Covid-19 as an Immune Event. Multiple Irritation Scenarios beyond Western Modernizations

Covid-19 como evento inmune. Múltiples escenarios de irritación más allá de las modernizaciones occidentales

Gerhard Preyer[*]
Reuss-Markus Krausse[**]

ABSTRACT

This contribution formulates theses on the ongoing interpretation of the self-irritation of societal communication and membership in social systems that are triggered by the observable pandemic. The article reconceptualizes immune events of societal communication from a sociological membership point of view. This is a feature of the continuation of the third research program of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt) in sociological theory. Based on the Covid-19 virus as an immune event, five theses are put forward that address relevant aspects of contemporary society. They concern: 1) the criticism of the traditional semantics of the concept of "crisis" and its replacement by the immune events of membership systems; 2) the global solution to the virus problem that cannot be expected and what follows from it; 3) the consequences of the different solutions of the virus problem, especially for Germany; 4) the struggle of nation-states regarding the availability of

RESUMEN

La presente contribución formula una serie de tesis sobre la interpretación, aún en curso, de la autoirritación de la comunicación social y la membresía en sistemas sociales desencadenadas por la pandemia observada. Reconceptualiza eventos inmunes de comunicación social partiendo de la membresía sociológica. Esto es una característica de la continuación del tercer programa de investigación de múltiples modernidades (Eisenstadt) en la teoría sociológica. Con base en el virus Covid-19 como evento inmune, se presentan cinco tesis que tratan aspectos relevantes de la sociedad contemporánea. Éstos son: 1) la crítica a la semántica tradicional del concepto de "crisis" y su sustitución por los eventos inmunes de los sistemas de membresía; 2) la solución global al problema del virus que no puede esperarse y las conclusiones que proceden; 3) las consecuencias de las distintas soluciones al problema del virus, especialmente en Alemania; 4) la lucha de los Estados nación

[*] University of Frankfurt am Main, Germany. E-mail: <preyer@em.uni-frankfurt.de>.

[**] Goethe University, Germany. E-mail: <reuss-markus.krausse@gmx.de>.

the vaccine; and 5) the consequence for the sociology of membership, as well as the function of protest communication. The conclusion and the outlook address fundamental problems that sociological theory should take into account. It is central to point out that without limited negations (immune events) social evolution cannot be restabilized.

Keywords: multiple modernities; glocalization; Covid-19; contemporary sociology; self-observation; societal communication, membership sociology; membership order.

para obtener la vacuna, y 5) las consecuencias para la sociología de la membresía y la función de la comunicación de protesta la conclusión y la perspectiva tratan problemas fundamentales que la teoría sociológica debe considerar. Es indispensable señalar que sin negaciones limitadas (eventos inmunes) no se puede reestabilizar la evolución social.

Palabras clave: múltiples modernidades; glocalización; Covid-19; sociología contemporánea; autoobservación; comunicación social; sociología de la membresía; orden de membresía.

Follow the change!
Chinese proverb

Introduction

1. Time dimension. What we lack in social systems is clarity. The events are familiar to us mainly through broadcast media, *e.g.* writing, printing and mass media. Our knowledge acquisition is also subjected to a memory set to forget, as well as the temporalization of this memory and the ordering of events in the time dimension. As members of social systems, we cannot dispose of them.

Even if there is some evidence for it, glocalized societies are not in a multi-crisis scenario. (The term "glocalization" is introduced by Robertson, 1995: 25-44.) They are further into modernization, leading to the change of previous achievements of Western modernizations, which, triggered by continuous irritations in societal communication, shows that a variety of different models replaces Western modernity with its claim of validity as a world system.[1] The Covid-19 pandemic affected societal interaction in different societies on different continents at the same time.

In late 2019 and early 2020, as Covid-19 began, various programs and measures gradually began to be implemented in many states in order to control the spread of the disease, to track it, to keep the supply of (especially medical) necessities stable, and to protect pop-

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[1] On the concept of irritation: 1.1., in this text.

ulation groups. The measures included, for example, travel restrictions, company closures, and movement restrictions that affected the organization of societal communication. Social interaction was replaced by media communication where possible, for example via video conferences. Many instances were restricted to membership; mass events were largely canceled. Some industries in the economic system were restricted.

A year before the September 11th, 2001 fundamentalist terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, a few months before the financial crisis of 2008, a month before the outbreak of the virus Covid-19 and its spread in 2020, one would not have expected these events. It is natural to retroactively seek clues that might have constituted a warning. But there is no self-evident flow of time from these assumed events to the one afterward, for example, of September 11th and whatever follows from it, for the international political system. This points to the time dimension as the regulatory framework of action and communication and its self-observation, which the members of social systems cannot negate. Under the restriction of the time dimension, dealing with uncertainty becomes more difficult. Uncertainty as to the indeterminate nature of the future present is inevitable, and certainty always eludes the perspective of the present future. This difference may be slight, but it is more than zero in any case. Uncertainty spreads and cannot be compensated by rational decisions and planning.

The members of social systems are oriented to their present future and have to deal with occurring differences of future presences in the present. This forces the membership systems to make choices that are not self-evident but require connecting rationalities that are also not self-evident in time. It is to be acknowledged that with the assumption of different system perspectives, prognoses about the course of societal communication, which also includes, for example, wars and the economic competition on the market of the economic and scientific system, are not possible.

2. Structure of the article. Since the 1990s, the project and the journal *ProtoSociology* have carried out several projects on the sociology of contemporary societies and the structural evolution of membership orders.[2] The research program of the multiple modernities of Eisenstadt (2002) and its continuation, for example, by Bokser-Liwerant (2016: 177-205), Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Miriam Ben-Rafael (2009), Ben-Rafael and Sternberg (2016), Marangudakis (2016), Preyer and Sussman (2016a), and Roniger (2016: 122-148) were of particular relevance. These works initiated a re-systematization of the restructuring of sociological theory since the turn of the millennium (Preyer and Krausse, 2020a) and the turn from the second to the third research program of multiple modernities we are within and beyond (Preyer and Sussman, 2016b: 1-29; Preyer and Krausse, 2020b: 69-114). The research program has since continued into a sociology of the Next Society (Preyer and Krausse, 2020a).

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[2]   See the following publications: Preyer, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c.

However, it is worth mentioning an oddity of conceptualization not only among journalists but also among sociologists. This is striking from the perspective of the German academic situation. It remains to be seen to what extent this also applies to the sociological communities, for example, in the United States of America. These are the two terms of the "splitting" of society worldwide and "diversity." The first is not a sociological term but rhetoric of the welfare state. The first question a sociologist asks is about social stratification in society as an equality-inequality order. The second term has probably migrated from biology into sociology. As sociologists, we do not need to rack our brains over the systematizations of biologists' subject matter. But it is obvious to ask how a biologist reconciles the concept of diversity as species variety with Darwin's theory of evolution. For this theory, there are no species as entities and therefore no biodiversity. Species are no more than a contingent evolutionary reflex.

Our contribution to this issue formulates *theses* on the ongoing interpretation of the self-irritation of societal communication and membership in social systems triggered by the observable pandemic. The article begins with an introductory note on the approach taken and its correction to traditional sociological terminology. It addresses the concept of crisis, the theoretical approach of membership sociology, and the third research program of multiple modernities. The five theses focus on the dimensions of analysis of the observation and combat of Covid-19, which is a self-observation and irritation of the members and participants of communication systems. The theses are focused on irritation and immune events of membership systems as social systems. The *first* thesis makes a correction to the definition of contemporary society of the concept of crisis, which is widespread not only among sociologists but also in the mass media. This refers to the function and role of the changed self-observation of societal communication by the mass media. Of interest here is the correction of the claims of the Western welfare state and the failure of the political integration of the European Union. The *second* thesis addresses the end of Western modernization in addressing the Covid-19 problem. It proves that the immune event of the virus spread did not result in a global solution to the problem. The *third* thesis draws conclusions from the different political organizations to solve the virus problem, especially in Germany. The *fourth* thesis concerns the issue of the struggle of nation-states over the disposition of the vaccine. It can be compared with the control of the flow of free resources (Eisenstadt). It leads back to the old sociological problem of social order. The *fifth* thesis revisits the sociology of membership in the research program of multiple modernities and addresses the function of protest communication. The theses are linked by the problem-referent of self-irritation and immune events that trigger the observation of membership systems. The conclusion and the outlook are intended to sketchily raise awareness of the problem. In doing so, it can be assumed that that the evolution of membership orders also includes negations, without which it cannot be restabilized. But we should no longer carry

the concept of crisis in sociological theory. In the outlook we also address the problem of populism and ask about its conceptualization.

Preliminary agreement on the problem reference

Concept of crisis

The concept of crisis is still carried along in sociological theory and in parts of the language of education. However, what is meant sociologically by it is not explained. If there are sales problems in the economic system of a transnational economy and layoffs occur, why is that a crisis?

Many representatives of the sociological theory have not processed Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis* (1959) on the actual state. If this were the case, they would think about other conceptualizations of "immune events" (Luhmann, 1984: 488-550). Koselleck's merit is to have systematized the so-called crisis of the ancient regime as a trigger of criticism in the 18th century that sparked the Jacobinism of the French Revolution. Eisenstadt has further re-systematized this in his research on the Western revolutions and their relationship to the Axial Ages. The pathology of the bourgeois age that erupts in fundamentalist terror is precisely not accidental. It is part of the Western modernization program. This is also the result of Eisenstadt's research on the revolution. This introduces an anomaly into societal communication in the domain of so-called modern societies that could not be eliminated in the elites' struggle to control the flow of free resources (Eisenstadt, 2006).

The term crisis comes from the medical description of illness. It has migrated into sociology and economics and has become part of everyday educational language. It should be noted that it has not led to any new classifications. A company is subject to competition in the market and inflation-deflation. The events are always described as a crisis. A woman has a nervous breakdown because she is not taken seriously by her family—this is also described as a crisis of this social system. The examples can be multiplied. But already from this it can be seen that the conceptualization of these events as crises is not quite satisfactory. At the same time, the term crisis also has a normative content, which implies a negative deviation from an expected target or desired state. Therefore, it is less suitable for sociological observations, since the description suggests a fixation on a desired social reality, which can also be different. In contrast to the Durkheim-Parsons tradition in sociological theory, we should by now assume that the nomic includes the anomic (Agamben, 2004). Just this goes along with the new version of the systematization of social integration of *ProtoSociology* (see about: Preyer, 2018a: 353-407, 2018b: 391-434; an English version is planned). It follows that the Durkheim-Parsons tradition and all basal norm-oriented approaches in sociological theory are no longer to be renewed. Therefore, societal communication and

membership are not based on a basic consensus but on a differential order of memberships. It is just to explain that membership and communication are possible under this condition. This is helpful in analyzing the reshuffling of contemporary societies. Membership sociology has recast the theory of social integration. It follows that the Durkheim-Parsons tradition and all basal norm-oriented approaches in sociological theory are no longer to be renewed. This is helpful in analyzing the reshuffling of contemporary societies.

There is a need for clarification of the rhetoric of crises and corresponding observer positioning in order to systemize the changes of expectations, which often take place over a longer period of time. Modernizations as structural social changes are often also paired with destructive creation and creative destruction (Schumpeter, 2018; Münch, 1998; Willke, 2003; Preyer, 2018a, 2018b; Preyer and Krausse, 2020a).

Membership sociology
From the point of view of the structural evolution of membership orders, an integration problem of social systems arose with the embedding of functional systems and the differentiation of ascriptive solidarity, which could not be remedied in the progress. This refers to the differentiation of elite functions, which is not adequately considered in the classical theory of evolution (Eisenstadt, 2016). From the perspective of Western societies, their susceptibility to crisis rhetoric is such that they are guided in their modernization by normative programs of democratization, universal rights, welfare economics, or even ecology. This comes to a head in the emerging paradoxes of Western modernization, for example, individualistic self-determination versus collective responsibility and reason versus emotion.

The membership sociology has recast social integration theory (Preyer, 2018a, 2018b) The membership theory of social systems states that they are self-determined by membership decision and its selection. Membership sociology makes the distinction between membership orders of social systems through which they are self-determined. Social systems are membership systems. This presupposes an observer who makes the distinction between member and non-member, the selection of members and the time determination of these systems as immune events. However, this observer, like every observer, is subject to a blind spot. We will say something more about this in this section.

In this respect, we conceptualize the social domain not as a regional ontology (Husserl, Schütz), but as a restabilization of a self-selective operation in time. It presupposes an observer and thus the self-observation of the members of social systems. Without that there is no social domain. From this perspective, the immune events are to be conceptualized as the negation space of the self-constitution of membership systems. Its foundation is the asymmetry between system and environment which cannot be negated. This means, however, that this asymmetry always carries negation along. The elementary operation of the self-constitution of social systems as membership systems is the selection and decision about

membership as their self-irritation. Without this decision and irritation there are no social systems and no membership order. (On the concept of irritation, see Luhmann, 1999: 55-109.) Irritations inevitably occur, so every system formation presupposes the asymmetrization of system and environment. The consciousness of the members of social systems is not the component of social systems themselves, but it can disturb membership and communication. It stands to reason that as evolution gains speed, so does higher irritation (Luhmann, 1997: 503-504). We are only at the beginning of the conversion of sociological theory about irritation as self-irritation triggered by membership selection. Only through this can members of social systems learn by self-irritation, that is, by immunological events. (For transdisciplinary research on irritation, see Gansel and Ächtler, 2013. On the concept of irritation, Preyer, 2013: 15-31.) Therefore, our starting point is not a zero situation or square one.

There is something methodologically fundamental to mention, which also concerns the award of the basic social area. In sociology, the observer belongs to the object domain. In this respect, there is no omniscient observer (Laplace demon). We always have to ask ourselves where we place the observer in sociological research. Another point is of no less relevance: every observer is also subjected to his blind spot of observation. This is true not only for perception, but for any social system as a membership system. The blind spot, however, is not perceptible, as it is with every observation. From the perspective of membership sociology, it is not directly observable at the immune event and the irritation. The virus spreads do not make the event visible as any immune event. Only membership sociology marks the event as an immune event. In the traditional sociological theory, this problem reference is evil as the limitationality of the structuring of social systems. These are, for example, exams or marriages, but also divorces as rites of passage. This blind spot cannot be eliminated, but only relativized by a different system reference; for example, we observe the economic system from the legal system or the political system from the legal system. This is something to keep in mind when analyzing membership immunology. It is also worth noting that membership sociology adopts Eisenstadt's approach to base elites (Eisenstadt, 2016). For the reader's understanding, we would like to point out that we speak of "societal," as in "societal communication," when the experience and actions of the members of social systems are exposed to observation. With regard to the concept of society, Simmel's statement that "society begins where the third party is added" is valid. This is also the approach of Sartre, who, however, did not know Simmel.

Third research program
We observe since the late 1990s and especially the early the 2000s that social programs have lost global orientation power and have been supplemented by non-Western programs. Above all, the modernization of communist China has disproved the universal validity of the Western Modernization program, and there can no longer be any question of the type of Western

constitutional democracy spreading worldwide. This marked the end of Western modernization as the dominant paradigm of sociological theory. The accompanying phenomena may not always please the individual observer. The continuation of the research program of multiple modernities with the membership sociological insights and theoretical approach provides an observation framework to describe this state of affairs in more detail. At this point, it will only be touched upon as far as it is necessary for the problem. Therefore, the question would have to be answered, which function irritations (crisis-communication) as forms of societal communication have in the context of multiple modernities as well as the sociology of membership.

From the perspective of the shift from the second to the third research program of multiple modernity (Eisenstadt, 2002; Preyer and Sussman, 2016a) and its further systematization, sociological theory has entered a changed situation analyzing in the framework of the *sociology of the next society* (Preyer and Krausse, 2020a). It reacts to the structural changes of the societal communication, which occurred by the glocalization of the social systems as a membership system of the "world society" as a "society of societies" since the turn of the millennium. The analysis of membership orders of the regional societies of South America, Africa, China, Western Europe, Russia, and the United States of America are thus addressed. The changed situation of societal communication already initiated a redefinition of the basic sociological concepts, for example, that of crisis, social systems, their orders, and the dimension of time.

This is reinforced by the viral time of the Covid-19 virus, as it irritates all social systems and forces them to technological innovations. This will put the inclusion and exclusion order of the social system of membership orders into a stronger structural drift and focus the introspection of membership differently. At the "is" level, it is also not clear with certainty where the virus came from and through which contact it entered the membership systems.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, observers speak of a multiple crisis scenario, as societal subsectors from social life to the economy, healthcare systems, political systems, and education systems are affected. This form of "crisis" is in another form, the continuation of a series of crises declared in previous years. For the sociological observer, they pose the questions, is it a question of "crises" that lead to a structural transformation in society, as it has been indicated for years, or is it more of a rhetoric triggered by the irritation of expectations of social support groups?

Before we look at the crises and their causes, we have to answer the question: Are we in a century of crises—terrorism crisis (2001), financial crisis (2008), Euro crisis (2011-2013), refugee crisis (2016), climate crisis (2018), democracy crisis (2019)?

There is something to be said for the fact that modern societies are in a permanent crisis. The question is whether "crisis" is too appropriate a word for it. Modern societies are in a state of flux. This transformation also leads to changes in expectations and their formal

organization. These changes become all the more visible when they do not live up to the predictability that is assumed in large parts of society. It can also not be redeemed.

Theses: The virus as a membership sociological immune event

First thesis

The social changes in the past two decades, often described as a crisis, are indications of the end of the dominance of Western Modernization and its achievements as a benchmark for non-Western societies, for example, economic growth, welfare state, democracy, and ecology.

What we know about society we know from the dissemination media, especially oral and written language, the printed press, and mass media. They continuously change the self-perception of what happens to the members of social systems.[3] What we know about the Covid-19 virus is mainly known through mass media, in Germany's case through regular reporting of the television station NTV, BBC World or CCN. In this respect, the members of every social system are exposed to irritation. It cannot be said that this makes dealing with the virus control problem more rational. It is not the virus that is irritated, but rather the members of social systems as observers. The European Union cannot be expected to institutionalize a solidarity community along the lines of the German welfare state. Political integration, which probably cannot be solved after all, and its staging in the mass media will continuously trigger immune events, which cannot be solved in its given institutional organization. This is often not adequately addressed in European studies. This deficit cannot be eliminated with the program of institutionalizing constitutional nation-state democracy at the level of the political organization of the European Union. What is needed is a multi-level democracy and a global government regime (Münch, Preyer, Willke). Willke, for example, argues that we should "dare democracy less." That would be a post-democratic political order.

This also limits rational handling and organization. Above all, the rhetoric of the representatives of the political system is limited in their options by their strategic political parties in the election campaign. They are also dependent on the economic system to finance their programs and tend to inflate the state budget over indebtedness. This also applies to China, thus the subsidies are hidden in banks there. We are now in a situation that can be characterized as beyond liberalism, socialism, and the classical nation-state. The fundamental problem of the changed steering function of political organization is that the success of the post-World War II welfare regimes obscured the view of the changed situation of the re-

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[3] It is a special merit of the German sociologists Luhmann, 1997: 190-315 and Baecker, 2007: 206-228 to have examined the relevance of these shifts.

lationship between the functional systems. This is also true for many research programs in sociological theory. The social policy, especially of the German welfare state, cannot be transferred to the changed situation. This applies both to the legalization of the labor relationship, which is increasingly giving way to company-specific regulations, and to the increasing de-solidarization of the parties in the political system. This also affects the transnational legal regulations of conflicts in the political system and in the economic system. The structural problem of welfare regimes is that they have juridified inclusion claims and thus overstretch the capacity of the legal system.

The European Union
In the states of the European Union, dealing with the restriction of infection is primarily national. There are also export restrictions on the vaccine. In contrast, China exports the vaccine with an economic agenda in its foreign policy. The repeated criticism of the political organization, that more political organization is needed, inevitably fails because of national interests.

The debts of the European Union and the release of subsidies will certainly not bring the states and their members closer. The German hardline position is increasingly being softened in the process. The withdrawal of Great Britain from the European Union undoubtedly damages its political integration. The European Union, as a unified political, democratic, and legal project, is above all a German program. Still, the German welfare state, for example, will not be transferable to the European Union.

The European Union's political programs aim at a normative integration program that intends to compensate for the possible consequences of the anti-Covid measures. It remains more than questionable whether they can achieve this, also because the social changes accelerated by the anti-Covid measures were already apparent in previous years, like the transformation in the economic system from present purchase to online purchase and the proliferation of home office work.

European Union societies are pursuing different methods and approaches in the containment of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not obscured by the European Commission's policy programs to promote economic development and mitigate the consequences of the pandemic or attempts to standardize measures of evidence and maintain freedom of movement. These political programs lack uniform implementation. Thus, a further distinction in political communication emerges, which is then further perpetuated in membership societies. The European Union tried to promote integration with a political program and to compensate for the economic consequences. It failed, as it had failed before with a common foreign policy, a common defense policy, or a common refugee policy. The political program lacks cultural integration and a procedure to coordinate and negotiate social interest, as well as a commonly shared vision (imagining and describing a conceivable future).

The membership order in sub-societies of the European Union remains heterogeneous; an economic elite and a scientific elite cannot hide this fact. A welfare program on the Scandinavian or German model cannot be transferred to the European association of states. As a result, programs to promote the economy, distribute vaccines, harmonize precautionary measures differ and sometimes compete.

The design flaw of the political organization of the European Union was from the beginning the claim to transfer the nation-state constitutive democracy to it. This mistake has not been corrected. Particularly, the political elites' attitude in Germany with their demand for a legalism of the organization of the European Union will fail. The formula "union without demos" was also used for the monster-like collective identity of the European Union. The German programs in this regard should not be followed. The exit of Great Britain, although narrowly preceded by the referendum, should not come as a surprise. The changed situation will tend to weaken the German political position, especially regarding economic policy. The German programs in this regard should not be followed. The exit of Great Britain, which was just before the referendum, should not be surprising. The changed situation will tend to weaken Germany's political position, especially in economic policy. It is not political correctness among the intellectual and political elites in Germany, but there is a grain of truth in De Gaulle's orientation of creating a "Europe of fatherlands." As it stands, the intellectual and political elites are unable to come to terms with this. One should not simply devalue the insight into the limits of the supra-national organizations of the European Union as nationalism but recognize the fundamental problem (on the problem of the reorganization of the European Union with a multi-level democracy: Preyer, 2014: 507-515. The German sociologists Münch and Willke also argue in a comparable direction).

The fundamental conflict of European modernization is that a Europeanization of the economic, legal and political systems has begun. The role of the European Court of Justice is to guarantee individual rights. As a result, traditionally-minded social groups are challenged. The human capitalists take on an immune function against these social groups. National disintegration is at the same time a trigger for counter-movements of renationalization. We should assume that the counter-movements of the collectivist tradition will continue to draw appropriate boundaries for liberal constitutionalism. This is obvious because feelings of togetherness and worlds of origin cannot be Europeanized. This limits the spread of human capital individualists in European society. From a fundamental point of view, it should be emphasized that European modernization cannot be generalized. We observe again and again that not only politicians, but also sociologists, are subject to a blind view of their observation. But it should be borne in mind, however, that there is no historical model for the political organization of the European Union (on European social stratification, Preyer and Krausse 2020a: 91-100).

Second thesis

There have been different responses and attempts to control the Covid-19 virus in Europe, the United States of America, Israel, India, South Africa, South America, and China. The success of virus control in China through authoritative actions is in part evidence that Western modernization has lost its model. This is also evidenced by the fact that the European Union will not institutionalize a common economic and social policy after the successful fight against the Covid-19 virus (on China's modernization: Preyer and Krausse, 2014; Krausse, 2015).

The multiple Corona scenario, for example, is evidence that societal communication between the members of the social system is in a state beyond Western modernity and modernization. The pandemic is also a staging of the mass media and self-observation of the members of social systems. It is an irritation event that is transmitted through simple interaction systems among attendants and can only be controlled by the prevention of direct communication. This is the interface through which modern communication technology resystematizes and reorganizes the societal communication of the members of social systems.

It should be emphasized that what many sociologists call "globality" does not bring about a uniform social structure. On the contrary: expansions of economic exchanges, political arrangements through international institutions, and tourism trigger conflicting relationships between local social systems and global processes, such as fundamentalism, migration, and the problems of self-identification of members of social systems as their collective identities. The emerging tensions and dangerous conflicts are to be expected between the formation of institutions, their formal organization and their decay, as well as between the creativity of the members of society and the regulations of communications. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that there is no global understanding and its institutionalization, but world society is a "society of societies" of orders of difference. Of particular interest is the situation in Germany (*Third* thesis) which supplements the reference to the European Union (*First* Thesis).

Third thesis

It is noticeable that, particularly in Germany, there is a widespread readiness to follow up on the political measures taken to combat the virus. However, the federal organization of the German political system does not allow centralized decision-making from Berlin as federal capital. In addition, state elections and a federal election are due in 2021. This in particular does not make political communication more rational. The coverage of the infectious

event spreads apocalyptic sentiments, without it being possible to say that the demands for are beneficial to the economic system.

In Germany, there is a particular fixation on opening/not opening schools and kindergartens; the rest of the population takes a back seat to this. The BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine aims to prevent infection as per the information status of 12/2/2021 from Israel. In Israel, vaccination passports are issued so that members of social systems can once again participate in social communication. This could also be a model for nation-states in the European Union. Again, we can see from this that the time dimension for overcoming the problems of functioning is fundamental. This could not have been expected in the short term before Christmas 2020. The arrival of a different present after 12/2/2021 changes the connection rationalities with other options in the subsystems of social membership and communication. These rationalities are not rational intrinsically, but for continuing societal self-observation and communication.

In the current situation of political communication in Germany, it is striking that they cannot adequately observe the strength of their federal political organization. The hardliners in matters of virus control lack the understanding of a regionally and locally appropriate program of infection control. In addition, the four-state elections in 2021 and the upcoming federal elections make it difficult to communicate more effectively. Even under more favorable circumstances, this is certainly only possible to a limited extent. Moreover, the communication of virus experts is not uniform and probably cannot be. The dilettante market of politicians and virus experts is also losing more and more trust from large sections of the population.

However, the claims to the serum of the nation-states and the accompanying rejections trigger introspections whose insights cannot be adequately processed by the representatives of the institutions. In this respect, a flood of immune events arrives, which can no longer guarantee their restabilizing function. Thus, a different definition of the situation of societal communication is made, and it can be compared to the struggle for the flow of free resources (Eisenstadt). This leads to the next thesis.

Fourth thesis

The struggle over the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine will stabilize the differential order of justice. It can be compared to the flow of control of free resources (Eisenstadt). In this struggle, which could result in wars, different civilizations meet. This could be accompanied by the fact that the chances of understanding in these encounters are not great.

The spectacular success of virological research in the scientific system, in which within a year a vaccine was available in Russia, China, Israel, Europe, India, South Africa, and the

United States, should not hide the fact that this does not yet imply the decision on its distribution. This is a political question which cannot be solved only by the political system, because the distribution is a problem of its organization. Considerable problems are to be expected in this connection. Germany's call for a more global justice for the world's population is a typical German political program, as it continues to have no relevant influence in its foreign policy. Germany is not, for example, represented in the UN Security Council.

The Covid-19 "crisis," as well as the other "crises" of the 21st century, suggest that there were irritations early on—bird and swine flu, in the case of Covid-19—which were not taken into account. In addition, the question arises of how and with what approach to react to uncertainty.

The Covid-19 period in particular proves that the changed structure of digitalized societal communication and its problems does not institutionalize global solutions. People have been mistaken about this for a long time. The recognizable structural problem that goes along with the Next Society is that modernization introduces a permanent problem of social integration of the local, the regional, the national, the supernational and the global. This is accompanied by a permanent irritation of all membership systems, which could flood them with immune events. In this respect, the old questions arise again for sociology:

a) How is society possible?

In other words:

b) Under what conditions does societal communication reproduce and processualize itself in an over-complex environment that is experienced as contingent?

c) How can membership systems persist as time-determined systems that continuously place themselves in a state of self-generated indeterminacy through membership selection?

Sociology should face the hardship that membership selection always carries exclusion. The level of sociological theory will be measured by whether it confronts this challenge.

Fifth thesis

Sociological theory does not follow political interests and is politically neutral. It is a communication in the scientific system. The members of the group of sociological theorists have to communicate about their foundations in inter- and transdisciplinary projects.[4] This addresses an analytical frame of reference in which it can locate its research interests. Membership theory and membership sociology bring forth a proposal in this regard within the frame of reference of multiple modernities. The turn is obvious because multiple modernities are a differentiation of particular civilizations and the latter are membership orders.

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[4] On the history of sociology and its institutionalization: Eisenstadt and Curelaru (1976).

We now assume in sociological theory that the scenario of the 20th century (for example, the historical East-West conflict after the Second World War) will not be repeated. Through the third research program of multiple modernities, we are resetting the observation of sociological theory, as it starts from the membership selection of social systems. Each membership system thus has its own social order, which it cannot externalize in its self-selectivity. There is also the question of whether it is true that China has a leading position in global trade. In this regard, it must be remembered that economic exchanges with China depend on external demand.

In the third research program of multiple modernities, a reinterpretation of protest communication is also to be undertaken. The protest that we observe in the global scene is amorphous and is difficult to organize formally. The protests in, for example, Miramar, Hong Kong, and Belarus, which are communicated in the mass media, are especially in Germany a political rhetoric of self-assertion. However, it is not a new insight that there is also something irresponsible in protest through demonstrations, since one endangers not only oneself, but under certain circumstances one's relatives and friends. It also turns out that one is usually powerless. The protest cannot cause a political influence as a protest. For this it needs the organization and the formal party formation around in the national political framework appropriate interests to represent. Moreover, it is true that one can demonstrate against anything in the present society. Protest is a self-irritation of social systems as an immune event of societal communication through their public sphere as an observation area of societal communication.

It is also worth mentioning that the conflict with Russia from the point of view of the states of the European Union is not a continuation of the Cold War, but can be explained by the different interests of the European states. The Russia-friendliness in Germany and the German Russian foreign policy take a special position compared to, for example, demands of sanctions against Russia. This conflict will not be neutralized. The problem reference is in this respect the tolerance to the special interests of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Conclusion and outlook

Observation distinctions

We placed membership sociology in the third research program of multiple modernities and systematized viral time of Covid-19 as an immune event of societal communication. This is to introduce other observational distinctions of sociological theory. We would suggest abandoning crisis semantics in sociological theory. To classify the concept of irritation in sociological observation, taking into account the state of research, and to distinguish it from journalistic use. In sociological observation, a irritation exists when the expectations

lead to a structural change. This change is usually announced over a longer period of time (Koselleck, 1988). With the current changes, the irritations become permanent. As soon as an unexpected change appears, then we are confronted with irritations. A new actor enters the international political system as a locally and globally networked influencer (terrorism irritation). In the economic system, the locally and globally connected financial systems enter into a domino effect through the default of uncovered loans, which makes a value adjustment (financial irritation). In the European Union, there is the issue of the debt burden and the threat of default of individual member states of the EURO area (Euro irritation). There are significant population movements to Western countries, such as the United States of America, Canada, the European Union, or even Great Britain from Central, South American, African, or Asian societies through authorized and limited access routes (refugee irritation). There is no international agreement on common political programs for the reduction of CO_2 emissions with the associated goal of achieving a flattening of global warming (climate irritation). Modern forms of communication are used under rejection of taboo language regulation and gaining political influence (democracy irritation/populism). Lastly, social life is restricted to maintain supplies and protect populations as respiratory disease spreads across continents and societies (Corona/Covid-19 irritation).

In all of these societal phenomena, patterns can be identified.

a) There was an aspirational and traditional expectation. This expectation was fixed in that it made an extrapolation of a present state to the future.

b) Several societies were affected in a comparable period of time.

c) A change took place on several societal subareas, which in a purposive attribution aimed at a targeted expectation.

d) Political communication sought to reestablish a former state of expectations.

This form of change was called a crisis, but it would be more accurate to speak of irritation in societal communication. The change and the further changes it triggers are still primarily a reshaping of expectations that are irritated. The term "crisis" has an evaluative (pejorative) connotation. It is also used and suggests a causality assumption or attribution coupled to an evaluative target state (failed). Irritation seems to be a more suitable term at this point, since it evades evaluation and remains open about the course of change and its classification.

We can now also say something about "Multiple irritation scenarios beyond Western Modernizations." The restructuring of membership sociological theory no longer assumes a world society, but a 'world society' as a society of societies. This is in line with the third research program of multiple modernities. We are beyond Western modernization, since the universal claim of its cultural program has become historical. This is particularly evident in the spread of Covid-19 and the national and societal type vaccination programs.

However, it is not denied that there is and will continue to be social exchange and organization between the multicentric social orders.

Populism

The idea that we are currently in an immunological event scenario obscures the insight for phenomena of the past years. There are irritations in expectations in several domains of contemporary societies that indicate that societal communication has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. The political system of Western democracies is challenged by populism, the economic system by distortions of other areas of society or internal crises like recent Covid-19 regulations or the financial problems in the economic system. In addition, there are the refugee problem, climate problem, and much more.

It can be assumed that the changed situation triggers a "global populism" that articulates the material interests of symbiotically bound needs of populations and conspiracy theories.[5] If we take Axford's (2021) "Postmodern Populism" as a starting point, two problem references are worth highlighting:

a) The limits of the logic of inclusion of functional differentiation (Luhmann: end of the logic of inclusion) and the excessive demands on the welfare state

b) The cultural globalization (hybridization) of the economic unitary culture evokes corresponding counter-reactions of autochthonous cultures and membership orders

The first point refers to the change in political communication and the structure of the political system of the Next Society. It is continuously showing control deficits. We should also keep in mind that there is a fundamental irritation in political democracy that can no longer be easily remedied. We do not know which version of political democracy will survive evolutionarily. The second point is almost inevitable, since the peripheral cultures and traditionally-minded status groups are threatened in their independence. This will trigger stronger immune reactions that do not sensitize to problem references but have a destructive effect. Populism will be with us for a long time to come, since we should not assume that justice in the sense of equal living conditions for all citizens of a nation will come about, but rather greater inequality between societies and nations. These fractures can no longer be compensated for by nation states. In this respect, we have reached the end of Western welfare societies and Keynesianism.

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[5] On populism and globalization: ProtoSociology, 2020; Preyer and Krausse, 2014; Axford, 2021; Steger, 2019.

Wrong account

The social sciences should not fall into journalistic rhetoric and assume a decade of crisis. For sociology in particular, as the science of social forms, social changes can provide an appropriate answer at this point. The sociological answer should include a concept of immunological events that is not normatively laden. Giving up the crises rhetoric, we conceptualize the negative events as an irritation of societal communication accompanied by the changes of the hitherto habitual variation—selection—and re-stabilization of societal communication as a communication of members of social systems. In particular, the so-called "problem of social order" (Parsons) is to be rethought from sociological theory.

The reconstruction of these re-stabilizations is often experienced or described as a crisis. But this is misleading and should not lead us to exaggerate the crises or to categorize them by evaluative over-forming. It is one of the basic insights of social science that social forms carry change and stability in equal measure, that is, normative regulation and anomie play together.

Back to the virus

After the virus period, it is not expected that the irritation will stop. On the contrary, the virus has uncovered a fundamental constitution of membership systems that we should not expect to be correctable. It is not the reorganization of the cities or the end of the retail trade, which has already started before in Germany, or the ecological rhetoric of the political parties, but rather social systems have been exposed by the continuous self-irritation as the state of exception. In this respect, it could be that the multiple modernities of the self-observations of societal communication also do not suggest a global response to this changed situation. It may be that, from the point of view of the scientific system, this triggers a renewal of sociology as a leading science. It could contribute to stabilizing the insight that multiple modernities do not institutionalize a global regime of prosperity and unified political regulation as well.

Western modernization in particular makes a faulty assumption when it elevates itself to a standard and strives for a progress of society to a target state to be achieved. It is one of the basic sociological insights that contrary developments take place in parallel. This is a mistake we encounter again and again in sociological theory. It fails to recognize that modern society does not have a membership order that encompasses all subsystems. The so-called "inclusion logic" of the large subsystems is limited by their formal organization. It imposes conditions on membership in them and participation in their communication systems that not all parts of the population can meet. The changes that emerged in the crises of the 20th century have a sometimes long run-up with signs to be recognized.

It should be emphasized that what sociologists somewhat misleadingly call "globality" does not bring about a homogeneous social structure. On the contrary, the expansions of economic exchange, political regulations by international institutions and tourism trigger internal conflicting relations between local social systems and global processes, for example, fundamentalism, migration, and problems of self-identification of the members of social systems, who may also lose the communicative connection to their local reference groups.

Back to the virus? We have to confront in sociological theory that without immune events there is no innovation in the evolution of societies. In this respect, we should prepare ourselves for the next virus. The reconstruction of sociological theory into the sociology of the Next Society should be done through its focus on the immune events of societal communication. The Next Society will be a society beyond liberalism, nation-states, and the welfare state. This does not mean, for example, that nation-states no longer exist as an organization of the political system, but that the nation-state no longer provides the dominant collective orientation of the members of society. This does not mean that one can no longer act with this illusion. The Next Society will have an immunological social order, since it will be a difference order of societal communication.

About the authors

GERHARD PREYER is professor of Sociology at the University of Frankfurt am Main and Editor-in-Chief of the *ProtoSociology:* An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Project, Goethe University. He conducts transdisciplinary research in philosophy and sociology, as well as sociological theory, comparative sociology and the philosophy of language. His publications include: (with Reuss-Markus Krausse) *Soziologie der Nächsten Gesellschaft Multiple Modernities, Glokalization und Mitgliedschaftsordnung* (2020) Wiesbaden: Springer/VS; (with Reuss-Markus Krausse) "Teil IV Drittes Forschungsprogramm: Multiple Modernities, Mitgliedschaft und Globalisierung" (2020) in *Soziologie der Nächsten Gesellschaft Multiple Modernities, Glokalization und Mitgliedschaftsordnung*. Wiesbaden: Springer/VS; (with Erwin Rogler) *Philosophie des Mentalen*. 3rd ed. (2020) Berlin: Humanities Online.

REUSS-MARKUS KRAUSSE holds a PhD in Sociology from Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main; is a Consultant for Corporate Development at the European Export and Trade Bank and he is actually working on the project *ProtoSociology* as the Scientific Assistant to Dr. Gerhard Preyer. He has also worked as Organization and Process Developer for BBT Consulting Koblenz. His publications include: (with Gerhard Preyer) *Soziologie der Nächsten Gesellschaft Multiple Modernities, Glokalization und Mitgliedschaftsordnung* (2020) Wiesbaden: Springer/VS; (with Gerhard Preyer) "Teil IV Drittes Forschungsprogramm: Multiple Modernities, Mitgliedschaft und Globalisierung" (2020) in *Soziologie der Nächsten Gesellschaft Multiple Modernities, Glokalization und Mitgliedschaftsordnung*. Wiesbaden: Springer/VS; *Hybridisierung Chinas. Modernisierung und Mitgliedschaftsordnung der chinesischen Gesellschaft* (2015) Wiesbaden: Springer/VS.

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