

Sigrid Wadauer

Terms and Possibilities of Self-Employment (Austria, 1920s and 1930s).

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In twentieth-century Austria, the share of self-employed in the workforce was declining. Yet, this was not a necessary and linear development. Nor did it concern all trades in the same way. Moreover, in the first decades of the century, this share was not small. According to the 1934 census, about 21 percent of the workforce (*Berufsträger*) was self-employed, including almost 25 percent of all economically active men and almost 14 percent of all economically active women. The share of self-employed was high in agriculture, in many crafts, and particularly in sales, where 40 percent were self-employed.¹ The number of small or one-man businesses was high,² and competition was fierce.³ However, the categories of the census did not refer to homogeneous and clearly distinguished groups. Self-employment could be performed and perceived in quite different ways. It could be a consequential step in an occupational career. It could – perhaps at the same time – be a possibility to deal with difficulties of finding employment or with limited employability.⁴ Yet, starting one's own business was not always easy at all.

This paper deals with struggles over the possibilities and terms of taking on a trade. It focusses on trades with little or no requirements with respect to formal qualification, capital, or location. I am considering a variety of trades which were performed on streets, from door to door or in changing marketplaces: various forms of sales (as peddler, street vendor, or travelling market merchant, salesman...), various trades and services (crafts like knife-grinding, basket-making, tinkering etc.; running errands, shoe-shining, collecting, busking, and so forth.) These occupations were often seen as similar, at the same time they were subject to different, more or

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¹ *Die Ergebnisse der Österreichischen Volkszählung vom 22. März 1934*, pp. 165, 228, 227, 232, 230. See also Bruckmüller, "Zur Sozialstruktur Österreichs", pp. 35-49.

² See, for example Eminger, *Das Gewerbe*, pp. 20, 22; Stiefel, "Im Interesse des Handels", p. 44.

³ See Schwiedland, *Der Handel*, p. 35; Krobatsch, "Die Krise in der Kaufmannschaft", p.10.

⁴ See, for example Williams et al., "Evaluating Competing Theories of Street Entrepreneurship".

less restrictive legal regulations. They were performed occasionally or permanently, with or without permit or in violation of the regulations. The difference between legal and illicit earning is not always evident at first sight; nor was the distinction between different trades in practice. Hence, it is anything but easy to determine the quantitative amount of people trying to make a living in such trades.⁵ Contemporary writings often evoke an increase and prevalence of such trades which were regarded as dishonest and as scandalously lucrative competitors to “sedentary” trades. At the same time, such trades could be seen as beggarly occupations or as an avoidance of honest work in lieu of a regular trade. They were seen as unregulated and hardly controllable practices, prone to fraud, tax evasion, fencing stolen goods, begging or vagrancy. Frequently, fierce restriction or even abolition of such trades was requested, claims which often also manifested anti-Semitism, nationalism, or hostility towards people seen as strangers, Gypsies or Yenish.⁶ Given this broad critique and propaganda, it might escape one’s attention that – despite it all – people strived for and performed such trades, justifying them not only as inevitable but also as necessary and useful.

Most commonly, trades without fixed location have been regarded as marginal, beggarly, as undesirable, irregular, as symptom of crisis or as traditional and doomed. In no way do they seem to be a positive or regular part of economy in the twentieth century. Accordingly, they do not seem to belong to established fields of research: neither to the history of trades and commerce⁷ nor to the history of work.⁸ Although research on itinerant trades points out to the economic importance of such activities in early modernity, this assessment does not seem to apply for the twentieth century.⁹ Several research papers deal with travelling salesmen in late nineteenth and early twentieth century from the perspective of economic history.¹⁰ But all the other trades are almost exclusively described as makeshifts and as somehow typical occupations in the context of histories of poverty, the history of Jews¹¹, Gypsies¹² or Yenish.¹³ Only recently,

⁵ See Wadauer, “Betteln und Hausieren verboten?“, pp. 182f.

⁶ See Wadauer, “Ins Un/Recht setzen“.

⁷ See, for example, Spiekermann, *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft*.

⁸ See Mikl-Horke, “Arbeit“, p. 29.

⁹ See, for example, Oberpenning, *Migration und Fernhandel*; Reininghaus (ed), *Wanderhandel*.

¹⁰ See, for example, Rossfeld, “Handlungsreisende“; Bartolomei et al. “Travelling Salesmen“; Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman*; French, “Commercials, Careers, and Culture“; Strasser, “The Smile that Pays”.

¹¹ See, for example, Reininghaus, *Wanderhandel*, p. 33. Keller, “Behördliche Einschränkungen des Hausiererhandels“.

¹² See, for example Mayerhofer, *Dorfzigeuner*, pp. 128, 135; Gesellmann, *Die Zigeuner im Burgenland*, p. 8.

¹³ Pescosta. *Die Tiroler Karrner*.

due to the erosion of standard-employment and the increase of so called atypical earnings in European countries, precarious forms of self-employment have received more and different interest.¹⁴ At the same time, global labour history and studies on the informal economy have illustrated the normality of a broad variety of ways to make a living.¹⁵ In this context, the self-employed were described variously: as an endangered middle class or a (lumpen-)proletarian form of self-employment.¹⁶ In studies on the informal economy¹⁷ they were also seen as plucky micro-entrepreneurs¹⁸ and as petty capitalists.¹⁹ However one assess these earnings, it became obvious that assumptions about the automatic decline of self-employment and of trades without permanent location were inaccurate.²⁰

Ambiguous and changing earnings

Life histories or trade records allow researchers to reconstruct the manifold and often changing ways in which people made a living in the course of their lives: as wage earners, self-employed, in paid and unpaid, permissible or illegal ways. A good example is provided by the various earnings of Josef Had.²¹ This case also allows us to illustrate the difficulties of categorizing earning practices. According to the trade records of the municipality of Salzburg, Josef Had, born in 1880 in Rudolfstadt near Budweis, was a mason. In 1914 he received a permit to collect rags for a factory in Salzburg. In January 1920, he obtained another permit to work as a travelling salesman. This permit – issued on request of a local company for agricultural machines and equipment – allowed him to visit costumers and take orders on account of the firm, presumably on commission. This occupation might appear as much more profitable and

¹⁴ See, for example, Bologna, *Die Zerstörung der Mittelschichten*.

¹⁵ See, for example, Van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, pp. 17-37.

¹⁶ See, for example, Sombart, *Sozialismus und soziale Bewegung*, p. 7; idem, *Der modern Kapitalismus*, Vol. 2, p. 351; Geiger, *Die soziale Schichtung*, p. 85; Denning, “Wageless Life“, pp. 79-97.

¹⁷ On this concept in general see, for example, Hart, “Informal Income Opportunities; Castells et al. “World Underneath”; Smith, “Overview: The Informal Economy and the State“, pp. 189-199; Morales, “Peddling Policy”.

¹⁸ DeSoto quoted by S. Bell et al., “Sidewalk Informality“, p. 223. On the difference between entrepreneurship and self-employment see Luks, „Prekarität“, pp. 52f., 57.

¹⁹ Smith, “Overview: The Informal Economy and the State“, p. 189.

²⁰ In many countries such practices did not disappear but rather increase in the 20th und 21th centuries, for various reasons though. See, for example, Kusakabe, *Policy Issues on Street Vending*; Cross, “Street Vendors”; Cross et al. (eds), *Street Entrepreneurs*; Graaff et al. (eds), *Street Vending*; Bromley, “Street Vending and Public Policy”; Mathews et al., “Introduction: what is Globalization from Below?”.

²¹ Archive of the City of Salzburg [hereafter AStS], Gewerbeamt, Ih 1920, Josef Had, 5403. (I do not use full names for reasons of data protection); AStS, Gewerbeamt, 1a1, 1926, Josef Had, 4456; 1a1 1936, Josef Had.

respectable than working as a ragman. Organizations of travelling salesmen represented their members as modern, qualified promoters of economy and progress.²² Yet, Josef Had's record does not really fit into this picture. An official report described him as a careless widowed father, whose children were frequently picked up by the police for begging and homelessness.²³ It is not possible to reconstruct whether and how long Josef Had travelled on behalf of the agricultural machines company. The withdrawn or declined permit to do so was included in the official records. Three months later, in March 1920, Had received a permit to buy wool scraps at the request of a local factory. In November of the same year, he also applied for a peddling license, pointing out that he was unable to work as mason due to war injuries and rheumatism. His earnings, he maintained, were too small; in the winter, he had rarely income. He pointed out to his clear record, his good reputation, his citizenship, and that he had lived in Salzburg since his childhood. This application, however, was declined with reference made to the political aim of protecting stable trades, the intended restriction of peddling and the prohibition of peddling within the town of Salzburg.²⁴ In 1923, Josef Had received a permit as travelling market merchant. In 1926, one finds a notation in his record that he illegally made a trade of cleaning sidewalks and clearing snow, a service he solicited via newspapers ads and placards. One day after this complaint, however, Josef Had registered the free trade (or *freies Gewerbe*) of cleaning sidewalks at the trade office.²⁵ His criminal record – which now included four convictions between 1923 and 1926 for public defamation, selling of dubious goods, and bodily harm – presented no obstacle here. In 1936, the 56-years-old Had applied for a permit to sell flowers within the town, reasoning that he could no longer perform his trade of a travelling market merchant that he did not wish to rely on his wife.²⁶ However, Had did not provide the necessary documents and fees, and thus the proceeding remained open. There is no way to reconstruct how else Josef Had might have tried to make a living, either legally or illegally, or how he might have found support by others.

The ambiguity and diversity of income and livelihood in this example and the various degrees of dependency on companies makes it difficult to categorize the practices. The example also shows that in some cases it was quite easy to attain a permit, whereas in others it was not. To

²² For example, “Messen und reisende Kauflente“, pp. 1f; “Festversammlung der Gremialkrankenkasse“ pp. 24-28.

²³ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih 1920, Josef Had, 5403: Sicherheitswache, 21.1.1920.

²⁴ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih 1920, Josef Had, 5403.

²⁵ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1 1926, Josef Had, 4456.

²⁶ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1 1936, Josef Had.

register a free trade took little effort, yet one had to raise the money to pay the fees and become a member of the trade association. By contrast, the application process for a permit to work as peddler or shoe-shiner could be accompanied by a remarkable bureaucratic effort encompassing numerous obstacles and restrictions.²⁷ In any case, however, the authorities were hardly to be avoided in such a historical context. Particularly in a town of this size (with about 40,000 inhabitants in 1934)²⁸ face to face encounters with police seem rather likely, as one can conclude from trade and police records. Someone performing a trade without a permit had to deal with the risk of being caught and fined. Goods might be confiscated as well. A record for illicit trade could become an obstacle for starting a legal business later on. Hence, it would be misleading to consider trades without permanent location per se as unregulated or part of an “informal sector” (a term, which contrasts with a “sector” of formal work and which was for good reasons not invented before the 1970s.)²⁹

Trade regulations as subject and as product of struggles

The legal distinctions and differentiations in regulating trades that seem similar in many respects and that were often denounced generally as “peddling” are not always coherent or comprehensible. Itinerant sales of fruits and vegetables, for example, were subject to other, less fierce restrictions than sellers of textiles or door-to-door haberdashers. Selling newspapers on the streets fell under the press law. There were additional laws and regulations for selling flowers, toys or delivering bread. The complex legal regulations and the policy of issuing of permits highlight the ambivalence in state policy towards these earning activities. The policy overall aimed on protecting “sendantary” trades and restrict itinerant trades. Yet, at the same time these trades could meet needs and – most importantly – granted possibilities of legal earning to those which would otherwise would burden the communities. However, the regulations were not simply set up by “the state”. These various trade categories, regulations, as well as the practical terms and possibilities of earning a living, need to be seen as a historical product of (and as subject to) ongoing struggles.³⁰ These struggles involved those who were trying to make a living, their competition, various official trade-representatives and associations, authorities as well as consumers and buyers.³¹ The numerous newspaper reports,

²⁷ See Wadauer, *Der Arbeit nachgehen?*

²⁸ *Ergebnisse der Österreichischen Volkszählung vom 22. März 1934*, p. 32.

²⁹ Vgl. Hart, *Informal income*.

³⁰ See Bourdieu, “Das Recht“.

³¹ See Wadauer, „Ins Un/Recht setzen“; idem.: “Mobility and Irregularities”; idem.: „Betteln und Hausieren verboten?“

parliamentary debates, surveys, complaints, political actions and scholarly publications indicate that, even though these trades might seem “marginal,” the struggles over them concerned “central” questions. Beyond the legitimacy of a particular trade or activity, such struggles concerned the right and the duty of earning, i.e. of making a living for oneself, and of supporting one’s family or to receiving support from others. At the same time, they concern the terms of trade in general: who (and under which terms and conditions or in which locations) should be allowed to perform a trade as a self-employed occupation. Who should be allowed to sell or produce (which kind of?) goods or offer (which kinds of?) services to whom?³² What should be acknowledged as a trade or an honest living? In the process, one can find various and different interests speaking for or against trades without a fixed location. How important was individual sustenance when compared to that of competitors? How much weight should be given to the promotion of economic development, the provision of goods, consumption, welfare expenses, labour law, security, hygiene, traffic, or cityscape? Such struggles addressed authorities’ different and sometimes contradictory agendas while at the same time advancing those agendas. These struggles also illustrate how authorities became increasingly involved in multiple aspects of everyday life and of making a living since the late nineteenth century. Their involvement ranged from occupational counselling and training over labour intermediation to the relation between employer and employee (insurances, labour regulations etc.) or between producer/seller and consumer (provision, quality, hygiene, price, location of sales etc.).

Most obviously, this new social policy contributed to the production of a new normalized wage labour. The possibilities and terms of self-employment changed as well, if less obviously. At the one hand, new social regulations concerned self-employment only partially or indirectly. The self-employed were, for example, included in new schemes of social insurance only gradually and partially.³³ Starting a trade might often even serve as income for those who could not find employment and for those who were not included in social insurance schemes, those without entitlement to unemployment benefits or a sufficient pension. On the other hand, self-employed trades must still be seen as a part of a new emerging social welfare state and new hierarchies of work.³⁴ Trade organisations frequently pointed out to the burden of taxes and expenses for their employees’ social insurance, to restrictions on working hours, regulations of working conditions, controls, hygiene, protection of consumers or just the general welfare and national economy. All of these were used as arguments to de-legitimize their allegedly illicit,

³² See Mejstrik, *Totale Ertüchtigung*, Vol. 1, pp. 45, 58.

³³ Sandgruber, „Soziale Sicherheit“.

³⁴ See Tálos et al., *Soziale Sicherung*, p. 13; Ritter, *Der Sozialstaat*.

allegedly unregulated competitors working without a stable location, who were regarded impossible to regulate. The greater public good was referenced when fierce restriction or even abolition of certain trades was demanded. Even the chamber of labour which rather acted in support of proletarian forms of self-employment like peddling argued that the work force should be directed to occupations more valuable for the national economy.³⁵

Since the late nineteenth century, these struggles had produced a hierarchical spectrum of official trade categories which were similar while also differing with respect to their regulations, their official representatives, and the possibilities they (legally) offered. The more a trade was still related to a stable location – such as a producer, a provider, a client, a stall or even a marketplace – the more its public value was acknowledged and the more liberally it was handled. Hence, permission to work as travelling salesmen on behalf of a company was easy to acquire. The same applies to a license as travelling market merchant. Several forms of itinerant sales, street vending or itinerant craft could be permitted in limited numbers with reference to local demand. Some practices – such as collecting rags, bones or metal – could be seen as useful for production. But peddling (or *Hausieren*) became more and more a trade representing everything that a trade should not be. It was seen as uncontrollable, traditional, and superfluous.³⁶ There was less and less reason to accept it except to preserve the peddler's individual existence – an existence which due to manifold restrictions became miserable and poor whenever it was conducted within a legal framework. Even the official representatives of peddlers described their trade as miserable and hardly respected, as something one would only pursue out of mere necessity.³⁷ Nevertheless, like Josef Had, many tried to obtain a permit or simply peddled. Moreover, it was not only the sedentary traders who fought against their competitors and demanded stricter regulations of trades without fixed location. Travelling salesmen also opposed the unrestricted influx in their occupation.³⁸ Even peddlers' organizations requested authorities' provisions against illegal peddling, which in their eyes

³⁵ Austrian State Archives [hereafter, ÖStA], AdR, Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, 501g, Gzl. 16113, Zl. 34588-1921: Neuregelung des Hausierwesens; *Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich*, III. Session, 1923, Beilage 716 (1921).

³⁶ Peddling could be justified as a way to sell cheap industrial or damaged goods, something which could serve the industries' and costumers' needs. It was therefore seen as a threat to trades and crafts. However, such arguments lost importance in the interwar period. I have described these debates in detail in Wadauer, "Ins Un/Recht setzen."

³⁷ Vgl. etwa "Es geht was vor!", pp. 3f.

³⁸ For example "Vom reisenden Kaufmann", p. 3. Härting, "Mißbrauch des Handelsagentengesetzes", p. 5.

damaged their trade's reputation.³⁹ As a result, trades without fixed location were not just subject to regulations and restrictions. Their organisations and associations contributed actively and/or defensively to differences and hierarchies between trades.

These struggles on the terms and possibilities to make a living cannot be reduced to debates, pamphlets, political requests, or collective political actions. We also have to consider the manifold ways how trades were practiced in accord with or in violation of the regulations. These more or less welcome attempts to make a living contributed to the terms and conditions of self-employment. How, then, can we systematically investigate them?

Sources, sampling, data and technique

In my research I used manifold sources like census data, administrative records, parliamentary papers, surveys, scholarly writings, pamphlets and newspaper articles, publications of trade associations etc. Trade records (such as applications for a permit) are in the centre of my research because they systematically allow us to reconstruct and compare usages of trades. They allow to reconstruct who legally tried to start a trade, and in which context and in which ways. Trade records show how applications were brought forward, were rationalized, reviewed, and how decisions were made. The advantage of this source material is that it enables us to examine the interrelation of practices of the parties concerned. Depending on the trade and the particular case one finds evidence (apart from the applicant) of immediate involvement by any of the following: the local trade office, the municipality, local police, the federal police office, tax office, chamber of labour, chamber of commerce, trade associations, medical officers, the organisation of war invalids, military authorities, political organisations, competitors, kin or acquaintances, attorneys, consumers, providers, etc. In cases of redress, the involvement could extend to the provincial government, the federal ministry, and sometimes even the federal chancellor or president. The trade records can include various documents: forms, protocols, reports, certificates, criminal records bureau checks, notifications. Often there are letters from applicants, their attorneys or kin. (It is not always clear who was writing or speaking.) By using these sources, it is possible to reconstruct and compare the official attributes of applicants, their context-bound (self-)representation, their behaviour, reasoning, and the often contradictory statements and reviews of the other parties involved.

³⁹ For example: "Das unbefugte Hausieren in Steiermark", p.7.

In the process of collecting data and creating a sample, I tried to explore and encompass the varieties and contrasts of such constellations and struggles in a systematic manner.⁴⁰ I used records from various Austrian archives from 1919 to 1938 that concerned primarily but not exclusively trades without fixed location in urban and rural contexts: peddling, itinerant trades, free trades, crafts, concessions (or *Konzessionen*), applications for travelling permits, for busking etc.⁴¹ In order to understand the peculiarities of such trades, I also included some records on trades with fixed location. In order to represent illicit trades as well, I included court records concerning violations of the Vagrancy Act.⁴² The units of observation (cases) also vary with respect to attributes of applicants (age, gender, religion, residence, nationality, previous earnings, qualifications, health, membership in associations, family, obligations to care for kin, criminal record, categorisation as Gypsy etc.), their statements and arguments (referring to family duties, military service, poverty, economy, law etc.), and rhetorical style (how they address authorities, writing, phrases etc.). Finally, the units of observation vary with respect to the attribute of the process and the decision (how long it took, parties involved, documents, levels of administration, appeal, etc.)

Units of observation are not persons but administrative processes, ranging from filing an application to the decision. In twenty-five cases, it was possible to find two or more records concerning one person, thus allowing me to reconstruct a person's different attempts to find a living over time and his/her (administrative) career. It also allowed me to compare self-representations in different contexts and to observe how the weighting and importance of attributes could vary. Overall, the conflicts and struggles as well as the often excessive administration and review processes produced a huge variety of cases.⁴³

The data base I created includes 184 units of observation which are described by 2134 modalities, that is, by answers to 910 questions (variables). I used a specific multiple

⁴⁰ In the sense of a structural sample, see Bourdieu et al., "Ziele einer reflexiven Anthropologie", p. 261; Mejskrik, *Totale Ertüchtigung*, Vol. 2, pp. 756-772; idem, "Kunstmarkt", p. 133.

⁴¹ Records from the years 1919-1938 were collected in: Archive of the City of Salzburg (107), Municipal and Provincial Archives Vienna (41), Archive of the Chamber of Commerce Vienna (2), Provincial Archive Burgenland (7), Provincial Archive Lower Austria (11), Provincial Archive Upper Austria (7), Provincial Archive Tyrol (8) Austrian State Archives (Federal Ministry of Trade and Industry). The largest number of records derives from the City Archive Salzburg. Here it was possible to link records referring to the same person and reconstruct careers.

⁴² See Wadauer, "The Usual Suspects".

⁴³ On this aspect see Wadauer, "Die Herstellung von Verwaltungstatsachen".

correspondence analysis, a technique of Geometric Data Analysis, to describe and visualize the structure of the data.⁴⁴ This analysis translates data into two geometrical figures and two clouds of points within a multidimensional space. These two clouds – a cloud of observational units and a cloud of characteristics – have the same structure. Describing the structure of the clouds means describing the structure of the data. The more similar observational units or characteristics (represented by points) are, the more closely they are located. The more dissimilar observational units or characteristics are, the larger the distance of the points representing them. In order to approach the structure of the multidimensional clouds, they are analysed in dimensions. The interpretation formulates a hypothesis on the structure of this cloud, proceeding from the first and most important dimension (the best one-dimensional approximation to the total cloud of points) to the second dimension (the second best one-dimensional approximation to the total cloud of points). There is variation within *and* contrast between positive and negative orientations of these dimensions, and there is a neutral zone and turning point between the orientations around 0, the barycenter. The primary plane shows the synthesis of these first two dimensions. (See figure 1.) The first dimension is displayed as the horizontal, the second dimension as the vertical. The diagonals of the plane represent the best integration of both dimensions.

The advantage of this technique is, that instead of starting the interpretation from whichever singular attributes or categories one might deem important, regardless of the reasons (such as gender, occupation, age, ethnicity etc.), it enables us to examine the interrelation of *all* characteristics (attributes or practices). Instead of describing clearly separated groups or types, it allows us to perceive and describe the principles of similarities, variation *and* contrast of characteristics and cases. It allows one to measure the weight of characteristics in a specific context, and it allows one to see how a particular modality or observational unit is defined by a specific context.

In describing the results of my research, I will start with a description of the two most important dimensions' patterns of variation and contrast.⁴⁵ I will then proceed to a description of the primary plane. I will exemplify the patterns by describing some units of observation, which are the best presentations of the most important orientations of this space of possibility.

⁴⁴ See Le Roux et al., *Geometric Data Analysis*; idem, *Multiple Correspondence Analysis*.

⁴⁵ Mejsstrik, *Totale Ertüchtigung*, Vol. 2, pp. 800-804; idem, "Felder", p. 178f; idem, *Kunstmarkt*.

Figure 1: Space of self-employed earnings. Primary plane. (Most important modalities, criteria: \cos^2 -and position)



The first dimension: trade administration

The first and best one-dimensional approximation to the structure of the overall sample, i.e. the first dimension of the space of self-employed earnings, shows the various ways people made

use of trade administration in their attempts to legitimize their practices. It can be described as a variation reaching from highly persistent attempts to acquire a permit for a highly restricted trade, to simple registrations of a trade, and finally to the lack and avoidance of trade administration (e.g. illicit earnings). (See figure 1, where this first dimension is displayed as x-axis; the described variation is displayed horizontally from right to left.) The more restrictively access to a trade was handled and the more difficult it was to obtain a permit, the greater the amount of administration that the parties concerned produced together.

One can find the strongest reference to trade administration in applications for a peddling license. Peddling (or *Hausieren*), i.e. selling goods from place to place or from house to house without specific location,⁴⁶ was highly contested and highly regulated in many respects already in the nineteenth century. Thus, there were restrictions concerning permits, goods, means of transport, assistants, and locations. After World War I, the requirements for a permit were even tightened. According to a 1922 law, permits were only to be issued in exceptional cases to Austrian citizens over 30 years of age, who could prove that they had no criminal record, that they were permanently unable to work in any other occupation, and that they were in a difficult economic situation. Invalid war veterans and war widows had to be favoured.⁴⁷ From 1934 on, no new permits were issued and even the necessary renewal of a permit every year was supposed to be granted only for reasons that were regarded particularly worthy of consideration.⁴⁸ All this made peddling a miserable trade if it was performed within legal restrictions. Nonetheless, a trade license certified that peddling was officially acknowledged as trade; it certified some respectability and honesty on the part of its bearer. But a license did not mean that this was a welcome economic activity. Nor did it clear up all doubts about whether peddling was even a trade.

It was difficult to meet the criteria of being poor and relatively unemployable and at the same time not being suspected of only using the licenses as a cover for begging. Local authorities were supposed to grant as few permits as possible. At the same time, they could not simply reject the applicants. The law required an elaborate formal and time-consuming review every year. A medical officer had to determine the degree to which the applicant's earning capacity had been reduced. The municipality had to confirm how difficult his or her economic

⁴⁶ *RGBl.* 1852/252, §1.

⁴⁷ *BGBL.* 1922/ 204, §1 (2); *StGBL.* 1919/245, §1.

⁴⁸ *BGBL.* 1934/324.

circumstances were. Police or gendarmerie had to confirm the applicant's respectability and reliability. The chamber of labour and the chamber of commerce had to review the applications as well. The chamber of commerce usually consulted the local trade association and based its decision on the association's review. There were explicit guidelines and procedural rules to be followed.⁴⁹ The statements were also based on discretion and on the position of the parties involved.⁵⁰ The chamber of commerce usually rejected such applications, pointing out the necessity of protecting sedentary trades. The chamber of labour usually supported applications. In cases of rejection, an applicant could file an appeal at the next level of administration, the provincial government, or the federal ministry. Some even filed a petition for mercy with the federal chancellor or federal president. The quantity of documents and (also controversial) information grew with the length of the process. Highly persistent applicants provided more and more materials, presenting themselves by arguing – as it was necessary – that they had no other choice. Simultaneously, they were exposing themselves to doubt and defamation. Such a pronounced persistence is to be found particularly among war invalids, thus manifesting a new relation between the state and citizens who had served this state in war and who had thereby sacrificed their health.⁵¹ War invalids did not only claim entitlement for good reasons. Rather, they also had already had manifold experiences with bureaucracy which helped them, whether in military service, in hospitals, during official reviews and categorisation of their invalidity, and in filing applications for social welfare. They were furthermore organized. These war invalids submitted applications – sometimes with the help of others – which described and categorized themselves according to the regulations: as war invalids, as “cripple”, as unemployable and penniless but still willing to make their living honestly without becoming a burden to society. They provided the necessary documents and certificates attesting to their entitlement, while insisting on their rights when faced with negative decisions. Consequently, this constellation produces a high amount of diverse (albeit controversial) information, particularly on an individual's ability and possibility of earning a living in alternative ways.

This characterizes the most extreme positions within the variety, a strong positive reference towards trade administration. Modalities (and units of observation) in the same orientation but closer to the barycentre (point 0 in the graph) make reference to less formalized reasons as well

⁴⁹ See Deutsch, *Anleitung zur Feststellung der Erwerbseinbusse*.

⁵⁰ See Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, p. 61; see also Dubois, *The Bureaucrat and the Poor*, p. 150.

⁵¹ See, for example, Pawlowsky et al., “‘Lästige Kostgänger bei der Allgemeinheit’?” pp. 223, 242; idem, *Die Wunden des Staates*.

as to those which fell under the traditional responsibility of communities, i.e. to poor relief rather than the new social support of the state.

Having said that, not every form of self-employment required such elaborate reasoning and/or review procedure by the trade authorities. Not every way of making a living was to be justified or legitimised in that manner. Lack and/or avoidance of legitimization by trade administration can be described on a spectrum of – at first sight – disparate and unrelated practices. These practices nonetheless have something in common: they manifest a different relation between the authorities and people trying to make a living than have been described before. Starting a free trade, for example, even without fixed location, did not require the authorities to *award* a permit as in the case of peddling.⁵² It was merely registered (though it could be prohibited later on for certain reasons.) All that was required was some information and a few documents. No reasoning or rationale was needed (at least before the *Ständestaat*, the Austro-fascist regime, restricted access to trades more generally with reference to local competition.)⁵³ People who tried to start a trade had to become members of a trade association. In the case of a craft, the trade association had to certify apprenticeship and the required time spent working as journeymen. Even acquiring a license for other, less contested trades of itinerant selling or street vending was correlated with much smaller administrative effort.

In comparison to peddlers, applicants seeking to take on such trades were younger. They had no entitlement to extraordinary permits, nor were they principally relying on the help of authorities. Their employability was not subject to negotiation. Such licenses usually were requested without difficulty. While they reveal less administrative effort, they do not manifest a clear avoidance or neglect of administration and of authorities. (These attributes and cases are found on the left of the horizontal variation in figure 1. They display a negative orientation towards trade administration but not in a pronounced way, for they are still close to the barycentre.)

Certainly one could also earn a living without first seeking the authorities' approval. Yet, a pronounced avoidance of any kind of trade administration (by the state or the trade associations) might also cause one to question the character of a practice. This was the case in procedures which were not initiated by someone who tried to make a living but when police and criminal

⁵² See Pöschl, "Beständiges und Veränderliches im Gewerberecht".

⁵³ *BGBI.* II 1934/323, §3; *BGBI.* 1933/84; *BGBI.* 1933/148; *BGBI.* 1933/283; *BGBI.* 1933/467; *BGBI.* 1935/545; *BGBI.* 1937/30; Eminger, "Zwischen Überlebenskunst und Großunternehmen", p. 300. Senft, *Im Vorfeld der Katastrophe*.

courts filed charges against someone for vagrancy and begging. (See figure 1, far left in the horizontal variation.) The accused might be working for little money, sometimes just for a bed and a meal. They may have been drifting, for example, making baskets, offering services as gardeners or tinkers, or just selling things. Without a permit, such practices could be acknowledged as honest types of earning, yet they could just as well be regarded as signalling a lack of honest intention or desire to work. In none of these cases can one find evidence that the accused had ever applied for a permit. Rather, the records indicate that such an attempt would have been without any chance of success: the defendants were persons without fixed abode, persons with foreign citizenship or stateless persons. The records suggested insufficient schooling or financial means.⁵⁴ Hence, such persons lacked any incentives and all preconditions for successfully dealing with trade administration. Authorities seemed to be more of a threat than a potential support. It consequently seemed reasonable to avoid them and to try and simply earn money. Finally, one could also justify a living in other ways. As one group of arrested maintained: “[W]e have always been making a living that way.”⁵⁵

The second dimension: social entitlement and affiliation

Whereas the first dimension describes the variety of ways applicants addressed and referred to authorities in their attempts to make a living, the second dimension rather describes the authorities’ attitudes towards the livelihood of an applicant.

For the most part, the majority of trades did not require Austrian citizenship or right of residence (*Heimatrecht*).⁵⁶ However, social and legal affiliation became relevant when it came to justifying a trade to the authorities (not only but particularly in the case of a trade without fixed location). Affiliation thus influenced the attitude of municipalities towards aspirations to start a trade. The second best approximation to the space of self-employed earnings can be described as variation and contrast with respect to affiliation and social entitlement (*Rücksichtswürdigkeit*). It reveals a variation from acknowledged entitlement over questioned entitlement to lack and avoidance of entitlements and belonging. (In figure 1, this dimension is

⁵⁴ *Emil Hellers Kommentar zur Gewerbeordnung*, p. 291.

⁵⁵ Provincial Archive of Upper Austria [hereafter OÖLA], BG Raab, Sch. 205, U76/1938.

⁵⁶ Requirements depended on the particular trade: age, qualification, good reputation or clear criminal record. The trade law of 1859 did not require Austrian citizenship or right of residence. Based on international agreements or extraordinary permits it was possible to start a trade as foreigner. Due to the *Inlandarbeiterschutzgesetz* of 1925 wage employment of foreigners required explicit permission. *RGBl.* 1883/39, §14; *RGBl.* 1859/227, §4; *RGBl.* 1883/39, §8; *BGBl.* 1925/457. An Austrian citizenship was a precondition for peddling and for other itinerant trades. *Hellers Kommentar zur Gewerbeordnung*, p. 97.

displayed as y-axis, the described variation is displayed vertically, from below to the top of the figure.)

To explicitly support an applicant even in an attempt to start a contested trade made sense with respect to the municipalities' obligation to provide poor relief.⁵⁷ For entitlement to poor relief was based on the right of residence. Claims for support seemed even more legitimate if they did not only concern an individual's inability to make a living but his/her whole family, his/her duty to care for spouse and children, or a lack of support from his/her family (i.e. the principle of subsidiarity.) This was more obvious in cases of unemployable men and less obvious (but still acknowledged) in case of war widows who could claim that they had lost their breadwinner. Hence, the review of applications always involved family and household. However, the municipalities' support did not necessary result in a positive decision for an application. The chamber of commerce rarely acknowledged such entitlements. In some cases, the chamber did not discern enough destitution; in others, it pointed out other possibilities for finding support or earning money. Nevertheless, applications which were supported by the municipality had the highest chance of being accepted, particularly in Vienna, despite the fact that peddling had been forbidden within the city since 1910 and strict guidelines had restricted the number of licenses issued.⁵⁸

Acknowledgment of entitlement was not exclusively based on merely lacking means or income. Plus: achieving recognition of entitlement and providing the necessary evidence were easier for those with fixed abode or who had a stable household. Many others were simply destitute but still had problems demonstrating that they deserved support or convincing authorities of their neediness. The more questions raised by an individual's identity, life, affiliation, or moral behaviour, the more his/her entitlement was questioned. Applicants whose official life course was shaped by mobility, by permanent changes of residence, by precarious housing situations and family lives, or by dubious lifestyles could hardly provide the necessary evidence. Documents and certificates were necessary to resolve doubts, yet the aftermath of World War I and the turmoil of the times contributed to the difficulties of furnishing them. In some cases

⁵⁷ *RGBl.* 105/1863, I. Abschnitt, §1 und III Abschnitt, §26; Reiter, *Ausgewiesen, abgeschoben*; Thienel, *Österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft, Vol. I*, pp. 45ff.

⁵⁸ See ÖStA, AdR, BMHuV, 1921, 501g, Gzl. 16.113, Zl. 18061/1921: Wiener Hausierer in Niederösterreich, Gzl. 16.113, Zl. 18061/1921. See also the reasoning of the reform of the law concerning peddling in: *Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich*, III. Session, 1923, Beilage 716 (1921).

of unclear citizenship or belonging or in cases of having a criminal record, it did not seem promising to refer to entitlement at all. Rather than hopelessly pointing to one's individual neediness and/or local residence, it might even become reasonable to avoid affiliation in the first place. That is to say, it might be a more sensible strategy to emphasise one's peculiarity in order to gain attention. And it might be more promising to claim traditional privileges awarded to ethnic minorities, at least in the era of the Habsburg monarchy.⁵⁹

The primary plane

Both dimensions together constitute the best two-dimensional approximation of the space of possibilities, i.e. the primary plane, as displayed in figure 1. The first dimension is the x -axis; the second dimension the y -axis. The diagonals are the best integration of both orientations. These orientations can be understood as

1. peddling as an official makeshift: the integration of a positive orientation towards trade legislation and acknowledged entitlement (See figure 1, towards the bottom right.)
2. illegal – perhaps – dishonest practices: the integration of the avoidance of trade legislation and the avoidance and lack of entitlement (towards the top left).
3. Ppretentious trade practices: the integration of the positive orientation towards trade regulation and the lack of entitlement (towards the upper right).

The triangular shape of the cloud of points indicates that not all orientations are manifest in this data and source material. (The integration of a lack and avoidance of trade legislation and acknowledged entitlement is not manifest in the administrative source material I used.) I will therefore describe only three orientations.

Peddling as official makeshift

In the 1920s and 1930 peddling was – officially – not seen as a trade like every other, as a type of regular occupation. At best, it was accepted as a makeshift in a few exceptional cases which fulfilled the requirements of trade regulations and social entitlement. A license was supposed to offer nothing more than an honest existence that would not burden welfare. It was not supposed to offer a perspective of betterment or a chance to compete with sedentary trades. At the same time, such a trade should not be too beggarly; it still had to constitute a trade. A license was granted instead if the respectable existence of a whole family was at stake, particularly if

⁵⁹ In 1852 this privilege applied to several districts of the Habsburg monarchy. After the dissolution of the monarchy, it only applied do a few districts within the Republic of Austria. *RGBl.* 1883/39; §51 of the trade law from 1859: *RGBl.* 1859/227; *Hellers Kommentar zur Gewerbeordnung*, p. 94; Sandgruber, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft*, p. 292.

applicants could not support their family or did not receive support by his/her family. Overall, these conditions were not easy to fulfil and even applicants who seemed to meet all requirements were not necessarily successful.

Tobias Nesch's administrative case is a very good presentation of this orientation. He was born in Galicia in 1884, with domicile and right of residence in Vienna, and also Jewish and married, applied for a peddling license in 1926.⁶⁰ Peddling seemed an opportunity for him to use previous experiences in sales occupations he could no longer perform. According to his application, he intended to visit customers and take orders, something which was not legal with such a permit. (Peddlers were only allowed to sell what they could carry around while salesmen were only allowed to take orders and show samples. For the most part, with the exception of some goods, salesmen were not allowed to visit private customers in their homes without receiving an explicit invitation to do so.)⁶¹

Nesch described himself – according to the requirements – as a war invalid. His earning capacity had been attested to by the invalids' office as 45 percent reduced, inasmuch as his health was getting worse. He referred to a report of the health clinic confirming that he was completely unemployable due to a laryngeal tuberculosis. An enclosed certificate stated that his condition was improving but that any occupation requiring speaking was inappropriate and would only prevent the slow process of a cure.⁶² The record indicates that the trade office first checked on his right of residence and his citizenship and that Nesch was asked to visit the office in order to clarify the subject of his application. According to a protocol, Nesch rectified that he wanted to peddle textiles and accessories, thereby using the license in the stipulated sense. He presented himself as a former businessman, whose business had failed due to his tuberculosis. Now he would be without any means, unable to work in any other occupation. His wife would thus have to provide for him and a foster child.⁶³ According to the police report, Nesch had no criminal record. The district council ultimately supported his application with respect to his family and economic situation:

“Tobias Nesch is 43 years old; he lives with his wife and a 17-year-old daughter. Currently he works as agent [...] with an average weekly income of 20-25 Schilling whereas his wife works

⁶⁰ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542-1928, Tobias Nesch: Tobias Nesch an das MBA 20, 1.12.1926.

⁶¹ “Warnung!“, p. 4.

⁶² WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542-1928, Tobias Nesch: TobiasNesch an das MBA 20, 1.12.1926.

⁶³ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542-1928, Tobias Nesch, Niederschrift vom 10.12.1926.

as agent [...] for 80 Schilling per week and expenses. Nesch is a war invalid; he is currently in hospital treatment. Due to his sickness, he has considerable debts. Hence, his economic situation has to be regarded as unfavourable although he has a good reputation. On the condition that no other legal requirements apply, the approval of his application is recommended.”⁶⁴

Nesch was deemed to live in difficult but still orderly circumstances. Even though his trade had no fixed location, he had a stable household as a point of reference. Rejection of his application would – as he wrote – result in his complete economic ruin.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the chamber of commerce still saw his situation as too favourable to make an exception and grant a license. A reduction of work capacity of 35-45 percent was seen as insufficient to keep him from working in another occupation. According to the law concerning employment of war invalids, the chamber stated that he was only to be favoured in case he could not find any other occupation.⁶⁶ However, Nesch still worked as agent, he had still some income and his health condition was improving, according to a medical certificate. At the same time, however, the Chamber of Commerce questioned his ability even to work as peddler, not because of his contagious disease but because of his ability to speak. Work as peddler did not require less ability to speak than any other occupation, the chamber maintained and was therefore no appropriate choice for his condition. Turning the health certificate Nesch provided against him, the chamber pointed out that an occupation which required speaking might even change his condition for the worse.

Nesch’s application was rejected in first instance but he then filed an appeal, declaring that he had fully lost his ability to speak and could not work in his occupation as canvasser. He pointed out the fact that for mere formal reasons he had no invalid pension. He thus had no other means of existence.⁶⁷ The trade office forwarded his appeal to the provincial government, recommending it be rejected. The provincial government, however, granted the appeal in 1927. (See the characteristics in figure 1 at the bottom right: “Decision: A change of occupation is impossible”, “Hometown: Bad economic situation”, “Agent”...)

“According to the university clinic, the applicant suffers from laryngeal tuberculosis, a disease which makes him incapacitated for a number of occupations. In today’s economic circumstances, a change of occupation is rarely possible. Due to his health, it seems impossible for the applicant to make such a change. Hence, the requirements for awarding a peddling

⁶⁴ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542-1928, Tobias Nesch: BV 20 an das MBA 20, 11.1.1926.

⁶⁵ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542/1928, Tobias Nesch: Tobias Nesch an das MBA 20, 12.2.1927.

⁶⁶ A similar case: Abraham Birn: WStLA, MBA 17, A25, B66/1933, Abraham Birn.

⁶⁷ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542/1928, Tobias Nesch: Tobias Nesch an das MBA 20, 15.2.1927.

permit can be seen as fulfilled. According to our investigations, his economic situation justifies granting a permit exceptionally as it is stipulated by the law.”⁶⁸

Due to his persistence Nesch received a permit almost four months after first applying. He had written a letter, had filled out a form, appeared at the office, answered questions and undergone examinations, whereupon he then filed an appeal. He had paid fees and obtained the necessary stamps and certificates. Now he had the possibility to earn a living legally despite his handicaps. The permit was valid for one year. While the renewal was rejected by the chamber of commerce, it was nonetheless granted. Perhaps this trade would allow him to avoid his complete ruin, as he had argued. Perhaps he would be able to just eke out a meagre living. At the very least, he was able to escape the danger of being charged with illicit trade, potentially diminishing his reputation further. In his letters, Nesch had touched on his war invalidity, his family, and his need and duty to provide for them. All these hardships and necessities were something that the authorities could acknowledge. War widows trying to make a living on their own display a very similar orientation, albeit less pronounced and less clearly acknowledged; they are closer to the neutral barycentre.⁶⁹

Illicit and – perhaps – dishonest earnings

The very opposite of such struggles to make a living legally is (in this construction) not wealth or flourishing trades. Instead it was earnings which were so meagre that they were suspected of indicating avoidance of work rather than a decent trade. Livelihoods which combined avoidance of trade administration and lack of entitlement were highly ambiguous from a legal standpoint. (See figure 1, the orientation towards the upper left.) A legal commentary on the trade regulations defined a *trade* as vocational activity which required the intention to earn and a regular performance. It was not an occasional or additional type of earning. Illegal or immoral activities (like prostitution) could not be acknowledged as trade from a legal perspective.⁷⁰ However, something which could be approved as a trade (like peddling, busking or an itinerant craft) could not be regarded as dishonest even if it was performed illegally without permit and even if it was often deemed a mere disguise for begging.⁷¹ Hence, it precluded a sentence of vagrancy. Even obvious begging – an activity which was forbidden in general – could be

⁶⁸ WStLA, MBA 20, A25, Zl. 542/1928, Tobias Nesch: MAbt 53 an das MBA 20, 21.3.1927.

⁶⁹ WStLA, MBA 2, A25, Zl. 12018/1924, Elise Schwamm: Städtisches Gesundheitsamt, 19.7.1924.

⁷⁰ Praunegger, *Das österreichische*, pp. 6-10.

⁷¹ See, Landa, “Die Landstreicherei, p. 277.

excluded from punishment if its necessity for survival was acknowledged.⁷² In this sense, many activities and circumstances for earning income were clearly neither illegal nor legal. Nevertheless, they might trigger an arrest and charges for begging or vagrancy. Police reports describe a variety of earnings performed without permit and for very little money, often for food and a bed: basket making, music making, working as a gardener or tinker, collecting fur or rags, helping out at farms etc. The arrested were described as penniless, as being out of work and without fixed abode. Destitution, though, was not a justification or excuse here; rather, it was presented as legal evidence in bringing indictments for begging and vagrancy. Without domicile, without right of residence, and without citizenship, the defendants had no entitlements, no right to earn income and no right to be supported. Because no legal claim could be substantiated, there was also no reason for further investigation or – from the perspective of the arrested – to fight for a trade permit or poor relief. (See figure 1, the characteristics “Acquittal”, “No administrative charges have been pressed for illicit trade”, “Trade office”, “Arrested: Begging”, “Police: Vagrancy”...)

The court record of Georg Laub illustrates this most clearly. According to the police report, he was confronted and monitored on 7 July 1937. Charges were filed for vagrancy.⁷³ According to his (German-issued) passport, he was born 1909 in Germany, stateless and without fixed abode. Laub was described as musician and basket maker without financial means, unmarried and obliged to provide for one seven-month-old child. *Allegedly*, the police report says, he had not obtained regular school education; he also had no criminal record. In the police report (not in his personal data), he is designated as a “Gypsy”. In most other cases, such a categorization is to be found in the personal data as an entry under the rubric of “occupation”. It may be that the police acknowledged that he did have an occupation, in spite of being labelled a Gypsy. Perhaps his categorization as Gypsy had been questioned. Overall, a number of aspects were unclear, yet there was no effort made to clarify the facts, nor was it really necessary to do so. Laub was just passing through, and likely drifted permanently. According to the entry in his passport, Laub had entered the territory of Austria only five days previously. In those five days, he had travelled through Upper Austria and lived from illicit basket making and public welfare. According to the report, Laub stated:

⁷² Poverty might cause necessity and preclude guilt if destitution and hardship endangered the offender’s life and if he has no other possibility to escape starvation than to commit a crime. See, *Die Kriminalpolizei*, p. 36.

⁷³ OÖLA, BG Raab, Sch. 202, U280/1937.

“I crossed the border on 2 July 1937 in Haibach in order to search for the peddler family Bernhard, because my bride and my child are with them. [...] Near Andorf, I repaired a basket for a farmer and received 80 *Groschen* and something to eat. From Andorf, I turned to Schärding and then in the direction of Raab because somebody told me that there were Gypsies. Because I had no money to travel, I was forced to repair baskets at farm houses. I received some money and food, so I did not have to beg plain spoken.”⁷⁴

For good reasons, Georg Laub did not seek confrontation with the authorities. Rather, he sought to avoid them by performing some kind of work instead of begging. (Hence, he was taking the authorities into account.) It seems that, according to the law, he did not really fulfil the criteria for vagrancy, i.e. drifting without work, without business, without means and without any intention to earn them in an honest way. He also was not caught begging, for there were no witnesses listed. Nevertheless, he was sentenced to two days detention for begging. The report designates as evidence a piece of meat found in his pockets. No charges were filed for performing a trade without permit. It was therefore simply not acknowledged as a trade. And challenging the sentence would most likely have prolonged his custody.

Here and in similar cases, the circumstances of drifting or of being destitute and without fixed abode seemed sufficient to indicate that someone was not performing a trade but was attempting to avoid honest work. At the same time, as indicated by some court records, a formal permit could still justify the most beggarly occasional earning and result in a sentence of acquittal. Consequently, a permit could also be seen as a protection worth struggling for and – under certain different circumstances – a reasonable objective.

A stranger and a businessman

Karl Hasch’s persistent struggles with the authorities of Salzburg are documented extraordinarily well. A variety of applications and other records is available from 1920 to 1937. Based on these sources, I constructed 13 units of observation, most of which manifest a strong orientation towards trade regulation. At the same time, they disclose a lack and avoidance of entitlement and affiliation. (In figure 1, see the orientation towards the upper right.) Karl Hasch’s attempts to make a living in the city of Salzburg are manifold and – in most instances – contested. He tried to obtain or renew a peddling license (ten times),⁷⁵ a license as a travelling

⁷⁴ OÖLA, BG Raab, Sch. 202, U280/1937: Anzeige vom 7.7.1937.

⁷⁵ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1920, Karl Hasch, 5649; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1922, Karl Hasch, 3051; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1924, Karl Hasch, 318, 623; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1926, Karl Hasch, 4126; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1927, Karl Hasch, 3703, 117; AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1927, Karl Hasch, 3703, 117.

market merchant⁷⁶, one to sell roasted chestnuts⁷⁷, and one to sell hot sausages.⁷⁸ (The latter three applications are more neutrally oriented with respect to trade administration, meaning that these units of observation are to be found close to the barycenter.) Some of these applications were successful; others were not. Apart from these attempts, there is evidence that he had other occupations, earnings and sources of livelihood: Hasch is denoted as a *carney*, *artist*, *musician*, *worker*, and *sales employee*. When he was young, he travelled with a circus. He served in the army during the First World War, he was accused of begging, and he received a small invalid pension and poor relief. Hasch's nationality was disputed as well. As a result, in the early 1920s, he had no right of residence; he frequently changed addresses and seemed to be constantly on the move. Yet, from 1920 on, he tried to obtain trade permits in Salzburg with great persistence. And he did so with good reason, for over the years several complaints and defamations were directed at him: Hasch was alleged to be peddling illegally, as a Gottscheer, and as raffling off candies and sweets. His documents were said to have been obtained by fraud.⁷⁹ He would only have pretended to be a war invalid, for people claimed to have seen him running.⁸⁰ The peddlers' association contended that he had not peddled according to the regulations.⁸¹ Hence, Hasch might have been a stranger but was not an unknown quantity. Rather, he was someone both exposed and vulnerable.

Many of Hasch's attempts to obtain licenses in Salzburg failed because he had problems not just proving his entitlement but even his identity. The authorities doubted his statements. There was contradictory information and reports. Even the Chamber of Labour, which chiefly argued in favour of peddlers, declared that it was impossible to come to a conclusion without better information. Additionally, he had a criminal record, which was a disadvantage. (Actually, there were three slightly different criminal records available.) There is almost no information about his family or kin. In many attempts, he tried to claim his entitlement to a peddler's license as a war invalid. At the same time, he tried to turn his deficits of "rootedness" to his advantage. He did not only strive for a regular peddler's license but claimed an exceptional permit and

AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1929, Karl Hasch, 120. AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1935, Karl Hasch. Vgl. ÖStA, AdR, BMHuV, 501r, Geschäfts- und Grundzahl 144.065-12/1935.

⁷⁶ Vgl. AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 3103

⁷⁷ Vgl. AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 4226.

⁷⁸ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 4710.

⁷⁹ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1920, Karl Hasch, 5649.

⁸⁰ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Stadtmagistrat Salzburg an das Stadtphysikat Salzburg, 24.1.1924.

⁸¹ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1927, Karl Hasch, 3703, 117: Hans Kirch, Rechtsschutzverein für Hausierer Salzburgs an die Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie in Salzburg, 12.2.1927.

privilege for selling southern fruits, such as oranges, almonds, dates, sweets and sardines, as had the Gottscheers within the city of Salzburg. (See figure 1, the characteristics “Applicant: Tradition”, “Sardines” ...) He avowed:

“According to the ministry decree of 18 June 1897 [...], peddling is forbidden within the city of Salzburg. In the times of the monarchy, this prohibition did not include the privileged peddlers. In greater numbers so called Gottscheers sold and raffled sweets. Since these Gottscheers don’t exist anymore, I hereby request that I be awarded a permit and that the ban be rescinded for me.”⁸²

Hasch thus wanted to combine entertainment and peddling, making use of nostalgia and exoticism. He asked for nothing less than that the law be suspended for him. In another letter, he wrote that as a “cripple” and an illegitimate son of a Gottscheer he felt “entitled”. He was unable to earn his bread in other ways since he was unable to walk longer distances.⁸³

Now such an attempt on his part might seem absurd. Yet, such a permit had been given to him erroneously in the past. There was also a note in his record that the trade office should not simply reject his request. The authorities seemed not strictly unwilling to grant extraordinary permissions to the Gottscheers, a German-speaking minority that had been given a privilege to peddle within the Habsburg Monarchy but who now, after the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, had become citizens of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁸⁴ After 1925, a treaty between the Republic of Austria and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes allowed members of this minority to be granted peddling permits.⁸⁵

However, no such treaty had been concluded when Hasch made his first attempts in Salzburg. By referring to such a privilege, he exposed himself to doubts even more. It nourished the assumption that he was not an Austrian citizen or opting for citizenship but was instead a Yugoslav. Hasch could provide a certificate which confirmed his highly reduced work ability and that peddling was one of the few occupations he could perform. Nonetheless, he was suspected of being an invalid only because of his former work as circus artist and not because of his war service. A further medical certificate claimed that peddling was not the only option

⁸² AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Verhandlungsschrift vom 31.1.1923.

⁸³ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Karl Hasch an das Bundesministerium für Handel, Industrie, Gewerbe und Bauten, 19.1.1924.

⁸⁴ Vgl. dazu *Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde et al.: Sonderausstellung Volkskunde der Gottscheer*, p. 63.

⁸⁵ Vgl. *BGBI.* 1929/9, Artikel 5.

for him but that an occupation which allowed sitting seemed more preferable...⁸⁶ Clarifying these questions took time; therefore, Hasch was not able to dissolve doubts about his identity and military service until 1927. Although he remarkably found supporters and intercessors (the organization of war invalids, an attorney, a local shop, and later on the *Vaterländische Front*, a political organisation of the Austro-fascist Regime), his applications were rejected frequently. The Federal Ministry claimed that it was also bound to given laws. The municipality of Salzburg rejected permits to allow raffling of sweets in inns because this would be a form of prohibited gambling which would only promote ordinary people's passion and carelessness.⁸⁷ The chamber of commerce stated that there was no reason to reinstate a privilege once it had been granted to a small group of citizens on the lowest level of culture for political reasons. If the municipality would grant such a permit, other more entitled war invalids would claim the same right.⁸⁸ Consequently, economical and ethical reasons spoke against that. Hasch's situation was, as the Chamber admitted, unquestionable difficult. However, there was no proof that he was in fact a *war* invalid, and there was also no information about any invalid's pension.

Despite all the doubts and rejections of his claims, Karl Hasch's attempts were not simply dismissed. His unproven statements were a problem not exclusively of his own. His applications triggered statements, reports, administrative communication until in February 1926 (more than 5 years after his first application in Salzburg) when he finally received a permit for peddling with southern fruits, haberdashers, accessories and crockery. Over the years, the authorities changed their position, giving different and contradictory statements and reviews. Hasch, too, facing all these obstacles, managed to cope and adapt. Failing to obtain a peddler's license, he applied for other permits easier to obtain. In 1923 he registered – without problems – his trade as a travelling market merchant⁸⁹ and a seller of roasted chestnuts.⁹⁰ A license for selling sausages at night was denied with reference to lack of local demand stated by the local trade association.⁹¹ Hasch made use of different trade categories which went along with different requirements. His self-presentation and the information and reasoning he furnished would vary

⁸⁶ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Stadtphysikat Salzburg an den Stadtmagistrat Salzburg, 25.1.1924.

⁸⁷ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Stadtmagistrat Salzburg an die Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte und die Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie in Salzburg, 7.2.1923.

⁸⁸ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1923, Karl Hasch, 133 und 681: Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie in Salzburg an den Stadtmagistrat, 15.2.1923.

⁸⁹ Vgl. AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 3103

⁹⁰ Vgl. AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 4226.

⁹¹ AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ia1, 1923, Karl Hasch, 4710.

according to the trade in question. Here his uncertain citizenship and his criminal record were not an obstacle. Nonetheless, according to complaints, he did not perform these trades according to the regulations but still illegally peddled as a Gottscheer.⁹² At the same time, Hasch did not give up applying for a peddling license, for it seemed to serve his needs better than other trade permits and other trades of better reputation. Although Hasch strove to acquire the same permit as other applicants I described above, these struggles manifest different orientations and different ways one could make use of a trade or a permit.

Conclusion

The trade practices I have described were highly ambiguous and heterogeneous. They have been categorized by researchers in different ways. Generally speaking, they were often attributed either to economy, to poverty, or to an informal sector. They have been labelled as micro-entrepreneurs or – more commonly – as beggarly occupations. Frequently these trade practices were discussed separately from the whole variety of trades and earnings. Singular attributes – such as destitution, religion, ethnic categorization etc. – have been emphasised and considered in isolation. Instead of reproducing such categorizations – which fails to pose the crucial question – I have described the struggles over the possibilities and terms of self-employment. These struggles are where the categories, differences and hierarchies of earnings were historically produced.

Applications for trade licenses allow us to systematically explore the varieties and differences of such trade practices and to investigate the constellations and situations in which livelihoods could be justified and legitimized to the authorities. They also allow us to examine how one might make use of official categories and earnings. Further, they allow us to differentiate the attitudes according to which people approached the authorities, presented themselves, and made claims. Finally, such sources demonstrate the authorities' different and often contradictory agendas, allowing us to understand the interrelation of the concerned parties' practices.

Trades without fixed location were not simply unregulated or unmonitored. Nonetheless, they were not always performed according to the regulations. People in search of a living referred variously to authorities: they claimed entitlement by presented themselves, providing rationales, and trying to fulfil requirements. They attempted to interpret, bend, and/or change

⁹² AStS, Gewerbeamt, Ih, 1927, KarlHasch, 3703, 117: HansKirch, Rechtsschutzverein für Hausierer Salzburgs an die Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie in Salzburg, 12.2.1927.

the rules. And in many cases, they also tried to avoid the authorities. Yet, even if one tried to make a living without the authorities' approval, one still at least had to deal with the possibility of negative sanctions in this particular historical setting. At the same time, the authorities had to contend with unauthorized and unwelcome activities. In this sense, people attempting to earn a living contributed to and co-produced administration and its official categories. They did so in various ways, in both consensus and conflict. I have described different constellations and terms which more or less suggested to someone that he or she could or should make the effort to obtain a license or instead try to avoid authorities altogether. In dealing with authorities, the usage of categories and permits was not arbitrary. It has to be understood by taking into account the interrelation of parties who were involved directly or indirectly.

Trades without fixed location were performed and perceived in the context of all the other trades, that is, in the context of what was seen as normal and/or preferable. They are neither outside nor at the margins of struggles which ultimately would lead to normalisation of labour and to the emergence of a welfare state. They manifest how historically, the interrelation between authorities and those who tried to make a living and who were supposed to earn for themselves and their families changed. As I have shown, the authorities did not act uniformly. One can perceive positive and negative interests in these earnings, resulting in highly complex legal regulations.

Administration could be used to legitimize such – often meagre – earnings. A permit might define peddling, busking or other activities as an official trade. But this did not dissolve all doubts. It did not mean that these practices were (fully) acknowledged as regular earning and not just as a substitute for work, i.e. as makeshift or even disguising work avoidance. The struggles I have described determined the legitimacy of a practice. They dealt with one's right and obligation to earn, they did not exclusively revolve around *work*. More frequently, the records refer to *trade*, *occupation*, *earning a living*, *bread*, or *existence*. These are not simply synonyms but dissimilar practical notions. For not every activity for making a living was officially welcomed. Not every trade and not every earning – even if legal – was acknowledged as an occupation or as work.

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Specific multiple Correspondence Analysis

Database:

184 units of observation (statistical individuals or cases)

910 variables (questions), 704 active

2.134 modalities (values, answers), 1.720 active

$$\phi^2 = 1,37961$$

Axes	1	2
Eigenvalue	0,0382	0,0284
Variances	0,0014	0,0007
Variance rate	0,028	0,021
Modified rate	0,107	0,058
Cumulative modified variance rate		0,165

Abbreviations (see figure 1)

The first letter indicates where the information comes from. A stands for applicant, TO for trade office, H for the hometown, P for police, CC for Chamber of Commerce, CL for Chamber of Labour, PHO for public health officer, TA for trade association, D for the decision on the application.

“...” indicates a literal expression, 0 means “no”, “is not mentioned” or “no information”

Label	
§183	Previous conviction for misappropriation
0Charges	No administrative charges have been pressed (for illicit trade)
0TradeApplication	No application for a trade license
0TradeOffice	Trade office is not explicitly involved
101-200Prison	Previous convictions: 101-200 days of prison in total
5-6Earnings	5-6 types of earnings are mentioned in the record
83-100Prison	Previous convictions: 83-100 days of prison in total
A0HeavyWork	A: I am not able to perform heavy work
A0Theft	A: I don't want to steal, I am not able to steal
ABegging	A admits begging, is forced to beg
ABread	A: I am earning my „bread“
ACrippled	A: I am a “cripple”
ADocuments	A refers to documents

AGaveUpPension	A: I gave up my pension
AgeDifference20ff	Age difference between spouses is 20 years and more
Agent	Occupation: (Sales) Agent
AInfirmity	A refers to physical infirmity
AInv+35	A: I am more than 35% invalid
AInvalid	A: I am an invalid
AInvOffice	A refers to the office responsible for invalids' compensation
Aquittal	Judgment: sentence of acquittal
ASpouseRWA	A: My spouse is unemployable, his/her ability to earn is reduced
ATradition	A refers to tradition
Carney	Occupation: carney
CC0Poverty	CC: There is no situation of poverty
CC0Prove	CC: There is no proof, certificates are missing
CCAbility?	CC questions of ability
CCGoodSit	CC: The economic situation of the applicant is good
CCNatEconomy	CC refers to the good of the national economy
CCOtherOcc	CC: Applicant can work in another occupation
CCMHO	CC refers to the statement of the public medical health office
CCPriviousConvict	CC points out the previous convictions of the applicant
CCWarInvalid	CC refers to the applicant's war invalidity
Child?	No information on children
CL0Info	CL: No information available
CLInvalid	CL refers to applicant's invalidity
Clothes	The applicant wants to sell clothes
CLPriviousConvict	CL refers to previous convictions
CourtRecord	Unit of observation is based on a court record
D0Help	D: No permit for employing a helper (porter)
DBadEc	D refers to the applicant's bad economic situation
DOccup	D: A change of occupation is impossible
DProperty	D. refers to applicant's property
DSpouse	D refers to a trade licence of the applicant's spouse
ExoticFruits	The applicant wants to sell exotic, southern fruits
Familyname	Family name is unclear
FreeTrade	Application for a free trade
TOOtherLicence	TO refers to applicant's other licences
H0Occup	H: Applicant is unable to work in another occupation
HBadEc	H refers to applicant's bad economic situation
HChildren	H refers to the applicant's children
HEarning	H gives detailed information on the applicant's income
Hernia	Limited work ability due to hernia
Hospital	Hospital
Houseowner	Applicant owns a house
HSick	H refers to the applicant's sickness
HSpouse0E	H: Applicant's spouse has no earned income
HSpouseEarn	H: Applicant's spouse is working
Hungary	Hungary is mentioned

Language	Limited work ability due to speech disorder
PMOWife	PMO: record includes a certificate on the applicant's wife
Nerves	Limited work ability due to neuropathy
P0Abode	P: A has no fixed abode
P0DutyOfCare	P: Applicant has no duties of care
P0Possession	P: Applicant has no possessions
PAbode?	P: Applicants whereabouts are unclear
PeddlingLicence	Application for a peddling license
PInvalid	P: Applicant is an invalid
PPC11-15Y	Previous convictions date back 11-15 years
PPoverty	P: Applicant has no means, is poor
PrivConvict	Several previous convictions
PSearch	P refers to a search warrant for the applicant
PVagrancy	Applicant is accused of vagrancy
Recourse	Record includes an appeal
CompensationCommision	Commission for invalids' compensation is involved (Entschädigungskommission)
Revid?	It is not clear if the decision has been changed within the process of appeal
Salesemployee	Occupation: Sales employee
Sardines	Applicant wants to sell sardines
SHS	Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes is mentioned
Single	Applicant is single
SweetChestnuts	Occupation: Sells roasted sweet chestnuts
Sweets	Applicant wants to sell sweets
TAMember	Applicant is member of the trade association
TOCrimRecord	TO refers to the applicant's criminal record
TOIsInvalid	TO: Applicant is invalid/pretends to be invalid
CC0Record	CC: Records are missing
Worker	Occupation: Worker
WorkFood	Works for food