

Interactive comment on “Critical geography in Germany: from exclusion to inclusion via internationalisation” by B. Belina et al.

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Critical geographies have enjoyed increasing popularity in German-language academic geography. The manuscript by Belina, Best and Naumann is important, timely and relevant to the audiences of Social Geography. It offers valuable insights into the history and practice of critical geographies in the German-language academic field. An English-speaking audience (in particular those English-speakers who do not also speak/read German) will benefit greatly from this English-language account of the struggles of geographers on the Left in German-language Geography and the current state of critical geographies in the German-language community.

Despite the importance and relevance of the paper, I think it could be strengthened in several respects. My main point is that the paper addresses an English-language

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readership that may not be familiar with the German context and the history and recent developments in German-language geography. For example, in English-language geography there has been a tension between radical geographers and critical geographers (e.g. a key American “radical” geographer whose work we included in a recent edited volume *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings* explicitly rejected the label “critical geography”). My impression is that “radicalism”/“radical” in its German translation (i.e. *Radikalismus/radikal*) and in a German context has quite different connotations than in English and the ‘Anglo-American’ context. The discussion on Marxism in German Geography is more explicit; perhaps the label “radical” is not even needed in your discussion. In a similar vein, the relations between Marxism and critical geography, which you address from p. 128 onward, could be mentioned earlier in the paper.

To use another example, you suggest on p. 128 (top para.) that Wirth is able to dismiss Marxism based on his position of power in the German academic system. This suggestion requires some elaboration, I think. Earlier (p. 123-124) you do explain that powerful professors have performed gate-keeping roles in respect to hiring and staffing questions. It is not clear, however, how exactly this power translates into the production of geographic knowledge and the ability to dismiss an intellectual viewpoint. An audience unfamiliar with the German academic system would appreciate more background information on this point. On a related note, the top paragraph on p. 136, discussing performance measures, seems to deal with professional practice, whereas the remainder of the paper is focused on scholarly knowledge production and reproduction. In the current version of the manuscript, it is not entirely clear to me how these two aspects of academic geography fit together.

A second point is that I am not convinced by your rejection of “Anglo-hegemony in German geography” (p. 137). On pp. 136-137, for example, you suggest that proponents of critical approaches have sought to catch up with ‘Anglo-American’ geographic discourses. Doesn’t this suggestion imply that ‘Anglo-American’ geography

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leads and German-language geography follows? Also, my impression is that the German-language critical geographies of the Neue Kulturgeographie have followed similar developments in English-language Geography associated with the New Cultural Geography and the so-called cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s. At issue here, I think, is who (i.e. which language community) possesses the power to articulate concepts, define trends and set agendas. If you do want to make a case for the independence of German (critical) geography, it would help the English-language readership if you explained how the Neue Kulturgeographie differs from and is not subordinate to the New Cultural Geography?

A few minor points: A recent issue of Geographische Revue also deals with critical geographies. Should this issue be added to the list on p. 119-118?

p. 127, line 9,10 does not make sense to me, should it be “Marxist geography” instead of “German geography”?

p. 134, line 15: “in/out discourse” do you mean “a discourse of inclusion and exclusion”?

To sum up, with a few revisions, this paper will make a valuable contribution to Social Geography.

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