron and metal industries.[61] But in contrast to various Reichstag initiatives for such industrial courts beginning in 1886, even a progressive central state civil servant like Lohman, in an 1888 note, still expressed his relative scepticism towards the immediate need to act.[62]

This changed with the great Ruhr miners' strike of 1889. In white papers and reports, public servants pondered possible strategies to limit the impact of such industrial action.[63] In their absence, even traditionally liberal actors such as the leader of Essen-based mining industry association Friedrich Hammacher—an advocate for a negotiated solution to the Ruhr miners' strike—saw no other way but to urge the government to take a tougher line against "contract breaching" employees not

58 Hans-Jörg von Berlepsch, *'Neuer Kurs' im Kaiserreich? Die Arbeiterpolitik des Freiherrn von Berlepsch 1890 bis 1896*, Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Politik- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte 18 (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1987), 291.

59 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 205.

60 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 304.

61 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 295.

62 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 352.

63 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 391.

returning to work.[64] Eventually, the government changed its stance. In a report to Bismarck, interior state secretary Karl Heinrich von Boetticher suggested the tableing of an amendment to yet another, liberal bill under consideration in parliament, which designated industrial courts as "arbitration offices,"[65] namely as facilitators of collective agreements rather than just examiners of individual employment issues.

The unusually democratic Reichstag suffrage provided a transmission channel for lower-level initiatives towards new fora for modern industrial relations. Between the 1878 and 1887 elections, the socialist vote share rose from 7.6 to 10.1 percent. In the February 1890 polls, it almost doubled to 19.7 percent, while the Catholic Centre party remained the strongest force in the Reichstag.[66] Even if these votes did not translate into comparable seat shares under the majoritarian electoral system, the election results demonstrated the failure of the anti-socialist laws of the 1880s and sealed the end of Bismarck's "cartel." More moderate local representatives like Berlepsch could no longer be disregarded. Having attempted to mediate in the miners' strike in his region earlier in 1889, he argued in an autumn report to Bismarck for the introduction of work councils, arbitration boards and equally staffed chambers in the mining sector.[67]

The growing influence of such lower-level voices in government and parliament set the stage for not only a more pragmatic stance, but also Bismarck's eventual departure in the following year. The protocol of the Prussian crown council meeting of 24 January 1890 documents Wilhelm II's desire to mitigate the risk of renewed strikes with new social policy initiatives, while his chancellor insisted instead on an extension of the anti-socialist laws—even if the new lack of Reichstag majorities had become obvious in a vote just a day earlier.[68] Berlepsch took over from Bismarck as Prussian trade secretary just before the disastrous 1890 elections that were followed by the chancellor's departure.[69] The new trade secretary continued to draw on previous legislative work passed, at times unanimously, in the Reichstag, while Wilhelm II

64 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 420.

65 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 479.

66 Gerhard A. Ritter, *Wahlgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch. Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1871–1918*, Statistische Arbeitsbücher zur Neuen Deutschen Geschichte (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980), 12, 38.

67 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 455.

68 Wolfgang Ayaß, Florian Tennstedt, and Heidi Winter, *Grundfragen der Sozialpolitik. Die Diskussion der Arbeiterfrage auf Regierungsseite und in der Öffentlichkeit*: *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik, II. Abteilung (1881–1890),* vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 479.

69 von Berlepsch, *'Neuer Kurs' im Kaiserreich? Die Arbeiterpolitik des Freiherrn von Berlepsch 1890 bis 1896*, 48.

chaired the relevant state council meeting based on a word-by-word outline prepared by senior civil servants.[70]

The emperor rebranded what were, in fact, lower-level initiatives. The industrial code reform of 1891was intended to increase public regulation of private industrial relations. Larger companies were required to introduce internal workplace charters, formalizing the terms of previously often verbal employment contracts. Moreover, workers' councils were to be introduced. Many heavy industrialists such as Krupp were opposed, but meeting minutes still note the support of a majority of employers present at an 1890 Prussian state council gathering.[71] As early as 1885, when the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had called for industrial code reform, the protocols of Reichstag commission meetings highlighted the political backing not only from Centre leaders such as the party's social policy expert Franz Hitze, but also from liberals and even moderate conservatives. Back then, the main conflict had been over how worker representatives on company or industry councils should be elected.[72]

In the following year, businessman and National Liberal Reichstag MP Wilhelm Oechelhäuser published a pamphlet in support of equally-staffed work chambers. Oechelhäuser's proposal differed from the broadly similar initiatives put forward by the Social Democrats in that he wanted the chambers to focus on surveillance, mediation, and increasing protection for employers from "contract breaches."[73] Years before the government caught up, therefore, the debate in the Reichstag had moved beyond the question whether industrial relations should become more coordinated; instead, representatives for worker and employer interests were already bargaining over the exact power balance in these new institutions, such as worker and industry councils.

Beginning in the 1880s, workers and employers displayed a growing interest in coordinating assistance by institutionalizing their conflicts. Even conservative Reichstag MP Stumm described worker councils as "a blessing" during an 1890 Reichstag committee meeting.[74] Via the works charter enacted at his Saar iron works in 1895, Stumm hoped to expand his authority into workers' private lives.[75] But protocols from the meetings of the council of elders at the Marienhütte ironworks in Silesia—one of Germany's oldest worker councils—point to less paternalistic effects. Instead, the

70 Wolfgang Ayaß, *Grundfragen der Sozialpolitik: Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik 1867 bis 1914, III. Abteilung: Ausbau und Differenzierung der Sozialpolitik Seit Beginn des Neuen Kurses (1890–1904),* vol.1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016), XIV, 89.

71 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 1.

72 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 94.

73 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 175.

74 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 90.

75 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 220.

minutes from the 1880s abound with references to employee self-control.[76] Around the same time, articles in worker publications also praised the "disciplining" effect of social democratic organization on otherwise wild-striking employees.[77]

While the government had once again lost interest by the middle of the 1890s, the workers' movement's interest in self-moderation kept growing from below. At an 1899 trade union gathering in Stuttgart, any remaining, orthodox opposition was dropped and collective bargains with employers were formally endorsed.[78] According to leading trade unionist Carl Legien, strikes were now the exception and no longer the rule.[79] Out of a total of 1625 officially registered strikes and lockouts in 1904,[80] industrial courts addressed 399[81]—a substantial share, considering that the municipal nature of the courts contrasted with the increasingly supra-regional nature of industrial action.[82] Businesses also established specific employer, not just industry, associations.[83] The charter for the nationwide and cross-sectoral central office of employers' associations, founded in 1904,[84] reflects an increased interest in the assistance provided by collective bargains, even among traditionally independent-minded business leaders.

By 1907, 10 percent of all workers were covered by collective agreements.[85] As with the existing industrial courts, factory charters and worker councils, the advances towards collective bargaining preceded any respective legislation on the state level, which would follow only after the First World War.[86] Liberal activists and politicians

76 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 38, 320, 355.

77 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht,* 141.

78 Hans-Peter Ullmann, "Industrielle Interessen und die Entstehung der Deutschen Sozialversicherung 1880–1889," *Historische Zeitschrift* 229, no. 3 (1979): 200.

79 Carl Legien, *Das Koalitionsrecht der Deutschen Arbeiter in Theorie und Praxis. Denkschrift der Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (Hamburg: Verlag der Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands, 1899).

80 Tenfelde and Volkmann, *Streik. zur Geschichte des Arbeitskampfes in Deutschland währen der Industrialisierung*, 296.

81 "Die Tätigkeit der Gewerbegerichte 1904," *Soziale Praxis. Centralblatt für Sozialpolitik* 14 (May 1904): 1325.

82 Jutta Rabenschlag-Kräußlich, *Parität statt Klassenkampf? Zur Organisation des Arbeitsmarktes und Domestizierung des Arbeitskampfes in Deutschland und England 1900–1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1983), 78.

83 Hans-Peter Ullmann, "Unternehmerschaft, Arbeitgeberverbände und Streikbewegung 1890–1914," in *Streik. zur Geschichte des Arbeitskampfes in Deutschland während der Industrialisierung*, ed. Klaus Tenfelde and Heinrich Volkmann (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), 197.

84 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 505.

85 Hans-Peter Ullmann, *Tarifverträge und Tarifpolitik in Deutschland bis 1914: Entstehung und Entwicklung, Interessenpolitische Bedingungen und Bedeutung des Tarifvertragswesens für die Sozialistischen Gewerkschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1977), 98.

86 Sabine Rudischhauser, *Geregelte Verhältnisse. Eine Geschichte des Tarifvertragsrechts in Deutsch-*

such as Karl Flesch ensured a further expansion of employment regulations, thereby reshaping worker-employer relations from the factory floor up, as "a new economic order cannot be constructed or decreed."[87]

From Collective Bargaining to Political Pragmatism

By the summer of 1895, Berlepsch had already requested to be removed from his post. In his resignation letter to Wilhelm II, he complained about the obstruction to his progressive course exerted by Stumm and other conservative and National Liberal forces.[88] The risk was not only that authoritarian elites would revert to outright suppression; orthodox positions in the Catholic and social democratic camps were also threatening to block further progress. Lower-level actors therefore began to coordinate assistance in the form of a push for a new pragmatism on the next, higher, stage—national party politics. Less than five years after the end of the anti-socialist laws, the government's so-called subversion bill (*Umsturzvorlage*) of December 1894 envisaged new obstacles to Social Democracy. Following the 1896 Hamburg port workers strike, conservative state elites tried to double down even further, tabling the 1899 prison bill (*Zuchthausvorlage*). This bill was rejected not only by the Catholic Centre party, but also by large segments of the National Liberals, previously members of Bismarck's "cartel." In response, vice chancellor Arthur von Posadowsky-Wehner again steered the government closer towards the February decrees.[89] But overall, the government remained a volatile veto player.

In contrast, political parties increasingly became key instigators. In terms of intra-party organization, this dynamic rested on greater representation for groups of lower-level actors; in terms of inter-party relations, cooperation gradually began to emerge. On the left, the unions were no longer willing to accept the leadership of the Social Democratic party over the entire workers' movement; they positioned themselves *against* the desire of politicians for political strikes. Within the Catholic milieu, Centre party leaders and workers' representatives pushed the pope to *allow* Catho-

land und Frankreich (1890–1918/19), Industrielle Welt, Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises für Moderne Sozialgeschichte 92 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017), 614.

87 Karl Flesch, "Die Tragödie des Arbeitsvertrags," *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 2 (1905): 243.

88 Wolfgang Ayaß, *Arbeiterschutz: Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sozialpolitik 1867 bis 1914, III. Abteilung: Ausbau und Differenzierung der Sozialpolitik seit Beginn des Neuen Kurses (1890–1904),* vol. 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 335.

89 Karl-Erich Born, *Staat und Sozialpolitik Seit Bismarcks Sturz. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Innenpolitischen Entwicklung des Deutschen Reiches 1890–1914* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1957), 146.

lic workers to become members in (formally interdenominational) Christian trade unions. While the socialists benefitted from their existing organizational status as a modern mass party,[90] the Centre's evolution meant a deeper organizational mutation from an elite party of notables to a party engaged in interest-based politics.[91] When the party voted against the government's plans for army expansion in 1893, this triggered early elections and concluded a process in which middle class politicians had replaced aristocratic notables at the Centre's helm. After 1900, these middle-class forces came under increasing pressure from the growing Catholic workers' movement. The high point of this social Catholic influence was reached in late 1906, when, under Matthias Erzberger's leadership, the Centre voted jointly with the Social-Democratic Party in the Reichstag to withhold further funding from the government's colonial genocide campaign against the Nama in Southwest Africa, again triggering early elections. As of 1907, however, middle class forces managed to regain some ground.[92]

The Centre's transformation rested on organizations such as the People's Association for Catholic Germany (*Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*) and on Catholic workers' associations, whose emergence in the last decade of the nineteenth century effectively provided the party with its locally rooted mass-movement underpinnings. These associations were self-help institutions designed to improve worker welfare and training, with local chapters organized along parish lines and presided by clergymen and Catholic employers.[93] This appeared to be in line with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, which had rediscovered the concept of subsidiarity as a Catholic response to the challenges of rapid industrialization. Drawing on the thinking of Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler and other German social reformers since the 1860s, the encyclical confirmed the social Catholic movement's achievements .[94]

Within local associations, specialist committees emerged for each profession. In the eyes of *Volksverein* founder Franz Hitze, the professional sub-associations should coordinate regionally, thereby providing a Catholic alternative to socialist trade unions. But as this model turned out to lack the unions' organizational prowess, Catholic workers

90 Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der Modernen Demokratie; Untersuchungen über die Oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig: Werner Klinkhardt, 1911).

91 Ulrich von Hehl, "Vom Honoratioren- Zum Berufspolitiker? Das Zentrum im Kaiserreich," in *Regierung, Parlament und Öffentlichkeit im Zeitalter Bismarcks. Politikstile im Wandel*, ed. Lothar Gall, Otto-von-Bismarck-Stiftung (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003), 151–83.

92 Wilfried Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich: der Politische Katholizismus in der Krise des Wilhelminischen Deutschlands*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der Politischen Parteien 75 (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1984).

93 Thomas Bredohl, *Class and Religious Identity: The Rhenish Center Party in Wilhelmine Germany* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2000), 60.

94 Klaus Schatz, *Kirchengeschichte der Neuzeit II*, Leitfaden Theologie 20 (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989), 109.

in industrial centres quickly began to set up interdenominational trade unions. Coal miner August Brust led the way by founding the Professional Association of Christian Miners (*Gewerkverein Christlicher Bergarbeiter*) in Essen in 1894.[95] The Christian trade unions engaged in collective bargaining, were willing to revert to industrial action, and worked together with their socialist counterparts.[96] This may have been facilitated by a pattern already noted by contemporaries: as Catholic social teaching focused on morals rather than economics, the *Volksverein* and other Catholic workers' organizations turned to the work of social democratic academics of the time, the so-called *Kathedersozialisten*, for intellectual guidance.[97] Yet, bottom-up attempts at worker representation and cooperation with Protestants and even socialists did not go unanswered. Ecclesial elites used their authority to prevent Catholic workers from joining non-Catholic (even if Christian, non-socialist) trade unions. The bishop of Trier, Michael Felix Korum, professed: "Even if the unions had only Catholic members, but assigned the leadership to a worker, we would have to fight them. What matters is that the clergy remains in control of Catholic workers."[98] In the ensuing trade union struggle (*Gewerkschaftsstreit*), the *Volksverein* and Catholic workers' associations pushed for a pragmatic line devised by social reformers in the urban and industrial centres of the Rhineland, that was in favour of further democratization and worker emancipation, and open to interdenominational trade unions. The conflict deeply divided German Catholicism, including the workers' associations. In 1912, a papal encyclical decreed a compromise: workers could become members in Christian trade unions as long as they remained simultaneously affiliated with a Catholic workers' association.[99]

The idea of organized representation for Catholic workers had risen from the bottom to recognition at the very highest level. It now received assistance from Catholic Germany's political party, as the Centre veered towards modern interest-group politics and became increasingly available for pragmatic politics across the class divide. Up until the First World War, the Centre grew into an integration party with a strong emphasis on medium-sized businesses.[100] Meanwhile, the debates about revisionism

95 Karl Josef Rivinius, "Der Streit um die Christlichen Gewerkschaften im Briefwechsel Zwischen Carl Bachern, P. Pankratius Rathscheck und Bischof Döbbing Vom Erscheinen der Enzyklika »Singulari Quadam« bis Zum Tod Kardinals Kopp (1912–1914)," *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 23 (1982): 135.

96 Helga Grebing, *Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Ein Überblick*, 7th ed. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), 127.

97 Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich: Der Politische Katholizismus in der Krise des Wilhelminischen Deutschlands*, 91.

98 cited in Emil Ritter, *Die Katholisch-Soziale Bewegung Deutschlands im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert und der Volksverein* (Cologne: Bachem, 1954), 323.

99 Bredohl, *Class and Religious Identity*, 149.

100 Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich: Der Politische Katholizismus in der Krise des Wilhelminischen Deutschlands,* 225.

and reformism pitted orthodox elements against less ideological forces within a Social Democratic Party that was, in the mass strike debate (*Massenstreikdebatte*), competing with pragmatic unions for the leadership of the workers' movement. From the bottom up, these dynamics transformed the party politics of the workers' movement from a risk factor into a coordinator of assistance for growing cross-class cooperation.

Social Democracy often struggled to attract working-class voters if they were Catholic, Polish, or semi-independent, and especially if they were low-skilled, or worked in the agricultural sector.[101] However, the fast-growing new middle classes of imperial Germany—"petty bourgeois" groups such as civil servants and office clerks—gradually became attainable for the party before the First World War, at least if they were Protestant.[102] Expanding its electorate to wage earners from all walks of life, social democracy had to come to programmatic terms with its voters' preferences in the conservative-capitalist society of the Wilhelmine empire. This was complicated by expectations expressed, for instance, by Friedrich Engels, that Germany would turn socialist by the end of the century.[103] Reformists, in contrast, had little interest in grand theory and its future predictions. Their thinking gained in influence in the practical politics of local SPD branches, in municipal councils and regional parliaments.[104] Among them was Bavarian SPD leader Georg von Vollmar who called on his party to focus on improving everyday living and working conditions.[105]

However, the SPD's 1891 Erfurt conference heeded the warnings of its leader August Bebel: reformism would undermine the party's position when the end of capitalism was just around the corner.[106] In contrast, theorists like Eduard Bernstein saw how the economic expansion of the later 1890s limited popular appetite for a quick overthrow of capitalism. He therefore envisaged a "democratic-socialist reform party" working pragmatically with other forces to improve everyday living conditions for its

101 Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die Sozialdemokratie im Deutschen Kaiserreich in Sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Vorträge 22 (Munich: Stiftung Historisches Kolleg, 1989), 46.

102 Jonathan Sperber, *The Kaiser's Voters. Electors and Elections in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 35.

103 Friedrich Engels, "Der Sozialismus in Deutschland," *Die Neue Zeit* (1892): 580–89.

104 Adelheid von Saldern, 'Sozialdemokratische Kommunalpolitik in Wilhelminischer Zeit,' in *Kommunalpolitik und Sozialdemokratie. Der Beitrag des Demokratischen Sozialismus zur Kommunalen Selbstverwaltung*, ed. Karl-Heinz Naßmacher (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1977), 18–63.

105 Georg von Vollmar, *Über die Nächsten Aufgaben der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Zwei Reden, Gehalten Am 1. Juni und 6. Juli 1891 im 'Eldorado' zu München* (Munich: Ernst, 1891).

106 *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten in Erfurt vom 14. bis 20. Oktober* (Berlin: Verlag der Expedition des 'Vorwärts' Berliner Volksblatt, 1891), 172.

voters.[107] The goal was a revision of Marxist theory, adapting to the—often hardly progressive—realities of Social Democratic voters' lives, rather than reacting to the failure of Marxist revolutionary predictions by scolding the lower classes for what György Lukács would soon label their "false consciousness."[108] But the decisive push emerged from the changing realities of industrial relations on the ground. The unions' increasingly pragmatic interactions with employers contrasted with both the desire for political strikes and the expectations of imminent revolution among national SPD leaders. Union membership also vastly outperformed that of the SPD.[109] Consequently, the 1906 Mannheim agreement terminated the strike debate in the unions' favour, confirming their independence and thus ruling out purely political strikes.[110]

This shifting balance also proved popular at the polls. Not only did the SPD become the strongest party in the Reichstag by the First World War,[111] but semi-official newspapers also noted how, in industrial court elections, social democratic candidates were supported by small and medium-sized employers.[112] These dynamics left their mark on policies across the political spectrum. For instance, Prussian state ministry minutes from 1901 noted how it was pressure from the Centre and the National Liberals that left the government with no choice but to endorse a further strengthening of industrial courts as arbitration offices.[113] Around the same time, writers in socialist publications began to drop their previous scepticism towards social insurance, and in the Reichstag, the SPD voted with the majority on several social insurance reforms.[114]

From Political Pragmatism to Electoral Reform

In several regional states, social democrats, liberals, and other "bourgeois" parties began to partner in more fundamental ways. Around 1900, this cooperation often focused on attempts at electoral reform, a central concern of the more recent political

107 Eduard Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969 [1899]).

108 *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, Georg Lukács Werke 2 (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2013 [1923]).

109 Joachim Eichler, "Von Köln nach Mannheim. Die Debatten über Maifeier, Massenstreik und das Verhältnis der Freien Gewerkschaften zur Deutschen Sozialdemokratie innerhalb der Arbeiterbewegung Deutschlands 1905/06. Zur Entstehung des 'Mannheimer Abkommens,'" *Arbeiterbewegung* 26 (Münster: Lit, 1992), 59.

110 Eichler, 234.

111 Ritter, *Wahlgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch. Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1871–1918*, 42.

112 "Neue Erfolge der Sozialdemokratie," *Neueste Mittheilungen,* 2 October 1894.

113 Rudloff, *Arbeiterrecht*, 408.

114 Ayaß, *Grundfragen der Sozialpolitik*, XXXII, 589.

science literature.[115] Given the regional nature of these reforms in Germany, political economists have drawn on the work of historians to study the interplay between local patterns of emerging coordination and cross-class coalitions enacting electoral reforms to improve workers' representation, such as in Saxony, where small and medium-sized producers were influential, as well as in parts of the Southwest.[116] Not least due to resistance from and within powerful Prussia, until the end of the First World War, progress on the national level occurred mainly in intellectual debates in which, however, lower-level progress towards greater coordination began to serve as examples.

Pre-1914 data on Reichstag MP voting patterns and constituency-level alliances suggest that the political right's *success* in forming local coalitions reduced the overall cohesion of the resulting parliamentary parties.[117] By the turn of the century, therefore, the existing majority runoff system created internally fragmented parties on the right just as increasing party *system* fragmentation in parliament (namely, the continued rise of Social Democracy) and increasing supra-local economic integration would have required the opposite: greater party-internal cohesion enabling the negotiation of deals that could coordinate political assistance for the cross-class management of the new, industrialized economy beyond local constituencies. Proportional representa-

115 André Blais, Agnieska Dobrzynska, and Indridi H. Indridason, "To Adopt or Not to Adopt Proportional Representation: The Politics of Institutional Choice," *British Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 1 (2005): 182–90; Josep M. Colomer, "It's Parties That Choose Electoral Systems (Or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down)," *Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005): 1–21; Marcus Kreuzer, *Institutions and Innovation. Voters, Parties, and Interest Groups in the Consolidation of Democracy. France and Germany, 1870–1939* (Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press, 2001); Martin and Swank, "The Political Origins of Coordinated Capitalism: Business Organizations, Party Systems, and State Structure in the Age of Innocence"; Jonathan Rodden, "Why Did Western Europe Adopt Proportional Representation? A Political Geography Explanation. Revised Version of Paper Prepared for Presentation at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston," 2009; Lukas Leeman and Isabela Mares, "The Adoption of Proportional Representation," *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014): 461–78; for the historians' view, see Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany*; Hedwig Richter, *Moderne Wahlen: Eine Geschichte der Demokratie in Preußen und den USA im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2017).

116 Thomas Cusack, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, "Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 3 (2007): 373–91; Thomas Cusack, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, "The Coevolution of Capitalism and Political Representation: The Choice of Electoral System,," *American Political Science Review* 104 (2010): 393–403; James Retallack, "'What Is to Be Done?' The Red Specter, Franchise Questions, and the Crisis of Conservative Hegemony in Saxony, 1896–1909," *Central European History* 23, no. 4 (1990): 271–312.

117 Valentin Schröder and Philip Manow, "An Intra-Party Account of Electoral System Choice," *Political Science Research and Methods* 8, no. 2 (2020): 251–67.

tion delivered this cohesion by incentivizing the formation of party organizations that could assist with the nationwide coordination of diverse, bottom-up interests.

Meanwhile, the SPD managed to become the strongest party in the 1912 Reichstag elections, despite the majoritarian system and structural gerrymandering in place. The SPD could hope for even better Reichstag results under proportional representation, but it also supported proportional representation on hierarchically lower levels—including electoral systems for industrial and mercantile courts, but also to the administrative bodies of social insurance after 1900—even where it threatened to weaken its existing position. Donald Ziegler has noted how the Social Democrats, "failed to produce articulate opposition to proportional representation. 'The fact,' concluded one writer in 1909, 'that proportional representation could cost us mandates in a number of social-political organizations cannot be decisive. It will be offset by other gains.'"[118] The publicist quoted by Ziegler was reformist strategist Friedrich Kleeis, writing in the SPD's programmatic publication, *Die Neue Zeit*, where he recounts how SPD decision-makers supported initiatives for proportional representation time and again after 1900, even when bourgeois forces bet on it to dilute worker dominance of of social insurance and industrial relations bodies. Kleeis' "other gains" overriding the logic of mandate maximization lay in the systemic effects of proportional representation on the workings of these institutions: "A representative body should reflect the views and demands of the electorate with the greatest possible accuracy so that minorities can also participate in the activities of these bodies, in accordance with their strength."[119]

On the next higher, more systemic level of electoral "rules of the game," proportional representation offered a better reflection of the emerging interest-based politics of the centre-right—something Bismarck had long tried to prevent through his "cartel." This expanded on previous developments on the hierarchically lower level of industrial relations, where the (national) coordination of employer interests had been aided by encounters with an increasingly organized workers' movement. The turn to proportional representation helped encourage the institutionalization of business interests so that the SPD and the unions could bargain with them. On the national level, rather than preventing the turn to proportional representation jointly with the conservatives and the far left, the Centre party had already begun to support electoral reform before the end of the War.[120] Meanwhile, the SPD's longstanding advocacy for proportional representation as the most accurate representative system evolved to also

118 Daniel Ziegler, *Prelude to Democracy: A Study of Proportional Representation and the Heritage of Weimar Germany, 1871–1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 34.

119 Friedrich Kleeis, "Die Einführung der Verhältniswahl bei den Sozialpolitischen Instituten," *Die Neue Zeit: Wochenschrift der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 1909, 516.

120 Manfred Rauh, *Die Parlamentarisierung des Deutschen Reiches*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der Politischen Parteien 60 (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1977), 411.

reflect its benefits for the management of intra-party interest coordination.[121] With proportional representation already assisting reformist socialists and the moderate centre-right with the coordination of their coalitions in lower-level, regional-state and industrial relations bodies, the national-level debate was already decided in favour of reform before the end of the empire.

Beyond Electoral Reform

This article has argued that the choice for politically and economically coordinated arrangements in late nineteenth-century Germany should be seen in the wider context of the politics of state formation under subsidiarity. Across several stages, coordinated arrangements assisted with the further institutionalization of a particular mode of public service provision amid ongoing pressures from rapid industrialization and the absence of top-down solutions. While this article dealt with the specific case of Germany, its results have broader implications for research on capitalist continuity and change. Analyses on the historical origins of coordinated capitalism should go beyond notions of strong government that have long flowed through the literature. In Germany, authoritarianism was a normative prism through which ruling elites looked at the beginnings of coordination, especially during the Bismarckian era. However, the emergence of coordinated capitalism during that time is, overall, better understood as the result of bottom-up dynamics based on subsidiarity—this is, the coordination of mutual assistance under conditions of political decentralization. Indeed, the greater appreciation for bottom-up dynamics in the recent literature on coordinated capitalism should be explored further in comparative studies beyond the scope of this article. Historical beginnings as well as recent developments should be reassessed in light of the role of broader, institutionalized patterns of decentralization. Patterns of state formation structure discrete political choices by creating incentives and constraints for the groups of actors engaged in the much-studied electoral politics of modern capitalist societies.

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121 Eberhard Schanbacher, *Parlamentarische Wahlen und Wahlsystem in der Weimarer Republik: Wahlgesetzgebung und Wahlreform im Reich und in den Ländern*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der Politischen Parteien 69 (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1982), 38.

Carolyn Taratko

African Labour's Cold War: The Conflict Over Trade Union Independence in Ghana, 1950s–1966*

Abstract

This article examines the conflict over "free" trade unionism within the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) during the 1950s and early 1960s. It demonstrates how labour leaders sought to anchor economic rights in ambitious development planning and extend their influence across the continent in the wake of decolonization. In contrast to colonial-era concepts of free trade unions as apolitical associations, anti-colonial and postcolonial leaders recognized the transformative political potential of labour organizing. On the basis of GTUC publications and the correspondence of its leadership with the International Conference of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Brussels, this article shows how Ghanaian labour leaders attempted to leave behind colonial-era dependencies while subordinating Cold War rivalries to what they perceived as the special, historically unique situation of newly decolonized countries. Ghanaian leaders eschewed existing models for international trade unionism, leading to a brief period of disaffiliation from the Western-oriented ICFTU as they attempted to chart their own path by mobilizing labour across the African continent. Ultimately, these attempts failed, and the forceful bid for a pan-African labour alliance under the Nkrumah government alienated many other African nations as leadership experienced increasing protest at home.

Keywords: *trade unions, labour, Ghana, Gold Coast, Cold War, Africa, Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC)*

In 1963, a young Ghanaian woman by the name of Sally Johnson returned to Accra after a trip to Berlin with a delegation from the Ghanaian Trades Union Congress (GTUC) and addressed a letter to the West German Ambassador to Ghana. It was in the nature of such organized trips to facilitate meetings with local counterparts and

* This research was supported with funding from the DFG Research Group FOR2983 "Freiwilligkeit." I would like to thank Iris Schröder and the participants of the Global History Colloquium at Erfurt/Gotha for their helpful suggestions.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.70.2023.55-72 Moving the Social · 70 (2023) · p. 55–72

to shepherd visitors around to sites of general interest. On the occasion of Johnson's visit, her West German hosts did not miss the opportunity to highlight the oppression in the East and the trauma of German division by arranging a visit to the Berlin Wall. In her letter, Johnson expressed great concern over a report circulated by the West German Europress Information Service that had been picked up by several newspapers. According to the report, upon seeing the "unfree" Eastern sector of the city, her eyes had welled up with tears. Johnson, however, recalled things very differently. She repudiated this version of the events, writing, "it is unfortunate that my visit to Berlin during the course of the seminar should be linked up with someone else's opinion about the conditions in the Eastern sector […] I hate to be used as a pawn in the Cold War."[1] She roundly rejected her instrumentalization, denounced the spurious report as "embarrassing" to the West German cause, and further warned that the incident had profoundly affected her political outlook. Beyond her personal objections, the report represented an affront to the policy of her country, which maintained a position of neutrality and non-alignment.

Sally Johnson's incensed response to the portrayal of her visit was emblematic of the way that the GTUC struggled to forge its own separate path as the fronts of the Cold War hardened during the late 1950s and 60s. Johnson worked at the GTUC centre in Accra, and, like many trade unionists, she had become deeply invested in Ghanaian politics through the anticolonial struggle that culminated in Ghanaian independence in 1957. Her close friend, Kofi Batsa, was the editor-in-chief of a prominent pan-African magazine, *Spark*, and close counsel to Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah.[2] Drawing on Batsa's contacts, Johnson's note made its way into the news bulletin of the GTUC, and also to the head of the East German *Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichten* (ADN) Bureau in Accra. The ADN bureau chief sent the report along to the ADN directorate in Berlin, explaining that he wished to bring it to the attention of the public. The circulation of Ms. Johnson's repudiation of Europress's emotional—and apparently embellished—retelling of her visit, which made its way from Johnson's desk to the West German embassy, the GTUC, *Spark*, and eventually the East German ADN, highlights the forces of the global Cold War that played out in Ghana in the first decade after Ghanaian independence in 1957. It shows that, despite sustained efforts to co-opt African labour organizations, enrol them in international federations, and instrumentalize them in the conflict between East and West, Ghana's labour leaders persistently leveraged their own visions for the future of labour on a non-aligned continent to advance their interests.

1 BArch DC 900 3832, Sally Johnson, TUC to Secretary, Press and Cultural Affairs, Embassy of the FRG, Accra. June 20, 1963.

2 Kofi Batsa, *The Spark: From Kwame Nkrumah to Limann* (London: Rex Collins, 1985).

Pursuing non-alignment required frequent deliberations and negotiations regarding how, and when, to best engage with bilateral partners and international networks. While international assistance could confer material advantages in the form of financial or technical assistance, it could also constrain possibilities for action and rankle official foreign policy, as Johnson's story shows. In particular, the relationship of Ghana's trade unions to the large postwar international trade union federations, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), demonstrates how Ghanaians labour leaders attempted to carve out their politics of non-alignment after independence. These federations served as important reservoirs of expertise and funding that helped to modernize the Ghanaian labour force. The rivalry between the two federations, which pitted the "free" trade union federations of Western, capitalist countries against the socialist "Second World," provided the backdrop to Ghanaian manoeuvring. As Carolien Stolte, Gerard McCann, and others have highlighted, focusing on Afro-Asian engagement with trade union internationalism during 1950s allows us to recover a sense of multidirectional exchange among decolonizing countries during the early years of the Cold War.[3] Trade unions played an important role not just in organizing labour, but also in forging links between actors involved in national, regional, and increasingly global union representation in the struggle against neo-imperialism and economic dependency.[4]

Anticolonial leaders sought more than national sovereignty. As Adom Getachew has argued, they also pursued a universalist project in the name of forging a more equitable international community.[5] The GTUC took on a leading role in articulating these objectives, as it sought to forge new geographies of solidarity beyond the borders of the nation-state. Between independence in 1957 and the coup that toppled Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, Accra became a hub for postcolonial self-assertion and a hotbed of pan-African trade union activity.[6] Ghanaian trade unions increasingly espoused a continental orientation and sought out partnerships across Africa in defiance of East-

3 Carolien Stolte, "Introduction: Trade Union Networks and the Politics of Expertise in an Age of Afro-Asian Solidarity," *Journal of Social History* 53 (2019): 331–347, here 331; Gerard McCann, "Possibility and Peril: Trade Unionism, African Cold War, and the Global Strands of Kenyan Decolonization," *Journal of Social History* 53 (2019): 348–377.

4 See Gareth Curless, "Introduction: Trade Unions in the Global South from Imperialism to the Present Day," *Labor History* 57, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.

5 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 1–14.

6 Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 213–260; Grilli, "Nkrumah, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism: The Bureau of African Affairs Collection," *History in Africa* 44 (2007): 295–307; Frank Gerits, *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the Pursuit of Anticolonial Modernity Shaped a Postcolonial Order, 1945–1966* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023); Gerits, "'When the Bull Elephants Fight': Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment,

West orthodoxies. A closer look at their aims and exchanges highlights the way that the labour movement saw itself embedded in a wider, pan-African struggle to remake continental politics upon an equitable economic and social foundation.

Ghana's trade unions were one of the early sites in the battle for a pan-African consciousness, providing the intellectual engagement alongside the framework of the social movement. This article examines the conflict over "free" trade unionism in Ghana during the 1950s and early 1960s to explore how GTUC leadership redefined the mission of trade union congresses. In contrast to the dominant, colonial-era concept of "free" trade unions as apolitical associations for modest improvement, anticolonial and later postcolonial leaders recognized the transformative potential of labour organizing. By examining GTUC publications and the correspondence of its leadership with the International Conference of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Brussels, we can see how Ghanaian labour leaders attempted to leave behind colonial-era dependencies while also subordinating Cold War rivalries to what they perceived as the special, historically unique situation of decolonizing and newly postcolonial countries. Their hyper-awareness of their historical situation strained their relationship with Brussels and other Western countries, ultimately leading to a brief period of disaffiliation from the ICFTU in 1959, as they attempted to mobilize like-minded unions across Africa. Ultimately, these attempts failed in no small part due to avowedly democratic—but practically authoritarian—behaviour, both at home in the wake of protests against restrictive measures after 1961, and on the international stage. Nonetheless, the episode illuminates how GTUC leaders sought to anchor economic rights in ambitious development planning and extend their influence across the continent in the wake of decolonization.

Trade unions played a crucial role in the colonial Gold Coast's struggle for independence. The organizations traced their formal origins to the colonial period, when they were promoted as part of the liberalizing policy of the Colonial Office after 1929 though, by the early 1950s they had distanced themselves from these roots.[7] African workers organized themselves in a way that moved beyond the British metropolitan model of wage labourers and collective bargaining. As many workers in the Gold Coast operated outside of the traditional wage labour economy, they embraced trade

and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–1966)," *International History Review* 37 (2015): 951–969.

7 Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Richard Jeffries, *Class, Power and Ideology in Ghana: The Railwaymen of Sekondi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For an assessment of the British Labour government's approach to colonial trade unions as a mechanism for stabilizing colonial rule, with a particular focus on activities in Kenya, see Paul Kelemen, "Modernising Colonialism: The British Labour Movement and Africa," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2002): 223–244.

unionism as a means of improving services and representing their interests to the colonial state, as Jennifer Hart has expertly demonstrated in the case of self-employed driver-entrepreneurs before independence.[8] Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, union membership grew, and many unions developed elaborate administrative structures to accommodate the new members.[9] In 1945, fourteen unions joined together to found the Gold Coast Trades Union Congress, which went on to organize district Trade Councils of Labour in the three large cities of Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi. These councils tackled issues ranging from a minimum wage to housing and health standards for workers.[10] Government employees and transport workers became union members early on, directing their grievances regarding wages and working conditions towards the state.[11]

As these trade unions became increasingly well-organized and networked within the Trades Union Congress, they mounted significant challenges to the colonial state. In 1949, an affiliate of the Gold Coast TUC mounted a strike against the government. In response, the government took repressive action against members of the union—these retaliatory measures prompted the Convention People's Party (CPP), which was concurrently agitating for self-determination, to throw their support behind the union and its workers, launching its "positive action" campaign of non-violent resistance, non-cooperation, and educational campaigns aimed at dismantling British rule in the Gold Coast. In the early weeks of 1950, the CPP joined forces with union leaders to call for a general strike that paralyzed the country for twenty-one days.[12] Two crucial features of the positive action campaign and the struggle for independence would accompany the GTUC throughout its early years: first, the unions had become accustomed to playing an adversarial role vis-à-vis the colonial government. The 1950 general strike and positive action campaign represented the apogee of this opposition. However, once colonial rule had been ended, they did not transition easily into a partnership with the new government and instead retained elements of their oppositional character. Second, the trade unions had briefly aligned with the CPP in their commitment to overthrowing colonial rule during the general strike. Recognizing the power of coordinated action, the CPP sought out a more sustained

8 Jennifer Hart, "Motor Transportation, Trade Unionism, and the Culture of Work in Colonial Ghana," *International Review of Social History* 59, no. 22 (2014): 185–209.

9 E. A. Cowan, *Evolution of Trade Unionism in Ghana* (Accra: Trades Union Congress, 1969).

10 Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, "The Ghana Trades Union Congress and the Politics of International Labor Alliances, 1957–1971," *International Review of Social History* 62 (2017), 194.

11 Godfrey A. Pirotta, "The Growth of Trade Unions under British Colonialism – A Comparative Study," *Economic and Social Studies* 1 (1982): 29–40.

12 Cowan, *Evolution of Trade Unionism in Ghana*, 1–16.

and formalized structure to preserve this harmony of interests; its elusive character created considerable frustrations for both sides throughout the Nkrumah years.

Gold Coast trade unions received assistance from the British Trade Unions Congress beginning in the 1930s. British guidance in the colonies drew on liberal theories of trade union activity and explicitly denied that unions were organizations with political aims; instead, they were promoted as paths to incremental improvement and a path to self-governance in a distant future.[13] However, as members sought to distance the unions from colonial structures and dependencies, they turned towards international organizations for assistance. The shift from a relationship with the colonizer toward free association with other organizations, as Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch has argued, represented an important and self-conscious step towards achieving autonomy. In particular, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which provided educational and financial assistance to African trade unions with the aim of cementing their Western-oriented ideological and political commitments, proved to be a ready partner.[14] In 1949, the ICFTU became the leading body for free trade unions, after it was reconstituted following a split with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which had come to be dominated by the Second World influences of the communist Eastern Bloc.[15] While this early split transformed international, primarily Euro-American, labour movements into a battleground within the Cold War competition for hearts and minds, it also opened up access to resources for Third World nations. The Brussels-based ICFTU was to become an early and ready assistant to labour organizers in the decolonizing world, providing technical and financial assistance and opening up paths of mobility for trade unionists from decolonizing African and Asian countries.[16] The Gold Coast applied for affiliation, and the application was accepted in July 1951.[17] Ghanaian trade unionists attended international conferences and benefited from consultations with the ICFTU and International Labour Organisation in Geneva. In 1951, John Tettegah, General Secretary of the Ghana Trades Union Congress, became the first African to be named to the ICFTU's executive board.[18] While the Gold Coast also had a number of trade unions affiliated with

13 From a handbook, *What is a Trade Union?,* written by J. S. Patrick, a colonial trade union advisor in Kenya. Cited in Jack Woddis, *Africa, The Lion Awakes* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961), 53.

14 Dorothy Nelkin, "Labor: Stumbling Block to Pan-Africanism," *The Maghreb Digest: North African Perspectives* 4, no. 11–12 (1966), 22–44.

15 IISG ICFTU ARCH 00622 394–397; Allen, 289–312.

16 John Riddell, *Die Freien Gewerkschaften im Kampf für die Freiheit Afrikas* (Brussels/Lagos: IBFG Afrikanischen Regional-Organisation, 1961), 5–11.

17 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4261, ICFTU General Secretary to Gold Coast Trades Union, 26 July 1951.

18 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4261, Tettegah, "Annual Report to Gold Coast Trades Union, 1955," 21.

the communist-backed WFTU, between 1949 and Ghanaian independence in 1957, relationships and affiliations with the West took on increasing importance in advising and shaping organizing activities.

Behind these two fronts, there was also a good deal of strife. To speak of trade unionism was not to speak of a single set of ideas and practices. Despite the increasingly dense bonds between the ICFTU and the GTUC, which were forged through study trips, trainings, and financial aid, the leadership of the GTUC remained sceptical towards the international federation. And for good reason: Although the ICFTU presented itself as the face of international labour action, the reality of the organization in the 1950s reflected the conflict between the anti-communist priorities of its US-based members and the priorities of the British TUC, which continued to protect its own interests in Commonwealth territories from its privileged position in the ICFTU leadership. As labour movements moved to the centre of postwar European states and took on significant roles in their respective governing coalitions as part of the broader postwar settlement, they advanced their commitment to domestic social reform by jettisoning much of their foreign policy—in particular their anti-colonialist agenda.[19] As Anthony Carew has written, "international labour action conducted exclusively through the ICFTU was, then, the aim of the purists, while independent activity by national centres was often the reality of trade union internationalism."[20] In the British case, the BTUC pursued its line of controlling the colonial labour situation by distancing it from wider political and nationalist ferments.[21] Their attempts to "depoliticize" trade unions led Ghana's new leadership to conclude that their concerns were not being taken seriously within such bodies and encouraged them to distance themselves from the hangover of colonial-era reformist projects in favour of more radical solutions for political, social, and economic transformation. Exposure and interaction with a variety of available national models helped crystallize thinking about the role of the GTUC.

The question of party-trade union relations remained of central importance in the divide between the free trade union federation of the West and their Eastern counterparts. The issue put the GTUC increasingly at odds with the free trade unions, as represented by the ICFTU and the American AFL-CIO, which insisted that trade unions should not become government-controlled institutions, since they derived their authority from voluntary participation and decision-making autonomy.[22] How-

19 For a comprehensive overview of the Left's role in the postwar settlement, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 278–329.

20 Anthony Carew, "Conflict within the ICFTU: Anti-Communism and Anti-Colonialism in the 1950s," *International Review of Social History* 41 (1996), 153.

21 Carew, "Conflict within the ICFTU," 169.

22 Vic Allen, *Power in Trade Unions: A Study of their Organization in Great Britain* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1954); discussed in Cowan, *Evolution,* 99–100.

ever, even one of the leading organizers and theorists of trade unionism in Britain, Vic Allen, conceded that it was doubtful that many trade union leaders understood their task as the fulfilment of the formal aims of the early unions, which were informed by the radical and socially transformative plans of early Socialists.[23] Within the confines of the postwar landscape in Europe, Allen noted that most union membership consisted of voluntary members who needed to be provided with frequent material evidence to demonstrate why they should continue to participate; this need for validation accounted for the more modest aims of improved living standards and worker protections that triumphed over revolution and "grandiose intentions."[24] The goals of Western European trade unionism had become more incremental, according a greater importance to the role and comforts of the individual in labour's struggle.

In Ghana, the relationship of trade union members, their federation, and the party followed a different course. Among much of the leadership of the CPP, the issue of consonance between party and trade unions was seen as fundamental to ensuring the basis for a workers' state and realizing their vision of African socialism; proponents referred to the unions and the party as "Siamese twins."[25] On the occasion of the Twelfth Annual Conference of the TUC in 1955, a resolution to formalize the alliance between the two was adopted, on account of the fact that "the policy pursued by Colonial Labour Advisers in the past about Trade Union neutrality [had] resulted in the misunderstanding of the political aims of the Trade Union Movement."[26] Without a political arm, which had been denied to them under the colonial yoke, the trade unions' possibility for social transformation remained stunted, so the argument. Some critics at home and abroad charged that the labour movement should consist of voluntary non-political organizations that acted as an economic pressure group. Nonetheless, the leadership of the CPP and the GTUC pushed ahead with their pursuit of a unity of purpose and action, and dismissed principles of voluntary association as colonial-era hangovers. Two years later, at the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the TUC at Cape Coast, Tettegah publicly aired his disdain for this model and its proponents: "We do not want to be bothered with Cambridge essays on imaginary ILO [In-

23 Vic Allen, *Trade Union Leadership*: *Based on a Study of Arthur Deakin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 13.

24 Allen, *Trade Union Leadership*, 13–14.

25 Cowan, *Evolution of Trade Unionism in Ghana*, 91. African socialism, in Ghana and across many decolonizing African states, was not avowedly Marxist-Leninist in nature, though certain proponents also engaged with these ideas. It had multiple meanings and often referred to a search for an indigenous model of economic development among groups wary of Western-style capitalism. Emanuel Akyeampong, "African Socialism: Or, the Search for an Indigenous Model of Economic Development?" *Economic History of Developing Regions* 33 (2018): 69–87; Nana Osei-Opare, "The Red Star State: State-Capitalism, Socialism and Black Internationalism in Ghana," PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles (2019).

26 Cowan, *Evolution of Trade Unionism in Ghana*, 93.

ternational Labour Organization] Standards, with undue emphasis on voluntary associations."[27] In highlighting its historically unprecedented character and task, Ghana's trade union leadership sought to chart its own course specific to the African situation.

Although the GTUC leadership emphasized the singularity of the postcolonial situation, they also eagerly gathered information about various organizational structures by engaging with international and national bodies. Two national centres, in particular, attracted John Tettegah's interest in the late 1950s: Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1957, Tettegah travelled to Israel, where he heaped praise on the Israeli labour organization Histadrut for its centralized and comprehensive structure, its expansive membership, and its integration into the political sphere.[28] Here, he saw a stark contrast to the weakness of the British model that Ghana had inherited.

After concluding his visit to Israel in 1957, Tettegah continued on to West Germany, where he visited Düsseldorf, East and West Berlin, and Frankfurt am Main.[29] Despite dramatic differences to the Israeli situation, Tettegah believed the West German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) could offer some practicable solutions. The DGB proved to be a dependable supporter of their Ghanaian counterparts, especially under the chairmanship of Willi Richter (1956–1962), who welcomed Tettegah in Düsseldorf and lobbied for more attention and resources in order to improve relations with developing countries.[30] Tettegah's visits abroad also helped him to think through the much-discussed reorganization of Ghana's trade unions. In a speech following the tour, he noted significant economic differences between Israel and West Germany, yet still appraised the DGB's more centralized structure, in which there were sixteen federally-recognized industrial unions, as a potential model. While the size and power of the Histadrut made it an attractive model for Ghana, the West German DGB presented a way to think about the thorny problem of the relation of trades union congress to political parties. Tettegah wrote, "According to the explanation given by the German Movement, the problem of democracy in our modern world is not the same as it was a hundred years ago. Modern economy has gained such an importance in this technical age that this it is in fact able to determine the character and substance of the State."[31] Despite the dramatic differences in historical experiences, Tettegah and others, including Nkrumah, often drew comparisons between Ghana's postcolonial situation and West Germany's postwar one when addressing German audiences. They emphasized the experience of historical rupture, the need to cultivate democratic

27 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4253c, "Tettegah Speech at Trades Union Congress on the Occasion of the 14th Annual Conference at Cape Coast" (25 January 1958).

28 Tettegah, *A New Chapter for Ghana Labour* (Accra: TUC 1958), 18–20.

29 Tettegah, *A New Chapter for Ghana Labour* (Accra: TUC 1958), 20.

30 B Arch DY 34/5524 ILO Nachrichten, IAA 17. Juni 1958 "Willi Richters Ansprache an die Internationale Arbeitskonferenz."

31 Tettegah, *A New Chapter for Ghana Labour* (Accra: TUC, 1958) [pamphlet], 22.

practices, and, above all, a commitment to the project of economic and social reconstruction that lay at the heart of both states: the success of the West German economic miracle made its expertise in labour organization and technical assistance appealing.[32] After his return, Tettegah drew lessons from his time with the DGB about trade union structures and the relationship between political parties and unions.[33] Though there was significant overlap in both personnel and interests between the leadership of the GTUC and Nkrumah's CPP, the relationship between the two had not yet been formalized in 1957, though the process of binding the two organizations together had been discussed heatedly in the run-up to and the wake of independence.[34] Tettegah had sought out the counsel of the ICFTU in reforming and drafting new labour legislation for the GTUC beginning in 1957. In Tettegah's drafts, the party and TUC were tightly bound together by their overlapping mission. This encroachment of party interests into TUC affairs repeatedly provoked the objections of the ICFTU, who advised against such a fusion of interests and struck it from early drafts, arguing that it flew in the face of modern democratic principles of free trade unions.[35] Looking to the West German case, Tettegah noted that there was no constitutional relationship between the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the DGB, but that this did not prevent the DGB from cooperating with the SPD. At the time, he described this as "the parallel position to what now obtains in Ghana," though this loose arrangement was not to endure.

Though the GTUC had gained much in the way of technical and financial assistance from the ICFTU and other Western-oriented groups, including bilaterally with

32 See B Arch B 161/283 "Vertrauliches Memorandum von Ghanas Staatschef. Handelsblatt-Gespräch mit Botschafter Asara. Accra hat 'unbegrenztes Vertrauen' zu Bonn," *Handelsblatt* (22 March 1960).

33 Ukandi Damachi, *The Role of Trade Unions in the Development Process with a Case Study of Ghana* (New York, 1974), 21; B Arch DY 34/3474, Tettegah's Speech in Dar es Salaam, 1965; B Arch 34/ 21837, Internationales Gewerkschaftskomitee für die Solidarität mit den Werktätigen und dem Volk Südafrikas, Accra, 196.

34 Early ICFTU contacts noted the CPP's desire to take control of the trade unions. As David Newman noted in 1953: "The CPP's failure to achieve this control was due not so much to the strength or wisdom of the TUC leaders but to an instinctive feeling on the part of the average trade union member that the participation of the trade union in the positive action campaign, while it may have helped with the political advance in the country, did little to improve his working conditions […] the leaders of the TUC have been aware of this ever since the TUC was re-formed at the end of 1951." IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4261, David Newman to Jay Krane, 27 Aug. 1953.

35 See IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4261, TUC of the Gold Coast to General Secretary of ICFTU, "Disaffiliation from the ICFTU," 15 September 1953. On assistance in drafting new labour legislation in 1957, see IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263b, "Tettegah–Millard–Newman talk at headquarters on 2 August 1957" and IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4270-4271, also mentioned in Tettegah, *New Structure*, 27.

the Histradut, the DGB, and the American AFL-CIO, these partnerships became strained as Nkrumah consolidated power at home and Ghana increasingly sought to assert itself on the world stage. While in the mid-1950s a turn away from the British Trades Union Congress in search of other models in Israel and West Germany represented the severing of colonial ties, factions in the Ghanaian leadership saw the unions as having not gone far enough in their rupture with imperialism and in the search for an alternative. Their alternative vision hinged on first settling the question of the relationship between labour organization and the ruling Convention People's Party, and also developing a more distinctive—and authoritative—approach to internationalism. These two questions were intimately linked, as Nkrumah and his circle sought to develop the "African personality" alongside a means of organizing workers that was commensurate to the postcolonial situation.[36]

The first point came to a head at the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Ghana Trades Union Congress in Cape Coast in January 1958. It was here that John Tettegah, still General Secretary of the GTUC, presented the so-called "New Structure," which went into effect in April 1959. The peculiarities of Ghana's economic situation had initiated discussions, beginning in 1954, about how best to mobilize these organizations. As Tettegah noted, "the worker's struggle, does not always and everywhere, assume the same form. There was a time when in fighting their employers, the workers smashed machines and set fire to factories. To them machines were the cause of poverty […] In Ghana today […] we have not the factories to smash; it is our responsibility to help create them and to give work to the masses of our people."[37] Postcolonial labour organizations thus carried the traditional responsibility of representing workers and guaranteeing their rights, while also bearing the weight of the additional imperative to support industrialization and national economic development. This double burden of ensuring worker welfare while spurring economic growth and development presented, per Tettegah, a historical novelty. In light of this, Ghanaian labour leaders—and African trade unionists more generally—saw themselves faced with a fundamentally different task, one that called into question the validity of available models in the West.

For his part, Tettegah increasingly stressed a departure from developmental models wherein one "underdeveloped" nation came under the tutelage of others, and instead advocated for a radical departure to match the experience of political, economic, and social rupture of decolonization. The binding of the unions to the CPP represented an important step. This reorganization was carried out through the implementation of the New Structure within the TUC itself, as well as reforms to labour legislation through a series of Industrial Relations Acts that were promulgated between 1958 and

36 Joe-Fio N. Meyer, "Foreword," in Tettegah, *New Chapter*, 8.
37 Tettegah, *New Chapter*, 26.

1960.[38] The acts organized all trade unions into twenty-four national unions along industrial lines and created the central body of the Ghana TUC as a coordinated labour front. It also substantially curtailed workers' freedom of association, allowing the governor-general to determine whether the TUC had "taken any action which is not conducive to the public good."[39] Further, at the 1958 General Council of the TUC, the body adopted a resolution that encouraged national unions to seek direct affiliation with the party, making the TUC an integral part of the CPP. While Western organizations reacted to these changes with muted alarm, Tettegah and his colleagues set out to court new allies in the East, where the existence of the "Siamese twins" of party and unions was accepted without further comment. In May 1958, Tettegah sent May Day greetings to the East German Freien Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB). A delegation of three Ghanaians travelled to East Germany for the celebrations, visited several industrial sites, and discussed closer cooperation between the two countries with FDGB Chairman Hermann Warnke.[40] Ghana, like many other newly independent African nations, was keen to extract benefits from both sides of the East-West divide.[41] East German interests centred on offering educational and technical assistance as a means of subverting the Federal Republic of Germany's Hallstein doctrine, which stipulated that it would suspend diplomatic relations with any country recognizing the German Democratic Republic.[42] In particular, GTUC leadership was particularly impressed by the GDR's success in integrating women and girls into the workforce in line with their Seven-Year Plan; reports on the achievements appeared in national newspapers.[43] The office of the ICFTU in Brussels was outraged to learn of the visit.[44] The ICFTU office noted that one of member of the delegation, Lawrence Ofor-Ankrah, had attended a conference in Munich and visited the ICFTU office in Brussels on a return trip from Scandinavia the previous year. With barely concealed

38 Paul Komlah Pawar, *The Ghana Trades Union Congress: A Brief Report* (Accra: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 1979), 5.

39 Pawar, *Ghana Trades Union Congress: A Brief Report,* 7.

40 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, News clippings and notes on, "Grüße aus Ghana," *Die Tribüne*, 4 May 1958.

41 Eric Burton, *In Diensten des Afrikanischen Sozialismus. Tansania und die globale Entwicklungsarbeit der beiden Deutschen Staaten, 1961–1990* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2021), 108–129.

42 For a discussion of the Hallstein Doctrine and the GDR's efforts to circumvent it, see Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen: Die DDR im internationalen System 1949–1989* (Oldenbourg: DeGruyter, 1997), 170–179 and William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969* (Chapel Hill; UNC Press, 2003).

43 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263d, "GDR Seven Year Plan provides technical courses for girls," *Ghanaian Worker* (no date), 2.

44 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, "Gewerkschaftler aus Ghana beim FDGB," *Die Tribüne*, 25 May 1958.

dismay, the ICFTU contacted General Secretary Tettegah to remind him pointedly that, although "there [is] no infringement of your affiliation in the fact that delegates from your organization should visit countries behind the iron curtain. It is just something which the Board of the ICFTU thinks it is unwise to do."[45] Despite the warning about the breach of protocol, the GTUC continued to push ahead on its own path.

Figure 1: Clipping from the FDGB newspaper *Die Tribüne* showing members of the Ghanaian delegation shaking hands with Chairman Herbert Warnke.[46]

The reorientation of the GTUC heralded a broader shift in Ghana's foreign policy. From the early 1950s, Nkrumah and the CPP had expressed scepticism towards the ICFTU, smearing it as an "agent of capitalists and bankers," and repeatedly demanding that the organization cease operations in the Gold Coast.[47] The ICFTU weathered these early attacks by remaining silent on the issue and continuing to provide financial and material support. But the GTUC's "New Structure," inaugurated in 1958, represented a more extreme vision and foregrounded its continental responsibilities at the expense of Western internationalism. The reforms aimed to establish an African alternative to European trade union federations that would ultimately be suitable for pan-African partnership and development. The close cooperation between Ghana and

45 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, General Secretary of ICFTU to Tettegah, 15 July 1958.

46 ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c "Gewerkschaftler aus Ghana beim FDGB," *Die Tribüne*, 25 May 1958.

47 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4261, Hammerton (West African Trade Union Information and Advisory Centre, ICFTU) to Oldenbroek, Accra, 16 June 1963, and Memo to the General Secretary Oldenbroek, 3 August 1953.

Sekou Touré's Guinea over the course of the autumn of 1958 gestured to this possibility: After Guinea was subjected to economic blockade by the French as retribution for their "no" vote on the question of immediate independence in the referendum on French Union in September 1958, Ghana provided swift economic assistance.[48] The Ghanaian press celebrated this display of solidarity during the period of blockade as a strong message for "the community of African countries, whose basis has been laid by Ghana and Guinea, [which] will have a far greater attraction from Africans than all the pseudo-communities or federations founded in Paris or London."[49] By contrast, Western organizations, including the ICFTU, found Ghana's push into the affairs of other African countries alarming because of its potentially destabilizing effects.

After the accelerated passage of the Industrial Relations Act in December 1958, the ICFTU responded internally with outrage. Jay Krane of the ICFTU noted the restraint the organization had shown over the years as Ghana's labour leaders flouted international norms. For the ICFTU, the situation represented a moment of crisis: for the first time in its existence, an affiliated organization had introduced repressive legislation and insisted its actions were acceptable, as they had been initiated by a sympathetic government. The ICFTU remained critical: Krane wrote, "surely it should have occurred to some people that governments and men change. Moreover, in our fight for trade union freedom and human rights in totalitarian countries such as the Soviet Union, Hungary and Spain, we are always told that the restrictions on the exercising of freedom of association mean nothing because the governments are the governments of the workers."[50] Ultimately, the international federation took no immediate action aside from reminding the GTUC of their affiliation. In an April 1959 meeting, the Steering Committee of the Ghana TUC decided that there was no need for it to "entangle itself in East or West conflicts and that since the Ghana Government has made a policy statement of one of non-alignment," the GTUC should follow a similar line.[51] These pronouncements also generated concern in the United States from the AFL-CIO, which had a long history of advising and financing GTUC projects and scholarships.[52] Despite these ominous rumblings, the GTUC did not immediately disaffiliate. Instead, in speeches by Tettegah and President Joe-Fio Meyer in April 1959, the two emphasized their gratitude to a hodgepodge of labour organizations cutting across the Cold War divide, mentioning the Histradrut, the AFL-CIO,

48 Alessandro Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea and Mali, 1955–1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022): 83–87.

49 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4273, "Significance of Ghana-Guinea Declaration. Moscow in French for Africa," 8 May 1959.

50 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, Jay Krane to S. Dawson, 10 Dec 1958.

51 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, Dawson to Millard, 6 April 1959.

52 IISG ICFTU ARCH00622 4263c, Gen Secretary to Michael Ross, Director of International Affairs, AFL CIO 13 April 1959.

the DGB, and "friends from East Germany" by name. Meyer, in particular, marked out this new course by boldly proclaiming that,

> the Western concept of Democracy is wrong as far we know it in Africa today. It is entirely different from Ghanaian democracy […] hitherto African Trade Unions have been admitted to International Organisations as puppet affiliates on payment of token fees and their mass support has then been used by rivalry factions to play power politics, to the stage their cold war and to justify their political ideologies.[53]

The ICFTU's West Africa representative Seth Dawson summarized this position as "the TUC intends giving its full support to the UGTAN [Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire, the first pan-African labour organization founded by Sekou Touré] as a stepping-stone to the creation of an African International. At the same time, they are desirous of maintaining the existing link between their organization and our International."[54] Recognizing that they had much to gain from non-alignment, Meyer, Tettegah, and the rest of the GTUC leadership sent a clear signal to the West that they intended to forge their own path to "Ghanaian democracy."

Official disaffiliation from the ICFTU came later that year, in December 1959. Though the GTUC submitted a letter requesting recognition of their withdrawal, it did not go into effect immediately as a result of a bureaucratic snare.[55] The ICFTU responded with a short reminder of the GTUC's duty to pay its dues. Dawson, the local ICFTU representative, advised that the reaction was better left to local affiliates, many of whom strongly objected to the move to disaffiliate.[56] In the interim, Dawson recommended that the organization continue to send ICFTU publications so as not to entirely cut off the free trade union movement and to leave the region exposed to Eastern Bloc publications and influence.[57] His suggestions represented a continuation of the ICFTU's longstanding policy of "wait and see" with respect to Ghana that had been in practice since the independence struggle in the 1950s.[58] The ICFTU noted in internal correspondence that it "has from the beginning, when Government control over the trade unions was established, deliberately refrained from publicly comment-

53 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263c, Joe-Fio Meyer, "Trades Union Congress. Presidential Address by Comrade Joe-Fio Meyer to the Official Inauguration of the Trades Union Congress Under the Industrial Relations Act of 1958, 19 April 1959," 7.

54 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263c, Dawson to Millard, 21 April 1959.

55 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263c, "Disaffiliation of Ghana TUC."

56 Since the ICFTU bylaws stipulated that no organization could be recognized if its membership fees were in arrears, the GTUC's disaffiliation was not accepted. IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263c, Dawson to Millard, 8 October 1959.

57 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263d, Inter-Office Memorandum from P. de Jonge to F. Fröhlich, 24 March 1960.

58 CITE IISG 1953 DOCS.

ing on the deteriorating situation, mainly in view of Ghana's position as one of the first colonial territories in Africa to attain independence and the appeal it thus had in the rest of Africa."[59] Ghana's status as the first postcolonial state in sub-Saharan Africa made the situation a litmus test for further developments in the region, and Ghanaian leaders wielded this substantial power quite consciously as they sought connections and resources across the continent.

It is important to note that the move to disaffiliate from the ICFTU was not simply a leap into the void. Instead, the GTUC planned to replace these networks with an African trade union movement that corresponded more closely with its own concerns as a greater number of African states gained independence. This should also be understood as a grab for power in the region and a bid for influence in these new states as they emerged. In partnership with Guinea, the GTUC announced the creation of the All-African Trades Union Federation (AATUF) in October 1959 to further the cause of nationalist movements and to "represent Africa on international non-partisan and non-ideological organisations such as the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, etc."[60] The organization, which was to be headquartered in Accra, planned to hold its first meeting in Casablanca in May 1960. In order to enforce the non-alignment of African labour organizations, the leadership promoted a policy of non-affiliation. The GTUC requested its disaffiliation from the ICFTU, though they claimed that they were not hostile to the organization.[61]

The stated intent to maintain friendly relations contrasted with the GTUC's—and by proxy, the AATUF's—behaviour. The *Ghanaian Worker*, the official publication of the GTUC, began publishing slanderous attacks on foreign leaders of ICFTU-affiliated organizations, including Tom Mboya, Kenyan nationalist leader and General Secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour, and Lawrence Borha, a Nigerian labor leader. One editorial from November 1959 charged that "Mboya and others chose to play foreign fiddle while Africa burns."[62] Mboya relayed his own impression to the Brussels office that Ghana was, "going all out to fight the ICFTU," both publicly and behind closed doors, by disbursing money to splinter groups across West and East Africa.[63] To stem the tide of Ghana's interference, Mboya called for more generous ICFTU support for African initiatives to reinforce African unions against communist

59 Indeed, the crisis sharpened as the CPP put down strikes and cracked down on the opposition in following months. IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263d "ICFTU Executive Board Meeting: Agenda Item 9(a)(iv): Ghana," Brussels, 30 October–2 November 1961.

60 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263c, Press Release, Formation of AATUF, 26 October 1959.

61 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263d, J.H. Oldenbroek General Secretary, ICFTU to Eiler Jensen 18 Feb 1960.

62 *Ghanaian Worker* (14 November 1959).

63 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4263d, Tom Mboya to General Secretary Oldenbroek, ICFTU, 2 May 1960.

influences. Besides, he noted, this intrigue made Ghana unpopular with its neighbours and resulted in conflict, such as the dispute in 1960 with Nigeria, when Nigerian ICFTU-backed labour leader Borha warned "it would be disastrous to the unity of the African people if any one African state tried to buttress its political ambition for leadership of Africa by using Pan-Africanism for rallying support."[64]

Despite these disagreements and the splintering of African labour, leaders attempted to forge a foundation for African cooperation. In November 1960, on the occasion of Tettegah's visit to Kenya, Tettegah and Mboya signed a joint declaration, proclaiming the need for effective free trade union organization in all parts of Africa and outlining the crucial role of unions in their respective countries, as well as across Africa generally:

> Before independence unions have a real contribution to make in the nationalist struggle in addition to their normal task of championing workers' interests […] After independence the unions have even an increasing responsibility and part to play in the national affairs. They must respond to the immediate needs of their new country in an effort to help consolidate the independence gained as well as help translate into tangible terms the new benefits that workers look forward to after independence. Both organisations recognize the need for cooperation, collaboration and maximum harmony between the trade union movement and the governments especially in our newly independent states so as to facilitate the prosecution of the national task—that of economic reconstruction and social advancement.[65]

Their shared vision highlighted how African trade unionism could not blindly emulate foreign models and instead required responses that reflected African problems and personality. While both leaders agreed that the AATUF itself should not affiliate with any international organizations, they did not take a position on the question of affiliation of member organizations—this was to change in the lead-up to the first conference in Casablanca.

The first conference of the AATUF in Casablanca in May 1960 attempted to sidestep these disagreements by excluding unsympathetic rivals and embarking on a rapid path to a United States of Africa.[66] Drawing on funding from the WFTU and Eastern bloc trade union centres, the GTUC set up fictitious trade unions in opposition to established ones in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda and insisted on recognizing them

64 IISG ICFTU ARCH0062 4273, From ICFTU Nigeria Office News Report. "Borha Warns Ghana Republic," 1 September 1960.

65 Tettegah and Mboya, "Joint Declaration on Behalf of the Ghana TUC and the Kenya Federation of Labour" (21 November 1960), 23–34.

66 Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, 165–211.

as national representatives.[67] Members of the AATUF, led by Ghana, advanced their vision of trade unions that submitted to the control of governments and political parties.[68] As a corollary, membership was made conditional upon disaffiliation from other labour federations, in particular the ICFTU. They also avoided votes on questions of substance, instead allowing the Steering Committee to dictate the agenda. By the end of the conference, all parties in attendance from outside of Ghana had walked out, leading the international community—including many African organizations—to regard the AATUF as a "sham organization" and to await renewed attempts at coordination on the continent under the auspices of the ICFTU.[69]

Shortly after Ghanaian independence in 1957, the GTUC fused with the ruling CPP, thus institutionalizing the relationship between the "Siamese twins" of party and union congress. While many historians have read this moment as a cynical power play by Nkrumah, it can also be seen as an earnest attempt to forge a new way forward towards development *for* and *by* the workers. This act of union represented a major breach with the norms of Western free trade unions and inaugurated an era in which Ghana sought to position itself as first among equals in a new pan-African constellation defined by the interests of rapidly decolonizing states. It sought out assistance from both Western and Eastern blocs, espousing an official foreign policy of non-alignment as seen in the machinations of the GTUC vis-à-vis the ICFTU. Yet this policy of non-alignment did not immediately mean disaffiliation from international federations—in fact, their disaffiliation from the ICFTU only lasted several months, and the GTUC maintained productive exchanges with a number of other Western organizations, including the AFL-CIO. Instead, non-alignment as seen through the lens of the GTUC indicated the freedom to pursue more varied affiliations, free from instrumentalization by the Cold War actors that Sally Johnson decried.

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67 African Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), *The Panafrican Labour Movement: Origins—Elements—Conflicts* (Dakar: ATUC, 1965), 4.

68 ATUC, *Panafrican Labour Movement*, 4. See also Robert Anthony Waters Jr., "Kwame Nkrumah and the All-African Trade Union Federation: Labour and Emancipation in Africa," in Grilli and Gerits, eds., *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020): 77–105.

69 ATUC, *Panafrican Labour Movement*, 8.

Janneke Drent

A Return to the Grandmother of Modern Activism: The Myth of the Larzac Struggle as the Symbol of French Collective Action*

Abstract

From 1971 to 1981, a group of 103 farming families living on the French Larzac plateau united to protect their sheep farms and land from expropriation to create space for the planned extension of the nearby Larzac military camp. Five decades later, the name 'Larzac' still remains part of French collective memory as a symbol of local activism, directly contesting the legitimacy of nationwide centralised decision-making. This article analyses how the myth of the Larzac struggle as the grandmother of small-scale French collective action first emerged in French media coverage, as well as engagement by both the Larzac farmers and activists of the Occitan regionalist movement. It also shows how the continuous reappropriation of this myth has shaped other newer kinds of protest, as the memory of the Larzac is mobilised to speak to issues that are still relevant today, namely the protection of local regional identity and culture writ large.

Keywords: *Collective Memory, Myth-making, Larzac Struggle, Grassroots Activism, Social Movement Audiences, Social Imaginary*

From 1971 to 1981, a group of 103 farming families living on the French Larzac plateau united to protect their sheep farms and land from expropriation to create space for the planned extension of the nearby Larzac military camp. Over the course of these ten years, this local community managed to gain nationwide support for their cause, organising protest marches attended by hundreds of thousands of people from all over France. Five decades later, the name "Larzac" still remains part of the French collective memory as the symbol of local activism, directly contesting the legitimacy of national

* I would like to thank Stephen Milder of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society and Stefan Couperus of the University of Groningen for their guidance during the research and writing process of this article, as well as their many excellent comments on its draft versions. I would also like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their helpful remarks and suggestions.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.70.2023.73-97 Moving the Social · 70 (2023) · p. 73–97

centralised decision-making.[1] Or, as Gaël Franquemagne notes, there are several kinds of Larzacs, including the "real physical geographical space" and the "imagined symbolic" Larzac. This last Larzac lives on in the mythologization of the Larzac struggle as a series of "heroic moments" during which the local community reinforced its own authenticity and autonomy vis-à-vis the intrusive actions of the centralised French state.[2] More than a mere geographical location behind a social movement, the image of the Larzac plateau became a resource in and of itself. Over the last fifty years, hundreds of articles and news reports, as well as dozens of books and a handful of documentaries, have been dedicated to telling its story.[3]

The popular French news network *France Info* calls the Larzac struggle the "symbol of grassroots and anti-globalist movements."[4] Weekly newspaper *L'Express* goes even further, noting that "it was on this high plateau that fifty years ago a rallying cry resounded which became the symbol of all new forms of struggle: 'All together at Larzac' (*Tous au Larzac*)."[5] But why do certain movements create enough of a legacy, of a collective memory, for it to remain resonant long after they themselves have ended? In cases like that of the Larzac struggle, the creation of new meanings attached to old forms of protests ensures the longevity of such a legacy. These movements live on in our collective memory, gaining a near "mythical" status, mobilised not so much by their original generation of activists, but instead by outsiders, those who interpret and reappropriate them.[6] New generations of activists may try to forge a link between their

1 Collective memory is a complex term often reassessed and redefined within the social sciences. For the sake of this article, however, collective memory is defined as a shared framework of knowledge of a given group of people, which creates both "an awareness of its unity and peculiarity." Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 130. Or, to follow the definition presented by the French historian Pierre Nora, collective memory is a "set of memories, […] of an experience lived and/or mythologised by a living collectivity." Pierre Nora, "Mémoire Collective," in *La Nouvelle Histoire,* ed. Jacques Le Goff (Paris: Retz-CEPL, 1978), 398–402. This collective memory not only creates a sense of unity, but also helps form a collective understanding of the present based on a shared collection of representations of past experiences.

2 Gaël Franquemagne, "La Mobilisation Socioterritoriale du Larzac et la Fabrique de l'Authenticité," *Espaces et Sociétés* 143 (2010): 127.

3 Most recently, Philippe Artières has published an in-depth history of the Larzac region and its history of collective intervention, see Philippe Artières, *Le Peuple du Larzac: Une Histoire de Crânes, Sorcières, Croisés, Paysans, Prisonniers, Soldats, Ouvières, Militants, Touristes et Brébis* (Paris: La Découverte, 2021). In 2011, the documentary "Leadersheep" (original French title: "Tous au Larzac"), which centres on the stories of several Larzac farmers who took part in the protests, won the César French national film prize.

4 "Le Trésor des Templiers: Mythes et Légendes du Larzac," *France Info,* 3 September 2014.

5 Philippe Chevallier, "Tous au Larzac!," *L'Express,* 23 May 2021.

6 The term myth, for the sake of this article, does not relate to some kind of normative judgment, focusing solely on the realistic factualness of the representation of the past. Rather,

struggles and older victorious movements, borrowing aspects of previous activism that speak to them and their ideals. Journalists and scholars use specific social movement examples to draw comparisons and explain larger waves of contention. In each case, the specificities that shaped a movement may become lost within the new context and framework it is applied to. The most prevalent meanings attached to certain past movements, then, are no longer merely the product of the actions and definitions created by those directly involved, but rather of those who reinterpret and reify them with their own new goals in mind. The myths of movements like the Larzac struggle are in fact rarely controlled by those directly involved, but rather by external audiences that attach their own meaning to them.

This article will analyse the myth of the Larzac struggle as the symbol of small-scale French collective action. In order to do so, it will look at the ways in which three different kinds of external audiences, journalists, scholars and other social movement activists engaged with the legacy of the Larzac struggle. This kind of post-movement engagement is essential to the survival of certain struggles as part of the collective memory, even when first-hand knowledge dies out. This article is therefore meant as a step towards gaining a better understanding of the process of (re)appropriation and of myth-making that take place on the side of external movement audiences.[7] It aims to contribute to that process by following the creation of a collective memory of the Larzac struggle as the main symbol for French collective action since the 1970s, from its reappropriation by the regionalist Occitan movement that took place alongside it, as well as its continued application in two modern-day cases: the protests against the construction of an airport in Notre-Dame-des-Landes and those against the construction of the Sivens dam.[8] Looking at the engagement of activists of those movements

myths are narratives centred on the relevance of certain events that function as a compelling explanation or illustration that not only reshapes our understanding of the past, but that also carries "significant meaning for the contemporary perception of the world." Anna Ceglarska, "The Role of Myth in Political Thought," *Krakowskie Studia Z Historii Państwa I Prawa* 11, no. 3 (2018): 346. These myths are the subject of constant reinterpretation and reappropriation, as they have to adapt to the ever-changing social realities they are applied to.

7 The field of social movement studies has over the years created theoretical frameworks that study similar kinds of cross-movement borrowing and continuity. Think for example of Charles Tilly's well-known work on the repertoires of contention, which centres on the general transformations and inheritance of established action repertoires. Similarly, framing theory scholars have concentrated on "master frames," overlapping meanings and aims that allow for large varieties of action groups and supporters to unite and form relatively heterogeneous coalitions. Yet, the process of decentralisation and recontextualisation that allows for specific movements to essentially turn into abstract concepts of their own, sometimes without clear connections to their original actors and aims, remains an interesting field of study where more research is still needed.

8 Although prominent supporters of the Larzac struggle, the Occitanists were far from the only external action groups collaborating with the local farmers. Other involved groups

with the memory of the Larzac struggle, this article shows that the early process of increased applicability and accessibility through the adaption of this memory by the regionalist Occitan movement, paved the way for the creation of a mythicised imaginary that remains highly resonant even today. At the same time, it acknowledges that the Larzac farmers themselves had their own reasons to make the legacy of their struggle as diverse as possible, ensuring the support of a wide variety of external sources and ensuring its mythical status.

The Larzac Struggle and its Context

The Larzac struggle has often been framed as much more than resistance against the extension of the military camp, but as a fight for a certain kind of *paysan* lifestyle that was being threatened not just locally, but all throughout France.[9] The Larzac farmers represented the traditional French countryside, in which the community still triumphed over the individualism of the post-industrial age, and people still were intimately connected to the land.[10] Through the participation and support of nationwide activist networks, most notably the ecologist and regionalist Occitan movements, this is the image of the Larzac struggle that spread through France at the time, and remains prevalent today. Virginie Magnat, for example, suggests that the Larzac struggle as an iconic symbol of French social movements "anticipated similarly memorable political interventions by Greenpeace, Act Up, and the Occupy movement."[11]

included the French environmental and antinuclear movements, pacifist groups led by activists such as Lanza del Vasto, Maoists and radical left political groups. An article of this size, however, does not leave enough space to discuss all the different ways in which each of these groups engaged with the Larzac struggle, and helped shape its surrounding myth and continued resonance as part of the French collective memory. The case of the Occitan movement is therefore chosen as a useful example of the coalition-building within the Larzac struggle, its dependence on external engagement, and its reappropriation by other forms of activism.

9 The French 'paysan' as a term for someone who lives and works in the countryside is sometimes translated as peasant, yet the French connotation misses the derogatory value of its English equivalent. In this case, in particular, paysan is used to refer to the specific traditional culture and lifestyle of France's countryside. During the Larzac struggle, the term was often used specifically as a "demand, a banner," as the farmers saw "the value of the term paysan, one rooted in the pays, someone who defends a territory." Donald Reid, "Larzac in the Broad 1968 and After," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 32, no. 2 (2014): 104.

10 Sarah Farmer, *Rural Inventions: The French Countryside after 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

11 Virginie Magnat, "Occitan Music Revitalization as Radical Cultural Activism: From Postcolonial Regionalism to Altermondialisation," *Popular Music and Society* 40, no. 1 (2017): 64.

Going one step further, French media outlets frequently describe the Larzac struggle as the "grandmother," or the "mother of all battles of 'real people' against an ignorant, unjust and brutal state."[12] Following this narrative, the Larzac plateau becomes the birthplace of the "French anti-globalist movement."[13] Similarly, later social movements are given, or claim for themselves, the title of "descendants or heirs" of the Larzac struggle's legacy.[14] More than just a symbol to learn from, the Larzac struggle became known as the ancestor of a wide variety of modern-day collective action all over France. A grandmother whose legacy and DNA they not only inherited, but without whom, to continue the family tree analogy, this new generation of French activists could have never been born in the first place. In order to understand how a protest taking place in a small localised community became known as the grandmother of modern-day social movements, this first section will provide a closer look at both the origins of the Larzac struggle, and the context in which it took place.

On the 28 October 1971, the French Minister of Defence Michel Debré announced government plans to expand the existing military camp in the Larzac, situated in the department of Aveyron in the South of France. When the camp was first built in 1902, it took up about three thousand hectares, a mere three per cent of the Larzac plateau. Debré's vision, however, required an extension of nearly six times that size or about seventeen thousand hectares.[15] He argued that the plateau had been scarcely inhabited for decades, and that the expansion would only mean the expropriation of "a few, not many peasants raising sheep and still living in more or less medieval ways."[16] It was a process that, he promised, would bring benefits to both the national army and the economic stability of the region. Although Debré's speech in 1971 formed the official announcement of the government's plans and is therefore often considered as the start of the Larzac struggle, news of the possible expansion of the military camp first broke at a 1970 meeting of the *Union des Démocrates pour la République* (Union of Democrats for the Republic). The first large-scale demonstration

12 Clair Rivière, "Retour sur la Lutte du Larzac, Aïeule des 'Zones à Défendre' et Berceau de l'Altermondialisme," *Basta !*, 19 July 2021, https://basta.media/Le-Larzac-rejoint-bien-d-autres-luttes-interview-Le-Peuple-du-Larzac-Philippe-Artieres-CQFD; Jean-Denis Renard, "Le Larzac, Cinquante Ans après que reste-t-il de la Lutte ?," *Sud-Ouest*, 24 October 2021, www.sudouest.fr/environnement/le-larzac-cinquante-ans-apres-que-reste-t-il-de-la-lutte-6645584.php.

13 Stéphane Hurel, "Que reste-t-il de la Lutte du Larzac ?," *La Dépêche*, October 18, 2021, www.ladepeche.fr/2021/10/18/que-reste-t-il-de-la-lutte-du-larzac-9860180.php.

14 Gaël Franquemagne, "Les Mobilisations Socio-Territoriales: Le Larzac, une Cause en Mouvement" (PhD Diss., Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, 2009), 126.

15 Reid, "Larzac," 99–122.

16 Mathieu Gervais, "Le Rural, Espace d'Émergence d'un Paradigme Militant Décolonial," *Mouvements* 84, no. 4 (2015): 79.

took place in Millau in May of 1971, although the size and frequency of the protests increased significantly after Debré's announcement.[17]

Over the next ten years, the group of 103 local farmers, together with activists from all over the country, organised protests against the extension. At rallies and marches in 1973, 1974 and 1977, massive crowds of over fifty thousand people gathered at the plateau to demonstrate.[18] Actions such as a protest in 1972, when the farmers brought sixty sheep to the Eiffel Tower with the words "*Sauvons le Larzac*" (Let us save the Larzac) and "*Des moutons, pas de canons*" (Sheep, not canons) written on their fleeces, ensured national media coverage in all the major newspapers.[19] During the autumn of 1978, the locals embarked on a march on foot from Rodez in the Aveyron to Paris, stopping at a different town every night to hold meetings and gain the support of the local population. A year later, a group of Larzac farmers pitched their tents on the Champ de Mars, a historic military field in Paris, demanding their farms should not be turned into another battleground.[20]

Many of these actions were based around the need to create a spectacle, to keep the Larzac struggle on the agenda and to sway public opinion throughout the country. Although originally depicted as a small and isolated community in Michel Debré's speech announcing the extension of the camp, actions like these showed that local farmers were slowly but surely winning nationwide support for their cause, while building increasingly stronger action networks to fall back on. From as early as 1971 onwards, the Larzac was already becoming a nationwide synonym for all kinds of local antimilitaristic action. *Le Monde* first described the expropriation of people for the benefit of the army in the Dordogne as a "new small-scale Larzac"[21] in 1972, followed a year later by the resistance against a "Larzac in the Lorraine region" when the French army planned to settle near Nancy in the North-East of the country.[22]

The Larzac struggle has often been portrayed as the symbol of confrontation between the authenticity of the French local community on the one hand, and artificial cold nature of the highly centralised modern state on the other. From the very start, the Larzac farmers actively reinforced this narrative. They presented themselves as a non-violent, hyper localised action group. But despite this curated image of a local

17 "Marché de Protestation Contre le Projet d'une Extension du Camp de Larzac," *Le Monde*, 11 May 1971.

18 Andrew Tompkins, "Transnationality as a Liability? The Anti-Nuclear Movement at Malville," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 89, no. 3 (2011): 1365–1379.

19 Franquemagne, "La Mobilisation Socioterritoriale du Larzac," 130.

20 Reid, "Larzac," 99–122.

21 "À Saint-Astier, la Gendarmerie Mobile Veut Occuper 115 Hectares: UN NOUVEAU LARZAC?," *Le Monde*, 6 June 1972.

22 "UN 'LARZAC LORRAIN': Élus et Agriculteurs s'Opposent à l'Installation de l'Armée près de Nancy," *Le Monde,* 31 August 1973.

community fighting against growing centralisation and modernisation, the farmers were also acutely aware of their need to gain the support from outsiders. Forming allegiances with pacifist, political leftist and even early environmentalist groups, the Larzac farmers consciously created a narrative that could easily be reappropriated by a wide variety of action groups, each with their own ideologies and potential audience. During a 1973 demonstration, for example, hundreds of striking workers of the LIP watch factory came to the Larzac plateau to declare a "marriage of LIP and Larzac," and the start of a joint uprising of peasant farmers and the working class.[23] Similarly, sheep and tractors were frequently used at demonstrations and protest marches to stress the farmers direct link to the traditional rural lifestyle they aimed to protect, but also formed an attractive link with the growing national interest in rural culture and lifestyles.

The reappropriation of the authenticity and purity of the countryside had led to the birth of regionalist movements all over France. The *Front Culturel Alsacien* (Alsatian Cultural Front) and the group *Bretagne et Autogestion* (Brittany and Self-government), for example, were founded in 1974 and 1973 respectively.[24] Working together with the regionalist Occitanists, and framing the Larzac struggle as part of the larger regionalist movement, thus opened up the possibility of gaining support from activist networks from all corners of the country. José Bové, who moved to the Larzac during the struggle, notes for example that "when I arrived at the Larzac, I immediately sensed a coherence between the place and my aspirations. […] I'm not a bird on a branch, I am in the real world."[25] Bové later went on to make a name for himself as a prominent figure within the environmentalist and anti-globalisation movements and as a member of the European Parliament, but he remained concerned with the future of the Larzac region. The Larzac struggle during the 1970s provided him with some of his first activist experiences, and he was also actively involved during later protests against the construction of a McDonalds in Millau and the organisation of a large-scale anti-globalist protest in 2003 at the Larzac plateau. While much of José Bové's political renown stems from these later protests, many descriptions of his political activism highlight the Larzac struggle in shaping his ideas on globalisation, environmentalism and the defence of rural lifestyles.[26]

23 Robert Gildea and Andrew Tompkins, "The Transnational in the Local: The Larzac Plateau as a Site of Transnational Activism since 1970," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (2015): 590.

24 William R. Beer, "The Social Class of Ethnic Activists in Contemporary France," in *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, ed. Milton J. Esman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 143–158.

25 Rixa Ann Spencer Freeze, "French Food vs. Fast Food: José Bové Takes on McDonald's" (Master's Thesis, Ohio University, 2002), p. 30.

26 Wayne Northcutt, "José Bové vs. McDonald's: The Making of a National Hero in the French

As for the case of the Larzac struggle, the local farmers initially had only one goal in mind, namely to prevent the extension of the military camp that threatened their livelihoods and local environment. Although they collaborated with external protest networks, such as Catholic youth groups and later on the regionalist Occitan movement, they strived to keep autonomy over their actions, to ensure that their own personal struggle remained at the centre of attention at all times.[27] Social movements, however, do not form and develop in a social vacuum, existing independently from the spirit of the time or social changes in society writ large. In an era that was marked by the rise of all kinds of new social movements, the Larzac struggle was hardly a stand-alone case.[28] Yet its quick spreading popularity and widespread media attention made it an easily accessible and thus attractive point of reference, or even resource, for all kinds of different movements to use. Jennifer Ann Peeples stresses the importance of "appropriation" amongst collective action groups. She studies the appropriation of the term "downwinders," an identity marker first exclusively used by those who lived "downwind" of the nuclear weapons production site in Hanford, Washington, to demand attention for the radioactive air pollution they were exposed to.[29] The term "downwinder," much like the name "Larzac," later transformed into a synonym for all kinds of related struggles, located all over the United States. This increase in the number of organisations and diverse local groups that use and appropriate the term for their own purposes, causes for "the concept of the downwinder [to] expanded to cover and conceptualise the various victim/place/toxin constructs to which it is articulated. The loss of a particular identity may be a gain for the concept's general applicability."[30]

Although losing some of the authenticity and specificity of the original use of a term like "downwinder" or "Larzac" as a result of this process of appropriation and increasing abstraction, it ensures that like-minded action groups can overcome the occasional limited amount of resources and symbolic value they need to spread their message across larger audiences. Or, as one former member of an activist committee

Anti-Globalization Movement," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 31 (2003): 326–345.

27 Reid, "Larzac," 99–122.

28 In the analyses of many European social movement scholars, the 1960s have crystallised as the era of a new kind of social movements, centred on the creation of shared identities, cultural change and highly interpersonal networks. Social movements became the crossroads where the personal, such as sexual identity in the LGBTQ+ movements or the traditional patriarchal nature of the household in feminist movements, became a part of the political. The feeling of community and of shared values, became prominent markers of social movements from the 1960s onwards. Paul D'Anieri, Claire Ernst and Elizabeth Kier, "New Social Movements in Historical Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 22, no. 4 (1990): 445–458.

29 Jennifer Ann Peeples, "Downwind: Articulation and Appropriation of Social Movement Discourse," *Southern Communication Journal* 76, no. 3 (2011): 248–263.

30 Ibid., 259.

later admitted, "we made the farmers mythical for political reasons."[31] As Jasper *et al.* note, the narratives surrounding social movements often stress the importance of heroic individuals over the work done by supporting networks of activists, yet scholars "tend to forget that these narratives represent thoughtful character work by the movements themselves."[32] Bringing up the example of Martin Luther King as the face of the American Civil Rights movements, they note that "King was not an all-powerful organiser and decision maker. But as a symbol, King was a superhero."[33] Social movements depend on the creation of these heroic and highly sympathetic figures, often forming a strong contrast to some deceitful opposition, which are used to not only inspire but also mobilise others.

The representation of the Larzac farmers as an isolated, virtually politically powerless, yet incredibly determined and close-knit group, gave the movement an almost heroic image, the French *petit pays* (rural countryside) fighting against the all-encompassing centralised state, a modern version of David against Goliath. Despite active involvement of national action groups, who not only supported the Larzac farmers during the struggle but also helped create and maintain the struggle as part of the French collective memory, it is the image of a small group of local farmers against the omnipotent state that proved most resonant. José Bové later acknowledged the importance for the farmers themselves to create such a legacy for themselves. He argued that to "lead a struggle, you need roots," and that the Larzac had turned itself into "a culture and a history" even for people living far outside of the plateau's geographical borders.[34]

Real-time connections made between movements, for example between the Larzac and Occitan struggle, provide more than just the ability to piggyback on the potential success and resources. Rather, as will become apparent throughout this paper, they show the broad applicability of an individual case to a variety of causes, making struggles such as that of the Larzac interesting not only amongst audiences of activists, but also to society at large. As Chin-Chuan Lee *et al.* stress, "collective memory can be best understood as a sensitising umbrella concept referring to a wide variety of specific

31 Pierre-Marie Terral, "Gardarem lo Larzac : de la Dimension Occitane de la Lutte Paysanne à son Cheminement Mémoriel," *Lengas* 69 (2011): 104.

32 James M. Jasper, Michael Young and Elke Zuern, "Character Work in Social Movements," *Theory and Society* 47, no. 1 (2018): 114.

33 Ibid., 118. It is worth noting, of course, that a number of scholars have criticized the use of Martin Luther King as the symbol of the Civil Rights movement, and the way it takes attention and importance away from underlying grassroot networks. See for example, Jeanne Theoharis, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

34 Terral, "Gardarem lo Larzac," 103.

mnemonic products and practices."[35] Movement-led appropriation and myth-making is one of those practices. Yet engagement from outside of the movements themselves is also essential. Struggles get resolved or die out, activists grow older and move on, and first-hand knowledge of the specificities of individual cases slowly disappears. Outside actors, such as new generations of activists, but also journalists and scholars tend to turn to the past to "frame current issues but also to predict the future."[36]

Retellings of events that took place in the past demand a certain level of abstraction, not in terms of rendering social processes more accessible to those who were not a part of them, but also simply because the past can never be seen as separate from its relevance to the present. As David Meyer and Deana Rohlinger note, "the stories we tell about the past reflect contemporary values and beliefs."[37] The vast complexity of historical events will inevitably be in some way reduced, reshaped or simplified to form a coherent and continuous narrative. Such narratives offer us a "convenient shorthand," a way of understanding the past that helps us understand and analyse those aspects of social change and political protest that are deemed important through the lens of our own general understandings of social change, and our own theoretical or cultural biases.[38] The creation of myths and symbols of social processes plays an essential role in this, because they help accentuate those parts of social movement that have become most resonant, most easily accessible and seemingly most characteristic of a certain time. For later generations of activists, an extensive retelling of all aspects of a movement like the Larzac struggle is not only of little practical use, but also potentially less attractive to a version that stresses a particular characteristic that is of interest to them. Modelling themselves to a specific version of a previous movement that fits their own ideological framework, strategic goals or need for historical justification, they reappropriate or deliberately misremember the parts of history that fit their current needs.

Instead of being placed inside of larger frameworks of social change, specific events and social movements often get turned into the heart of their own development, the start of the context in which they develop. This leaves us with a narrative that centres on the "immaculate conception" of a social movement, in which key events occur and actors mobilise themselves seemingly spontaneously, without being rooted in larger

35 Chin-Chuan Lee, Hongtao Li, and Francis L.F. Lee, "Symbolic Use of Decisive Events: Tiananmen as a News Icon in the Editorials of the Elite U.S. Press," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 16, no. 3 (2011): 336.

36 Ibid., 337.

37 David S. Meyer and Deana A. Rohlinger, "Big Books and Social Movements: A Myth of Ideas and Social Change," *Social Problems* 59, no. 1 (2012): 137.

38 Ibid., 142.

processes of political, cultural and social development.[39] Or, to refer back to Gaël Franquemagne's work on the Larzac struggle, it leaves us with a new dimension that focuses less on the physical or geographic nature of a conflict, and instead becomes part of the imagined representation of what remains of importance, and thus should be remembered.[40]

On the side of scholarly literature, the term Larzac seems to have taken on an almost mythical meaning that reshapes the perception of the original struggle, but in turn also creates a new frame of reference for other protests to fit inside of. The Larzac as a geographical location has become synonymous with a much larger scale of activism, "generalisable and extendible beyond the plateau."[41] The Larzac struggle then, is pushed inside a framework that no longer limits itself to its originally intended and case-specific objectives, and instead paints it as the prime example of nonviolent resistance to the centralised power of the modern industrialised state that has the potential to shape other protests. Mathieu Gervais, for example, describes the 2014 protests against the construction of the Sivens Dam across the river Tescou as being embedded in the heritage of the Larzac struggle, presented as the symbol of activism against French militarism, technocratic power and centralised statism.[42] In trying to understand this kind of myth-making, or the creation of a narrative in which one event or one movement can become the symbol for a much larger wave of contention and change, and placing a lot of weight and significance on singular case studies, we often forget to ask why this process matters in the first place. As Anna Ceglarska notes, myths are in their essence a form of explanation that "have strived for a certain universality," making them both widely applicable and suited for constant reappropriation and reinterpretation.[43] References to the Larzac struggle as the grandmother of all kinds of local forms of collective resistance against the workings of the modern centralised political system, almost turn the history of the Larzac into a concept of its own, a useful tool to connect cases that are perceived to be similar in an easily understandable way.

The "social imaginary" of the Larzac as the marker for all different kinds of collective action has become one of the dominant features in the analysis of modern French social movements, be that those centred on the centralised state/local community binary, or more broadly to fit descriptions of large-scale often environmentalist

39 Verta Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance," *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 5 (1989): 761.

40 Franquemagne, "La Mobilisation Socioterritoriale du Larzac," 127.

41 Gwyn Williams, *Struggles for an Alternative Globalization: An Ethnography of Counterpower in Southern France* (Farnham: Routledge, 2008), 29.

42 Gervais, "Le Rural," 73–81.

43 Ceglarska, "The Role of Myth," 347.

protests.[44] The use of the name Larzac, then no longer revolves around the aims and effects of the protests as desired and decided upon by the activists directly involved at the time. Rather, the real legacy of the Larzac struggle can be found in the way it still resonates as a part of our collective memory, and in turn shapes our understanding and analyses of movements and protests far outside of its original reach. Portrayed almost as the prime example of a struggle that never really ends, as it continues to inspire and influence collective action even today, this social imaginary of the Larzac remains resonant precisely because its continued use makes it a readily available and easy to understand way of explaining and contextualising contemporary cases. It is no surprise then, that even the physical location of the Larzac plateau remained a prominent place for all sorts of activism, from an anti-globalist demonstration attended by hundreds of thousands of people during the thirtieth anniversary of the original struggle to current anti-shale gas fracking protests. Even the original 1970s activists seem to grasp the unique longevity of the widespread attention for their cause, as a 1973 edition of the activist magazine *Larzac Informations* notes how "the Larzac is the privileged place of all kinds of struggles, our presence today is just a stage in this fight."[45] Longing both for the solidarity of people all over France, and the recognition of the exemplary status of their own struggle, the local action committee spoke of the existence of "Larzacs everywhere," emphasising that what was happening to the Larzac farmers could happen again, anywhere and at any time.[46] As the following section will show, the "Larzac struggle" has become a kind of umbrella term, designed to fit a wide variety of modern-day movement characteristics, be that the activism to protect rural communities, to support regional identities, or simply as a way of invoking the memory of a movement of unlikely activists that managed to secure a victory against the dominant French state.

44 Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar stresses the importance of "social imaginaries" as means of shaping collective life and collective memory. These social imaginaries are perspectives on reality, or frames of reference that turn into shared ideas and identities, as well as value systems and socio-cultural practices. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 4.

45 "Intervention des Paysans Travailleurs," *Larzac Informations Août, Septembre et Octobre* (1973), *Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis, Berlin.*

46 Gildea and Tompkins, "The Transnational in the Local," 581–605.

The Creation and Deployment of Myths: the Occitan Movement

As mentioned before in this article, the Larzac farmers often staged protests they knew would get a lot of attention from the media, portraying their struggle as that of the French countryside and traditional local communities against the impersonal centralised state in a way that resonated with large parts of the population. Creating a strong social imaginary of sympathetic and ordinary citizens, concerned with the protection of their local identity and way of life, they made it easy for people all over the country to identify with their situation, to frame the movement as exceeding the geographical borders of the Larzac plateau. Perhaps more importantly, however, the Larzac struggle was one of the few movements of its kind and time that actually proved to be victorious, which naturally made it one of the more memorable and also more attractive examples of what a movement should look like.[47] As Robert Benford notes, "once a social movement fashions and espouses a highly resonant frame that is broad in interpretive scope, other social movements within a cycle of protest will modify that frame and apply it to their own cause."[48] Attaching yourself to a movement with a certain level of historical grandeur speaks directly to the memory of that movement, and makes clear what is at stake, even to those outside both the old and the new protests. It conveys the message that the same level of importance should be given to contemporary struggles as to the ones already taken up in the collective memory, as they present themselves as existing within the same realm and legacy of protest. The following section of this article will look at the creation and deployment of one of the most prominent characteristics of the modern-day imaginary of the Larzac struggle, namely its strong roots in Occitan regionalism.

One of the first external activist networks openly supporting the Larzac farmers was the regionalist Occitan movement.[49] This movement revolved around the promo-

47 In 1981, the newly elected socialist president François Mitterrand decided to officially abandon the plans for the expansion of the military camp, following the annulment of those by the French Court of Cassation a year earlier. Land that the state had already acquired in preparation of the project was turned over to the community, as the *Société Civile des Terres du Larzac* (Civil Society of the Larzac Soils) made up of and run by local farmers was given a lease of the lands.

48 Robert D. Benford, "Master Frame," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social and Political Movement*s, ed. David A. Snow et al. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 1.

49 The Occitan movement of the 1970s was not a one singular movement, but rather a collection of several activist networks, united through their similarity in ideas, means of protest and slogans, of which '*volem viure al païs*' (we want to live in the country) is perhaps the most well-known example. As Frans J. Schrijver notes, "there has always been friction between a movement defending a homogenous Occitan culture, and Provençal, Auvergnat,

tion and protection of the Occitan culture, through the support of bilingual French and Occitan education at schools, or even the call for autonomy of the region. For the French historian Daniel Fabre, the Occitan culture is considered to be one of rurality and of peasants, existing in contrast with the urban industrialised culture of the rest of France that tries to dominate it.[50] One of the main ideological motivations behind the Occitan movement was that of "internal colonialism"[51] of the South of the country by the more industrialised and politically and economically powerful North.[52] Some even went as far as speaking of a cultural genocide of the rural communities.[53] From as early as May 1971 onwards, several hundred members of the *Comité Occitan d'Études et d'Action* (Occitan Committee for Study and Action), which had been founded in the early 1960s by linguist and historian Robert Lafont, pledged to help the Larzac farmers. The Larzac struggle proved to be an interesting opportunity to publicise the committee's two main spearheads: the reappreciation of the local identity of the region, and the demands for more autonomy regarding any changes to the living environment.[54] It fit into a larger framework of growing regional pride, identity politics and sociopolitical unrest in the Occitan region during the 1960s and 1970s, think for example of the mine workers strike in Decazeville or the winegrowers' movement. Although these movements each had their own objectives and strategies, those were based in overlapping regionalist ideologies, and activists within different movements often supported each other. As Yan Lespoux notes, the strikers, Larzac farmers, mem-

Gascon and other specificities within that large territory." Frans J. Schrijver, *Regionalism after Regionalisation: Spain, France and the United Kingdom* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2007), 203. For the scope of this article, however, these smaller activist groups will not be treated in-depth.

50 Daniel Fabre and Charles Camberoque, *La Fête en Languedoc: Regards sur le Carnaval Aujourd'hui* (Toulouse: Privat, 1977).

51 The term internal colonialism is not unique to the French Occitan movement, as it has been used to describe a great variety of forms of oppression, such as discrimination of black communities in the United States from as early as the 1960s. Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (1969): 393–408. As for the case of the Occitan movement, the concept of internal colonialism was mainly used by the linguist and historian Robert Lafont, one of the founding members of the Occitan Committee for Study and Action. In 1957, however, the French literary journal *Esprit* had already published an article titled Décoloniser la France (Decolonising France), which drew a parallel between the ruling of the French colonies and the ways in which the French government treated its rural regions. Alain Alcouffe, "Le Colonialisme Intérieur," *Conference in Tribute to Robert Lafont* (2009), 1–8.

52 Gildea and Tompkins, "The Transnational in the Local," 590.

53 Francisco Letamendia, *Game of Mirrors: Centre-Periphery National Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 2000).

54 Eleonore Kofman, "Regional Autonomy and the One and Indivisible French Republic," *Environment and Planning: Government and Policy* 3, no. 1 (1985): 11–25.

bers of the Occitan Committee for Study and Action, and even singers of the *Nòva Cançon* (a musical genre promoting Occitan culture and language) such as Martí all dreamed of getting out of their "regionalist ghetto," claiming that Occitania was neither "a colony nor a bargaining chip."[55]

The Larzac struggle formed a perfect real-life example of one of the regionalist movement's concepts of "internal colonialism." Describing the relation between Paris and the French countryside as one of exploitation and oppression, the regionalists created a convincing call to action for many local farmers. By casting themselves as the "victims of a centralising bureaucratic state," which provided no place for traditional small-scale family enterprises or local identities, they united themselves to fight one common enemy, the French state.[56] The Larzac struggle proved to be an excellent opportunity to connect the, up till then mostly abstract, idea of internal colonialism, to a concrete case.

Two of the most well-known slogans of the Larzac struggle, "volem viure e trabalhar al païs" (we want to live and work in the country) and "gardarèm lo Larzac" (we will keep the Larzac) are in Occitan, not standardised French. Yet the population of the Larzac had never been particularly involved in the Occitan movement before 1971. Or, as Didier Martin notes, "the Occitan identity of the farmers is an identity of collective opposition, it does not precede the conflict."[57] The slogan "gardarèm lo Larzac" itself was not even coined by one of the local farmers, but by Roland Pécout, a member of the Occitan movement.[58] It was used during several demonstrations, such as the tractor ride to Paris in 1973, as a way of openly linking the more cultural side of the Occitan movement, namely its demand for the official recognition of the Occitan language, and the political demands for more autonomy and the cancellation of the military camp extension. That is not to say, however, that this linkage is unanimously accepted among those studying the movement, or even deemed a proper representation of the situation. In an article for the self-described activist blog *Mescladis e còps de gula*, historian Jean-Pierre Cavaillé questions the legitimacy of "gardarèm lo Larzac" as a symbol of the Larzac struggle. He notes that, "'gardarèm lo Larzac' is obviously […] a picturesque patois expression, we must not reduce the history of Larzac, a history of a unique, serious and crucial social struggle to this."[59] In focusing on the accuracy of this generalising link between the regionalist and the Larzac farmers, however, Cavaillé ignores one major aspect of myth creation and the remembrance of events,

55 Yan Lespoux, "La Nòva Cançon Occitana e la Societat Miègjornala," *Lengas* 90 (2021).

56 Michael Bess, "Greening the Mainstream: Paradoxes of Antistatism and Anticonsumerism in the French Environmental Movement," *Environmental History* 5, no. 1 (2000): 9.

57 Didier Martin, *Le Larzac: Utopies et Réalités* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1987), 134.

58 Terral, "Gardarem lo Larzac," 93–116.

59 Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, "Le Larzac sans l'Occitan," *Mescladis e còps de gula*, http://taban.canalblog.com/archives/2012/01/30/23373063.html.

namely that they are rarely controlled by those directly involved, but rather by the external audiences that attach their own meaning to it.

As movements grow and develop, but also certainly as the conflicts that cause them get resolved, their memory as portrayed by their audience, be that academics, new protest groups or journalists, becomes more and more relevant. The myth of the Larzac as part of the regionalist movement, in that sense, does not necessarily relate to the ways in which the actors directly involved in the struggle may have situated themselves, but rather to how it is interpreted and appropriated by those who aim to use it for their goals, as an example of how to organise a certain type of protest or as a symbol for a much larger process.[60] Although critiqued by scholars such as Didier Martin and Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, the use of the memory of the Larzac struggle as the symbol of the regionalist Occitan movement remains prominent. Sarah Trouslard, for example, cites the work of Valérie Mazerolle in noting that the Larzac is "at the heart of the preoccupations of the Occitan organisations."[61] Joan-Danièl Esteve speaks of the Larzac as the "catalyst" of the Occitan movement.[62] Similarly, Robert Lafont writes "we were born in Occitania, in the Larzac" in an article about the 2007 "Anem Òc, per la Lenga Occitana" protest for the defence of the Occitan language.[63]

While the struggle itself might not have started as a response to the regionalist ideals of more autonomy and the strengthening of the local identity, this Occitan dimension certainly helped the memory of the Larzac remain resonant, among scholars, but also in the French media. The French newspaper La Dépêche, for example, claims that France discovered the Occitan identity through the Larzac struggle,[64] and describes

60 It is, of course, often insufficient to imagine any social movement as an essentially two-sided affair, in which the social movement actors and their opponents, or the structure they reject or attempt to change, are the only parties involved. For James Clyde Sellman, the "crucial third dimension" is that of those who function as the movement's audience. Social movements are fundamentally triangular, because they depend on this third group, be that people not yet participating in any form of collective action or those adhering to a different action group, for potential support. James Clyde Sellman, "Social Movements and the Symbolism of Public Demonstrations: The 1874 Women's Crusade and German Resistance in Richmond, Indiana," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (1999): 576. In the case of movements such as the Larzac struggle, that have become a near mythical point of reference for a much larger generation of movements, it is also interesting to consider the role of researchers as part of this third group, as part of the audience. Much like activists adhering to different action groups, scholars are engaging in several ways of analysing and utilising the collective memory and representations of a movement.

61 Sarah E. Trouslard, "Occitan Musicians, Immigration, and Postcolonial Regionalism in Southern France," PhD Dissertation, City University of New York (2020), 125.

62 Joan-Danièl Esteve, "Les Chanteurs de la Revendication Occitane," *Lengas* 67 (2010): 28.

63 Ibid., 52.

64 "Gardarem l'Occitan," *La Dépêche*, 24 October 2009, www.ladepeche.fr/article/2009/10/24/701145-gardarem-l-occitan.html.

the slogan "gardarèm lo Larzac" as an "obvious battle cry of the Occitan heart."[65] Yet the strong symbolic power of the word "gardarèm" seems to have somewhat outgrown its specific Occitan roots. During recent years, protesters at Notre-Dame-des-Landes in the Loire region used their own Breton version of "gardarèm lo Larzac" (we will keep the Larzac), "miret 'vo douaroù, Kernitron-al-Lann" (we will keep Notre-Dame-des Landes).[66] Both on the side of scholars and journalists, the memory of the Larzac is being invoked and mobilised not to merely refer to the resolved conflict the plans for the extension of the military camp caused, but rather to speak to issues that are still relevant in today's society, those of the protection of local regional identity and culture writ large. The geographical and physical space of the Larzac plateau may no longer be the site of contention, the social imaginary that surrounds the legacy of the Larzac struggle as the triumphant symbol for local community and regional identity still remains.

Recent Uses of the Myth of the Larzac: Symbolic Power and Constraints

How can we still see the influence of the Larzac struggle's mythical status on modern-day examples of social movements? Which aspects of the imaginary of the Larzac struggle, and its prominent place in the French collective memory, still help shape these new kinds of protests, by mobilising new activists or by creating a link between modern-day issues and the Larzac's celebrated past? And how may such links, created by activists themselves or on the side of the press and scholars, also pose constraints to the ways in which these newer movements are understood? In social movements, collective memories can help create a sense of continuity and unity, allowing movement actors to integrate their action into a larger framework of collective action, or as a way of linking past and present struggle through the use of for example similar slogans and names. Memory work should therefore be understood as a continuous process of appropriation and reinterpretation.

Collective memory work is the activity of creating ties with the past that not only establish a sense of continuity within a larger history of collective action, but also a sense of unity and belonging among movement actors, who use shared understandings of the past and shared experiences to create their collective identity, values and beliefs, and movement objectives. As Frederick Harris argues, "it is not memories per

65 "Il y a 50 ans, Gardarem Lo Larzac (1/6): 'J'étais bien Sage et puis l'Armée a Voulu Prendre Nos Terres…,'" *La Dépêche*, 3 August 2021, www.ladepeche.fr/2021/08/03/jetais-bien-sage-et-puis-larmee-a-voulu-prendre-nos-terres-9710863.php.

66 Artières, *Le Peuple du Larzac*, 5.

se that could directly influence collective action over time, but rather the meanings that aggrieved groups attach to those memories that could determine their capacity to assist potential challengers in their quest to make sense of new situations."[67] This ability to transform the memory of a past movement into a useful point of reference for a contemporary movement, does necessarily mean that the specificities of the former need to be simplified, in order for it to be applied to a new case. Past forms of collective action can continue to shape the strategic means and aims, or even cultural links in modern-day movements. Donatella Della Porta *et al.* argue, for example, that movement culture is a combination of "innovation and inheritance," and "broad sets of memories and representations."[68]

In 2012, the French government launched its "operation César," a series of expulsions of squatters objecting to the construction of a large airport near Nantes, the ZAD[69] (*zone à défendre*, zone to defend) of the aforementioned Notre-Dame-des-Landes.[70] Protests against the creation of the airport had been ongoing since its plans were first announced in the 1960s. In 2009, however, the conflict reached its peak when around 300 activists started illegally occupying the terrain.[71] Most of the land had previously been owned by local farmers who, similarly to the case of the Larzac struggle, had been evicted. Many of the squatters aimed to defend not only a return to a more rural way of life, but also the autonomy of the local community who "would not be subjected to the competitive and predatory logic of urbanisation."[72] Stressing the resemblances between the Larzac and the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Patrick Warin urged President François Hollande in an open letter sent in 2012 to abandon the plans for the creation of the airport. He noted how his father, Jacques Warin, had worked together with Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy in 1981, at the end of the Lar-

67 Fredrick C. Harris, "It Takes a Tragedy to Arouse Them: Collective Memory and Collective Action during the Civil Rights Movement," *Social Movement Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006): 23.

68 Donatella Della Porta et al., *Legacies and Memories in Movements: Justice and Democracy in Southern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 81.

69 *Zone à défendre* (zone to defend) is a French neologistic term used to describe an area occupied by protesters, usually in order to stop development programmes. Notre-Dame-des-Landes has quickly grown to be one of the most well-known examples of a *zone à défendre* due to the "militancy, the persistence and the innovative potential of its inhabitants." Sonja Schüler, "The Zone à Défendre of Notre-Dame-des-Landes in France: An Ambivalent Space for Social Critique," *Urbanities* 1, no. 7 (2017): 45.

70 "'Notre-Dame-des-Landes: Chronologie d'un Projet très Contesté,'" *France Inter*, 17 January 2018.

71 Cécile Rialland-Juin, "Le Conflit de Notre-Dame-des-Landes: les Terres Agricoles, entre Réalités Agraires et Utopies Foncières," *Norois* 238–239 (2016): 133–145.

72 Anne-Laure Pailloux, "Zone d'Aménagement Différé contre 'Zone à Défendre': Analyse d'une Lutte pour l'Autonomie dans/de l'Espace Rural," *Justice Spatiale | Spatial Justice,* no. 7 janvier (2015): 1.

zac struggle. Warin warned Hollande that he was "faced with a new Larzac" and that "those of Notre-Dame-des-Landes and those of Larzac are the same kind of people, and millions of us will be supporting them so that they will be listened to."[73] The use of the Larzac struggle as a point of reference made sense not only because both struggles featured a local community taking on state-level decision-making, but also because the imaginary of the Larzac is often hailed as the triumph of such a local community in mobilising the rest of France. Warin aimed to show Hollande that he was taking on a battle much larger that it may have seemed at the surface level. A battle that, as he persuasively made clear by invoking the memory of the victorious Larzac farmers, the President was set to lose.

Patrick Warin was not the only person who tried to invoke the memory of the Larzac struggle as a tool in the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes. On the side of the protesters, but perhaps more interestingly also on the side of state officials, references to the Larzac were a regular occurrence. Sébastien Lecornu, state secretary for Ecological Transition, that the government was "turning its back on any form of collective management. The Larzac model is promoted by the associations, and I have made very clear to them that the Larzac model was not the one the state would continue with."[74] Drawing a direct connection between the protests at Notre-Dame-des-Landes and the Larzac struggle, both Warin and Lecornu recognised that the latter's legacy still proved powerful enough to not only unite and inspire new activists, but also question the government's monopoly of decision-making processes. Although earlier depictions of "new Larzacs" during the 1970s had focused specifically on the antimilitaristic nature of the struggle, for example in *Le Monde's* description of protests against the construction of military camps near Nancy and in the Dordogne, this characteristic was not applicable to the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes four decades later. Instead, the vitality of the struggle as a victorious symbol of citizen-led action, and of the tension between local communities and the national government became visible.

While the activists in Notre-Dame-des-Landes were protesting against the creation of an airport, over five hundred kilometres away over a thousand people gathered to oppose a different development plan: that of the Sivens dam over the river Tescou, in the region of Tarn. The construction of this dam would mean the destruction of 13 hectares of wetland, home to nearly a hundred protected species, including bats, snakes and salamanders.[75] As one local action group noted, "it is an unsuitable project

73 "NDDL par Patrick Warin," *Archives EELV*, 30 October 2012, https://archives.eelv.fr/mandatureRegions2010/elus-champagneardenne.eelv.fr/wp-content/blogs.dir/121/files/2012/12/NDDL_par_Patrick_Warin.pdf.

74 "Pas de Nouveau Larzac à Notre-Dame-des-Landes," *Reuters,* 20 March 2018.

75 Mathieu Brier and Frédéric Scheiber, "Avec Armes et Barrage: en Forêt de Sivens, l'Arsenal de l'Agro-Industrie Impose sa Loi et son Barrage," *Revue Itinérante d'Enquête et de Critique Sociale* 9 (2015): 140–143.

of which the environmental and financial costs are very high, and benefiting agricultural practices that are a dead end for farmers and for society as a whole."[76] During the early hours of Sunday 26 October 2014, a violent confrontation between the protesters and the police broke out, when a stun grenade fired by a police officer killed 21-year-old botanist Rémi Fraisse.[77] In the month that followed Fraisse's death, thousands of people took part in marches against police violence and against the construction of the Sivens dam all over France.[78] Although the official plans for the dam were abandoned in January of 2015, the departmental council of Tarn eventually voted in favour of the construction of a new dam, half the size of the original one.[79]

For Mathieu Gervais, the resistance against the construction of the Sivens dam follows in the footsteps of the Larzac struggle, as both highlight the "importance of the figure of the farmer as one of resistance against the state."[80] And parallels between the two cases are easy to draw. Once again, a crowd of people gathered to protest against development plans designed to destroy an area they praised for its natural beauty and authenticity. Even more importantly, José Bové, one of the main figures of the Larzac struggle, was a participant in several of the demonstrations against both the Sivens dam, and those against the airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes.[81] His first encounter with the people of Notre-Dame-des-Landes took place in 1973, at the height of the Larzac struggle, and Bové felt the two communities had a shared past. With regards to the modern-day activists, however, he was also quick to note the differences, stating that each action group needs to the discover "the rules of the game on their own"[82], and that Notre-Dame-des-Landes would be the "laboratory of the 21st century, […] which would have to be different than that of the Larzac."[83] The protests against the construction of the Sivens dam, he argued, formed modern-day opportunities for directly concerned communities to take control of the public debate. and to create flows of civil society expertise that work horizontally, instead of merely top-down.[84]

76 "Présentation," *Collectif pour la Sauvegarde de la Zone Humide du TESTET*, www.collectif-testet.org/23+presentation.html.

77 Victoria Xardel and Aurélien Berlan, "Les Lueurs Sombres de la ZAD de Sivens: Extraits de Sans Aucune Retenue," *Mouvements* 84, no. 4 (2015): 131–137.

78 Philippe Subra, "De Notre-Dame-des-Landes à Bure, la Folle Décennie des 'Zones à Défendre' (2008–2017)," *Hérodote* 165 (2017): 11–30.

79 Christophe Sibertin-Blanc, "A Formal Analysis of the Interplay of Actors Involved in the Sivens Dam Project," *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 26, no. 3 (2018): 291–307.

80 Mathieu Gervais, "Le Rural," 75.

81 "Du Larzac au Barrage de Sivens: 40 Ans de Luttes Écologiques," *Le Figaro*, 27 October 2015.

82 "José Bové: 'Notre-Dame-des-Landes sera un vrai Laboratoire Foncier du XXIe Siècle,'" *Libération*, 18 February 2018.

83 Ibid.

84 "Comment Sortir, au Mieux, de la Crise à Sivens?," *L'Humanité*, 10 November 2014.

The strategies and spirit of the time that aided the Larzac farmers during the 1970s could serve as a source of inspiration for new activists, but merely copying the past and applying it to today's society would not suffice. Although an actor in a seemingly continuous kind of protest that began at the Larzac plateau and is still continuing, José Bové made it very clear that the activists at Notre-Dame-des-Landes and Sivens would have to find their own way.

Mathieu Gervais's description of the Sivens dam protesters as direct heirs of the peasant-led Larzac struggle, contains another major flaw. The farmers who lived near the proposed site of the dam were in fact supporters of the plans, which would create better irrigation for their lands, and not part of the activist groups opposing them. In March of 2015, for example, a group of about 130 local farmers blocked the activists from accessing the site.[85] If any comparison should be drawn between the protesters of the Larzac and those of the Sivens dam, it should be that both fought for the protection of a rural environment, as can be found in the work of Philippe Pelletier, for example.[86] While the Larzac struggle was rooted in, and in fact characterised by, the importance of the autonomy of the local community as the leaders of the movement, the Sivens dam protests depended largely on the support of external activists. Where the 103 peasants of the Larzac shared a collective identity and worked together as one relatively homogenous unit, the situation at the Sivens dam is much more complicated.[87] As one inhabitant of the region noted, "the *zadistes* [the activists occupying the *zone à défendre*] need to get out of our way, and not come and piss us off at our home."[88]

Missing the support of a large part of the local population, and thus unable to create "a great mobilisation of everyone," many of the activists at the Sivens dam felt increasingly demotivated. Or, to use the words of one young woman interviewed by the newspaper *Libération*, "the Larzac was another time. […] There is no more consciousness. People are lobotomised. They are not here, they are watching The Voice on

85 Brier and Scheiber, "Avec Armes et Barrage," 140–143.

86 Philippe Pelletier, "Sivens: the Removal of the French Territory by Means of Planning and Development," *Justice Spatiale | Spatial Justice* 7 (2015): 1–5.

87 The 103 local farmers of the Larzac struggle did also depend heavily on the creation of coalitions with a wide variety of external action groups ranging from the Occitan movement and antinuclear activism, to radical left and pacifist groups. It was the collaboration with the radical leftists and Maoists, however, that often caused tension during the early days of the struggle, as many of the farmers objected to the political and ideological views of these groups. Their involvement was occasionally seen as negatively impacting the farmers' autonomy to lead the struggle, and their frustration with this interference of external groups was at times similar to the annoyance of the locals at the Sivens dam with the zadistes.

88 "À Sivens, le Quotidien Toujours Explosif entre Pro et Anti-Barrage," *Libération*, 18 December 2014.

TV."[89] Although acknowledging the continued relevance of the Larzac as the imaged standard by which to judge or contextualise new movements, her words seem almost reminiscent of those of José Bové, urging the activists of Notre-Dame-des-Landes and Sivens to find their own ways of mobilising people. Where the breeding ground for the growth of nationwide support levels was still relatively fresh for the Larzac farmers, profiting from the wave of regionalist and anti-statists contention of the late 1960s and early 1970s, that specific part of the memory of the Larzac struggle is losing its resonant in today's society. As such, the use of the Larzac myth as a means of mobilising potential activists or of inscribing new protests as part of its legacy, has lost its practical use, and thus its attractiveness. Instead, the possibility of creating a link between the Sivens dam protests and the Larzac struggle, almost seems like a constraint rather than a resource. What we are left with, then, is a narrative that depicts the modern-day activists as grandchildren of the Larzac, rather masters of their own struggle.

While on the side of scholarly literature still a seemingly attractive symbol to describe modern-day protests, the memory of the Larzac seemed to be more of a hindrance than a resource to the activists at the Sivens dam. As mentioned before in this article, the overpowering legacy of some movements can also come with a series of constraints for newer generations of protesters. Missing a more direct link with the Larzac struggle, for example concerning the kinds of actors concerned or the role of regional identity, the memory of the Larzac no longer seems to mobilise the masses of people it used to. At the Sivens dam, the memory of the farmers exists in stark contrast with the opposition faced from precisely the local agricultural community. The Larzac is then considered to be merely a memory of the past, one that no longer translates to these new activist groups, who have their own battles to fight. While the Larzac still seemed a relevant point of reference for the case of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, as movement audiences are typically more receptive of a new movement narrative if it "echoes the basic outlines" of an already established one, this is not always true.[90] The case of the Sivens dam not only shows a shift between scholarly and activist understandings of the role of the legacy of the Larzac struggle as the prime example for virtually all locally-organised protests that followed it, but also between different sets of relatively similar movements.

89 "À Sivens, «Tout est Rasé, c'est Fini»," *Libération*, 25 September 2014.

90 David S. Meyer and Deana A. Rohlinger, "Big Books and Social Movements: A Myth of Ideas and Social Change," *Social Problems* 59, no. 1 (2012): 140.

The Myth of the Larzac Struggle as the Symbol of French Collective Action

This article set out to analyse the importance and the creation and reappropriation of collective memory, social imaginaries and myths in social movements. More precisely, it looked at the question of why and how certain movements create enough of a legacy, for it to remain resonant long after they themselves have ended. The collective memory of past struggles and forms of protest plays a vital role in the way that newer generations of activists position themselves, as part of larger narratives and action frames that offer both a source of inspiration as well as an opportunity to anchor themselves within larger pre-established waves of contention. The inheritance and reappropriation of specific memories, strategies, symbols and representations of reality forms a vital part of the work of many social movement activists. In order to study this process, the analysis of the case of the Larzac struggle, which took place between 1971–1981 but lives on in French society as the prominent grandmother of modern collective action, formed the foundation of this article.

As this article aimed to show, the creation and continued resonance of legendary myths of struggles such as that of the Larzac farmers as the grandmother of collective action depends both on the actions of involved activists themselves and their support networks, but also on the role played by external audiences long after the movement itself has died down. Outside engagement of the social movement audience, be that activists belonging to different movements, scholars or journalists, shaped the legacy of the Larzac struggle, and which parts of its story remain relevant as a means of understanding the present. Using the case of the Larzac, each with their own aims and attached meanings, they play a fundamental role in the creation of a social imaginaries of the struggle that moves past an understanding of the Larzac as a historical place of struggle, but rather as prime example of a kind of collective action in which modern activists are the direct heirs or grandchildren. One of the Larzac struggle's contemporaries, the Occitan regionalist movement, for example, did more than merely provide the Larzac farmers with a much larger audience and potential support network. As one of the first external movements to get involved and work together with the local community, the regionalist movement used the protests against the extension of the military camp as a way of linking their abstract ideological views on regional autonomy and identity, as well as internal colonialism, to a concrete real-life example. At the same time, their cooperation with the Occitan movement provided the Larzac farmers with the external support, resources and widespread attention they craved. The vision of the Larzac struggle as inherently Occitanist, although not without its critics, remains strong. Its representation as a symbol of the resistance of local communities against the centralising power of the French state continues to be attractive through its continued use in comparison to new cases, such as those of Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

One of the strengths of the Larzac case as a powerful symbol of collective action, is the fact that it was one of the few victorious struggles of its era, a fact celebrated and remembered not only on the plateau itself, but all over France. Even five decades later, the image of a small community persevering and ultimately winning against the dominant hegemonic power of the French state and political elite continues to inspire activists, and in turn be mobilised itself by people such as Patrick Warin. Warin linked the protests at Notre-Dame-des-Landes to those in the Larzac not merely because of its similarities in terms of movement organisation and aims, but also because the concept of the Larzac still manages to invoke the memory of this unlikely victory. This memory proved to be a powerful and persuasive tool that served not only to further motivate the activists themselves, but also as a warning to the state officials. What happened in the Larzac, he reasoned, could very well happen again, as the people of Notre-Dame-des-Landes fought the same continuous battle.

All of this is not to say, however, that the case of the Larzac can always easily be applied as the example or grandmother of all modern social movements that share some of its characteristics. Although highly attractive as a kind of cognitive map or even a shorthand to the analysis of these new movements, the case of the protests at the Sivens shows that the myth of the Larzac struggle is hardly a one-size-fits-all solution to understanding modern activism. To echo the words of José Bové, French society has seen some significant changes since the 1970s, and it is up to the modern activists to find their own strategies and ways of mobilising the masses in a way that appeals to the movement audiences of the twenty-first century. Although the resonance of the legacy of a case like the Larzac struggle remains strong, mostly on the side of the media and scholarly analyses, but also to a lesser extent amongst new generations of protesters, casting modern movement actors the direct inheritors, without paying attention to the specificities of each case, causes a kind of overgeneralisation that sells short the hard work of these new action groups in innovating and adapting old strategies, as well as coming up with their own. In this sense, the relevance of myths is something that not only changes based on the newer cases it is being applied to, but also part of a process that depends on the external audience that uses it, and its ability to achieve the goals of such an audience, be that to serve as a convenient shorthand to explain a long tradition of activism, or as a way of mobilising others as the inheritors of historic struggles.

As mentioned in the introduction, this article is not meant as a critique of the process of myth-making and the process of reappropriation in and of itself. On the side of activists, protest myths help provide ways of positioning themselves as part of larger narratives of collective action that speak to potential supporters, adversaries and the general public. On the side of journalists and scholars, myths such as that of the Larzac struggle provide a framework with which to structure the analyses of a wide variety of movements, as well as a way of gaining a kind of universality to be applied to similar cases and to connect them in ways that are easy to understand as they use

shared social imaginaries. So long as this imagery of the Larzac struggle prevails, there will still be new Larzacs presenting themselves, or being presented as, the grandchildren of that heroic first struggle. This article aimed to be a first step towards gaining a better understanding and consciousness of the ways in which myths allow for specific movements to become somewhat detached from their original actors and aims, but instead are created and shaped by those who appropriate them. In doing so, the field of social movement studies will gain a better insight into the ways in which the existence of such myth shapes our understanding not just of the movements that are being mythicised, but also the newer cases to which they are then applied.

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LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

REVUE D'ÉTUDES OUVRIÈRES CANADIENNES

JOURNAL OF CANADIAN LABOUR STUDIES

VOLUME 92 (FALL/ AUTOMNE 2023)

INCLUDING / COMPRENANT

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