

### Recent developments in quantitative history in Austria

Botz, Gerhard

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## QUANTUM DOCUMENTATION CONTINUES THIRD YEAR FOLLOW-STUDY IN FIELD

At present QUANTUM conducts its third survey of research projects within historical social research in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and in other countries insofar German language sources are analyzed. As in 1977, QUANTUM and the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften jointly carry out this survey. Please use the enclosed questionnaire for reporting your own work and send it directly to the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften. The reported research projects will again be published in a special documentation in 1979.

We kindly ask for your help for this documentation. Please distribute the additional questionnaire to other people you know of working in your field of research.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN QUANTITATIVE HISTORY IN AUSTRIA

If quantification in history is considered as the use of figures, statistical tables, graphs etc. - a view for which there is good reason - then it stands to reason that in Austria its tradition is as strong as in other countries. By virtue of its subject matter this pertains particularly to social and economic history. But if quantification in history implies advanced statistical and mathematical techniques and the systematic testing of explicit social-scientific theories, it becomes obvious that to date only few examples exist in Austrian historiography.

As in Germany most Austrian historians of the inter-war period had retired from social history in the broader sense of Western Europe to positions of mere politics and ideology. This happened even before the seizure of power by fascism. It marked the end of some stimulating beginnings in the fields of psychoanalysis, social psychology and political statistics like the well-known study on the unemployed of Marienthal by M. Jahoda, P. Lazarsfeld and H. Zeisel<sup>1)</sup> and the clear sighted analyses of election results done by Robert Danneberg<sup>2)</sup> during the period of the rise of nazism. These social-scientific studies easily could have influenced Austrian political and social historiography in a positive sense. But for years they have not even led to imitations among social-scientists and historians after 1945, apart from one exception: a series of studies on the social history of the workers in Lower Austria,<sup>3)</sup> researched and/or edited by Hertha Firnberg in the early fifties.

Until the beginning of the sixties the conservative view on history excluded even contemporary historiography as a distinctive discipline within the academic world. This also left political science with a chance to develop only inside the law faculties or outside the university and caused heavy initial opposition against sociology.

All this has to be considered when evaluating those social and economic historical studies which at the end of the sixties tried to utilize computers for the first time in Austria.<sup>4)</sup> This is all the more so, if one considers the lack of contact with international research and a considerable methodological delay in the social sciences, another inheritance of the period of fascism. The problem is compounded by the time lag in the development in the computing facilities in Austria.

Strong signs of a break-through of quantitative methods in history did not occur till the 13th Conference of the Austrian Historians at Klagenfurt in 1976. At this meeting this established institution opened for the first and only time one of its sections to the "quantifiers" among social and economic historians. The printed lectures of this section<sup>5)</sup> even today provide useful information on quantitative historical research in Austria.

Since then, quantification in history has made some progress in Austria mainly among some advanced students of history and the younger university teachers, but nevertheless it has not yet become a generally accepted methodology in historical research. Sometimes historians when using quantitative methods and computers are denounced as people who wish to teach their students mathematics rather than history. Sometimes also, it has even been known that their work has been described as bordering on astrology. Indeed, a good deal of the common prejudice against statistics in history, regarding mainly sampling and sample sizes, are still alive<sup>6)</sup>. Hence it is clear that statistical procedures used by quantifying historians need improvement. Information on finished or ongoing quantitative projects and the possibilities of an exchange of methodological experience are still rare and dependent on personal chance. Even historical social-scientific research is aggravated by the lack of a common language.

These restraints on the growing interest in quantitative methods were all the more sensitively registered as a veritable explosion of relevant publications occurred on the international level. As a matter of fact the relative growth of quantification in history in West Germany has been much more impressive than in the United States and in Britain<sup>7)</sup>, and this became relevant to Austria.

In order to reduce the above-mentioned difficulties the Institute of Modern and Contemporary History of the University of Linz and the Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institute of Labour History at Linz have held a workshop, "Introductory Course: Quantification in Modern and Contemporary History", from September 28th to October 1st, 1978. This course was based on close cooperation with "QUANTUM" (Cologne) and the Institute of Applied Statistics of the University of Linz. It was financially supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and organized by Gerhard Botz (Linz).

The intention of this course was not to replace the approved didactic ways of quantification for historians, namely:

- a) introductory classes to statistical methods and computing in the social sciences at nearly every university, summer schools like the one annually held at the University of Essex (Colchester/England) or training courses for historians which belong to the normal curricula at the universities of Bielefeld and West Berlin;
- b) the use of publications like readers, introductory texts, specialized articles and so on;
- c) the advantages of everyday interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and teamwork with social-scientists.

As it was to be expected that the level of knowledge of the participants would differ highly and their interests would hardly be homogeneous the introductory course was designed to attain three different goals at once:

- 1) to provide historians with the basic understanding necessary for the right use of quantitative methods, or least to enable them to follow the three main didactic ways of access to quantification as listed above (it was not intended to enable the participants in these proceedings to apply after four days all the demonstrated techniques and skills);
- 2) to give as well a rough overview on some of the advanced statistical tools and the main problems which can be solved by statistics and computers, and those which cannot;
- 3) to stimulate an exchange of experiences and information among all those who are interested in quantitative historical research in Austria.

The general idea of this introductory course was to approach its aims along the lines of research strategy, demonstrated with the help of a concrete example. This example was provided by Wilhelm Heinz Schröder's (Berlin) study on the collective life histories of the Social Democratic Candidates for the German Reichstag during the last decades of the rule of William II<sup>8)</sup>. Starting at the very elementary level, Schröder's statements were complemented at appropriate stages by explanations of the statistics (measures of central tendency and of dispersion, normal distribution, sampling, contingency problems and regression and correlation) by Gerhard Arminger (Linz). The fact that one of the main lectures in the course was an historian, the other a social statistician, provided for a continuous interdisciplinary exchange of views. In addition, extended evening sessions dealt with preparatory work towards electronic data processing, the use of computers and a general understanding of its function, exemplified in small groups by some batch runs with SPSS and interactive trials with STATPAK on terminals, using mainly the data of Schröder's demonstrator study. During all this, 10 papers were distributed, dealing with basic information, more specialized topics and the individual stages of the course.

Before this condensed three-day course started, the first day of the workshop was devoted to a series of public lectures on basic problems of quantitative and social-scientific methods in historical research. After short opening statements by Karl R. Stadler (Linz) on the meaning of quantification in history and an introduction to the goals of the course by the organizer, Rudolf Wohlgenannt (Linz)

outlined the main steps of, and conditions for, social-scientific research from a theoretical point of view. Friedrich Fürstenberg (Linz) gave a lecture on the time dimension in the social sciences from the vantage point of sociology. He stressed the different kinds of time perception in society and the various types of concepts of social change. He emphasized the need for joint efforts to clarify empirically as well as theoretically the differences in the concept of time within the social and historical sciences and to elaborate a common basis of understanding of that highly important dimension of social reality.

Roderick Floud (London) in his lecture dealt with "Recent Developments in Quantification in History". His main points were: Quantitative methods are not a matter of confession but simply a tool for historians and social scientists, like other methodologies. Quantitative historians should bear this fact in mind when using their own specific terminology which is closely linked to the language of mathematics and statistics. In doing so they would avoid the growth of a reaction and a feeling of hostility against quantification and empirical studies in general, which are not uncommon in the case of sociology and political science. During the next decade, he stated, there will occur a rapid change in data processing technology, relating to both the development of hardware and analytical procedures, which will facilitate not only the work of historians, but, more so, will alter their very concepts (by causing movements from the isolating rectangular punch card pattern to a full relational data-base structure and processing).

At the end of the first day short reports about projects in progress were given, which suggest that there is more quantification going on in Austrian historiography than one would suspect at the first glimpse and even more than was indicated by the QUANTUM documentation 1977<sup>9</sup>). The 40 participants coming from nearly every historical institution in Austria and from three institutes abroad, at the end of the course decided

- 1) to nominate liaison persons for each university,
- 2) to intensify the contacts among quantifying historians and social scientists on the national level as well as in the international area,
- 3) to continue this kind of meeting in the near future and hold the next workshop at Linz in September 1979, devoted mainly to regression analysis and time series,
- 4) to request the Austrian Historians' Association to establish a particular permanent section, "Quantitative Methods in History", at the bi-annual "Historikertag".

Demands for establishing a documentation project on sources and published research in quantitative history in Austria had to be postponed because of the lack of financial and organizational assistance, bearing also in mind the possibilities already offered by QUANTUM.

The lectures given on the first day and the introductory course are being prepared for publication by G. Armingier, G. Botz and W. Schröder in 1979.

Notes:

- 1) Jahoda, Marie, Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Zeisel, Hans, Die Arbeitslosen von Marenthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langdauernder Arbeitslosigkeit (first published: Leipzig 1932), Frankfurt/Main, 1975.
- 2) Danneberg, Robert, Die Wiener Wahlen 1930 und 1932, Vienna 1932.
- 3) Der niederösterreichische Arbeiter. Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsstruktur Niederösterreichs in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, nos. 1 - 5, Vienna (1952 ff.).
- 4) See: Kropf, Rudolf, Zur Auswertung von Urbaren mittels Computers, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 77 (1969), pp. 141 - 144;  
Cerwenka, Peter, Der Münzumsatz zur Türkenzeit - Der Einsatz der Computertechnik in der historischen Forschung, in: Pickl, Othmar (ed.), Die wirtschaftliche Auswirkung der Türkenkriege, Graz 1971, pp. 338 - 345; Cerwenka, Peter, Roth, Paul W., Der Münzumsatz des 16. Jahrhunderts im Raume des östlichen Österreich. Ein Anwendungsbeispiel der elektronischen Datenverarbeitung in der historischen Forschung, Graz 1972.
- 5) Bericht über den dreizehnten Österreichischen Historikertag in Klagenfurt, veranstaltet vom Verband Österreichischer Geschichtsvereine in der Zeit vom 18. bis 21. Mai 1976 (= Veröffentlichungen des Verbandes Österreichischer Geschichtsvereine, 21), (Vienna) 1977, pp. 99 - 204; see mainly the lectures of Herbert Matis, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen quantitativer Analysen in der Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte", and Michael Mitterauer, "Untersuchungen zum Strukturwandel der Familie in Österreich - Probleme der Anwendung quantifizierender Forschungsmethoden".
- 6) See: Botz, Gerhard, Quantifizierende Methoden in der Politik- und Sozialgeschichte, in: Zeitgeschichte, 5 (1977), pp. 72 - 83, 114 - 122.
- 7) Roderick Floud in this lecture at the workshop on Sep. 28th, 1978 at Linz mentioned below.
- 8) See: Schröder, Wilhelm Heinz, Die Sozialstruktur der sozialdemokratischen Reichstagskandidaten 1898 - 1912, in: Herkunft und Mandat, Frankfurt/Main 1976, pp. 72 - 96; Schröder, Wilhelm Heinz, Probleme und Methoden der quantitativen Analyse von kollektiven Biographien, in: Best, Heinrich, Mann, Reinhard (eds.), Quantitative Methoden in der historisch-sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung, Stuttgart 1977, pp. 88 - 125; Schröder, Wilhelm Heinz, Quantitative Analyses of Collective Life Histories, (manuscript 1977, will be published in: Clubb, Jerome, Scheuch, Erwin K. (eds.), Historical Social Research.

- 9) Bick, Wolfgang, Müller, Paul J., Reinke, Herbert, Quantitative historische Forschung 1977. Quantitative History 1977. Eine Dokumentation der QUANTUM-Erhebung, Stuttgart 1977.

Gerhard Botz  
(University of Linz)

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### QUANTUM SESSION

AT THE 1978 CONVENTION OF THE GERMAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

### "CONTENT ANALYSIS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS"

Three papers were held:

Dieter RULOFF (Forschungsstelle für Politische Wissenschaft, Münster-gasse 9, CH-8001 Zürich) gave a broad overview on content analysis, especially using historical material as data basis. In particular, he reported about a recently started research project on "Measurement of Détente in Europe". The paper may be requested from the author.

Reinhard MANN (Institute for Applied Social Research, University of Cologne, 5000 Koeln 41) discussed problems of quantitative document analysis. He focused on limitations of representativity and validity of data obtained by the analysis of large masses of files ("Akten"). The arguments were taken from experience with an ongoing project which tries to identify social determinants of protest behavior and resistance against National Socialism in Germany.

Peter Ph. MOHLER (Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen (ZUMA), B2, 1, D-6800 Mannheim 1) gave a summary of his work about value change in German society from the end of World War I to the beginnings of the seventies. He has analyzed interesting sources: all the "Abitur" essays from a boy's gymnasium in Francfort, written during this period.

There is just published a book by Peter Mohler, entitled:

Abitur 1917-1971.  
Reflektionen des Verhältnisses zwischen Individuum und kollektiver Macht in Abituraufsätzen  
Frankfurt/Main: Verlag Peter Lang 1978

The three papers were commented by Hartmut KAELBLE (Freie Universität Berlin, ZI 6, Hittorfstr. 2-4, 1000 Berlin 33). He asked questions