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Democracy, Totalitarianism, and Dead Ends in Sociology

Reinhold Sackmann

reinhold.sackmann@soziologie.uni-halle.de

Abstract

The 20th century did not only see the rise of academic sociology, but highlighted also strife within societies that resulted in specific forms of totalitarianism. Literature on the relationship of sociology and these totalitarianisms is controversial. Some authors state that sociology is not a natural antipode to dictatorships: Some sociologists like Sombart and Michels were active proponents of totalitarian ideology, and most totalitarian regimes quite liked the technical expertise of social research. Other authors propose that a flourishing sociology needs a certain form of society characterized by openness and tolerance to find a constructive climate for theoretical reflection, empirical research and practical relevance. From this position one could state that there is a “Wahlverwandtschaft”, a structural affinity, between sociology and democracy.

The article uses empirical material from a case study on the development of sociology at the University of Halle between 1900 and 1990. The University of Halle is an interesting case in so far as in this East German university the societal context varies between monarchy, democracy, fascism and communism. The empirical material focuses on published and unpublished work of Friedrich Hertz and Rudhard Stollberg, as well as archive material to their activities and conflicts. Specific dead ends of forms of historical sociology and empirical sociology are analysed with regard to the guiding question, whether there is a structural tension between forms of totalitarianism and sociology.

Keywords

German sociology; Nazism; Ernst Grünfeld; Friedrich Hertz; Rudhard Stollberg;

Dead ends in the development of a scientific discipline can be the result of either an external force bringing a fruitful development to a sudden end, or the effect of an inner logic driving one to the conclusion that a certain approach fails to achieve the results that one hoped to gain. In social sciences the causal attribution of a dead end is sometimes a topic of heated debate, because a forced standstill may attract later generations to pursue the same path whereas a self-declared failure signals “change path” to potential successors.

Discussions in post-fascist West German sociology were highly controversial after a published remark by Helmut Schelsky that German sociology in the Weimar Republic had reached a dead end due to a failure of its scientific programme: “the melodies were played through” (Schelsky 1959: 37). Sociologists like René König (1984, 1958), who were in exile during the Nazi period, were shocked by this remark, and repeatedly argued that large parts of German sociology were driven into exile by force. Strong sociological programs were beginning to spread, especially at the end of the Weimar period. In hindsight, this discussion in German sociology at the end of the 1950s intermingled personal and professional interests and scientific analysis. There was the delicate issue that a minority of sociologists remained in Germany under the Nazi system, including Schelsky, which both Schelsky and König kept in the background.

In this paper I want to generalize this controversy with the following research question: Why does sociology run into dead ends in totalitarian societies? It seems that some disciplines are more interwoven with social structure than others. It is likely that social sciences would be more dependent on a certain structure of society than natural sciences. For example, it would be astonishing to see a discussion on the dead end of chemistry at the close of the Weimar Republic. Some of the best chemists of that time were driven into exile, which stopped some development in this field, but no one thinks that chemistry as a discipline was at a dead end at this time. As a guiding, and quite risky, hypothesis to be tested and refined in this paper, one could even emphasize that the scientific discipline of sociology is not only more dependent on social structures than other scientific disciplines, but that it is somehow related to a certain social structure—namely democracy—in order to flourish. This might be described as an elective affinity between sociology and democracy.

The argument develops in five sections in this paper. In the first, tendencies are described that point towards this affinity. The second examines theories explaining a tension between sociology and totalitarian regimes and an affinity between sociology and democracy. The third sketches the empirical methods used in this analysis. The fourth presents results from a case study of sociology in an East German university during the 20th Century. The fifth and final section discusses the results of the case study and draws attention to the limits of this study.

1. Totalitarian and democratic societies and sociology

Do we have material to form an initial suspicion that there might be an elective affinity between sociology and democracy and some tension between sociology and non-democratic societies? To answer, one has to be more precise on the meaning of sociology. We define sociology as a science that is institutionalized as an academic discipline and which refers to formation processes of societies that call themselves societies. Therefore, we do not include in this definition of sociology any social thought, e.g. of Aristotle, that was not put forward with reference to explicitly mentioned societies. So, by this definition, one prerequisite of sociology is a society that develops a concept of society. In our narrow sense of the meaning of sociology, we also do not include sociological thinking that is not institutionalized in academic disciplines. Social philosophers like Comte, Marx, and Spencer were important for the history of sociology, but they were not successful in institutionalizing sociology. Thus, we propose that institutionalization of the academic discipline sociology is a second prerequisite for the existence of sociology.

The second concept used here is democracy. This is defined as a formal state government structure in which at intervals a broad electorate chooses its governing parties in free and fair elections. Decisive for this concept is that there exists a legal state separate from the personal possession of the

ruler, and structured pluralistic political processes that transfer power for a limited period of time. A seemingly vague notion in this definition is the term “broad electorate,” which reflects degrees of democratization: i.e. the percentage of certified voters in relation to the adult population of a state territory.

There is scientific consensus on the fact that the concept of society is a semantic used primarily by modern societies following the big shift of semantics at the beginning of the 19th century (Koselleck 1979: 24). Some stress Paine’s rather broad idea of “society” in pamphlets before the American War of Independence as the starting point (Paine 1776) as the innovative set of semantics. Others point to the reference to the more elaborate argumentation of Joseph Sieyès in generalizing the *Tiers État* at the onset of the French revolution (Sieyès 1789; Institut für Sozialforschung 1956: 23), and others the theoretical conception of a civil society by Hegel (1820) (Riedel 1975). Most agree, however, that the concept of society is not a semantic of pre-modern societies, most of which were not democratic. It was the legitimations of two decisive political revolutions that began civil societies’ use of the concept of society, as both Paine’s and Sieyès’ pamphlets show. The case of Hegel, however, illustrates that once the concept is established one does not have to be a personal supporter of democracies to use these semantics.

Auguste Comte introduced the notion of sociology. Most commentators agree, however, that the inception of a social science called sociology did not occur before the turn of the 20th century. Durkheim, Simmel, and Weber are seen as major figures in the development of the concept of sociology as a scientific discipline (Abel 1970). In hindsight, some sociologists would add several names of founding fathers and mothers, some may remove one or two of the aforementioned trio, but the majority would mention at least one of them.

During the period in which sociology was established, in one programmatic paper defining sociology as a discipline published in 1894/95 in German, French, and American scientific journals, Simmel tried to establish a formal sociology. This focused on processes of interdependence, and tried to detach itself from concepts of a holistic society. In 1908, he rephrases the “problem of sociology” and states that “... the claims, that the science of sociology tends to raise, [are] the theoretical continuation and reflection of practical power, which in the nineteenth century the masses have acquired in opposition to the interests of the individual. But the feeling of importance and the attention, which the lower classes forced from the higher classes, is supported especially by the concept of “society” (Simmel 1992: 13). In other words, Simmel parallels a social movement—a movement towards more power sharing—as a “practical power” that is transferred to the scientific discipline sociology. Already Simmel’s contrasting of “masses” and “individual” signals that he does not see the academic discipline of sociology as a supporter of this democratic movement; in his time “masses” was a derogatory term for large electorates.

Whereas Simmel is successful conceptually in separating the concept of a value-free academic sociology and a democratic movement, he does not achieve this differentiation; he is an object of evaluation by a conservative state himself. Despite his broad audience at Berlin University, and his seminal publications, he is not made a full professor until 1914. The Prussian ministry rejects his faculty’s application for Simmel’s professorship in 1898, arguing that he is a sociologist; i.e. a suspicious radical (Rammstedt 1992: 888)! Simmel’s case illustrates how the establishment of the academic discipline of sociology might be characterized by three prerequisites: A process in a society establishing a society semantics; theoretical and empirical scientific work that forms the basis of a new discipline; and a government structure that allows this new discipline to institutionalize itself at university level. The historical pattern of the establishment of sociology in its origin countries shows

that the last point, which is sometimes neglected in the literature, is quite important (Sutherland 1978). Democratic government structures seemed to be more open to the institutionalization of the new social science, sociology. Sociology is institutionalized in universities in the two largest democracies—USA and France—at the turn of the 20th century. The case of the United States is interesting. By 1909, there were 55 full-time and 372 part-time professors in sociology (Steinmetz 2010: 9), despite the fact that the coherence of the theoretical and empirical scientific work of American sociology was still rather vague. French sociology was institutionalized in universities in 1896. Indeed, the classic work of Durkheim shows its intellectual vigor at that time. In contrast, three large countries with mixed monarchy-democracy structures, Germany, Austria, and Great Britain, did not institutionalize sociology at university level before 1907: Britain in 1907 (Halsey 2004: 3); Germany in 1919 (Sutherland 1978); and Austria last of the three in 1919 (Langer 1988). The German case is instructive. Despite the strong scientific program of early 20th century sociology, now regarded as classic, there was not a single sociology professorship before the democratic revolution in 1918. In terms of an elective affinity between sociology and democracy, one could state that historically sociology had a higher likelihood of being chosen for institutionalization in universities earlier in large democratic societies. At the same time less democratic governments rejected attempts to institutionalize sociology because it was seen as too democratic, even when sociologists tried to distance themselves from democratic movements. Ringer's (1969) classic study elaborates the difficulties and ambivalences of the modernist German mandarins, who are at the center of the establishment of German sociology. An irony of the negative logic of an elective affinity between sociology and democracy is that democratic revolutions in Germany and Austria successfully institutionalized sociology in universities, but in a continuation of its democratic lag, some of the first sociologists picked by the conservative university establishments—such as like Freyer in Leipzig or Spann in Vienna—were anti-democrats.

If there is an elective affinity between democracy and sociology, one might suppose that there is also an inherent tension between totalitarianism (as an antidote to democracy) and sociology. We define a totalitarian regime as a state government structure in which one party governs without set time limitations, without legal opposition, and cherishing some kind of *Weltanschauung*. In contrast to pre-modern government structures in totalitarian regimes there is a state but, unlike democracies, there is no pluralistic competition between parties and no formal procedures of a change of government initiated by the broad electorate. Rather vague in this definition of totalitarianism is the notion of a specific *Weltanschauung* as most 20th century dictatorships legitimize themselves using some kind of more-or-less systematic ideology. According to this definition, National Socialist Germany, the Communist Soviet Union and Mobutu's Zaire would all be totalitarian regimes, despite the fact that the number of books explaining the dominant ideology varies in these States.

With regard to the general description of the relation between sociology and totalitarian regimes, contrary to some exaggerations by early post-war sociologists one can state that there were a number of sociologists working in fascist Germany (Klingemann 1996) and Italy, however much institutionalized sociology was hampered. In Germany, all efforts by right wing sociologists like Freyer or Sombart to gain broad support from the new Nazi dictatorship were unsuccessful because the Nazi establishment viewed sociology as a product of the hated Weimar Republic (Stölting 1984).

The relationship between communist totalitarian regimes and sociology differed according to the scientific traditions in the various countries. In the Soviet Union, sociology was banned between the mid 1920s and the 1960s. In East Germany, sociology was not allowed between 1950 and the mid 1960s. In Communist China, sociology as a scientific discipline was kept away from universities until

1979 (Gransow 1992). Communist Albania did not allow sociology until 1986. The situations in Communist Poland and Yugoslavia were somewhat less suppressive.

With regard to the thesis of tension between sociology and totalitarian regimes, there is no clear indication that professional sociologists, or their organizations, refused to work in totalitarian regimes, as show in the examples of Freyer and his colleagues, or Polish sociology in the post-war period. However, in both fascist and in communist regimes, we find explicit policies against the discipline of sociology, more than against any natural science, and also somewhat harsher than any measures against most other social science disciplines.

A third type of state that was dominant in most parts of the world during the first half of the 20th century is still rather neglected by research on the history of sociology. Given that this case study's empirical material does not refer to this type of society, I just want to mention general tendencies. Societies governed by a colonial regime are non-democratic by nature; they crumble as soon as general elections are allowed. If one looks at sociology in colonial societies, in very few cases sociology can be detected before de-colonialization. Colonial rulers appear to institutionalize anthropology/ethnology instead of sociology to signal a distance between rulers and the ruled (Keim 2008). This one might conclude that there is also a tension between sociology and colonial regimes, as with other non-democratic societies.

To summarize this first chapter, it can be stated that, in general, there is a higher likelihood of sociology being institutionalized as an academic discipline in democracies than in non-democratic societies. Periods of tension, and sometimes even explicit suppression of sociology, is not uncommon in fascist and communist regimes. In other non-democratic societies, like colonies without self-rule or mixed monarchy-democracy structures, sociology tends to either not be institutionalized or be institutionalized later than in democracies. However, the elective affinity between democracy and sociology and its counterpart—a tension between non-democratic societies and sociology—seems more probabilistic than determinist, like most social science correlations (Goldthorpe 2002). Considering the nature of actions behind this elective affinity, one gets the impression that a rejection of sociology by non-democratic regimes is more common than an active exclusive propagation of democracy by sociologists who vary in their views. Why is there tension between totalitarian regimes and sociology?

2. Theories on the relation of totalitarian regimes and sociology

Explanatory theories that state a causal link as to why totalitarian regimes quite often form a tense position towards sociology are scarce. Merton (1968) gives a rather general theory. He sees a structural co-evolution of democracy and science with science getting the opportunity to develop independently in democracies. According to Merton, the guiding imperatives of science in general are universalism, communism, disinterestedness, and organized scepticism. Tensions between science and totalitarian regimes result from anti-rationalism in the *Weltanschauung* of the latter and from the “rather ... diffuse, frequently vague apprehension that scepticism threatens the current distribution of power” (ibid: 615).

Merton's is a theory of tension between science in general and totalitarian regimes, but offers no specific hypothesis as to why sociology should be special within all science disciplines. Different suggestions are put forward in the literature. Some authors take it as an effect of the demography of the scientists in sociology: e.g. because the proportion of Jews among sociologists was higher than

in other disciplines, the proportion of its émigrés was high during the fascist regime in Germany (Käsler 1984). If this hypothesis is conclusive, the tension between totalitarian regimes and sociology could be simply coincidental.

Another group of authors stresses more central ideas of sociology that tend to clash with totalitarian regimes. For example, Eisermann (1959) sees sociology as a born opposition science and Neuloh (1986) views its critique of ideology as a nuisance for totalitarian rulers. More complex, though similar, for Geiger (1956) sociology is born at the end of the 18th century when a “free society emerged against the organized state” (ibid: 11) by criticizing power per se. As an empirical, analytical, and critical science, sociology continues this idea, which runs counter to the central principles of totalitarian states, which only have use for self-glorification and social engineering. If Geiger’s hypothesis is correct, the critical inner logic of ‘sociology proper’ will clash with totalitarianism, which would only tolerate a ‘sociology light’ in the form of social engineering and Geiger would not call this sociology.

There are interesting variants of Geiger’s theory in the literature. Habermas (1992) states that German sociology arises as a sociology of culture and knowledge critically related to German humanities that cannot be continued in forced exile. Whereas Habermas focusses on the inner logic of ideas finding a dead end in external events, Stölting (1984) stresses the motives of the totalitarian regime. Nazi elites believed in the public image of sociology, which was seen as liberal, socialist, and connected with the Weimar Republic. Therefore all attempts of right wing sociologists like Freyer were rebuffed and only a ‘sociology light’ of single working sociologists without institutionalization of the discipline sociology was tolerated. According to Stölting’s theory, the decisive moment of the tension between sociology and a totalitarian regime is that the latter believes in the critical, democratic image of sociology, independent of the fact that individual sociologists try to set themselves apart from this image.

The normative implications of Geiger’s theory are stressed in a strand of the literature, which accentuates that only a critical ‘sociology proper,’ fighting actively against totalitarianism, would be worthwhile. Wittebur (1991) claims that nearly all émigrés failed, as they did not write the seminal analysis that shattered totalitarian rule. In a similar vein, Hannah Arendt criticized sociology as a discipline of social engineering, taking Mannheim’s ideology and utopia as an example (!), whereas she wanted an existentialist critique of the diabolic nature of totalitarianism (Baehr 2002).

In conclusion, theories on the tension between totalitarian regimes and sociology (as well as an elective affinity between sociology and democracy) fluctuate between normative statements and empirical observations; between system level typologies and explanations of patterns of action. It seems important, therefore, to be precise about the mechanisms by which the tension between sociology and totalitarian regimes is produced, and through which the elective affinity between democracy and sociology created. This is important, as dead ends in sociology through totalitarian regimes might be produced in different ways. One thesis is that dead ends of sociology in totalitarian regimes occur more or less coincidentally, more as a reflection of the composition of its actors than of any attribute of its science. An alternative hypothesis in line with Geiger is that there are parts of the scientific core of sociology proper that are suppressed by totalitarian regimes because they are opposed to their power structure. A sub-hypothesis of the Geiger thesis is that only sociology light in the form of propaganda or social engineering can survive in totalitarian regimes. A fourth hypothesis is that totalitarian perceptions of sociology as a critical science bring about dead ends in sociology. A fifth hypothesis states that the forced shift of context via emigration produces dead ends in sociology.

3. Methods

The empirical method used in this paper is a case study on sociology at an East German university during the 20th century. As a qualitative case study no generalizing conclusions on the frequency of occurrence of observed practices can be drawn. The aim of the analysis is to understand whether there are mechanisms that tend to produce tension between a totalitarian regime and sociology and, if yes, to determine their nature.

East Germany during the 20th century seemed to be a good place for such a study as there were a broad variety of regimes. From 1900 to 1918 there was a mixed monarchy-democracy regime, from 1918 to 1933 the state was democratic, in 1933 this gave way to a fascist regime, which collapsed in 1945 and was followed by a communist dictatorship until 1990, returning to democracy after from 1990 to 2000. Halle University, the subject of this study, was founded in 1694 and throughout 20th century was a “normal” middle-sized university. During the period of the observation it was part of the federal state of Prussia until 1933 and since 1990 has belonged to the state of Saxony-Anhalt. This study is interested in dead ends and for this reason we end it in 1992. Thus re-establishment of sociology after democratization will be ignored.

Being interested in institutionalized sociology as a scientific discipline, we use a very narrow definition of core sociology; professors who have the word sociology in their title. We will concentrate on two main figures, Friedrich Hertz (1930–1933) and Rudhard Stollberg (1965–1990), who fulfill this criteria. A third figure, Ernst Grünfeld (1929–1933), will also be briefly reviewed. Grünfeld seems to be an interesting case with which to study the relationship between sociology and its dead ends. For these three professors rich material was both accessible and used. Besides publications of these authors, Hertz kept the manuscripts of his Halle lectures, which we copied at the archive for the history of sociology in the Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria. Halle University archives were consulted on all three subjects of study. In the case of Rudhard Stollberg, documents from the archives of the secret state police (Stasi) were used to reconstruct the conflicts around the dissertation of Bahro. An archive of the department of sociology in communist times was also found in the attic of its building which included, among other objects, titles of seminar papers (cf. Pasternack and Sackmann 2013).

4. Case study: Dead ends of sociology in Halle

The following chapter analyses dead ends in the development of sociology at the University of Halle during the 20th century. Although we will focus on the end of the Weimar Republic and the time of the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR), it is useful to briefly review the situation before 1918, which we call a monarchic-democratic regime.

4.1 GRÜNFELD AND SOCIOLOGY BEFORE SOCIOLOGY

From 1694 until 1918 there was neither a sociology professorship at the Halle University nor one single university course that includes the term sociology in its title. Why doesn't sociology exist as an academic discipline in Halle before 1918? It seems futile to give an answer to a question on the non-existence of an object, as there is no parallel in Halle to the efforts of Simmel and his Berlin University to establish a professorship of sociology. We think it is useful to take a closer look at the Ernst Grünfeld's dissertation, defended in 1908 at the university of Halle, as it gives an idea as to why both the potential for the existence of sociology as a discipline and its rejection are traceable in Halle. Sciences of the state (Staatswissenschaft) was the term used before 1945, which self-characterized

the social sciences in Germany at that time. It encompassed disciplines that today one would call macroeconomics, business studies, political sciences and sociology. Dominant within this spectrum was macroeconomics. In Halle, Gustav Schmoller, Johannes Conrad, and Heinrich Waentig were all situated in the main stream of German economics; the Historical School of Economics, which was organized around the Verein fuer Socialpolitik.

Waentig, the supervisor of Grünfeld's dissertation on Lorenz von Stein, can be seen to be interested in sociology as his 1894 dissertation was on the predecessors of Auguste Comte. Waentig's political orientation, however, is quite unusual in the German Kaiserreich. He was to become a deputy for the left wing Social Democratic Party to the Prussian Parliament during the Weimar Republic. Grünfeld's topic is also quite unusual as it is the first comprehensive monograph on Lorenz von Stein in Germany. Lorenz von Stein is praised in this book as the first social scientist in Germany to introduce "Gesellschaftslehre" (discipline of society) in a systematic way in 1842 and thus became—despite heavy criticism by Treitschke and Roscher—the founding father of the Historical School of Economics. After a thorough discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the work of von Stein, in the last chapter Grünfeld (1910: 206–257) evaluates the effects of von Stein's social science approach. In this context, there is an interesting discussion of the relation between sociology and social sciences. Grünfeld argues that demands for chairs in sociology are unfounded as it is still "fruitless" (ibid: 213), whereas the integration of social science approaches in economics—as done by Bücher and von Schmoller—was more productive. More generally, Grünfeld states that the introduction of sociology in the US and France, which he observes is due to the "universality, its other side being a certain superficiality" (ibid: 245), characteristic of these countries. This "seems to be not adequate for the German essence" (ibid.), which aims at specialization. Therefore, the incorporation of social science topics into economics, which happened in Germany, is seen as preferable to the institutionalization of sociology.

Analyzing these passages, one can state that even in progressive groups of young German social scientists, sociology was seen as something "not German"; something that was only suitable for "superficial" democratic countries. The somewhat bizarre argument of national characteristics of sciences proves the pattern of a non-introduction of sociology in monarchic Germany. Beside the vivid language of this treatise written two years before the foundation of the German sociological association, it also shows that even scientific authors like Grünfeld, writing on topics which are rather sociological, seem to have the impression that it is prudent to distance themselves from "foreign" sociology to be successful in academia.

4.2 HERTZ AND THE DEAD END OF SOCIOLOGY 1933

After the democratic revolution of 1918, the position of sociology in the academic field changed. The first professorship of sociology was awarded in Germany in 1919 and following this we see a broad institutionalization of sociology in German universities (Lepsius 1981). In Halle, institutionalization took place in 1929–30, when the Austrian Friedrich Hertz was appointed as an ordinary professor of economic sciences of the state and sociology. In part, his appointment was an effect of a democratization process, as the Prussian ministry insisted, against a reluctant department of the sciences of the state, on making a designation that included sociology (Böhme et al. 2013: 56–57). Hertz was a compromise candidate acceptable to the liberal minded economic department which, at the time, consisted of Aubin and Jahn. Ernst Grünfeld and Friedrich Hertz are added to the professorial body in 1929–30.

Even among the non-uniform sociologists of his day, Hertz was unusual. He was a scientist of the state by training and had attended the universities Vienna, Munich, and the London School of Economics. He was also a founding and leading member of the “Sozialwissenschaftlicher Bildungsverein in Wien”, the first German speaking social science organization (Müller 2004), a journalist, a manager of the industrial association of Austria, and a high level civil servant of the Austrian State after World War I. Scientifically he was mainly known for his critical works on race theories (Hertz 1915) and on nation building (Hertz 1927), as well as works on the structure of the Austrian economy WWI.

Why did institutionalized sociology end at Halle University in 1933? In the case of Hertz’s sociology, the fascists despised the content of its orientation, theories, publications, and lectures. Hertz not only attacked the pseudo-science of race studies in books since 1904, he also criticized the first professor of race studies, Hans Günther—who was appointed by the Thuringian provincial Nazi government (Hertz 1930)—as unscientific. Soundly attacking a core Weltanschauung of the totalitarian regime made Hertz one of the most hated professors at the university among Nazi students. A Nazi press campaign tried to denounce Hertz as a terrorist who helped to organize a violent attack on Günther, and the preparation of a Nazi student boycott led to Hertz’s resignation as professor. To save his life and that of his family he fled to Vienna and later was exiled in Britain.

What kind of sociology ended at Halle University with Hertz’ departure in 1933? We are fortunate that, in addition to his publications, we have the manuscript of a lecture on “Current sociological theories,” which he gave in the winter semester of the 1932/33 academic session and with which he planned to conclude the summer semester of 1933. In general, his publications (Hertz 1927; 1929; 1931a; 1931b) show that his empirical work is in the tradition of historical sociology, which tried to analyze societies by comparing conditions and results in macrosociological constellations and by sketching lines of development both realized and sometimes only seen possibilities. Steinmetz (2010) claimed that this kind of historical sociology was typical of German Weimar sociology and, due to its rejection in countries of exile, found a dead end. Its approach was taken up again in the 1960s.

It seems appropriate to look more closely into what was meant by historical sociology at that time, particularly by Hertz. Two main projects were pursued within historical sociology. One tried to achieve a history of ideas in their societal embedding: for example, the development of the modern idea of “race” is sketched and analyzed as an ideology to transfer feudal prestige notions to larger units like nations (Hertz 1931a). In this line of thought, developmental notions are as important as analytical components. Another set of ideas that were even more prominent in Weimar sociology, aim to develop a typology of pure types of forms and their logic from historical and spatial comparisons. In an article on forms of nation Hertz (1927) proceeded by describing the history of the idea of nation, defining its core components as being related to states—a form of community feeling with different contents and a will of belonging—and distinguishes and analyses types of nation state, language nation, descent nation, race nation, belief in common descent nation. Similarly in 1929 Hertz’s historical and contemporary material on migration is a starting point for typological work that forms general theories on relations of patterns of action and societal formations.

Hertz’s empirical approach in his 1932 & 33 lecture on sociological theory is very much in line with Abel (1929), whose book forms the core of his lecture. In his fascinating book, Abel argues that looking into the work of current German sociologists can solve the problem of a foundation of the specialized discipline sociology, both in theory and method. He states that Simmel was right in his approach to single out interaction as a basic object of a specializing science of sociology, but also

criticizes him for his lacking systematization, methods and for the impracticality of differentiating form and content. Abel is even more critical towards the phenomenological approach of Vierkanndt. He supports von Wiese in his effort to reconcile quantitative methodology and theory, but is critical of his lack of empirical work. Abel presents Weber's work as seminal as he solves problems of both theory and methodology, and also conducts empirical studies. In his lecture, Hertz wholeheartedly supports Abel's argument, which would become important step towards the later synthesis of classical sociological theory by Parsons in 1937. Using Hertz's own terms, a sociology that is centered on patterns of action that relate to historical circumstances should be value-free and empirical. This is completely in line with Abel's theorizing. The only difference is that Hertz also supports practical sociology, which is problem-centered.

If there is such a strong reciprocal link between German Weimar sociology and international sociological theory building, as seen in the work of Abel and Hertz, are we still able to proclaim a dead end to the Weimar sociology? I think there is still a positive answer to this question. The local answer is that after Hertz's forced exile, his kind of sociology was no longer followed in Halle (and many other places in Germany). Further, Parsons follows Abel's lead, but he cuts back historical dimensions in his work from the 1930s to the 1950s. And Hertz, continuing his work in exile, shifts his empirical focus from historic-typological theory building towards historical narrative, increasingly neglecting general theory (Hertz 1957; 1962; 1975). Therefore, the specific Weimar historical sociology that combined typological work with vast historical material came to an end due to a forced change of context.

4.3 STOLLBERG AND SOCIOLOGY IN A COMMUNIST STATE, 1965–1990

Between 1950 and 1964 no academic sociology was allowed in the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR). After this sociology was reintroduced at university level, though at a quantitatively very low level (Meyer 1996). In Halle, Rudhard Stollberg, held the only professorship for sociology from 1965 to 1990. These 25 years provide a much better opportunity to look more into the details of the relation between sociology and totalitarianism than the shorter Nazi period. Was there a tension between the two, and if so, what form did it take?

Stollberg studied political economy at Halle University during the 1950s. Under the GDR, it became common to appoint in-house professors, as is the case with Stollberg. Like most GDR sociologists, he specialized in the sociology of work. He was proud of his international conferences on the topic, he even hosted a meeting of a research council of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in spring 1989. As a loyal member of the communist party, he belonged to the core group of sociologists who organized teaching and research programs for the GDR.

According to Geiger (1956) a totalitarian regime like the GDR would not tolerate 'sociology proper', but only 'sociology light,' which served the demands of the state for 'glorification' and social engineering.

To corroborate this thesis, we analyze an important study of Stollberg and his team on shift work (Jugel, Spangenberg and Stollberg 1978). We do find some glorification of the regime insofar as socialism is treated as constituting a lifestyle in contrast to capitalism without structural contradictions (ibid: 5, 24). Shift work, for example, is seen as "progressive" (ibid: 8) in socialism where in capitalism it is exploitative. However, 'glorification' is not the book's central purpose. its focus is more on social engineering. It provides a quantitative empirical study on the effects of shift work on family life, leisure, and health, describing quantitatively how shift work is disruptive to

family life and health, but less so to leisure. Is it adequate to qualify this empirical work somewhat derogatively as social engineering and not, as Stollberg would have termed it, as practical sociology? For practical purposes, both seek means to achieve specified goals, not at finding and evaluating ends of action. In this context, Stollberg's book tries to find ways to alleviate the negative effects of shift work by giving advice to managers of companies (ibid: 18, 125–128). For example: the same shift rhythms for spouses are less disruptive for families; cooperation with child caring institutions lessens stress on children; a switch of shift start times to 7 am, 3 pm and 11 pm would be more healthy than the existing patterns; participation of children in the decision making of families (ibid: 49); and participation of workers at the introduction of shift work (ibid: 128) are encouraged. Despite the somewhat paternalistic orientation of most parts of the book, there seems to be no clear dividing line between social engineering and practical sociology. There is, however, a difference between 'sociology light' and 'sociology proper,' per Geiger, insofar as Stollberg observes that a general discussion of the pros and cons of an extension of shift work is beyond the limits of his book. The extension of shift work is an established fact, set by the political decisions of the Communist Party and the Communist State, which are cited in the book, and which are beyond criticism. However, even trying to keep to the limits of 'sociology light,' Western scientific observers (and communist functionaries in the GDR) saw Stollberg's implicit critique of shift work as "sociologist of work Rudhard Stollberg keeps to be the only person who [...] dares to express a fundamental critique of shift work" (Voigt 1986: 160). One could conclude that both sociological authors and totalitarian observers police the thin line between 'sociology proper' and 'sociology light.'

A more fundamental problem of following the approach of 'sociology light' in a totalitarian regime is brought to light in the conflict around the dissident Bahro, which seems to have influenced Stollberg's scientific work more than the controversies around his sociology of work (Pasternack 2013a: 130–142). Rudolf Bahro wrote a PhD thesis in 1975 on low and high level managers in industrial companies in the GDR, which included an appendix of notes on 48 interviews. Stollberg did not supervise this work, but wrote an expert opinion which was slightly critical (evaluated "cum laude"). Stollberg did not know that the State Secret Police had already read the interviews and were appalled by the critical content of the managers' comments on their work. They intervened by declaring the dissertation "secret" and appointing two additional expert opinions for the dissertation, which stood in opposition to the three existing positive opinions to produce an overall negative vote and the dissertation was thus failed. Bahro was imprisoned, but was successful in smuggling a more radical book out of the country, which was published in West Germany in 1977 as one of the most important dissident works in East Germany. Later that year Bahro was expelled from the country and went to West Germany. Thus in 1977, Stollberg had to criticize himself for his insufficient vigilance in his evaluation of the dissertation in various committees: the party organization at the university; the management of the university; and in a party assembly, where he had to defend himself against eviction from the communist party. There were no further sanctions against him, except for more intensive observation by the State Secret Police.

Reflecting on the relationship between sociology and totalitarian regimes, two aspects of the Bahro affair stand out: Bahro's empirical material work, which annoyed to a key organization of the totalitarian regime, the State Secret Police; and that Stollberg was criticized for his evaluation of this work without recommending that the empirical material should be censored. Stollberg was a sociologist loyal to the regime and so not recommending this was impossible. Therefore the Secret Police secretly noted that Stollberg's self-critique at the public humiliations was not convincing: "His whole behavior was artificial" (Pasternack 2013a: 136). The arbitrary repression of a totalitarian

regime is nearly impossible to adapt to, thus, even ‘sociology light’ is a strategy in which reprimand cannot be avoided.

For me the reaction to this kind of repression seems to be important. There is, as Merton (1949) lists, a whole range of behavior with which to react to a situation in which one’s demands diverge from the opportunities a society offers. Rebellion would be a way to openly oppose the power structure. In her analysis of the work of GDR sociologists during communism, Sparschuh (2005: 40) criticizes the lack of open opposition in GDR sociology. There was no important dissident or central reformer within GDR sociology like Zaslavskaya (1984) in Russia. In a totalitarian regime, the arbitrary and harsh sanctions of the regime make rebellion an unlikely pattern of behavior: “Fear produces inaction, or more accurately, routinized action” (Merton 1949: 204). A plausible reaction to totalitarianism, therefore, is ritualism; in other words one no longer believes in the accepted goals of the society, but nevertheless one conforms to the means of achieving it. In Stollberg’s book on “Why and what for sociology” (Stollberg 1985) one sees a tendency to transform ‘sociology light’ into a ritualistic science. We will look closely at this book in what follows.

A general statement, which hinders sociology like other social sciences in communism, is that the totalitarian regime determines its *Weltanschauung* as a theory that is already complete. Ettrich (1997) sees this preset theory as a major difficulty that crippled the development of sociology in the GDR. In a personal footnote in his book, Stollberg states that the following questions are open: “Enthält der historische Materialismus sämtliche oder nur die Grundaussagen einer allgemeinen Soziologie?” (Stollberg 1985: 69). Both statements imply that the totalitarian *Weltanschauung* historical materialism must be kept as the dominant sociological theory. The aim of sociology is “to help by its research to uncover laws, formulate them scientifically, which determine the functioning and the development of society. These laws are called social or sociological laws” (ibid: 9). Despite this natural science terminology, Stollberg is not able to formulate “laws” beyond the *Weltanschauung*. He states that there are three important questions for sociology: “What historical stage is reached?” (ibid: 49); “What relations show up?” (ibid: 53); and “In what direction moves the development?” (ibid: 54). These questions (and their answers) indicate that the *Weltanschauung* of historical materialism should guide the research. As western sociology is interwoven with its method of production, it is deemed a “manager of social ills” (ibid: 158). One can conclude that, from this perspective, neither cooperation with international sociology nor autonomous work on sociological theory appears advisable, both are risky because one either competes with historical materialism or risks becoming ‘infected’ by foreign dangers. The way out of this dilemma is to concentrate only on sociological methods (ibid: 97–136), special sociologies (ibid: 75), and saying that sociology “fulfills an instrumental function” (ibid: 87). The concept of a ‘sociology light’ that Stollberg presents in 1985 is very similar to that in his book on shift work. He tries to keep to empirical, practical sociology, accepting the limits that the *Weltanschauung* places on his work. The low-key, subdued enthusiasm still perceptible in his work of the 1970s is turning into ritualism. The necessities of ‘sociology light’ are described as facts of a small world to which one has to adapt. Therefore, the risk of ‘sociology light’ within totalitarian regimes lies not only in the danger of being arbitrarily attacked—even if respecting its limits—but also an internal risk insofar as a growing experience of these limits turns scientific enthusiasm into ritualistic action.

Was the kind of GDR sociology that Stollberg represented at a dead end in 1990? In contrast with discussions on the dead end of parts of Weimar sociology in 1933, we find a number of actors who try to answer this question in the early 1990s, but hardly any contemporary discussion on this topic.

Stollberg himself indirectly answers the question; he became ill and did not participate in the debate. In terms of Merton's typology, one could say that Stollberg reacted to the new constellation of the sudden unforeseen revolution in the GDR by retreat, which seems to support the interpretation that the inner nexus between the totalitarian regime and 'sociology light' was already loosened in the 1980s.

Younger East German scientists tried to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the sociology of work in Halle (Schippling 1992). It has been said that its empirical knowledge of a decline of work satisfaction between 1967 and 1987 was valuable, but it lacked a stronger link to the critical theoretical thinking of West German authors.

West German observers, like the director of the institute for research on work and professions, judge this work even more critically. Stollberg's sociology of work was not sociology in a scientific sense because as it only aimed at adaptation of work and did not question its societal purpose (Buttler, 1992). West German Lothar Peter, a frequent guest at Halle in GDR times, was more differentiated: Despite the fatal connection of sociology with historical materialism and its concept of law, the sociology of work by Stollberg produced sound empirical research that he interpreted normatively instead of pursuing more the phenomena of a change of values (Peter 1990).

It is worth noting that because of the specific circumstances of the East German transformation—a combination of an East German revolution and unification with the far bigger West Germany—it was West German scientists who evaluated the continuity or discontinuity of East German sociology. Lepsius, as the West German organizer of the re-establishment of a department of sociology in Halle University, reported on the scientific qualifications of the GDR department staff. He evaluated them as scientifically sound and not as informants for the State Secret Police and recommended the prolongation of their contracts (Lepsius 2002). The ministry of the new Bundesland, however, refused to continue the employment of any of the sociologists without giving any specific reason. Thus the dead end of GDR sociology in Halle after reunification was institutionally quite radical.

In conclusion, one can state that there was a certain tension between sociology and the communist totalitarian regime of the GDR. This did not hold only for the period of its repression before the mid 1960s, but which lasted until 1990. The tension between this science discipline and the totalitarian regime is stronger than for many other disciplines, because the totalitarian *Weltanschauung* is seen as a superior sociological theory thus crippling open sociological reflection. Geiger's thesis of a selective acceptance of a 'sociology light' in the form of social engineering has been found to reflect both the self-declared aims of its scientists, who would prefer the term practical science, and the constraints of regulated State research policy. Surprisingly however, and not in accordance with Geiger's views, even the practice of 'sociology light' produced a number of conflicts, principally due to the arbitrary nature of the totalitarian regime, which enforced rigid programs of 'sociology light' which had a tendency to act out an inner logic and regress towards ritualistic science.

5. Elective affinity of sociology and democracy? Tension between totalitarianism and sociology?

Can we draw any general conclusions from this study? First, one has to draw attention to its quantitative limits; a single case study never guarantees statistical robustness. It would be worthwhile to test hypotheses of this study with a higher number of countries and years. However, that was not the aim of this research, which just focuses on the mechanisms causing either a tension

between sociology and totalitarianism or an elective affinity between sociology and democracy. From the existing literature, five hypotheses were put forward—coincidental; against core of sociology proper; only sociology light; totalitarian perception; shift of context—which can now be refined in light of the empirical material of 20th century development at one “normal” East German university.

The first thesis claims that the higher percentage of sociological dead ends as the Weimar Republic turned to a fascist regime was coincidental; that it was mainly the result of a higher percentage of Jews in this discipline. As I have shown, all sociology professors in Halle University were forced into exile in 1933. Even within the broader perspective of all professors of science of the state, of which sociology was a part, still 100% were forced to resign. Current estimates for all faculties state that the Nazis evicted 9% of all Halle professors (Bruch 2013: xxxiii–xxxiv). Therefore, in Halle social science evictions were 10 times higher than in other disciplines. Current estimates for German sociology professors evicted or exiled depend on methods used, but range from 42% (Wittebur 1991: 134) to 78% (Neuloh 1986: 24), a current reanalysis with data from Kürschners Gelehrten Kalender estimates 66% (Holzhauser 2015: 143). This would be about four times higher than the German average of 16% (Bruch 2013: xxxiii). The high specificity of sociology and social sciences being forcefully evicted makes a coincidental relationship highly unlikely. Therefore, we have to refute the first thesis at least as most important process. A closer look at the Halle cases in the sciences of the state shows that Aubin was transferred for political reasons. Hertz, as we have seen, was also forced to resign for political reasons. (The fact that his grandparents practiced Judaism is, in this case, coincidental not causal.) Jahn was forced to resign in 1937 because the Nazis classified his wife as Jewish. Grünfeld, despite being Christian, was dismissed in 1933 because his grandparents were of the Jewish faith. For individuals the label “Jewish” was arbitrary as the Nazi criterion did not refer to individual actions or decisions but set irrational descent criteria.

A second thesis says that totalitarianism clashes with ‘sociology proper’. In the case studies above, we showed that a clash between totalitarian *Weltanschauung* and ‘sociology proper’ can sometimes cause tension. Hertz’s scientific books analyzing race studies as an unscientific enterprise, brought about the political pressures for him to resign. Hertz is rather singular in his scientific focus but, as Schleiff (2009) has shown, the organizers of the founding session of the German Sociological Association in 1910—especially Weber—arranged things systematically in such a way that the race paradigm was shown off as prototypical social science, which always comes to wrong conclusions because uses natural science theories to explain social phenomena. Therefore, being against race theories was part of the core mainstream sociological epistemology until 1933. As Hertz was present at some of these sociological meetings he could legitimately, with his critique of race theories, be seen as representative of mainstream ‘sociology proper.’

Despite being very different in content, historical materialism as a *Weltanschauung* of 20th century totalitarian communist regimes also clashed with sociology, as we showed in the case of Stollberg. Regarded as a superior sociological theory, historical materialism hindered sociological theory building in communist countries. Other sociological theories risked being interpreted as competing with the *Weltanschauung*. To avoid this risk many sociologists, like Stollberg, tried to refrain from theory building to reduce the likelihood of sanctions.

Thus, one has to conclude that an important mechanism that brings ‘sociology proper’ into tension with totalitarian regimes lies in the social science content of their *Weltanschauung*. Despite the fact that both Nazi and Communist *Weltanschauungen* tried to claim a natural science status for their ideologies, both had social science arguments that clashed more with sociology as a science than they did with natural sciences.

There is no systematic evidence that the tension between ‘sociology proper’ and totalitarianism results from a critical stance towards power in general, as Geiger suggests. A sufficient number of sociologists are willing to cooperate with totalitarian regimes for different reasons, a number that appears to be neither higher nor lower than in other disciplines.

A third hypothesis states that ‘sociology light,’ in the form of propaganda or social engineering, is more likely to be tolerated by totalitarian regimes than other forms of sociology. Indeed the case of Stollberg shows that social engineering was both the kind of sociology the state wanted and what its sociologists tried to deliver. In comparing Hertz and Stollberg we see that both propagate practical sociology, which some will classify as a form of social engineering because its aim is to find solutions to fixed problems. We see a clear increase of means at hand between 1930 and 1980 for such an orientation because empirical methods flourished at this time. However, the case of Stollberg shows that even ‘sociology light’ has the potential for tension with totalitarian regimes and that there seem to be different forms of conflict between ‘sociology light’ and totalitarianism.

Some are the results of a somewhat naïve interpretation of applied sociology, which are shared by advocates of practical sociology in totalitarian regimes and critics of social engineering. Both imply that a benevolent/malevolent manager/ruler will, with the help of social engineering, be able to rationalize his rule (and thereby stabilize the totalitarian regime). However, conflicts with ‘sociology light’ arise because the manager/ruler who is central to this totalitarian concept sometimes resists change (Pasternack 2013a: 128). Even the implicit critique of ‘sociology light’ of the empirically measured effects of shift work is seen as challenging to the existing order (Pasternack 2013c: 181–187). Conflicts of this kind are not uncommon in many fields of science, as all science—even sociology light—can innovate and challenge established views and routines. As shown in the analysis of the Stollberg’s book on shift work, one observes both an attempt to keep to the limits of ‘sociology light,’ but also to hold on to the critical information of empirical work. One could even say that conflicts of this kind, which take place both within the role set of social scientist within a totalitarian regime and beyond in relation to different interaction partners, are driving forces that may also motivate.

‘Sociology light’ is also affected by different kinds of conflicts about the general nature of the arbitrariness of totalitarian regimes. The circumstances around the Bahro affair show that standard procedures of ‘sociology light,’ such as including empirical appendices or evaluating PhD theses according to scientific criteria, can sometimes result in dangerous, publicly humiliating. We saw that these arbitrary interventions in social science work, which are far more common in totalitarian regimes than in democracies, seem to affect the habitus of ‘sociology light’ because a possible form of reaction to these interventions is ritualism. It would appear that the difference between ‘sociology light’ and ritualism is small as neither problematizes certain core values/institutions/aims. Seen from the perspective of the individual however, ‘sociology light’ is something practiced in a subdued consent, which allows the authorities to test limits from time to time and sometimes be proud of progress. Ritualism is a stricter form of hypocrisy because external forces are seen as so strong and incalculable that only a strict limitation of one’s actions can protect against sanctions. As we have seen, Stollberg seems to have shifted his ‘sociology light’ concept in the direction of ritualism, which reduces inner involvement with science. Other observers of ‘sociology light’ in totalitarian regimes have also come to the conclusion that it appears ritualistic in some core passages (cf. Ettrich 1997). In conclusion, the third thesis has to be refined on the basis of the empirical study. Sociology light in the form of social engineering is a concept that is more tolerated by totalitarian regimes and aimed at by sociologists, but it is no safeguard against tensions with totalitarian regimes and possible degenerations of its inner logic towards ritualism.

A fourth hypothesis states that the totalitarian perceptions of sociology as critical science bring about dead ends in sociology. We showed how external images were important in the development of sociology in Halle. In the case of Hertz and the dead end of sociology in 1933, we showed that he was among the few sociologists who was really a critical scientist and therefore, in his case, his status cannot be said to have brought about the dead end. In the case of Grünfeld and early sociology up until 1918, however, we showed that the image of sociology as a foreign (democratic) discipline was important in causing even young critical scientists with an affinity to sociological themes to distance themselves from the new discipline. In the case of Bahro, one can see that even raw empirical material can be seen as “critical” because totalitarian regimes tend to suppress any descriptive information about their state. Thus, in conclusion, the fourth thesis also has to be refined. Non-democratic regimes’ critical perceptions of sociology are decisive for the initial blocking or repression of sociology. However, at later stages the everyday procedures of sociology can cause tensions with totalitarian regimes that are largely independent of its general image.

The fifth thesis sees causal effects of a forced shift of context via emigration as resulting in dead ends in sociology. Hertz’s case supports the thesis that Weimar historical sociology could not be undertaken in exile. Like most other sociologists above the age of 55, he was not able to continue his work as a professor in exile (Fleck 2007: 236). Unlike many émigrés he had good language skills, he had contacts within both academia and public life in Britain, and he had sufficient resources to continue scientific work. Despite these exceptionally positive circumstances, the project of typological historical sociology shifted its focus in a way that strengthens Steinmetz’s (2010) hypothesis that historical sociology in the Weimar sociological tradition came to a dead end because it did not flourish after a forced change of context. Similarly, we saw that the GDR tradition of sociology of work ended with the end of the GDR. One possible cause is that it was already on the brink to petrifying into ritualism already before the demise of the GDR. More important, however, were the harsh West German political and scientific evaluations, which brought it to an end with the change of society. With reference to thesis five, we can confirm that forced shifts of context in a number of countries are an important cause of dead ends in sociology in the 20th century.

In conclusion one can state that sociology, out of reasons of its own logic—both as ‘sociology proper’ and ‘sociology light’—tends to be victimized more often in totalitarian regimes than many other scientific disciplines and therefore, dead ends of scientific lines of thought caused by shifts of political regimes are rather more likely than in other disciplines. We have shown a number of mechanisms that produce systematic tensions between sociology and totalitarianism. There are also a number of indicators that show how sociology prospers better in democratic than in totalitarian regimes. However, this elective affinity between democracy and sociology seems to result from democracy giving sociology more opportunity to follow its scientific aims than any specific preference or sociologists being more democratic in their views than other scientists. A systematic comparison of disciplines in their relation to political regimes was, however, beyond the limits of this study.

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