

# Institutional Aesthetics: Path Dependencies in German Theatre

Im Rahmen des Forschungskolloquiums des Instituts für  
Theaterwissenschaft  
LMU München

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*Institutional Aesthetics: Path Dependencies in German Theatre*

Bianca Michaels

*Highly Improbable and Far-Reaching: Path Dependencies and Critical Junctures in the Institutional Development of German Theatre*

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# Institutional Aesthetics: Path Dependencies in German Theatre

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# Institutional Aesthetics

"institutions" = enduring entities that cannot be changed instantaneously or easily. = quality of persistence

„bureaucratic routinization“ (Max Weber)

Shannon Jackson, *Social Works : Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011)

*Performance Research* 20.4 (2015), ed. Gigi Argyropoulou and Hypatia Vourloumis

new-institutionalism

“an institution can only become enacted and active if it, like a garment or a house, finds someone who finds an interest in it.” Paul di Maggio

## What is path dependence?

„path dependence characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties.“ (James Mahoney, 2000)

„self-reinforcing and reactive sequences“  
*critical junctures: => adoption of a particular institutional arrangement*

"lock-in" => difficult to depart from path

Table 1. Typology of path-dependent explanations of institutional reproduction

	<i>Utilitarian explanation</i>	<i>Functional explanation</i>	<i>Power explanation</i>	<i>Legitimation explanation</i>
<i>Mechanism of reproduction</i>	Institution is reproduced through the rational cost-benefit assessments of actors	Institution is reproduced because it serves a function for an overall system	Institution is reproduced because it is supported by an elite group of actors	Institution is reproduced because actors believe it is morally just or appropriate
<i>Potential characteristics of institution</i>	Institution may be less efficient than previously available alternatives	Institution may be less functional than previously available alternatives	Institution may empower an elite group that was previously subordinate	Institution may be less consistent with values of actors than previously available alternatives
<i>Mechanism of change</i>	Increased competitive pressures; learning processes	Exogenous shock that transforms system needs	Weakening of elites and strengthening of subordinate groups	Changes in the values or subjective beliefs of actors

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*Mechanism of reproduction*

*Potential characteristics of institution*

*Mechanism of change*

Mahoney 2000, p.517



Claus Peymann,  
Berliner Ensemble



Frank Castorf  
Berliner Volksbühne



Karl Sibelius, Generalintendant, Trier



# Highly Improbable and Far-Reaching: Path Dependencies and Critical Junctures in the Institutional Development of German Theatre

Bianca Michaels

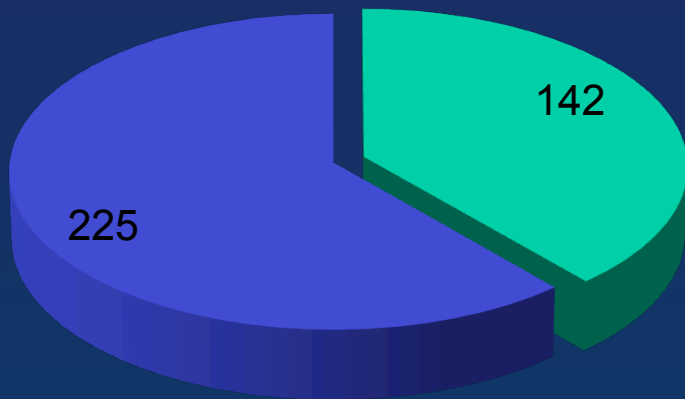
Institut für Theaterwissenschaft

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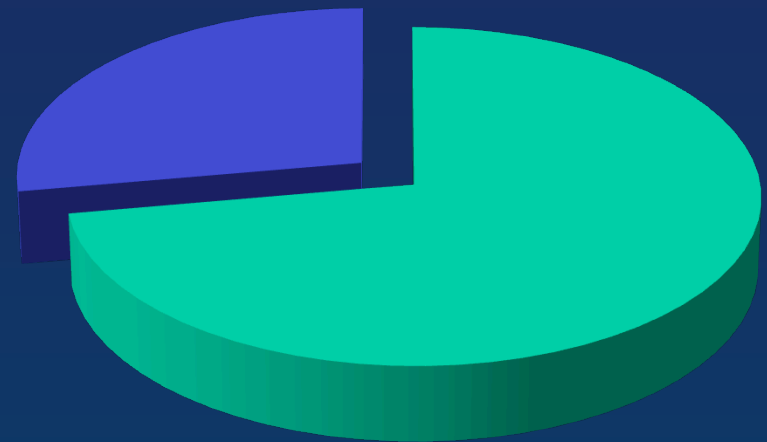
# Institution = Rules of the Game (Douglass North)



# Season 2013/14



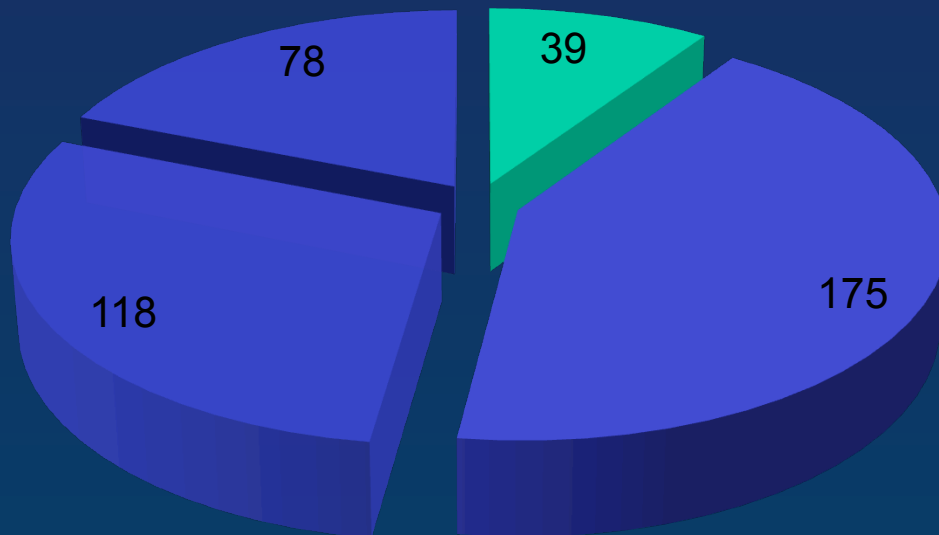
- Public Theatres (Stadt- and Staatstheatres)
- Private Theatres



- Attendance Public Theatres (20.739.949)
- Attendance Private Theatres (8.048.425)

Deutscher Bühnenverein: Theaterstatistik 2013/14, 2015

# Relation public Theatres – privately owned/run Theatres (1913)



- Court Theatres (39)
- Private Theatres (175)
- Stadttheater (owner: municipality) (118)
- Stadttheater (owner: private JSC) (78)

Kongress für Städtewesen, Düsseldorf 1913/Statistisches  
Jahrbuch Deutscher Städte 1913

# „Stadttheater“ in the 19th century

Business ventures that rest on gain and loss  
of the parties involved

„Unternehmungen, die auf Gewinn und  
Verlust der Beteiligten beruhen“

(Brockhaus Encyclopedia 1895)

# “Landauer Theater-Verein“ Joint-Stock-Company, 1841



# Reinforcing Mechanisms (Arthur, North)

high set-up costs

learning effects

coordination effects

adaptive expectations

# Increasing Returns

“Economists characterize such self-reinforcing sequences with the expression ‘increasing returns’ to highlight how the probability of further steps along a given path increases with each move down that path until an equilibrium point is reached.”

(Mahoney 2000: 512)



## Path Dependency

“Critical junctures are characterized by the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives. These junctures are ‘critical’ because once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available”

(Mahoney 2000. 513)

# Path Dependency

“A path-dependent sequence of economic changes is one of which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including happenings dominated by chance elements rather than systematic forces”

(David 1985:332)

# Effects of the Re-unification on the Opera Houses in East Germany

Sebastian Stauss

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# 0. In theory

**Table 1.3** Model of the Socialist and Capitalist Systems

<i>Model of the Socialist System</i>				
1⇒	2⇒	3⇒	4⇒	5⇒
Undivided power of the Marxist-Leninist Party	Dominant position of state and quasi-state ownership	Preponderance of bureaucratic coordination	Soft budget constraint; weak responsiveness to prices; plan bargaining; quantity drive	Chronic shortage economy; sellers' market; labor shortage; unemployment on the job
≠	≠	≠	≠	≠
<i>Model of the Capitalist System</i>				
1	2	3	4	5
Political power friendly to private property and the market	Dominant position of private property	Preponderance of market coordination	Hard budget constraint, strong responsiveness to prices	No chronic shortage; buyers' market; <i>chronic</i> unemployment; Fluctuations in the business cycle

Source: This figure is based on Kornai, Janos, "What the Change of the System from Socialism to Capitalism Does and Does Not Mean," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2000, 14 (1), p. 29.

1. A shift of property?
2. Changes in bureaucratic administration and coordination
3. Changing labour forces

# Diversification of Theatre Forms in Contemporary Theatre using the Example of the Munich Kammerspiele

Mara Kaeser

Institut für Theaterwissenschaft

LMU MUNICH

# Example Munich Kammerspiele



# Key Findings

1. The artistic director's theatrical philosophy
2. Artistic creation vs. organizational transformation
3. Institutional aesthetics



<http://www.inaes.kunstwissenschaften.uni-muenchen.de/index.html>

The screenshot displays the website for the inaes research center. The top navigation bar includes the LMU logo, the department name, and the inaes logo. A search bar is located below the navigation. The main content area is divided into a left sidebar with navigation links (DAS FORSCHUNGSZENTRUM, LAUFENDE PROJEKTE, NEWS / EVENTS, PUBLIKATIONEN, TEAM, KOOPERATIONSPARTNER, KONTAKT) and a main content area. The main content area features a large image of the Oslo Opera House and a section titled 'News / Events' listing several recent events with dates and brief descriptions.

**Navigation and Search:**

- Search: Google Benutzerdefinierte Suche
- URL: www.lmu.de
- Menu: Fak. Geschichts- u. Kunstwissenschaften | Department Kunstwissenschaften

**Left Sidebar:**

- DAS FORSCHUNGSZENTRUM
- LAUFENDE PROJEKTE
- NEWS / EVENTS
- PUBLIKATIONEN
- TEAM
- KOOPERATIONSPARTNER
- KONTAKT

**Main Content Area:**

Forschungszentrum Institutionelle Ästhetik (inaes)

**News / Events:**

- 21.12.2016 12:00 Uhr – 14:00 Uhr  
**Panel bei Forschungskolloquium in der twm**  
Vorstellung des inaes-Forschungszentrums und Vorträge [mehr](#)
- 04.11.2016  
**inaes bei Jahrestagung der Gesellschaft für Theaterwissenschaft**  
Perspektiven einer institutionellen Kritik des Theaters [mehr](#)
- 31.08.2016  
**"Unter Übermensch - Charismatische Herrschaft in der Kunst"**  
SZ-Beitrag von Prof. Dr. Balme [mehr](#)
- 17.06.2016  
**Panel bei Jahrestagung der IFTR in Stockholm**  
inaes präsentiert vier Vorträge zur Pfadabhängigkeit [mehr](#)
- 08.04.2016 14:30 Uhr – 16:00 Uhr  
**Methoden-Workshop mit Prof. Dr. Axel Haunschild, Universität Hannover**  
Workshop für twm-Lehrende [mehr](#)

**Footer:**

Die Theaterwissenschaft München untersucht im Rahmen von „inaes“ die wechse Ästhetik im Gegenwartstheater. Analysiert wird die Verschränkung von Produktion Rahmenbedingungen und daraus resultierender Ästhetik.