

Chapter 14

A Journey into Sociology

Horst J. Helle



Has my life so far been a journey into sociology? It has probably been more of a journey into social problems with sociology appearing later as a way of finding answers. And what kind of social problems were those? Many different kinds, but they often had a view on the United States of America from a European perspective as the organizing principle. I am German, and to be German was extremely dangerous when I was young. When allied aircraft deposited their loads of carpet bombing over the city of Hamburg in July of 1943, they could have killed me as they did the other twelve women, children, grandmothers, and aging men who sat in the same cellar with my mother and me. The others died; my mother and I were dug up—strange coincidence? An early lesson in social problems? Why do these aircraft pilots want to kill me? Later, in 1981, I met Ken, a warrant officer in the U.S. Air Force. He had been ordered to bomb German cities in World War II, then was shot down, parachuted to safety, was made a prisoner of war in Germany in the forties, and became a friend of mine in the eighties. He died of cardiac arrest while exercising on his bicycle in the outdoors—one of those Americans brought up to be very strict with themselves?

When president Eisenhower was running for re-election, I traveled to the University of Kansas under an exchange program that was initiated by Senator Fulbright from Arkansas. I came to New York by boat and continued my journey

to Kansas by rail, using the services of the New York Central to Chicago and of the Santa Fe Railway from Chicago to the Midwest. Soon after I arrived there, Hungary rose up against Russian suppression. I remember listening to President Eisenhower's public address explaining to the American people why the U.S. could not send their military force in support of the anti-communist uprising. A terrible massacre occurred in Hungary when the uprising was crushed. After the Hamburg experience as a child, this was my second confrontation with U.S. military politics. In 1972, during my tenure as a sociologist in Vienna, I met a colleague who had managed to get out of Hungary alive, and who recently retired as a sociology professor in Germany. Did all this make me a pacifist? No, probably not, but it contributed to making me a sociologist.

While a graduate student at the University of Kansas I met my wife-to-be, Carolyn Joyce Craft (1935–1999). She became my English tutor as well as the ambassador of the American Midwest in my home. Carolyn had grown up in a Presbyterian family, and her relatives had been supporters of Republican candidates for generations. She, however, had alternative political ideas. When on one occasion upon her insistence I helped her remove Goldwater stickers from her father's car (Carolyn: "I am not about to drive on campus to have my former professors see me with those stickers on the bumper") it caused a major conflict in the family. But that confrontation was minor compared to what happened when—as an exchange student in Germany—Carolyn decided to join the Roman Catholic Church. This alienated her entire Kansas family. Another lesson in social problems? An incentive to study the sociology of religion? Maybe. But it was also an experience in American Studies (And it made me respect and admire Carolyn's courage. She was of course my favorite American).

To leave the University of Kansas with a Master's degree in business administration required that I write a thesis. In order to complete it I interviewed blue-collar workers in a maintenance plant of Trans World Airlines in Kansas City. When I returned to my German *alma mater* in Hamburg, my professor rejected the notion that I could elaborate on that for a Ph.D. dissertation in business administration: "That is not business administration as we do it here, that is sociology!" Having been discouraged from further pursuing my studies in the Hamburg graduate school of business on account of outlandish dissertation interests, I approached the only sociologist who taught in the field at the University of Hamburg at the time: Helmut Schelsky. He had spent the majority of his life in Saxony in the cities of Dresden and Leipzig, and as an academic and former officer in the military spoke, of course, educated German. However, when he quoted United States publications in English, his Saxon past became audible, so one of my closest college friends remarked whispering during Schelsky's lecture: "He speaks Anglo-Saxon!"

While working toward a Ph.D. in sociology at Hamburg University I had very clear career plans: I was going to be a manager in industry, like my father. I viewed sociology as a preparation for personnel work or for finding employment in marketing and advertising. A dissertation on blue-collar workers would therefore be appropriate. I had already written the first chapters of my would-be dissertation, when Schelsky's assistant called: "Come into the office, the boss wants to see you!" Schelsky revealed to me that a prominent member of the employers' association of the ports of Bremen had contacted him about a study on longshoremen. Bremen

dock work was reeling under poor human relations and high accident rates and the operations were falling behind in Bremen's competition with Rotterdam in the Netherlands. I had just sent a folder to Schelsky with information about myself asking him to support an application for scholarship money. In that application I had stated that I studied the literature and language of the Netherlands, so Schelsky correctly concluded that I spoke Dutch. Being able to interview dockworkers in Dutch was crucial to conducting that part of the research project that was to be carried out in Rotterdam in the Netherlands and in Antwerp in Belgium. Schelsky suggested during our conversation that I should change my dissertation, or rather, give up what I had intended to do so far! I was reluctant, so he suggested simply that I think about it, and after a day or two I realized that I really had no choice if I wanted his continued support. So I scrapped what I had written, bought heavy boots (and everything else one wears to minimize the likelihood of getting killed while working on the docks), and started being a longshoreman. In the course of one year I interviewed 500 dock workers, about 100 each in Hamburg, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Rotterdam, and Antwerp (in that order), and this, my re-education of a middle class college boy, is—I believe today—what made me a sociologist. But I did not know that at the time.

Being a Ph.D. candidate in Hamburg I had been exposed to Schelsky's teaching, and maybe more importantly, to the eventful sessions of his graduate seminar. He had key figures come visit and give guest presentations, among them Gehlen, Dahrendorf, a theologian who later became a bishop in the Lutheran Church, and Everett C. Hughes from Chicago, who came with his wife. Both, Everett and Mrs. Hughes spoke German (!), which saved Schelsky from having to resort to his "Anglo-Saxon". I had, of course, no idea at the time, that I would eventually meet these sociologists again much later.

I received my Ph.D. without too much trouble, and considered my graduation a final farewell to academic life. I was successful in qualifying for the management training program of Unilever Germany, and spent two years being sent to various departments of that international company. While I was stationed in Münster to drive around the countryside in a small truck selling margarine and cream cheese, I felt bored after work, and got myself accepted to the graduate seminar of Professor Joseph Höffner, a priest, Catholic theologian, and expert in the social teachings of the church, who later was to become bishop and cardinal. But my stay in Münster was abruptly ended by the premature birth of my oldest son, Paul, who needed only eight months of pregnancy to (almost) fully mature. This triggered a visit from my in-laws in Kansas, but it was not a happy occasion, not even for Carolyn, because their stay included Paul's baptism, which, alas, did not take place in the Presbyterian Church.

Once my two years as management trainee were complete, Unilever Germany gave me a position in marketing in their soap and detergent division. I tried to explain to myself that my growing discontent was because of a lack of familiarity with the work environment, because of narrow-minded colleagues, and because of a general impatience on my part, but it became more and more obvious to me that I would not be happy in the long run were I to continue working in business. So I started looking for employment alternatives, and interviewed for the position of program director

in the America House Hamburg. In the meantime Schelsky had accepted a position at Münster University, and Heinz Kluth had become his successor in Hamburg. Kluth was a former student of Schelsky's, and we knew each other well from the graduate seminar sessions. Kluth had two positions of assistants to fill, and he was in touch with two very good men who wrote excellent Ph.D. dissertations. He hired one of them, and then offered the second opening to me. I gladly accepted, and years later, I asked him why he did not hire the second very good candidate at the time. He replied that he did not want to have two Catholic assistants work for him, and since both of the original applicants were members of that church, he took one and then reserved the other slot for me. "But I am a Catholic too, did you not know that?" He was surprised. "You were born in Hamburg, and your first name is Horst! That seemed sufficient indication to the contrary to me," Kluth replied. Then he added: "But really I do not care which church you belong to." Another lesson? I got a university position by mistake! Being German almost killed me as a child, being a Catholic almost locked me out of a job as a young adult!

I started teaching sociology as a non-tenured assistant at Hamburg University in May of 1962. I remember struggling with the books by Parsons, trying to translate his texts into German and wondering why his sentences were as long as is common in German academic writing. Then David and Evelyn Riesman came to visit my department. None of the tenured faculty felt that their English was good enough to host them, so they delegated that task to me, and of course Carolyn and I felt honored and were delighted. We found the Riesmans to be the most sensitive and wonderful people. To my surprise David asked me to take them to the mass graves of the victims of the carpet bombings in 1943. I did, and David stood for the longest time, looking at the large area in which the 30,000 persons were interred in the Central Cemetery in Hamburg-Ohlsdorf. Then he said: "Now I know why I did my teach-ins against carpet bombing." I have been a lazy reader of sociological literature, but knowing the author well, it motivated me to read *The Lonely Crowd* (Riesman 1950) and the collection of essays *Individualism Reconsidered* (Riesman 1954). David Riesman was a lawyer by training. He shared that background, of course, with Max Weber. Later in his life Riesman occasionally appeared in court as an attorney for small colleges that had a long tradition of educating males or females, respectively, but who were sued by feminists, claiming gender discrimination. Riesman on his own could not hold back the tide, but he was deeply sad that many of those traditional colleges went bankrupt as a result of legal battles. He was, among many other things, an expert in educational institutions and a much sought-after advisor when new universities were founded.

David Riesman was close to the Quakers. He loathed violence. He gave me a manuscript entitled "Is American Society Violent by Nature?" which I translated into German and have now made available on my website.¹ He also gave me a manuscript of a sermon he preached at Harvard chapel. I should have kept closer track of these documents, and I regret now not to be able to retrieve them. But I do remember one line of reasoning clearly that referred to the origin of racist ideology. Riesman argued that slavery was common in the southern United States and also in many

1 See <http://www.horst-helle.de/riesmand.htm>.

areas of Latin America. In the latter case the slave owners were usually Catholics, which according to Riesman had to mean that they knew full well that it was a sin to have slaves, and that humans tended to be sinners, but had a chance to repent and better themselves. The southern United States, on the other hand, was inhabited by Protestants of the kind who tended to argue "Since we have a tradition of doing this, it must be the right thing to do!" Riesman then considered the references to slaves held by the biblical patriarchs and to slavery in ancient Greece and ancient Rome as ideological concepts for the justification of slavery, and he was of the opinion that racist doctrine resulted from that.

Since using Parsons' texts proved to be a burden on my students, I was happy when I discovered that Peter I. Berger had published his *Invitation to Sociology* in 1963. Berger's take on the social problem of racism as spelled out in that book struck me as being consistent with Riesman's interpretation. Also, Berger offered sociological insights, which took me back to my experience in Kansas. He points out that the "Black Belt" and the "Bible Belt" occupy geographical areas in the United States which largely overlap (Berger 1963: 113). I remember the barber in Kansas who explained that he could not cut the hair of African-Americans because he did not have the special tools it takes to cut curly hair. Berger writes in *Invitation to Sociology* that the conflict over the question of slavery isolated the ultraconservative fundamentalist Protestant groups from a wider exchange of Christian ideas, and as a result kept them from developing. He is also of the opinion that the fundamentalist Protestant churches concentrate on private sins, mainly on sexual offences, and leave infringements against very basic Christian principles in public matters out of consideration. As a result, a politician is not allowed to have sex with his secretary, but he is free to wage war. In Berger's opinion this religious attitude is functional in "maintaining the social system of the American South" (Berger 1963: 114). Berger also made reference to David Riesman, although not in this particular context.

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) gave me a fellowship to do research at the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago during the second half of 1966 and the first half of 1967. This extended stay in the U.S.A. gave me an opportunity to resume contact or meet sociologists who would greatly influence me in the following years. In New York City I meet with Peter Berger. He showed me to a nearby bookstore and we took a fresh copy of *The Social Construction of Reality* from the shelf (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In Columbia, Paul Lazarsfeld took time to see me for a brief interview. He pointed out that I ought to study the writings of Hans Freyer. In Brandeis University, Kurt Wolff kindly made an appointment with me. I introduced myself to him in English, but he spoke German during our encounter and created an atmosphere of a German university. We talked about Georg Simmel, whom Wolf had translated and introduced to teaching in the United States. In Santa Barbara, California, I met Tamotsu Shibutani, one of the most influential students of Herbert Blumer. Since I had been given my fellowship to study the concept of the symbol in sociology, I was going to Chicago to find the Chicago School of symbolic interaction. But when I arrived in Chicago, that school had already disappeared and its former representatives had scattered around the country. Shibutani in California was one example. But I also met again with Everett Hughes, who had visited Schelsky's graduate seminar in Hamburg, and

whose kindness during our second encounter left a deep impression. But he was no longer with the Chicago department, which he had dominated for so many years.

Sociology at the University of Chicago had moved in the direction of objectivism. The school of symbolic interaction was gone. I met with Peter Blau before he also left Chicago (and grew a beard). The department heads were Morris Janowitz and after him Nathan Keyfitz, both very friendly, but in no position to advise me with my project. In those months, I met Donald N. Levine. He had retreated from the department and concentrated on the college of the University of Chicago. From him I learned that Parsons knew the work of Simmel quite well, and that Parsons did not ignore Simmel because he was unfamiliar with him, but rather because he could not integrate Simmel's ideas into his own system. There was one professor in the sociology department with whom I managed to establish an ongoing relationship: Edward Shils. He taught a seminar on the sociology of the university which I attended regularly. I was struck by a number of parallels between the style of Shils and that of Schelsky. Both talked most of the time themselves rather than listen to less intelligent graduate students, both had a cigar in their mouths (leaving it up to the people in attendance to wonder how much of the cigar they smoked and how much they chewed). Both struck me as utterly well informed. In addition, Shils showed an interest in Schelsky and asked me about him when he learned that I had been his student.

The stay in Chicago and work during the months following back in Hamburg resulted in my book on "Sociology and the Symbol" (*Soziologie und Symbol*, Helle 1969) and in getting my post-doctoral degree, the *Habilitation* as *Privatdozent*, which is the license awarded by a faculty to privately teach a course—sociology in my case. This does, however, not include a position, but is a necessary credential for being appointed to a tenured professorship. To make money for my family and myself I returned to the pre-Chicago job as assistant that had been given to me by mistake. But in my new academic status, I was now asked to give the lecture "Introduction to Sociology" in a large lecture hall with an audience of several hundred students. My students could, of course, benefit from what I had learned in the United States. A small but very loud minority had adopted from America what started in Berkeley as the free speech movement. Their representatives approached me after my lecture and informed me that I had the wrong consciousness not realizing that I should fight on the side of the labor class since I too was merely a wage earner. For them to decide whether my consciousness was right or wrong meant to me simply that they grossly ignored my intellectual autonomy.

In 1969 I was called to succeed Arnold Gehlen as professor at the Aachen Institute of Technology (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen). I looked forward to possibly co-teaching seminars with him, but he had been attacked by leftist students as a fascist, and did not want to take any more of that. As a result, my contacts with him occurred in private meetings, and when he handed over the sociology chair and library to me he remarked: "I have always tried to keep this as small as possible!" Like Gehlen before me, I received one secretary, one assistant, and a very good small library. Gehlen did not think much of colleagues who tried to show off the number of people they had working for them. He was very knowledgeable of American pragmatism and knew more about George Herbert

Mead than was typical in Germany at that time. He was interested in what I had learned in Chicago and he encouraged me to pay more attention to Mead. I got involved in organizing the celebrations that were to be held at the centenary of the Aachen Institute of Technology, and upon my request Gehlen chaired a work group with international participation.

After only three years in Aachen I accepted a position in Vienna, Austria, at the venerable old Universität Wien. There too—as previously in Aachen—teaching was overshadowed by student unrest. When the surprising invitation came to join the Department of Sociology at the Universität München, it made my colleagues in Vienna unhappy, but it meant getting back to Germany and teaching in one of the best schools in the humanities. I was appointed to a new position, so I was nobody's successor in Munich. During the many years of active research and teaching there (1973–2002) I was host to a large number of international visitors, most of them from North America and from Asia. Among them were Jeffery Alexander, Reinhard Bendix, Phillip Hammond, Talcott Parsons,² Edward Shils, Neil Smelser, Ralph Turner, and Kurt Wolff. Needless to say, considerable influence on my thinking as a sociologist was derived from these contacts. I found it to be of great importance to have been able, during visits to the U.S.A. as well as during encounters in Germany, to discuss in German with American colleagues texts written by German authors. This applies to my contacts with Martin Albrow from London, with Peter Berger (whose Viennese accent we jokingly identified as not German but Austrian), with Reinhard Bendix, Barbara Heyl, Everett Hughes, Carl W. Roberts, and Kurt Wolff. Bendix told me on one occasion that the generation of American sociologists who mastered the German language will die out and that thereafter, German authors cannot expect to be noticed in the U.S.A. unless their books are translated into English.

The year 1981 brought me back to the U.S.A. for several months during a sabbatical. My family and I lived in Ventura, California, a location that enabled me to stay in touch with the campuses of the University of California in Los Angeles as well as in Santa Barbara. In Los Angeles I met with Ralph Turner who introduced me to Harold Garfinkel and recruited me to organize and chair a session for the Tenth World Congress of the International Sociological Association (ISA) to be held in Mexico City in 1982. Turner was then vice president of the ISA and needed all the help he could get. He wanted two theory sessions in Mexico, one on macro theory to be chaired by S.N. Eisenstadt, and the other on micro theory, which he wanted me to prepare. Among the presenters whom I succeeded in persuading to participate were—in the preparatory stage—Harold Garfinkel and Erving Goffman. Garfinkel did not make it to the meetings, and Goffman (1922–1982) informed me that he had been diagnosed with stomach cancer.³ I never met him face to face, but we had telephone and air mail contact prior to his death.

Overall the Mexico meetings went well. I got to know and appreciate Eisenstadt, and we agreed to publish the papers from the sessions we had organized. In order to work on that project in detail, Eisenstadt and I met in Bad Homburg, near Frankfurt

² A note about Parsons' last day at Munich can be read on my website; see <http://www.horst-helle.de/parsonsd.htm>.

³ See <http://www.horst-helle.de/goffmand.htm>.

am Main in Germany several months later. It so happened that Shils was in the same hotel, and so Eisenstadt, Shils, and I had the most remarkable conversations over dinner and late into the night in Bad Homburg. The two volumes that were based on the Mexico meetings finally appeared in 1985 (Eisenstadt and Helle 1985; Helle and Eisenstadt 1985).

In my work on the sociology of the family I had noticed the writings of Joseph Ratzinger on marriage. He pointed out that in the history of Christianity, specifically in the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Churches there was more flexibility in dealing with divorced Christians than in the Roman Catholic Church. Until 1977 Ratzinger was a professor (and for a while also Vice President) at the University of Regensburg. Thus, from the time I was appointed in Munich until 1977, Ratzinger and I both worked at Bavarian universities and had overlapping interests in religion and pastoral work. I had also noticed that Ratzinger received his post-doctoral degree, the *Habilitation*, at my university on the basis of a thesis on Saint Bonaventura, which interested me for the somewhat ridiculous reason that I had been in Ventura in California, and had learned then, that the official name of that settlement was *City of San Bonaventura*. According to university lore, the Roman Catholic faculty in Munich almost failed Ratzinger, because his theological ideas were too progressive for the taste of some of its members. Later Ratzinger was well liked by his students and highly respected for his publications, so when he, a simple priest with no hierarchical history, was to the surprise of the public appointed archbishop of Munich, the news was received with regret by the academic community and interpreted as a sad loss to theological research.

The University of Munich needed an additional position for a full professor of sociology in order to cope with the rising number of students in that field. It so happened that at that time the state of Bavaria entered into negotiations with the Vatican in Rome to change the treaty Bavaria had with the Vatican, and in the course of that renewal, a Catholic chair of sociology was established which could only be filled with the consent of the archbishop. We, the Munich sociologists, had no experience with that procedure, so, having been in touch with Ratzinger prior to his becoming archbishop, I was delegated to visit him in his residence to discuss finding a sociologist whom Ratzinger was not going to veto. It became clear to me that someone who had spent his entire career teaching in German universities was an easy partner who would have no problem understanding what goes on in faculty meetings. It was my impression that he would have preferred to continue his life as a scholar, and that may still be the case now that he is Pope.

In 1988 my Munich team and I organized a summer school in interpretive sociology for which the English sociologist Paul Atkinson invented the name Organization for Advanced Studies in Interpretive Sociology (OASIS). I became more and more interested in alternative approaches in sociological theory and posted information on important authors on my website for my students to use.⁴ We had a separate list of names for those who were still alive at the time, and only transferred them to the "Dead Sociologists Society" once they had died. Of this group, Friedrich Tenbruck and Tamotsu Shibutani were present at our OASIS convention in Munich

⁴ See <http://www.horst-helle.de/deads.htm>.

in 1988. Both of them made the most memorable contributions in their lectures and discussions. Tenbruck proved to be incredibly knowledgeable on Max Weber, and Shibutani was the authority on George Herbert Mead. We published the papers that were prepared for this conference in English as *Verstehen and Pragmatism: Essays in Interpretative Sociology*, and some colleagues still use this book in their teaching (Helle 1990).

It was because of my interest in Mead that in 1989 I spent several months at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, because there I was close to another American, Harold Orbach who, like Shibutani, is an expert on Mead. Orbach invited me to Kansas State, and I liked the idea also, because I had been a student at KU. I visited Kansas State in between semesters, so back in Munich few people noticed that I was gone. Then at the beginning of the academic year 1990–1991 I had a sabbatical, which enabled me to accept an invitation from Richard Coughlin to spend a semester at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. There, as previously in Manhattan, Kansas, I was in contact with colleagues from the department of cultural anthropology to learn about the original religions of Native Americans. In Albuquerque I had a Navaho in my class on the sociology of religion, who contributed directly toward that goal. The most significant influence on my orientation from cultural anthropology came from Elman R. Service, whom I met on several occasions in Santa Barbara, and whom I invited to Munich University, where we spent a semester co-teaching. His “law of evolutionary potential” has made me look at cultural and political change from a new and very fruitful perspective.

My travels throughout my career have been oriented towards the West. Most of the time away from Germany, I spent in the U.S.A. But that changed in 1995 when I went to Asia for the first time. Visits by colleagues from Japan and South Korea in Munich prompted invitations by scholars who wanted to return the hospitality they felt my team had shown them while they were in Munich. In 1996 I gave a lecture to teachers and students of sociology at Peking University (which still is known by that name, even though the city is now called Beijing). I tried to use the sociology of knowledge to explain why certain schools of theory became dominant at certain times and later were replaced by another mainstream approach. I used Germany as an example to illustrate why Marxist sociology was dominant there in the seventies and eighties, and why it was on the retreat in the nineties. This had tacit but obvious implications to the state of the discipline in mainland China. After the end of the question period, an elder Chinese colleague dressed in a Mao-style uniform took me aside, so we could talk in private. He said that China had spent too much time taking over Western ideas like those from Hegel, Marx, Lenin, and others. It was time, he said, to return to China’s own old traditional texts! He told me that he thought that I would understand his point and agree with him, and I did. And since then, I believe, that is (in part) what is happening in China.

In Seoul, South Korea, I was a guest at Sogang University several times in the late nineties, and the intense contact with Korean Shamanism, by witnessing (video taping) a ritual that lasted for two days, I internalized a totally new approach to religion. This experience has influenced my teaching the sociology of religion, where I emphasize the Meadian concept of *taking the role of the other* in the sense that you can have no notion of what goes on in the ritual of a religion that is not your own

unless you at least try to take the perspective of those who *believe* in what is going on. The Korean experience also taught me that it is pointless to try to re-introduce Shamanism in a culture in which that tradition is no longer alive as it is in several cultures of Asia. Mao had thousands of Shamans executed and still could not root out Shamanism in China, because they are the *pontifices* who help build a bridge to the deceased loved ones.

My team and I had spent years in Munich collecting remote and little known texts by Georg Simmel on religion. I wanted to show the discipline that Simmel must be recognized as a sociologist of religion. Having first published a collection of Simmel's work on religion in the German original (Helle 1989), one of the greatest challenges in my career was then to translate those texts into English. This was initiated by Phillip E. Hammond, a sociologist, a professor of religious studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara and a past president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. A three-way-contract was negotiated between the Society, Yale University Press, and I to have the project materialize. It is due primarily to the devotion and patience of Ludwig Nieder in Munich, and Susan Abel, then at Yale Press, that the book finally appeared (Helle and Nieder 1997). Working through Simmel's texts on religion with the unusual intensity that was required in the course of this project helped me find additional conceptual tools for the study of religions. In April of 1996, Gary T. Marx and I organized an International Conference on "Georg Simmel's Actual and Potential Impact on Contemporary Sociology" in Boulder, Colorado, which was attended by the most noted Simmel scholars, including Kurt Wolff and Donald Levine.

The final years in Munich prior to my retirement were the most fruitful ones, also with regard to the relationship with the other senior members of my department. Jutta Allmendinger and Norman Braun joined and brought with them their extended exposure to the most distinguished higher education in America: Allmendinger has a Ph.D. from Harvard, and Braun has one from the University of Chicago. In addition, we recruited Armin Nassehi, the son of a German mother and a father from Iran. A devoted disciple of Luhmann, Nassehi makes sure our students know all about systems theory, and his international family background also makes him the professor of choice for our foreign students. Finally, our department shares with the London School of Economics the privilege of counting Ulrich Beck among their own, probably one of the most widely read sociologists at the present time. These and other colleagues, including many in other departments and in the two divinity schools (Lutheran and Catholic), plus the many years of tenure in Munich made it hard to retire in 2002. The traditional legal status of *emeritus professor* (which, unfortunately, the German state legislatures have abandoned because they felt it was old-fashioned) gives me the rights and privileges of a professor without being subject to any duties (except, of course, good behavior). I have therefore continued to teach, but only the courses I enjoy.

Most recently, I was invited to spend time as a guest professor at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, U.S.A. This is the site where Winston Churchill, upon the invitation of President Truman, delivered his Iron Curtain Speech in 1946, and I was there to witness the sixtieth anniversary celebrations of that event. It was like a homecoming to the American Midwest for me. When I was an international student

(in those days we were referred to as “foreign students”) at the University of Kansas, I was included in a group of students from all over the world who were invited to visit then ex-President Truman in Kansas City. During that visit, Truman was verbally attacked by a student from the Near East for having allowed the State of Israel to be founded on—what the student referred to as—Palestinian territory. Much later I shared long debates with American friends during the war in Vietnam. Now I am back in the United States during the war in Iraq. It seems that some problems simply stay with us in spite of the promising progress that sociology and humanity in general have made over the decades.

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