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### From the Periphery to the Centre of Historiography

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# From the Periphery to the Centre of Historiography: Paths to Central Europe's Rural Past

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In historians' minds, the concepts of "centre" and "periphery" have been largely identified with Immanuel Wallerstein's work. His centre-periphery, or rather centre-semiperiphery-periphery, model of the world economy over historical time<sup>1</sup> has been widely evoked and often applied by historians seeking to interpret long-lasting socio-economic processes and structural relations between different large-scale geographical regions. Furthermore, his model can be fruitfully used as an interpretive historical tool in other proportional ways, for example when working on medium- or small-scale geographical regions, or when focusing on the political, social and cultural, rather than on the economic, aspects of history.

But the concepts "centre" and "periphery" themselves can, as I see it, also be used loosely when dealing with the history of historiography, with the questions put, the topics examined, the methods applied and the sources used by historians in different time periods, places and academic communities. Questions, topics, methods and sources, which are all closely interrelated with one another, appear to change positions within the concentric circles of academic historians' interests. So here I use the concepts "centre" and "periphery" freely, regardless of Wallerstein's famous interpretive model, to indicate a shift, albeit not an immutable one, in the vantage point of historians of the Central European and especially the Austrian countryside. This shift brought new issues and questions into the focus of historical studies, while older questions were studied in combination with and in the light of the new ones. The "centre" here, therefore, denotes the dominant point of view of a historical text, its subject, questions and methodology, in comparison with questions, topics and methods that concern the same broad field and that may be taken into account, but lie in the "periphery" of scholarly interest.

This article presents and reflects on worlds of the rural past which, accompanied by fresh questions, methods and sources, and also thanks to them, moved from the periphery to the centre of academic interest at the University of Vienna Institute for Economic and Social History in the 1980s and 1990s. While studying there during the second half of the 1990s, I experienced this development myself.

## *A historiographical turn*

The social and cultural history of rural Europe is nowadays flourishing.<sup>2</sup> But for a long time, it remained somewhat on the margins of European social history, especially its modern and contemporary version. In general, up to the 1980s, historians dealing with the rural past were for the most part interested in the (economic) history of agriculture,<sup>3</sup> while social historians working on modern and contemporary Europe were mainly interested in industrial and urban societies.

During the early 1980s, in Vienna a (new) social, or rather socio-cultural, history of rural Austria, especially for the period between the late nineteenth century and the outbreak of the Second World War, began to develop, and it was met with a positive response by historians and the public. Interest in rural history – certainly connected to the constant importance of the agrarian sector and population in modern Austria – was accordingly revived. Geographically it is focused on today's Austria but extends beyond it to territories – especially central European territories – of the Habsburg Monarchy. Its chronological focus is linked to the still considerable percentages of those registered as occupied in the agrarian sector in the censuses of late imperial as well as interwar Austria (still more than one-third of the working population in 1934), despite their continuous decline, with the rural exodus reaching a peak in the early 1920s.<sup>4</sup> The official or academic primary sources for the history of the countryside – censuses, records, ethnographic studies – were much more systematic and more numerous for the late imperial and the interwar period than for the previous period. Moreover, oral or written autobiographical accounts, which, as will be seen below, were fundamental to these historiographical developments, depended on elderly people narrating or writing down their experiences, and, in the early 1980s, such informants could not, as a rule, have been born before ca. 1890.

Attention turned to the so-called “full peasants”, namely those who were able to make a living from their land and their animals, but also to social groups that constituted the rural working classes and usually, to a greater or lesser extent, depended on peasants. For the most part these people belonged, in Michael Mitterauer's words “to those groups of the rural population, who are not considered to be full peasants [*Vollbauern*] and who, in terms of prestige, rank under the peasants”.<sup>5</sup> They were cottagers (*Kleinhäusler*, *Keuschler*, *Häuselleute*, *Söllner*), rural poor living in huts on the peasant farm (*Inwohner*, *Stübelleute*),<sup>6</sup> and/or smallholders (oscillating between the peasant and the cottager world, especially in regions where property was divided among all heirs, as was the case in West Tirol and Vorarlberg).<sup>7</sup> Rural servants were among those who ranked under the peasants; they were men and women who lived in peasant houses and were members of the peasant households, ideally in their youth, before making their own family (life-cycle servants), but also throughout their lives (lifelong servants).<sup>8</sup> Not all rural servants automatically belonged to the rural working classes; among them, male as well as female peasant children often

enjoyed social prestige in local societies, and were expected either to inherit land, or to be compensated for not inheriting in favour of a single heir (usually an older brother) according to customary law (*Anerbenrecht*).<sup>9</sup> By the 1980s there were no more rural servants and rural working-class groups in Austria. Thus, there was and there is, in Mitterauer's words, "no contemporary group that feels connected to the tradition of the rural lower classes".<sup>10</sup> From this point of view, giving voice to these silent people may have been the most revolutionary feature when this turn began.

In this new, fresh perspective, peasants, cottagers and rural servants came into the fore as historical subjects: their experiences, their everyday lives, their relations, their feelings, their conceptions and perceptions became important for historians. They revealed a multifaceted rural world, which defied the primacy of the industrial and the urban world in old as well as in new forms of social history, regardless of whether they concentrate on the study of social structures or emphasise people's experiences and behaviours – a world in its own right.

Since the early 1980s in Austria, new theoretical and methodological approaches went hand in hand with the collection and classification of numerous ego-documents (for the most part retrospectively written autobiographical accounts), a rather new type of historical material across continental Europe at that time.<sup>11</sup> This article will now turn to how this collection of ego-documents, which led to the formation of a modern, rich and dynamic archive at the University of Vienna Institute for Economic and Social History, contributed decisively to an in-depth knowledge of the rural world in the past, interacting with particular historiographical trends in German-speaking Europe and the social history approaches that were developed at the institute before the archive's founding. Then it will turn to the features and workings of rural family economies through the lens of these ego-documents, in order to reflect on how a social history of the rural past that draws on living experiences can shed a different light to historical processes that occupy central positions in large-scale historical narratives, such as industrialisation and urbanisation, and can indeed claim a central position in such narratives itself.

### *Life history records as windows to the past*

By now, the Collection of Biographical Records (Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen), as this modern archive is called, comprises personal (mainly autobiographical) testimonies written by more than 4,000 individuals.<sup>12</sup> Systematic compulsory school attendance after the Imperial Elementary School Act of 1869 in Austria (a country where compulsory elementary education decrees date much earlier) may have meant that in the 1980s the elderly who had been brought up in rural societies had a greater sense of themselves as members of a wider society, beyond their community. It certainly meant that they had acquired skills, such as writing, to an extent that allowed them to record their experiences, when asked for it.

However, their importance to the wider population was beginning to wane – the future belonged to cities and the urban way of life. As we will show next, people were mobilised to narrate their experiences through the researchers' systematic initiatives. Within this context, women proved to be, to some extent, more willing than men to discuss the past, to speak and write about it,<sup>13</sup> perhaps because prevailing gender perceptions somewhat prevented men from expressing feelings inevitably associated with diving into the past.

Despite its contemporary size and the various socio-economic backgrounds of the authors, the collection maintains a special relationship with the rural world: "Rural life stories tend to outweigh those with an urban background in number and scope."<sup>14</sup> Mitterauer, the Austrian historian who founded the collection, was deeply interested in rural history (and his deep Catholic faith may, as I see it, partly account for his interest in populations inextricably connected with religious faith and practices). It all started in a seminar on change in family and everyday life in rural Austria held at the institute during the 1982 spring semester. While students taking part in the seminar interviewed old people about living conditions in the past, it turned out that written autobiographical records, intended only for the closer family circle and providing important information on the subject being dealt with, were often to be found in family ownership. In autumn 1982 excerpts from the manuscript of Maria Gremel, born in 1900 in a cottager family of Lower Austria, were read on Austrian radio; they had a great impact on the audience,<sup>15</sup> motivated other people with a rural background to write down their life experiences and became the yeast for the development of the documentation over the next years and decades.

Published in 1983, Gremel's manuscript became the first in a series of by now almost 70 books containing records kept at the documentation centre, either in whole or in part, in thematic volumes, usually accompanied by scholarly texts that highlight their connections to various historical contexts and analyse their scholarly value. The title of the book series speaks for the historians' and the authors' primary concern: "So that it doesn't get lost..." ("*Damit es nicht verlorengelht...*").<sup>16</sup>

In the following years, many volumes were exclusively dedicated to the rural working classes and also to peasants; besides, texts by elderly people from rural backgrounds have been included in most of the book series. By the turn of this century, these publications, together with other scholarly and educational projects, closely associated with the collection, initiated or supported by it, had already enormously enriched our knowledge and perspective on rural society and world.

Writing down their memories, reflecting on them, organising them, in response to issues they themselves raised, or in response to their kin, their friends, their peers or scholars, the authors, women as well as men, have opened multiple windows to the rural past. We look into it through the lens of historical subjects.

We meet cottagers' children, growing up in poverty, walking long distances in bad weather to get to school, playing with self-made toys, working at the side of their parents, herding cows on behalf of peasants (often in return for an absolutely necessary pair of shoes), moving into peasant households and entering rural service, usually at the age of 12 or 13, but sometimes, if need be, if for example a parent had passed away, much earlier.<sup>17</sup> We learn about children born out of wedlock and their mothers, peasant daughters full of shame or rural servants who have no choice but to continue working and who pay for the child to be raised by a kin, or, if the child's father happened to be a peasant son, send it to live and work on behalf of the paternal grandparents. We find foster children, most of them born out of wedlock, growing up in peasant households, all too often changing homes and thus developing a sort of lifelong depression, working without pay in kind or in money.<sup>18</sup>

We meet rural servants, men as well as women, who work usually on the side, under the orders and the constant control of the peasant couple, clearly separated by gender and within a usually strict framework of a work hierarchy defined by physical strength, skills and, above all, age, with the youngest placed in the lowest ranks. We find female as well as male rural servants, rural women as well as men, working hard, lacking sleep and often experiencing great physical tiredness, while also having fun, singing, joking, enjoying each other's company and feeling (at the time or retrospectively) proud of their work. Yet a careful reading of the texts makes clear that female rural servants, peasants' wives and cottagers' wives as well, lived in a male-dominated world, worked longer hours and barely enjoyed any leisure time.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, we read about the *Sennerinnen*, dairy maids, who occupied a very special position within labour hierarchy and enjoyed freedom while looking after the animals on mountain pastures during summer.<sup>20</sup>

We learn about individuals breaking social rules, about female servants secretly waiting for their lovers to come through the windows of the female servants' room during the night, mistreated young servants secretly leaving their workplace before their contract ended, and hungry rural servants stealing food from ungenerous peasants.<sup>21</sup>

But we also discover that marriage and remarriage was a primary social duty for peasants, men and women alike, in eastern alpine mountain regions, that historical subjects often had to suppress their feelings and emotions, hide negative experiences and submit to social rules.<sup>22</sup> We realise that faith and religious practice comforted people and helped them get through everyday hardships, but that church attendance, prayer and confession also served as a fine control tool of social behaviour within rural communities and peasant households.<sup>23</sup> We are confronted with the hard fate of sick and elderly working men and women, who are no longer in a position to work for their living and depend on the rural communities' mercy.<sup>24</sup>

## *The theoretical and methodological contexts*

The publication of life-history records, the scholarly articles that accompany them, the scholarly projects and studies, the educational projects that made and still make use of them, all speak for this turn to a social history of the rural world, which is interested in everyday life, in peoples' relations within domestic groups and communities, in human agency, living experience; it was and is also inevitably interested in the present and the ways history connects to it, through the workings of memory, the ways people construct their narratives, and how the exchange of living experience and perceptions of the past can help elderly people who have spent their childhood and youth in a world we have lost, such as the rural one, make sense of themselves.<sup>25</sup>

This turn to a history of everyday life and individuals' experiences went hand in hand with developments in European historiography since the early 1970s, but more so since the early 1980s and the 1990s, to which historians in Vienna considerably contributed.<sup>26</sup> They studied rural history from different yet intersecting historiographical (and thus also theoretical/methodological) points of view, mainly from the perspective of family history, everyday life history, history from below, the history of women and gender history and historical anthropology.

Life records show clearly how crucial to our understanding of past Austrian rural societies research on the history of the family and the household is, since peasants, cottagers, rural servants, men and women, adults and children, spent their lives (their working lives as well) first and foremost in domestic groups, that maintained largely pre-industrial functions (for example, as spaces of production). Historians in Vienna had been conducting research on family history, collecting census data<sup>27</sup> and using quantitative methods since the early 1970s (under the influence of recent historiographical developments in Britain). Thus, in the early 1980s the history of the family and the household was an already established topic at the Institute for Social and Economic History; scholars there emphasised the value of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to family history.<sup>28</sup>

The history of everyday life was prevalent in 1980s German academia;<sup>29</sup> in his preface to the first volume of the "So that it doesn't get lost..." book series, Mitterauer noted that the book was a contribution to everyday life history (*Alltagsgeschichte*), adding: "The question of everyday living conditions in earlier times is increasingly coming to the fore in new research on social history. In particular, family life and the realities of the world of work are receiving increasing attention."<sup>30</sup> Scholars were mostly interested in the everyday life of ordinary people, and everyday life history in the German-speaking world went hand in hand with the "history from below" (*Geschichte von unten*),<sup>31</sup> which had originated in the Anglo-Saxon world, and gave a voice to the common people, the poor and the oppressed. In our case, the majority of the authors with a rural background came from families of the rural

poor, from small peasant families or from mountain peasant families, constantly confronted with hard-to-cultivate soils and adverse weather conditions. Social historians in Vienna “have consciously addressed people who were and are disadvantaged in their life chances”.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, the place of women and men, the relations between them and gender issues in general permeate autobiographical/biographical records that are full of stories of male and female rural servants, cottagers and cottagers' wives, peasants and peasants' wives, and depict a world where people are separated by sex in most spaces of everyday life (notably at work, which literally dominated their lives, but also beyond it).<sup>33</sup> In fact, there are more women than men among the collection's authors<sup>34</sup> and right from the start women's voices dominated the documents.

On the whole historians in Vienna, especially those working with the collection, have been interested in historical subjects, in their experiences and conceptions, in their relations to one another, but also their interaction with (flexible) structures, institutions, laws, customs and mentalities, as well as geographical conditions, or conjunctures (for instance, a war or economic crisis). They have been looking into rural history (and history in general) largely through the methodological lens of what in the early 1990s they called “historical anthropology”, a term that had been used in the past but had not really spread in German-speaking academia.<sup>35</sup> “The multifaceted and contradictory way in which one adapts to the world ... the multifaceted forms of expression and the acts by which people experience and shape the world”<sup>36</sup> stood at the centre of this approach. Historians inspired by historical anthropology intended to explore the specific human being, his/her handlings, his/her feelings, his/her thoughts, his/her sufferings.<sup>37</sup>

In the future, new fields of historical research could be opened within the theoretical and methodological framework presented above: The images of social relations and the individual in rural societies conveyed by the personal testimonies could be systematically compared with other images produced on the same space by the literature, theatre or cinema of the period under study, whether by people with experiences in the rural countryside (for example, writers who come from rural areas) or from people in the city with non-experiential knowledge of the rural countryside.

### *Large-scale historical processes in new perspectives*

These new approaches, with their emphasis on people's experiences, offer valuable insights into large-scale historical processes and help us approach such processes from different angles.

The collection's autobiographical records are, for example, very telling regarding the features and character of the rural economy in early twentieth-century so-called Old Austria and the interwar Austrian state. Memories of working lives dominate personal narratives that concern rural Austria; hard manual work and the struggle to make a living, to preserve

the peasant farm or simply to survive permeated people's lives in households that largely functioned as spaces of production. No wonder that personal memories almost always place work and production within a household, family context, relating them to the ways labour was divided among its members.

By the late nineteenth century, Austria was extensively industrialised and urbanised, despite agriculture's economic, and thus also social, importance.<sup>38</sup> Looking into the economic life from the perspective of the household or family economy, on the level of everyday family life and living experience, on the microlevel that is, helps us relativise this large picture. It shows that well into the interwar period the Austrian economy and society displayed interrelated features stereotypically associated with peripheral (or semi-peripheral) economies: the vital role of subsistence particularly (though not exclusively) in rural areas, the remarkable oscillation of peasants and particularly of the rural working classes between the peasant economy and society, on the one hand, and the industrial and urban world, on the other, and essential ties of urban families to the rural world. In fact, the rural world appears to function along pre-industrial economic and social lines such as self-consumption, payment in kind and interpersonal and interfamilial relationships subject to social commitments.<sup>39</sup>

Self-consumption largely featured in peasant (especially mountain peasant) as well as rural working-class households. Yet in the case of the rural poor, the subsistence economy was part of their reciprocal relations with peasants living in the same region. The latter usually granted the former pieces of land, animals as well as rights (the right to graze goats and cows on peasant land, the right to collect various goods in peasant property). In autobiographical narratives, mothers and children, and less so fathers, would usually cultivate small pieces of land and take care of the animals (hens, goats, sometimes a cow) to secure the family's food throughout the year. They would also collect wood, small branches, mushrooms and all sorts of berries from forests: Wood was used to cook and as a heating material, small branches and their leaves were used to feed the animals, while mushrooms and berries enriched the family's diet.

Peasants would grant plots, goods and rights mainly in exchange for men's, women's and children's labour. Cottagers and small peasants provided "full" peasants not only with labouring hands when needed, at peak times, but also, especially in regions where the peasant economy largely focused on animal husbandry, with rural servants. By the age of 12 (sometimes even earlier) their sons and daughters would enter rural service, thus relieving family economy and strengthening pre-existing asymmetrical socio-economic ties.<sup>40</sup>

The links of rural working-class families with the peasant economy and society could be of different strength and character. The rural poor and their families were integrated in the peasant economy and society in many ways. Labour ties between peasant and cottager

households were long, continuous, intertwined with other social ties (for example, godparenthood) and involved almost every family member.

So, while the rural poor were attached to peasant societies (and their children's entering the rural service points to a reproduction of rural work relations and very strong social ties), at the same time this attachment decreased as family members improved their income by undertaking jobs outside peasant economy and thus heading towards the urban world. Autobiographers often mention their fathers (and rarely their mothers) working as factory workers; furthermore, they mention their fathers working as peddlers, masons in the city, or miners. Besides in certain mountainous regions, the Vorarlberg, the Upper Mühlviertel in Upper Austria and the Upper Waldviertel in Lower Austria, men, women and children still worked in domestic industries in winter, while also working for the peasants at peak times or sending their children into rural service.

Economic activities outside the peasant economy and society could then loosen the links of the rural working classes to the peasants. The case of railway men households, which comes up in several autobiographical records, and remained largely unnoticed up to the 1990s,<sup>41</sup> is most interesting. Rural servants often got married upon finding a job in the railways (mostly as signalmen) and lived on their wages, as well as on plots and coal (usually granted by the railway companies), while their wives and children still occasionally worked for the peasants. The continuation of former socio-economic ties encouraged pluriactivity and ensured a decent standard of living. Such ties appear to have extended to some urban households that maintained strong links with their rural families of origin and the respective rural communities; these links permitted them to move to the countryside and become rural in periods of acute crisis.

All in all, the transformation of the rural economy and society under the impact of processes such as industrialisation or urbanisation (inextricably connected with rural exodus), cannot be understood in their complexity if cut off from the workings of rural households and communities. And (auto)biographical records contribute decisively to rural historians' deep understanding of households and communities, and their role in the evolution of the rural economy and society. The shift towards the study of rural life through the eyes of historical subjects who narrate their experiences in no way precluded other methods and approaches. Research on rural household structures over time often went together with research on everyday life experiences.<sup>42</sup> The study of autobiographical texts went hand in hand with the study of censuses and statistical analyses. Thus, analysing soul books and censuses, adopting a macroscopic as well as comparative perspective while writing on rural life patterns, social hierarchies, family structures or the gender division of labour, remained crucial to Mitterauer's writings;<sup>43</sup> at the same time he utilised, where the period under examination permitted it, autobiographical material to interpret the mechanisms of Austrian rural society.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s in Vienna a "rural history turn" (my phrase) brought ego documents, historical anthropological methods, and research on the microlevel into the

centre of historians' interests. It influenced Austrian rural history towards approaches that combine an extraordinary variety of sources and methods while steadily bringing historical subjects in the centre of historical developments.<sup>45</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
- <sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ruralhistory.eu/> on the activities of the European Rural History Organization (EURHO). The first conference under its auspices was held in Bern in 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> Jeremy Burchhardt, "Agricultural History, Rural History, or Countryside History?," *Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2007): 469. There had been, however, a few early undertakings for a history of everyday life and living experience in rural England. See Raphael Samuel, ed., *Village Life and Labour* (London: Routledge, 1975).
- <sup>4</sup> Ernst Bruckmüller, *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2001), 381–82.
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Mitterauer, "Lebensformen und Lebensverhältnisse ländlicher Unterschichten," in Michael Mitterauer, *Familie und Arbeitsteilung: Historischvergleichende Studien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992), 33.
- <sup>6</sup> According to Mitterauer, "Inwohner" usually come up in scattered rural settlements, "Kleinhäusler" usually in closed village settlements. Michael Mitterauer, "Formen ländlicher Familienwirtschaft im österreichischen Raum," in *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation in ländlichen Gesellschaften*, ed. Josef Ehmer and Michael Mitterauer (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 215–16.
- <sup>7</sup> On the rather weak peasant milieu in Vorarlberg in comparison with other Austrian regions, see Hubert Weitensfelder, "Vom Stall in die Fabrik: Vorarlbergs Landwirtschaft im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft im 20. Jahrhundert: Regionen, Betriebe, Menschen*, ed. Ernst Bruckmüller, Ernst Hanisch, and Roman Sandgruber (Vienna: Carl Überreuter, 2003), 15–72, see esp. 56.
- <sup>8</sup> According to Ortmayr, rural service was usually a life-cycle experience in the fertile plains of Lower and Upper Austria, where rural servants were recruited from cottagers and "Inwohner" children, and usually a lifelong experience in some local societies of the Eastern Austrian Alps, where rural servants were recruited from the high number of rural servants' children born out of wedlock: Norbert Ortmayr, "Sozialhistorische Skizzen zur Geschichte des ländlichen Gesindes in Österreich," in *Knechte: Autobiographische Dokumente und sozialhistorische Skizzen*, ed. Norbert Ortmayr, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 19 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992), 321.
- <sup>9</sup> Hermann Wopfner, *Bergbauernbuch*, vol. 1, *Siedlungs- und Bevölkerungsgeschichte* (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1995), 133, 157; Hermann Wopfner, *Bergbauernbuch*, vol. 2, *Bäuerliche Kultur und Gemeinwesen* (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1995), 412; Ortmayr, "Sozialhistorische Skizzen," 353.
- <sup>10</sup> Mitterauer, "Lebensformen und Lebensverhältnisse," 33.
- <sup>11</sup> Oral history, which produces oral, mostly transcribed, ego-documents, has developed in Britain since the early 1970s (Graham Smith, "The Making of Oral History: Sections 1–2," in *Making History: The Changing Face of the Profession in Britain*, Institute of Historical Research, accessed 11 July 2021, [https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral\\_history.html](https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral_history.html)) and in Germany since the late 1970s and particularly the early 1980s (Dorothee Wierling, "Fünfundzwanzig Jahre: Oral History," *Werkstattgeschichte* 75 (2017): 83).
- <sup>12</sup> See "Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen," Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, accessed 11 July 2021, <https://wirtschaftsgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/doku-lebensgeschichten/>.
- <sup>13</sup> Günter Müller, "Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen," in *Briefe – Tagebücher – Autobiographien: Studien und Quellen für den Unterricht*, ed. Peter Eigner, Christa Hämmerle and Günter Müller (Vienna: StudienVerlag, 2006), 141.

- <sup>14</sup> “Dokumentenbestand,” Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, accessed 11 July 2021, <https://wirtschaftsgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/doku-lebensgeschichten/dokumentenbestand/>.
- <sup>15</sup> Michael Mitterauer, “Vorwort,” in Maria Gremel, *Mit neun Jahren im Dienst: Mein Leben im Stübl und am Bauernhof 1900–1930* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1983), 7.
- <sup>16</sup> On the book series, see “Editionsreihe ‘Damit es nicht verlorengelht...’,” Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, 11 July 2021, <https://wirtschaftsgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/doku-lebensgeschichten/editionenreihe-damit-es-nicht-verlorengelht/>; see also the very informative article by Günter Müller, “Den eigenen LebensSpuren nachspüren: Damit es nicht verlorengelht. Eigene Lebenserinnerungen zur Sprache bringen,” *LebensSpuren* 3 (2007): 437–44.
- <sup>17</sup> See, indicatively, Therese Weber, ed., *Häuslerkindheit: Autobiographische Erzählungen*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 3 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984).
- <sup>18</sup> See, indicatively, Eva Ziss, ed., *Ziehkinder*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 28 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994).
- <sup>19</sup> See, indicatively, Therese Weber, ed., *Mägde: Lebenserinnerungen an die Dienstbotenzeit bei Bauern*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 5 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1987); Ortmayr, *Knechte*. Ortmayr’s innovative oral history study on rural servants in interwar Upper Austria has been an integral part of the developing rural history in Vienna: Norbert Ortmayr, “Ländliches Gesinde in Oberösterreich 1918–1938,” in *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation*, ed. Josef Ehmer and Michael Mitterauer, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 40 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 325–416. On female servants’ position in relation to male servants, see also Maria Schuster, *Auf der Schattseite* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 38, and Rosa Scheuninger, ed., *Bäuerinnen erzählen: Vom Leben, Arbeiten, Kinderkriegen, Älterwerden*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 60 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), for example, 77.
- <sup>20</sup> Barbara Waß, “Für sie gab es immer nur die Alm...” *Aus dem Leben einer Sennerin*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 16 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988). See also Maria Papathanassiou, “Sennerinnen: Zur Geschichte ländlicher Frauenarbeit in den österreichischen Alpen vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Zwischenkriegszeit,” in *L’invention de l’architecture alpine: Die Erfindung der alpinen Architektur*, ed. Anne-Lise Head-König, Jon Mathieu, Luigi Lorenzetti, and Reto Furter, *Histoire des Alpes/Storia delle Alpi/Geschichte der Alpen* 16 (Zürich: Chronos, 2011), 297–317.
- <sup>21</sup> See, indicatively, Barbara Passruggger, *Hartes Brot: Aus dem Leben einer Bergbäuerin*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 18 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 60–61; Schuster, *Auf der Schattseite*, 244–45; Ortmayr, “Ländliches Gesinde,” 398. On cases of very young servants who abandoned their workplace because of mistreatment, see Maria Papathanassiou, *Zwischen Arbeit, Spiel und Schule: Die ökonomische Funktion der Kinder ärmerer Schichten in Österreich 1880–1939*, *Sozial- und Wirtschaftshistorische Studien* 24 (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik; Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 295–96.
- <sup>22</sup> See, indicatively, Schuster, *Auf der Schattseite*, 75–80, 193–97, 200–11.
- <sup>23</sup> Olivia Wiebel-Fanderl, *Religion als Heimat? Zur lebensgeschichtlichen Bedeutung katholischer Glaubensstraditionen* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993); Maria Papathanassiou, “Aspekte der bergbäuerlichen Lebenswelt in Österreich – vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Zwischenkriegszeit,” in Maria Schuster, *Arbeit gab’s das ganze Jahr: Vom Leben auf einem Lungauer Bergbauernhof*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 40 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), 236–42.
- <sup>24</sup> Peter Klammer, *Auf fremden Höfen: Anstiftkinder, Dienstboten und Einleger im Gebirge*, *Damit es nicht verlorengelht...* 26 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992), 187–209, 233–47. Klammer’s book regards the poor mountain region of Lungau (Salzburg) during the early decades of the twentieth century, and combines life-history records with material from the local archives, shedding light on various aspects of everyday life and individual experiences.
- <sup>25</sup> On how the (elderly) authors perceive the process of writing down their memories, see Müller, “Den eigenen LebensSpuren nachspüren,” 439–40.
- <sup>26</sup> See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 101–17. Iggers emphasises the combination of

quantitative with qualitative methods by Mitterauer and his co-workers at the University of Vienna since the early 1970s and speaks of “an Austrian variant of critical historical social science”. He recognises a combination of cultural history and the history of life patterns with the study of social structures and social processes (76). Since the early 1980s, social and cultural history in Vienna followed considerably different paths from German historical social science, in my view. The collection and research analysis of (auto)biographical records brought the history of everyday life as well as micro-approaches to history into the fore.

- <sup>27</sup> “Wiener Datenbank zur Europäischen Familiengeschichte,” <https://famdat.univie.ac.at>, and “Beschreibung und download der Daten,” <https://famdat.univie.ac.at/data-gr.html>, Wiener Datenbank zur Europäischen Familiengeschichte, accessed 17 September 2024.
- <sup>28</sup> Josef Ehmer and Michael Mitterauer, “Zur Einführung: Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation in ländlichen Gesellschaften,” in Ehmer and Mitterauer, *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation*, 30.
- <sup>29</sup> Alf Lüdtke, ed., *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989).
- <sup>30</sup> Mitterauer, “Vorwort,” 9.
- <sup>31</sup> For Austrian history-from-below studies at the time of this new approach to the Austrian rural past through the biographical records, see Hubert Christian Ehalt, ed., *Geschichte von unten: Fragestellungen, Methoden und Projekte einer Geschichte des Alltags* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984).
- <sup>32</sup> Peter Paul Kloß and Michael Mitterauer, “Vorwort der Reihenherausgeber,” in Ziss, *Ziehkinder*, 8. On the writing of autobiographical documents by the non-educated, the disadvantaged (the so-called “*populare Autobiographik*”), see, among others, Klaus Bergmann, *Lebensgeschichte als Appell: Autobiographische Schriften der “kleinen Leute” und Außenseiter* (New York: Springer, 1991), 15–39.
- <sup>33</sup> On the gender division of work, see Papathanassiou, “Aspekte der bergbäuerlichen Welt,” 211–16.
- <sup>34</sup> Müller, “Den eigenen LebensSpuren nachspüren,” 440.
- <sup>35</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, “Kulturgeschichte, Sozialgeschichte, historische Anthropologie,” *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 55, no. 2 (1968): 145–64.
- <sup>36</sup> Michael Mitterauer and Edith Saurer, “Editorial,” *Historische Anthropologie* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1.
- <sup>37</sup> Gert Dressel, *Historische Anthropologie: Eine Einführung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 25; Richard van Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie: Entwicklung – Probleme – Aufgaben* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000), 32.
- <sup>38</sup> On Austria’s economy, see Herbert Matis, “Austria: Industrialization in a Multinational Setting,” in *The Industrial Revolution in National Context*, ed. Mikulaš Teich and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229–38; Roman Sandgruber, *Österreichische Geschichte: Ökonomie und Politik. Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna: Verlag Carl Ueberreuter, 1995), 292–98; Bruckmüller, *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs*, 382, 394.
- <sup>39</sup> The following paragraphs draw on my readings of numerous life history records from the collection; many of them have been published in the volumes of the “Damit es nicht verlorengeht...” book series, mentioned here (see notes 8, 17–21, 23–24).
- <sup>40</sup> In his study on Pollham, a community in Upper Austria (Grieskirchen District, Hausruckviertel) Norbert Ortmayr has analysed these asymmetrical, reciprocal relations: Ortmayr, “Ländliches Gesinde,” 346–64.
- <sup>41</sup> See Werner Drobesh, “Gebirgsland im Süden: Kärntens Landwirtschaft 1918 bis 1999,” in Bruckmüller, Hanisch and Sandgruber, *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft*, 219: “The railway peasant, typical for the Carinthian very small peasantry vanished – he was the railway employee, who run a tiny farm.” In the early twentieth century, Upper Styrian agriculture was in crisis, especially after the 1908 and 1909 crop failures. Rural servants in Styria abandoned the plains and looked for employment in industry

in the area around the rivers Mur and Mürz or in transport companies like the Southern Railway Company (Südbahn) or the Crown Prince Rudolf Railway Company (Kronprinz-Rudolf-Bahn): Bernhard A. Reismann, "Landwirtschaft inmitten der Industrie: Die östliche Obersteiermark," in Bruckmüller, Hanisch, and Sandgruber, *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft*, 370.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Ehmer and Mitterauer, *Familienstruktur und Arbeitsorganisation*.

<sup>43</sup> See, especially, Mitterauer, *Familie und Arbeitsteilung*, 33–210.

<sup>44</sup> See two of his articles in Mitterauer, *Historisch-Anthropologische Familienforschung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990): "Ländliche Familienformen in ihrer Abhängigkeit von Umwelt und lokaler Ökonomie," 131–45 and "Gesindeleben im Alpenraum," 257–88.

<sup>45</sup> See the studies on Lower Austria by Ernst Langthaler, "Agrarwende in den Bergen: Eine Region in den niederösterreichischen Voralpen (1880–2000)" and "Agrarwende in der Ebene: Eine Region im niederösterreichischen Flach- und Hügelland (1880–2000)," in Bruckmüller, Hanisch and Sandgruber, *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft*, 563–630 and 651–740, respectively.