



Max Weber in the World – Max Weber in der Welt. Bonn: Max Weber Stiftung - Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland, 04.07.2012-05.07.2012.

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Max Weber in the World – Max Weber in der Welt

For over a century, Max Weber has been known as one of the most prominent social scientists of Germany. His writings have influenced numerous academics and have been fundamental for the development of modern European sociological thought. Today, his influence has expanded across the borders of Europe and into all corners of the world, where his literature has been translated numerous times and in a multitude of different languages.

The conference focused on the international reception of Max Weber as a key academic figure not only in sociology but as well in other fields such as economics, history, religious studies and political science. Its commitment to analyze the influence of Weber's publications in an international context was reinforced by an array of lecturers from around the world, delivering a truly multilingual presentation.

The papers examined Weber's influence throughout the twentieth century as well as in contemporary discourse. They presented a contrastive analysis of his works by investigating several thematic and conceptual obstacles that emerged during the translation process. They also examined important periods in Weber's life that impacted the conception of his theories but also strengthened his image as a leading academic.

The conference also marked a new phase of recognition for the Foundation of German Humanities Institutes Abroad, as it has now adopted the new name, "Max Weber Foundation" for its tenth anniversary. As stated by the President of the Max Weber Foundation Heinz

Duchhardt, the utilization of "Max Weber" as the new name will support the foundation's mission to establish its role as a leading international institution for social sciences, cultural studies and the humanities. Cornelia Quennet-Thielen (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung), Andreas Beyer (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris) and Wolfgang Schieder (K&U) emphasized in their opening remarks that the new name also contributes to preserving the legacy of Max Weber as one of the most prominent German scholars of our time.

The first panel, moderated by Werner Gephart (Bonn), explored the earlier reception of Max Weber's works and its progression over the course of the twentieth century.

MARTA BUCHOLC (Warsaw) addressed the cultural issues that led to the stagnation of Weberian literature in Poland during the early twentieth century. Key factors such as Weber's "antipolonistic" attitude as well as the negative stigma associated with him by Poles were further discussed by Bucholc in order to contend that no neutral or systematic analysis could be established given the ambiguity with regards to Weber himself and his work. Weber's response to the "Polish Question" was therefore never conceptualized due to the lack of coherence between generations of Polish intellectuals.

DITTMAR DAHLMANN (Bonn) analyzed the barriers that impeded the integration of Weberian literature among Russian intellectuals. Although Weber was a respected sociologist in Russia prior to the Russian Revolution, many of his publications became restricted due

to strict censorship on foreign literature. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Weber's work regained popularity as it became influential for the development of post-soviet sociology.

By periodizing the reception of Max Weber's works, WOLFGANG SCHWENTKER (Tokyo) examined the obstacles that delayed the translation and interpretation process in Japan. Although an early interest emerged among Japanese intellectuals with regards to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic*, its translations were only completed with intermediary languages such as English. This became the source of a century-long thematic struggle and it was only during the turn of the century that a new generation of young interpreters re-conceptualized his work, thus stimulating a new appreciation for Weberian literature in Japan.

ALEXANDRE TOUMARKINE (Istanbul) discussed the delayed reception of Weber's works in Turkey. By considering the socio-political instability in Germany during Weber's lifetime, Toumarkine contended that the Turkish society adopted a negative portrayal of Weber and as such, his theories on capitalism, modernity and especially secularism arrived relatively late in Turkey. The translation process also challenged the interpretation and re-conceptualization of Weberian theories in Turkey, given that the English language served as the primary intermediary between Weber's German literature and its translation into Turkish.

The second panel, moderated by Wolfgang Seifert (Heidelberg) focused on key periods of Max Weber's life that impacted the development of his theories.

PETER HERSCHE (Bonn) reconstructed Max Weber's trip to Italy in 1901 and investigated its effect on his subsequent theories. His stay in Italy served primarily as a therapeutic treatment for his degenerating health. However, he became immersed in a 1000 years old religious culture and consequently used the opportunity to converse with numerous Italians as to understand this catholic environment. Given Weber's strong Protestant background, he remained very critical towards Catholicism and as such, his critique on its religious sociology served as the foundation for his later thesis on the *Protestant Ethic*.

FRANCESCO GHIA (Trent) examined Weber's view on the notion of *Zeitgeist* in order to showcase his diverging opinion with regards to the view of French historian Hippolyte Taine. Weber was a supporter of romanticism and argued that the term *Zeitgeist* is defined as

the truth reflected through the arts. As an advocate for sociological positivism, Taine is highly critical of this position as for him, it is an irrational concept of truth and therefore it is better defined by his concept of *Milieu*, thus the physical environment that shapes a person. Weber rejects this notion given that humanity is not shaped by the environment but by the coinciding religious and economic dimensions of humanity, which he concluded through his studies on the Protestant Ethic.

LAWRENCE SCAFF (Detroit) explored Max Weber's first trip to America, the *Amerikareise*, in order to discuss the profound effect it had on the development of his future thesis but also on his reputation as a scholar. The voyage served as an investigation on the relationship drawn by Weber between *the Protestant Ethic*, seen as the up and coming influential secularist lifestyle of America, and the *capitalist spirit*, thus the new modern capitalist culture, resulting from America's recent industrialization. Scaff argued that Weber's reception in America was purely psychological, given that afterwards, he primarily became reputed for his accurate documentation of their culture.

SAM WHIMSTER (London) focused on Max Weber's notion of the nation state and the context in which it was developed. Whimster contended that Weber's idea of the nation state was shaped by his daily reality and environment, which at the time consisted of the German Empire. Therefore his critique is based on the political sociology of an empire. Weber's theory should thus be considered as encompassing both the empire and the nation state as comparable entities of analysis.

HINNERK BRUHNS (Paris) analyzed Max Weber's reaction with regards to Germany's policies during the First World War and the postwar years through the writings of historian Wolfgang J. Mommsen. At the beginning of the war, Weber maintained a supportive position claiming that the war was advantage and even necessary for Germany's defense however, as the war developed, he became more critical of Germany's policies of annexation. In his subsequent writings, he concentrated himself on the sociological dimensions of the war, criticizing its devastating effects on the German population. Bruhns explained that following the war, Weber sought more political participation in order to introduce more democratization and constitutional reforms in Germany.

The final panel, moderated by Gerd Krumeich (Düsseldorf), presented an overview of the current reception of Max Weber's literature, especially among non-Western intellectuals.

EDITH HANKE (Munich) presented a geographical analysis of Weber's reception as to compare the degree of cultural transfer resulting from the latter. Translations of Weber's work have for long been concentrated in the Western World and only recently a new appreciation for this literature has now emerged in other areas such as Russia, China, Japan and the Islamic world. Nevertheless, this form of cultural transfer still remains ambiguous and at times inconsistent, as most Weberian translations do not originate from the German language but from intermediary languages such as English and French.

STEFAN LEDER (Beirut) examined the integration of Weber's work in the Arabic world and among the Islamic community. Similar to many other non-Western translations, the interpretation of Weberian literature in the Arab world was conducted through intermediaries and as such, a thematic debate has developed from the latter; such terms as capitalism, Protestantism and ethic, remain conflicted with the socio-cultural dimensions of Islam and the Arabic culture. Leder discussed new developments within the translation process, particularly from a new movement consisting of Islamic scholars. Nevertheless, the debate between regional and systematic Arabic translations remains disputed.

By drawing on the writings of the renowned Egyptian scholar Abdel Wahab El-Messiri, HAGGAG ALI (Cairo) investigated the influence of Weber's works on the contemporary intellectual discourse on secularism and modernism in Egypt. Ali argued that many Egyptian scholars such as El-Messiri re-conceptualized Weber's works to draw relations between his theories and the new socio-political development of contemporary Egyptian society. The notion of separating the religious and societal life-worlds, as theorized by Weber, has become a prominent but also divisive topic in current Egyptian politics.

GANGOLF HÄBINGER (Frankfurt/Oder) addressed the historical dimensions that influenced Weber's examination of the universal historical problems of modernity. Such factors as the structure of the modern state, the rise of European imperialism, the development of democracy and the cultural significance of economic activities have all contributed to the inconsistency of the theory of Universal History. Häbinger analyzed these factors in relation to Weber's work on capitalism, modernity and world religions in order to provide a significant meaning for the Universal History of Culture.

As demonstrated by the presenters of the conference, Max Weber is a renowned figure in all parts of the world and his works remain highly influential in all fields of

social sciences. Although in current times he is well respected, his reception has not always been consistent throughout the twentieth century and many of his works arrived relatively late in most non-Western parts of the world. Many cultural and political factors have impeded this reception and as such, the appreciation for his literature is relatively recent. However, the interpretation process of Weber's literature has presented a common obstacle; many important concepts that are fundamental to Weber's theories cannot be effectively translated from the German language. The use of intermediary languages such as English and French has been widespread as a response to this issue however, the cultural transfer resulting from the latter remains inconsistent as there is a lack of direct interpretation. Nevertheless, a new generation of scholars has tackled these issues in order to provide a better understanding of Weber's works in their well respected languages. The works of Max Weber have become some of the most translated academic oeuvres and even today, the interest for his theories is ever growing.

Conference Overview:

Begrüßung

- Heinz Duchhardt (Stiftung DGIA)

- Staatssekretärin Cornelia Quennet-Thielen (BMBF)

- Dominik Geppert (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn)

- Andreas Beyer (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris)

- Wolfgang Schieder (Göttingen)

1. *Die internationale Weber-Rezeption in der Vergangenheit / Die Rezeption Max Webers durch die Welt*

Moderation: Werner Gephart (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Käthe Hamburger-Kolleg »Recht als Kultur«)

Warschau: Die Reaktion polnischer Intellektueller auf Max Webers Polenschriften

Marta Bucholc (Universität Warschau)

Moskau: Die Rezeption der Russlandstudien im Kreis der russischen Intelligenz

Dittmar Dahlmann (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn)

Tokio: Japanische Kontroversen über Max Webers »Protestantische Ethik«

Wolfgang Schwentker (Osaka University)

Istanbul: Die Rezeption Max Webers in der republikanischen Türkei

Alexandre Toumarkine (Orient-Institut Istanbul)

CNRS / EHESS, Paris)

2. *Max Webers Rezeption der Welt*

Moderation: Wolfgang Seifert (Universität Heidelberg)

Rom: Der Romaufenthalt (1901â1903) und Max Webers Verhältnis zum Katholizismus
Peter Hersche (Universität Bern)

Paris: Max Weber und die »Philosophie de lâart« von Hippolyte Taine

Francesco Ghia (Università degli Studi di Trento)

Washington: Max Weber und die USA

Lawrence A. Scaff (Wayne State University, Detroit)

London: Max Weber and the World of Empire

Sam Whimster (London Metropolitan University und K ate Hamburger-Kolleg »Recht als Kultur«)

Paris: Der »Soziologe« und der Krieg. Max Weber 1914â1920

Hinnerk Bruhns (Centre de recherches historiques,

3. *Die internationale Weber-Rezeption in der Gegenwart / Die Rezeption Max Webers durch die Welt*

Moderation: Gerd Krumeich (Heinrich Heine-Universität, Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe, D sseldorf)

Max Weber weltweit. Zur Rezeption eines Klassikers in Zeiten des Umbruchs

Edith Hanke (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe, M nchen)

Beirut: Max Weber und die arabische Welt

Stefan Leder (Orient-Institut Beirut)

Kairo: Max Weber and the Revision of Secularism in Egypt: The Example of Abdelwahab Elmessiri

Haggag Ali (Academy of Arts, Egypt)

Max Weber und die »universalgeschichtlichen Probleme«

Gangolf H binger (Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder)

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<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

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