

Concept: *Re_thinking Participatory Critique?*

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“We will not return to normality, because normality was the problem.” This slogan which has gone viral was projected onto a building facade in Santiago de Chile during the mass uprisings last year as a protest action against the neoliberal regime of the Chilean government. Due to the direct effects of the outbreak of the pandemic, the campaign [#LaNormalidadEraElProblema](#) / [#NormalityWasTheProblem](#) gained relevance and urgency and has since then resonated throughout the world. In the context of social, economic and ecological inequities, such as the worsening of humanitarian emergencies, the question arises as to what participatory strategies are available or can or need to be developed in the face of the current dynamics of social fragmentation and isolation. What is at issue in view of rightwing populist appropriations and instrumentalizations of the current situation is to critically reflect on modes of action, infrastructures and techniques of forging solidary alliances in regard to their affective, media-related and social effects and transformational potentials. The analysis and use of critique as a practice and ethical stance offers options to negotiate positionings in the present. A “partaking critique” (teilhabende Kritik) seeks to take into account its own situatedness, privileges and normative posits and make them productive in a “negotiating and acting ‘with’.”

The workshop *Re_thinking Participatory Critique?* aims at questioning critique in regard to its theoretical and social dimensions and using the concept of a “partaking critique” to outline an updating perspective. In contrast to negative or affirmative critique or critique from the outside, critique is to be understood as a practice. Based on current aesthetic-activist practices, the goal is to mobilize critique beyond universalizing abstractions and totalizing gestures as productivity. In the horizon of this turn, critique always takes place in a situated and transversal manner, shifting the focus to partaking as the frame of relational processes. Partaking (Teilhabe) problematizes the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, addresses its infrastructural and institutional conditions and reflects its emergent modes of subjectivation. By favoring the concept of partaking over that of participation, processes of partaking, collectivizing and difference as well as questions of responsibility and involvement are brought to the fore.

Formulating a “partaking critique” underscores the necessity of recasting critique with the aim of providing a power-analytical and at once speculative approach to current practices of critique. This new perspective seeks to expose and make legible Eurocentric traditions and thus conceptions of critique obliged to the epistemology of modernity. The questioning of critique as “partaking” examines its modalities, qualities, possibilities, and efficacies in the sense of an engagement with and a positioning in the present. Based on specific artistic, media-related and activist practices, the modes of operation of a partaking critique are to be discussed in the globalized context of current ecological, social and political challenges. A perspective is to be developed and put up for debate that examines the potentialities and limits of a contemporary concept of critique along aesthetic, affective and more-than-human dimensions of concrete practices (of resistance). With an introductory keynote lecture and three thematic focuses, the workshop opens up a space for reflection and discussion serving to elaborate in a polyphonic process and specify in historical and theoretical terms aspects of a partaking critique.

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