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The Cosmopolitan Figuration: Historicizing Reflexive Modernization

Daniel Levy

State University of New York – Stony Brook

From Modernity to Modernization

Rethinking modernity has been the immanent challenge of sociological theory during the last three decades. By introducing the phenomenon of ‘Second Modernity,’ Ulrich Beck has rendered our continuous engagement with the basic premises of modernity into an explicit enterprise and provided the vision, necessary to understand how reflexive modernization is working.¹ However, attempts to delineate a distinctive era run the risk of simply being juxtaposed to ‘First Modernity.’ Like other theorists before him, Beck’s analysis of a new type of (second) modernity is at peril to de-historicize the transition from one epoch to a new one by addressing it in terms of a rupture. Initially this helps to see the contours of a new era, but eventually abstracting from the diachronic renders epochal transitions into rigid schemes. As a result, sociologists have often tended to naturalize and subsequently strip certain terms (such as, for example, the nation-state or legal-rational legitimacy) from their historical origins and our sense of their malleability. We experience them as ‘natural’ to the degree that we ignore their historical roots, as well as the cultural conditions and political contingencies of their current incarnation. Modernity is perceived in a way that indicates that people have forgotten what the modernizing process consists of.

It is instructive to take a brief look at how the founding fathers of sociology conceptualized the emergence of modernity. The classics ‘invented’ tradition to

¹ This is not the place to list the various elaborations and advances his work has spanned. Suffice to say here, that his ideas on reflexive modernization have generated a great deal of attention. Starting with the seminal U. Beck, S. Lash & A. Giddens *Reflexive Modernization: politics, tradition, and aesthetics in the modern social order* Stanford 1994. And more recently, a special issue dedicated to various applications of the concept (*Theory, Culture & Society* 2003 Vol. 20(2)).

distinguish emerging societal, economic and political forms in modernity. Their conceptual efforts resulted in categorical juxtapositions, such as ‘Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft,’ being part of a broader separation expressed in the differentiation of tradition and modernity. Durkheim, among others, articulated this as a binaric opposition in his ideas about the division of labor.² Operating with teleological assumptions about the trajectories of modern society, actual historical trends – such as for instance secularization - were collapsed into categorical variables and functional equivalents of solidarity mechanisms, providing them with a causal force and a timeless quality.³

The point here is not to add another polemic against an already maligned structural functionalism, but to reflect about comparable risks when we attempt to sketch the contours of an epochal transition. Scholars studying epochal changes are facing the danger of reifying a phenomenon by rendering what is a process into a status. This is frequently accompanied by a sociological retreat from the past into the present.⁴ Process-reduction is particularly salient when engaging in ‘Zeitdiagnose,’ of the kind that both the earlier modernists as well as Beck are involved in. The former, frequently substituted history with linearity, stipulated a singular (or necessary) path toward development, rather than the co-existence of plural forms of modernization. To avoid some of these pitfalls, we need to understand not only how Second Modernity is distinguished from First Modernity, but also how they are related and the various transformations that reflexive modernization itself has been undergoing. We, therefore, need to historicize rather than categorize the cosmopolitan figurations that Beck is directing our attention to in his recent work.

Accordingly, his entwined chronology of reflexive modernization can be described in two broad theoretical strokes. One goes back to the 1980s and the notion of ‘Risk Society,’ with its unanticipated side-effects. Here uncertainty takes center stage and with it a transformation of the reflexive (from reflection to reflex). Scott Lash reiterates

² Durkheim, E. *The Division of Labor in Society* New York 1964.

³ Statistical analysis, to name a prominent methodology, regularly surrenders a process oriented approach to one that is limited to snapshots. This process reduction is often a function of measurability and access to data. Akin to the winning T-shirt slogan at a meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion: “The N’s Justify the Means“

⁴ Elias, N. “The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1987 4(2-3), S. 223-247

the view that reflexivity not reflection is the defining moment of Second Modernity.⁵ This strikes me as static and deterministic at once. Uncertainty is not synonymous with a shift from reflection to reflexivity, nor is reflection necessarily marginal during an epochal transition marked by a high degree of uncertainty. Uncertainty triggers different responses. I would like to suggest a process in which reflections not reflexivity have become a central feature of the last two decades. It is precisely the pervasive uncertainty about the future, I argue, which has propelled a self-conscious (i.e. reflective) preoccupation with the past to the forefront of political-cultural discourse. Collective memory studies provide a valuable tool-kit to capture the features of a new type of reflexivity that contributes to the cosmopolitization of different life spheres.

The second part of this essay will provide a discussion and historical overview of this development, building on Beck's 'cosmopolitan turn,' that is, the theoretical works that have evolved during the last decade.⁶ The focus is on various facets of globality, that is, the cultural, social, economic and political consequences of growing interdependencies. Cosmopolitanism is here perceived as "a methodological concept that helps to overcome methodological nationalism and to build a frame of reference to analyze the new social conflicts, dynamics and structures",⁷ that characterize a world of cosmopolitan interdependencies penetrating into the local. The global and the local are not anti-thetical categories but are mutually constitutive. According to Beck, "Globalization' is a non-linear, dialectic process in which the global and the local do not exist as cultural polarities but as combined and mutually implicating principles. These processes involve not only interconnections across boundaries, but transform the quality of the social and the political *inside* nation-state societies. This is what I define as 'cosmopolitanization': cosmopolitanization means *internalized* globalization, globalization *from within* the national societies. This transforms everyday consciousness and identities significantly. Issues of global concern are becoming part of the everyday local experiences and the 'moral life-worlds' of the people... So it rejects the dominant opposition between cosmopolitans and locals as well: there is no cosmopolitanism

⁵ Lash, S. "Reflexivity as Non-linearity" *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2003 20(2), S. 49-57.

⁶ Beck, U. "The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity", *British Journal of Sociology* 2000 51(1): 79-106. Beck, U. "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies" *Theory, Culture & Society* 2002b 19 (1-2): 17-44; and Beck, U. *Der Kosmopolitische Blick* Frankfurt (forthcoming).

without localism.”⁸ By taking this ‘cosmopolitan turn,’ Beck has skirted the dangers of process reduction and his recent work carries important methodological implications for a process-oriented sociology that this essay seeks to develop. On this view, development is no longer perceived in terms of a *Bruch* (rupture) but as *Umbruch* (transformation). One objective of this essay then is to elaborate on the necessity to historicize developments (of modernization), rather than delineate categories (of modernity).

Figurating Beck

In order to historicize how reflexive modernization shapes the ongoing formation of Second Modernity, I propose to join Beck’s methodology of cosmopolitization with the figurational approach of Norbert Elias.⁹ The affinities between them have not been sufficiently addressed.¹⁰ Elias rejects any kind of self-sustaining logic of development. Instead he focuses on the historical and institutional conditions through which cultural and political claims are established as foundational meaning systems. Their respective dominance is a function of changing figurations. His figurational sociology is predicated on the assumption that claims of legitimacy are the successful product of a particular development of interdependencies. Those interdependencies cannot be reduced to, say, independent variables, but always remain the very object of our investigations. Figurations are webs of interdependence, which tie individuals together and shape their collective motives for action. Individuals are “people who, through their basic dispositions and inclinations, are directed towards and linked with each other in most diverse ways. These people make up webs of interdependence or figurations of many kinds, characterized by power balances of many sorts, such as families, schools, towns, social strata, or states.”¹¹ No less important, these figurations frequently mutate into new

⁷ Beck, U. 2002b S. 18.

⁸ Ibid: 17-19

⁹ One of the few explicit examples that points to Elias’s relevance for scholars of globalization is Stephen Mennell Mennell. S. “The Globalization of Human Society as a Very Long-term Social Process: Elias’s Theory” in Featherstone, M. *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* London. 1990. S. 359-372

¹⁰ Thus, for instance, Elias’ critique of the juxtaposition of ,we’ and ,I’, and Beck’s observation of a historical demise of the distinction of structure and agency in the process of reflexive modernization, still await a systematic exposition.

¹¹ Elias, N. *What is Sociology?* London 1978: S. 15.

forms. Thus villages have become cities, tribes can turn into states, and nation-states dissolve into subnational (e.g. regions) or supranational (e.g. European Union) units.

Elias's figurational approach revolves around historical processes that led to the formation of the state. His treatment of state formation processes differs from conventional perspectives in the study of nationalism in that he focuses on the particular cultural traits that emerge as a result of distinct structural conditions. During state formation processes human figurations assume the quality of specific cultural matrices, which in turn shape the relational qualities of a society and the way it perceives of itself collectively. Elias replaces the conventional developmental narrative, which pays little attention, if at all, to the cultural specificity of nation formation, with an attempt to indicate the relationship between certain structural characteristics and the formation of a national habitus.

His methodological deliberations on historical processes seem particularly beneficial for the study of epochal change and continuously changing figurations. Figurations form by way of mixing old and new elements. Hence the persistence of older structures (and norms) cannot be interpreted as a mere anachronism (as theorists of first modernity did with ethnicity, religion etc.). It is thus neither a matter of the old emperor dressing up in new cloth, nor that of a new emperor in old cloth. To grasp, both the cultural specific and its relation to changing webs of interdependencies, that is the emergence of a cosmopolitan figuration, I propose to think about the relationship of First and Second Modernity in terms of a 'continuum of changes.'¹² This notion entails a transformative element and joins it with a certain continuity. It suggests that meaningful political-cultural premises are informed by a significant past as well as by a present that is being transformed. On this view, collective modes of identification and the claims that are perceived as legitimate may change over time, however, the respective meanings those claims carry, remain linked 'by a long continuum of changes.'

Cosmopolitan Memories: The Missing Link

The affinity between Elias's figurational approach and Beck's thoughts about a cosmopolitanized Second Modernity in terms of such a continuum of changes, is best

illustrated by pointing to the crucial role collective memory is playing for processes of reflexive modernization. According to Elias the past shapes the present order and the legitimacy of claims, “implicitly as one of its conditions, explicitly through the picture, which living generations carry of the past of their country; it (the past) has, like the future, the character and the function of the present. As determinants of behavior the past, presence and future operate together.”¹³ The methodological insight from Elias’s figurational approach, is that we cannot look at the political culture of a society from a presentist perspective. Both in the sense of focusing merely on the present as well as projecting current sensibilities back into history.

Thus for example, most sociological approaches continue to be pervaded with a fixed understanding of the nation-state that it is rarely remarked upon.¹⁴ It is a conception that goes back to sociology’s birth amidst the 19th century formation of nation-states. Ironically, the territorial conception of national culture – the idea of culture as ‘rooted’ – was itself a reaction to the enormous changes that were going on as that century turned into the 20th. It was a conscious attempt to provide a solution to the ‘uprooting’ of local cultures that the formation of nation states necessarily involved. Sociology understood the new symbols and common values above all as means of integration into a new unity. The triumph of this perspective can be seen in the way the nation state has ceased to appear as a project and a construct and has become instead widely regarded as something natural. Elias’s own empirical attention was directed at the origins and developments of state formation and a concomitant national habitus.

At the beginning of the 21st century the spatially rooted understanding of culture is being challenged. Accordingly, the objective of this essay is to identify how the ‘continuum of changes’ is related to the uncoupling of nation and state in the context of the emergence of cosmopolitan memories.¹⁵ By cosmopolitan memories we are referring to a process that shifts attention away from the territorialized nation-state framework that is commonly associated with the notion of collective memory. Rather than presuppose

¹² Elias, N. *Time: An Essay* Oxford 1992. S. 46.

¹³ Elias, N. *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* Frankfurt 1989. S. 459.

¹⁴ Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago 1999.

the congruity of nation, territory and polity, cosmopolitan memories are based on and contribute to nation-transcending idioms, spanning territorial and linguistic borders. The conventional concept of collective memory is nationally bounded. We argue that this ‘national container’ is slowly being cracked. Distinctive national and ethnic memories are not erased but transformed. They continue to exist, but globalization processes also imply that different national memories are subjected to a common patterning. They begin to develop in accord with common rhythms and periodizations. But in each case, the common elements combine with pre-existing elements to form something new. In each case, the new, global narrative has to be reconciled with the old, national narratives, and the result is always distinctive. Global and local (that is the culturally specific) values are mutually constitutive. How exactly we draw the conceptual and empirical boundaries of the local (i.e. nationally, regionally etc.) can only be determined through historical inquiry.

Cosmopolitan Figurations and the Fragmentation of the Nation-State

Elias looked into the transformation from highly decentralized and fragmented societies into centralized and monopolizing states. “Which dynamics of human interdependencies push toward the integration of ever larger areas and a relatively stable and centralized government apparatus?”¹⁶ For him, the modern age was characterized by a “certain level of monopolization. [...] It is only with the emergence of this continuing monopoly of the central authority and this specialized apparatus for ruling that dominions take on the character of ‘states’”.¹⁷ This development, in turn, is a function of changing figurations. “The tendency of monopolies, e.g. the monopoly of force or taxation, to turn from “private” into “public” or “state” monopolies, is nothing other than a function of social interdependence.”¹⁸

In the global age, scholars of reflexive modernization are facing a different set of questions related to a reverse trend, marked by a loss of nation-state sovereignty. What

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the concept of ‘cosmopolitan memory’ see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory” *European Journal of Social Theory* 2002 5(1) S. 87-106.

¹⁶ Goudsblom, J. and S. Menell (eds). *The Norbert Elias Reader* Oxford 1998 S. 42-43.

¹⁷ Elias, N. *The Civilizing Process* Oxford 1994 S. 345

¹⁸ *Ibid*: 351

happens if we think of interdependencies outside the national container? Which forms of interdependence can explain this decrease in monopolization? How did the civilizing process become a source for fragmentation rather than centralization of state-society relations? What are the effects of this civilizing dynamic on the cosmopolitization of nation-states? The thesis here is that the civilizing process, which is marked, among others things, by a pacification of violence, is no longer concerned with the monopolization of various modes of legitimacy (over force, taxation etc.), that is state formation. Instead, it is a process that is reconfiguring the state. If the civilizing process of First Modernity was leading to a monopolization of state power, cosmopolitan figurations in Second Modernity are circumscribing conceptions of state autonomy and transposing domestic interdependencies to a global realm. Rather than presuppose the congruity of nation, territory and polity, the civilizing idiom of Second Modernity, is circumscribed by the moral authority of human rights.

The historical origins of this process can be located through the changing representations of the Holocaust. They have become a central political-cultural symbol facilitating the emergence of cosmopolitan memories.¹⁹ The choice of the Holocaust is not arbitrary. The Holocaust, or rather the representations that produce shared memories, is a paradigmatic case for the relation of memory and modernity. Modernity, until recently one of the primary analytic and normative frameworks for intellectual self-understanding is itself questioned through memories of the Holocaust.²⁰ It is precisely the abstract nature of ‘good and evil’ symbolizing the Holocaust, which contributes to the extra-territorial quality of cosmopolitan memory. Moreover, the Holocaust constitutes an

¹⁹ It should be noted that the salience of cosmopolitan memories is, for the most part, related to the European experience. Even though the concept is representative for wider developments, it is not necessarily universal. Elias cautions us that “Where the investigation of processes as such constitutes the focus of the research task, however, the universals acquire a different cognitive status and value than is the case where timeless law-like regularities stand in the center. In the latter case, the discovery of universals is the highest research aim, while in the case of process models it constitutes only an auxiliary tool for the construction of process models [...] Moreover, in the case of process universals, the researchers must be certain that they are genuine universals, that they refer to the least differentiated as well as to the most differentiated societies. General Law-like regularities or typologies abstracted from the researcher’s observations of his own society and presented as universals are in that case not of much use.” Goudsblom, J. and S. Mennell (eds). *The Norbert Elias Reader* Oxford 1998 S. 178-179.

²⁰ For a detailed and comparative analysis of the historical process see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*. Frankfurt 2001.

epochal turning point, frequently referred to as a civilizational break.²¹ It has, therefore, the potential of challenging basic national assumptions (like sovereign law in its own territory) and creating a cosmopolitanized public and political space that reinforces moral interdependencies.

Elsewhere, we have described the diffusion of human rights norms during the last six decades as the distillation of changing modes of Holocaust memory.²² It is one way in which the memory of the Holocaust has been ingrained in institutions. We consider the recent proliferation of human rights ideas as a new form of cosmopolitanism, exemplifying a dynamic through which global concerns become part of local experiences. In contrast to the universalist view of the Enlightenment, we view cosmopolitanism as a process in which universalism and particularism are no longer exclusive “either-or” categories but instead a co-existing pair. The choice of “cosmopolitanism” as a new moral and political idiom in this connection is not arbitrary. It relates to political and intellectual forms predating the era of the nation-state. And it resurfaces at a time when the basic premises of the nation-state are challenged and the shape of its sovereignty is being transformed.

It should be noted that comparable uncertainties also marked the emergence of the modern nation-state at the end of the 19th century.²³ It depended on a process by which existing societies used representations to turn themselves into new wholes that would act immediately upon people’s feelings, and upon which they could base their identities -- in short, to make them into group that individuals could identify with and counter the uncertainties that urbanization and other aspects of modernization entailed. Uncertainties were met with heroic narratives of nationhood that projected a new secularized teleology into the future of society.²⁴ At the end of the 20th century the situation has been reversed.

²¹ According to Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s study of the ‘Dialectics of Enlightenment’ (1944), barbarism is an immanent quality of modernity, rather than its corruption. On their view, civilizational ruptures inhere, at least potentially, in the processes of rationalization and bureaucratization that characterize modernity. It is the breakdown of reflexivity within modernity that facilitates the destructive potential of modernity.

²² Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. “The Institutionalization Of Cosmopolitan Morality: The Holocaust And Human Rights” *Journal of Human Rights* (forthcoming).

²³ The founding fathers of sociology were preoccupied with the uprooting effects of industrialization. A good example is Durkheim’s focus on different forms of solidarity. Especially his rhetorical strategy to attach the label of organic, with its positive connotations, to modern forms of solidarity and mechanical to traditional ones, is indicative for this trend.

²⁴ Anderson, B. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London 1983

With an abundance of uncertainties marking world risk society, critical memories about nationhood have proliferated. During the last two decades there has been a pervasive trend of national introspection, leading numerous countries to ‘come to terms with their past.’ Different political and moral entrepreneurs, such as human rights activists, non-governmental organizations and international NGOs cosmopolitanize statehood, from within and outside the state, through raising memories of past injustices. They do so by directing public attention to human rights abuses and violations of international norms, refocusing our attention away from the territorially caged assumptions of nation-state monopolies toward cosmopolitanized forms of legitimacy that crystallize through the moral-political prism of human rights. This cosmopolitan figuration emerges at a particular historical juncture of global interdependencies and in response to how the nation is assessed in light of particular historical memories.

The fact that these memories are no longer beholden exclusively to the idea of the nation-state is of central importance. The key interpretive issue here is the transition from heroic nation-states to a form of statehood that establishes internal and external legitimacy through its support for skeptical narratives. Those post-heroic manifestations of statehood are predicated on a critical engagement with own past injustices, manifested, among other things, in the proliferation of historical commissions and the active role human rights organizations occupy in public debates about usable pasts. ‘Inventions of Nationhood’ during the 19th century were based on heroic conceptions and formative myths that were transmitted by ‘traditional’ and ‘exemplary’ forms of narrativity.²⁵ In contrast hereto, the Holocaust is inscribed into the historical awareness of West-European nations (and increasingly also in Eastern Europe) during the last quarter of the 20th century, a period that is characterized by a self-critical narrative of their national past. While traditional and exemplary narratives deploy historical events to promote foundational myth, the critical narrative emphasizes events that focus on past injustices of one’s own nation. Cosmopolitanized memories thus evolve in the context of remembered continuities that view the past of the nation through its willingness to come to terms with injustices committed in its name.

²⁵ Rüsen, Jörn. “Die vier Typen historischen Erzählens” In *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*. Reinhardt Koselleck and Jörn Rüsen. (Hg.) München 1982 S. 514-606.

Another transformation of nation-state monopolization relates to the fragmentation of memory and its privatization. This process manifests itself in a changing relationship of memory and history. During the last two decades we can observe the emergence of ‘memory history’ (*Erinnerungsgeschichte*).²⁶ The difference to conventional historical narratives is instructive. History is a particularized idea of temporal sequences articulating some form of (national) development. Memory, on the other hand, represents a co-existence of simultaneous time transcending multitude of pasts. (National) history corresponds to the telos of modernity (as a kind of secularized religion, or civic religion). Memory dissolves this sequence, which is a constitutive part of history. Memory implies the simultaneity of phenomenon and a multitude of pasts.

‘Memory history’ is a particular mnemonic mode which moves away from a state supported (and state supporting) national history. The previous (attempted) monopoly by the state to shape collective pasts, has given way to a fragmentation of memories carried by private, individual, scientific, ethnic and religious agents. To be sure, the state continues to exercise an important role in how we remember its history, but it is now sharing the field of meaning production with a host of other players. Modes of collective memory are being cosmopolitanized and exist on supra- and subnational levels. Current attempts to Europeanize the memory (and historiography) of expulsions in the 20th century or the proliferation of regional and local (heritage) memories, to give but two examples, are indicative of these trends. The formation of cosmopolitan memories does not eliminate the national perspective, but renders nationhood into one of several options of collective identification. As the state loses its privileged command over the production of collective values (e.g. nationalism), the cosmopolitization of modernity becomes politically and culturally consequential.

What matters for the current argument is that the ‘long continuum of changes’ and a civilizing process predicated on changing figurations of interdependencies are no longer exclusively tied with the formation of the nation-state but with its transformation. It also raises the theoretical injunction of how the fragmentation of memories relates to Elias’s central dynamic, the monopolization by the state. In contrast to Elias’s focus on nation-

²⁶ For a detailed account of the distinction between ‘Erinnerungsgeschichte’ and ‘Nationalgeschichte’, see Dan Diner’s *Gedächtniszeiten. Über Jüdische und andere Geschichten* München 2003.

state formation, the cosmopolitization of statehood constitutes a central dimension of reflexive modernization. As noted above, the transformation of the nation-state is particularly visible in the case of the European Union, where the Holocaust represents a civilizational break of modernity and the dividing line to barbarity.²⁷ A widespread skepticism toward nationalism, by large parts of society but also by the state itself, is the result. This development manifests itself both domestically and internationally and it is driven by both exogeneous and endogeneous factors.

Domestically, we observe a de-coupling of nation and state. Obviously, nationalism is not withering away, not even in Europe. However, it is no longer synonymous with the legitimating labor of and for the state. On the contrary, national tropes are frequently directed against the state. What looks like a contradiction between rising nationalism and declining nation-state legitimacy, is only a paradox when we view nationalism in 19th century terms. Instead we are observing a new nationalism related to some of the aforementioned processes of cosmopolitization. “The new nationalism is above all nationalism of social discontent and not of state patriotism. What is at stake is less a question of ideology than identity and social resources...whatever form it [nationalism] takes, it cannot easily be harnessed for the purpose of the legitimation of state power. Nationalism can thus be seen as a product of the internal crisis of the state in the age of globalization.”²⁸ Cultural assumptions rather than *raison d’etat* characterize many of the neo-nationalist parties as well as some of the recent notions used to explain international relations.

The international politics of cosmopolitanized states are conditioned by their embeddedness in a web of global and juridical interdependencies rather than considerations of the congruence of nation and state. Cosmopolitanized states are embedded in two coexisting processes: one focuses on the aforementioned propensity for

²⁷ Whether barbarism constitutes a separate breakdown of civilization or whether it is very much part of modern rationalization and bureaucratization itself, has produced a lively theoretical debate. Rather than viewing the Holocaust as a deviation from an emancipatory path, barbarism and civilizational breaks are perceived as inherent qualities, and for some even as inevitable outcomes of modernity and Enlightenment. Zygmunt Bauman’s arguments in his book “Holocaust and Modernity” (1989) express a radicalization of the aforementioned modernity equals barbarization thesis. For Bauman, the Holocaust is no longer a perversion of the principles of rationality, but rather its direct outcome insofar as it provides the necessary logistics for its execution.

²⁸ Delanty, Gerard. *Citizenship in a global age* Buckingham 2000 S. 95-96.

self-conscious interrogations of past human rights violations; the other relates to a juridification of political affairs and the legitimacy international legal idioms confer upon domestic politics. The jurisgenerative impact these legitimating human rights ideals have on the juridification of domestic politics and a judicialization of international politics are by now a permanent feature of global politics. Examples for the proliferation of human rights laws and the new legalism abound. Suffice to say here, that this new International Law underscores the transition from the age of nationalism to the global age. “Just as the prior international legal regime, premised on state sovereignty and self-determination, was associated with the growth of modern nationalism, the new legal developments of the emergent humanitarian law regime are associated with the contemporary phenomena of political transition and globalization.”²⁹

This is not an inevitable process nor are all states equally affected by it. The saliency of human rights and their transformative impact depends on a variety of factors inside and outside the state. Adopting cosmopolitan values and the institutionalization of transnational legal practices, is highly path-dependent. That is to say, the uneven diffusion of human rights practices is, among other things, also the result of how past injustices are remembered and negotiated in the context of a specific national culture. ‘Memory history’ is that process through which the respective role of a (political) collectivity is articulated and becomes a self-conscious project. It is, in other words, a reflexive process. Through memory a political community validates, challenges and reproduces itself. As much as the modern nation-state of the late 19th and early 20th century was the result of growing economic and socio-cultural interdependencies, the cosmopolitan figuration in the 21st century is mainly propelled by the institutionalization of political and moral interdependencies and a growing public (and reflexive) awareness about those changes. The importance of memory and the reflexive nature of how collectivities and individuals comes to terms with their past is a key factor in the process of reflexive modernization.

²⁹ Teitel, R. “Humanity’s Law: Rule of Law for the New Global Politics” *Cornell International Law Journal* 2002 Vol 35(2) S. 370.

Conclusion

In this essay I have suggested to move away from categorical distinctions and instead, historicize the emerging features of a new global era by focusing on processes of reflexive modernization rather than demarcate the features of a distinct modernity. For those of us who study transformations of such scale, Ulrich Beck continues to be a stimulant for new ideas. It was Schumpeter who said: “In every scientific venture, the thing that comes first is Vision. That is to say, before embarking upon analytic work of any kind we must first single out the set of phenomena we wish to investigate, and acquire ‘intuitively’ a preliminary notion of how they hang together or, in other words, of what appear from our standpoint to be their fundamental properties. [...] In other words, analytic effort is of necessity preceded by a pre-analytic cognitive act that supplies the raw material for the analytic effort.”³⁰ Beck’s attempts to break out of methodological nationalism constitute such a vision. His theoretical suggestions provide ample foundations to address how the process of reflexive modernization is unfolding.

The introduction of collective memory studies to explore epochal transitions, and the emergence of cosmopolitanized memories in particular provide us with a diagnostic capacity that facilitates an ongoing reflection about global interdependencies. It allows us to historicize the intensification of interdependencies beyond the national pale, rather than stipulate them as static occurrences or as part of a universal development. Here the elective affinity between the relational approaches of Elias and Beck is coming to the fore: the former sees interdependencies as a basic sociological principle, the latter directs our attention to the growing recognition of interdependencies in global politics and culture as primary mechanism of reflexive modernization. They are mutually reinforcing. Beck’s analysis of interdependencies is benefiting from a process-oriented approach. And Elias’s state-centered figurational framework, gains from Beck’s insights into the fragmentation of state power and its ongoing cosmopolitization. Elias focuses on the formation of a national habitus. Beck, on the other hand, recognizes how emerging

³⁰ Schumpeter, J. *History of Economic Analysis* London 1986 S. 561-562, 41.

cosmopolitan figurations are not becoming second nature, but rather exist as thin attachments that are continuously negotiated and contested.³¹

Beck's differentiated vision, stripping us from certainties and the allegedly unproblematic attachments we often tend to associate with times past, is occasionally met with perplexity. "It is interesting to note that vision of this kind not only must precede historically the emergence of analytic effort in any field but also may re-enter the history of every established science each time somebody teaches us to *see* things in a light of which the source is not to be found in the facts, methods, and results of the preexisting state of science."³² It is this visionary element that sets Beck apart. He is like a navigator through a stormy sea, dropping us off islands we thought we knew. As we go from one to the other, we come to understand that they are not only discrete places, but that our understanding of their common features is a function of the road we travel. We realize that it is not so much the destination that matters but the journey itself.

³¹ Paradoxically, so-called Identity politics are a weak foundation for identification because they are frequently based on self-conscious efforts rather than on internalized constraints.

³² Ibid: 41

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