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### Sociology Transformed

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'Christian Fleck, a leading historian of sociology, has created a fascinating sketch of the Austrian experience that will be widely appreciated by all like-minded scholars, especially given the unique characteristics of his country's approach to the discipline. While very attentive to minutia, about which he knows more than anyone else, Fleck never loses sight of the big picture – the challenges that sociology poses to any society in which it seeks to become institutionalized. Fleck's book could serve as model for other national histories of social science.'

– Alan Sica, Penn State University, USA

'This is a highly personal overview by a perfectly informed and sharp minded observer of the Germanic academic scene on Austrian sociology of the 20th century, including a very critical study of the promotional system of local universities (liable to reproduce mediocrity). The stress is laid both on intellectual and institutional developments. The story goes from prestigious, mostly extra-mural (non academic) beginnings with heavy participation of Jewish luminaries, to the disastrous break of the 1938 Anschluss, succeeded by ups and downs of a difficult and in part failed reconstruction of academic autonomy. Indeed the post-war years were marked by limited de-Nazification, continuously burdensome academic conservatism, largely linked to the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church and the impact of political power games between the two ruling parties (the infamous "Proporz" system). All this seems to have curbed innovative scholarly productivity as well as the heuristic reception of new Western paradigms, in spite of the growth of student numbers (particularly after the academic reforms of the 1970s) and the emergence of a network of research centers outside universities, beginning with the "Institute of Advanced Studies", a prototype of sorts. (The latter was funded by the Ford Foundation via the intervention of a by then famous emigrant Paul Lazarsfeld.) All in all a fascinating in-depth report on a singularly deviant case of a dubiously "national" intellectual history. The melancholy conclusion of the author points to "dead ends, failures, frauds, undeserved appropriation and incompetence" in an European society ranking nowadays among the most prosperous in economic and social terms.'

– Victor Karady, CNRS, France and Central European University, Hungary

'For the last half-century, American sociologists have taken the existence of the basic discipline for granted and have therefore tended to overlook the difficult political, cultural, religious and intellectual obstacles that had to be overcome. Fleck's history of sociology in Austria provides a useful antidote to these bloodless "understandings". The post-war development of "Austrian sociology" (Fleck eschews this term because "the entity which goes by the name 'Austrian' sociology... lacks a specific uniformity") was hobbled by the remnants of the Nazi past and decimated by persecution, racism, anti-Semitism, a mass out-migration of Austrian intellectuals to the West (with no formal policy ever put in place to encourage their return), and the heavy hand of the post-war Catholic Church. American readers will also be surprised by the large number of Austrians who became prominent in American sociology: **Alfred Schutz, Hans Zeisel, Otto Neurath, Joseph Schumpeter but above all others Paul Lazarsfeld who was instrumental in establishing empirical sociology in the US.** In the 1950s, there were many more former Austrians holding professorial posts in the US than there were sociologists teaching in Austrian universities – several dozens (at least) versus two. American sociologists will be surprised to learn that what we now understand as "American sociology" was largely an import brought to the US by various European conflicts from about 1890 forward and that not all of the key figures were German, French or British.'

– James Wright, Editor in Chief, International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences

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# Sociology in Austria



Christian Fleck

*Associate Professor, University of Graz, Austria*

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SOCIOLOGY IN AUSTRIA

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First published 2016 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of Nature America, Inc.,  
One New York Plaza, Suite 4500

New York, NY 10004-1562.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Hardback ISBN: 978-1-137-43586-6

E-PUB ISBN: 978-1-137-43588-0

E-PDF ISBN: 978-1-137-43587-3

DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873

Distribution in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world is by Palgrave Macmillan\*, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

A catalogue record for the book is available from the British Library

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## Acknowledgments



Since this small book is not my first attempt to come to terms with the history of sociology in Austria, it should be no wonder that some of its formulations have been used before, even more so is this the case with ideas and explanations. In the first chapters I made use of some formulations published recently and reprinted here by permission of Manchester University Press, publisher of *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Volume 23, Issue 1, 2015, 'Sociology in Austria: From Gifted Amateurs to Institutional Banality', pp. 1–15, ISSN 0791-6035. © Sociological Association of Ireland, 2015. Another quite different source I would like to mention with gratitude is related to 'Grant agreement n°319974' by the European Commission. Under the programmatic title International Cooperation in the Social Sciences & Humanities (INTERCO), I had the pleasure to exchange ideas with a huge group of stimulating colleagues from other EU member states and beyond. A special thanks go to readers of drafts of this book: Christian Dayé, Matthias Duller, Max Haller, Andreas Hess, Victor Karady, Kristoffer Kropp, Stina Lyon, Albert Müller, Andrea Ploder, Rafael Schögler and Mario Wimmer offered me their opinions and pointed to underdeveloped parts of the argument, as well as pointing to the usual little but annoying errors here and there. None of them, however, is responsible for any or the remaining defects and unconventionality. Stephen P. Turner improved the readability of the text by his editing.


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# 1

## Sociology in Austria: Introduction



**Abstract:** *The development of sociology in Austria has been influenced by political changes more than once during the 20th Century. After the breakup of the Habsburg Empire, a tiny successor state had to struggle to survive, and government did not spend much attention to academic affairs. Two consecutive dictatorships destroyed academic freedom and brought with them forced migration and imprisonment. Favoritism and conformism became characteristic patterns in the higher education system. After 1945 the reestablished Second Republic did not try to dismiss professors promoted during the dictatorship and did not invite exiled academics back home. The consequence was the continuation of behavioral patterns in academia established earlier: Austria's postwar academic world was not governed by meritocratic criteria but the effect of a 'dynamic adaptation' to new political regimes. Following an institutionalist point of view one had to take into account such discontinuities and pay tribute to episodes of de-institutionalization.*

**Keywords:** Austria; conformism; de-nazification; governance; institutionalization; Nazism; universities

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0004.

On a Sunday evening in January 1945, a twenty-nine year old American writes a letter to his parents back home in Texas about a dinner with his two new bosses the day before. They invited him to a fancy restaurant and over some drinks and an expensive meal (the writer reports the exact amount of dollars spent: \$20, which is today about \$260) the two seniors laid out the job offered to him. When it came to bargain the salary, the young man asked, in his eyes, for much more than he thought reasonable, but the two added 500 dollars above his grandiose \$4,500. The letter continues congratulating the parents whose 'good blood and bones and brash you all put into me began to come through a little' (Mills 2000, p. 84).

The three men spending an evening together were C. Wright Mills; Robert K. Merton, then thirty-four years old; and as the senior at the table Paul F. Lazarsfeld, who turned 44 that year. Subsequently Mills was hired by the directors of the Bureau of Applied Social Research to work as the field director in Decatur, Illinois. There the Bureau had planned to collect data for their next big study on the role of media in forming public opinions. Several years later, after struggling with Mills about his unwillingness or inability to finish the manuscript, Lazarsfeld dismissed him and hired a substitute, Elihu Katz, who managed to finalize what became published as *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955). Later, Mills took revenge by criticizing the style of work he should have done as 'abstracted empiricism' (Mills 1959).

Around the time when the three Americans talked business in Manhattan, a not-so-young man took part in what has been called an 'evacuation action'. The location was at World War II's eastern front where the Soviet Union's Red Army executed heavy pressure on the Nazi Wehrmacht. Fifty-one year old Benedikt Kautsky was one of the thousands of prisoners of the concentration camp Auschwitz who had to walk to the Gleiwitz camp (now Gliwice, Poland) about 50 kilometers deep in the Third Reich's shrinking domain. Kautsky, the son of the prominent theoretician of the Second Socialist International Karl Kautsky, survived the evacuation march and four camps altogether where he had been imprisoned for seven years. After his liberation by Allied troops in Buchenwald, he moved to Switzerland to recover. While there for six months he wrote a book about the camps, *Teufel und Verdammte* (*Devils and Damned*), which came out in Zurich in 1946. It is more than an eyewitness account but also a sound sociological analysis. Kautsky presented his view of the camp's social organization at least once in front

of sociologists when he participated in a panel on terror at the German Sociological Society's second postwar Congress in 1948 in Worms (Lepsius 1979, p. 69). Kautsky's study, however, did not get the credit it would have deserved, for several reasons. One might have been his not belonging to German academic circles since he remained in Switzerland up to 1950. His attempt to get a university position in the United States was not successful, so he returned to Vienna where he had worked in the interwar years. There he made a mostly non-academic career on the sideline of the labor movement, first as a trade union's educator, then as vice-director in one of the nationalized Austrian banks. He also became *Privatdozent* for social policy at two universities, Graz and Vienna, editor of Karl Marx's writings, and author of the revisionist programs of both the Austrian and the German Social Democrats, a party in which the still remaining Marxist traits were extinguished in 1958 and 1959, respectively. Kautsky died in 1960 at the age of 66.

Why start a short history of sociology in Austria with anecdotes that happened far away from the country's soil and also seem to be unrelated to one another?

Before discussing the similarities, a note on the skewed representation between the sexes here and in subsequent parts of this book should be made to avoid unnecessary allegations. It is a fact that back then the male-dominated world of academia was seen by all members as natural and the fact that women did not occupy in it any space did not get challenged at all. The few women who could find a place there are the proverbial exception.

Let us move now to the links between the two stories.

Three of the men mentioned left their marks upon postwar sociology worldwide, and it is no speculation to relate their impact to their actual places of living. Only in the second half of the 20th Century worldwide academia became more strongly divided into one capital and several provinces. Obviously the center had moved across the Atlantic, and Lazarsfeld, Merton and Mills were at the very core of the center. Several parts of Europe, the German-speaking segment in particular, had been put aside, and the residents of the new capital could ignore whatever was produced there. This move had its causes both in politics and in sheer numbers. Nazism de-legitimized all things German whereas the effects of the dramatic growth of the republic of science's population did not become recognized immediately. It should be uncontroversial that the more a population increases the less observable it remains for

its members. Dissimilar to Latin, which was a foreign language for all its practitioners, the new lingua franca privileged those who spoke it as their mother tongue.

It might not be widely known that all four men possessed at least weak ties to Austria: Lazarsfeld was born in Vienna; he grew up there and received his primary and secondary socialization in Austria. The German-born Kautsky lived most of his adult life there. Merton spent only a summer at a famous villa in Grundlsee to improve his German in the middle of the 1930s. Twenty years later Mills lived for half a year in Austria, lecturing in the summer of 1957 for two weeks at the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies (Mills 2000, pp. 199–238, cf. Schmidt 2003) and continued to live in Innsbruck afterwards for the rest of the year. He enjoyed riding his BMW motorcycle up and down the Alps more than improving his German (Mills 2000, pp. 242, 246, 303). The two Americans did not meet any fellow sociologists during their visits, but Merton visited bookstores and Mills loved coffeehouses where he wrote what later came out as *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills 1959).

Furthermore all four men located themselves politically as left of center, even if some were more outspoken than others with regard to their political leanings. Earlier generations of sociologists have not been as clearly belonging politically to the left as the members of the generation that shaped postwar sociology (the German-speaking sociologists entered the 'liberal' bandwagon much later than their Anglophone or French colleagues). Kautsky's biography was aberrant, not only for the seven years he spent in a concentration camp. Neither his career nor his writings meet today's expectations for an academic man. He changed topics and professional affiliations and his résumé resembled a *Privatgelehrter* (an independent scholar). The occupational trajectories of the three professional sociologists were much more uniform: Mills got his first tenure-track academic job at the age of 25, Merton at 28. Only Lazarsfeld was different. He was not appointed to a regular position before the age of 40 because of his complicated move from Europe to America. All three stayed professors for the rest of their lives. Nevertheless, one finds some similarities across the Atlantic divide. Kautsky seldom addressed purely an academic readership; his prose is plain and the analytic devices understandable for any lay person. Mills also wanted to be heard by the largest possible audience and wrote appropriately. The tendency of sociology and other social sciences to

favorably address peers and sidestep lay readers started only then. A methodologist like Lazarsfeld or a theoretician like Merton would not be held responsible for readability today although this 'odd couple' (Merton 1998, pp. 169–71) tried hard to be understood by not only expert readers. The subjects of the two books – mass media's consequences and state terror against political opponents and ethnic minorities – echo the very different political and cultural experiences of those who were by training and inclination interested to understand recent developments of their social environments. Likewise the very different reception of the products, which were the outcomes of the two episodes, illustrates what happened not only to sociology but to all of the sciences during the second third of the 20th Century. Between the early 1930s and the middle of the 1950s American institutions of higher education and research surpassed their European counterparts in a way which could not be more dramatic. The United States and their institutions of higher education and research became the unchallenged leader, and the Europeans lagged behind for decades – and Austria's performance was even worse. To sum it up: the two episodes illustrate the cultural lag between academic environments that were just a generation earlier in the reverse order of prestige.

## Austria as it was

Another general remark is needed before starting with the portrait of sociology in Austria. In sociology, as in most other disciplines, the majority of those who spend time reading about its history are primarily interested in products of lasting fame. They are therefore more interested in finding out the circumstances that enabled particular authors to proceed successfully and produce disciplinary benchmarks. Prominent authors and celebrated books, seldom shorter pieces like articles, and even less frequent other accomplishments, are at the core of the curiosity of these readers. They will be disappointed with what I have to offer. What follows is a story of dead ends, failures, frauds, undeserved appropriation and incompetence, with no happy ending but one which could be labeled 'the conquest of banality'. Why then should someone continue reading? One of the less dull truisms of sociology highlights that by examining deviant cases we can improve our understanding of the ordinary. Austria's intellectual history deviates from familiar patterns.

Speaking about Austria means, at least with regard to intellectual affairs, focusing on Vienna, a city which was the metropolis of the Habsburg Empire and continued to produce, and even over-produce, talents after the end of the monarchy until the early 1930s when a reactionary regime of Roman-Catholics banned all leftist institutions and forced liberal minded people into public silence. Within four years this authoritarian regime had been removed by the Nazi movement from inside Austria and the expansionist aspirations of the Hitler government in neighboring Germany. After the *Anschluss* (as the annexation of Austria by the Third Reich in 1938 has been called), persecution and expulsion ruined the leftovers of a flourishing cultural era.

Vienna's population had grown during the 19th Century at a pace comparable to cities like Chicago. Located in the center of the continent, Vienna received many immigrants from eastern parts of Europe, a region from which even more people went overseas. Among them were the parents of the above-mentioned Merton. He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania into an immigrant family, but easily could have ended up in Vienna's *Leopoldstadt* district with its huge number of Jewish immigrants from Galicia and the Bukovina. In Austria the social and cultural conditions for the quick advancement of second-generation immigrants were less auspicious than in the New World. A huge number of prominent Austrian scholars came from Jewish families, but most of them were third or fourth generation Viennese, like the Lazarsfeld family. Compared with the rapid upward mobility of the East European immigrants in New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago, the Viennese Jews started producing remarkable intellectuals and scholars only after their parents had succeeded economically. Labeling these people Jews or of Jewish origin is somewhat misleading because the overwhelming majority of them followed the path of assimilation by leaving their religious community or practicing their faith quietly. The infamous Viennese mayor Karl Lueger (1844–1910) expressed the attitude towards this minority tellingly when he declared that he decides who is a Jew, which means that any attempt to assimilate needed the approval of the Christian majority. Nazism brought with it the emergence of a 'race'-based anti-Semitism where even men who fought for the *Kaiser* in World War I, side by side with an Adolf Hitler, another product of Vienna's fin-de-siècle culture, could be persecuted. Several of the subjectively completely assimilated individuals learned only when they were forced to prove their 'Aryan ancestry' that their parents or

grandparents were of 'Mosaic' religious affiliation and they themselves therefore were counted as 'half' or 'quarter Jews' by the Nazi authorities. Of the nearly 200,000 Austrians persecuted as Jews according to the Nuremberg Laws by their Nazi compatriots, around 60,000 perished in the killing fields and extermination camps. The vast majority of the rest escaped, and an unknown tiny minority survived the seven years of Nazi reign as so-called 'submarines'. The escapees were not a representative sample of the whole Jewish population but younger, better educated, wealthier, politically adept. Remarkably many from this wave became well-known scholars, including first-class sociologists.

In April 1945, two weeks before the unconditional surrender of the Nazi regime that ended WWII in Europe, Austria re-established itself as an independent republic. The Austrians got a more favorable treatment by the Allied Forces because of the equation of the state of Austria with its people when they had declared Austria the 'first victim' of German expansionism. Austria's postwar elites were not slow to use this ambiguous formula. Politicians and the cultural elite tried to separate Austria from any German traits. A telling example of this attempt to form an independent nation has been the change of the name of the home language taught in school. Up to this point the vast majority of Austrian citizens spoke German and would have had no objection to naming the classes at school German language instruction. The 'separatistic' Austrian government decided to label it 'instruction's language'. Nevertheless, in hindsight, one is forced to credit Austria's postwar governments a success because they achieved a different treatment by the Allies than the two other successor states of the Nazi Reich. Legitimized by undisputed results of an early national election, held only half a year after re-establishing an independent Austria, a two-party coalition government ruled Austria for the next twenty years and beyond. For the first ten years Austria remained an occupied territory, partitioned between the four Allied Forces, with only restricted sovereignty. Whereas the overall future was undecided and insecure, several parts of the country could be governed without much interference of the Allied overseers. The whole education sector, from kindergarten to the universities, was one of the domains where the Austrian government could do as they pleased. The Allies stopped pressing for de-nazification or re-education long before any signs of success could be seen. Since the two political parties agreed on dividing the state between them into spheres of influence, the education sector was handed over to

the conservative People's Party, the successor of the Christian Social Party. Both ministry and university personnel were selected for their deference to the rule of Catholicism and political Conservatism. Civil servants and professors disbanded by the Nazis in 1938 returned to their desks and professorial chairs if they lived nearby. Those who had gone into exile experienced much more trouble with being reinstalled. Travel permits were seldom granted by the victorious nations, and invitations to return were not issued.

Exiled professors worrying about the future of their former universities did not get the needed support by the American and British occupation forces and were outright rejected by the Austrian government. An initiative called the Austrian University League of America published a memorandum about the reconstruction of the universities in which its authors pled for a complete revocation of all promotions under Nazi rule, but instead the opposite happened. The League offered both the ministry and the universities lists of scholars willing to return, but none of them received an invitation.<sup>1</sup> On these lists one does not find the names of Paul Lazarsfeld or anyone of a similar academic caliber because they were not interested in exchanging their, in more than one respect, favorable positions for an insecure position in Austria with its still widespread destruction, lack of food and uncertain political future. But the list contains the names of several scholars who became prominent later on and would have made a difference in Austria (it is an open question whether they would have become similarly prominent if they had returned to Austria in the 1940s).

Austria's postwar academic world was populated by people who, during their lifetime, had experienced more than once the reality that success and survival in academia were not rooted in meritocratic accomplishments and open competition, but instead required the 'dynamic adaptation' (Müller 1997) to new political regimes. After 1945 it was relatively easy for professors to overcome their Nazi affiliations, either by joining a political party or by finding someone who was willing to provide a so called 'clean bill paper'. Consequently, the professoriate of the postwar years assembled countless conformists and shameless panderers. Not the best role models for the next generation.

To gauge the long-term consequences of such a climate one need also to be aware of a particularity of the recruitment procedure in 'teutonic' (Galtung 1981) universities, in which the *Ordinarius*, a full professor occupying a chair, was the one who in practice selected his successor by



granting him *habilitation*, the second doctorate. Up until the late 1960s professors with above-average social capital were even allowed to put together the list of potential successors and make the faculty forward it to the minister. One needs little sociological imagination to envision the criteria of selection. The effect is clear: the next generation resembles the previous one in more than superficial aspects. Together with the long life expectancy of the professoriate, one sees a high degree of uniformity in at least two academic generations, at a minimum of half a century.

## An institutionalist perspective

Any study of the development of a particular scientific discipline is confronted with the problem of whether, and to what degree, the case under consideration has been influenced by social, political, and intellectual factors. Obviously sociology and neighboring disciplines are molded by the nation state in which they exist, who finances their personnel, from whom they get data and to whom they often deliver their findings. This is a characteristic of the social sciences, and probably some parts of the humanities, whereas for example astronomy does not show a comparable rootedness in and dependence on the nation state beyond basic facts as finance and legal frames.

For decades a distinguished approach to the study of the trajectory of a discipline has referred to institutional patterns, structural conditions which form the very outcome and secure stability over time. This institutionalization analysis resembles another approach that lost some of its appeal, the modernization approach to study the trajectory of societies as a whole. Although the persuasive power of modernization theory has diminished over the last three to four decades, using ‘institutionalization’ as an analytic instrument has not received much criticism. Following Edward Shils’s famous paper on institutionalization (Shils [1970] 1980) we usually refer to factors (1) facilitating a process of perpetuation by establishing forums for exchange of ideas in the form of journals, conferences, departments etc.; (2) by creating modes of transferring knowledge to the next generation, either via formal curricula or instances of apprenticeships; and (3) by enabling continuation through financing people and activities with the sole aim to continue what had been planted and set in motion. Implicitly most

authors applying such an institutionalization approach agree about two things: First, only a full-fledged discipline is able to significantly contribute to the progress of science, which means by implication that at least basic requirements had to be developed in each of the three dimensions. Second, that over time successful variants of institutionalization expand in each dimension. The myth of growth occupies a prominent place both in modernization theory and perspectives on the institutionalization of scientific disciplines. The reader should keep in mind, however, that a far-reaching consensus is not needed to make use of the idea of institutional patterns. For instance, after a period of expansion, a discipline can go through episodes of compression and still remain the same discipline intellectually. Such instances of de-institutionalization have not received the attention they should, unfortunately. Both processes together form disciplines. As long as a sufficient number of individuals identify with their own specialty they could create an identity by telling the story of their own and their predecessors' attempts.

There is a need for a final remark on the subject under study here. Conventional wisdom holds that something like a 'German' sociology exists that is different from the 'French' or 'British' variant. The case covered here is dissimilar because only very few observers would go so far as to speak about an entity which goes by the name 'Austrian' sociology. First and foremost one is inclined to avoid this label because what one can observe inside the borders of Austria is that sociology lacks a specific uniformity. Attempts to establish something like sociology as a distinct style of thought and scholarly unity have been made more than once over the last century and a half in the region known as the Republic of Austria since the end of WWI; however, at no point in time were the proponents able to develop a unified approach to the discipline. Sometimes rival positions existed side by side; at other times those born later did not recognize and often did not even know their predecessors. In other words, the history of sociology in Austria cannot serve as an illustration of a case of cumulative development and enhancement. Too many political, intellectual and organizational interruptions produced a trajectory of discontinuities. Furthermore, the relatively short history of sociology in Austria (about five academic generations long) should rather be seen as the falsification of the conventional wisdom that the more institutionalized a discipline the better its outcomes. The Austrian case demonstrates that even the opposite can happen and that more

structure, money, personnel, acceptability etc. can result in less prestige, recognition, innovation or excellence.

But how and why did this happen?

## Note

- 1 On the list were, amongst others, Karl Bühler, Ernst Gombrich, Karl Popper, Karl Menger and Oskar Morgenstern (Fleck 1987, p. 205).

# 2

## A Remarkable Past

► **Abstract:** *This chapter sketches the history of sociology in Austria from its first appearance in the late 19th Century until the end of democracy and the takeover by the Nazi movement in 1938. During this half a century a number of books on several sociological topics were authored which received remarkable resonance both by contemporaries but also later on through re-editions and translations. This intellectual blossoming contrasts heavily with the unfavorable conditions under which these works had to be produced. The universities did not support creative and innovative research, and also banned Leftists and Jews from climbing up inside academia.*

**Keywords:** Alfred Schütz; anti-Semitism; Felix Kaufmann; Habsburg Empire; Joseph A. Schumpeter; Logical Positivism; Ludwig Gumplowicz; Marie Jahoda; Otto Bauer; Otto Neurath; Paul F. Lazarsfeld; Red Vienna

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0005.

On 27 October 1958 Paul F. Lazarsfeld received a letter from a German who claimed to have met him before in Paris. A Dr. Erich Peter Neumann was asking for permission to reprint a book to which Lazarsfeld contributed an introduction a quarter of a century earlier. Meanwhile the book had become kind of a classical text in empirical social research: *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (The Unemployed of Marienthal). In 1958, however, the small monograph had sunk into oblivion and Lazarsfeld hesitated about recovering it. He thought the study was lacking in methodological sophistication. But Neumann, who had directed, together with his then spouse Elisabeth Noelle, the well-known private public opinion business Allensbach Institut für Demoskopie, put pressure on Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld was at this time near the peak of his fame and was too busy to consult with his co-authors, but after some additional insistence by the German he gave in. Finally, he even submitted a new preface to the second edition of *Marienthal*. Neither Lazarsfeld nor his co-authors were paid royalties nor did they receive any follow-up correspondence on the reception of the book's second edition. It is unclear when, if at all, Lazarsfeld or his co-authors realized that Neumann and the Allensbach Institut sold the copyright for a paperback edition to Suhrkamp fifteen years later, and have collected above-average royalties ever since. As an inexpensive, small book published by a famous publishing house, the book continued to sell; it is now in its 22nd printing (Jahoda et al. 1975; Jahoda et al. 2002).

This anecdote tells us several things, and not all of them can be followed up in detail here. Let me stress only one feature: A small study done in the early 1930s in Vienna, which had been published back then under the worst conditions one could imagine (meaning at the time when the Hitler government started its first round of anti-Jewish measures), was returned to print on the initiative of a book lover who stumbled upon one of the few surviving copies in a second-hand bookshop, saving the one name which resonated with him – and finally made a profit. Why did no one in Vienna or somewhere else in Austria unearth the book? After WWII the study was known there only in political groups affiliated with the labor movement, but university people did not recognize it before the paperback edition came out in 1975. It is guesswork, but at least a speculation backed up by good reasons, that Austria's postwar professoriate sidestepped this and other intellectual pearls from the past out of petty jealousy. Indeed, there is not one study from the postwar era produced in Austria which could compete with the impressive number of sociological publications from the first half of the 20th Century.

## Remarkable beginnings

Ironically, the best known contributions to sociology from Austria stem from times where even basic steps towards institutionalization were non-existent. Before WWI, when today's Austria was the core of the Habsburg Empire, the scholarly world happened to exist overwhelmingly in universities financed completely by the government. The majority of the university professors opted for the ruling German nationality in this multi-ethnic state, which lacked nearly all features of a modern nation state. Only the army and the high bureaucracy united the Empire, whereas most other subsystems became disintegrated because of the separatist moves of ethnic groups striving for independent states and national unity. Only the division of the Empire's oldest university, Charles University in Prague, into a German and a Czech branch in 1882 cut through the German domination inside academia.<sup>1</sup>

For much of the 19th Century the social sciences were not as differentiated as today's disciplines are: economics, statistics, political theory, law and sociology belonged to what was called *Staatswissenschaften* (the study of the state), forming together with law one of the four faculties of a traditional university. This composite of non-existing separate academic disciplines back then produced civil servants, lawyers and judges, politicians and journalists, and its professoriate proclaimed themselves as servants of the state, but these strange servants strove to rule the house according to their own interpretation of what was good for the state, the emperor or the nation. For their service they received a very good salary, in relative terms at least a much higher one, so speaking of *Geistesaristokratie*, spirit aristocracy, correctly described their aspiration for superiority.

During the 19th Century the social science discourses circled around two big questions. First, scholars were afraid of the side-effects of capitalist accumulation. Above all, poverty and urbanization caught the attention of university professors. The German-speaking Austrians joined the much larger group of Germans who became known as the *Kathedersozialisten*, socialists of the lectern, assembled since 1873 in the *Verein für Socialpolitik*, association for social policy, a combination of an academic discussion forum and an advocacy group. The proceedings of its meetings were published over three decades in 190 volumes.

Sociological inquiry was, secondly, inevitably rooted in the particularities of multi-ethnic Austria-Hungary.<sup>2</sup> Out of this environment one

of the most prominent figures of the founding generation of sociology emerged, Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909). In 1883 Gumplowicz published most notably the first German book with sociology in its title: *Der Rassenkampf. Sociologische Untersuchungen* (The Race Struggle: Sociological Investigations). Besides the probably more than phonetic closeness to another type of struggle, the *Klassenkampf*, class struggle, the title caused confusion later by readers who deduced from it that the author must be a racist, while the opposite is true. Gumplowicz saw race not as a biological entity but as the outcome of battles between social groups in which one came to dominate others and cemented its power, such that their dominance could be overturned only by the emergence of newly formed groups. Gumplowicz espoused a conflict theory of social order. Some academics joined him because they were interested in the multiethnic reality of the old Empire; however, later authors stressed the role of nations and nationality more heavily than Gumplowicz did. The leading Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer (1881–1938) formulated an interesting perspective by claiming that a nation is not historically fixed but the result of intensive arguments over past experiences by those who share them. A nation is the result of joined actions and concerns, a community of fate. An echo of Bauer's interpretation can be found in Max Weber's definition of an ethnic group ('race creates a "group" only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait', Weber [1921] 1978, p. 385) and in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983, pp. 107–09), but only the last one quotes Bauer. The lasting role nationalism and ethnicity played at the time could be seen by looking at contributions from other social scientists. For instance Joseph A. Schumpeter, primarily seen as an economist, contributed to this debate as late as during the interwar years (Schumpeter [1927] 1953), and it might be no exaggeration to find echoes in more recent authors who were brought up in this ethnically diverse social environment: Karl W. Deutsch, Emerich Francis and Ernest Gellner in Prague, and Eric Hobsbawm in Vienna.

Gumplowicz's life reveals some illuminating aspects. He was born to a Jewish family in Cracow, then a small, semi-independent republic. He remained a member of the Jewish community until 1884 when he and his wife left the Kehilla, known in German as the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*, the official label for the Jewish community's administration, and later converted to Protestantism. Gumplowicz's national creed influenced his thinking more strongly than his religion did. His hometown became annexed to Galicia, at that time a 'crown land' of the Austrian Empire,

when he was a school boy. As a young lawyer he participated in the Polish uprising against the great powers Russia, Austria and Prussia, which had been seen as responsible for the partition of Poland. After the defeat of the Polish independence movement, Gumpłowicz retreated from politics. In 1875 he moved to Graz where he successfully tried to get entry to the university. He first received habilitation and finally became professor in the faculty of law. Gumpłowicz was the most prominent exponent of sociology in the old Empire but could not teach sociology because proper study programs did not exist. His plea for a non-individualistic, conflict-oriented interpretation of sociology that tries to follow the model of the sciences as much as possible was not as idiosyncratic as one would assume today. Gumpłowicz bonded with other scholars of his time, nationally and internationally. He never traveled, and in this light his prominence comes even more as a surprise. Instead of going into more details of this controversialist's thinking, I would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that Gumpłowicz was not alone, neither in his understanding of sociology and its duties nor with regard to his social position. If there is anything characteristic to sociology in Austria until the rise of Nazism, one could point to the fact that the Austrians favored a positivist interpretation with regard to meta-theoretical reasoning and therefore were committed to empiricist orientation at the everyday level of sociological investigation. Their reference group consisted of John Stuart Mill and Ernst Mach, which were very different from their German neighbors' preference for Hegel or the Neo-Kantians.

Several other early sociologists were Jewish or had Jewish ancestors, so it seems to be easier to name those who did not belong to this ethno-religious group. Field marshal Gustav Ratzenhofer (1842–1904), a contemporary supporter of Gumpłowicz, should be mentioned, and from the next generation Karl Renner (1870–1950) and Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950). The latter two could be labeled 'part-time sociologists' (Fleck 1990, p. 31). Even Gumpłowicz made his living by teaching administrative law, and all those who later became regarded as sociologists produced their contributions side-by-side with other obligations, either academic or professional. Schumpeter was an economist. Renner was a lifelong politician who only in the early stages of his career, when he served as a librarian in the parliament, found time to publish, under a pseudonym. His treatise on the social functions of civil law from 1904 later became well-known abroad, due to a translation which went through several printings after it first appeared in 1949 (Renner [1904] 2010).



## Interwar blossoming

Over the next decades the social position of what was then a *Privatgelehrter*, an independent scholar, remained the dominant pattern. At the same time the focus of sociologists switched from dealing with ethnic rivalries to more abstract reasoning on the one hand and more specialized coverage on the other. Alfred Schütz (1899–1959), a banker for most of his life, wrote at night about philosophy and methodology; whereas Otto Neurath (1882–1945) ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds and no one knows when he found time to write all his pamphlets, amongst them *Empirische Soziologie* (Empirical Sociology), which carried the ambitious and programmatic subtitle ‘Scientific Content of Economics and History’ (Neurath [1931] 1981). However, the group Neurath eventually helped to create, the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivism, influenced later sociologists and other social scientists more through other publications (including oral transmission) than through Neurath’s writings. The Unity of Science movement tried to spread the positivist message until the end of the 1950s, at least. In addition Neurath was the *spiritus rector* of a museum, which was located in Vienna’s town hall as part of what is called Red Vienna, a broad political movement of education and improving the conditions of living for the majority. Pictorial representations of statistical relationships, which later became known as Isotype, were developed at this museum. Together with an ingenious graphic artist, Gerd Arntz, Neurath created this new mode of presenting quantitative information to lay people (see Sigmund 2015; Stadler 2015).

Schütz’s first book, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932), did not become known beyond the small circles to which he belonged in Vienna before he was forced to flee to New York in 1938. The book acquired the status of a ‘must read’ in Europe only indirectly through the reception of writings of some of his students at the New School for Social Research. It should be mentioned that his Viennese publishing house, Julius Springer, issued a second edition in 1960, which indicates that in Austria the organizational memory of a publishing firm functioned better than the collective memory of academics that had completely forgotten this book by the time. Schütz’s book did not have anything to do with the political or social debates of his time but resorted to philosophy and its application to basic features of sociability. Over time, Schütz’s disciples obliterated the Misesian social milieu, which initially had influenced his

thoughts. Weber's and Husserl's influence on Schütz continued to be mentioned while the one stemming from Ludwig Mises and his associates was pushed aside.

During his years in Vienna, Schütz regularly attended the meetings of Mises' *Privatseminar* and the so-called *Geist Kreis*, founded by F. A. Hayek. Both circles were devoted to intellectual exchanges, but their members held liberal or conservative political convictions and belonged socially to the well-established upper middle class segment of the city's population. Several of its members were of Jewish origin, and nearly all of them went into exile during the Nazi era. Another member of these circles relevant to sociology was Felix Kaufmann (1895–1949), a lawyer by training who received a habilitation in philosophy of law but earned his living as a manager of a British oil company. Kaufmann was interested in the philosophy of the social sciences. He participated in discussion groups more broadly than his friend Schütz and visited regularly the meetings of the neo-positivists and the group of Legal Positivists around Hans Kelsen. Kaufmann's book *Methodenlehre der Sozialwissenschaften* came out first in 1936. Its author wanted to solve some of the controversies that reached back to the famous *Methodenstreit* between the founder of the Austrian School of Economics Carl Menger and the head of the German Historical School Gustav Schmoller. Kaufmann's understanding of the social sciences was broad, and his philosophical aim was to bridge phenomenology and logical positivism. After his flight into exile he joined the New School in New York where he got a professorship for the first time in his life. He completely rewrote his book and published it under the title *Methodology of the Social Sciences* in 1944. It got some friendly reviews, one by C.W. Mills (Mills 1945), but due to his premature death, Kaufmann did not exhibit a strong influence on American sociology. He is still remembered in philosophy on both sides of the Atlantic (Cohen & Helling 2014).

Whereas we can identify some continuity in topics, frames of reference and points of view from the Empire to the First Republic (1918–38), we have to recognize a severe rupture with regard to the institutional side of sociology and other social sciences. Under the Emperor, even an outsider, nonconformist and Jew like Gumpłowicz could successfully compete for a university professorship, at least a provincial one, while in the interwar period academia was almost completely closed. Some have attributed the closed doors to rising anti-Semitism, but this is only half of the truth. Without a shadow of a doubt, expressions of anti-

Semitism became more pronounced (Taschwer 2015); however, large-scale discrimination could not really happen because there were no job openings. The Republic with its population of 7 million was the heir to the Empire with its 30 million inhabitants, not including the Hungarian part. Austria's state bureaucracy and its universities were bloated and much too big for the small country. This resulted in a popular metaphor for the capital Vienna: the 'hydrocephalus of Austria'. The two decades of the interwar period were characterized by stagnation and prejudice; most probably these two factors were not completely independent of each other. In academia, anti-Jewish sentiments could be consequential at the threshold of the academic market, as habilitation became inaccessible for Jews, Socialists and even some Liberals.

Vienna's upper middle class sent their children to universities in large numbers because of lack of other options on the labor market. A sense of anomie amongst students from prosperous backgrounds fed into a climate of political messianism, but also contributed to sociological curiosity and experimentation. The best known example in social research is the small monograph mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community* originated from a micro-environment of politically committed young people who taught themselves the techniques of social research or learned it on the job. On the advice of Otto Bauer, then a leading politician of the Social Democrats with strong scholarly interests, the young researchers changed the topic of their planned investigation from use of leisure time to socio-psychological consequences of long-term unemployment. Bauer also suggested the small village just outside of Vienna as a strategic research site (without knowing this concept which was developed decades later: Merton 1987). Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1901–76) recruited a number of collaborators, first from the counterculture movement of the Social Democrats and then from the vicinity of the University of Vienna's psychology department of Karl and Charlotte Bühler. Marie Jahoda (1907–2001), who was married for a while to Lazarsfeld, remained longer in Vienna but was expatriated in 1937 by the authoritarian government because of her underground activities in the socialist movement. She fled to London where she spent the war years as a political exile. At the end of WWII she inquired as to whether she would be welcomed in Vienna by her old party. She soon learned that anti-Semitism had survived the end of Hitler's dictatorship. She decided not to return and opted for academia as her sole world. The third author of *Marienthal*, Hans Zeisel (1905–92), had contributed to the

study an afterword on the history of sociography. A lawyer by training, he published on economics and earned his living as a sports reporter for the Social Democratic daily *Arbeiter Zeitung*. He escaped from Vienna only after the *Anschluss* and resettled in New York where he worked in the marketing industry and later became a professor of sociology at the law faculty of the University of Chicago.

## Fruits of an under-institutionalized environment

Looking over the half of a century that started with Gumpłowicz's first use of the term sociology in Austria and lasted until the *Marienthal* study, a number of features stand out. First, some scholars were economically secure enough to pursue their own agenda (as did Gumpłowicz, for example); these scholars did not have real students but mainly attracted admirers, only some of which were based at universities. Second, a group of people with enough leisure time to formulate their ideas concerning social life grew up; some of their output attracted an audience at the time and continued to be read by later generations. Third, thinking and writing about social topics had been popular at the time and attracted scholars from neighboring fields who contributed individually with a small number of publications, but which, taken together became a kind of a library of modern social thought. Besides the above-mentioned Renner and Schumpeter, Hans Kelsen (1881–1973) contributed to what would later become the sociology of law, political theory and sociology of knowledge. Kelsen followed Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854–1923), who was one of the first authors who considered ideas as objects worth of sociological analysis. Jerusalem's disciple Walther Eckstein (1891–1973) wrote on this topic and edited his teacher's papers before he was forced into exile, and Ernst Grünwald (1912–33), who died mountain climbing, contributed a kind of systematic study on the field. The philosopher Edgar Zilsel (1891–1944) could not leap the hurdle of the habilitation at the University of Vienna in the early 1920s, but the book he submitted for this examination formed the base of his attempt to provide a sociological analysis of science. After his forced migration to the US, he produced a handful of articles on this topic, which earned him recognition long after he committed suicide (Zilsel 1926; see Fleck 2015, chapter 3). Fourth, the existential basis of the production of knowledge, which Merton listed in his paper on the paradigm of a sociology of knowledge as being one of

the most important dimensions of analysis (Merton [1945] 1996, p. 208), in Vienna resembled neither the traditional form nor our modern way of knowledge production. Only very few could enjoy the freedom and, with it, the reflective solitude of a university chair. The vast majority earned their living by meager jobs and spent their free time in coffeehouses and other places debating their ideas and insights.

All these things came to an end when at first the authoritarian, right-wing government of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg started persecuting political enemies, a practice that turned fatal when the Nazis took over. During the seven Nazi years not much sociology was produced and only a few former (or future) sociologists remained inside the Third Reich. We do know of some victims of the racist extermination system. The best known is Käthe Leichter (1895–1942). Others survived years of imprisonment and wrote afterwards about it, like Eugen Kogon (1903–87) and Benedikt Kautsky (1894–1960). The overwhelming majority of former or future sociologists managed to escape Nazi-ruled Europe. Those who reached America climbed the career ladder at an astonishing pace (Fleck 2011, p. 146); the members of the ‘children transports’ even surpassed their US-born counterparts (Sonnert & Holton 2006).

In Austria, Nazi rule ended after seven years. During this time sociology blossomed in America, and it wasn’t an easy task trying to catch up with the front-runner. In the years after 1945 the Austrians decided not even to try.

## Notes

- 1 Polish was used since 1867 at the university in Lemberg (Lwiw, Ukraine), and until 1846 at Cracow’s university when instruction started there in German (until the end of the Habsburg Empire).
- 2 An impressive ethnographic panorama of the ethnic diversity of the Empire offers the so-called “Kronprinzenwerk” *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*, which appeared in print between 1885 and 1902 in nearly 400 deliveries, see Zintzen (1999).

# 3

## A Decade of Backwardness

**Abstract:** *This chapter gives an overview of the history of sociology in Austria in the decades after the end of WWII. To understand the stagnation of this period one has to recognize the broader situation in society and the universities. Due to consecutive regime changes conformism dominated the behavior of academics. Sociology could not prosper in the 1950s because the ministry did not like its Western appeal and former Austrians were not called back. In 1950 an Austrian Sociological Society had been established, but it did nothing. The topics university sociologists debated at some length included the nature of the authoritarian regime from 1934–38 and Natural Law doctrines held in high esteem by the Roman Catholic Church.*

**Keywords:** August M. Knoll; Austrian Sociological Society; backwardness; Catholic restauration; conformism; de-nazification; Ernst Topitsch; Rockefeller fellowship; Rockefeller Foundation

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0006.

On 21 April 1954 an Austrian spending a year abroad as a Rockefeller Fellow made a strange remark in a letter he sent from Cambridge, Massachusetts to New York. The visitor from Vienna, Ernst Topitsch, had arrived half a year ago in Harvard 'to study American methods of empirical research and to broaden his knowledge of American sociology and social psychology' (as the fellowship card of the Rockefeller Foundation indicates). There is not much in the files about Topitsch's success in familiarizing himself with empirical social research, but he made good relationships with others, among them Philip Rahv, one of the founding editors of *Partisan Review*. Rahv had found an article by the Austrian philosopher so intriguing that he managed to publish an English translation in his magazine under the title 'Sociology of existentialism' (Topitsch 1954). The two exchanged letters, met each other in New York, negotiated further contributions to the magazine, and finally Rahv mediated an opportunity for Topitsch to give a talk in front of the Philosophical Society of New York University on 'Society, Technology, and the Structure of Metaphysics'. In thanking Rahv, Topitsch added that 'this lecture will be the last chance to speak (relatively) free for a while'.<sup>1</sup> What did the *Dozent* from Vienna have in mind with this lamentation?

Of course, Topitsch (1919–2003) had to return to a city where soldiers from the four occupation forces still patrolled the streets, but there were newspapers, magazines, public forums and universities with no obvious censorship or similar restrictions on the free expression of opinions. Since Topitsch was not paranoid, his remark has to be read as a comment on an atmosphere of intellectual narrowness and conformism, in particular in the academic world. Indeed conformism was the signature of the 1950s, as several commentators observed. Whereas David Riesman bemoaned the 'other directedness' in his *The Lonely Crowd* (Riesman 1950), eyewitnesses of the intellectual climate in Austria wondered about another variety of conformism. Topitsch was one of them and coined the phrase 'Postwar Restauration' for what happened in Austria (Topitsch 1996, p. 17).

## Years of 'restauration'

Speaking about 'restauration', triggered by representatives of the Catholic church, reminds historically educated readers in the territory which became Austria after the end of WWI of the period when Rome's papacy

fought against the expansion of Protestantism and the House Habsburg took the lead in forcing Protestants either to convert or into exile. Who was forced this time to abandon their spiritual persuasion? Topitsch and his peers were under the impression that the established were uniform in their *weltanschauung* and forced younger people into their mold. There was no choice because there weren't any deviating opinions around in Austria's postwar universities. Lack of freedom to express nonconformist views was the signature of the 1950s. But at closer examination, one sees that the political and cultural situation was the consequence of the persistence of both a structural arrangement of the 'teutonic' universities and local particularities.

At the time the universities were in the hands of a small group of professors with the official title *Ordinarius* (at all nine Austrian university-type tertiary institutions together about 300 men and less than a handful of women). Below them were professors with the title *Extra-Ordinarius* (about 120, again only a handful of them female) with less influence, a lower salary and usually no assistants as helping hands. Together these two strata of professors formed the 'faculty' which governed the universities. The assistants (about ten times as many as professors) were exclusively selected by the 'top dog' professors. Therefore an assistant was more or less in the hands of his superior that decided who could apply for habilitation. This second dissertation-like examination functioned as the entry into a competition to become the professor's successor. After passing the exam, the assistant got the title *Dozent*, for which non-university based *Privatgelehrte* were also allowed to apply. Although they were tenured civil servants, like the professors, the assistants-and-*Dozent* lacked any influence inside the faculty (two of them were allowed to attend the meetings but with no voting rights). Sometimes even a *Dozent* was treated like a servant by his superiors. This happened to Topitsch during his years at the University of Vienna, where this son of a teacher who served in the Wehrmacht for the whole war and who had graduated in 1946 and passed habilitation in 1951, was rewarded symbolically in 1956 with the pompous title *Titular Extra Ordinarius*. This title – the very same one which was given to Sigmund Freud decades earlier – was for business card use only. I will examine habilitation in more detail in Chapter 6.

The unworldly milieu of Austria's universities had gone through tumultuous times from the fin-de-siècle until the years when it had to cope with the Nazi past. The end of the monarchy in 1918 brought with



it not only a reduction in numbers but also heavy economic devastation. Both war bonds signed out of patriotic feelings and trust in the stability of the old regime had lost their value completely, and galloping inflation destroyed the rest of the economic foundation of the middle classes in the following years. During the two interwar decades university graduates did not get appropriate jobs and immigrants from the former eastern parts of the Empire populated the declining metropolis. The Social Democrats built Red Vienna to improve the living conditions of the metropolitan proletariat, which caused animosity from the middle class. Militant anti-Semitism became the prevalent attitude of both students and their professors. At the end of fourteen years of democracy in Austria, liberals and leftists were expelled from the universities. After the Nazi takeover of power, Jews were persecuted and proponents of the former 'Austro-Fascist' regime were forced to retire.

After the fall of the Nazi regime, about one third of the professoriate was expelled – though most of them returned some years later through revolving doors. These doors remained closed to practically all of the so-called *Reichsdeutsche*, Germans from the Reich, who had gotten positions in Austria after the *Anschluss*. One of them was Arnold Gehlen (1904–76), a philosopher-sociologist of some repute. Some very outspoken anti-democracy propagandists were also prevented from re-assuming their university chairs as for example Othmar Spann (1878–1950), who had been professor of economics and sociology at the University of Vienna from 1919 until 1938 when he had to retire because of inner Nazi rivalry.

During all these troubled times the universities tried to defend some of their autonomy. They succeeded most where camaraderie could be practiced. Different dismissal patterns could be observed during the 1930s and 1940s. While in 1938 the rate of discharge was highest in the top positions of *Ordinarius*, the opposite happened after 1945, when the lowest ranks were kicked out much more often than the 'top dogs'. The overall consequence was an uneven age distribution in academia: during the Nazi years the lower-ranked could climb up the ladder and had a good chance of surviving de-nazification. The older professors from 1938 and the younger generation of 1945 did not survive the purges. The result was an obsolete professoriate.

The whole de-nazification procedure was characterized by a lack of rule-following. Exceptions were the rule. Those who wanted to survive had to convert to Catholicism and bow deeply in front of its exponents.

Former Nazi affiliates who did not do this were forced to leave the universities and the country, as was the case with the later Nobel Prize Laureate ethologist Konrad Lorenz (1903–89) and with Ludwig Bertalanffy (1901–72), a theoretical biologist who played a role in the creation of systems theory in the behavioral sciences. In branding this era I introduced the phrase ‘autochthonous provincialization’ to show that consecutive dismissals resulted in low intellectual quality among the scholars who survived the regime changes (Fleck 1996a). In the early 1930s liberals and leftists lost their jobs; after the Nazis took power, Jews were forced into exile or murdered; and after 1945, those who preached a racist ideology and would not subjugate themselves under the Church’s cross were dismissed.

Autonomy of the universities was on paper only. Universities were financed completely by the government, and the federal ministry decided appointments of professors (but not the assistants). For any new or otherwise open professor position, the faculty had to submit a list of three candidates to the minister. Without further official consultation the minister selected one or ignored the list altogether and promoted his favorite without any chance for the university to protest successfully. Since all personnel were civil servants (assistants before habilitation on a temporary contract), the ministry decided who gets what in terms of budget and assistants. A consequence of this highly centralized system was a tremendous conformism with regard to the publicly presented *weltanschauung*. One had to belong either to the conservative People’s Party or its numerous front organizations, or be held in high esteem by exponents of the Roman Catholic Church to survive in this ‘closed shop’ university. The number of nonconformists was always very low but a bit higher than zero. One could get the impression that this was intentionally to avoid any criticism about nepotism. Professors belonging to the Communist Party, some in the sciences, functioned as court jesters.

These would have been interesting times for sociological observers, but the very academic culture did not produce or encourage this type of self-reflectivity, and outside academia none of the fertile social milieus had survived the two dictatorships. A social philosopher like Topitsch avoided analyzing his contemporary cultural and social institutions by choosing a broader subject: His first book *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik* (*From the Origin and the End of Metaphysics*) ([1958] 1972) was a criticism of Natural Law and could be read by contemporaries as a rejection of the philosophical foundations of Catholicism. Following Hans

Kelsen and Heinrich Gomperz (1873–1942), whom he discovered only by reading their texts (both were forced into exile), Topitsch practiced a kind of sociology of knowledge approach by studying philosophical and political doctrines. Occasionally he entered debates with proponents of Natural Law, but he never transgressed the frame of reference of a philosopher or historian of ideas. Topitsch later called his combination of history of ideas and the sociology of knowledge *Weltanschauungsanalyse*, analysis of world views.

Many academics who did not fit into the narrow world of Christian insider-ism and self-exploration, which dominated the intellectual discourse, left the country. Topitsch was one of them. In 1962 he became professor of sociology at the University of Heidelberg, a chair once occupied by Max Weber. It was not unusual that a philosopher became a sociologist, and vice versa (a route Topitsch took ten years later when he returned to Austria as *Ordinarius* for philosophy at the University of Graz). In sociology Topitsch became known as an expert in *Ideologiekritik* (criticism of ideology) and as one who tried to revive the philosophy of science perspective for the social sciences. In the first capacity he coined concepts which became wider known, e.g., *Leerformel* (empty formula) for pseudo-theoretical sentences with no particular meaning but the opportunity for each user to put their own interpretation in it. A reader that Topitsch edited was widely resonant and reached its 12th printing twenty-eight years after the original came out in 1965 (Topitsch 1960; Topitsch 1965; Topitsch & Payer 1993).

## Founding a professional association in an unprofessional environment

In 1950 a group of about a dozen scholars from different fields established the *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Soziologie*, Austrian Sociological Society (ÖGS). The first elected president, August Maria Knoll (1900–63), had become *Ordinarius* of sociology the very same year. Prior to that, he had held an associate professorship since 1945, when he re-entered the university seven years after his dismissal by the Nazis. Knoll had passed his habilitation in 1934 and taught for the next four years at the University of Vienna as a *Dozent*. In 1950 Knoll was the only professor of sociology at any of the Austrian universities. He had surrounded himself with younger people only loosely connected to the field of sociology. One

of them was Topitsch, whom Knoll mentored but was never formally superior to.

More remarkable than the composition of the founding group in terms of sociological competencies (which was very weak, to say the least) was its composition in terms of party affiliation. As a well-known pattern of Austria's postwar political culture, all institutions, organizations and activities had to be bipartisan. The whole country was divided between the two parties. In any organization one political direction held the majority and the other functioned as observers and informants for their *lager*. Austria's vernacular used the expression *lager* as a synonym for the milieus under the tutelage of one of the big political parties. The Austrian Sociological Society belonged to the Conservatives, but two representatives of the Social Democrats were members of the executive board.

The newly established Society started ambitiously. In August 1950, Knoll wrote to the executive secretary of the International Sociological Association (ISA) to apply for membership for the Austrian branch, and he nominated a representative for the ISA conference to be held at Zurich in September 1950. In fact at least one Austrian did attend the Zurich meeting, and one might suspect that this was the main reason for founding the Society and establishing contact with the ISA, because at this time one needed a permit from the occupation forces to travel abroad. Nothing else happened afterwards. Letters from the ISA secretary regularly remained unanswered. After the initial claim of representing more than 200 sociologists, the Austrian Sociological Society went into hibernation for the next ten years.

The main reason for this inactivity may have been the fragile institutional base of sociology in Austrian universities or the lack of professional interest among its members. One could speculate on another factor. The re-establishment of the German Sociological Society, and its recognition by the ISA, forced patriotic Austrians to establish their own links to the international community because of the official policy of disconnecting all relations with Germany. Before 1933, Austrians had taken part in the German Sociological Society and spoke at its biennial conference. Benedikt Kautsky alone did this after 1945, but he was by then not considered an Austrian.

Knoll belonged to the same branch of Catholicism as Johann Mokre (1901–81), who had been in exile in the United States before returning to his hometown of Graz in 1948. Mokre was a visiting professor at first

because he had taken US citizenship and could therefore not be appointed to a regular position in Austria.<sup>2</sup> He got a professorship for philosophy of law, political science, and sociology there in 1949, where he remained active until his retirement in 1971. Neither man was entrepreneurial, but more like the 19th-Century quixotic scholars. Whereas Knoll was able to impress some students, Mokre did not leave anything lasting or worth remembering – no publications but two disciples.

Showing a bit more of pluck than Topitsch (nineteen years his junior), Knoll published several articles and finally three books on the social doctrine of Roman Catholicism during the 1950s (Knoll [1962] 1996). Besides this *Ideologiekritik*, Knoll participated in debates about the role of the so-called *Ständestaat* from 1934 to 1938. Former supporters and representatives of the authoritarian regime debated the credentials of this dictatorship at length; they found some. Those who spent the Nazi years in exile were more critical of its anti-democratic features whereas the ‘inner emigrants’ praised its anti-Nazi stance. One should add that this debate did not reach out to their former enemy in the civil war but was played out in magazines of opinion written and read by Catholics only. The Social Democrats fought their own fights less in its theory magazine than in books published by exiled former members.<sup>3</sup> Over time Knoll became more critical toward the Church, and the one book he managed to complete before his untimely death was debated fiercely. His opponents charged him with subverting the authority of the Church. He lost his position of leadership in the ‘extramural’ (i.e., non-university) Institute for Social Policy and Social Reform, which he had co-founded in 1954 (it is still active as a small think tank today). Together with some friends Knoll became known in Austria as a ‘left-Catholic’ accused of acting as a ‘stirrup holder’ for the Soviets or communists. This phrase, similar to the ‘fellow traveler’ of English-speaking anti-communists, had been used to discredit ‘traitors’, although the German expression emphasizes the active role more strongly than the English phrase.

## This time, no advantage of backwardness

In the mid-1950s, while several dozens of former Austrians held positions in sociology departments at colleges and universities in the US, Austria had only two professors teaching sociology (see Fleck 2011, chapter 4). Other professors sometimes gave lectures in sociology or neighboring

disciplines. Even more meager than the small number of sociologists was the output.

Although the ministry discouraged the teaching of any of the new imports of Western scholarship such as sociology or political sciences at universities, the Catholic Church showed an interest in the new research techniques of surveys and questionnaires. In 1952 an 'extramural' Institute for Ecclesiastic Social Research was founded, producing hundreds of reports about parishes, mostly in the form of 'grey literature'. This new research unit helped the careers of those who conducted research there. Certainly it also helped the clergy to work out strategies so that the Church could adapt to modern times. The formation of this institute could be seen as a validation of the fact that what happened outside Austria was not completely ignored but merely selectively imported. The religious orders' international network brought foreigners to Austria (the first institute director was a priest from the Netherlands), and some individuals linked to the Institute also spent time abroad as exchange students. The Institute even founded a sister unit for the study of religious life in Hungary under Communist rule, run by refugee priests. The institute was closed by the Church in 1994.

The decline in intellectual capital can be illustrated by comparing the number of recipients of fellowships by the Rockefeller Foundation, which gave this kind of support from 1925 until the outbreak of the war and resumed the scheme very quickly after 1945. Before WWII, twenty-eight Austrians received a fellowship from the division of social sciences of the Foundation, whereas after the war only eight Austrians succeeded in getting this chance to spend some time abroad. Characteristically, two of the postwar fellows had to end their stay abroad earlier than planned because their superiors called them back to Vienna!

One former dweller of Vienna's coffeehouses, Odessa-born Alexander Gerschenkron (1904–78), arrived as a refugee in Austria in 1920. Until the Nazis forced him out of town, he did not receive financial support from American philanthropists but managed to escape with the help of a former American visitor and grantee of the Rockefeller Foundation who spent a year in Vienna. Gerschenkron eventually became a professor of economic history at Harvard in 1948 where he devoted some of his research efforts later on to the economic history of the Habsburg Empire. To make sense of the trajectory of Russia and Austria-Hungary, he invented the concept of 'advantages of backwardness'. An economic system which lagged behind for some time could surpass its competitors

by learning from the failures others made on their way. It would be nice to apply this explanatory sketch also to intellectual competitions, but unfortunately Austria was not an example. As we will see in later chapters, research and development in Austria never improved above the level of what innovation researchers labeled ‘followers’ at best.

Looking at the trajectory of Austria as a whole over the last seven decades, one has to admit kind of a success story. In terms of economy and quality of life, not to mention the happiness index and similar follies of mass media, Austria now regularly ranks very favorably. How could it be that a society that functions well in economic terms is nearly dysfunctional in intellectual affairs? To unravel this mystery, we will look at the time after the Catholic restauration. We will find that these years were the lowest point in the history of intellectual affairs in Austria. It became better but never really good.

## Notes

- 1 Thanks to Edith Kurzweil who provided me with copies of the correspondence between Topitsch and *Partisan Review*. Additional data from the Rockefeller Archive Center’s file on Topitsch, Rockefeller Foundation, Record Group 10.2 Fellowship Record Cards, Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York.
- 2 Until 2004 Austria’s professors were civil servants and had to be Austrian citizens by definition.
- 3 English only readers can get an impression of this debate by consulting Winter (1939) and Gulick & Gerschenkron (1940). The books by Social Democrats were first published in English: Braunthal (1948) and Buttinger (1953).

# 4

## A Missed Opportunity

**Abstract:** *In 1959, Austria had the opportunity to establish Vienna as a place for advanced training in empirical social sciences due to the initiative of ex-Austrian Paul F. Lazarsfeld who managed to persuade the Ford Foundation to give a grant for such an endeavor. However, the Austrians did not like this proposal and wasted four years quarreling about who should profit from the American gift. In 1963 an institute opened which is still around: the Institute for Advanced Studies/ Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS).*

**Keywords:** Ford Foundation; Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna; Oskar Morgenstern; Paul F. Lazarsfeld

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0007.



In June 1959, Paul Lazarsfeld was having a hard time. In Vienna, there was no one around to type his correspondence. Before going on family vacation to Opatija, Yugoslavia, he nevertheless produced three long letters to Shepard Stone, then the leading officer responsible for international relations at the Ford Foundation. In the first letter the Columbia sociologist excused himself for his shortcomings as a typist, as since his earliest days in America he had enjoyed the helping hands of secretaries and therefore never had learned to spell. He then reported to Stone about the outcomes of his recent assignment as a consultant to the Ford Foundation. Together with some other Americans, he had crossed the 'Iron Curtain' several times during the last two years to look for fellowship candidates in Poland and Yugoslavia. This experience had induced him to ask the foundation to assign him to do the same in his native Austria. But during a stay of ten days, in January 1958, he did not find a single young person living up 'to the standards which the Ford Foundation had set up for the granting of these fellowships' (Lazarsfeld [1973] 1993, p. 10).

One and a half years after this discouraging episode Lazarsfeld was again in Vienna. He wanted to follow up on the progress of an initiative he had suggested to the Ford Foundation immediately after his first return to his home town. Back then he had won a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation that brought him to New York in 1933, where he remained for the rest of his life. After more than two decades absence from Austria, Lazarsfeld's inclination to organize was still alive. He had learned this skill as a young activist in the Social Democratic movement and applied it when he founded the first empirical social research unit in Central Europe, the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle*.

In a 30-page 'Report on Austria,' Lazarsfeld tried to explain the Austrian situation to the Ford Foundation and outlined a scheme helping to improve it. For this report he did real fieldwork and interviewed about 40 people, from the Chancellor and the Minister for Education down to former students and surviving associates. Furthermore Lazarsfeld wrote a short advisory text explaining to the Austrians how they could get money from the then-wealthiest foundation worldwide. In personal letters, he informed the Ford Foundation's Stone about his recent impressions and opinions. In one of them he summarized them, characteristically by proposing a research project:

As to the Austrian situation at large, I find it as depressing as before. No brains, no initiative, no collaboration. Someone should make a study to find

out how a country can be intellectually so dead, and at the same time have such wonderful musical festivals.<sup>1</sup>

At this early stage only two things were sure. The ex-Austrian Lazarsfeld wanted to do something good for his hometown and the Ford Foundation was willing to cover the costs. Less certain was what the Austrians had in mind. The problems on the Austrian side were twofold. On the one hand, its politicians and professors did not have the slightest knowledge of how American foundations worked. On the other hand, too many 'players' followed their own direction, the two parties collaborating in a coalition government stalked each other, and no side would permit their political opponent any success. Even within each party, suspicion and envy governed behavior toward other members. (A famous Austrian saying states that the opposite of a friend is a fellow party member, called in the vernacular a 'party friend'.) Early on Lazarsfeld had tried to explain what an American foundation expects from a future grantee. Applicants have to submit a well-defined, detailed plan of intrinsic value and such a plan should not become controversial in the country of the beneficiary. The people interested in a share of the gift from the 'rich American uncle' (a stereotype very much in use at this time in Austria) reached beyond the borders of the small republic. Some former Austrians approaching retirement age thought about returning to their hometown; F.A. Hayek asked around about who might willing to pay the costs. The person with the least personal stake was Lazarsfeld. He enjoyed the recognition he had earned; he could demonstrate to former compatriots his urbaneness. He probably loved to travel to Vienna for short visits but never planned to return there permanently. Having repeated this to all interlocutors, he nevertheless had strong convictions about possible options. One plan he had filed some time prior was seemed to have the possibility of becoming reality elsewhere. Lazarsfeld suggested the creation of what we today would call a graduate school of social sciences, offering training in empirical social research techniques. The initial proposal changed its gestalt and finally became the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California, established with money from the Ford Foundation (Lazarsfeld & Merton 1972).

Indeed, the opportunities to acquire the then still new techniques of doing empirical social research were meager, both in the US and in Europe. The Bureau of Applied Social Research regularly hosted students, graduates and visitors from abroad, but it never became an official training unit, just one of the few places where such training could be

acquired in a participatory way, so to speak. Summer schools and similar schemes came into existence only later. Demand for such facilities led to the founding of others, for example, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Spring Seminar at the Zentralarchiv in Cologne and the Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis. Together with the ambition of the Ford Foundation to reach across the Cold War divide by offering fellowships to students from Comecon countries, the establishment of such an institution in Austria, which had declared its perpetual neutrality in 1955, could have made it an innovation leader in higher education. The Austrians of the later 1950s missed this opportunity – and it did not resurface again.

## Balance of power

After five years of intrigue and rivalries, the *Institut für Höhere Studien* (Institute for Advanced Studies) opened its doors without any fanfare because the director was not able to manage any sort of festivity. Besides the name, not much was laid down. The Ford Institute, as it became known at the outset, had a governing body in which representatives of the two coalition parties held seats, rounded off with a representative of the Ford Foundation, as long as it provided funds. The *Kuratorium*, as it was named, resembled more an executive board than an oversight board. It decided about all affairs including nominating the director, selecting applicants for the two-year terms as *Scholaren*, deciding who should be invited as a visiting professor and framing the details of the budget. However, the less than ten members seldom spared enough time for the meetings. They attended the pre-meetings of their own faction more regularly than the official one afterwards, where voting rights usually were bundled. Consequential decisions had to be reached outside the official meetings, as the result of compromises between the spokespersons of the two parties. This weird form of governance was widely used in Austria's Second Republic. Formally independent registered associations got their funds completely from the government whose two parties nominated representatives to their governing bodies. The proportional divide encompassed the non-existing civil society the same way as in the nationalized industries, banks and other enterprises.

Lacking any experience with the day-to-day business of a modern (or any) research institute, Austria's politicians involved in selecting

the directors for the Ford Institute repeatedly made poor choices. Here as elsewhere in postwar Austria, the political parties nominated two persons for the executive level; the one who really runs the business and a second one with the obligation to observe what the real director was doing and reporting his observations to his party representatives. As a rule, the first director got only slightly more money as a salary than the associate director who seemed to be paid for the pain of being superfluous. The founding director of the Ford Institute was a Bulgarian born professor of statistics from the University of Vienna, Slawtscho Sagoroff (1898–1970), who had become professor there because of the intercession of ‘power brokers’ (Wolf 1999). While he claimed to have had a spectacular career in America, it in fact culminated in unemployment. Other professors did not want to be trumped by a newcomer. The associate director, Adolf Kozlik (1912–64), may have been a better choice – he had academic merits, experience running an independent research unit, and interest in Austrian affairs. However, he belonged not only to the wrong party, the Social Democrats, but annoyed people because of his rudeness. The fact that he never put a tie around his neck made him unpopular on both sides of the political spectrum. An economist by training, after spending some time as an assistant at the *Institut für Konjunkturforschung* under Oskar Morgenstern, he left Austria in 1938 for political reasons. Kozlik met Morgenstern again while in exile in the US, where he later founded an Office for European Economic Research, which became absorbed by the Office for Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA. Kozlik returned in the early 1950s to Vienna (not because he got an invitation to return, although his name was on the list of exiled academics mentioned in Chapter 1), but did not get an appropriate job there – the university was beyond reach for one of his stature, and the Social Democrats did not like such nonconformists (Fritzl 2004). At the Ford Institute Kozlik and his counterpart could not find common ground, so he devoted his energy to writing books; three of them were published after his premature death at the age of 52 in November 1964. One of them attracted attention because of its fierce criticism of the education system in Austria: *Wie wird wer Akademiker in Österreich?* (*How Does One and Who Becomes a University Graduate in Austria*, Kozlik 1965) is both a polemic and an evidence-based analysis of the social selectivity inside the educational system. The lamentation about the misery of the education system became part of public discourse in German-speaking countries around this time, famously

put into headlines by the then-German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, who spoke about 'Bildung als Bürgerrecht', education as a citizen's right (Dahrendorf 1965). Kozlik's book did not get mentioned by the German critics of the outdated character of their highly similar education system. It nevertheless is one of the handful of sociological studies by Austrians about Austrian affairs which has stood the test of time.

After three years of disservice, the contract with the founding director was dissolved against his will. He returned to his professorship, which he had not abandoned while being the Ford Institute's director. To find a successor was not easy, as candidates familiar with Austrian particularities feared the power of the political parties and foreigners were not considered as candidates because the politicians feared their potential independence from political direction. When no one could be persuaded to take over this well-paid but shaky position, a man who had been brought into the inner circle of proponents relatively late agreed to act as an interim director reluctantly. Oskar Morgenstern (1902–77), whom Lazarsfeld had recruited when he had recognized that he himself could not get anything done in Vienna because of his Red past there, was highly familiar with Austrian affairs. In 1938 when on a lecture tour in the US, his substitute as director of the *Institut für Konjunkturforschung* had executed a coup against him, which convinced Morgenstern to remain in the US as a politically exiled professor. Because his parents lived in Austria and survived the war, he returned very early after the war's end. While he had belonged to the recruitment pool of the government before the *Anschluss*, his encounters with the Austrians in 1947 convinced him that it would be better to stay at Princeton University instead of returning to a broken-down society like postwar Austria. In the early postwar years he rejected invitations for several jobs, including becoming the founding director of the Ford Institute, which would have been an option because of his conservative political affiliation.

Most probably because the founding director had his approval, Morgenstern was cajoled into an interim directorship in the academic year 1965/66. He stayed at the institute for less than three months and therefore could not make any lasting changes. There were at least three more directors before the Ford Institute, which later became known by the acronym IHS, found a sound base for its work.

On the side of the *Kuratorium* and the directors, a scientific advisory board had been established from the very start. Lazarsfeld and

Morgenstern sat on it until their deaths in 1976 and 1977 respectively, which meant that the Institute invited them for meetings twice a year. The advisors did not get much information from the *Kuratorium*, and in the initial years their suggestions were sidelined most of the time.

The institute was divided into departments, and the decision of which disciplines should be granted space at the institute was as labyrinthine as all other affairs in this case. Finally economics, sociology and political science made it, whereupon it was clear that the two patrons, Lazarsfeld and Morgenstern, had secured their disciplines ample recognition. It remained something of a mystery that political science was selected without controversy. Each department head assembled around him initially about ten assistants; later, when the Ford money terminated, the number of assistants went down.

Heading a department or becoming an assistant was as politicized as anything else. In the first years both political parties nominated half of the assistants. Their only obligation was to show up when visiting professors gave their lectures. These on-paper assistants were allowed to hold their former jobs, so the money from the Ford Foundation was seen as a pay raise for political clients.

Later on, however, the misbegotten institute became kind of an ordinary teaching and research unit. The department of economics was one of the first units in the German-speaking countries where game theory played a very prominent role. Morgenstern was also able to encourage econometrics. In political science the initial emphasis was on empirical research in the style of behavioralism. When political science became a university study program in 1972, some of the former *Scholaren* could compete successfully for professorships at the three Austrian departments.<sup>2</sup> Lazarsfeld was less successful at steering the department of sociology in the direction he wanted. At the time the institute was functioning reasonably, the approach for which he was the poster-boy had come under attack: positivism was no longer a matter of course but was treated as a force from the dark side. After Lazarsfeld's death, no one from 'his' institute in Vienna wrote an obituary (Morrison 1976).

## Sociology's misfortune

The less than promising trajectory of the sociologist at the IHS was caused in part by a competitor who initially channeled money from the institute

into his own affairs and later on jealously followed what happened there. In an environment populated only by a handful of actors, the personality of a single individual could have tremendous consequences within it. This was the case with sociology in Austria from the 1950s to the 1980s and beyond.

The only *Ordinarius* for sociology, August M. Knoll, was no advocate of empirical social research, but at the same time he did not argue against it. Besides being remembered by former students as a good teacher, he did not fill the role of a discipline builder. His style of research did not need much support by others; therefore, close collaboration did not become practiced at his university institute. One of his students at least became interested in empirical research because it promised to pay off. As a young man Leopold Rosenmayr (born 1925) seemed to foreigners to be the only one in Austria interested in the type of research for which Lazarsfeld had been the champion. Rosenmayr jumped on the bandwagon and founded a small research unit at the Knoll Institute and managed to get American foundations to assign him research grants. Nothing remarkable came out of this small unit, but Rosenmayr managed twice to receive habilitation (first for social philosophy and then for sociology) and finally succeeded his local mentor when Knoll died prematurely in 1964. After climbing up the ladder in the university Rosenmayr immediately became a power player in university affairs in Vienna due to his being a man of all seasons. During the Nazi years he served in the Wehrmacht, after the war he joined the left wing of the Catholics, and when the Social Democrats became the leading party in 1970 he enjoyed gracious support by the new minister for science, a woman he was familiar with from earlier collaborations.

Whereas Knoll and Topitsch were prototypical humanistic scholars, primarily interested in sticking their noses in their books, Rosenmayr was the opposite type, someone who loved to demonstrate and execute power up to the level of personal exploitation and used authoritarian behavior toward subordinates. Very dissimilar to other manager-like scholars, however, Rosenmayr seldom went into hiding to finish a manuscript in time. More than anything else, money was the currency Rosenmayr admired. In the early days of the Ford Institute the associate director mentioned to someone from the Ford Foundation that his 'institute was becoming a sort of Ford Foundation to the rest of the University'.<sup>3</sup> Before becoming a professor, Rosenmayr's list of publications were anything but impressive, and afterward no one knew exactly how much he contributed

to the collaborative publications. If such an authoritarian character gets the chance to occupy a leading position, the environment in which this happens will become intellectually and socially a desert, populated only by those individuals who love to receive instructions instead of thinking on their own. Former student-collaborators fell out with him and left town or sought their fortune elsewhere.

After five years of preparation, for the first six years of its existence the Ford Institute received about one and a half million dollars from the American philanthropists, and the Austrian government gave half of the amount the Americans channeled into the institute. In the early 1960s the sum of money given to the institute was the equivalent of sixty recipients of Rockefeller post-doc fellowships annually. As indicated before, the Ford Institute's departments housed around ten assistants and seldom more than fifteen to twenty students. The students got a stipend for a two-year period, and the assistants were hired for at least twice as long. This means that during the first six years, three cohorts of graduates and at least one cohort of assistants should have gone on the academic labor market, or for sociology alone about thirty *Scholaren* and at least five assistants. From this, one would expect a visible number of alumni inside the universities. But the truth is almost no one from the early cohorts made an academic career in sociology at all.

## Finally a success

During the first years the Ford Institute did not take off but instead became a mess. Officially the University of Vienna did not approve the founding of a rival institute. For years the situation remained problematic and proved James Coleman right in his comment: 'An "Institute for Advanced Study" covering only Austria is wholly inappropriate; that is like an Institute for Advanced Study for the state of Tennessee.'<sup>4</sup> It took a long time before routines were established sufficiently to offer students interested in empirical social research chances to improve their portfolios. Nearly all of the students came from Austria; all aspirations to attract foreigners had been buried very early on, most likely because of jealousy and an unwillingness to share the American pie with hungry people from Soviet Europe. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1960s the former Ford Institute became a remarkable place to grasp contemporary developments



in sociology. Initially it was expected that visiting professors should stay there for one or two years, but in reality prominent social scientists did not want to leave their home base that long. Visiting professors came for half a semester at most, but quite a few returned more than once and were able to establish bonds with students and assistants. Some luminaries in sociology belonged to this cadre: James Coleman and Aaron Cicourel just to mention two. In some cases their Austrian pupils were able to produce books or articles out of these collaborations or as the result of conferences organized by the institute. However, the success was one-sided because the vast majority of the visiting professors did not gain any professional benefit from their terms at the institute. There is no systematic data at hand, but browsing through CVs of graduates from the 1960s and early 1970s demonstrates that at best three or four co-authored articles appeared. Compared with the publication policies of many of the visiting professors at their own universities, one has to conclude that the student body in Vienna did not show enough talent. Reading Oskar Morgenstern's diary from this period is illuminating. He invited a member of the IHS to work on a joint paper but had to nag his future Austrian co-author over a very long period of time during which he more than once thought about canceling the project entirely. This Austrian economist was one of the more successful members of the institute, but academic time management was not well known in Vienna around 1970.<sup>5</sup>

Of sustainable status was only one strand, sociology of medicine, which started at the Ford Institute and later became an independent extramural research unit for the next forty-five years. The most lasting effect, however, were the ties established between Austrians and their mentors from abroad (Knorr Cetina 2005; Knorr Cetina 2007). The first sociology alumnus from the institute who got a professorship at an Austrian university was Max Haller in 1985; before him graduates and assistants from the institute had to go abroad to secure jobs (as did Haller for some years, too). The Austrian university sociologists remained hostile toward the Ford Institute for a very long period of time.

The years in which well-intentioned Americans tried to do something favorable to the social sciences in Austria were those years in which the two-party-system blocked any initiative; therefore, a success would have been highly improbable. On the other hand, the Austrian social scientists who played a role in this affair do not deserve praise for their behavior.

## Notes

- 1 Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Letter to Shepard Stone, 29 June 1959, Lazarsfeld Papers, Columbia University, Box 32, folder 4.
- 2 One of the alumni, Peter Gerlich, estimated that a third of the professoriate were former *Scholaren* (Gerlich 1993, p. 152).
- 3 Frederick Burkhardt, A Journal of a Visit to Vienna, 17–28 June 1963 as a Consultant to the ‘Ford Foundation’ on the ‘Institute for Advanced Studies’, Ford Archive, reel 2574.
- 4 James Coleman to Ford Foundation, 10 September 1964, Ford Foundation, reel 2845.
- 5 Digital Edition of Oskar Morgenstern’s Diary: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/context:ome>. Cf. Morgenstern & Schwödiauer (1976).

# 5

## Years of Reforms

**Abstract:** *After a long period of stagnation, Austria's research and higher education sector became the object of reform due to the pressure of international organizations and by isomorphic adaptations of changes happening elsewhere in the West. From 1966 onwards it became possible to study sociology at two universities for the first time. To satisfy student demand the federal ministry assigned new professorships to the universities. About ten new professors were appointed during these early days of institutionalizing sociology in Austria. Their selection followed less than meritocratic criteria, but they belonged to the subculture of the Roman Catholics.*

**Keywords:** contract research; OECD; personnel selection; reform; Social Democratic Party; University reform

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0008.

It was a rare moment in the history of sociology in Austria when on 18 June 1976 the federal minister for science and research gave a talk in front of a sociologist-only audience. Hertha Firnberg (1909–94) had become head of the new ministry when her party, the Social Democrats, won the elections in 1970. Twenty years earlier she had been one of the representatives of the Social Democrats at the founding meeting of the Austrian Sociological Society and later on served for a while as its vice-president. Before turning into a full-time politician, she worked as a social statistician and published amongst others on social stratification in Austria. Therefore, she was no alien to the world of sociology. In 1977 she brought the carrot and the stick with her and challenged the listening sociologists from the very beginning. Under the title ‘The Usability Deficit in Sociology’, she blamed social scientists for not being policy oriented enough, as it would be labeled later on, and asked her audience to offer more ideas, utopian thoughts and non-mainstream methodologies as, e.g., action research! At the same time she named only one sociologist by name three times, her old buddy Leopold Rosenmayr who, according to the minister, was the only who had acted to her complete satisfaction. The mixture of messages and revelations astonished readers when the manuscript was published in a journal (Firnberg 1978), and some sociologists replied, or tried to at least. Least surprising was the social engineering perspective toward applied research. Such studies should help politicians – Firnberg spoke about herself always as ‘we practitioners’ – to make the right decision; therefore, they should be delivered on time, at least. She made her audience laugh, about their colleagues of course, when she listed the delay of several then well-known research projects. Furthermore, the minister criticized the ivory tower mentality of academics and the lack of methodological rigor and conceded that politics might have been naïve to expect more from sociology. The talk did not make newspaper headlines but remained a thorn in the side of Austria’s sociologists – quite ironically it became reprinted as a kind of preface to the book publication of one of the overdue projects Firnberg had exposed in her talk five years earlier (Knorr et al. 1981). There is no need to examine the replies in detail, but use this incident as an illustration for the huge change between the backwardness of sociology in Austria fifteen years earlier to the more or less up-to-date level of controversy when Austria’s Social Democratic reform government was in full bloom. How exactly did this change come to life?

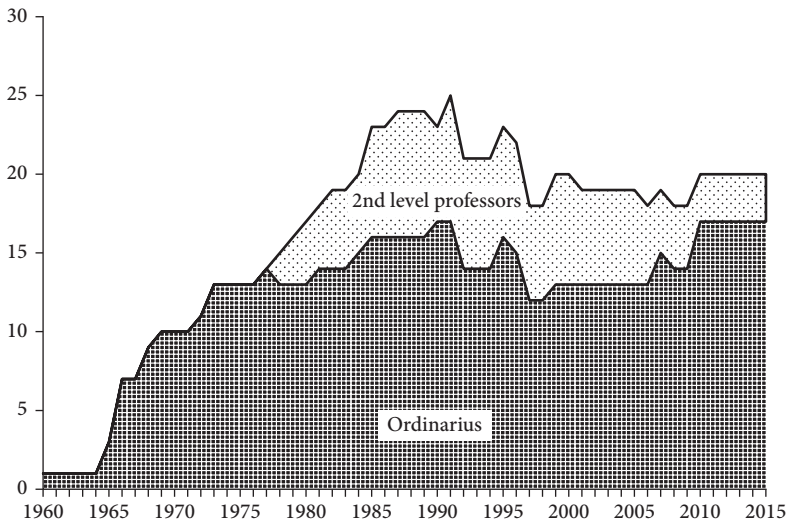
## A case of isomorphism

The depressing atmosphere narrated in the last two chapters was the result of the rivalry of the two big political parties and their functionaries' effort to not lose control over their domains, combined with attempts to hinder the adversary to expand its 'sphere of influence', as these spaces were called in Austria's political jargon. Surprisingly, in pure economic terms, post-war Austria was an impressive success story. Its growth rate was regularly above comparable nations, and the corporatist arrangement raised the income of all strata. The welfare state, which had not had undergone any expansion after it was initially established after the end of WWI, accelerated. Only what Marxists call the superstructure lagged behind: Aside from the performance of classical music, other cultural expressions could not find space to flourish; the tiny groups of avant-garde artists did have a hard time finding a niche. Nevertheless, the 1960s exhibited an optimistic mood and reforms started in different corners of society. World politics found an echo even in the labyrinths of the Austrian bureaucracy when the so called 'Sputnik shock' caused the United States to invest in education and research, and Europeans 'isomorphed' that strategy. Independently of that, another process produced its own spillover. Whereas it might be that the first mentioned process was indeed a 'myth', this second one formed sustainable structures: The postwar reconstruction of Austria's economy through Marshall Plan money had established a first cadre of planning experts. The administrative body of this transatlantic support scheme transformed itself into a new international player, which became one of the most consequential inter-governmental organizations of the second half of the 20th Century: Formally founded in 1961 as the Organization for Economic Co-Ordination and Development, the OECD immediately launched expert evaluations of all aspects of its member states' economic systems. To encourage economic growth, the expansion of any and every education became the mantra of the epoch.

Higher education in particular was seen as crucial for further economic growth in two ways: on the one hand, scientific insights would be transformed into new products; on the other hand, universities would produce a better qualified labor force, able to accomplish the spinning-off of scientific developments. Austria was and still is weak with the first assignment but caught up to other advanced industrial societies with regards to the production of qualified university graduates, initially producing even more than the country's economy could absorb.

## Studying sociology for the first time

The university system of Austria had not gone through any major reform since its establishment in the 1850s.<sup>1</sup> The basic rules remained the same over decades. Formal curricula existed only for medicine and law whereas all other studies, assembled in the increasingly dysfunctional ‘philosophical faculty’, were heavily under-regulated. All university study programs led to the doctorate as the one and only degree. On paper one needed three to four years to reach it, but in 1965 depending on study and the university (the expanded retention time had its roots in very low tuition fees) it took between 4.5 and 8 years. Before 1966, sociology and other social science disciplines could not be studied, but one could submit a thesis if the label of a professor’s chair contained the name of the discipline (and professors were relatively free to add additional fields to the one for which they were hired initially). Figure 5.1 shows the development of the two highest levels of academic personnel in sociology.



**FIGURE 5.1** *Stock of professors of sociology in Austria and their composition*

*Note:* Both types of professors belong to the faculty before 1975 and to the so-called ‘professors curia’; excluded are honorary and visiting professors. ‘Ordinarius’ are full professors; the titles of the other group changed over time. After 2004 there is no differentiation in titles but individual contracts.

*Source:* My calculation, based on an examination of university sources.

Both *Ordinarius* and *Extraordinarius*, roughly comparable to full and associate professor in the US system, belonged to the governing body of the universities, the faculty. Other employees were their subordinates and functioned as assistants, as they were officially called.

Within a decade, from the midst of the 1960s onwards, the academic representation of sociology in Austria was complete. Up until the late 1970s the teaching load of the faculty was modest. One professor was in charge of around 80 students on average, and the system invited entrepreneurial types to accumulate doctoral candidates: Professors got additional fees for grading theses and taking final exams, which encouraged more than one professor to establish a so-called ‘dissertation factory’. In Austrian universities writing and defending a doctoral thesis had always been a two-person game with not much control by the professors’ peers. A consequence is that the quality of the theses varies strongly.

Overall the numbers of graduates remained modest for the first three decades. Before 1985 there is no data available to differentiate between men and women, but the total number was slightly lower than in the first period shown in Figure 5.2. On average every professor had to take care of one Ph.D. candidate’s thesis *defensio* per year, but in reality the burden

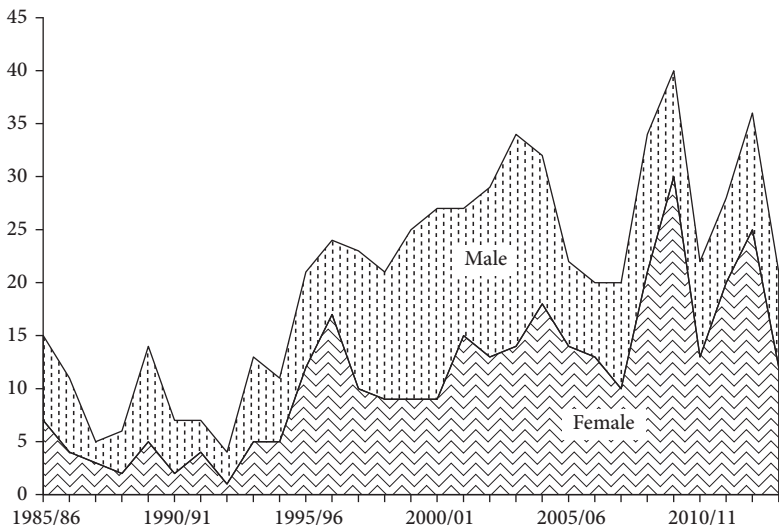


FIGURE 5.2 PhD graduates in sociology, per year and by sex

Note: Data from the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy. No data available before 1985.

was even lighter because very often *Dozenten* got along with students more easily and were more often chosen by students.

Due to pressure from outside, a reform of the university curricula came into effect in 1966. For the first time ever a separate study program of sociology was established. In the first two years of training economics, management studies and sociology followed a joint study program; only in the second half could a specialization in sociology be chosen. After submitting a master's thesis, graduates earned their first degree, 'magister', and could then continue for a doctoral thesis. The sociology program immediately attracted students at the two universities where the government had offered it: in Vienna and at a newly founded university in Linz. These two and six more universities (where sociology was only part of the broader social science study programs and could not be selected as a major) received new sociology professorships.

Not really surprising for contemporary Austrians, but strange for foreigners and later-born, nearly all the new jobs were given to those with strong connections to the Roman Catholic Church. Even two clergymen, a Hungarian Jesuit who had fled after the Communist takeover in 1949 and a Bavarian priest, got sociology chairs. Several of the newly appointed professors had gotten their sociological training at the Institute for Ecclesiastic Social Research by investigating the wishes of churchgoers from all corners of the country. According to law, the newly hired got immediate tenure, were granted Austrian citizenship if called from abroad, and had to retire at the age of 70. This meant that newcomers of the late 1960s – in their early forties on average – were expected to remain in their university positions until the end of the 1980s.

Judging the academic merits of the first cohort of sociology professors in Austria, one is compelled to say that seven out of the eight would not have been able to compete for chairs at any of the better known universities in neighboring Germany, not to mention any more advanced places (the overachiever left after fifteen years for his native country). Half of the new professors had studied and made their careers in Austria, and the rest immigrated for this very job. Germans of the same generation who became professors of sociology there usually spent at least a year on a fellowship abroad, whereas three out of four new Austrian sociologists lacked such an experience. Their lists of publication were short and do not contain anything of lasting significance. Since job openings were not announced publicly, the selection process was in the hands of the faculty appointed previously. In the case of a new university, the ministry appointed a



so-called 'founding senate' whose members usually appointed themselves to the first chairs. In these situations, a mechanism could work that I have called the 'tendency of the rate of reputation to fall' (Fleck 2010, p. 269). It proposes that any newly hired professor should not outperform the established ones. Those doing the hiring do not wish to wake up in the shadow of someone possessing more reputation. The working of this 'law' is encouraged by a set of marginal conditions. First, if there are no performance criteria for allocating taxpayer's money to universities; secondly, if students choose the place where to study not because of the professoriate and its fame but for non-academic reasons; and, thirdly, if there is more than one representative of a particular discipline at the faculty, this kind of downward hiring will happen. In the 'teutonic' universities, only one professor was in charge of a broadly defined field (discipline), so faculties had a slight incentive to raise their collective reputation by selecting a 'good man' because he would not compete directly with the established ones. However, if a faculty had to hire additional professors for a field which is already represented by one of its members, this particular man (it was still a small, patriarchal system) occupying a chair for the whole field is heavily encouraged to slice only a small portion from his cake for the newcomer and jealously assure that this newcomer will rank below him in all relevant status dimensions. There were no obstacles to that. Finally, if a federal minister who selects the candidate from a list does not want to shake the boat but strives only for the continuation of nepotism and strengthening the camp of their own *weltanschauung*, a university system ends up at a slippery slope.

The expansion of the sociology professoriate from two to ten men (Figure 5.3) happened in Austria when, after two decades of a two-party coalition, the government was exclusively run by one party. The Conservative government held power from 1966 to 1970, during the culturally tumultuous 1960s, and though nothing dramatic happened at Austrian universities, a feeble echo reached the lecture halls. Sociology became fashionable and attracted self-declared progressives. Weekly magazines like *Der Spiegel* and cheap paperback series from neighboring Germany spread the messages of the student movement and popularized the Frankfurt School. In 1968 the tiny Austrian Communist Party sided initially with the 'Prague Spring' reform movement, but when the Stalinists regained power, the remaining party intellectuals left and got some attention in mainstream media. Compared with Paris or Berlin, Vienna kept calm. There the left-wing students who had chosen sociology realized that its Austrian branch did

[illegible]

**FIGURE 5.3** Professors of sociology at departments of sociology in Austria over time, by university, status, sex and type of career continuation

Notes: Ordinarius are darkly greyed; Extraordinarius are lightly greyed. Women are shown in italics.

*Professors:* GD: Dux \*1933 A; HJH: Helle \*1934 A; JF: Flecker \*1959; JM: Muckenhuber \*1980; KF: Freisitzer \*1928 C; LO-I: Oates-Indruchova \*unknown; MP: Pfadenhauer \*1968; RZ: Ziegler \*1936 A; ST: Titscher \*1945 C; UM-P: Mense-Petermann \*1964 A.

Abbreviations: \* Year of Birth; A: went abroad; C: changed university in Austria; R: retired; † died in office; → continues in/after 2015.

*Not included are professorship at universities and faculties without a department of sociology.*

86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
R										Neckel * 1956										A		JF							
†										MP																			
										R												Verwiebe *1954							
										R																			
Traxler *1951										†												Kittel *1967							
R																						Richter *1952							
an *1940										R																			
Nowotny *1940										A												Felt *1957							
R																													
										R												Pernicka *1973							
										Zimmering *1951												R							
										R												Bacher *1956							
										R												Aulenbacher *1959							
R																						Kraemer *1962							
										R												Moebius *1973							
er *1947																												R	
																												JM	
										Wetterer *1949												R		LO-I					
R										Stagl * 1940												R							
*1929										R														Hahn *					
																								Fux *1958					
										R																			
										Scott *1956																			
										Preglau *1951																			
																								Staubmann *1956					
										R																			
*1947																												R	
										R																			
										R												9		A				Bögenhold *1955	
Bontinck *1941										R														Smudits *1954					
22	23	23	23	23	25	24	24	24	23	22	18	18	20	20	19	19	19	19	19	18	19	18	18	20	20	20	20	21	21
4	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

not feel any inclination for the *zeitgeist*. The majority of the new professors of sociology found it difficult to interact with these students. At university departments in the hands of Roman Catholics, an entire generation experienced an unfriendly welcome. Over the next 25 years, the gulf widened between university-based professors of sociology, encircled by a handful of apprentices, and the slowly increasing number of sociology students who idealized liberation and social change, admired critical theory instead of survey research and rejected traditional authority for democratization. Outside academia 'sociology' became a popular label used by people who never attended any course in sociology, but saw themselves as reformers, or even revolutionaries. Once more, sociology was amalgamated with social reform, this time the 'sociology equals socialism' formula did suffice to capture the mood of at least some of its exponents.

## A climate of reform

From 1970 until 1983 the Social Democrats held an absolute majority in parliament and were therefore able to run a single-party government. Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1911–90), supported by younger cadres who commanded voting surveys and public opinion research, had won the campaign with a program for opening to more democracy. Kreisky's propaganda claimed that 1,400 experts had helped to formulate a reform agenda, and indeed the Social Democrats executed several ground-breaking reforms, in particular in family law, the judiciary and women's rights. Abortion became exempt from punishment, and women who wanted to start working outside of their home were no longer compelled to ask their husbands for approval. Democratization would air out all areas of life, including the universities.

The government tried to reform universities by breaking the monopoly of the *Ordinarius* and granting students and lower level collaborators faculty voting rights. To carry out the reforms, the new minister needed some support from inside the universities. She found it in students, lower-ranked faculty members and opportunists who detected the spirit of change and sided with the party in power. To avoid irritating the establishment, the minister appointed outsiders to the professoriate only reluctantly. She tried to strengthen her supporters from the higher ranks by assigning to them adjunct 'institutes', supported through an independent system controlled by party officials and financed generously out of the federal budget. The

Ludwig Boltzmann Society, named after one of the greatest Austrian scientists, did not follow an overall mission but made some professors into heads of adjunct institutes. In some cases these small units, seldom more than two researchers working at one institute, succeeded in establishing a new research agenda. In two cases of sociological research it worked well. One institute for sociology of law and criminology and one for sociology of medicine became well established – in both cases they were still around in the 21st Century. Both units were initially directed by sociologists with only weak ties to the universities, but both directors finally became professors. Other Boltzmann Institute programs were less successful, to say the least.

For the government the creation of extramural institutes was advantageous. It could commission particular research projects with one of them and because these small institutes wanted to get follow-up contracts, the balance of power was in favor of the ministry. Those who did contract research were usually under some surveillance, executed by civil servants from the ministries, who were often their peers because they had studied together. It should be added that the spirit of reformism was more than just rhetoric to win elections, but a deeply felt attitude on the part of the leading figures inside the Social Democratic party, which resonated with the younger generation of social scientists. The basic consensus was broad enough even to accept criticism from the side of the minister, as narrated before. If there was disagreement, it concerned the speed of reforms, and not very surprisingly the social scientists voted for speeding up the process.

It is not clear whether it was planned from the beginning, but within a short period of time Austrian sociology fell apart. Inside the university only few sociologists were around. About a dozen professors and three to four times as many assistants had a chance to secure tenured positions if they did not alienate their superiors before reaching this goal. Given that the initial selection was still done by one professor who offered a position to someone he thought appropriate, uniformity was the consequence. The tenured professors and lower-ranked were free to follow their own interests. Since university departments did not have any funds available for research, university-based sociologists had to apply for third-party money if they wanted to execute a costly empirical project. The majority opted for library research despite the fact that the libraries were not well equipped, their quite recent acquisitions coming from the libraries of closed down America Houses. According to a contemporary study, 68 sociologists were on the universities' payroll in 1973 (Knorr et al. 1981, p. 33). Nearly the same number worked outside the universities (fifty-one, according to the same survey).

During the 1970s and beyond, the extramural sociology research units experienced very similar problems. Their staff was all of the same age and possessed nearly the same level of qualification, which means that they did not have much experience with large-scale social research. According to data from the aforementioned study, two-thirds of all Austrian sociologists were younger than 32 and only one out of five was older than 42. The number of women in sociology was somewhat higher than in other social sciences: in 1973, Knorr et al. counted fifty-one female sociologists in the universities and sixty-eight outside, or twenty-seven per cent and thirty-one per cent, respectively. The numbers for all social sciences were seventeen per cent women in universities and thirty-one per cent outside (Knorr et al. 1981, p. 39).

The former Ford Institute – during the 1970s the institute still was known under this heading – became one of the hot spots for research projects to support the reform agenda. The personnel there came to be seen as belonging to a ‘socialist cadre hotbed’, as the institute was named in the press. With the consultation of visiting professors, groups of more-or-less unexperienced graduate students and young post-docs got involved in studying almost everything, from public administration, the situation of the social sciences and the system of medical care to the patterns of social mobility in Austria. Other research institutes investigated the social situation of peasants, urban problems, incarceration rates, etc. In other words, the entire Social Democratic reform agenda was accompanied by empirical social science research. Some projects collapsed before the researchers delivered their final report, others took three times longer to complete than they were scheduled, while yet others took on the form of television documentaries. Some of the collaborators even learned how to do sociological research.

The split between slow-moving university departments and hectic extramural contract research units was widened when a group of young Turks challenged the professors sitting on the governing board of the Austrian Sociological Society and succeeded in taking over as early as 1971. The victory was a Pyrrhic one because it allowed the established professors to leave the Society, which became even weaker than it had been before. In Austria and other European countries such quasi-professional associations are less compulsory for members of an occupation. Their influence is usually relatively restricted and the bonding between constituency and functionaries fragile; such organizations do not play the same role as their American counterparts.

## Intensified productivity

In 1976, twenty-six years after its founding, the Austrian Sociological Society started its own journal, unimaginatively called *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* (ÖZS), *Austrian Journal of Sociology*. In line with the mood of those years and the work done by the first generation of professionally-trained sociologists in Austria, the first volumes contained articles that dealt almost exclusively with Austria and its social problems. Furthermore, the editors announced that sociology in Austria had gained scholarly recognition and found its way into social and political practice, a phrase used then to circumscribe what a decade earlier had been called ‘the use of sociology’ (Lazarsfeld et al. 1967). For the first couple of years, half of the issues were devoted to special topics, regularly closely connected with one of the major government-funded research projects of the period; later on more ‘open issues’ appeared. Initially the established professors from the universities seldom contributed articles. At the start the editorial team was hosted by the Ford Institute’s department of sociology and worked voluntarily for the journal. The journal never became a successful competitor with the better-known outlets from neighboring Germany (the same could be said for similar journals from nearby disciplines and leads one to conclude that the ten times larger German field just did not recognize contributions from its smaller neighbor). The claim that sociology’s findings would find a welcome beyond the walls of academia was not repeated later on. From the 1990s onwards ÖZS started to publish irregularly *Sonderhefte*, special issues, usually book-length edited volumes dedicated to particular broader subjects. This journal was never the only sociological one edited in Austria: *SWS-Rundschau* was a successor journal that has been published since 1987, *Innovation – The European Journal of Social Science Research* started in 1988 and *Angewandte Sozialforschung* went back to 1968 but stopped appearing sometime in the early years of the 21st Century. As the titles indicate, three of the four journals publish nearly exclusively in German. All these journals are indexed in Sociological Abstracts (see Crothers 2000 for an analysis on Austrian sociology using this database), but none are regularly listed in the Web of Science citation indexes.

Near the end of the reform period an edited volume on the conditions of life in Austria appeared (Fischer-Kowalski & Bucek 1980). It should not come as a surprise that none of its contributors held a chair in

sociology at the time of the writing. Internationally, the research behind this book belonged to the social indicators' movement; internally it was regarded as a moderate Marxist statement that criticized the Social Democratic government for not doing enough to equalize conditions of living. From an international, comparative perspective the research conducted by the younger Austrian generation of social scientists could hardly be called sophisticated; however, compared with what happened at the same time at universities it seemed like a triumph of those on the margin over those in the ivory tower. As a reward, several members of this generation eventually got promoted to professors.

Another book, which came out the year before the above-mentioned one, could help illustrate the situation in Austria at the end of the 1970s in two ways (Nowotny 1979). On the one hand, this study investigated public debates around a public referendum which the government initiated to overcome quarrels about the first nuclear power station in Austria. In November 1978 the voters rejected the government's plan by a tiny majority of 50.5 per cent. Contrary to his promise, Chancellor Kreisky did not resign from office but won the election the year after with the highest proportion of votes ever: 51 per cent of the popular votes. During the campaign for the referendum the government had organized expert panels to discuss pros and cons of non-military use of nuclear power. Helga Nowotny, then director of a newly established extramural center for social welfare, formerly head of the department of sociology at the Ford Institute and with a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University in 1969, studied the public debates and wrote a research report afterwards. Nowotny approached more than one Austrian university professor of sociology to see if this book would suffice for habilitation. She was rejected outright and subsequently got her habilitation at Bielefeld. Others too went through degrading interactions with those in power at Austria's universities back in the 1970s. Nowotny and several more made their ways up to levels none of the insider favorites could reach. Only from the 1990s onward had the social closure softened and habilitation became an option not just for recipients of nepotistic favors.


## Note

- 1 A new law in 1955 only laid down what had been the practice ever since.



# 6

## The Eye of the Needle in Recruiting



**Abstract:** *Academia in Austria has always been a very hierarchical system, but the institutions of the recruitment did not get much attention. In a small world like sociology in Austria the consequences of particular recruitment patterns might become even more consequential compared with large academic systems that possess more chances to correct inappropriate developments.*

**Keywords:** academic recruitment; Habilitation

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0009.

Readers of the *ÖZS* (the *Austrian Journal of Sociology*) once got a chance to take a look at the backstage of academia. For the first time, in its 9th volume, the journal published letters to the editor. In an exemplary way the first of them revealed the dysfunctional working of the most enigmatic institution of the 'teutonic' higher education system, the habilitation, to which I have referred repeatedly in the preceding chapters. In 1984 a candidate for habilitation described her experiences over the previous three years to make this hurdle. She wasn't just a writer but one of the longtime editors of the *ÖZS* herself, a well-known member of the Austrian Sociological Society and an outspoken exponent of the left wing first generation of professional sociologists. She had earned her PhD in sociology from the University of Vienna in 1971 after some quarrels with the 'top dog' professor there. She then had joined the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) where she worked as an assistant after the two-year-course as a *Scholar*. By the end of the 1970s she, like her colleagues at the IHS, had to make up her mind about her academic future. The directorate of the IHS did not want to grant tenure to any of its employees. As the termination of employment at the comfy IHS drew nearer one could consider a habilitation at one of the Austrian universities in order to open the door for getting a call to a chair afterwards. The brave few who followed this path went through highly uncomfortable experiences, some of which were described in the letter to the editor (Fischer-Kowalski 1984). The two professors who played a crucial role in the case had been invited by the editors to reply. Their nearly identical answers were that 'official secrecy' would forbid them to reveal anything (Acham 1984; Freisitzer 1984). Fischer-Kowalski's major complaints about the proceedings were that the committee did not proceed with her request but tried to discourage her by putting it off. Knowing that her future career was dependent on mastering the habilitation, her adversaries could damage her reputation this way more effectively than by a straightforward rejection of her application. In the long run Fischer-Kowalski got a habilitation and even managed to become professor for the new specialty 'social ecology' – twenty years after she first applied for habilitation. Meanwhile her experiences taught other candidates a lesson.

## Administer a queuing line

Since habilitation is used only in the 'teutonic' academic system, and in some 'isomorphing' neighboring countries, it might be appropriate

to explain its working in some details. One needs not to quote the proverbial Martians, but my guess is that even contemporaries from different academic cultural backgrounds – younger or socially remote people – will be surprised about some of the particularities of this institution. Attempts to analyze it are immediately confronted by its unobservability. The meetings are closed and the records are not open to any public – the files fall under legal protection for all persons involved, which means that the files become available only when all participants of a particular proceeding have passed away, or given their written consent for examination. Therefore, not one proceeding of postwar sociology can be studied in detail from its minutes and files. Participants are generally unwilling to lift the curtain. When I asked fellow sociologists to devote their remaining documents from such proceedings to the Archive for the History of Sociology in Austria (AGSÖ), if I got answers at all they were mostly negative (Fleck 1991). It was as if I had tried to enter the most intimate parts of their existence. One of the few who answered declined my wish and explained to me that according to his understanding academic life is governed by ‘lifeworld standards of behavior and decency requirements’; therefore, a request for archival documentation would resemble the ‘tampering of witnesses’ (Stagl 1991, p. 247). In oral histories interviewees seldom start talking about this episode in their professional life and even very prominent figures avoid mentioning this status passage in written memoirs. For instance, the two volumes with autobiographical chapters written by those who belong to the so-called postwar generation of German-speaking sociologists contain nearly no detail but report the facts of their habilitation in passing (Bolte & Neidhardt 1998; Fleck 1996b).

This cloak and dagger secrecy should alert sociologists interested in the routines of their own tribe to investigate it, but the opposite happened: up to this day only a handful of publications cover this status passage, and some more remarks are dispersed through other writings. Max Weber’s famous talk on ‘Science as a Vocation’ (Weber [1919] 1946, pp. 129–34) contains five pages with some telling observations and commentary, but they did not persuade others to dig deeper into the morass (see for recent exceptions: Mozetič 1995; Müller 2000). This remarkable lacuna in sociological self-examination makes what follows a sketchy portrait restricted mainly to the officially defined sides of the procedure plus some anecdotal data.

The habilitation goes back to the 19th Century when holding a doctorate seemed no longer sufficient to guarantee a proficient transfer of knowledge to the next generation. Additional proof of competence was seen as necessary, but those who passed got entry into kind of a waiting position only. Someone who mastered the examination earned the right to teach at the granting university, but there was no employment there. Holding the picturesque title of *Privatdozent*,<sup>1</sup> its representatives were paid for their service by fees of students; in exceptional cases the income level could reach reasonable highs, thus for instance Georg Simmel mentioned his level of income as *Privatdozent* in Berlin as a reason not to compete for professorships in provincial places (no one knows whether the German Jewish philosopher-sociologist might have been practicing the sour grapes-strategy). Even in the post-WWII years a *Privatdozent* had to be rich or practice another occupation while waiting until an opening offered him a chance to learn whether he was a candidate with sound prospects for a chair (the first woman who had been granted a habilitation was Judith Janoska-Bendl at the Philosophical Faculty, Faculty for Arts and Science, at the University of Graz in 1964 in ‘philosophical sociology’). Indeed passing habilitation at one place was never an assurance to have reached a particular level of agreed upon status inside the discipline nationwide. One’s place in line for a position at the top – *Ordinarius*, or chaired full professor – is seldom determined by seniority but had to be negotiated every time again, until someone reached an age when they were seen by others as too old to be promoted at all. That is the difference with the French system of *concours d’agrégation* – the nationwide competition for particular jobs annually.

The proceeding is subject to academic self-governance, ‘teutonic’ academics’ holy cow of ‘autonomy’. Therefore, the state entered the field very late when, in the Austrian case, the applicability of administrative law regulation had been assured by the administrative courts. Before that, rejected applicants did not have any realistic opportunity to object to flaws in the process. The university reform from the 1970s, hailed by its proponents as a breakthrough into democracy, did not challenge the right of the professoriate to decide alone about the selection of those fit to become full members of their tribe. Candidates still saw themselves as in the hands of the established, which is also the case today to some extent. During the 20th Century not much changed with regard to the formalities of the proceedings. There were only few formal requirements: holding a dissertation in the appropriate field, submitting a *Schrift*, and

surviving several steps of examination. What was never written down but in practice was the most crucial prerequisite was a patron. Each of these prerequisites could be substituted or reinterpreted, with one exception.

The pertinent dissertation could be pushed aside if the committee decided that other accomplishments were functional substitutes. The *Schrift* could be just two articles of moderate length or a lengthy manuscript of hundreds of pages. The *Schrift* seldom had appeared in print before submission, and the exact version submitted to the committee is rarely stored in libraries (there had been a rule to deliver copies of dissertations to libraries, but there is no similar rule for habilitations); later published versions point irregularly to their pre-history. Only those sitting on the committee knew for sure what exactly the *Schrift* had been, and if they decided by majority vote that a collection of articles, manuscripts or notes should be taken as the crucial written thing, no one could object to these decisions because of the secrecy of the deliberations. At one point this strategy got its own bureaucratic name: 'cumulative habilitation', which means that a number of formerly written or published pieces were seen together as the *Schrift*. In cases where candidates wish to put a single work in front of the committee, they usually are advised to play it safe by not submitting a published book but only a printed manuscript, so that the candidates could claim that they would take care of any of the criticism raised by referees and members of the committee; a promise no one ever was held to afterwards. (In a case of mutual good will a candidate who handed in a formally insufficient typescript was allowed to exchange it for a better edited example within a week whereas the very same defect stopped a proceeding before it even had begun when the same professor who behaved generously for the aforementioned insider wanted to discourage an extramural candidate by declaring his unwillingness to work as a copy-editor.) By expressing such servility one could impress on the members of the committee that the persona in front of them was respecting the elderly and had learned the rules of the game, so he or she could be incorporated into the holy few. What resembles tribal behavior was indeed the continuation of feudal social relations where the Feudal Lord granted security to his followers and the vassals had to respect their Master. Traits of feudalism persisted in Central Europe for a very long time, and some practices are still alive, not only in everyday life but also in academia.

The quintessential prerequisite is the patron. Like at the examination level before, the dissertation, when a candidate has to look out a prospective

*Doktorvater*, the same applies for the habilitation, even if the patron here was never called *Habilitationsvater*. In both cases it is a two-person-play only; to call it a game would be misleading because of the complete lack of any rules, if one wants to apply Mead's famous distinction (Mead [1933] 2015). If the patron is an influential member of his faculty with no or only an insignificant number of enemies, such a patron could make anyone into a *Privatdozent*. Since these conditions seldom obtained, patrons had to make hard decisions, less about candidates and more about the management of their own status and reputation. Proposing a candidate who would end up as too weak would undermine the patron's status and would make it harder to pass the next case smoothly through the labyrinthine world of faculty committees. Patrons have to take care of their colleagues too. Sitting on a committee was and is always double-edged: it takes your time, but it enhances your reputation at the same time. You are good enough to be called to such a service, but no one would like to sit on too many committees at the same time. Therefore, a wise patron manages to find the best time to propose a candidate. Above all, candidates for habilitation were potential successors and could become colleagues at one's own university or somewhere else in the country. Carefulness has always been the dominant motive in these affairs.

It is no wonder given such a figuration that the most consequential negotiations have always happened outside of committees and before a candidate showed up as a candidate publicly. (On a side note, even if files would be open for examination, these parts of the negotiation procedure could never be observed and therefore not analyzed properly.)

These formalities and prerequisites are just what the names indicate. Let us therefore go forward when a habilitation formally has been initiated. A committee is assembled, the role of the patron filled and the candidate behaves according to the never laid out rules of the game (simply speaking: acting subserviently). Then negotiations start in earlier times, first about the 'character' of the applicant. Proof of personal integrity always meant more than lacking a criminal record (which nevertheless candidates had to submit from the police, called *Führungszeugnis*, a certificate for proper conduct). The fitting into the expectations of those who did make it in before them had to be proven. Files historians were able to inspect reveal incredible utterances, which were held against a candidate, and in former times anti-Semitism, patriarchy and attacks on Leftists and un-German behavior mushroomed.<sup>2</sup> Today the first step is generally sheer routine without debate.

Then it comes to the appointment of reviewers. Up to very recent times the patron was the sole reviewer. Later a second reviewer from the faculty was obligatory but only in those cases where a faculty was divided strongly into factions so that disagreements surfaced. For quite some time at least one external reviewer has been mandatory. In cases where no previous micro-negotiations happened, or people changed their mind or broke promises, the very findings and nominations of reviewers could take some time. The same applies for the delivery of the written reports. Committees who did not want to advance the candidate could slow down the process nearly to a deadlock. In the old days a candidate who politely inquired about the status of his proceedings was completely at the mercy of the committee's 'top dogs'. Fischer-Kowalski's case from the beginning of this chapter changed the rules because since then the committee has only six months for each step of the procedure, at which point it has to come to a resolution which also has to be handed over to the candidate formally. In cases of sheer inactivity or failing to meet the schedule, appeal is an option. But even under this rule an unwilling committee can still keep a candidate at bar for more than two years, long enough to destroy a career. An emergency exit is possible: a candidate can withdraw at any step which would not kill the applicant's social status completely (at least one could move to another university).

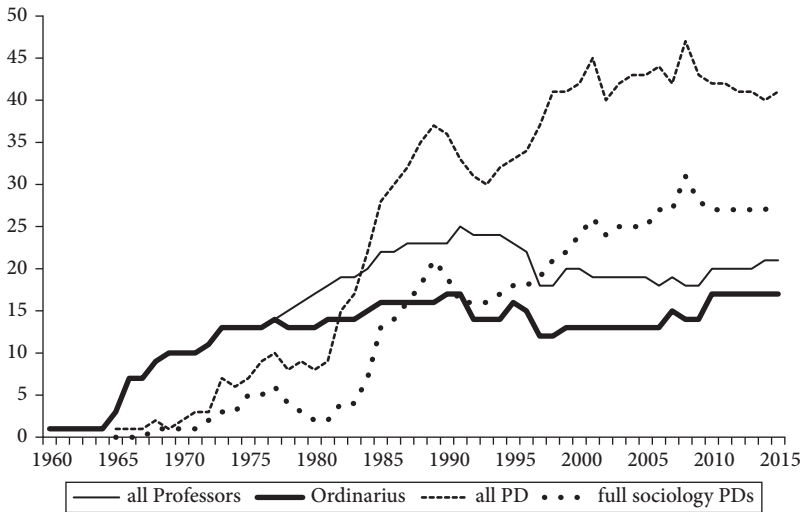
After the reports are submitted the committee has to come to a conclusion about the quality of the *Schrift* and the academic merits of its author. At this step of the proceeding displays of power between rival members of the committee will be enacted at length. This quarreling works two-ways: On the one hand, negotiating the status hierarchy of the established happens here quite often, but on the other hand, enemies of the candidate start talking about their dissatisfactions and indicate their intention either to reject the candidate completely or, much more often, to destroy the candidate's standing by granting him or her a derogatory *venia legendi*. In a way, committee members test their negotiating power here and measure the amount of influence they possess in their native micro-environment (external members of the committee seldom contribute much to this kind of communication).

If the candidate passes the reviews successfully, an oral presentation and discussion is the next step, and this one is the one when the candidate and the committee meet each other for the first time in person. Before the reforms of the 1970s the discussion after the presentation was a real examination. Every member of the committee was allowed

to raise any topic belonging to the discipline for which the candidate wanted to become *Privatdozent*. For instance, someone applying for a habilitation in sociology by submitting a book-length study on the behavior and attitudes of soldiers could be asked about not very recent controversies on the connection between voting and particular occupations. One can imagine that this was an open door for any misanthropic inclined professor and since committee members came from different disciplinary backgrounds, boundary work happened frequently. To demonstrate that there are some people around who are broader read, better equipped, and in a word, cleverer than the candidate has been the rule of this debate. Candidates did not sleep well the night before.

The final way to make a difference is the wording of the *venia legendi*, the title of the field for which the candidate earns the right to teach. For a very long time it has been a kind of consensus to grant it for the whole discipline. Due to differentiation processes it then became the practice to substitute for the discipline well-defined parts of it, as it has been traditionally accomplished in history by granting habilitation for periods, such as ancient history, or later in medicine by specialties as ophthalmology. Initially habilitation labels in Austria's sociology were for the whole disciplinary field. When in the early 1970s extramural candidates started to apply, they got the title for those parts of the field in which their main activities were located, for instance sociology of arts or sociology of education (see Figure 6.1). By limiting the disciplinary field it was clear for all participants that such a candidate would never have a chance to compete for a full professorship in sociology. Later on, candidates got into troubles when they knocked on the doors of university departments of sociology with résumés in their hands containing at least as many publications as the insider tenured members of the department. Some, in particular the professors at the University in Vienna, did not care about their reputation inside the sociological community in Austria, to which they felt they did not really belong, and turned them off from the outset. Others accepted their application, tried to postpone the procedure as long as possible and suggested finally an embarrassing *venia legendi*. Until the end of the 1980s the number of *Privatdozent* being granted a *venia legendi* for the full range of sociology was very low. Only from the middle of the 1990s onwards a stampede started; it became easier to be knighted for the waiting room, which also became overcrowded, so the chance of ending up as a professor waned.





**FIGURE 6.1** *Professorial positions and qualification of aspirants*

*Note:* Professors as in Figure 5.1. Aspirants are Privatdozenten either with an unrestricted or specialized, i.e., restricted *venia*.

*Source:* My calculation, based on publicly available CVs and university sources.

The less favorable conditions of the 1970s and 1980s forced potential candidates to choose between three options: Those lacking courage changed their career plans completely and left academic sociology; others who wanted to continue in academia applied for habilitation at one of the provincial universities in Austria or went abroad. The last ones finally outperformed those who had blocked them in their native country.

Portraying an academic micro-environment's crucial institution is not enough to give a true picture of the discipline of sociology in Austria in the last fifth of the 20th Century. We have to have a look at the composition of those who managed to pass the examination.

## The recruitment pool

As mentioned before, becoming a *Privatdozent* amounts to reaching a position from which one can wait for an opportunity to receive a call for a professorship. Remaining in this position would not cause much

trouble for the waiting individual if he or she was alone or at least not accompanied by more people than available future positions. If the waiting room becomes crowded, rivalry would intensify and expectations for final success rates deteriorate. A simple measure would be the ratio of professors to future applicants. Over the last seventy years about 125 individuals managed to earn a habilitation whose title included sociology, and of them about one quarter were women. Roughly half of them got it for sociology proper; the rest became *Privatdozent* for generally recognized specialties as sociology of law, medicine, etc. or had to accept one or another degradation. The more honorable outcome is to get the *venia* for sociology with special emphasis/reference to any subfield, like history of sociology or sociological theory; the less fortunate ones got a *venia* with a more or less weird title, for example 'sociology of corporations and social scientific conflict analysis', 'applied sociology of the education system' and 'qualitative social research and history of sociology', just to quote a few.<sup>3</sup>

It is fair to hypothesize that those fellow sociologists holding a *venia* with a derogatory status could not compete successfully for an *Ordinarius* position. As Figure 6.1 shows, the ratio between *Ordinarius* and waiting *Privatdozenten* was in favor of the last up until the end of the 1980s. All in all seventy-eight candidates were granted a *venia* for full sociology, and thirty-three of them succeeded in climbing up to professor either at home or abroad (see Table 6.1).

Furthermore, the market value of being a *Privatdozent* is completely different if someone had held a prior university position. Those who successfully applied for habilitation from an insider position got not only the title for their letterhead but received tenure automatically. The last accomplishment was probably held in higher esteem than purely

**TABLE 6.1** *Career trajectories of Austrian Privatdozenten by categories*

	Range of <i>venia</i> legendi	Remain same status	Became professor in Austria	Became professor abroad	
Extramural	Sociology	10	7	2	19
	Specialist	11	2	3	16
Insider	Sociology	43	9	7	59
	Specialist	12	2	1	15
Total		76	20	13	109

*Note:* Extramural = applying for *Privatdozent* without being employed at an Austrian university; Insider = becoming a *Privatdozent* while employed at an Austrian university.

academic merit. Given the above-mentioned selection process and the crucial role of patrons, we can now add another particularity to the understanding of the Austrian subtype of the 'teutonic' academic culture. As mentioned before, in Austria it had been the rule that all decisions of hiring young academics were done by one professor only. That is an indirect consequence of the organization of the universities along the chair system. The holder of such a feudal position received the right to select his collaborators and 'democratizing' generally did not make much of a difference.

From the point of view of an *Ordinarius* the hiring procedure was tricky. In the 1960s and 1970s an academic career could start when one was still a graduate student. The official title was 'scientific helping hand', and the contract could be renewed annually for a maximum of four years. If one managed to finish their dissertation within this timeframe, he or she was entitled to become an assistant. Being an assistant meant one had a chance of staying there for ten years with three contract renewals. There was no established formal evaluation procedure, so the assistant had to negotiate any accomplishments with the superior only. Over the years the assistant had to demonstrate his or her ability to finally submit a habilitation (if both parties liked each other enough, the collaboration could be prolonged by four more years or one could get tenure without a habilitation). The longer one stayed the more he or she earned a kind of right to be promoted further. This highly particularistic recruitment model put the *Ordinarius* in a position with only two options: He could either change his helping hands regularly (because getting fired after one or two years would not cause any trouble for the professor and the young person would not even dare to protest) or select one for a career. Usually one professor got two positions of assistants simultaneously; only stars could ask for more (when Ernst Topitsch returned to Austria in 1969 he got five assistants immediately, but this remained the exception). An *Ordinarius* who voted for the second option received one or two brave villeins who themselves could eventually be gratified for their subservience by becoming tenured employees, although only one of them could follow the Feudal Lord. These, let us call them insider-*Privatdozenten*, usually did not seriously compete for better positions elsewhere, partly because they lacked a competitive portfolio, partly because their niche position was so favorable. The lower part of Table 6.1 shows the trajectories of these insider-*Privatdozenten*. Nearly three quarter of them (55 out of 74) remained at the same place in the same position but changed their

occupational title only, but this picture is even too rosy because those of them who made it up to the professoriate did this in most cases at the very same department of the very same university where they started their careers a decade earlier.

On first sight those applying for habilitation from outside the universities seem to be the disadvantaged stratum – because they did not get an invitation to join the universities at the start and had to earn their living, sometimes by performing jobs unrelated to sociology. But in looking at their further trajectory they seem to be more successful members of their profession than the insiders: 14 out of 35 reached the position of professor either at home or abroad compared with 19 out of 74 insider-climbers. Extramural *Privatdozenten* ended up at the professorial status more often than their insider competitors.


Habilitation, at least in sociology, never functioned as an impersonal and valid measurement tool but as a humiliating exam in a selection process which favors servility as a precondition for acceptance, first to a waiting position, and if one continues to conform, with some luck, finally to the valuable status of *Ordinarius*.

## Notes

- 1 Over time the very title changed from initially *Privatdozent* to *Universitätsdozent*, *Dozent* and returned after the last university reform to the old-fashioned *Privatdozent*. For convenience I use this one throughout this book.
- 2 Müller (2000) reports on this, and memoirs and diaries contain additional details from several decades of Austrian academia.
- 3 The funny thing is that the very meaning of these specialized habilitation is not fixed, so holders of such derogatory titles could claim that their title would be a plus compared with those holding only a flat one without being laughed at. This is not the only aspect of academic life in Austria where impression management could be built up on ambiguity.

# 7

## Extramural Social Research



**Abstract:** *From the 1970s and beyond, the extramural sector of sociological research expanded and became a relevant factor in the 1990s when Austria joined the European Union. The European Framework Programmes supported over the next two decades these applied social research institutes whereas the university department shrunk from this new option for international collaborations. Both the extramural sector and the so-called scientific infrastructure for social research receded when an austerity policy was imposed by the Austrian government.*

**Keywords:** contract research; European Union

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0010.

In October 1992 a few dozen Austrian social scientists came together for two days in Vienna to discuss their common future. Several months before, seven of them had taken the initiative by establishing what they named *Forum Sozialforschung*, Social Research Forum. The aim was a lobbying organization for Austria's extramural research units belonging to the field which later on became called SSH, for social sciences and humanities. The core of the founding group consisted of members of the first generation of graduates in sociology, joined by some colleagues from political science and economics; why they decided to use 'social research' as their unifying label is not quite clear, but it seems that they preferred something associated with the notion of 'applied' and 'empirical'. The organizers had even been able to raise enough money to appoint a 'general secretary' for the *Forum*. At the conference the initiators came together with younger people, but one did not see many visitors from the universities. Invited speakers from abroad reported about their experiences with contract research done by non-university researchers (a 'Eurocrat' promised the audience that research funds could be expected in forthcoming EU Framework Programmes). The proceedings were published under the title the 'Present Position and Perspectives of Extramural Social Research' (Hartmann 1993). Two months before this event a much bigger meeting happened to be held in Vienna as well: A First European Conference for Sociology had debated 'Sociological Perspectives on a Changing Europe' and had brought together about 300 sociologists from different corners of the continent. There were no statistics available on the participants, but it might not be far away from the truth to assert that the majority came from a university background. It is more than pure coincidence that both meetings made use of the 'perspective' label to frame their debates, even if the academic Europeanists finally chose a different title for the publication of some of the papers by university-based sociologists (Haller & Richter 1994).

The beginning of the 1990s had been a time of rapid and radical changes which called for explanation and interpretation: the fall of Soviet Europe, the begin of what became a year-long civil war breaking apart neighboring Yugoslavia and Austria's application for membership in the European Union, which back then did not use this label, but was still called the European Communities. The previous decade had been characterized by changes in Austria too, not all of them to the liking of average sociologists. The end of the single-party government in 1983 was accompanied by disenchantments which could be summarized as the

end of the reformist consensus. The Social Democrats were never again able to form a similar broad support for a reform agenda, as they had in the 1970s. They lost cultural hegemony, around this time a widely used catchword borrowed from Antonio Gramsci. In its place two controversial political figures entered center stage: Former UN General Secretary Kurt Waldheim's candidacy for president of Austria brought with it a heated debate about the concealed Nazi past of this candidate and his generation. Waldheim's victory must have been seen as kind of a revenge of the older generation against the moralism of the younger one. At the same time, the rise of a new leader of the far right party which had been established decades before as a cover for former Nazis, but had moved to a more liberal political position, demonstrated that the optimistic view of progress from the 1970s – that Austria's polity and society are moving to a 'social democracy' – was blue-eyed. But not only politics and the past interfered with the mood of the generation which became known as the 'sixty-eighters'. There were also new social and economic tensions. The stagflation after the two oil crises affected Austria and its counter-actions, later on labeled 'Austro-Keynesianism', started around this time to become costlier and required a much longer time than expected. The number of unemployed people increased and reminded Austrian sociologists that sixty years earlier a now famous study marked a high point in the history of social research but also the start of political developments which ended catastrophically. Only two new social movements might have been seen as promises for a better future: feminism and environmentalism. While, not very surprisingly, sociologists did struggle to make sense of economic developments, they found it much less demanding to join the bandwagon of these two new movements.

Opportunities for sociologists to become 'relevant', an idea which united the discipline, have not been taken by more than a few of the profession's rising populace, however. The debates about the Nazi past were dominated by historians (Botz & Sprengnagel 1994), but when a linguist analyzed street utterances around political rallies against Waldheim, sociologists did not propose a view of their own; sociology had lost its interpretative monopoly to the new kid on the block: cultural studies (Wodak 1990). Without governmental reform initiatives which asked sociologists to support it with findings from ordinary social research, they found it hard to deliver to the public what around this time had become rejuvenated under the label 'diagnoses of the time', an expression introduced by Karl Mannheim half a century

earlier. Such diagnoses were delivered by cultural studies guru much more cheaply and more quickly than professional sociologists could submit evidence-based recommendations. To make things even worse, another competitor won the ears of politicians and took money out of their research funds: business consultants and similarly slick people who claimed to have made a study before advising their clients what they should do next. If asked to share either the report or the data of such studies, one seldom got an answer at all. In a word: sociologists lost their near monopoly of social analysis and did not find real answers for these challenges.

The gulf between academic and extramural sociology was as deep as before, but those who in the 1970s had formed the opposition had reached an age where they had to make up their minds about their personal futures. In the early 1990s most professors of sociology from the first cohort were still around, an expansion of sociology at the universities was not on the agenda of the government and the success of the happy few IHS graduates or employees who had slipped in the universities made it clear for others that this segment of the academic labor market was closing. Those who had not made up their mind were forced to do it now. By ten years after graduation and after experimenting with several occupational options, even those who had earned a habilitation from outside the university had to realize that they would not get a call to a professorship.

## **A fragmented landscape beyond the universities**

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the Social Democratic governments of the 1970s preferred to support extramural research institutes instead of expanding university departments of sociology. One way of accomplishing this was through the Ludwig Boltzmann Society, which stood under control of representatives of the Social Democrats and functioned similar to a holding. It got all its funds from the taxpayers and was governed by a handpicked few confidants, but no academics. The very existence of this funding body goes back to the early 1960s when the Social Democrats had gained votes at the election and asked their coalition partner for their own share of influence in the research system. Later on, when they won elections and could run the government on their own, they did not abandon this outdated organization. One more reason for



the continuation of this figuration could be seen in the circumstance that in the eyes of politicians it was easier to channel taxpayers' money to clients via this bypass instead of annoying university insiders. It is to the credit of the politicians that even for a powerful minister it might not have been manageable to bring a particular research agenda into the universities: Universities' usual inertia combined with attempts to defend their autonomy, which united even antagonistic parties inside the universities, blocked pointed initiatives from outside very successfully. Extramural research units promised to deliver what government had asked for. Nepotism favoring party loyalists on the one hand and contractual dependency of its institutes on the other hand characterized the Boltzmann Society. From the 1990s onwards, budget restrictions prevented this flea circus of tiny pseudo-institutes from growing any larger (fifteen years later when the Social Democrats lost their influence the Boltzmann Society started changing direction towards 'real sciences' by closing its armada of SSH institutes: the last one with a sociological agenda will close in 2016).

A second option allowing for politicians to govern research was the creation of new independent research units, usually organized as incorporated associations, initially funded generously by government or a municipality. Some of them acted as a reward for returning refugee scholars when they reached retirement age abroad, others were under the close surveillance of ministries with each of them having a near-monopoly of research on special research agendas: conflict resolution, work and occupation, and – most prominently – urban studies.

A third strand of the extramural research agenda had been associated with the Austrian system of social partnership. The prewar *Institut für Konjunkturforschung*, Institute for Business Cycle Research was re-established after 1945 by an agreement between trade unions, the chamber of labor and the chamber of commerce. Labor and industry financed its services, such as economic forecasting, needed for the wage bargaining.

Finally, the traditionalistic Academy of Science ran research institutes and research groups, but only two belonged to the social sciences. Imitating his mentor Oskar Morgenstern, sociologist Robert Reichardt directed an Academy Institute for Socio-Economic Research. The Institute for Demographic Research at the Academy did not play a big role before its present director, Wolfgang Lutz, took over the leadership. The largest extramural research unit remained, however, the IHS, whose shaky beginnings have been described in Chapter 4.

To complete the picture one should mention the existence of research units originating from inter-governmental contracts, like the one for 'system analysis' outside of Vienna in a palace formerly used for hunting trips by the high aristocracy, where from the early 1970s Cold War antagonists collaborated with each other. This and another unit, the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, did not play a big role in Austrian politics at the time, but both offered job opportunities for graduates.

There were not many other research positions for sociologists available. Due to a complete lack of statistical data, we are dependent on estimates of the size of the extramural SSH segment. In 1988 Josef Hochgerner, the lead figure behind the creation of the *Forum Sozialforschung*, projected the number of all professional sociologists at 500, one fifth doing research inside and one fifth outside the universities. This would have been a doubling in both sectors since the survey from 1973 (Knorr et al. 1973, p. 33; Hochgerner 1988, p. 459).

The main obstacle was not employment but the conditions of the workplace. At nearly all extramural research sites, new entrants and even more senior employees did not enjoy much freedom or independence. They were what their labor contract indicated: white collar workers. For those who had grown up in an atmosphere of anti-authoritarianism, ending up as an ordinary clerk was not seen as the fulfillment of a dream. The founding members of the *Forum Sozialforschung* were all men in their early forties who asked for more, so they established their own independent research institutes in the years just before the creation of the *Forum*. Half a dozen of them are still working. Probably, three times more disappeared within this quarter of a century.

## Harsh times for entrepreneurship

The challenge for all these independent research institutes was finding a secure financial foundation. Most got subventions, but these sums could not even cover infrastructure costs; therefore, the directors had to look for other funders. Most found them abroad, in Brussels, where several General Directorates of the European Communities (later: European Union) dispersed research money for contractual research. It is to the credit of these newly established extramural research institutes that Austria got back some of the money it had to pay as a membership

fee. From the EU's Fourth Framework Programme onward, Austrian non-university applicants submitted proposals more often than universities, and their success rates were not bad. According to Barbara Hönig's research, between 1994 and 2006 ten university departments of sociology and 23 non-university research units won contracts (Hönig 2009, pp. 124–26). A rare source which also has data on failures offers an explanation of why the university departments were reluctant to continue (Smith 2002, pp. 15–16). The overall success rate was 23 per cent, but the extramuralists outperformed the established university researchers markedly: 34 per cent compared to 22 per cent for the university institutes. This significant difference explains the further absence of university departments of sociology from the European Research Area: the costs were high, the success rate low, and the university administration did not place heavy pressure on their faculties to increase the share of third-party money.

If successful, an extramural institute gained support for a reasonably long period of time, usually a minimum of two years, but with pressure to continue writing proposals and managing research partnerships abroad. As much as these collaborations opened Austria's sociological community to Europe, the future was always insecure. Only few produced more than Brussels was asking for. The entire EU research circus is devoted to policy-relevant research, but much less to the progress of scholarship. As a consequence, the gulf between academic and extramural sociology broadened, this time not out of any animosity but as a consequence of a research policy that didn't plan for a long-term secure environment in which scholarship could blossom.

Where the government seemed under pressure from Europe to participate in joint endeavors, Austria opted out, even more often than less-developed European countries: there is no regular General Social Survey in Austria, participation in waves of the European Social Survey was weak, and the government closed the institute that had stored social survey data for secondary analysis. In the early 2010s the then well-established subvention system was terminated, and some of the more promising extramural institutes were forced to join universities to maintain funding. The *Forum Sozialforschung* had closed much earlier when its proponents thought EU funding would substitute for Austrian sources. When the government proclaimed a general austerity policy, the higher education and research sector was too weak to demonstrate any resistance. After about forty years of strengthening the extramural

sector, the government changed gears and opted again in favor of the university system, this time reforming its governance radically. Since 2004, Austrian universities are relatively autonomous. The government negotiates three-year contracts, and within these budgets universities are fairly free to allocate them. In addition, the government forced several of the extramural institutes it had subsidized in prior decades to join the universities or lose government support completely. Together with the downturn of the economy after 2008 and a more reluctant policy by the EU with regard to research money for contractors from small institutes, the extramural social researchers found it hard to survive. Academic, university-based sociology did not go through similar contractions and was not the victim of the new public management regime. Surprisingly, sociologists did even better and managed to increase the number of places where one could study sociology from three to five. While governments of a different political inclination feared sociology, university rectors and the new governing bodies did not show prejudice against the discipline. It must have outperformed competitors inside the university because the new regime did not increase university budgets, so more sociology meant less of something else, although it is unclear who the losers were.

# 8

## Concluding Remarks on ‘Social Impact’ and ‘Scholarly Success’

**Abstract:** *The aims of sociologists are not always restricted to the ivory tower. Some sociologists want to become public intellectuals, others policy advisors or social activists.*

*Looking at the different spheres of impact, one finds that in Austria sociologists are well represented in mass media. With regard to the policy relevance it seems that in some fields a longtime influence can be traced but lack of data calls for a reserved interpretation. With regard to purely academic success the picture is relatively clear: Sociologists remaining in their native environment are relatively similar with regard to their academic recognition. Comparing with classic authors of Austrian background and with two other groups of contemporary sociologists and scholars from neighboring disciplines reveals that Austrian sociologists were less visible and recognized.*

**Keywords:** counselling; Hirsch-Index; indicators for scholars’ evaluation; media representation; policy research; proletarianization of brain-workers; public sociology; scholarly success; social impact

Fleck, Christian. *Sociology in Austria*.  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.  
DOI: 10.1057/9781137435873.0011.

After this short tour of Austria's sociology, I would like to return to a remark with which this small book started: contributions to sociology from Austria in the distant past are better-known than more recent ones. I offered some names of authors and titles of books to support this claim. Here I would like to add some more data and a comparative analysis.

It goes without saying that striving for reputation and acclaim are moving forces for scholars and scientists, even if official rhetoric puts other motives (such as seeking the truth or changing the world) ahead of such individualistic, performance-oriented incentives. Where one could be reached by sticking to internal imperatives alone, the former aim needs support from others. We could call this aim 'social impact' and the latter 'scholarly success'.

This is not the place to elaborate at length on the remuneration of scientists and scholars, not just for lack of space but more for of a lack of data. Statistics about the income of university scientific workers are scarce for countries like Austria. Anecdotal evidence suggests two revealing things. First, around 1930, Austrian professors were very well paid civil servants. The upper ranks of them got twelve times the GDP per capita (Fleck 2011, p. 330) whereas today we can estimate that they get not more than three times the GDP per capita (Altbach 2012, p. 30). Although this does not mean that academics nowadays are disadvantaged people, it indicates that the elite status is gone. 'Massification' of universities brings with it a leveling down of the social status of its employees. Whether this change has any consequences for the attractiveness of academic careers, we simply do not know. We do not possess any data about the social composition of Austria's sociological community. In the early 1970s when the IHS researchers made their survey on social scientists in Austria, they asked their respondents the usual socio-demographic questions, but in the book we get only one table: eighty-one respondents belonging to a sociological research unit indicated the occupations of their fathers and eighty-seven provided data also on their mothers (no explanation for this difference). Nine per cent of the fathers worked in academic professions or were artists; the same percentage were blue collar workers. One out of five was a higher civil servant or white collar employee and one-third of the sample had fathers with average civil servant or white collar occupations. Also one-fifth of the fathers belonged to the group of self-employed or business people (the rest were farmers or retired people) (Knorr et al. 1981, p. 44). These data do not reveal much. The small sample and very conventional coding of occupations

are obvious shortcomings – and as the raw data have been lost (as with several other studies), we cannot do any secondary analysis. There was no later, or more sophisticated, research on the social background and class composition of sociologists (or any other group of academics) in Austria, which is in itself revealing.

A second thing we know from anecdotal sources is that in the first third of the 20th Century, Austrian scholars could add significantly to their regular income by writing or lecturing. When Joseph A. Schumpeter bankrupted the bank he was directing, he not only promised to pay the debt, but announced informally that he would have to publish more to increase his income. Browsing his list of publications indicates that he did indeed publish more, but practically all the articles came out with typical academic publishing houses, like Mohr-Siebeck in Tübingen, and appeared in core academic journals, as the famous *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*; though a handful he published in the *Deutscher Volkswirt*, a weekly comparable to the *Economist* today. But Schumpeter was not the only one whose balance sheet offered surprising details. Hans Kelsen estimated in 1933 that over the decade before, he added one-third to his university salary by giving public talks and via honoraria for unspecified services (Fleck 2011, p. 328). Unfortunately, we do not have any data or analysis on the income academics could earn today in addition to their regular salaries. It seems, however, that the 'proletarianization of brain-workers' that concerned sociologists like Alfred Weber in the early 20th Century started much later (Weber 1923). Academia's 'top dogs' might still be able to add a reasonable share to their regular income, but the vast majority definitely will not.

## Social impact

The aforementioned social impact has not yet been measured, but as a participant one could give an informed witness's account. We could do it by simply dividing the field into three segments: first, contributions to public debates; second, policy briefings; and finally, confronting conventional wisdom.

Compared with other Western nations, the share of the public space which is taken regularly by members of the sociological community is surprisingly large. Daily newspapers of broadsheet format represent

sociologists prominently in their op-ed pages. Furthermore, regional newspapers offer their pages to locally-known members of the sociological community relatively regularly. The Austrian sociologist with the largest mass media audience hides his professional affiliation from readers: Roland Girtler publishes weekly, page-long articles in the full-color magazine of the largest Austrian tabloid (which reaches nearly half of Austrian readers), always with the opening sentence, ‘The wandering cultural studies guy...’. These articles, as most of his books published over the last three decades, could not be seen as falling into scholarly sociology, but, surprisingly enough, Girtler has not been ostracized by his fellow sociologists. He is still famous with students and occupies the position of sociology’s court jester. Other former sociologists stopped calling themselves sociologists and lost a connection with their former fellows. For instance, feminist activist Edith Schlaffer, founder of Women Without Borders and Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), who for decades co-directed an institute for politics and human relations under the umbrella of the Boltzmann Society, described in Chapter 7, is no longer considered a sociologist. One could name some less prominent examples of former sociologists working under other affiliations.

Whereas the public appearance of sociologists is by definition observable, the evaluation of policy advocacy and consultancy is less easy. My personal impression is that in particular sectors one has to recognize relatively stable and therefore probably influential relations between sociologists and policy makers, either politicians or high members of the public administration at the federal, regional or municipal level. Vienna’s health system and organization of hospitals was strongly influenced by a core group of sociologists of medicine, with their own Ludwig Boltzmann Institute from the late 1970s until 2008. The Conservative Party took counsel from the remarkably large group of sociologists and scholars from neighboring disciplines, ranging from family law to pastoral theology, concerned with the topic of family. The institutional nucleus of this advocacy has been the extramural Austrian Institute for Family Research. It became part of the University of Vienna in 2010 and is now listed side by side with the departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences. A third example of close relationships between sociologists and policy makers is the Public Employment Service, formerly part of the Ministry for Social Affairs. Labor market studies and in particular research on unemployment and measures to fight it found an open ear,



for some years even those of the minister. Here the interested audience could get research reports for free, long before the Internet made such a policy superfluous. Sociologists publishing their findings in this series could be sure of being read by people from inside the bureaucracy. One could add other fields where social researchers and policy makers maintained long-term, mutually beneficial relationships, for example sociologists of law and criminal justice.

This brings me to the third aspect: has there been any large-scale influence executed by sociologists, or, to put it even more dramatically, did any sociological insight help change the world? Unfortunately, it seems that one has to end up with a negative answer here. To be clear: I do not refer here to topics where sociologists do not agree and therefore no uniform advice could be identified. For years now Bernd Marin, another longtime director of an extramural institute, has sermonized about the need for a reform of the pension system. He was even called 'professor pension reform', but his position is not unanimously supported by fellow sociologists. Although there are some insights, none of the members of the sociological tribe would start challenging the system. For example, it is nearly a truism that the division of students at the age of nine-and-a-half into different educational paths is socially selective and discriminates against families less familiar with education at all (they are now euphemistically called 'educationally challenged stratum'). This finding has been open at least since Adolf Kozlik published his polemic in 1964. But during this half century nothing has changed in the education system, and the public debate continues. Not even the well-received results of the international assessment of students' abilities, PISA, could persuade the powerful teachers' union, conservative politicians and better-off families to change.

The second illustration comes from labor market and unemployment research. Since the beginning of the contemporary increase of unemployed workers, tabloids and politicians regularly have started debates about the level of unemployment benefits by pointing to characters of the 'Andy Capp' type. The only difference is the change of metaphors: once Andy was vacationing in Florida, later he was hanging around in a social hammock or pursued moonlighting. Sociologists' consensus about the inappropriateness of such finger-pointing might be not as broad as in the previous example, but research has indicated that the lack of jobs could not be overcome with harsher welfare state policies. It would be possible to add more instances, but the point should be clear. Whenever

sociologists' insights collide with powerful social groups, the interests of the latter will win. This is not a really new insight for sociologists, but still an annoying one.

The portrait of the public sociology side of affairs would be incomplete if one would not point to the fact that the publishing market for sociology collapsed some time ago. Traditional houses, like the *Europa Verlag*, owned by the trade unions, were sold to foreign conglomerates, and a grassroots initiative *Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik* ran out of energy after two decades and collapsed after a management buyout. Today there is no publishing house around which is devoted primarily to the social sciences, and the small houses which publish some sociology do not reach larger audiences. Therefore, German publishers publish most of the books written by Austrian sociologists. Besides being still primarily a book writing discipline, the connection to readers beyond the small academic circles has been cut off.

## Inside the walls

The larger audience never cared about quarrels inside academia. Average people do not recognize hierarchical differences and are neither interested nor able to follow the petty-minded status rivalries of academics of any branch. Only recently the ministry for science and research requested balance sheet-like reports in which the universities had to submit data about their employees' records in research, teaching and administration. Up to the very end of the past century neither the ministry nor any university administration cared about what university people did. Academics could never do anything to improve their salaries or get any other benefit out of their performance. What critics like to disqualify as the intrusion of neoliberalism finally took hold in Austrian universities. 'Performance records', 'knowledge balance' and similar catchwords are now commonly used, but up to now there is no consensus how to measure the quality of scientists' output.

It is to the advantage of all parties that the impact factor regime has not yet arrived. Sociology is still more of the book writing type of scholarship, and if Austrian sociologists publish academic journal articles at all, they seldom win the approval of editors of leading English language journals. As a consequence, Austrian sociology would not end up among those who decide to follow Andrew Abbott's advice: to read only papers

from SSCI listed top journals and books from the five publishing houses who won his approval (Abbott 2014, pp. 81–84).

On the other hand it would dissatisfy some readers to not try to present an intersubjective, verifiable measurement of the reputation of sociologists from Austria. For this reason I decided to do my own small evaluation project. As mentioned, SSCI would not work because of the small amount of Austrian papers referred to there (and there are other reasons not to trust Thomson Reuters and their Web of Science for evaluative purposes – see Fleck 2013, Fleck & Hönig 2014). Following others I, quite reluctantly, went to Google Scholar, and with the help of a freeware analytic tool 'Publish or Perish' (PoP) I checked the appearance of about 120 names related in various ways to Austrian sociology. The sample consisted of all professors of sociology and *Privatdozenten*. This is the population discussed in the previous pages. For comparison, I chose small non-random samples of the following: a group you could call *expatriates*, sociologists who worked for a while in Austria, might have received a habilitation but left the Austrian universities to accept professorships abroad. Similarly, I selected professors from neighboring disciplines such as demography, social ecology, urban planning, philosophy and STS holding professor positions at any of the Austrian universities at the time the data collection had been done (spring 2015). Finally, I checked the data for some of the scholars discussed in Chapter 2, let us call them *classics*.

The software offers several indicators, but the main obstacle is that it has troubles with ambiguity of names; for this I checked all hints manually and refined the results this way (whenever I was unsure whether a particular title belongs to the author, I researched and decided *in dubio pro* the candidate). Within the error ranges of the database itself – Google Scholar is part of Google about which Joseph Weizenbaum rightly said it's a scrap heap with some pearls in it – one could be relatively secure that the data is valid. From all the indicators PoP offers automatically I decided to make use of the Hirsch-Index. Simply speaking, it is provable with the very data the software delivers (for those unfamiliar with the h-index: it is the maximum number of articles  $h$  such that each has received at least  $h$  citations). Over the manual refinements that were made I also checked double entries and corrected them but, given the data input from Google Scholar, that was not entirely manageable.

What I will offer here are not results for individuals because that would look like a beauty contest instead of a comparison of groups. For a more

detailed picture I decided to split the group of professors into four: the second level or *Extraordinarius*, and three cohorts of all of the *Ordinarius* or full professors appointed to a chair at an Austrian university since 1946. Table 8.1 shows the h-index and two more indicators: the number of papers and the overall number of citations. In Google Scholar, ‘paper’ means linked sources with similar sounding titles; therefore, the number of papers is always much higher than the real numbers published. (Readers might remember that in one of these silly media competitions Sigmund Freud defeated Karl Marx with a h-index of 282; see Van Noorden 2013. One does not need to be an expert in Freud to know that even this prolific writer did not author such a high number of ‘papers.’) Besides undiscovered double entries, other sources of multiplying the count of papers are following editions and translations. There might be good reason to take a translated paper or book as a separate unit of investigation.

Does Table 8.1 reveal anything about sociology in Austria? I believe so. First, we see that there are not big differences between the status groups in Austrian sociology. Starting by interpreting differences of one h-index point does not make sense, given the sketchy database. But there are two big differences, which allow a tentative interpretation. Both the means for expatriates and for the classics are much higher than all values for those who remained in Austria. What we do not know is the direction of causality. A second point of interest would be the relationship

**TABLE 8.1** *Reputation of several groups (means) according to Google Scholar, spring 2015*

Group	Subgroup	n	h-index	“papers”	citations
Ordinarius	all	70	13	76	1,077
	<i>Old</i>	21	11	86	761
	<i>Middle</i>	25	16	111	2,385
	<i>Young</i>	24	13	6,459	947
Extra-Ordinarius		7	12	44	600
Privatdozent	Insider	60	8	34	368
	Extramural	26	8	36	487
Expatriates		17	20	187	5,352
Classics		15	24	222	14,147
Women		40	9	37	653

*Notes:* Generations of Ordinarius are divided by year of their first appointment: old = between 1946 and 1975; Middle = between 1976 and 2004; Young = after 2004. Women: Results without Expatriates and Classics.

of the Austrian numbers to sociologists from other countries. Another of the mushrooming metacrawlers making use of Google Scholar, Scholarometer, calculates disciplinary means of h-indexes: For 1,223 counted sociologists the averaged h-index was 16.8. If this was a valid measurement we would have to conclude that the Austrians are behind.

I hesitate to argue strongly in favor of the validity of these calculations. At the same time, I am completely sure that the future of academic sociology will depend much more on such performance indicators than any more broadly defined impact on society at large.

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