

What's new about the *New Cultural History*?

An exemplary survey of the Austrian academic community

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1. Theoretical and methodological approaches

A main goal of this volume, and the conference preceding it, was to take some kind of comprehensive inventory of academic activities, of “institutions—themes—perspectives”, to quote the conference’s subtitle, filed under *Cultural History/Kulturgeschichte*. This is doubtless an ambitious and important endeavour. Still, before being able to give you the exemplary survey of the current situation in Austria I was asked to contribute in this essay, it seems worthwhile and even necessary to pause for a moment and think about some of the seminal definitions of *Cultural History*, or else of some premises to which the paradigm of *Cultural History*, esp. the *New Cultural History* is committed—for these are not necessarily, and for some of us even categorically *not*, organized in and around institutions and specific thematic topics.

I will shortly return to this issue. But let me first give you an overview of my contribution: In the first part of this essay I will briefly present my personal approach to what might be conceived of as (new) cultural history. I will do that by commenting on some important theoretical principles and methodological approaches, following some texts on *The New Cultural History* that may be regarded as formative for and seminal both in the Anglo-American and the continental academic community and important for my own formation as a scholar of cultural history: *The New Cultural History*, edited in 1989 by Lynn Hunt, and Roger Chartier’s important selection of essays published the same year under the title of *Cultural History between Representations and Practices*.¹

1 HUNT, 1989; CHARTIER, 1989a. For a recent overview taking into account a wide range of international contributions, see TSCHOPP, 2009, and the contributions in POIRRIER,

Drawing on these theoretical and methodological considerations I will in the second part move to giving you a short and exemplary survey of some trends and tendencies of the Austrian academic community in the field of *Cultural History*. The central question to establish the respective data was how to define criteria and indicators, which are by no means self-evident, to search for and find *Cultural History/Kulturgeschichte* in research and teaching in a national research environment.² Finally, I will close with some remarks about what my preliminary diagnosis might mean for the perspectives of a (*New*) *Cultural History* in Austria, but also beyond, especially in the European context.

By now it has become a commonplace that the *New Cultural History* is in fact not that *new* any more, but at least more than two decades old. It was at the end of the 1980s that it became visible throughout a range of different disciplines and in various countries. The 1990s then saw the humanities and social sciences substantially *turned* by culture.³ More than 20 years ago, Lynn Hunt in her introduction to *The New Cultural History* already mapped out some of the key paradigms and legacies, methods and aspects connected with the term that still are valid today.⁴ It has to be noted, though, that her issue and those of the other contributors' are not institutions, and only few research themes or topics which are only used to exemplify methodological tasks. In fact, some scholars referred to in the introduction, e.g. François Furet and Robert Darnton, even articulate explicit and strong criticisms of a cultural history defined in terms of its topics of inquiry.⁵

Hunt takes social history and its explanatory roots in Marxism and the *Annales* school as a starting point, but also as a means of differentiation between social and cultural history, as particularly since the 1980s "Marxists and Annalists alike have become increasingly interested in the history of culture"⁶ with "the most striking instance" [of their] "turn toward culture [being] their growing

2008. Important German introductory volumes on *Kulturgeschichte* are e.g. DANIEL, 2001; LANDWEHR/STOCKHORST, 2004; LANDWEHR, 2009; MAURER, 2008; TSCHOPP/WEBER, 2007.

- 2 I am grateful to Christina Linsboth for the basic data collection and procession that formed part of the background for the observations presented in this essay.
- 3 A comprehensive discussion of the most important paradigmatic shifts in the humanities, social sciences and cultural studies during the last decades, often labeled as "turns" is provided by BACHMANN-MEDICK, 2006.
- 4 HUNT, 1989, p. 1-22.
- 5 ID., p. 9, with reference to FURET, 1983, p. 405, and DARNTON, 1980, p. 364.
- 6 HUNT, 1989, p. 4.

interest in language.”⁷ As a consequence, with the criticism of economic and social history and their master narratives, models and theories to explain history and society and with the turns to language and discourse, symbols and meanings, texts and pictures, the crucial question addressed “culture’s relationship to the social world”.⁸ Thus, the debate in the Anglo-American academy has always been more concerned about the relations between social and cultural issues and their complementarity than in the German speaking countries, where a rather strong opposition between social and cultural history prevailed for a long time.⁹

Out of the different models to answer these questions, the anthropological model, mostly connected with the name of Clifford Geertz, was one of the most influential, both in the English speaking world and beyond it.¹⁰ Deciphering of meaning instead of causal laws of explanation became one of the central tasks of Cultural History, after a while followed by a harsh criticism of the notion of a fixed, coherent and common meaning that one would allegedly be able to hermeneutically find within the text.¹¹

Drawing on Frederic Jameson, Hunt asserts that for the New Cultural History, in line with newer literary criticism, the question is less what a text *means*, but rather, how it *works*.¹² Hunt takes this argument further by drawing on her own research on the impact of revolutionary discourse in the French revolution: “The point of the endeavour was to examine the ways in which linguistic practice, rather than simply reflect social reality, could actively be an instrument of (or constitute) power. [...] Words did not just reflect social reality; they were instruments for transforming reality.”¹³

7 ID., p. 5. For a German anthology on the *Annales* school see MIDDELL, 1994.

8 HUNT, 1989, p.10.

9 See e.g. WEHLER, 1998 and 2001. For reconciling voices e.g. TSCHOPP, 2009; LANDWEHR 2009, as well as his contribution to this volume.

10 Most influential in the German speaking world are probably GEERTZ, 1975 and 1983. On the theoretical and methodological issue of meaning as constitutive for a cultural historical perspective and thus its importance for the paradigm of *Kulturgeschichte* in the German speaking academy see LANDWEHR, in this volume, as well as the respective chapters in DANIEL, 2001, on different related traditions both in historiography and in other disciplines.

11 HUNT, 1989, p. 12-14.

12 JAMESON, 1981, quoted in HUNT, 1989, p. 15.

13 HUNT, 1989, p. 17. This constructionist argument was also developed and became highly influential in the field of gender studies and gender history, SCOTT, 1986, and BUTLER, 1990 and 2004.

This argument leads to Roger Chartier, who figures prominently in Hunt's introduction and also contributed a paper to the volume.¹⁴ He programmatically titled the introduction to his own beautiful book *Die unvollendete Vergangenheit. Geschichte und die Macht der Weltauslegung* (first published in French, 1989, and translated the same year into German) "Kulturgeschichte zwischen Repräsentationen und Praktiken" – "Cultural history between Representations and Practices".¹⁵

"The struggles in the realm of representations are not less important than economic struggles, if one wants to understand the mechanisms, through which a group establishes or tries to establish its own vision of the social world, its values and its hegemony."¹⁶

So, within structures and relations of power culture does not play less important a role than economy or politics, and neither do economic and social relations determine cultural issues. They are themselves fields of cultural practice and production, or in Chartier's words: "The representations of the social world themselves are the constituents of social reality".¹⁷

Cultural History therefore always is a Cultural History of the Social. That is one of the most important convictions of a *New Cultural History* which can by now be assumed to be shared by most of its representatives.

Drawing on Michel Foucault, Chartier analyzes discourses as *discursive practices*. He does not read them as media of a global ideology, but is interested in their practical layout, their rhetorical interconnections and their strategies of argumentation and evidence. This leads to looking for the relations between texts and their readers, and the production of meaning.¹⁸ Thus, two central questions are:

- Under which circumstances a text becomes *valid* for the reader's specific situation?
- How can a narrative configuration effect a re-figuration of one's own experience?

14 CHARTIER, 1989b.

15 CHARTIER, 1989a.

16 ID., p. 12: translation.

17 Quoted in HUNT, 1989, p. 7, footnote 20. For similar arguments elaborated in the German debates see e.g. LANDWEHR, 2003, STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 2005.

18 CHARTIER, 1989a, p. 18-19.

Accordingly, Chartier's notion of appropriation stresses the variety of the uses of texts and the heterogeneity of ways of reading, the meaning of which is exactly *not* set within the text nor determined by it. Cultural History thus is concerned with representations, practices and modes of appropriation:

- representations as classifications, inclusions and exclusions, through which the social world is organized as a historical product;
- practices generating meaningful representations;
- modes of appropriation confirming and opposing, negotiating, modifying, and adjusting them.¹⁹

2. Cultural History in Austria

In how far would one find these concepts and principles or at least some of them integrated in current *Cultural History* endeavours in Austria²⁰? I will start genealogically and take a look back to the 1990s, the *high tide* of *Cultural History*/*Kulturgeschichte* and *Cultural Studies*/*Kulturwissenschaften* and its main reception in the German speaking world. I therefore want to introduce two large-scale initiatives that played a seminal role in the advancement of the cultural turn in the humanities and Cultural Studies in Austria. One of them was a thematic research programme, the other a funding programme, both explicitly including cultural historical approaches as sketched above within their theoretical and methodological framework.

19 ID., p. 21. A comparable approach is represented by Stuart Hall in his seminal model on the Encoding/Decoding of meaning, cf. HALL, 1980. For Halls impact on British Cultural Studies see e.g. HALL, 2000; GILROY, 2000; also TURNER, 1996; MARCHART, 2007; LUTTER/REISENLEITNER, 2008.

20 On Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Austria's most important funding organization for basic research, and esp. its funding projects see <http://www.fwf.ac.at/de/projects/sfb.html>; for details on the SFB *Modernity: Vienna and Central Europe around 1900* see <http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/moderne/>; as well as <http://www-gewi.uni-graz.at/fomop/home.html> presenting a follow-up network based on the research undertaken within the SFB; all websites visited on 07.09.2010.

2.1 Special Research Programme (SFB) Modernity: Vienna and Central Europe around 1900

The first programme was a long term *Special Research Programme* (SFB) funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) between 1994 and 2004 titled *Modernity: Vienna and Central Europe around 1900*.²¹ It was the first SFB-project in the humanities ever funded in Austria, based at the University of Graz. It included projects from about seven disciplines and employed some 40 research fellows, a lot of them post graduates (both PhD students and post docs) and junior fellows. Its aim was to research and discuss modernity as a “cultural phenomenon, a process which is linked to economic and social transformations that started in the 17th and 18th century [including significant] fundamental socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural changes”²².

Unlike in many traditional approaches, *Vienna Modernity* (Wiener Moderne) was not conceived of in terms of a reductive notion of culture confined to art and cultural production/creativity, but the very concept included social crises and conflicts connected with phenomena such as nationalisms, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and struggles of identity.²³

The SFB was organized around specific research topics concentrating on Vienna and Central Europe, but it also highlighted its explicit problem-oriented and trans-disciplinary orientation represented in five research groups working under the headlines of

- isms and ideologies,
- aesthetics of modernity — modernistic aesthetics,
- culture and society,

21 <http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/moderne/edok.htm>, 07.09.2010.

22 For a comprehensive list of publications from the research output of the SFB see <http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/moderne/edok.htm>, 07.09.2010. An even further reaching critique of the traditional “Vienna Modernity” paradigm is provided by MADERTHANER/MUSNER, 1999, see also p. 184 below.

23 On the current research policy and programmes of the ministry see http://www.bmwf.gv.at/startseite/forschung/national/programme_schwerpunkte/forschungsprogramme_schwerpunkte_ueberblick/, 10.09.2010. Information on older research programmes is not available on this website any more. The website of the FSP *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften* that provided a platform for the emerging research network from 2000 to 2005 (<http://www.culturalstudies.at>) had to go offline due to a lack of funding.

- cultural transfers,
- identities.

2.2 Research Programme (FSP) Cultural Studies/ Kulturwissenschaften

The second initiative was the research programme *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften*, which I had the pleasure to develop and head. It was implemented in 1998 as one of the central research initiatives within the department of Social Sciences of the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research. From then until 2003, more than 50 research projects were funded, and as the *Modernity-SFB* did, we were able to develop a far-reaching research network.²⁴

The main conceptual issue was to develop and work on a scholarly yet also political notion of culture as well as to historically investigate the different traditions of Cultural Studies and Kulturwissenschaften, however not only concentrate on conceptual differences, but also make visible their convergences, intersections and the possibilities of integrating different approaches.²⁵ Strategically, the program aimed at stimulating trans-disciplinary research both on a national and international level. But it was also and explicitly committed to the specific Cultural Studies lineage of the *Birmingham-Tradition*, an intellectual practice describing how everyday life is defined in and by culture—as well as offering strategies for mastering and changing it.²⁶

The research projects, a lot of them with a historical perspective, therefore comprised a variety of different topics, such as

- migration, minorities and issues of multiculturalism,
- gender issues,
- (post-)colonialism and the construction of identities,
- ethnicity and nation,
- economic and media globalization,
- culture, nature, and science.

24 See LINDNER, 1998, LUTTER/MUSNER, 2002 and 2003; cf. also the contributions in GÖTTLICH et al., 2001, esp. LUTTER, 2001 and WAGNER, 2001. On the interrelations of British Cultural Studies and Cultural History see BURKE, 2004 and 2008, cf. also LUTTER/REISENLEITNER, 2002.

25 For introductions and anthologies see e.g. TURNER, 1996; HOFMANN et al., 2006; LINDNER, 2000, MARCHART, 2007; LUTTER/REISENLEITNER, 2008; see also GROSSBERG, 2010.

Both programs—with all their differences—shared the features that they were basically strategically and methodologically oriented (rather than focusing on specific topics), and that they rested to a large extent on flexible networks, organized around workshops and conferences, summer schools and international exchange—but were predominantly *not* rooted in the established academic, esp. university institutions.

2.3 Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (IFK)

This quality of not being a traditional inner-academic institution is also characteristic of the *Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften* (IFK). It was founded in 1993 and has by now developed into one of the most visible institutes of advanced study both on a national and international level, concentrating on trans-disciplinary research and studies of culture. Its approach is made very clear by the mission statement on the IFK's website:

“[...] cannot be grasped merely historically as the memory of a society but is equally understood as a realm of discourse regarding society's future prospects. Culture may be understood as a *dynamic process* that produces and interprets meanings and is *shaped by political, social, and economic contexts*. Culture as the sum of life-forms and life-styles of human beings, *differently determined according to place, society, and history*, is not self-referential but articulates societal processes as well.”

“Thus the task of cultural studies is not only to analyse the ‘interior’ of given aesthetic, literary and popular practices, but also to assay their external conditions. Consequently, cultural studies can be understood as a project of deciphering *cultures as textures of the social*.”²⁶

The institute's research and administrative practice thus relies on some basic features:²⁷

26 <http://www.ifk.ac.at/about-en.html>, 16.09.2010: excerpt, my choice and highlights. See also the mission statement at the institute's most recently relaunched website at http://www.ifk.ac.at/cms/index.php/mission_en.html, 20.09.2010.

27 http://www.ifk.ac.at/cms/index.php/ifk_senior-fellow_en.html; <http://www.ifk.ac.at/cms/index.php/certainty-undermined.html>; <http://www.ifk.ac.at/cms/index.php/alle>

- structures built upon the open exchange between *senior* and *junior fellows* from different countries, research environments, and disciplines;
- this dialogue, though, is led within a number of *research foci* changing over time and designed to strengthen the institute's profile;
- lectures, workshops and *conferences*, *graduate schools* and postgraduate research, as well as
- *publications* to promote the common problem-oriented and trans-disciplinary issues.

Today the IFK has become the very institution in Austria where form and content (as laid out above), both in terms of *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften* and of *Cultural History*, merge in a very innovative, yet sustainable way. It does not—and cannot—provide research-based undergraduate and graduate teaching, which is evidently the task of the universities.

2.4 Academic institutionalization of Cultural History?

This takes me to my last topic, the exemplary survey of the current state of Cultural History in the Austrian academic community. The leading questions for my short survey that can only be preliminary in this context and are by no means intended to be comprehensive, were the following:

- Which *institutions* document research and teaching in Cultural History (universities, *extra-universitarian* institutions)?
- How are existent activities in Cultural History *organized*? Can they be described as *institutionalized*, i.e. rooted within their home institutions (e.g. institutes; research or studies' programmes), or are they rather organized around research projects and project clusters, book series, conferences?
- Are the theoretical and methodological *notions and concepts* of *Cultural History* or *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften* underlying these initiatives made explicit or defined in terms of mission statements, research profiles etc.?
- To which extent are activities in Cultural History explicitly related to *research traditions* such as *Cultural Studies*, *Kulturwissenschaften*, or specific trends in historiography?
- Are there any *specific topics* or *thematic clusters* to be traced?

termine.html; <http://www.ifk.ac.at/cms/index.php/ifk-series-parabasen.html>, all 20.09.2010.

First of all it is important to notice that—in contrast to the situation ten years ago—there are no specific public or private funding initiatives to support *Cultural History* and/or *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften* in Austria. The most important public funders such as the national research fund (FWF), the Vienna fund for science and technology (WWTF), or the Austrian Academy of sciences (ÖAW) are all funding projects in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies and are also—inter- and trans-disciplinary—but not specifically *Cultural History* or *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften*.²⁸

If we turn to universities and focus on departments of humanities and cultural studies, and particularly on historically oriented disciplines, we will find that five of the six major Austrian universities—Graz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Salzburg, Vienna –, as well as one of the newly restructured Art Universities, the *University of Applied Arts* in Vienna²⁹, clearly feature activities in *Cultural History* and *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften*.

The University of Vienna provides a somewhat typical example for the structural situation at the beginning of the new century: With the implementation of the new university legislation after 2002,³⁰ the traditional Faculty of Humanities was split in two, each covering more than a dozen departments of different scale and even more chairs:³¹

- *Historisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät*
- *Philologisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät*

The statement of the *Historisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät* in the university's development plan³² names a number of exciting *Themenfelder* (topical areas) and *Forschungsschwerpunkte* (research priorities), using the term *Cultural History* or a related notion of *culture*, such as

28 See <http://www.fwf.ac.at/de/projects/index.html>; <http://www.wwtf.at/programmes/>; <http://www.oew.ac.at/deutsch/stipendienpreise/index.html>, all 16.09.2010.

29 <http://www.dieangewandte.at/jart/prj3/angewandte/main.jart?rel=en&reserve-mode=active>, 16.09.2010.

30 For an overview see <http://www.univie.ac.at/organisation/>, 16.09.2010. Details at <http://www.univie.ac.at/dekanat-hist-kult/> and <http://phil-kult.univie.ac.at/>, both 16.09.2010.

31 The text is available at <http://kommentare.rdb.at/kommentare/s/ug/htdocs/start.html>, 16.09.2010.

32 http://public.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/rektorat/Aktuelles/Entwicklungsplan/UW_Entwicklungsplan_2009.pdf, p. 63–69, 16.09.2010.

- *Kulturen des euromediterranen Raumes und Altertumswissenschaften (topical area)*,
- *Historisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Europawissenschaften (topical area)*,
- *Visuelle Kulturgeschichte—Kulturen und Medien des Visuellen (research priority)*,
- *Wissenschaftsgeschichte—Wissenskulturen—Wissensgesellschaften (research priority)*.

Still, of all the chairs within the faculty, only three have an explicit reference to Cultural History, none of the positions have so far been filled and only one has already been advertised.

The statement of the *Philologisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät* in the development plan and the concrete measures taken show even fewer claims, far-reaching or sustainable activities relating to Cultural History.³³

Still, one will find a number of research initiatives on different levels in both faculties, e.g. large scale funded research projects and networks that bridge different institutes, but also departments (and faculties) such as the National Research Network *Kulturgeschichte des westlichen Himalaya seit dem 8. Jahrhundert*.³⁴

A particular initiative is represented by the *interdisciplinary Cultural Studies working group* (since 1998), assembling teachers and researchers from different disciplines and departments to institutionalize research and teaching in Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna that also cooperates with institutions outside the university.³⁵ Its mission statement does not only show a clear commitment to inter- und transdisciplinarity, but also refers to some of the central approaches and methodological principles mentioned above:

“We share a scientific commitment that eschews traditional boundaries between academic disciplines. Our aim is to focus on the cultural process (i.e. the motivations, orientations, and regulations which permeate all areas of work and life), and also to analyse cultural production.”³⁶

Moreover, one can find both overarching thematic priorities on the level of several departments, such as *media cultures* and a *cultural history of knowledge*

33 Id., p. 69-75.

34 <http://kunstgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/ifk-2-31/>, 20.09.2010.

35 <http://www.univie.ac.at/culturalstudies/netw/kooperation.htm>, 16.09.2010.

36 <http://www.univie.ac.at:80/Geschichte/htdocs/site/arti.php/90057>, 16.09.2010.

at the history department,³⁷ and a number of individual research projects of the institutes' members, a lot of them including internal and external as well as international cooperation.

The same basically applies to other Austrian universities, if mostly—on a smaller scale—due to their general size. The most *institutionalized* of these initiatives are

- *Zentrum für Kulturwissenschaften* (University of Graz)³⁸
- *Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institut für Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte* (University of Graz)³⁹
- *Zentrum für jüdische Kulturgeschichte* (University of Salzburg)⁴⁰

All of these universities feature different activities in Cultural History, mostly on a very low level of *institutionalization* and, perhaps most importantly, with only two study programmes in cultural studies in the whole country:

- BA and MA *Applied Cultural Studies* (*Angewandte Kulturwissenschaften*) at the University of Klagenfurt—this is the only *full* teaching programme according to the *Bologna*-architecture;⁴¹
- Interdisciplinary *Erweiterungscurriculum Kulturwissenschaften/Cultural Studies* at the University of Vienna—i.e. it has *only* the status of a cluster/module that can be combined with several BA or MA studies.⁴²

37 <http://www.univie.ac.at:80/Geschichte/htdocs/site/arti.php/90057>, 16.09.2010.

38 <http://www.kulturwissenschaften.at/index.php>, 20.09.2010.

39 <http://www.lbg.ac.at/en/humanities/lbi-history-society-and-culture>, 20.09.2010.

40 http://www.uni-salzburg.at/portal/page?_pageid=244,136522&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL, 20.09.2010.

41 <http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/main/inhalt/4704.htm>; among others the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research and the University of Vienna provide a dossier with general information, links and documents on the *Bologna process*, the initiative of the European Union to build a European higher education area: http://bmwf.gv.at/startseite/studierende/studieren_im_europaeischen_hochschulraum/bologna_prozess/ and <http://bologna.univie.ac.at/index.php?id=aktuelles0>, both 20.09.2010.

42 <http://www.univie.ac.at/culturalstudies/studium.htm>, 20.09.2010. On the scarcity of curricula in cultural history see also PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS, p. 185 below.

Moreover there are so-called *Wahlmodule* (elective modules) *Kulturgeschichte*, e.g. for MA at the University of Vienna.⁴³

On the other hand, a particular feature of the Austrian academic community not only in the field of Cultural History, but in the whole area of the Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies is a very strong presence of *extra-universitarian* academic institutions operating outside the universities, with the IFK being the most prominent in the field of Cultural Studies. Among them one can roughly differentiate those having *Cultural History* and/or *Kulturwissenschaften/Cultural Studies* as the main task, such as the *Institut für Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte* (IKT)⁴⁴ at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) or the already mentioned *Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften* (IFK); and others that work in these fields only within particular projects and research initiatives, such as the

- *Institut für Wissenschaft und Kunst* (IWK)⁴⁵
- *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen* (IWM)⁴⁶
- *Institut für jüdische Geschichte in Österreich* (INJÖST)⁴⁷

Another specificity of the situation in Austria is the number of strong and productive inter-personal networks and project clusters that reach far beyond the home institutions of their participants, often integrate independent scholars, and establish links—both on a theoretical and thematic level—between the initiatives of the 1990s and the current endeavours, esp. those in the extra-universitarian scene and the project oriented initiatives within the universities. A representative example provides the network of Roman Horak (Univ. of Applied Arts, Vienna), Helmut Konrad (Univ. of Graz; *FSB Modernity*), Lutz Musner (IFK, Vienna), Wolfgang Maderthaner (*Labour History Society*, Vienna), Siegfried Mattl (Univ. of Vienna; *Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institut für Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vienna) which has conducted several major research projects employing junior researchers mostly based in Vienna, but also within an international network covering, among others, the University of Berkeley that resulted in a series of important publications in *Cultural Studies* and *Cultural History*.⁴⁸ The theo-

43 http://www.pri.univie.ac.at:80/activecc/geschichte/index.php?m=D&t=mageschichte&c=show&CEWebS_what=BA~32~Kulturgeschichte, 20.09.2010.

44 <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/ikt/>, 20.09.2010.

45 <http://www.univie.ac.at/iwk/>, 20.09.2010.

46 <http://www.iwm.at/>, 20.09.2010.

47 http://www.injoest.ac.at/institut/das_institut/, 20.09.2010.

48 E.g. MADERTHANER/MUSNER, 1999; HORAK et al., 2001 and 2004.

retical approaches of this research group can be described as rooted in *Cultural Studies* and *Cultural History*, and some of its most important methodological and thematic foci can be summarized as follows:

- deconstruction of *Wiener Moderne* as an elitist culture,
- labour history and the history of Austria's Social Democratic Party,
- mass culture in Vienna in the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g. football),
- urban cultures, esp. youth cultures in the suburbs,
- communication and consumer cultures and their role in identity constructions.

Another example is provided by the cooperation of Moritz Csáky and Heidemarie Uhl, both institutionally based at the *Institut für Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte* (IKT) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Moritz Csáky was the institute's director between 1997 and 2009), but also within the more informal network of the *SFB Modernity* discussed above.⁴⁹

The theoretical basis of their work clearly lies in the fields of *Kulturwissenschaften* and *Cultural History*, their thematic interests focus on:

- modernity in Vienna and Central Europe around 1900,
- (Austrian) memory and identity,
- identity and memory politics after the "3rd Reich" (in the 2nd republic),
- cultural history of the performative forms of the theatre and the *operetta* in Vienna.

These and comparable interpersonal networks are all characterized by their explicit theoretical approach, their theoretical and methodological diversity, drawing on approaches in the *New Cultural History*, as sketched above, and on a variety of traditions in *Cultural Studies* and *Kulturwissenschaften*. Their notions and concepts of *Cultural History* or *Cultural Studies* are made explicit or are defined in terms of mission statements, research profiles on their project websites, in publications, at conferences, and via other means of academic communication.

On a more institutional level, this kind of explicit commitment to *Cultural History* combined with methodological transparency seems independent from the level of institutionalization:

49 Research and publications at <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/ikt/forschungen.html>, 20.09.2010.

Examples of good practice are:⁵⁰

- *Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies working group* (University of Vienna),
- *Institute for Economic and Social History* (University of Vienna),
- *History Department* (University of Salzburg),
- *Department Cultural History and Humanities* (Univ. of Applied Arts, Vienna),
- *Zentrum für Kulturwissenschaften* (University of Graz),
- *Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften* (IFK),
- *Institut für Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte* (ITK, Austrian Academy of Sciences).

Examples of *not so good practice*, however, are specifically given by a considerable part of those university initiatives mostly imposed *from above* by the management during the restructuring of the institutions both on an organizational and on a thematic level. Particularly the example of the large faculties at the University of Vienna—the *Historisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät* and the *Philologisch-kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät*—show that often you will find less content behind exciting and far reaching labels and headlines than it might be expected.

3. Preliminary conclusions

Thus, to answer my initial question, a superficial survey of the Austrian landscape would mostly not tell you what is *new about new cultural history endeavours* as defined above; it will rather give you an idea of managerial research and knowledge politics at the beginning of the 21st century.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the very researchers and students, working in the smaller entities of the large structures and involved in the endeavours developed therein in a more *grassroots* oriented research and teaching practice, would not be committed to *Cultural History*. On the contrary: If one takes a closer look at the levels of particular departments, research projects—funded and unfunded alike—, networks and project clusters, one discovers a lot of exciting activities thoroughly committed to the theoretical and methodological principles of (*New*) *Cultural History* and covering a wide range

50 I cannot go into any details here, but the excerpts from the mission statement of the IFK and the Cultural studies working group at the University of Vienna quoted above from their websites are exemplary for the practice of the initiatives mentioned below. For more information see the weblinks quoted in the footnotes above.

of diverse topics from Antiquity and the Middle Ages to Contemporary History and from Area Studies to Global History.

Therefore, the existence and prosperity of *Cultural History* definitely does not seem a matter of specific thematic topics. The major problem—especially within the European framework—is rather, that current forms of managerial politics tend to highlight plans and big labels instead of *real* activities and to thereby make invisible and sometimes even impossible the continuous background *work*, which draws on structures and research traditions developed in and before the 1990s.

One problematic result specific to Austria is the lack of solid study programmes in *Cultural History* and *Cultural Studies/Kulturwissenschaften*.⁵¹ Another more general issue is the necessity for researchers to devote much time to adjusting their projects to the current rhetoric and organizational frames without many possibilities to sustainably link them to existing endeavours.

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51 For similarities and differences in Switzerland and Germany see the contributions of DEJUNG and LANDWEHR in this volume.

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