

# Austrian Academic Publishing in Sociology

*A Critical Review*

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**abstract:** This overview of the publication market for sociologists in Austria also examines a few recent publications by Austrian sociologists. Writing in German, Austrian sociologists are highly dependent on the market in neighbouring Germany, where approximately one-third of the books written by Austrians are published. Particular deficiencies of books by Austrians published in Austria are careless editing, indexing and copy editing. Among types of publication, most common are volumes of collected papers and monographs. A small number of publications attempt 'diagnoses of the era', addressing a larger audience. Core areas are the history of sociology and the humanities, immigration and the labour market

**keywords:** history of sociology ♦ publishing ♦ sociology in Austria ♦ sociology of science ♦ sociology of sociology

Over the last four decades, sociology has developed in Austria slowly but increasingly. Five universities offer full study programmes in sociology; other universities – there are all in all 22 public and some smaller private universities accredited in Austria – offer sociology courses for other curricula. Twenty-two full professors, more than twice as many associate professors, and even more assistant professors and lecturers teach at universities.<sup>1</sup> About a dozen research units exist on the margins of the academic system or outside it. Some get basic support from the state, or even from international bodies, others depend on their own luck in contract research, or in succeeding in the EU research business. The Austrian Sociological Association has about 500 members, including graduate students (Fleck, 1994, 2002; Nowotny and Fleck, 1993).

Let us start with a look at the publication market. Four sociological journals are edited in Austria at the moment: in 1976 the *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* was founded, which irregularly publishes *Sonderhefte* too;<sup>2</sup> the *SWS-Rundschau* has been published under this title since 1987;<sup>3</sup> *Innovation – The European Journal of Social Science Research* was launched in 1988;<sup>4</sup> and *Angewandte Sozialforschung*, which goes back to 1968, is issued very irregularly. Three of the journals publish almost exclusively in German. In addition, some research institutes publish yearbooks; the two most widely distributed are edited by the Academy of Science's Institute for Demography, and by the independent Institut für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie.<sup>5</sup> Several specialized websites offer data and to a lesser degree publications. The Graz-based Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich developed websites on *Klassiker der Soziologie*, the Marienthal study, Marie Jahoda, Ernest Manheim and Exiled Sociologists.<sup>6</sup> The Viennese WISDOM (Wiener Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Dokumentation und Methodik)<sup>7</sup> serves as a depository for data sets, and sociologists from the University of Linz have created Hyper-Bourdieu, Hyper-Elias and Hyper-Geertz – primarily consisting of detailed bibliographies of these three social science heroes.<sup>8</sup>

Particularly consequential are the changes in the publishing business. There is no publishing house devoted to sociology or to the social sciences exclusively, and there is nothing comparable to the university presses in the Anglophone countries. Some of the traditional houses still exist, now mostly owned by German companies. If they publish academic books at all they prefer the humanities; only a few run small sociology series. All publishing companies are private enterprises, but heavily dependent on public subsidies. This pattern has significant consequences because publishers negotiate with prospective authors only about the amount of money needed but arrange neither reviewing of proposals or manuscripts nor simple editorial work, very often not even copy editing. Poorly prepared books are the result.<sup>9</sup>

Books do not play a big role in academic careers. The eye of the needle is still the *Habilitation* (or second degree after the PhD) and to enter the kingdom of academia one has to please a small group of internal examiners, where the so-called *Habilitations-Vater* (father of the habilitation) acts as patron. In Austria, publishing books is almost a hobby for those who have passed the *rite de passage* of the *Habilitation* prior to publishing their research and at best, it merely boosts their reputation.<sup>10</sup>

Another feature is the production of *Festschriften* by disciples, friends and beneficiaries of an influential individual. Such collections of papers presented at an anniversary seldom offer interesting reading but do disclose networks. Leopold Rosenmayr, who held the chair in sociology at the University of Vienna for nearly half a century, was given a birthday conference when he turned 75, and the *Festschrift* was published five

years later, just in time for the next anniversary (Amann and Majce, 2005). Rosenmayr's specialization for many years, sociology of ageing, found some followers (Amann, 2000; Eder et al., 2009). If such a volume appears after a scholar's death this confirms that the deceased not only had mourning friends but left them something to think about further; Hans Georg Zilian being one example (Hödl et al., 2007).

Because of the nature of the publishing market, one cannot trust the publishing house or the authors in advance. A new book may have come out only because someone collected enough money for it from his close friends. As a tax-payer – all the subsidies being finally paid by them – and as a sociologist, one is better off to refrain from ordering a book without background knowledge. The numbers of copies sold are now down to less than 500 on average.

A handful of sociologists are public figures because newspapers have opened their op-ed pages to them or even invited some to act as regular columnists. Korom investigated a sample of 100 public intellectuals and found that those who fashioned themselves as 'synthetic intellectuals', or experts, do better than partisan intellectuals (Korom, 2008). Outside the academic world, the best known sociologist is Roland Girtler, who regularly fills two pages in the weekend magazine of the largest yellow press newspaper, reporting about wandering around as a 'cultural study tramp'. He visited real tramps, interviewed prostitutes, accompanied police officers on duty, spent time with members of the German minority who remained in Romania, followed the paths of poachers, socialized with the nobility and shared a room with a criminal pimp (only in a hospital). Sociologically, Girtler's studies might lack a great deal: there is rarely any discussion of the scholarly literature, the fieldwork is often not well documented, the methodology is simplistic and the interpretations are usually short of any impact from sociology. The main message of all his writings is that all people do have a culture of their own and want to be seen as honourable persons (see, e.g., Girtler, 2008). Some of his admirers have, however, produced a 'Best of' volume (Girtler, 2006).

Ordinary folk from academic sociology produce more boring texts, at least in the eyes of the audience, and sell less. This is even unfortunately true for those Austrian sociologists who follow Karl Mannheim in providing diagnoses of our time. Manfred Prisching's books are issued by a German publisher and he subtitled his last two books 'essays' to invite a larger audience to hear what he has to say about consumerism (Prisching, 2009) and the tensions between *Bildung* (meaning both education but in particular worldliness and knowledgeability) and the demands of the larger society (Prisching, 2008). Amann's essay discusses the logics of global struggles (Amann, 2008), and Haller raises his voice in the debate on the EU and its lack of democratic participation (Haller, 2008b, 2009).

Nowotny wrote an essay with a molecular scientist and managed to place it with the still leading German publisher Suhrkamp, which reaches a much wider audience than the competitors. Consequences of biotechnology for understanding individuals are the core of their small book (Nowotny and Testa, 2009). Summing up his research on unemployment and the paradoxes of the labour market, the late Zilian (2005) put forward the idea that outsiders have to struggle for survival in a 'jest society'.

Textbooks usually sell well because here Say's law applies: 'supply creates its own demand'. Textbooks in Austria focus on the historical development of the field (e.g. Amann, 1996; Mikl-Horke, 2001). Since it derives from the English original, Giddens et al. (2009) resembles the Anglo-American style. Other textbooks address readers interested in particular parts of sociology: Morel et al. (8th ed., 2007) is still widely used as an introduction to the main directions in sociological theory. 'Teutonic' contributions get much more recognition than developments elsewhere or more recent ones. For example, rational choice, theory construction à la Stinchcombe, grounded theory or the contributions of Tilly or Collins are not covered, nor are Bourdieu, Giddens or Bauman. An interesting small textbook edited by Forster (2008) offers short chapters on what is in German still called hyphenated-sociology: age, arts, family, media, migration, urban and regional, tourism, sports, science, just to cite half the headings.

As indicated before, the historical past plays an important role both in Austria at large but also in sociology. This relation to the past, however, does not always evoke pride. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that the history of sociology is one of Austrian sociology's strengths. The authors' mindsets range from traditional national pride-ism down to shame about what happened to Austria in the 20th century, and the analytic approaches are distributed along the axis of philosophy of ideas at one pole and sociological analysis of sociology's past at the other. Custodians of Austria's rich past are assembled in a huge series of edited volumes titled appropriately *Geschichte der österreichischen Humanwissenschaften* (Acham, 1999–2006). The field defined as 'the human sciences' ranges from medicine to the history of the Middle Ages, from philosophy to economics. In this field, 'Austria' is still as large as it was in the past, and an Austrian is anyone who was born within the changing boundaries of the state. The absence of a common methodology or research strategy is a real deficit. Surprisingly, most of Acham's contributors avoid saying more than a few words on the role anti-Semitism and Nazism played in the first half of the 20th century. Autobiographies by Austrian sociologists are a rarity; the only scholar who does not hesitate to reminisce about his past as a young man is Rosenmayr (2008). At the centre of a historical-empirical study by Fleck (2007) is what he calls a collective biography of more than 800 German-speaking social scientists. Comparing German and Austrian social scientists, he found that

the emigration rate of the Austrians was much higher than that of the Germans, and the former did better in exile than their German colleagues. At least some exiled German social scientists returned to their country of origin, whereas Austria's Second Republic did not invite émigrés to return and those who did come back were not really welcome. Given the small size of the country it comes as a surprise that authors do not pay attention to one another. Weiler (2006) presents a comprehensive history of the beginnings of anthropology, and published several other outstanding papers before his untimely death; it is therefore rather astonishing to come across an edited volume on Franz Boas (Pöhl and Tilg, 2009) where neither Weiler's book nor his other papers are given any credit. Müller (2008) collected all available information on the famous study of the unemployed in Marienthal (Jahoda et al., 2002).

Since Austria produced and expelled such a huge number of sociologists, it is not astonishing that some of the most outstanding scholars found devoted disciples abroad too. Sometimes foreigners pay more and more serious tribute to their heroes. This is the case with the Czech aficionados of Lazarsfeld's methodology (Jeřábek and Soukup, 2008), and even more so in the case of Germany's admirers of Alfred Schütz. Copies of Schütz's *Nachlass* (posthumous works) are stored at the University of Constance where his Collected Works is under preparation. Two offspring of the project are the short introduction to Schütz (Endreß, 2006) and the results of the publication of the correspondence between Schütz and his fellow émigré from Vienna, Eric Voegelin (Schütz and Voegelin, 2004). Whereas I am somewhat critical of the German obsession with Collected Works (such enterprises invite readers to follow how an author finally arrived at his propositions instead of debating what he has to say), I have to admit that both the introduction and in particular the volume of correspondence make fine reading. Schützians will obviously learn something from the papers written before the *Sinnhafte Aufbau* appeared in 1932 (Schütz, 2006). Fairness dictates citing that at least two Austrians are part of the Schütz camp, one co-edited the Schütz-Voegelin, and another one is responsible for one of the planned nine volumes (in 12 books!) of Schütz's Works. Compared with the Schütz Mountain the Lazarsfeld Hill is much smaller, too small in the eyes of some observers. At the moment, only a single book by this outstanding empirical social researcher and methodologist is available in German (Lazarsfeld, 2007).

Much less attention than to the great past is dedicated to the dark side of history. Sociological analyses of Nazism are rare. Paul Neurath's recently published PhD thesis which he submitted to Columbia University in 1943 is a gem (Neurath, 2004, 2005). As an eye-witness sociologist, Neurath analyses the inside of two concentration camps and since this text was written much before the current better known studies, it provides

perspectives that are lacking there. Ziegler (2000) and Kannonier-Finster (2004) offer detailed portraits of individual and family dynamics of coming to terms with the dark past of Nazism. However, Austrian sociologists are by no means ahistorical; at least those who follow Elias as their master have contributed interesting comparative studies on the civilizing process (Kuzmics and Axtmann, 2007) and the different trajectories of the death penalty in Austria and England (Reicher, 2003). They refrain, however, from applying Elias's analytical instruments to Austria's cruel 20th century. Nearly the same is true for another persuasively argued monograph on the relation between literature and sociology where the cases under investigation are mainly drawn from the long 19th century (Kuzmics and Mozetič, 2003).

For most of its practitioners, sociology is the science of contemporary society and this applies to Austrian sociologists too. Based on survey research, there are several multi-authored reports at hand: Schulz et al. (2005) results from a collaboration of Austrians within the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme); Friesl et al. (2009) is part of the European Values Study. Both books aim to be accessible to lay readers. Schulz et al. are more concerned with up-to-date statistical analyses whereas Friesl et al. wants to be an 'empirical primer', which results in some sociological shortcomings. *Die österreichische Gesellschaft* (Haller, 2008a) provides users with a detailed analysis of patterns of social mobility; *Österreichische Lebensstile* (Richter, 2006) is a collection of previously published papers. Common to all these studies is a lack of an institutional portrait of Austrian society, and this is a pity. Since Austrian students do not have any contact with social studies in secondary schools, first year university students are severely unprepared for understanding the major institutional patterns of their own society. Steinert and Resch (2009) offer a portrait of capitalism as a mode of production as an introduction.

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Austria experienced an increase in the number of legal and illegal immigrants. As a consequence, the share of foreign-born inhabitants is now as high as in traditional immigrant societies. Around 13 percent of those living in Austria were born elsewhere. The Ministry for Science and Research commissioned a collaborative research project on xenophobia. The findings are assembled in a multi-volume series (Bauer et al., 2002; Berghold et al., 2000; Faßmann et al., 2002; Liebhart et al., 2002; Van Dijk and Wodak, 2000; Volf and Bauböck, 2001). Migration continues to draw the attention of sociologists and other social scientists. A kind of follow-up to the xenophobia series is the 2. *Österreichische Migrations- und Integrationsbericht 2001–2006* (Faßmann, 2007). Besides the fact that Islam was recognized as an official religion back in the days of the multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire, Muslims did not get much attention during the 20th century in Austria. A recent PhD thesis

stirred up something of a public outcry because the author claimed that the vast majority of Muslim religion teachers, who are paid by the Austrian government, hold undemocratic views (Khorchide, 2009). Other studies, PhD theses, have drawn a more detached picture. Ornig (2006) interviewed young Austrians of Muslim conviction and Burtscher (2009) analysed the difficult process of becoming an established member in a tensely integrated society. A content analysis of Austrian secondary school textbooks shows that there is still evidence of racism, xenophobia, etc. (Markom and Weinhäupl, 2007). The Austrian school system has very often been singled out for not being able to serve those pupils coming from a social background which lacks cultural capital. Telling support for the truth of Bourdieu's perspective is offered by a detailed study of those young people who were forced to leave their countries of origin during the Nazi years: the authors of *What Happened to the Children who Fled Nazi Persecution* (Sonnert and Holton, 2006, 2008) make clear that the only 'thing' that these kids were able to bring with them was their cultural capital. Recent support of the crucial role schools play in the integration process of foreign-born children results from the famous PISA studies: children with what is now called an immigrant background are discriminated against, period (Haider and Schreiner, 2006). A small study by sociology students shows where immigrants can find work: as paper delivery boys, because the big media houses persuaded the members of parliament to vote for an exception to the usual ban on the employment of foreigners in the Austrian labour market (Aberer et al., 2006).

Immigrants are not the only people who are poor. *Armut in Österreich* is a handbook on this topic (Dimmel et al., 2008) and some of the contributors to this valuable companion contributed to another edited volume on the consequences of neoliberalism and the increasing tendencies toward surveillance (Dimmel and Schmee, 2008). The rise of the populist right is obviously closely connected with changes in the social structure. Egger de Campo (2000) shows however that not all voters of right extremists are of the authoritarian personality type, some just love to be entertained, and demagogues of the right sometimes fill this gap. Flecker (2007) analyses the connection between changing working conditions and the appeal of extremist right-wing parties in a comparative way. Flecker's independent research institute even started a series with a German publisher to make its research available to readers beyond the offices of the EU. Eichmann and Hofbauer (2008) studied the world of management consultants; Flecker and Kirschenhofer (2007) assembled additional papers on the connection between right-wing populism and changes in the labour market; Holtgrewe (2006) is a contribution to the widely debated 'flexibilization' of the labour market which added the neologism 'flexicurity' (labour market flexibility plus social security) to the sociological vernacular. Another book from a

collaborative EU project located its research sites in cities and offers some comparative papers on the fear of crime in public space (Sessar et al., 2007).

Recent policies by the EU cause tremendous anger among those who think that the old Humboldtian university is still viable. Kellermann et al. (2009) assembled articles by many critics and a few defenders of the unification process which is aimed to create a European Research Area and bring Europe's universities closer to each other. Harding et al. (2007) look at the same site from a different angle: the role universities play for their surrounding regions and their innovation potential. Biegelbauer and Borrás (2003) are concerned with the innovation process too but enlarge their spectrum to a transatlantic comparison. Together with two more detailed Austrian investigations (Badelt et al., 2007; Pichler et al., 2007), these collected volumes prove that at least sometimes collaborative publications are worth the effort and make interesting reading. Something completely different is the resonance such studies get; it will not come as a surprise that it is usually small.<sup>11</sup>

As an institutionalized discipline sociology demonstrates some inwardness, too. In past decades, feminist sociologists formed a pressure and support group at the same time, and transnational cooperation was stronger. German and Austrian feminist sociologists (who nowadays prefer to call themselves 'gender studies sociologists') collaborated very closely, much more closely than any other sub-group within German-speaking sociology. Unintentionally, these behaviours resulted in a kind of self-encapsulation and unjustified unawareness of what was being done in this field by non-feminists. This ignorance is most unjustified. Aulenbacher and Wetterer (2009) show that a gender approach has something to say for the sociology of work, and Paulitz (2005) demonstrates the same for social studies of science and technology. What once was named the decomposition or fragmentation of sociology can even take place in a small community such as that of Austria. Internal debates rarely take place. Balog and Schülein (2008) document one of the exceptions of this stated rule and the late Balog contributed a treatise of his own to the theoretical work in sociology. Following Weber but not restricted by being a Weberian, Balog discusses basic problems of sociological explanation (Balog, 2006). Closer to his own sources of inspiration, Steinert argues in favour of the fruitfulness of the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* in his 2007 monograph that is partly a discussion with other followers of Adorno who are not admired by Steinert, and partly the outline of what could be studied empirically if one considers the diatribes of Horkheimer and Adorno against the culture industry not as purely upper-class prejudices, but as a form of sociological imagination.

I hope this necessarily incomplete review of sociological writing in Austria serves to give people from abroad an impression of what is going on in Austria, and to inform potential visitors about what Austrian sociologists do to earn their living in following the call of sociology. Readers



who would like more information on the subject and/or start discussions, are invited to contact me by email.

## Notes

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1. Besides using the American titles here one should bear in mind that the Austrian system is not based on individual promotion but on fixed positions with a replacement policy. Reforms of the university system during the last 20 years were directed towards its governance primarily but brought with them the end of the civil servant status for the faculty.
2. [www.oezs-digital.de](http://www.oezs-digital.de)
3. [www.sws-rundschau.at/index.php](http://www.sws-rundschau.at/index.php)
4. [www.tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/13511610.html](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/13511610.html)
5. *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, see: [epub.oeaw.ac.at/4015-2](http://epub.oeaw.ac.at/4015-2); and *Jahrbuch für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie*, see: [www.irks.at/pub\\_frame.html](http://www.irks.at/pub_frame.html)
6. [agso.uni-graz.at/](http://agso.uni-graz.at/)
7. [www.wisdom.at/](http://www.wisdom.at/)
8. [hyperbourdieu.jku.at/](http://hyperbourdieu.jku.at/); [www.kuwi.uni-linz.ac.at/hyperelias/z-elias/](http://www.kuwi.uni-linz.ac.at/hyperelias/z-elias/); [hypergeertz.jku.at/](http://hypergeertz.jku.at/)
9. Only 32 percent of the books under review have a name index and only 27 percent a subject index. If there are indexes at all, the publisher's address is in the UK or the US.
10. Defenders of the Teutonic system will argue against my view that a habilitation can be done only by submitting a book-length manuscript which has to be ultimately published. A recent analysis revealed that of all the habilitations submitted in Austria during the last five decades only 52 out of 95 sociologists published their manuscript either before or at any time afterwards. For details see Fleck (2010).
11. Therefore it is even more surprising that Badelt et al. (2007) were commissioned by the official National University Federation. If they wanted to influence the political decision-making process they would have done better to spend the money elsewhere.

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*résumé:* Cet examen général du marché de la publication pour les sociologues en Autriche passe en revue quelques publications récentes faites par des sociologues autrichiens. Du fait qu'ils écrivent en allemand, les sociologues autrichiens ont une très forte dépendance par rapport au marché de leur voisin l'Allemagne, où sont publiés à peu près un tiers des livres rédigés par des Autrichiens. Les principaux défauts présentés par les livres écrits par des Autrichiens et publiés en Autriche sont une mise en page, une indexation et une relecture faites sans soin. Les types de publication les plus courants sont des recueils d'articles et des monographies. Un petit nombre de publications s'essayaient à un 'diagnostic de l'époque' et s'adressent à un plus large public. Les sujets principaux sont l'histoire de la sociologie et des sciences humaines, l'immigration et le marché du travail.

*resumen:* Esta revisión del mercado de publicación para los sociólogos en Austria también examina algunas publicaciones recientes de los sociólogos austriacos. Al escribir en alemán, los sociólogos austriacos son altamente dependientes del mercado de la vecina Alemania, donde aproximadamente un tercio de los libros escritos por austriacos son publicados. Deficiencias particulares de libros escritos por austriacos y publicados en Austria son de edición, indexación y edición de copia descuidada. Entre los tipos de publicación, los más comunes son los volúmenes de documentos recopilados y monografías. Un pequeño número de publicaciones aborda el tema 'diagnósticos de la época', dirigida a un público más amplio. Las áreas centrales son la historia de la sociología y las Humanidades, la inmigración y el mercado laboral.

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