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“[...] how can this science learn from the art it is working for?”¹
Considering what is at stake, we should not wait any longer. We cannot wait any longer, as after two theory-canonized (and thus institutionalized) generations of *Institutional Critique* in the 1970s and 1990s and a postscriptum in the 2000s a next phase of artistic institutional critique should now be made possible. We should not wait any longer, the stakes are too high.

The *Institutional Critique* that was reserved to the field of art, should first of all be received and installed *transversally*² to be effective beyond the field of art itself. Thus being effective for processes of institutionalization in other fields, such as that of science. As a result, this might involve deterritorializing effects on governmentalities. Secondly, from now on, the focus should be on transversally *instituent practices* and *performativities* of *Institutional Critique* itself – and no longer – like hitherto – on the institutions of institution³ and critique⁴. Thirdly, the transversal practices and performativities – without any doubt – have to unfold potentials that are *desubjugating*⁵ (instead of subjugating) potentials that also *design* and *care*. In final analysis, what are to be aimed at are transversally instituent practices and performativities with equally deterritorializing, desubjugating, designing as well as caring potentials.⁶

These reflections are based on theoretical as well as political and social necessities and on the understanding that institutional critique should no longer be considered primarily as a disciplined and disciplining genre of art⁷, but rather as transversal and desubjugating instituent practices and performativities that by proxy have an effect on the general public in its own interest. Herewith discussions on ethics and politics will be indispensable. The established governmental differences and their mechanics of power are being challenged by these

1 Burcu Doğramacı, “Kunstgeschichte migrantisch denken”, in: Eine Kunstgeschichte ist keine Kunstgeschichte. Kunstwissenschaftliche Perspektivierungen in Text und Bild, ed. Birte Kleine-Benne. Berlin: Logos 2024, pp. 127–136, here p. 127.

2 See the multilingual platform for research and publication *transversal* of the *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* (eipcp), <https://transversal.at> (accessed 02/28/2024).

3 Cf. Andrea Fraser: From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique. in: Artforum, vol. 44, no. 1, September 2005a, pp. 100–105. reprint in: Dispositiv-Erkundungen | Exploring Dispositifs, ed. Birte Kleine-Benne. Berlin: Logos, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.30819/5197>, pp. 111–118 (accessed 12/28/2023). Fraser, both performance artist and theorist of *Institutional Critique*, changed the line of argument of her speech *From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique* (Los Angeles, 2005) to *From Critique to Analyse* (Berlin, 2014). Fraser proposed that institutional critique (of art institutions) would become analysis of institutions, like the institution of art and beyond. Recently, Fraser prioritized to examine the “institution of art discourse” that would be “most responsible for policing the boundaries of legitimacy, for maintaining and reproducing hierarchies”. Alex Greenberger: The ARTnews Accord: Artists Lorraine O’Grady and Andrea Fraser Talk Art World Activism and the Limits of Institutional Critique. in: ARTnews, 06/17/2021, <https://artnews.com/art-news/artists/lorraine-ogrady-andrea-fraser-artists-institutional-critique-conversation-1234596040> (accessed 08/12/2022).

4 Cf. Michel Foucault: What is Critique? in: The Politics of Truth, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007; Judith Butler: What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue. in: transversal 05.2001, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0806/butler/en>; Irit Rogoff: From Criticism to Critique to Criticality. in: transversal, 01.2003, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en>; Helmut Draxler: Gefährliche Substanzen. Zum Verhältnis von Kritik und Kunst. Berlin: b_books, 2007 (accessed 02/22/2024).

5 Cf. Foucault 2007, loc. cit., p. 47: “critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.”

6 Foucault defines the task of the critical attitude towards the art of governing: “[...] as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, of finding a way to escape from them or, in any case, a way to displace them, with a basic distrust [...]”. Ibid., p. 44f.

7 Cf. Benjamin Buchloh: Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions. in: October, vol. 55, Winter 1990, pp. 105–143, https://monoskop.org/images/7/7e/Buchloh_Benjamin_HD_1990_Conceptual_Art_1962-1969_From_the_Aesthetic_of_Administration_to_the_Critique_of_Institution_s.pdf (accessed 03/01/2024); id.: Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art. in: Artforum, vol. 21, no. 1, September 1982, pp. 43–56; Andrea Fraser: In and Out of Place. in: Art in America, June 1988, pp. 122–129.

instituent practices, which can be artistic, curatorial, museological, architectonic, geographic, biotechnological, urban, techno-political, state... practices.⁸ The purpose of theory is to de-seal [ent-verschließen] itself towards its subject of research and uplift its methodological⁹, as well as its epistemological and praxeological potential. With these preliminary remarks, I also openly plead to consider art theory in the framework of a political and social usage and thus as a practice.¹⁰

The normativities and even the situations of the regime and their respective dispositifs have changed after the first and second generation of *Institutional Critique*. The societal processes of closure that could be observed after the 1990s and, since the 2000s, in a different manner than before, led to narrowing structures of governance of and by institutions. Not only did these closures reduce the negotiabilities of the political, but they set in motion far-reaching and provoking tectonic shifts. I am emphasizing here specially the perpetual efforts to discredit deconstruction and decolonization in a non-objective manner, showing hostility against plurality and diversity, closing the confidential social sphere and to abolishing the open societies.¹¹ Within a short span of time, major disruptive movements of resonance were and are activated, with the result that we find ourselves transferred into a new reality that, in view of dynamics, hardly coagulate into a reality. These new realities observably traverse the spheres of the digital, the fossile and the military¹² and are often only kept in shape by what has already been institutionalized. We should begin to explore our possibilities of planning, acting and building within our present governmentalities and their internalizations¹³ and to answer the urging questions of instituent practices that include *our* participation in the empowerment of the institutions themselves. Are these statements aporetic? They will not be merely aporetic, if we understand institutions no longer as institutionalized corporate bodies, but as instituent practices

8 The activities for example of Forensic Architecture, Assemble, Tania Bruguera, Adrian Piper, International Institute of Political Murder/Milo Rau, Jonas Staal, Zentrum für Politische Schönheit, as well as many socially-based collectives and organizations that were active at the *documenta fifteen* in Kassel 2022 as *lumbung*, for instance the Nhà Sàn Collective (NSC), the Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (ISTAR), the Komina Film a Rojava, the Jatiwangi art Factory (JaF) or the Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (ZK/U) are operating transversally, desubjugating, designing, as well as caring for and in the interest of the general public. I am also adding the shortlist for the Turner Prize 2021: Array Collective, Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.), Cooking Section, Gentle/Radical and Project Art Works.

9 Cf. Andrea Fraser: *Was ist Institutionskritik?*. in: *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 15, no. 59, September 2005b, pp. 86–89.

10 Recent art-historical research in the field of performance studies and governmentality studies are in line with these requirements. I agree with Laura M. Holzman’s definition of *Engaged Art History*: “An engaged art history with strong interdisciplinary roots has three primary features: it is rigorous, problem-oriented, and democratic.” Laura M. Holzman: *Cultivating an Engaged Art History from Interdisciplinary Roots*. in: *Socially Engaged Art History and Beyond. Alternative Approaches to the Theory and Practice of Art History*, ed. Cindy Persinger and Azar Rejaie. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43609-4>, pp. 33–48 (accessed 02/22/2024). Nevertheless, I would like to enhance and specify Holzman’s definition with the term of a *socially engaged art history*, cf. also Marcus Held and Birte Kleine-Benne: (Sozial engagierte) Künstler*innen & Theoretiker*innen, ent(- ver)schließen wir uns! in: *kritische berichte*, no. 2, 2022: Soziale Fragen heute, pp. 63–70, https://bkb.eyes2k.net/download/2022_Held-Kleine-Benne_kritische-berichte2.pdf (accessed 02/24/2024).

11 Foucault defined this as a state of emergency that was reactively defended by a dispositif. About the urgency as a strategic direction of the dispositif, cf. Michel Foucault: *Dispositive der Macht. Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit*. Berlin: Merve, 1978, p. 120.

12 Thank you to Erwin Liedke for our professional discussions.

13 Cf. also Geraldine Rauch and Jürgen Zimmerer: Die Demokratie muss auch in der Wissenschaft verteidigt werden. in: *jmwiarda*, 02/23/2024, <https://jmwiarda.de/2024/02/23/die-demokratie-muss-auch-in-der-wissenschaft-verteidigt-werden> (accessed 02/24/2024).

and performativities, and if we thus accept our involvements¹⁴, embodied internalizations and incorporations. They will not be aporetic, if our self-reflection will be at least three-partite: able to reflect and criticize, imbued by the conditions that rule or govern us, as well as caring for “the world“ – around us, the others and “the world” as a part of ourselves. In other words, we have to give up the dualism of inside/outside and the “divine trick”¹⁵ on several levels. Thus, institutional critique can be understood as critique of society, of social conditions and of science, as well as critique of the self and self-care and care for the democratic as democratizing processes¹⁶ – and all this at the age of its impossibility?¹⁷

A Variant of Art Historical Re-Reading

The prevailing canonized artistic genre of *Institutional Critique* is in-formed by art history and can be structured by an outline of three generations, respectively phases, which on the levels of production and reception are exemplified by the political events around 1968, 1989/1990 and 2001 (9/11). If reconstructed genealocially, I can retrace its history told so far, ruled within the aesthetic regime, in a short and transparent manner. But first of all I have to recall a very intransparent complex of knowledge, whose sediments I have to make visible archaeologically. I might also name this complex an institutionally constructed intransparency, comprised of primary and secondary texts, twisted axes of time, retrospective receptions, early historization, contradicting self-theoretizations, overlappings, retrospect circumscriptions, new negotiations, expectations and ideologies. This elaboration and archaeological work is or will be the actual gain of research. The reconstruction of a linear and periodically narrated history of *Institutional Critique* is rather plain, except for its restraining character. However, its theoretical receptions take place on different axes of time, using equivoke terms with antithetical semantics and implicit ideologies, referring to the respective localizations and references. The particular intertwined practices are: “the implementation of an intransparent complicatedness, a hermetics of language, a hermeneutic causation, a twisted self-historicizing chronologization that is supported by a combination of journalistic rhetorics, publicistic

14 Cf. Fraser 2005b, loc. cit., p. 89. According to Fraser, the difficulty of institutional critique – and of psychoanalysis – is defined by one’s self-involvement in their implementation, regardless of one’s conscious knowledge of this self-involvement. Therefore, if we criticize the institution of art, we always also criticize ourselves. [German translation: “Und dies macht Institutionskritik – wie auch Psychoanalyse – so ungemein schwierig, weil in die Inkraftsetzung von Verhältnissen zu intervenieren immer auch heißt, dass du selbst an ihrer Inkraftsetzung teilhast, wie bewusst du dir dessen auch immer sein magst.” Und weiter: “Wir sind die Institution Kunst: Der Gegenstand unserer Kritiken, unserer Angriffe, ist immer auch in uns selbst.”] Ibid.

15 Donna Haraway: *Situiertes Wissen. Die Wissenschaftsfrage im Feminismus und das Privileg einer partialen Perspektive*. in: Donna Haraway. *Die Neuerfindung der Natur. Primaten, Cyborgs und Frauen*, ed. Carmen Hammer and Immanuel Stieß. Frankfurt a. Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 1995, pp. 73–97.

16 I refer to the platform *Demokratie als unvollendeter Prozess*, curated by Okwui Enwezor for the *documenta 11*, 2002. Cf. id.: *Die Black Box*. in: *Documenta 11_Plattform 5*, exh. cat., Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002, pp. 42–55. See also the lecture of Martin Saar *Muss Demokratie demokratisiert werden?*, dated 17.05.2019, Frankfurt University of Applied Science, <https://deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/europaeische-union-demokratie-in-der-krise> (accessed 02/24/2024).

17 See the lecture of Jean-Luc Nancy 2016 in Berlin *Unser Zeitalter ist nicht mehr das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik* during the symposiums *Was ist Kritik?* See also Birte Kleine-Benne: Was ist Kritik, Teil x+1. in: *artlabor*, 01.02.2016, <https://artlabor.eyes2k.net/?p=2146> (accessed 02/24/2024). Irit Rogoff proposed, that we consider ourselves in the phase of cultural theory of *criticality*, that differs from previous phases of criticism and critique. Formulated with Hannah Arendt, “that we are what Hannah Arendt has termed ‘fellow sufferers’ of the very conditions we are critically examining”. Cf. Rogoff 2003, loc. cit. About the “mainstream of the critical”, cf. also Helmut Draxler: *The Habitus of the Critical. On the Limits of Reflexive Practice*. in: *transversal*, 03.2007, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0308/draxler/en> (accessed 03/01/2024).

structures of distribution and publication and by the instituting of a unambiguous consistent overall position.”¹⁸ An alliance of artists and art critics consensually cancelled the differences between a theory of critique and an art of critique; a critique of art was supposed to recreate an asymmetric relationship. Even the question of originality for the term of *Institutional Critique* is pars-pro-toto relevant as a subject of institutional critique.¹⁹

It is therefore my proposition that from its very beginning, *Institutional Critique* traversed its own practice of genreification, historization, theoretization and canonization. This way, *Institutional Critique* might be an inspiration for the starting point of an institutional critique that discusses dys-/functionalities, defense techniques, processes of decision making, politics of representation, as well as resistances, integrities and care responsibilities. *Institutional Critique* might as well inspire a postfundamentalistic research of discipline and regime that combines academic and aesthetic specializations with political theories; and it might inspire the unwritten history of practices of art-making that have not yet been subjected to any theoretical setting of the aesthetic regime, its premises, dialectics, oppositions and politics of terminology. Consequently it is not yet communicable, or only with difficulty. In final analysis, knowledge and power are inseparable. Thus, *Institutional Critique* can likewise be defined as a double strategy of both, a systemic hack and as a systemic crack. “Hackers build things, crackers break them.”²⁰ *Institutional Critique* confirms and revokes already made distinctions.²¹

The first generation of *Institutional Critique* in the 1960s and 1970s was retrospectively proclaimed in the mid 1980s and it was situated in the paradigm of deconstruction that prevailed since the 1960s as a radicalized continuation of the project of enlightenment in the field of sciences. *Institutional Critique* questioned and aesthetically deconstructed certainties and destroyed “evidences and universalities”²², especially the institution of the museum, which seemed to dominate the conditions for the production, reception, presentation and perception of art. *Institutional Critique* was mainly interested in the instituting of the topoi of the museum and of the White Cube²³, and their specific architectonic, spatial, contextual and social realities²⁴. Later it extended its art-systemic perspectives by including substantivized instances of the operating system of art, such

18 Birte Kleine-Benne: Auf das Ende des ästhetischen Regimes spekulieren ... in: Dispositiv-Erkundungen | Exploring Dispositifs, ed. Birte Kleine-Benne. Berlin: Logos, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.30819/5197>, pp. 157–192 (accessed 12/28/2023).

19 According to Graw eye-witnesses, whose work was subsumed under this label, could not recall its start and its circulation. [German translation: “Befragt man Augenzeugen, deren Arbeiten unter diesem Label subsumiert wurden, dann vermögen sie sich beim besten Willen nicht zu erinnern, wann es eigentlich aufkam und wer es in Umlauf brachte.”] Isabel Graw: Jenseits der Institutionskritik. Ein Vortrag im Los Angeles County Museum of Art. in: Texte zur Kunst, vol. 15, no. 59, September 2005, pp. 40–53.

20 Eric S. Raymond: How To Become a Hacker?, 2001, http://catb.org/esr/faqs/hacker-howto.html#what_is (accessed 02/28/2024).

21 With this statement I refer to George Spencer-Brown’s Axioms 1 and 2 of his theory of processes of form operations: “Axiom 1.The law of calling” (p. 1) is the “form of condensation” (p. 5). “Axiom 2. The law of Crossing” (p. 2) is the “form of Cancellation” (p. 5). Cf. George Spencer Brown: Laws of Form. New York: The Julian Press, 1979.

22 Foucault 1978, loc. cit., p. 19.

23 Cf. Brian O’Doherty: Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space. San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986. (first published 1976 in Artforum).

24 See, among others, Tony Bennett: The Exhibitionary Complex. in: The Birth of the Museum. history, theory, politics, ed. id. New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 59–88.

as galleries, magazines and exhibitions. This first generation, which is being associated with *Conceptual Art*²⁵ or with the context-sensitive examinations of the White Cube²⁶, was narratologically designed as a critically-distanced, anti-authoritarian and emancipatory *counter*-model. To date, art history creates a center of its master narrative with four male, white, US-American and Western European heroes. Till today, this standardization values those four, although at the same time, the canon itself was traversed by an institutional critique inherent to feminist practices, like those of Eleanor Antin, Lee Lozano, Adrian Piper, Martha Rosler and Mierle Laderman Ukeles.²⁷ They negotiated practices of identity, body and gender avant la lettre. Thus, the first Generation of *Institutional Critique* and its female and male authors became part of a canonized complex of knowledge and power which is relevant in the context of institutional critique.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, a second generation as another variant of institutional critique was proclaimed simultaneously. One would later define this generation as discussing the institution as a solution, instead of a problem, as it argued “rather *for* than against it”²⁸. The reason for this classification was that the second generation rejected the idealized position of critique from the outside. Many artistic, but also curatorial and journalistic activities of this second generation emphasized the “institutionalized ‘support system’”²⁹. They addressed the issue of the position and function of art in society, of its space of exhibition and its function in the management of the exhibitions, the practices of curating and collecting and its connection to the reception of art. Retrospectively, *Institutional Critique* of the 1990s/ and the beginning of the 2000s was confronted by a contrary conceptual turn that did not seem to concern the first generation: removed from an emphatic identification of art and critique approaching its ultimate renunciation, from the point of view of art critique itself. Art theory had equipped the first generation and, at its beginning, also the second generation with a critical narrative of liberation and emancipation, which became a critical narrative of oppression and crisis. Critique, especially critique of the arts, was generally suspected of collaborating with capitalism. Now, institutional critique was received as an affirmation of social, political and economic conditions. There where even discussions about “service-artists” and their self-instrumentalization within the “service industry”.³⁰ As Andrea Fraser has pointed out, “we are trapped in our field [...]”.³¹ From now on,

25 Cf. Peter Osborne, ed.: Conceptual Art. London/New York: Phaidon, 2002; Julia Bryan-Wilson: A Curriculum for Institutional Critique. Or the Professionalization of Conceptual Art. in: New Institutionalism. Verksted #1, 2003, ed. Jonas Ekeberg. Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003, pp. 89–109, <https://dokumen.tips/documents/julia-bryan-wilson-a-curriculum-for-institutional-critique.html> (accessed 02/26/2024). In Osborne 2002 *Institutional Critique* is represented in one of seven chapters, which itself contains ten selected essays, among others Buchloh 1990, loc. cit.

26 Cf. Wolfgang Kemp: Medienrevolution und Kunstwissenschaft. Unter und vor dem Einfluss der Digitalisierung. in: Die Zukunft des kunsthistorischen Publizierens. ed. Maria Effinger and Hubertus Kohle. Heidelberg: arthistoricum, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.663>, pp. 189–220, here p. 201 (accessed: 02/26/2024).

27 Some of these female artists’ texts were included into the anthology *Institutional Critique* of 2009, cf. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, ed.: Institutional Critique. An Anthology of Artist’s Writing. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009.

28 Simon Sheikh: Notes on Institutional Critique. in: transversal, 01.2006, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/sheikh/en> (accessed 02/22/2024).

29 Wolfgang Kemp: Zeitgenössische Kunst und ihre Betrachter. Positionen und Positionszuschreibungen. in: Zeitgenössische Kunst und ihre Betrachter, ed. id. Köln: Oktagon Verlag, 1996, pp. 13–43, here p. 30.

30 Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann: Reformmodelle. in: Das Museum als Arena. Institutionskritische Texte von KünstlerInnen, ed. Christian Kravagna/Kunsthau Bregenz. Köln: Verlag Walter König, 2001, pp. 166–173.

31 Fraser 2005a, loc. cit., p. 105.

theoretical interpretations of *Institutional Critique* are divisible into a time ‘before’ and ‘after’ – leading to complications of its reception. It is another question for research in institutional critique whether the actual cause of this shift was the scholarly widely quoted sociological study of 1999 by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello on the assimilatory powers of capitalism³².

The debates and postulates in the 2000s demanded a continuation of *Institutional Critique*. This phase of theory of institutional critique was labelled as a third generation (IC3³³), as “phase”³⁴ or “wave”³⁵, as a second period of institutional critique, it was also labeled as “phase-shift”³⁶, as Postscriptum of *Institutional Critique and After*³⁷ or as *New Institutionalism*³⁸. However, it was not possible to empirically define and thus genrefy an artistic finding.³⁹ In my opinion, these critiques could rather be considered self-prolonging alliances in the interest of a social critique that attempted a self-referential examination of institutions, also in the theory of art, and thus to methologically develop different variants of self-referentiality. Many found potential here, others,⁴⁰ like myself, tried a similar approach: the theoretical liberation of the genre of art in reference to the inherent politically effective practices of the governments of the aesthetic regime. This is to be recommended based on the empirical findings. But there is more at stake. For quite some time the question of disciplinary techniques of government and mechanics of power, such as the formation of a canon and of genre, has been relevant, as well as the question, whether institutional critique should or could be presupposed as a constituting part in any art practice that can be labeled as the artistic and that is immanently connected to the political.⁴¹ This evokes a critical survey of a formerly exclusive and excluding discipline. Therewith also no second period or third generation would even have been termed. Instead, in a logical and consistent manner,

32 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello: Le nouvel Ésprit du capitalisme. Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1999. Engl.: The New Spirit of Capitalism. London/New York: Verso, 2007.

33 Stephen Zepke: Towards an Ecology of Institutional Critique. in: transversal, 10.2007, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/zepke/en> (accessed 02/28/2024).

34 Hito Steyerl: The Institution of Critique. in: transversal, 01.2006, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/steyerl/en> (accessed 03/01/2024).

35 Sheikh 2006, loc. cit.

36 Brian Holmes: Extradisciplinary Investigations. Towards a New Critique of Institutions. Towards a New Critique of Institutions. in: transversal, 01.2007, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/holmes/en> (accessed 02/24/2024).

37 John C. Welchman, ed.: Institutional Critique and After. Geneva: JRP|Ringier, 2006.

38 Cf. Ekeberg 2003, loc. cit. Cf. also Nina Möntmann, ed.: Art and Its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006; Oliver Marchart: Hegemonie im Kunstfeld. Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Biennalisierung. Köln: oncurating.org, 2008.

39 See, among others, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh: Critical Reflections. in: Artforum International, vol. 35, no. 5, January 1997, pp. 68–69, p. 102, <https://artforum.com/features/critical-reflections-6-202025> (accessed 02/24/2024).

40 Since 2000 this subject area is being researched by the independent, transnational *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* (eipcp) in Vienna, <http://eipcp.net>, from 2005–2008, the above topic was discussed by the project *transform*, <https://transform.eipcp.net>. See the agenda of *transform*: <http://transform.eipcp.net/about/de.html>. I add the lecture series *Phantasma und Politik* from 2013 to 2015, in Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin, conceptualized by Helmut Draxler und Christoph Gürk, <https://hebbel-am-ufer.de/phantasma-und-politik>. See also the three-partite symposium *What is Criticism?* in Berlin in 2016 (<https://camera-austria.at/2016/01/was-ist-kritik-what-is-critique-international-symposium-in-berlin>) and Zurich (<https://e-flux.com/announcements/105823/international-symposium-what-is-critique-was-ist-kritik>). The introductory lecture by Jean-Luc Nancy was titled *Unser Zeitalter ist nicht mehr das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik*. See also Kleine-Benne 2016, loc. cit. and id.: Was ist Kritik?, Teil x+2. in: artlabor, 10.02.2016, <https://artlabor.eyes2k.net/?p=2234> (accessed 02/24/2024).

41 See also my lecture *Politisches im Künstlerischen* during the winter term 2019/2020 at the Institute for Art history of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, <https://bkb.eyes2k.net/V1LMU2019-20.html> (accessed 02/24/2024). Cf. also Oliver Marchart: Die politische Differenz. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010.

the conditions and normativities of what we define as art,⁴² as well as the normativities and regime conditions and their respective dispositifs would have begun to change.⁴³ Therefore, *Institutional Critique* can be considered as a precedent for shifts of the dispositif and thus as useful for the examination of the dispositifs, making the complex dynamic, inexplicable and intransparent conditions of our present meaningful.

Three preliminary aspects are worth mentioning as a result of this analysis: First of all, an art-scientific finding of interest is that the theoretical reception and discursive framing of *Institutional Critique* can be read as a theoretical subjugation, respectively as a non-occurring desubjugation of theory namely under the premises of the aesthetic regime.⁴⁴ In other words, the premises of the aesthetic regime could prevail, even though the artistic practices of institutional critique and their social dynamics and de-sealing readiness to cooperate had not belonged any longer to the deceptive politics of “As-if”⁴⁵ of the regime. In this regime, the dogmata of dominance of representation and absence of function have been and still are relevant. The theory of art itself, its procedures of judgement and improvement of attributions and paraphrases of artistic practices even led to a dismissal of the duty of care of art criticism in dealing with their own objects of research.⁴⁶ Second, my following thesis is the result of the findings above: there is not only a difference between the critique of art and the art of critique, but also a gap which has to be bridged by the theory itself, especially by critically observing the system of criteriology. This insight should also be discussed in the field of art theory combined with the insight that institutional critique as a genre demonstrates which political and social networks remain un(der)exposed, if art historiography is practiced merely as a narrative sequence of stiles and genres. Thirdly, this thesis leads to the understanding of institutional critique as a method,⁴⁷ attitude⁴⁸ or practice, instead of a material and element of art historiography and its genreification. Institutional critique would no longer be solely reserved and enclosed within the art and the field of art, but would be applicable transversally or “extradisciplinarily”⁴⁹ by the (art-)sciences. Thus, institutional critique could be applied in current times of crisis, for example in order to preserve democratizing practices of institutionalization;

42 According to Rancière, aesthetics is the name of a specific regime to identify art, rather than a discipline. [German translation: “‘Ästhetik’ ist nicht der Name einer Disziplin. Es ist der Name eines spezifischen Regimes der Identifizierung von Kunst.”] Jacques Rancière: Das Unbehagen in der Ästhetik, ed. Peter Engelmann. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2017, p. 18. [German translation: “Das ästhetische Regime der Kunst identifiziert Kunstwerke, die, wenn man so sagen kann, den Raum der möglichen sinnlichen Erfahrung ausloten und ver ändern.”] Id.: Ist Kunst widerständig? Trans. and ed. Frank Ruda and Jan Völker. Berlin: Merve, 2008, p. 43.

43 Cf. Kleine-Benne 2020, loc. cit.

44 Cf. Rancière 2007, loc. cit.

45 Rancière 2008, loc. cit., p. 27.

46 See p. ex. Martin Saar: Einführung. in: Texte zur Kunst, vol. 21, no. 81, März 2011, pp. 51–52, here p. 52. Therefore female and male artists of institutional critique thought about leaving the art world. Cf. Yilmaz Dziewior: Interview mit Andrea Fraser. in: Andrea Fraser. Works. 1984 to 2003, ed. Yilmaz Dziewior, exh. cat. Kunstverein Hamburg, Köln: DuMont, 2003, pp. 78–90.

47 Cf. Sönke Gau: Institutionskritik als Methode. Hegemonie und Kritik im künstlerischen Feld. Wien/Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2017, <https://medienarchiv.zhdk.ch/files/98f70a3a-8f22-416d-9a63-80bef588c31d> (accessed 02/22/2024).

48 Cf. Johannes Meinhardt: Institutionskritik. in: DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst, ed. Hubertus Butin. Köln: DuMont, 2002, pp. 126–130.

49 Holmes 2007, loc. cit.

it would thereby simultaneously be a movens and a goal. Thus, *Institutional Critique* could be comprehended as the artistic comparable to the political⁵⁰ and might convey ideas for social contributions of art practices.

Processes of Un-Learning, De-Learning and New-Learning:
An Attempt of Operationalization

In the following, continuing with the third aspect above concerning possible future research, the options in-formed by political theory are of interest, in order to enable the emancipatory transversal, de-sealing possibilities of self-transformation, following Foucault’s concept of critique, namely in the field of art as an institution and also in reference of its institutions. This way, particular interests of specialized research fields can be transcended. It remains an open question how “today” a “reflected intractability”⁵¹ could manifest itself. For this purpose, I propose a synthesis of past findings of artistic institutional critique and its art-theoretical receptions. For the presently relevant “transversally instituent practices and performativities with equally de-territorializing, desubjugating, designing as well as caring potentials”.⁵² I propose to test the following schematic and preliminary working formula: detachment plus involvement plus urgency plus methodology plus epistemology plus praxeology minus major.⁵³

The general implication of this synthesis is to learn from the hitherto research-based, situated, ecologically-oriented and processual working practices of the *Institutional Critique*, from its theorizations and its wounds, but also in a certain way, to unlearn those⁵⁴, just to learn anew, in order to unfold the next dimension and to encounter the governmentalities of our manifold presents. This means in detail: From the first generation one could learn, to step away, to keep distance, in order to unlearn this distance, to acknowledge the involvement in a desubjugating gesture, in order to begin to care⁵⁵ in simultaneous detachment and involvement. From the second generation it could be learned to accept the involvements and the

50 “We want to tentatively define these de-sealing examples as an extracted artificial, which has to be defined in a postfundamental way in reference to the conceptual difference between politics and the political (la/le politique, politics/the political) and which has to be understood in analogy to the political as episodic and processual, uncertain and unpredictable, non-representative and undisciplined, irritating and uncertain, situative and turbulent. The artificial is therefore itself responsible for the necessary deterritorialization of art.” [German translation: “Diese ent-verschließenden Beispiele möchten wir versuchsweise als ein abgerungenes Künstlerisches bezeichnen, das in Referenz zu der konzeptionellen Differenz zwischen der Politik und dem Politischen (la/le politique, politics/the political) postfundamentalistisch zu denken und in Analogie zum Politischen als Episodisches und Prozessuales, Ungewisses und Unvorhersehbares, Nichtrepräsentatives und Undiszipliniertes, Irritierendes und Unbestimmtes, Situatives und Turbulentes zu begreifen ist. Das Künstlerische selbst nimmt die so dringend erforderliche Deterritorialisierung von Kunst vor.”] Held/ Kleine-Benne 2022, loc. cit., p. 65.

51 Foucault 2007, loc. cit., p. 47.

52 I am quoting the beginning of this essay.

53 This argument was inspired by Deleuze/Guattari’s “n-1”, cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Rhizom. Berlin: Merve, 1977, p. 11: According to Deleuze/Guattari the one is only a part of multiplicity, if it can be subtracted. [German translation: “Das Eine ist nur dann ein Teil der Vielheit, wenn es von ihr abgezogen wird.”] I was also inspired by Deleuzes’ operative recommendation: “The complete critical operation consists of (1) deducting the stable elements, (2) putting everything in continuous variation, and also, consequently, (3) transposing everything in minor [...]” Gilles Deleuze: One Manifesto Less. in: Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought, ed. Timothy Murray. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 204–222.

54 Cf. Ariella Aïsha Azoulay: Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism. London and New York: Verso, 2019.

55 See also Karen Archey: After Institutions. Berlin: Floating Opera Press, 2022. This project of Archey, which was initiated during the COVID-19-pandemic views institution from the perspective of care, and institutional critique as a “praxis of care”. See also her lecture *After Institutions: Care and Change in Times of Crisis* 2021 in Amsterdam, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=gbARu1FooZE> (accessed 02/28/2024).

internalizations in order to unlearn wrong dualisms and oppositions (such as the uninvolved distance to institutions), as well as one’s own insensitivity and vulnerability. From the second generation and one of its theoretical interpretations one might also learn to acknowledge and to employ institutional critique as a methodology. The second generation might also teach us to consider that something – rarely unequivocal and transparent – will happen, if the prevailing “security within an available ontology”⁵⁶ is being put at stake. (This can be exemplified by intellectual, professional and other risks, it might also imply to put something into the foreground, into being present or truthful.) The postscriptum could teach us to accept the extradisciplinary necessity of a social critique and contrary to the “closure phantasms”⁵⁷ within the field of art not to fall into the trap of the aesthetic dispositifs, which lock themselves in lack of function, dominance of representation and desire for autonomy. In addition, institutional critique should be acknowledged as an epistemology, as a basis for the production of epistemai, and to reveal the limits of knowledge and of the knowable. Institutional critique could be defined as a praxeology that can be used to focus on instituent, instituting and institutionalizing practices and performativities.

More precisely: Institution would no longer be considered as the distanced, un/vulnerable object of research and observation. We would no longer be inescapably enclosed in the institution⁵⁸ and *Institutional Critique* would no longer “merely” be a methodology. Derived from Foucault’s question *What is Critique?*⁵⁹ Fraser asked *What is Institutional Critique?* and responded that it is a “methodology of critical, reflexive site-specificity”⁶⁰. I would like to enhance this methodological dimension by an institutional critique, that can be seen under the perspective of epistemology. Through this dimension and the resulting epistemological practices, institutional critique would be able to produce knowledge that is situated, ethical, moral, affective and embodied. Supplemented by a praxeological perspective, institutions could now be understood as practices and performativities. Viewed with a focus that is inspired by praxeological theoretization, as a consequence, knowledge, power, institutions, critique and subjects would be “de-naturalized and ‘de-essentialized’ and would instead be made visible as contingent structures” – and I add that they would be made visible as fragmented, un-uniform and ephemeral traces of embodiments – of a “discourse of an epoch whose hierarchical thought patterns are time and space-dependent and generated and traversed by power structures”⁶¹. From the view of postfundamentalism, our discussions will not be of institutions, but of institutionalizations, more specifically of instituent, instituting and institutionalizing practices and performativities. This also includes the implicit, intuitive, routinized *empraxis*, to be able to name the habitual, repetitive, retarding, compulsive, deceitful and violent⁶² aspects of institutions. And this also takes into account the institutionalized materializations and their conditions of origin, such as media and modes, architectures and algorithms.

56 Butler 2001, loc. cit.

57 Gerald Raunig: Institutent Practices. Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming, in: transversal, 01.2006, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/raunig/en> (accessed 02/02/2024).

58 Fraser 2005a, loc. cit., p. 104.

59 Foucault 2007, loc. cit.

60 Fraser 2005b, loc. cit., p. 87.

61 Gau 2017, loc. cit., p. 495.

62 Cf. Sara Ahmed: Complaint! Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021; id.: The Nonperformativity of Antiracism. in: Meridians, vol. 7, no. 1, 2006, pp. 104–126, <https://jstor.org/stable/40338719>, cf. also the Blog *Feminist Killjoy* by Ahmed: <https://feministkilljoys.com> (both links last accessed 02/24/2024).

“Learning from *Institutional Critique*” signifies the enhancements of the success formula “art-historical, art-critical, art-practical”⁶³ with an actualized dimension – which is today also the dimension of a semantically ambiguous failure [Versagen]: “Failure [Versagen] as a rejection, disappointment and being disappointed.” This approach might mobilize the multiple-institutionalized nexus of knowledge and power with the motivation to uncover its inherent contingencies. Within the power mechanics of institutionalized, with its abilities of perseverance, of retardation and silencing, this approach might also mobilize one’s own involvements (for example of language and perception), as well as (self-)performed embodiments, longings and pain tolerance.⁶⁴ This way we might try “*not* accepting as true [...] what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you it is true”⁶⁵. And this way we could try to be opposed⁶⁶ to existing rules, regulations and laws and to discover at the same time, how to performatively unify contradictions [Widersprechen] and truth-telling [Wahrsprechen].⁶⁷ In order to be able to assess and determine the potentials of the transforming processes of the governmental arts, Foucault’s methodological, epistemological and praxeological question of the *how*, *for whom* and *who* of the generated and designed processes of desubjugation could be called into mind⁶⁸ –I add to these the questions of *when*, *what* and *with whom*, and also *why not*. These questions would create many possibilities: firstly to specify the concrete individual case and therefore to both concretize and reconstruct it, secondly to make more precise and differentiate the in- and excluded, thirdly to operationalize and praxeologize, fourthly to practice terminological and ethical self-reflection and self-criticism, fifthly to pluralize through a collectivizing strategy and sixthly to implicitly include. This would enable an understanding of *Institutional Critique* not solely as an art historical genre, but as a program of action, maybe even as a curriculum,⁶⁹ that would make it possible for us to encounter the governmentalities of our present/s. This might sound complicated, but it is simply as complex as the current challenges that are presented to us.

This text of 2024 is the preliminary result of scientific research of several years within the infinite discourse of *Institutional Critique*.

Translation: Simone Rosenfelder and Birte Kleine-Benne

63 Kemp 2021, loc. cit. Kemp continues: „[...] und eine große Ausnahme.“

64 I am referring to my seminary *Complaintivism?* during the winter term 2021/2022 at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Faculty of Art and Design, Professorship History and Theory of Art. In this context we researched in different formats (text, video, photography, drawing, performance) on the processes of instituting and transformation, <https://cptv.artnextsociety.net> (accessed 03/01/2024).

65 Foucault 2007, loc. cit., p. 46.

66 Cf. ibd.

67 I am referring to my seminary *Crying Institute* during the winter term 2022/2023 at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Faculty of Art and Design, Professorship History and Theory of Art: <https://cryinginstitute.artnextsociety.net>. And I refer to the consequent project *Crying Classroom* in cooperation mit Nadja Kracunovic und Rand Ibrahim: <https://cryingclassroom.net> (both links last accessed 03/01/2024).

68 “how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them.” Foucault 2007, loc. cit., p. 44.

69 This was an announced, but for sound reasons not actualized plan of Julia Bryan-Wilson 2003, loc. cit.

