



Beyond class and nation: reframing social inequalities in a globalizing world¹

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Abstract

From the start individualization theory is the investigation of the paradigm shift in social inequality. Furthermore it shows, how the transnationalization of social inequalities bursts the framework of institutional responses – nation state (parties), trade unions, welfare state systems and the national sociologies of social classes. In this essay I shall try to conceptually elucidate the ‘cosmopolitan perspective’ on relations of social inequality in three cases: (1) the inequality of global risk; (2) the Europe-wide dynamic of inequality; and (3) transnational inequalities, which emerge from the capacities and resources to transcend borders. Before that I take up Will Atkinson’s question: ‘What exactly constitutes individualization and to what extent has it really displaced class?’ (Atkinson 2007: Abstract)

Keywords: Institutionalized individualization; transnationalisation of social inequalities; methodological nationalism; methodological cosmopolitanism

I. Introduction

In his polemical critique *Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class* Will Atkinson – at last! – takes up the challenge I threw down to the sociological analysts of class some 25 years ago.² I welcome the limitation to a ‘primarily conceptual critique’ (Atkinson 2007: 356). Atkinson thereby goes considerably further than those researchers of class who have described my theory as ‘data free’, devoid of an empirical base and without any firm mooring in the social world (Marshall 1997; Goldthorpe 2002; Skeggs 2004; Brannen and Nilsen 2005; Scott 2006; more on these below). Atkinson accuses me – no doubt justifiably – of ‘refuting’ a caricature of sociological class research which I have myself constructed (Atkinson 2007: 358). But that is at least equally true of him and the sociological researchers of class, who attack a travesty of my theory of individualization, which of course saves them from any serious discussion of

the accusation that their sociology of class is historically out of date. I would not have thought it possible, but Atkinson shows no appreciation whatsoever of the *key distinction between class and inequality*, which is so fundamental to my argument. Accordingly the end of social classes is not the end of social inequality, but the beginning of radicalized inequalities; to maintain, that individualization means the disappearance of social inequality ‘in terms of movement’ (Atkinson 2007: 354) is complete nonsense.

There are two ways of discussing the ‘end of classes’. One is the well-trodden highway of welfare state integration of the proletariat – with the aim of levelling class differences *and* social inequality (which Atkinson and the class sociologists imply is what I say); the other approach, which is the one I have taken from the start, is the investigation of the *paradigm shift in social inequality*. Individualization theory is then precisely *not* a theory of pacification (as is implied) but a *theory of crisis*, which furthermore shows, how the transnationalization of social inequalities bursts the framework of institutional responses – nation state (parties), trade unions, welfare state systems *and* the national sociologies of social classes.

Individualization implies no (final) state, but a process, more precisely: a process of the transformation of the *grammar* of social inequalities. This throws up two questions: on the one hand that of the *de*-structuring of social classes, and on the other, that of *re*-structuring. In other words, the question as to the *de*-structuring of social classes (through welfare state individualization, ‘out-sourcing’ and ‘in-sourcing’ of risks, through ‘internal globalization’ and ethnic pluralization of social classes etc. – see Section II below) has to be supplemented by the questions ‘What post-class, “cosmopolitan” manifestations of radicalized social inequalities are emerging and how can they be analysed sociologically and empirically?’ My response to the re-structuring question is ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ (see Section III).

In my counter-critique, therefore, I shall address a second strategic misunderstanding, that is, the completely abbreviated reception of my proposal of replacing the ‘methodological nationalism’ of the sociology of classes and inequality (which, incidentally, is also true of my theory of individualization! – that’s the point) with a ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’. Atkinson certainly concedes:

As to the idea that class analysis is ‘ontologically dependent’ on the anachronistic vision of a territorially-defined nation state, this seems – at first – to be a more telling criticism . . . However, once the real nub of Beck’s argument is exposed it begins like so many of his other propositions to look less convincing . . . The main thrust of his critique on this front consists of the contention that individuals increasingly lead ‘cosmopolitan’ lives nestled in more than one national system, and that consequently class fails to eliminate salient forms of existence. (Atkinson 2007: 359)

Here Atkinson falls victim to his own insufficient reading, notably of my trilogy on cosmopolitanism in the social sciences.³ In this essay I shall try to conceptually elucidate the ‘cosmopolitan perspective’ on relations of social inequality in three cases: (1) the inequality of global risks – where, within a cosmopolitan horizon, the nation state principle is replaced by the principle of the side-effects of decisions which transcend nation state boundaries (Section III); (2) the Europe-wide dynamic of inequality – where the nation state principle of incomparability is replaced by the principle of the comparability of national spaces of inequality (Section IV); and (3) transnational inequalities, which emerge from the capacities and resources to transcend borders (Section V). Before I address these misunderstandings in my counter-critique, however, I would first of all like to take up Atkinson’s question:

II. ‘What exactly constitutes individualization and to what extent has it really displaced class?’⁴

What does individualization mean empirically?

Again and again the ‘empirical deficit’ of individualization theory is referred to with a frown and pursed lips, without the empirical operationalization which I offer being even acknowledged, still less taken up or criticized. Nevertheless Atkinson does see, ‘that individualization is not, as some writers have argued it to be (i.e. Furlong and Cartmel 1997) simply a subjective phenomenon concerning self-identities and attitudes alone, but a *structural* phenomenon transfiguring objective life situations and biographies’ (Atkinson 2007: 353). In other words, *individualization* must be clearly distinguished from *individualism*. Whereas individualism is commonly understood as a personal attitude or preference, individualization refers to a macro-sociological phenomenon, which possibly – but then again perhaps not – results in changes in attitude in individuals. That is the *crux of contingency* – how individuals deal with it remains an open question.⁵ I, like Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens, emphasize that individualization is misunderstood if it is seen as a process which derives from a conscious choice or preference on the part of the individual. The crucial idea is this, individualization really is imposed on the individual by modern institutions. To that extent there is agreement.

Not one of the authors, however, who criticize me, has drawn the obvious conclusion. The instance of falsification (and with it also the empirical proof of the individualization hypotheses) is not to be found primarily in the contingency of attitudes and modes of behaviour of individuals (and in corresponding qualitative and quantitative studies, e.g. Paul de Beer 2007), but in the *relationship between state and individualization*: basic civil rights, basic political rights, basic social rights, family law, divorce law (Barlow and James 2004), but also the neoliberal reforms of the labour market (Brodie 2007; Rosenein 2007;

Rose 1990). In all these fields there is evident, empirically verifiable or refutable, an historic trend towards an institutionalized individualization.⁶ This is because the addressee of these (basic) rights and reforms is the individual and not the group, the collective. From this point of view the historical-empirical basis for testing individualization theory, not only within a national society, but across borders, is:

- 1) the establishment of basic civil and political rights in the nineteenth century, their restriction (to men) and their de-restriction (inclusion of women) in the twentieth century and,
- 2) the establishment, expansion and then dismantling of the welfare state in Western Europe after the Second World War, and in particular the developments from the 1960s and 1970s onwards.

Evident here is the *irony and paradox of the welfare state*. The class struggles of class society achieve the welfare state and with it the principle of individual assignment of claims and contributions with the consequence that individualization becomes permanent, and the internal structuring principle of modern societies (classes) become less important. It is the *collective success* with class struggle which institutionalizes individualization and dissolves the culture of classes, even under conditions of radicalizing inequalities. (The limit and exception of this is the institutionalization of collective solutions such as the general binding quality of wage agreements, which in turn, however, can be undermined by the individualization of employment groups and contracts (see Kratzer 2005; Nies 2007).⁷ The extent to which such an institutional individualization has taken place since the Second World War can only be established in historical sectoral analyses which investigate how aspects of individualization find expression in the societal semantics of law, that is, in the texts of legislation or commentaries on legislation and in the practice of the administration of justice (against the background of public discourses and political debate) or also in current and future reforms of the welfare state and of the labour market. At the same time it is important to distinguish between institutionally individualized *opportunities* to make decisions and institutionally individualized *obligations* to make decisions.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the background is constituted by a general 'out-sourcing' of key institutions, which, in First Modernity, relieved the individual or provided him with security and orientation (Lash 2002). This can be observed with reference to the family, but also to the welfare state and in particular to the transformation of management (Sennett 1998). At the same time there is also a kind of 'in-sourcing' taking place. Many features, functions and activities which were previously assigned to the nation state, the welfare state, hierarchical organization, the nuclear family, the class, the centralized trade union, are now transferred inward and outward: outwards to global or international organizations; inward to the individual.

From that it becomes clear, that the institutionalized opportunities to make decisions and the institutionalized obligations to do so can only be analytically distinguished from one another but not in the real world. If one makes welfare state legislation the possible test case of individualization theory, then it is also necessary to pay attention not only to *de*-limitation, but also to the limitation of *de*-limitation (and then again subsequently to the *de*-limitation of the limitation and so on). In other words, tendencies to *de*-individualization in the transformation of the law must also be investigated. All three questions as to the institutionally individualized *opportunities* to make decisions, the institutionally individualized *obligations* to make decisions and to tendencies to *de*-individualization characterize the *space of ambivalences* of institutionalized individualization must be addressed. Atkinson does not regard these ambivalences of individualization as founded in the material itself, but blames them on the lack of clarity of my argument (Atkinson 2007: 362).⁸

Beyond the normal family and normal class

Under what conditions and in what sense can we speak of a ‘meta-transformation’ through institutionalized individualization and what consequences does that have for the construction of social classes? Since we are here entering new territory, it may be useful to elucidate matters with reference to an area which has been better researched – the meta-transformation of the *family* (Beck 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002, 2004; Beck-Gernsheim 2002): Until the 1960s there was in Western societies a generally acknowledged family model, which was indeed still practised by most people (more or less closely depending on life circumstances, class, religion etc.). This *normal family model* consisted of an adult couple with their own children; it was taken for granted that the adults were of different sexes, i.e. a man and woman; that they were married, and remained so until death did them part; and that there was a division of labour between the two such that the man was employed, was the ‘provider’, while the woman bore responsibility for the home and family. Naturally there were also other ways of living even then – deliberately chosen by a few brave souls, otherwise involuntarily adopted. But what is crucial is this, that these other ways of living were considered *abnormal*, were comparatively rare and could usually only be lived discreetly and furtively. These were ‘lapses’, ‘aberrations’, the fault of unfortunate circumstances and external forces, for example the turmoil of war and the subsequent upheavals. This is now what has changed completely under the conditions and as a consequence of institutionalized individualization. The normal family described above has certainly not disappeared, but there is a great variety of other forms in addition, and, above all, the power of the norm itself has been weakened. Because, in recent decades, changes in both family behaviour and the conception of the family have taken place, there now exists a ‘juxtaposition

TABLE I: *Transformation of family law in Germany*

	Original version of Civil Code in force since 1st January 1900	Reformed Marriage Law in force since 1st July 1977
§ 1354	The husband makes the final decision in all matters concerning shared married life; in particular he determines place of residence and residence.	Rescinded.
§ 1355	The wife takes the husband's family name.	The spouses may take as married name . . . the birth name of the husband or the birth name of the wife.
§ 1356	The wife is . . . entitled and obliged to take charge of the common household affairs.	The spouses arrange the housekeeping by mutual agreement.

Note: For other European countries see e.g.: Mason, Fine and Carnochan (2001); Röthel (1999); Barlow and Grace (2004).

of various forms, for each of which equal rights already exist or are being claimed' (Lüscher 1994: 19). Consequently there has been a relativization of ideas of normality. And that is the crucial point. There are not only more and more 'deviations' appearing, whose popularity is growing. What is important, rather, is that formerly deviant forms of co-habitation are now increasingly normalized and accepted, both socially and legally. This *change in models*, which turns abnormality into normality, is a central characteristic, an operational criterion of the meta transformation of the cultural conditions of life. In other words, what is now establishing itself is not only diversity, but something much more than that: the *normalization* of diversity, both with regard to family law and to the self-image of family members, and finally even in the observer perspective of the sociology of the family. Meta-transformation with respect to law means an increasing number of regulations are being introduced, which have the deliberate aim of turning collective requirements into individual opportunities for choice. This is especially the case, where the order of gender relations in marriage is concerned. A fundamental reform of the relevant sections of the law has taken place in many countries. The transformation in the German legal system can be taken as an example (see Table I).

In addition, in Germany as in other Western countries, there are many other changes, all leading in the same direction – *The Normal Chaos of Family Law* (see Dewar 1998; Mason, Fine and Carnochan 2001; Röthel 1999; Barlow and Grace 2004). Further examples, to mention but a few, are easier divorces, the improved legal position of children born outside marriage, the improved legal position of long-term relationships outside marriage, and the increasing acknowledgment of long-term homosexual relationships. In every case the legislators see it less and less as their role to prescribe just one kind of partnership as obligatory. Instead the decision of choosing between a number of forms of co-habitation, all with an equal legal status, is left up to the individual. Yet precisely this development sets in motion – a consequence

which is both paradoxical and foreseeable – a regulatory spiral. When gay or lesbian couples marry or are able to enter into an official partnership, does that mean, that they also have a right to parenthood, through adoption or thanks to progress in reproductive medicine? If it is no longer taken for granted that on marriage the wife takes the husband's name, which name should their children receive? If increasing numbers of people marry for a second and third time, how can financial resources be fairly distributed between partners and ex-partners and ex-ex-partners and their various children etc.?

The *empirical observation of institutional developments*, which is necessary to any scrutiny of individualization theory, confirms dramatic changes, as do studies in contemporary history, in particular those by Ulrich Herbert (2002, 2007). Within the space of about 15 years, that is, within a single generation, a similar change in the accepted model took place, almost simultaneously, in almost all European societies and not just for a few groups, but for all groups. Such a comprehensive and fundamental institutional change, which shifts the opportunities and risks of making decisions onto individuals, and in such a short time, is historically unparalleled. It is extended in the (Social Democratic or Conservative) concept of the '*active welfare state*', which dominates the social policy agenda in all Western countries and links three principles: the development of human capital (education), individual responsibility and integration into the labour market. Evident here is the extension of the institutional production and reproduction of the individualized individual. It is simultaneously an example of how the impossible task of finding biographical solutions to systemic contradictions is imposed on individuals. With reference to Canadian reform policies Janine Brodie similarly comes to the conclusion, that the active welfare state:

is a quintessential example of neo-liberal individualization (. . .). Although it identifies Canada's poor by group-based or systematic markers, its proposed strategies for poverty alleviation are framed in terms of individual choices and private solutions. As such, this policy advice simultaneously downloads all responsibility for structural inequalities and risk management onto individuals and validates the market as the primary mechanism whereby individuals secure personal security and well being. (Brodie 2007: 220)⁹

If this diagnosis of (welfare and neoliberal state) institutionalized individualization is accepted as certain, then for *both* sides – individualization theorists and class theorists – there arise the following questions: what consequences does this historically unparalleled change in models have for the constitution of social classes? If institutionalized individualization means that there is a growing pressure towards reflexive life styles and individualized biographies and that meaning and identity need to be discovered individually¹⁰, can there still be a collective identity of class? When individualization generalizes the mode of self-accountability and self-responsibility (Wohlrab-Sahr 2003) – both

as expectation of others and as self-image – but at the same time social inequalities are intensifying, how can this ambivalence of an ‘individualized class society’ be sociologically and politically decoded (Nollmann and Strasser 2007)?¹¹ The argument of the individualization theorists is that objective features (income, position in the hierarchy) and subjective features (consciousness, lifestyle, leisure interests, political attitude) *diverge*. Many individuals may still be in the same position. But there is no common and unifying explanation for their suffering, even more: they have to blame themselves. The consequences can be demonstrated with the help of the historian Edward Thompson (1980). In his essay, *Class Struggle Without Classes*, he writes: ‘Class as a product of the capitalist industrial society of the nineteenth century, which then shaped the heuristic understanding of classes, has no claim to universality, but is nothing more than a subordinate case of the historical formations which emerge from class struggles’ (Thompson 1980: 268). Here Thompson points to the key insight of the post-class diagnosis of inequality, given that he argued, that class conflict existed before classes existed, and that such a formation of classes out of social conflicts was by no means an historical law, but rather a special or exceptional case. This is exactly the position of the theory of the individualization of social classes. Individualization transforms class struggle, which, to adapt Thompson, precedes class. There emerges a capitalism without classes, more precisely: without classes *for themselves*. Individualization uncouples class culture from class position; as a result, there are numerous ‘individualized class conflicts without classes’, that is, a process in which the loss of significance of classes coincides with the categorical transformation and radicalization of social inequalities.

On the other hand, the continued existence of social classes appears ‘justified by even a cursory glance at some statistical indices revealing the continued influence of class on income, access to consumption goods, health and, perhaps most sadly of all, the chances of living beyond infancy’, as Atkinson remarks in an aside (Atkinson 2007: 355). To select just one finding, despite educational reforms, working-class children (measured by the educational level of their parents) are hardly represented in higher education, while the proportion of children of affluent parents and parents with a higher education going to university is higher than ever before. The conclusion is, that now, as before, class origin determines access to a university education. These figures (which are as true of Great Britain as of Germany, and also of many other European countries) seem to confirm the closed circle of university access and elite, which excludes working-class children, demonstrating the persistence of class and so refuting individualization theory. Except that it doesn’t, because class culture is, without qualification, equated with class position and the continuity of classes, *contra* Thompson, simply assumed. The hypothesis of the individualization of class conflicts, and with it the erosion of classes, is not even taken up as a question. On the other hand, the sources of error of a class sociology

uninformed by individualization theory can be exposed even in these empirical findings:

- (1) The unreflected equation of constancy of educational level attained with the constancy of social classes underestimates the 'elevator effect' (Beck 1983) which the individualization perspective places centre stage. Even if the relations of social inequality (i.e., operationally speaking, the hierarchy of educational levels attained) have remained constant, the opening up of the universities in the 1960s and 1970s may have made it possible for many children from working-class homes to rise up the social ladder. *Their* children are now likewise studying, but in the statistics they already count as the children of parents with a university education. We are (possibly) dealing with a paradox here, i.e. the more working-class children have risen in terms of social class in the course of educational reform, the more constant the class structure appears to be, because the working-class children who have gone up the social ladder now 'pass on' their educational status to their children.
- (2) The false conclusion of the leap from statistical constancy to social constancy of the 'working class' covers up the key question: *who* are the persons and groups, who are now statistically subsumed under the constancy of the substantive term 'working class'? In Germany, at any rate, it is the case that the cultural homogeneity of the so-called 'working class' has been dissolved in a process of 'internal globalization and pluralization'. This can be demonstrated by the explosive increase in the proportion of foreign or immigrant youth completing their school education at a *Hauptschule*, the lowest rung of the educational ladder. The constancy of social classes unreflectedly assumes the constancy of the national membership of the members of these classes. Here too it is the case, that class culture and class position are being uncoupled; the multi-ethnic, multi-national working class is no longer a working class.¹² The question, regarding how nation and class are merged in the same educational categories, assumes a change of perspective, a 'cosmopolitan outlook'. The critique of methodological nationalism is, however, primarily a self-critique of individualization theory. This is because not only class theory, but also individualization theory is trapped in the dead end of 'methodological nationalism': both analyse the transformation of social inequalities in the framework of the anachronistic gaze of a territorially defined nation state.¹³

III. The transnationalization of social inequalities

As we know, Marx subordinated nation to class. Marx's theory of society made it clear, that the greatest problem for the future of national societies was that

they would be challenged by border-transcending class conflicts. Looming on the political horizon was an international working-class movement, which presented the perspective of a world revolution. Marx's ideas put the nation state in a panic. Its response was to locate the class problem, which emerged with explosive force out of the upheavals of industrialization, as a problem internal to the nation state. Thus the transnational class dynamic was transformed into many separate national 'social questions', and from that point on the integration of the proletariat into nation state societies was at the forefront of politics. This task had such a high priority, that such diverse attempts at a solution as Socialism, the welfare state and the sociology of class were involved, all tacitly accepting the national frame of reference. In the end the effort was so successful that national integration and solidarity as conditions of class order and class conflicts became simultaneously real and unrecognizable.

Critique of methodological nationalism

Class theory and sociology after Marx has (with a few exceptions) concentrated on the economic position within the nation state. Put another way, the order, which the class order makes possible, is based on the principles of nationality and ethnicity, but the sociology of class has not and does not (adequately) address this theme. Most theorists of class, including Bourdieu, who gave so much thought to globalization in his final years, have identified class society with the nation state (Atkinson 2007: 359). The same is true of Wallerstein, Goldthorpe and many others.

In order to elucidate and illuminate the scope of these background assumptions, it is useful to differentiate between *first* and *second order questions*.¹⁴ First order questions refer to the 'What-questions' of social inequality, second order questions to 'Who-questions'. First order questions address the material distribution of opportunities and obligations, resources and risks, that is, income, education, property, vulnerability etc. They assume the answers to the second order questions which have not been posed, i.e. *who* is unequal? and which unit (of reference) precedes class conflicts? What is the appropriate framework within which the first order questions are raised and can be answered politically and sociologically? It is the congruence of political status (membership of a nation, holding a passport) and socio-economic status (position in the nation state hierarchy of inequality) which continue to be tacitly accepted as the background pattern of class analysis. Class researchers understand and analyse their object from the viewpoint of a national 'Us-Sociology'. Class conflicts assume nation state standards of equality and a national 'Us-solidarity' as much as the national exclusion of the non-national other. This unreflected, supposed congruence between political and socio-economic status is what, inter alia, I mean by 'methodological nationalism'. Only a cosmopolitan outlook reveals, that the meta principles of state, nationality and ethnicity

constitute the unit of reference, the frame, in which the conflict-laden questions of the material distribution of resources are dealt with. The social scientific gaze, under the spell of methodological nationalism, can simply not *see* that the combination of nationality and territoriality pre-eminently fixes the social position of individuals and groups on a world scale. Antecedent to the status which can be acquired within a national-territorial frame is the rank and political status of the nation of origin in the international system (e.g. in accordance with the distinction between centre and periphery).¹⁵

In other words, methodological nationalism is based on a double assumption of congruence: on the one hand the congruence of territorial, political, economic, social and cultural borders, and, on the other, the congruence of actor's perspective and social scientific observer perspective. The premises of the normative-political nationalism of the actors become the unreflected premise of the social scientific observer perspective. Both congruence assumptions are mutually reinforcing. The consequence is that conventional 'objective' social theory and even the methodologically most sophisticated 'value free' empirical research 'harbors a political position. Scholars who are methodological nationalists not only take the boundaries of the nation-state for granted but also contribute to the reproduction of their state's projects' (Glick Schiller, Caglar and Guldbrandsen 2006: 613; Kurasawa 2007).

The research questions which arise, not least after the radicalization of social inequalities, because of the incongruity of boundaries (that is, when the congruence between political and socio-economic status dissolves) cannot even be posed, neither empirically, nor theoretically, nor politically, still less answered, within the framework of methodological nationalism. Territorial, state and economic, social boundaries certainly continue to exist, but they are no longer co-terminous! That triggers an avalanche of questions as to the *ambivalence* of co-national or multi-national spheres of action and situations, the *contingency* of non-congruent boundary constructions which have to be decoded as the result of collective and individual decisions and to the production and reproduction of *transnational* spheres of activity and inequality (Mau 2007; Vertovec 2006).

Only in the systematic shift from the national gaze to the cosmopolitan outlook do the big blind spots – and sources of error – of the methodological nationalism of individualization and class sociology become recognizable. This is because only in the framework of such a cosmopolitan sociology of inequality can the fundamental asymmetry of a perception of inequality trapped in the national gaze be uncovered, both in social terms and in terms of the perspective of social science. Until then, the 'legitimizing performance' of the national welfare state will not become even *visible*, i.e. the latter turns its attention exclusively *inwards* and thereby excludes transnational or global inequalities from the field of vision of the relatively privileged. Only when the *nation state principle of intra-national non-comparability* of social inequalities has been

established for social and political actors, as well as for the observer and research perspective of social science, is it possible for politics and sociology, in an unreflected coalition, to concentrate on social classes and their regulation in the internal national space. The 'functional performance' of the nation state in 'legitimizing' global inequalities derives not least from the fact that political comparisons can only be played out *intra*-nationally and never *inter*-nationally. Delegitimizing comparisons in turn also always assume national norms of equality. Consequently, the differences in income, for example, between Nigerians and Germans, South American women and Finnish women, Russians and Chinese, Turkish women and Korean women can be very great, even with the same qualifications and the same work, but this only becomes delegitimizing, when these comparisons are made within a common perceptual horizon of institutionalized equality. This can be given through membership of a nation or in a globally operating company, but also perhaps in 'European society' (see below).

At the same time methodological nationalism fails to recognize that the ability to cross borders and the possibility of doing so has become an essential resource of social inequality in a globalized world – whether through the possession of mobile capital or mobile cultural capital or whether, on the other hand, through being 'bound to place', e.g. through agricultural production or the territorial link to jobs with welfare state protection. Of prime importance is not continuous mobility, but the *option* of being able to exploit economic and cultural capital transnationally (Weiß 2005: 714).

Politics of framing

The following may be used to argue against this critique of the national introversion of class researchers. From world system theory (Wallerstein 1983) and dependency theory, to the broad field of development studies and the theorists of the globalization of classes such as Leslie Sklair (to mention only a few) there is a wealth of efforts and movements within sociology to research global inequalities. It is also true, that the global conditions of national inequalities, which are produced by factors like capital mobility, have long been on the research agendas of economists and social scientists. Is the critique of the methodological nationalism of the sociology of class, therefore, not in danger of forgetting and repressing research into global inequalities (see e.g. Martell 2007 as well as the overview in Kiely 2007)?

No. But in order to understand that we would have to return once again to the second order meta question: what is the appropriate frame, within which the first order questions, as to the distribution and regulation of material inequalities, can be addressed? The Who-question in other words, who are the relevant individuals who constitute the unit of comparison of social inequality? As far as this *politics of framing* is concerned, the distinction between

affirmative and *transformative* politics/policies (Fraser 2007) seems to me to be of central importance. The majority of social inequality researchers unquestioningly adopt the premises of international law, which assign individuals to national societies – incidentally without the least empirical evidence! – as the premise of nation state framing. In this case, therefore, it is a matter of an *affirmative* politics of framing. The clear-cut either/or of national and international, us and the others is adopted, theoretically and empirically, as the appropriate unit of social inequalities more or less without reflection. It is completely true that there is a great wealth of comparative international studies of social inequalities, but these too make use of nation state averages and don't even think of including in their comparisons individuals in inequality categories which transcend and mix up national borders. *Global* inequalities – as interesting and important as these may be – usually presume nation state averages. Three examples of the application of methodological nationalism may be distinguished: *national* framing, *international* comparative framing and *global* framing. These are all based on an unreflected affirmation of the political and legal grammar of national boundaries as the premise of the framing of social science research into inequality.

This is to be distinguished from the *cosmopolitan* outlook, which pursues an active *transformative* politics of framing. The nation state principle no longer answers the Who-question of social inequality. In a globalized world the nation state framing loses its aura of self-evidence. In the face of geo-political instabilities the experience of 'globality' spreads (Albrow, Robertson). That means, for example, decisions taken within one territorial state significantly alter the situations of people living beyond the borders of that state. The same is true of the decisions of companies, transnational enterprises, the communication and information flows of the internet, the speculators of casino capitalism, supranational organizations, global risks, transnational public spheres etc. etc. But because under conditions of cultural, economic and political globalization nation state boundaries increasingly resemble a Swiss cheese in which there are more holes than cheese, people in their socially unequal positions find themselves more vulnerable to transnational currents, forces and powers. Confronted by climate change, the spread of Aids, the incalculability of transnational terrorism and the unilateralism of the world's greatest military power more and more people find themselves exposed to the experience, that their conditions of life and survival are at least as much dependent on processes which penetrate the borders of nation states as on ones which appear within nation state control.

But the *grammar* of social inequality is changed as a result. A minimal critique of the methodological nationalism of the sociology of class can be formulated in the following way. In a globalized world, in which nation state boundaries are losing political, economic and cultural congruence and definition, the exclusive focus on class structures of the citizens of one nation state

soon leads to conflicts as to *who* pays as member, that is, *how* is the relevant social unit defined? The key question which then arises for methodological nationalism is how can the frames, the units of social inequalities be constructed across borders and between people and populations whose identities also include solidarities which are based on other interactive and participatory classifications than nations and political units?

Below I would like to at least sketch out a couple of answers to this question, by conceptually elucidating the social grammar of transnational, post-class specific forms of social inequality – (1) Inequalities of global risks, (2) pan-European inequalities and (3) border artists. The argument is this: the end of national class society is not the end of social inequality, but precisely the opposite, the birth of more radical, new ‘cosmopolitan’ forms of social inequality, to which (so far) there are no institutionalized answers (trade unions, welfare state).

IV. The inequality of global risks

I have argued, that the nation state principle is no longer in a position to adequately describe inequalities. What can replace it? My suggestion is the *side-effect principle*. This states that belonging to a unit of social inequality are persons, groups, populations, across nation state boundaries who are significantly affected in their situations and life opportunities by the consequences of the decisions and structures of others. Methodological nationalism can once again be defined from this viewpoint. Within its horizon the nation state principle coincides with the (side-) effect principle. This is precisely what no longer holds good in world risk society (climate change, terrorist threat, financial crisis). There are now not only national, but cosmopolitan horizons: the search for a new future-oriented, planetary ethics of responsibility which turns subjection to the decisions of others into a political issue and finds advocates in new cultural movements (Beck 2007).

Whoever wishes to uncover the relationship between world risk and social inequality must reveal the grammar of the concept of risk. Risk and social inequality, indeed, risk and power are two sides of the same coin. Risk presumes a decision, therefore a decision-maker, and produces a radical asymmetry between those who take, define the risks and profit from them, and those who are assigned to them, who have to suffer the ‘unforeseen side effects’ of the decisions of others, perhaps even pay for them with their lives, without having had the chance to be involved in the decision-making process. Where and for whom is the functionality, the attraction of the ‘globalization’ of risks? Here, too, a relationship between risk and risk, risk and power is evident. Often it is the case, that the danger is *exported*, either spatially – to countries, whose elites see an opportunity for themselves – or temporally – into the future of

unborn generations.¹⁶ National boundaries don't have to be removed for this flourishing export of dangers, rather their existence is a precondition of it. It's only because these walls, restricting sight and relevance, persist in people's heads and in law that what is done with deliberation remains 'latent' and a 'side effect'. Money is saved, if the risk is transported to a place where safety standards are low and the arm of the law cannot reach, in particular the arm of one's own national law. That is as true of the export of torture as it is of the export of waste, dangerous products and controversial research. Accordingly dangers are 'deported' – to low safety countries, low wage countries, low rights countries. To the cosmopolitan gaze the distribution of 'latent side-effects' follows the pattern of the exploitation of marginal, peripheral regions where the law is weak, because here civil rights are a foreign phrase and where political elites maintain their position of remaining largely unresisting 'side-effect countries' and of assuming the 'latent' 'maximization of dangers' in the interests of a maximization of profit.

The non-perception of risks or the unwillingness to perceive them increases with the lack of alternatives in human existence. The risks are passed on to a place where they are not appreciated or not taken seriously. The acceptance of dangers in these countries is not to be equated with agreement. Their concealment and the accompanying secrecy are the product of deprivation. Put differently, dangers are not accepted, they are imposed. And it goes unnoticed, thanks to the power to present processes as if nothing of importance is happening.

The dismissal of risks in states, in which poverty and illiteracy are especially widespread, does not mean, therefore, that these societies are not integrated into world risk society. In fact, it's the other way round. Thanks to the scarce resource of silence, which they offer as their specific form of wealth, they are the worst affected. There is a fatal attraction between poverty, social vulnerability, corruption and the accumulation of dangers. The poorest of the poor live in the blind spots which are the most dangerous death zones of world risk society.¹⁷

V. Pan-European inequalities

Regarded systematically it is only the cosmopolitan outlook which makes what national borders do visible and accessible to research. They institutionalize the incomparability of national spaces and in this way 'legitimize' transnational and global inequalities (Beck 2005: 22–34). Sociology, by doubling this institutionalized, inward-looking and isolating orientation places itself (unreflectedly) at the service of this 'legitimation'. National standards of equality exclude transnational inequalities; intra-national comparability of inequalities ensures international incomparability.

The pre-determined irrelevance of large global inequalities allows rich and powerful nation states to offload the risks of their decisions onto poor states (see above), a practice which is ultimately stabilized by the methodological nationalism of sociology which confirms and reinforces the national perspective of activities. The sociology of class based on it doubles the national closure and depicts itself and its object of research in accordance with a nation state 'nativist scholarship'. What elsewhere would be considered problematic in terms of scholarship is here unreflectedly elevated to the level of a methodological principle: self research. This autism of the national gaze comes into conflict with the processes of Europeanization. That raises the question, what transnational, pan-European dynamic of inequality is emerging from Europe's political integration (Beck and Grande 2007: ch. VI)?

With respect to this question, it's not only a matter of which conflicts are already emerging with Europeanization, but also, primarily the meta-theoretical second order question as to which categories and co-ordinates characterize the pan-European conflict dynamic (Kriesi and Grande 2006). Is it possible to simply assume that the narrative of classes, which developed in the frame of nation states and national societies, is also applicable at the European level? Hardly. But then how are the first order What-question and the second order Who-question of social inequality related within the framework of Europe as a whole?

The eastward expansion of the European Union does not mean the colonization of countries, nor are there likely to be unforeseeable migration flows, but something perhaps much more serious is taking place – whole countries are 'emigrating' to the EU. The framing of social inequality is therefore mutating. The second order question – who is unequal? – is in the process of being transformed. Voluntary collective immigration of states is an historically new phenomenon. What does that mean for the 'ethnic' self-definition of the European Union, and which has, thus far, been characterized by a kind of 'West European racism', which hardly needed to, or even could, see itself as such? Also, what does it mean for the pan-European structure of inequality and conflict?

Until now – and here the methodological nationalism of sociology is particularly in evidence – there has been a largely unreflected assumption: Europe must be understood as a plurality of societies, that is, *additively*. In other words, European society coincides with the national societies of Europe (France, Germany, the Benelux and Scandinavian countries, Spain, Portugal, Poland etc.). This conceptual limitation programmes the lack of comprehension with which sociology faces Europe, indeed the irrelevance of Europe for sociology and seals the Europe-blindness of sociology (Mau 2006). There are comparative studies which attempt to grasp 'Europeanization' through a methodical comparison of national societies, or in accordance with the model of the endogenous convergence of national societies, or, finally, as overlapping with

the previous approaches, in terms of shared social and historical features. But nowhere do the key questions of a macro-sociological European dynamic even come into view. How can a societal space and its dynamic, to which national societies belong, be understood when, at the same time, it does not itself obey the national society premises of social cohesion, cultural homogeneity, political participation and welfare state assistance (Heidenreich 2006; Bach 2004; Delanty and Rumford 2005)?

Europeanization is characterized by a meta-transformation, i.e., the basis of the boundary construction and division of labour between national and international politics is removed. Europeanization is, therefore, the classic historical example of a change in the form of social inequality through the de-limitation of national spaces. If, broadly speaking, one wishes to formulate a relationship between encapsulated nation state class analysis and the expansion and consolidation of the EU, then one could say that the more Europeanization there is, the more the principle of comparability replaces the principle of the incomparability of social inequality between nation state spaces, and the more the diversity of national cultures of inequality in Europe emerges within a European framing, the more explosive the pan-European dynamic of inequality becomes. Whereas in the nation state epoch of First Modernity the economic and social differences between the European countries could be mutually ignored, with progressive Europeanization these differences now collide.

As a result of the economic and political de-limitation of national spaces the methodological nationalism of class theory and sociology is now also subject to examination. The *supposed* strict separation of national and international spaces (whereby civil, political and social basic rights and equality standards were institutionalized in national spaces, and international spaces arose through the mutual recognition of sovereign states) is eroding. And with that the gates are for the first time being opened to Europe's volcanic landscapes of inequality. How do pan-European conflict dynamics interact with specific, regional, national and individual inequalities?

VI. Border artistes: agency, legitimacy and immigrant dynamics

The second order question, the Who-question, that explores the framing of social inequality, not only assumes the administrative gaze of the nation state's legal authority and its executive actors (border police, police, state prosecutors, courts etc.). The Who-question can also be directed against these actors of institutionalized defining power, but *from below*, actively through practices of border-transcending ways of life. Class sociology, which unquestioningly adopts the territorial nation state unit of inequality as the premise of its researches, quite overlooks the fact that the resource and capacity of 'border use', that is: to cross nation state boundaries or to instrumentalize them for the

accumulation of life chances, has become a key variable of social inequality in the globalized world.

While spatial relations are without doubt diverse, their influence on positions of social inequality can be reduced to two aspects. *Spatial autonomy* constitutes an advantage in itself. If spatial autonomy is compromised, the *quality of the spaces* to which an actor is limited or gains access is an important factor shaping positions of social inequality. (Weiß 2005: 714)

Several components are involved here:

First: Whoever belongs to a unit of social inequality, obeys not only an administrative definitional power (passport holder, citizen), but also emerges from the agency of active transnationalization *from below*. If it is true, that in Second Modernity borders blur and mingle, then the type of the ‘average (im)migrant’ is the embodiment of the blurring of borders between nations, states, legal orders and their contradictions. In order to survive, the average (im)migrant must become an *artiste of the border* (slipping under the border, using the border, setting the border, bridging the border etc.), and he or she can fall from the high wire of border use on which he or she is balancing. From the national perspective it is impossible to see the potentially criminal migrant as part of an avant garde of transnational mobility. Likewise, there is no thought, that these mobile populations are rehearsing a cosmopolitan form of existence; instead they appear recalcitrant, since they refuse assimilation.

Second: If one understands the capacity for border crossing, of border use as constitutive of transnational situations of inequality, then it is possible to show (as an initial step) how new kinds of radicalized hierarchies of inequality emerge beyond nation and class:

While the upper and some middle layers of world society extend their life-worlds to the globe, the lowest positions are affected by global dynamics, but reduced to their immediate surroundings in the opportunities for action. (Weiß 2005: 716)

Radicalization of transnational inequalities means that in the wealthy upper third of the world hierarchy the ‘polygamy of place’ is practised; if need be the rich elites can even privately finance their own protection from everyday violence. Conversely the exclusion of the excluded is sealed not least through their exclusion from the resources of border-transcending mobility (Bauman 2001; Castells 2003). In the broad middle ground it becomes clear that there is not only active but also passive (‘suffered’, ‘imposed’) transnationalization. With the porosity of nation state borders, thanks to information technology, there arise new possibilities of exchange and of competition in labour markets across national borders (Beck 2006; Mau 2007). Atkinson (2007: 359) argues transnationalization is only a minority problem. But this is not true, because

the immobile parts of the population are also affected by the transnationalization of inequality.

Third: In these ways of life, where border-crossing against possibilities are tested by poverty and wealth, *various nation state spaces of social inequality* intersect and penetrate one another. But typically the mobile individuals find themselves unequally placed in the various framings of social inequality. At the same time it is the case that the greater the spatial autonomy of individuals (family and ethnic groups), the less important the border becomes.

In this context, with respect to political status, Aihwa Ong talks of '*flexible citizenship*' (Ong 2002). She refers in particular to attempts by top Chinese entrepreneurs, managers, technocrats and business professionals to 'exploit shifting national rules of affiliation for investment, work and relocalization in a vast international diaspora as they . . . seek to evade, deflect and take advantage of political and economic conditions in different parts of the world' (Ong 2002: 174). Caroline H. Bledsoe (2004) provides a vivid example of strategic practices of border use: '*anchor babies*' in the USA. 'This term refers to children who, by virtue of their birth on US soil, become the means by which their families stake a future claim on legal US residence' (Bledsoe 2004: 98). Since anyone who is born on US territory is automatically granted American citizenship, and since at the age of 18 a citizen born in the USA has the option of uniting family members, the adult *anchor baby* becomes a social actor answering the Who-question of social inequality, in that he or she brings all kinds of family members into the country as legal citizens.¹⁸ More precisely, the unequal resource of border crossing and border use contains three components:

- (1) Anyone who disposes of the appropriate *economic or cultural capital*, which places him or her in a position to choose the optimum context for its realization, finds himself in a better position than those who (for whatever reason, e.g. agricultural ties to the land or welfare state ties to particular jobs) are bound to nation state frame and space in the development of their life chances (Weiß 2005).
- (2) In addition there are the *unintended instrumentalization opportunities of border regimes*. All attempts to make the politics of separation legally and militarily watertight, open up unwanted and un(fore)seen holes, which the resourceful and experienced know how to make use of, in order to assemble border-crossing forms of existence. As states respond, attempting to impose a clarity that will in turn allow them to impose restrictions, their efforts will inevitably create yet more loopholes and ambiguities of which people at the margins in turn will try to take advantage.
- (3) At best tolerated, often criminalized, the 'loop hole artistes' are *extremely functional*, even if they appear illegitimate or illegal in the national perspective. As Saskia Sassen (2006) demonstrates, there are contradictory strategies which promote migration from the periphery

and tacitly tolerate or even encourage the employment of immigrants, ethnic minorities and women in the highly segmented labour markets at the centre. Because the extra-functional qualifications, which migrants offer, combining social competences with a readiness to work for low wages and to accept contracts (to the extent that these exist at all) which provide little protection, they are extremely functional for certain segments of low skill sectoral labour markets. The transnationalization of capital, about which there is so much talk today, is complemented by a very restrictive transnationalization of cheap labour that is mostly not recognized and acknowledged for what it is: the model of an experimental cosmopolitanism *from below and out of impotence*, in that a minimum (level) of change of perspective, dialogic imagination and inventiveness in dealing with the contradictions inherent in the border regime become the condition of survival.

The new type of a migrant everyday cosmopolitan develops his abilities to deal with otherness through the border experiences of culturalization and ethnicization. In the receiving societies (im)migrants become, almost inevitably, experts in the cultural system of distinction, which turns them into ethnic others, above all in its banal manifestations in everyday life. On the basis of these experiences there emerges a reservoir of 'labels' for the migrants' everyday culture: e.g. for a temporary strategic self-ethnicization or for the many forms of 'ethno-mimicry', which are presented to multiculturalism in order to outwit it . . . Neither the pleasure nor the burden of difference is attached to this culture. Here culture and identity are not autonomous horizons, to be expanded in the interests of an education in world citizenship. They are, rather, inseparable from a long history of hegemonic cultural and identity politics, which is inevitably also part of a specific, subjective history. And hence this cosmopolitanism depicts no utopias of paradisaical, postnational conditions, but at best precarious heterotopias, which envisage the dream of a better life beyond the border quite practically and politically, within the terms of the doable. (Römhild 2007: 620)

VI. Prospect: The 'modernity dispute' in international sociology

Will Atkinson has publicly accused me of once again proclaiming 'the death of class'. I plead not guilty due to proven innocence, but turn the tables and accuse Atkinson and the sociologists of class, for whom he speaks, of having barricaded themselves in the (world society) idyll of welfare state class analysis and, as a result, struck by self-imposed blindness, have failed to recognize the transformation and radicalization of social inequalities in a globalized world.

Cosmopolitan forms of social inequalities should be confused neither with *global* inequalities nor with *international* inequalities. These are very different

notions – both in terms of their constitutive contents and with respect to their policy implications (Milanovic 2007; Pogge 2007; Thompson 2007; Held and Kaya 2007). The crucial difference between cosmopolitan forms of inequality on the one hand and global, international and national forms of inequality on the other lies in the choice of unit of reference, in the politics of framing. In one case, the dualism of national and international is taken for granted, in the other, it's cancelled. For the former, the relations of social inequality are located primarily *within* nations (or in the comparison between nations), in the case the dualism of national and international is cancelled, the relations of social inequality are located across borders, that is, conceptualized as a relation *between* nations.

Global inequalities follow the principle of *general universalism*, i.e. the horizon of equality and accordingly the unit of social inequalities includes *everyone*; no distinction is made between nationality or other classifications (such as profession, gender, class, ethnicity etc.). International inequalities follow the principle of *national particularism*. The national or international comparative sociology of inequality and class separates the national social structures and allocates them to national sociologies in accordance with methodological nationalism. In the case of national and international inequalities the answer to the Who-question, who determines who belongs in the sphere of politically relevant inequality?, accords with the authority of states. Without doubt, there is a need for a third conception with adequate recognition of the plurality of border-crossing relations of social inequalities across the globe.

Anyone who ignores these non-global and non-international but cosmopolitan transformations and radicalization of social inequalities and marches on in step with welfare state class analysis is not being true to the task of the sociologist, that is, to explain the sudden otherness of the society in which we live. Strict modernists will read from their highly sophisticated empirical data that the class paradigm of the modern national society has timeless authority and compelling, canonical validity. Here one comes up against a paradoxical vulnerability of modernity, its inability to consciously age and its skill, even as it grows older, it stays with the conventional data production. This way one can say sociology of modernity is covering a political position in favour of the values and ideologies of the nation state. Thus modern sociology, which once broke all taboos, has itself become a taboo. It must not be questioned and put in doubt by cosmopolitan alternatives. A modernism, which was once the embodiment of the future is today largely concerned to anaesthetize the curiosity which is so vital for sociology.

Smouldering under the surface of sociological routine is a paradigm dispute which runs across the established theoretical schools and which challenges anew the methodological conception of empirical social research, because it is sparked by the *historicity*, that is transience of fundamental concepts and fundamental institutions of modern society in the course of the modernization

of modernization. Ultimately at issue is, the extent to which sociology is equipped, intellectually and methodologically, to adequately understand and explain its object – the dynamic of a modern society which overthrows its own conceptual premises (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003; Beck and Lau 2005). Since the early 1980s I have been trying both to conceptually grasp this paradigm dispute and to encourage it, by distinguishing between *simple* (or *first*) and *reflexive* (or *second*) modernization. From the standpoint of the latter, the modernization of modernity, it is not the crises, but the successes of radicalized modernization which have fundamentally altered social and political landscapes worldwide and at great speed, overturning seemingly eternal basic categories like class and nation state. Routine breaks down in the face of these dramas of reflexive modernization. We are witnesses to the emergence of a new kind of capitalism, a new kind of internationality, new kinds of social inequalities, new kinds of nature, new kinds of subjectivity, new kinds of everyday co-existence with the excluded, indeed even a new kind of state organization, and it is precisely this kind of epochal transformation of meaning, which sociologists must understand, research and explain.

The other side in the debate – the majority – no matter to which theoretical school it belongs, generally perceives no sign of such a ‘meta transformation’ in the sense of a transformation of the frame of the transformation. It declares the ‘reflexive modernizers’ to be fantasists, mere journalists, essayists lacking empirical substance and evidence. They understand modernity as always having been a mixture of routine and drama¹⁹, as fields of activity, in which there are exceptions to continuing normality or simply anomalies.

My view, however, of the dramas of modernization at the beginning of the twenty-first century is also clearly distinct from those of Anthony Giddens and Alain Touraine. Giddens (1990) emphasizes, that the individual can benefit from the ever more abstract and globalized structures, which the development of modernity produces. Touraine (1992), on the other hand, fears that these structures are being increasingly and lastingly ‘hardened’ by scientific methods, so that the individual ultimately becomes an appendage of ever more rational production processes and leads a stunted existence as a ‘consumer unit’. To me the structures of (simple) modernity are very far from being as stable as Giddens anticipates or as Touraine fears. Exactly the opposite is true: they are eroding, disintegrating, and in the vacuum that arises the various players must learn – on an unfamiliar terrain of radicalizing cosmopolitan inequalities – to explore, without falling, their new sphere of activity in the context of uncertainties and not-knowing (and not being able to know).

I am sure, that if this subterranean paradigm dispute breaks out openly, and draws the attention of sociological journals and congresses, there will be a great commotion and many misunderstandings – but above all that it will be a revitalization of the sociological imagination, re-establishing the presence of sociology in society, its relevance for politics and public debate. It is to the

credit of Atkinson's lively and ironic attack on my voluntary and involuntary provisional arguments and exaggerations, that the silence about this 'modernity dispute' has now been publicly broken.

We are under the spell of a sociology, whose foundations were conceived and developed in the past hundred years. The first century of sociology is over. On the way into the second, which has now begun, the space of sociological imagination and research has to be opened up and determined anew, i.e. opened up to the *cosmopolitan constellation*. Learning about others is not simply an act of cosmopolitan open-mindedness but an integral part of learning about and understanding the reality of ourselves or even viewing ourselves as other. A cosmopolitan sociology (Beck and Sznaider 2006) means a sociology which reflects on the ontologized premises and dualisms of a nation state sociology – such as national and international, us and them, internal and external – in their significance for the grammar of the political and the social, as for the determination of the sociological field of investigation, and in this way gains a new sociological perspective, not least on the phenomena of social inequality. A cosmopolitan sociology clearly distinguishes itself from a universalist one, because it doesn't start out from something abstract (usually derived from a European historical experience and context, e.g. 'society' or 'world society' or 'world system' or the 'autonomous individual' etc.). Instead key concepts like contingency, ambivalence, interdependence, interconnectedness take centre stage along with the methodological questions posed by them. Cosmopolitan sociology, therefore, opens up indispensable new perspectives on seemingly isolated, familiar, local and national contexts. With this new 'cosmopolitan vision' it follows the empirical and methodological paths which other disciplines – such as contemporary anthropology, geography, ethnology – have already taken with enthusiasm.

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Notes

1. I would like to thank especially Jacob Arnoldi and Anja Weiß, also Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, Angela McRobbie, Peter A. Berger, Edgar Grande and Daniel Levy for their very helpful comments and references.

2. *Jenseits von Stand und Klasse* my initial essay on the individualization of social inequality was published almost 25 years ago.

3. The titles of the three books are *Power in the Global Age* (2005), *The Cosmopolitan*

Vision (2006) and (with Edgar Grande) *Cosmopolitan Europe* (2007); the three volumes appeared in German in 2002, 2004 and 2005.

4. Atkinson (2007): Abstract.

5. An example is the interesting study 'How individualised are the Dutch?' by Paul de Beer (2007). Here individualization is made operational with *detraditionalization*, *emancipation* and *heterogeneity*. But the message of the findings remains unclear (de Beer 2007: 397). Clarification might be provided by an initial inquiry into the

degree of institutionalized individualization in Holland (see below).

6. In earlier publications (drawing on Parsons), I have used the term 'institutionalized individualism'; that, however, mixes up the objective and the subjective dimension and leads to corresponding misunderstandings.

7. In the original version of the theory (1983; English translation 1992) I attributed individualization causally above all to the education system, educational reform; only subsequently did I extend causal attribution to the welfare state and its contemporary reforms.

8. After 25 years of research and debate some lack of clarity of the original version has been overcome. Now it is evident, not that the argument is ambiguous, but that reality is more complex; this is true, in particular, if one also takes into consideration the transformative power of risk distribution and transnationalization (see below).

9. Zygmunt Bauman sums up the ambivalence: 'The subjects of contemporary states are individuals by fate: the factors that constitute their individuality – confinement to individual resources and individual responsibility for the results of life choices – are not themselves matters of choice. We are all today "individuals *de jure*". This does not mean, though, that we are all "individuals *de facto*". More often than not, control over life is the way in which the story of life is told, rather than the way in which life is lived.' (Bauman 2001: 69; Bauman 2002, see also Schroer 2000 and Elliott and Lemert 2006)

10. These are the themes of the conceptually and empirically highly differentiated life course research; for recent work/research see Cosmo Howard (2007) or on specific topics Budgeon (2003), Elliott (2001), Furlong and Cartmel (1997), Mayer, K.U. (2004), Mills (2007), Mythen (2005), Nies (2007) and many others.

11. Nollmann and Strasser (2007) try to build a bridge between theories of individualization and class. 'Individualisation theorists argue that individuals no longer consider themselves as class members with a

common fate and destination. At the same time, empirical studies show a more or less unchanged effect of class membership on education and life chances. These two points of view do not necessarily indicate irreconcilable assumptions. Rather, they refer to two different objects of sociological research. Individualisation theorists refer to the causal assumptions people seem to show more often in their attitudes and behavior, whereas class researchers refer to causal knowledge we can see from outside as scientific observers' (Nollmann and Strasser 2007: 114). This original and challenging essay has two weaknesses: 1) it underestimates the contingency of subjective reactions; 2) it remains tied to methodological nationalism.

12. The 'super diversity' of class also contains, not least, persons with a higher education, whose educational capital is not recognized (Weiß 2005; Vertovec 2006).

13. This is, incidentally, also true of the very stimulating and in many respects clarifying discussion volume 'Contested Individualization' (2007) edited by Cosmo Howard.

14. See here also Nancy Fraser (2007), who suggests this in the context of 'reframing *justice* in a globalizing world'.

15. There are, however, initial reflections on this overlap and (inter)penetration of national society and world society position of social inequality in Wallerstein.

16. Many will perhaps think they see a contradiction here: On the one hand I maintain that there is the objective expansion and qualitative novelty of risks – humanly produced threats (side effects of civilizational advancement) which do not know state borders, class divisions, gender and ethnic differences etc., and are touching everybody equally with no privileged escape route. On the other hand, there's the inequality of global risks. Here, too, there is no inconsistency in the approach, only the complexity of reality: both are true.

17. I do take the criticism of Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert (2006) in their inspiring book *The New Individualism* about the violent nature of the risk society which is underdeveloped in my writings: 'Risk is too

gentle a word in a world where so many are caught without hope (...). The worlds today are not so much risky as they are *deadly*, and especially for those on the social and economic margins. Deadly worlds are violent worlds (...). There is a risk to be sure, but the ubiquity of violence in the world is something more.' (2006: 177 f)

18. 'A number of impoverished pregnant women every year try to reach the USA to give birth by undertaking dangerous crossings that parallel those in Europe: trekking across deserts, entering cargo containers,

and even crossing dangerous rivers. But the most striking cases may be wealthy Mexican women, who cross the border in the most routine manner, not just once, but multiple times, for prenatal checks with the physicians they have engaged to deliver them... In effect... the highly strategic use of just one birth can eventually transform an entire family into individuals with permanent legitimacy' (Bledsoe 2004: 98).

19. 'Routine' and 'drama' are the two concepts Richard Sennett (2007) introduces to analyse the dynamics of risk society.

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