

Kocka, Jürgen

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Comment on the presentation by Johannes Hirschmeier

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Jürgen Kocka  
*University of Bielefeld*

Professor Checkland mentioned the question, which level of generalization might be appropriate for such a comparison?, and to me, too, this seems to be one of the crucial problems of our work. I think if one starts to compare three countries, which is more than most of us ever try, being content with two countries, the level of generalization must be higher, and so it makes much sense to me that Professor Hirschmeier selects ideal types of a relatively high level of generalization in order to use them for a framework for empirical research. I think it would be necessary or helpful to conceive of such

general concepts as ideal types, in the Max Weber sense of the term. They never are identical with reality but are supposed to hit something of the essentials of the reality which they describe; nevertheless they always imply a moment of choice, of selection according to the viewpoints and interests of the researcher. It may be the job of the historian to describe and explain the varying distances between these ideal types and the reality in different countries. This would be one of the methodological mechanisms by which one could perhaps reconcile a high level of abstraction with empirical work usually done by historians. One of the fruitful effects of such an ideal-types approach could be that empirical research would be more cooperative, more organized, and more directed toward fellow researchers so that common questions could be elaborated. I think that this could be one of the tasks of such a conference as this.

Now, having said that, I also might turn my attention to some of the distances between the ideal types presented by Professor Hirschmeier and some of the aspects of reality in Germany during this time. I'll make it short, with two or three points. Professor Hirschmeier, I think, is very correct when Re points out to us that the aristocracy, the bureaucracy and the educated middle classes were social strata in 19th' century Germany which in a way despised or slightly looked down on entrepreneurial activities and had a certain priority in terms of general social recognition and status compared with most entrepreneurs. However, not in contradiction to what Professor Hirschmeier has said, just as an accent, I would like to stress that this was no longer a corporate society. Corporatism had virtually broken down in Germany after two centuries of absolutism and reform from above; not too much ascribed status and ascribed success in my opinion was left in Germany during the time period under discussion. After all, a bureaucrat does not enjoy ascribed, but achieved status. He has to study, and he has to pass examinations and qualify for his rights and status; and it would be equally so with educated middle classes. Not so with aristocracy, of course. There was a general question implied in this. Although there was this status priority of non-entrepreneurial groups, entrepreneurs functioned very well in Germany during this time. The question is, do they really need a dominant status position in a society in order to perform economi-

cally well? And if I may pick up with something Professor Cochran said just before, maybe a certain disadvantage in terms of status may be one of the motivating factors behind entrepreneurial activities and striving.

Now my second point refers to the strategies of justification used by entrepreneurs, one of the points important in Professor Hirschmeier's paper. I agree with him that the adherence to feudal aristocratic attitudes was one of the tools used by very wealthy entrepreneurs to gain social status in the general public. But I also think that there are very important, perhaps even more important, other strategies of justification. It's hard to measure this. It was very common among German entrepreneurs to point to their individual achievements, especially vis-a-vis their workers. The reference to aristocratic attitudes was not very helpful for them in justifying their authority vis-a-vis the increasing opposition of the working class, but stressing their individual achievements, and also property and the rights of property, was very much used by them in a way very similar to what we hear about the United States and Britain. Also their reference to education was used increasingly as a sign of increased status within a society in which education was appreciated very highly. Also, as a third or fourth strategy of legitimization, German entrepreneurs liked to present themselves as modernizers—modernizers who were mainly responsible for reaching a high degree of national strength, of creating the prerequisites for national strength. (This would perhaps be comparable to Japanese examples.) In other words, this would pick up with what Professor Checkland said before. If you look closely at reality, you'll find three or four, maybe five strategies of justification, and a neat distinction between a German, an American and a Japanese ideal type would become a little more unclear.

My last point: I think that the attitude toward the state was really changing, as Professor Hirschmeier mentioned; and I think it is completely legitimate to stress more the static aspects and to take a snapshot of a thirty-year period. If you look on the period of a hundred years or, let's say, three quarters of a century, from the start of industrialization to World War I, there's a remarkable change in the attitude of entrepreneurs toward the state and govern-

ment, and there are very strong variations locally. If you look at the Rhenish entrepreneurs in the second third of the 19th century, partly because of economic reasons, there's a lot of opposition to the Prussian government, which is regarded as autocratic and feudal. After all, these were the men who supported the Revolution of 1848. But entrepreneurs increasingly reconciled themselves. Now this was different in Berlin of the same time, where their traditions of mercantilism and Prussian bureaucracy were much stronger and more influential on the attitudes of businessmen as well. However, even in the Rhineland, and also in other parts of Germany, businessmen reconciled themselves to most aspects of state policy after that policy became more and more favorable toward industrialization and businessmen's interests. I would say that the position of the state within the system of classes was changing over this time due to the increasing influence of business groups on the state government. And in this sense there is a change of attitudes as well. German businessmen, in spite of their relatively positive attitudes toward government and the state, nevertheless were eager to preserve their own sphere of disposition *vis-à-vis* government interventions. This also, I think, might be a difference compared with Japan. There are many examples where businessmen who tried to secure their right to decide about a matter as much as they wanted were confronted with certain parts of the government bureaucracy that tried to co-determine these decisions. Therefore, I think one should, on the one hand, not overstate the close relationship between German entrepreneurs and government bureaucracy, and one should see the dynamic process in the relationship between the two.