

### Occupation and social structure in modern Central Europe: some reflections on coding professions

Jarausch, Konrad H.

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

GESIS - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Jarausch, K. H. (1979). Occupation and social structure in modern Central Europe: some reflections on coding professions. *Historical Social Research*, 4(3), 10-19. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.4.1979.3.10-19>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY Licence (Attribution). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN MODERN CENTRAL EUROPE:  
SOME REFLECTIONS ON CODING PROFESSIONS

Historians interested in society, polity, economy and even culture encounter the problem of analyzing the changing social structure of modern Central Europe. However, interpretative inferences from occupations to social structure are often hampered by a number of vexing problems. Developed from mid-19th century Prussian models, German census categories describe economic function rather than social class. Moreover during the course of industrialization the initially distinct status hierarchies of countryside, city and government become increasingly difficult to reconcile. Finally the absence of a universally accepted stratification matrix makes many conclusions incompatible with official tabulations and figures derived by other researchers, thereby limiting verification as well as secondary analysis.1) In order to take a first step towards overcoming this confusion the quantification committee of the Conference Group on Central European History sponsored a workshop on this topic at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in San Francisco on December 28, 1978. The following remarks represent the gist of the discussions between William H. Hubbard (Concordia University-Montreal), Walter Kamphoefner (Universität Münster), Frederick Marquardt (Syracuse University), Brian Peterson (Florida International University) and Konrad H. Jarausch (University of Missouri-Columbia), the session's chairman.

Although far from unambiguous, occupation has become the single most meaningful indicator of stratification in modern society. Understood as a societal role with social, political and financial (economic) consequences, Beruf describes a person's place within both the class structure and the prestige hierarchy of a community while also offering some clues to his relationship to political authority. Its use as an indicator of socio-economic position is enhanced by its ready availability.2) However, its meaningfulness is a function of the degree of specialization in the societal division of labour and the amount of detail contained in the sources used by the researcher. Inadequate specificity of occupational information is a common problem. A classic example is the designation "Kaufmann" which can span the whole range of wholesale-retail trade from petty grocer to large-scale merchant. Another difficulty is the changing skill and status content of specific occupations over time and space as a result of changing technology. Some occupations such as "Kammacher", "Hafner", and "Seifensieder" virtually disappear in the course of the nineteenth century. The livelihood and status of the "Schuster" or the "Kleidermacher" are altered by the coming of the sewing machine and the establishment of factories producing ready-to-wear articles for a large market.

Since what the historian is looking for, after all, are the ways in which occupation affects life-style, economic situation or other dimensions of social behaviour, it is necessary to supplement occupation with other variables in order to enhance its value as a criterion of social organization. The most obvious supplementary data are those that locate the occupations within an economic hierarchy: Income, wealth (capital assets), size of holding, size of firm (number of coresident journeymen), and number of household

servants are probably the most relevant examples. One can use this supplementary data to construct occupational ranking schemes based on the average income or the like associated with specific occupations or occupational groups. Because of the nature of sources involved, these ranking schemes would apply initially to specific communities at specific times, e.g., Graz in 1900, Krefeld in 1888 etc., but the construction of a scale with wider geographical and temporal validity might be feasible on the basis of numerous local studies.3) In using such ranking schemes one must also remember that a number of occupations are related to a person's position in the life cycle. A low-paying occupation that leads nowhere should not be equated with an equally unremunerative job that represents an early phase of a more profitable career pattern.

In order to evaluate more fully the status position of a single occupation or of a group of professions it is important to know as much as possible about other demographic variables, such as sex, age, marital status, residence, religion and education. Any one of these attributes of individuals or professions narrows the interpretative universe and can help in avoiding economic reductionism. Most of these factors appear in clusters with certain occupations. There are typical professions for female, young, unmarried, rural Catholics without higher education such as being a "Magd". Since society consists of multiplicities of roles, analysis ought to take as many of such dimensions into account as possible. After all cross-tabulation and correlation, if not just used unthinkingly (run everything by everything) is one of the blessings of computer technology. Hence, even if the sources sometimes do not permit exact quantitative ranking by income, they often do allow clustering by other social attributes and thereby the ordering of occupational categories into broader status hierarchies, even if individuals may still overlap.4)

Primary sources with data on occupation are numerous but of unequal value. It is virtually impossible to formulate a single judgment regarding their accuracy, reliability, or completeness. A major distinction can be drawn between those sources that give occupational distribution of an aggregated population and those that contain a nominal listing of individual persons and their respective occupations. Examples of the former are the Gewerbetabellen and Fabriktabellen assembled in Prussia between 1810 and the 1860s. Before 1846 they did not include all occupations even in industry. Moreover their purpose was to provide information on the performance of the economy not on the occupational composition of the population; consequently persons were subsumed under the category in which they worked rather than under their actual job or occupation. The question of whether the aggregate occupational data refer to the actual Beruf or to the Betriebstyp must also be kept in mind when consulting what is probably the most widely used source of occupational data, the published censuses. The Austrian census in the nineteenth century, for example, always aggregated according to the Betrieb so that a "Tischler" in a "Lederfabrik" was counted under "Lederindustrie." The discrepancies or skewness created by this method of aggregation are initially slight but increase as the size of the productive unit grows and technology and the division of labour become more sophisticated. These two examples underline the necessity of studying carefully the criteria and methodology used in such sources;5) the researcher should never just blindly copy the rubrics and numbers.

Historians of modern Central Europe are just beginning to exploit nominal lists containing occupational information for social analysis. Prominent examples of this type of source are: manuscript census records, nominal tax lists, city address books, parish registers, police registry files (Melderregister), factory personnel files and university matriculation books. Common to all these is a restriction of the subject population to a specific group or geographic area or both; hence the common basic problem is representativeness and completeness. For analyses of society as a whole the manuscript census is undoubtedly the most useful; but unfortunately census manuscripts are seldom available for Central European communities after the 1860s.6) City address books also purport to contain occupational data for an entire community and they are commonly available; however, one must assess them carefully to discern the criteria for inclusion of persons. Address books often include only heads of households and hence exclude working spouses and children, lodgers and servants; sometimes casual laborers and factory workers are also systematically excluded. A second common difficulty encountered in these sources is the inspecificity of the occupational titles. Here the only remedy is to try to link name in different sources in the hope that the designation can be made more specific. For example, by consulting the city address book it is occasionally possible to discover that a person who lists himself in the manuscript census as Kaufmann is more specifically a Manufakturwarenhändler. The final type of institutional personnel record can be found more frequently because of the Central European mania for bureaucratic documentation. The possibilities appear virtually limitless, ranging from Reichstag deputies and government members to university students and prison inmates. The key difficulty of such prosopographical files is the source and purpose of the information, be it the individual himself or some official body such as the police. Only when the researcher knows the likely of the designation (lowballing in order to get financial aid, highballing in order to brag) can he estimate its accuracy.7)

The classification of occupational titles is the crucial step in translating jobs into socially meaningful categories. In the published results of the official censuses the classificatory scheme has already been decided for the historian and all that can be done here is to point out some pitfalls; these dangers become larger and less avoidable when the researcher uses the condensed data given in the Statistische Jahrbücher and it is highly advisable that one always consult the fuller versions of the data available in the Statistik des Deutschen Reiches or the Österreichische Statistik. There are especially two areas in which the published data, if accepted uncritically could lead to misinterpretations. The first area pertains to the assignment of specific occupations to larger groups or functional economic sectors.8) Among the problems encountered are: 1) Servants are seldom treated as a genuine category of employment on the grounds that their work does not contribute to the national economy. Consequently servants do not appear among the berufstätige Bevölkerung but rather are listed as Angehörige under the occupational category of their employer. 2) Family workers (mithelfende Familienmitglieder) are imperfectly and inconsistently enumerated; this can lead to confusing fluctuations in the labour force from one census to the next especially

in the agricultural sector. 3) Day labourers (Tagelöhner) are sometimes tabulated as a separate occupational category under the service sector and sometimes as members of the branch (Betriebstyp) in which they were employed at the time of the census. 4) Some occupational categories are not always tabulated under the same sector for all censuses. The primary example is the hostelry and restaurant business; in the Austrian census Gastgewerbe is subsumed under industry and crafts in 1869, 1880 and 1890, thereafter under trade and commerce.

The second area of classification difficulty concerns the placement of individuals into social positions within the occupation (Stellung im Beruf). The concept of distinguishing the status of individuals according to their relationship to the employer or the source of their income makes sense in itself but the application of this concept by the census authorities is occasionally contradictory and misleading. Some of the questionable assignments result from genuine methodological dilemmas but others from ideological bias and the desire to minimize the size of the working class. 9) 1) The category of independent or self-employed person (Selbständige) contains not only the self-employed artisan, businessman, or rentier but also the pensioner, the unemployed, the inmate of institutions and the like. 2) The category of salaried employee (Angestellte) includes not only the ranking civil servants and upper-level management personnel but also the lowly postman, state railway worker, etc.

In dealing with nominal listings the researcher can make his own decision on classification. However, this should not be taken as license for eccentricity. Instead of starting with present day sociological categories which presuppose postindustrial structures and are therefore likely to distort earlier patterns significantly, the researcher should begin with the self-perception of historical actors (i.e., checking the qualitative evidence for such keywords as Bildung, Besitz which describe self-identification). The scholar ought to take a very serious look at those classification categories employed by contemporary statisticians, which often reflect normative concepts of a given time and place, if only to make his own results comparable to theirs. The investigator ought to remain as close to the original designation in the source as possible, either by entering the actual job-title in alphabetic form on his data-file or by classifying each profession separately in a completely nominal taxonomy. 10) This closeness and concreteness allows the greatest flexibility for subsequent recoding and does not imprison the interpretation in assumptions which were held at the outset of the research but were subsequently modified. The analyst ought to follow a systematic procedure for transforming the e.g. over 1000 nominal professional designations in a matriculation register for a sample of 7500 students into a) a more limited number of generic professions such as lawyer, estate owner, artisan, white collar employee etc. before collapsing these into b) even broader social strata on the basis of the above mentioned attribute clusters or income hierarchies. The project director ought to keep in mind that the degree of specificity or skewing in the social scale depends upon the analytical purpose. If the goal is to investigate the formation of the working class, great differentiation among various levels of unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled laborers and artisans is necessary, while all middle and upper

middle class categories can be condensed. Finally the student of a certain social process ought to use a multiplicity of codes for such aspects as economic function, status position, political power (to use Max Weber's triad) in order to analyze his data in the multi-dimensionality typical of actual social relationships. Since codes determine interpretation to a large degree, they should be established only after prior sifting of qualitative evidence and the occupational coding ought not to be left to a badly paid student assistant but should be handled by the principal investigator himself.11)

On the basis of their own research on Austrian urban demography (Hubbard), German-American migration (Kamphoefner), Prussian labor history (Marquardt), Weimar electoral and social analysis (Peterson), German student and professional development (Jaraus), the workshop participants reached the following tentative conclusions:

- 1) Although there are great difficulties with the use of occupation in establishing economic class and social status, a careful historian can reach meaningful conclusions about social stratification on the basis of professional designation.
- 2) In order to succeed in this enterprise, the researcher must be rigorously critical of the accuracy, completeness and specificity of his aggregate of individual sources and must compare them as much as possible with others.
- 3) Since the classification of occupational titles is the crucial step in the analysis, the scholar would do well to keep his data file as close to the sources as possible and proceed from contemporary self-perception and older statistical categories systematically to general concepts which are both comparable and logically consistent.
- 4) To cope with the multidimensionality of social space, the analyst ought to employ several coding schemes which allow him to investigate empirically the relationship between economic class, social status and political authority, instead of imposing the links beforehand through coding mechanisms.12)

Because historical questions and methodological approaches are bound to continue to differ, there is no need to demand a universal master code. But greater awareness of the pitfalls of aggregate census statistics or of individual nominal classifications schemes ought to make research results more testable and cumulative. Hence there is great need for further debate on the difficulties of inferring social structure from occupation, if central European quantitative history is to match its promise with actual performance.13)

#### NOTES

1. For one example of the importance as well as the difficulty of the subject see the lead issue of Geschichte und Gesellschaft (1975) and especially the introduction by J. Kocka, Theorien in der Sozial- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vorschläge zur historischen Schichtungsanalyse, pp. 9-42. At the risk of

appearing heretical less general theorizing about social history and more specific attention to research methods would now appear imperative.

2. E.g. W.A. Armstrong, "The Use of Information about Occupation," in E.A. Wrigley, ed., Nineteenth Century Society (Cambridge, 1972), 191-310 and M.B. Katz, "Occupational Classification in History," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 3 (1973), 63-99.
3. See the index of average income in occupational groups in Graz in 1900/03 in Appendix I. Lists of income-tax payers, including name, occupation and tax owed, were occasionally printed in some German cities; see Verzeichnis der Communalsteuerpflichtigen der Oberbürgermeisterei Crefeld, Umlage pro 1891/92 (Crefeld, 1891). Another example of the kind of information available is: "Die Hamburgischen Einkommensteuerzahler nach Geschlecht, Alter, Beruf, Staatsangehörigkeit und Bürgerqualität," Statistik des Hamburgischen Staates, 17 (1895): 49-69.
4. Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Social Transformation of the University: The Case of Prussia, 1895-1914," forthcoming in Journal of Social History (June, 1979).
5. Two very useful articles on the Austrian census are: Christel Durdik, "Bevölkerungs- und Sozialstatistik in Österreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," in: Beiträge zur Bevölkerungs- und Sozialgeschichte Österreichs, ed. by Heimold Helczmanovski München, 1973), 225-66; Johannes Ladstaetter, "Wandel der Erhebungs- und Aufarbeitungsziele der Volkszählungen seit 1869," in: ibid., 267-96.
6. One major exception is the city of Graz whose city archives still contain the manuscript copies censuses from 1850, 1857, 1869, 1880, 1900, 1910. On the exploitation of this source see William H. Hubbard, "Forschungen zur städtischen Haushaltsstruktur am Ende des 19. Jhs. das GRAZHAUS-Projekt," in: Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas, ed. by Werner Conze (Stuttgart, 1977), 283-91.
7. Cf. Bonner Universitätsarchiv, Matrikel 1818ff as well as the published matriculation registers for Tübingen, Göttingen, Erlangen, Heidelberg and Kiel cited in K. H. Jarausch, "Die Neuhumanistische Universität und die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, 1800-1870" forthcoming in Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte.
8. On the problem of comparability in the Austrian censuses see Österreichische Statistik, N.F. 3:1. Cf. also Th. Geiger, Die soziale Schichtung des deutschen Volkes (Stuttgart, 1932) for a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to convert German census categories into social classes.
9. For a description of how the persons were assigned in the Austrian census see Österreichische Statistik, 66:4. See also Tabellen und amtliche Nachrichten über den Preussischen Staat für das Jahr 1849 (Berlin, 1851f.) for the Prussian equivalents and the coding instructions in Statistik des Deutschen Reiches, vols. 2, 111 and 211 (Berufszählungen von 1882, 1895 and 1907).

10. See Appendix I for an example of the coding schemes used in the GRAZHAUS project. A good description of the recommended procedure is also found in: Theodore Hershberg & Robert Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification," Historical Methods Newsletter, 9:2-3 (1976); 59-98.
11. Cf. Appendix II for a multidimensional occupational code for Prussian university student fathers which includes such aspects as estate, economic function, employment status, elite membership and social class. Cf. K. H. Jarausch, "The Sources of German Student Dissent, 1815-1848," in L. Stone, ed., The University in Society (Princeton, 1974), vol. II, 533-69 for an initial attempt.
12. W.H. Hubbard, "Der Wachstumsprozess in den Österreichischen Groß-Städten 1869-1910," in: P. C. Ludz, ed., Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte (Opladen, 1972), 386-418; W. Kamphoefner, "Transplanted Westfalians: Persistence and Transformation of Socioeconomic and Cultural Patterns in the Northwest German Migration to Missouri," Diss., Columbia, Mo., 1978); F. Marquardt, "Sozialer Aufstieg, sozialer Abstieg und die Entstehung der Berliner Arbeiterklasse, 1806-1848," Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 1 (1975), 43-77; B. Peterson, "The Politics of Working-Class Women in the Weimar Republic," Central European History, 10 (1977), 87-111 and K. H. Jarausch, "Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialization: The Case of Students in Imperial Germany," Journal of Modern History, 50 (1978), 609-630.
13. G. Botz, "Quantifizierende Methoden in der Politik- und Sozialgeschichte," Zeitgeschichte, 5 (1977), 72-83, 114-122; and K. H. Jarausch, "Promises and Problems of Quantitative Research in Central European History," Central European History, 11 (1978), 279-289.

#### APPENDIX I

##### Grazhaus Code for Position In Occupation

- 101 Independent owner-entrepreneur in general
- 102 Grossgewerbe und -Industrie, Fabrikant, Gutsbesitzer
- 103 Kleingewerbe und -Industrie, Handwerksmeister
- 104 Großhandel, large-scale retailing and transport, Hotelier
- 105 Small-scale retail trade, shopkeeper, Gastwirt
  
- 106 Independent Professional
- 107 Independent means, Rentier, Privatier
- 108 Annuitant (mostly for females)
- 109 Independent subprofessional (e.g., Hebamme)
- 110 Landlord, Hausbesitzer
- 111 Maler, Bauer, small farmer
- 115 Salaried Employee (Angestellte od. Beamte ohne Näheres)



- 116 Senior supervisory, management or professional positions, university professors, military officers of colonel rank and above
  - 117 Junior supervisory, management or professional positions, Oberschul- und Gymnasialprofessor, military officers up to and including majors.
  - 118 Primarily clerical positions, Volks- und Bürgerschullehrer
  - 119 Unskilled salaried positions, policemen, Amtsdieners
  - 120 Amtspraktikant
- N.B. If person is listed as retired (i.P. ), the initial digit is '2'.
- 125 Skilled worker
    - 126 Foreman in factory, Oberkellner, Zahlkellner
    - 127 Skilled journeyman in factory
    - 128 Skilled journeyman in workshop
    - 129 Handlungscomis
  - 135 Semi-skilled worker, Kellner
    - 136 Vorarbeiter
    - 137 in factory or large-scale operation
    - 138 in workshop or small-scale operation
    - 139 Handlungspraktikant
  - 145 Apprentice
    - 146 in factory
    - 147 in workshop
  - 151 Unskilled worker
    - 152 Vorarbeiter in unskilled occupation
    - 153 factory employment
    - 154 workshop employment
    - 155 general construction labourer
    - 156 casual day labourer (Tagelöhner)
    - 157 non-resident household service
  - 161 Heimarbeiter
  - 165 Family worker (e.g., listed as 'hilft')
  - 171 Supported by family (in general by HHV)
    - 172 Spouse, child over 5 years not incl. in category 176
    - 173 child under age 5
    - 174 Family relative incl. those with 'Privat' as occupation
    - 175 Non-relative
    - 176 Child attending school beyond Volks- or Bürgerschule unless in cat. 185
  - 181 Wirtschafterin, Haushälterin and non-employed offspring
  - 182 Resident household servants and their non-employed offspring or relatives
  - 183 Erzieherin, governess
  - 185 Student (not of HHV's family or residing outside HHV's household)

- 186 Social outcast, prison inmate, prostitute
- 190 Welfare recipient
- 191 No occupation
- 192 Unknown
- 193 Other
- 194 Presently unemployed in occupation listed

N.B.: If data is inadequate or questionable, the initial digit is '9'.

APPENDIX II

Bonn/Göttingen Code for Students'; Father's Profession

- a) political elite:   0. non-elite
  - 1. economic elite
  - 2. governmental elite
  
- b) economic function:
  - 1. Landwirtschaft (A)
  - 2. Handwerk und Industrie (B)
  - 3. Handel und Verkehr (C)
  - 4. Häusliche Dienste (D)
  - 5. Öffentlicher Dienst, freie Berufe (E)
  - 6. Ohne bestimmten Beruf (F)

- 1. Selbständige
- 2. Aufsichts- und Rechnungspersonal
- 3. Sonstige Gehilfen

c) social status

A. estate

- 0. Common
- 1. Von
- 2. Baron
- 3. Graf
- 4. Prinz

B. Occupation:

10. höhere Beamte

- 11. Staat
- 12. Lokal
- 13. Hof
- 14. Justiz
- 15. Kirche
- 16. Medizin
- 17. Erziehung
- 18. Militär
- 19. Forst

20. freie Berufe

- 21. Rechtsanwalt
- 22. Arzt
- 23. Apotheker
- 24. Gelehrter
- 25. Techniker
- 26. Künstler
- 27. Schriftsteller
- 28. Journalist
- 29. Andere

30. Besitzende

- 31. Gutsbesitzer
- 32. Patrizier
- 33. Industrieller
- 34. Großhändler
- 35. Großverkehr
- 36. Leitender Angestellter
- 37. Rentier
- 38. Financier
- 39. Andere

40. Alter Mittelstand

- 41. Bauer
- 42. Verwalter
- 43. Handwerker
- 44. Kleinkaufmann
- 45. Kleinverkehr
- 46. Vorarbeiter
- 47. Bürger
- 48. Andere

50. Neuer Mittelstand

- |     |                  |                          |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------|
| 51. | nichtakademische | Staatsbeamte             |
| 52. | " "              | Lokalbeamte              |
| 53. | " "              | Post- u. Eisenbahnbeamte |
| 54. | " "              | Justizbeamte             |
| 55. | " "              | Kirchenbeamte            |
| 56. | " "              | Erziehungsbea.           |
| 57. | " "              | Militärbeamte            |
| 58. | " "              | Angestellte              |
| 59. | Andere           |                          |

60. Unterschicht

- 61. Tagelöhner
- 62. Dienstboten
- 63. Handwerksgesellen
- 64. Arbeiter
- 65. Hilfsarbeiter
- 66. Soldaten
- 67. Arbeitslose
- 68. Arme
- 69. Andere

Hubbard, William H.  
Department of History  
Concordia University  
7141 Sherbrooke St. West  
Montreal H4B 1R6  
CANADA

and

Jarausach, Konrad H.  
Department of History  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, Missouri 65201  
U. S. A.