Shadow economies and irregular work in urban Europe

16th to early 20th centuries

edited by

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and
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[1] See Thomas Buchner, 'Shadow economies and non-regular work practices in urban Europe (16th to early 20th centuries)', *Hamburger Wirtschafts-Chronik* N.F. 6 (2006), 147-55; Georg Stöger, 'Tagungsbericht *Shadow economies and non-regular work practices in urban Europe (16th to early 20th centuries).* 17.02.2006-18.02.2006, Universität Salzburg', *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 13.05.2006, http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=1127.

It can be questioned whether this approach provides insight into how work or masculinity were experienced in the trade, since it mainly addresses the discourse of masculinity. But how can experience be distinguished from discourse? Apart from the philosophical answer that the verbal expression of an experience shapes experiences, the presence of men in ladies' hairdressing shows how the discourse controls reflection on the work. The inappropriate role of male craftsmen in the field of ladies' hairdressing was therefore never discussed, nor was the suitability of women. Instead, aspects of qualification were debated in order to find arguments against both female and male competition. In these debates, credentialization was linked to aspects of legality and not having certification was represented as seemingly illicit. Thirty years after the *'kleiner Befähigungsnachweis'*, qualification became as important for trade law as it had previously been in hairdressers' and other artisans' discourse. After the introduction of the *'großer Befähigungsnachweis'* in 1935, permission to carry on a trade was only given to those who had a masters' trade certificate (*Meisterbrief*). The effect of reducing competition from self-employed artisans was welcomed in many trades without a gender-specific context, but the arguments hairdressers brought before 1935 against women in their field show the importance of the category of gender. Furthermore, the reference to qualifications, stressing aspects of quality and industriousness, only appeared to be distanced from gender-specific implications since it ignored the inequality of educational opportunities. Although the option of a formal apprenticeship was open to girls as well as to boys, girls rarely made use of it in the beginning of the twentieth century, because within the bourgeois family ideology their future role as wives and mothers made credentialization superfluous.

In the understanding of trade law regulations as articulated by male hairdressers, aspects of morality and of gender-specific educational opportunity were not addressed. Instead, traditional apprenticeships, when supplemented with modern elements like vocational schools, were perceived as the only model available. Long before self-employed work without a master's trade certificate became illegal under the law, it was also regarded as illicit by men in hairdressing who were defending their traditional position.

Mobility and Irregularities: Itinerant Sales in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s[1]

Sigrid Wadauer

1. Introduction

In public debates of the interwar period, mobile and sedentary trades were seen as opposites, similar to the distinction made between legal and illicit trade. A fixed location seemed to promote obedience to regulations whereas – much to the anger of sedentary shopkeepers – many trade regulations did not seem to effectively limit itinerant trades, which instead appeared highly uncontrollable. Itinerant traders were suspected of fraud, tax evasion, smuggling, and selling stolen goods or goods of lesser quality. They were accused of being a public annoyance or even a threat to public health. In addition, they were regarded as superfluous and traditional, as a 'parasitic' rather than a positive contribution to national economy.[2]

The close interrelationship of mobility and irregularity appears to be an almost timeless feature of small-scale distribution. The research literature on *irregular* (or *informal*) economy[3] often addresses practices such as street vending, hawking, and peddling.[4] Very similar phenomena can be found in different countries, in different eras, in different socio-economic and political contexts, and in different ethnicities.[5] An irregular

1 My paper presents the results of research projects funded by the Austrian Science Fund (START-project Y367) and an ERC-Starting Grant (200918 Production of Work).

2 John C. Cross, 'Street Vendors, Modernity and Postmodernity: Conflict and Compromise in the Global Economy', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 20 (2000), 29-51, here 42.

3 This term was coined by Keith Hart, 'Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* I (1973), 61-89.

4 *Ibid.*, 69.

5 Alfonso Morales, 'Peddling Policy: Street Vending in Historical and Contemporary Context', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 20 (2000), 76-98, here 84; Regina Austin, '"An Honest Living": Street Vendors, Municipal Regulation, and the Black Public Sphere', *The Yale Law Journal* 103 (1994), 2119-31; Suzanne Wasserman, 'The Good Old Days Of Poverty: Merchants and the Battle Over Pushcart Peddling on the Lower East Side', *Business and Economic History* 27 (1998), 330-9; Robert L. Boyd, 'Race, gender, and survivalist entrepreneurship in large northern cities during the Great Depression, *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 34 (2005), 331-9; Alejandro González Arriagada, *Surviving in the City. The Urban Poor of Santiago de Chile 1930-1970* (Uppsala, 2000); Francis Neshamba, 'The Transition of Enterprises from Informal to Formal – Some Evidence from Zimbabwe', *'Small Enterprise Development' – An International Journal* 8 (1997), 1-11; John C. Cross, 'Co-optation,

economy, as several scholars point out, is not exclusively associated with developing countries or to economic crisis and poverty.[6] It clearly did not disappear with economic development but rather expanded in the twentieth century, presumably because of formalization.[7]

The literature on what is called the *irregular, undocumented, informal, shadow, grey, clandestine,* or *parallel* economy is very rich and often contradictory.[8] It refers to a variety of different and often elusive practices.[9] The terms used for it are highly ambiguous, in turn raising a number of questions.[10] If we start with typologies – as Alfonso Morales has pointed out – we risk creating an image of separate entities, instead of seeing the multiple interrelations and transformations of regular/formal and irregular/informal economies.[11] Thus, instead of commencing with intrinsic and ahistorical attributes of practices[12], this paper will discuss the making of irregularity in a specific historical context: in the interwar period in Austria prior to the *Anschluss* of 1938. At that time, there was a wide variety of ways to make a living involving spatial mobility, ranging from recognized economic activities to illicit or prosecuted forms. Although occupations were differentiated by legal trade regulations, the practices carried out were

Competition, and Resistance State and Street Vendors in Mexico City', *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998), 41-61.

6 Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes, 'World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy', in Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton (eds.), *The Informal Economy. Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (Baltimore and London, 1989), 11-37, here 12; M. L. Truu and P. A. Black, 'The Urban Informal Sector and Market Imperfections', *South African Journal of Education* 48 (1980), 12-27; Saskia Sassen, 'The Informal Economy: Between New Developments and Old Regulations', *The Yale Law Journal*, 103 (1994), 2289-304.

7 'Black markets, underground economies, and the informal Sector', in: Joel Mokyr (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 2003), 263-7; Martha Alter Chen, 'Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment', *DESA Working Paper* No. 46, ST/ESA/2007/DWP/46 July 2007 [http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/].

8 Matthew H. Fleming, John Roman and Graham Farrell, 'The Shadow Economy', *Journal of International Affairs* 53 (2000), 387-409.

9 Robert Aponte, 'Informal work in the U.S.: Case Studies and a Working Typology', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 17 (1997), 18-36, here 33.

10 See especially the critical overview by Philip Harding and Richard Jenkins, *The Myth of the Hidden Economy. Towards a New Understanding of Informal Economic Activity* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia 1989); Stuart Henry and Stephen Sills, 'Informal economic activity: Early thinking, conceptual shifts, continuing patterns and persistent issues – a Michigan study', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 45 (2006), 263-84; Ronnie Lippens and Paul Ponsaers, 'Re-visiting the informal economy: Introductory notes', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 45 (2006), 259-61; Alice Sindzingre, 'The Relevance of the Concepts of Formality and Informality: A Theoretical Appraisal', in Basudeb Guha-Khasnobis, Ravi Kanbur, and Elinor Ostrom (eds.), *Linking the Formal and Informal Economy: Concepts and Policies* (Oxford, 2006), 58-74; Louis Ferman, Louise E. Berndt and Stuart Henry (eds.), *Work beyond Employment in Advanced Capitalist Countries. Classic and Contemporary Perspectives on the Informal Economy* (Lewiston/Queenston and Lampeter, 1993).

11 Alfonso Morales, 'Epistemic Reflections on the 'Informal Economy'', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 17 (1997), 1-17; Susanne Teltscher, 'Small Trade and the World Economy: Informal Vendors in Quito, Ecuador', *Economic Geography* 70 (1994), 167-87, here 168.

12 Castells and Portes, *World Underneath*, 32.

not always so clearly distinguishable. Rather than regarding legal regulations as a source of how things were actually done, then, they have to be understood as resulting from competing practices for successfully implementing specific interests. By including individual and collective representations of itinerant trades, I will attempt to overcome a common flaw in the literature, according to which these types of practices are seen exclusively from the viewpoint of their opponents. Instead, I will map out a field of forces made up of various competing strategies and perspectives: those of the authorities and of sedentary economic competitors in addition to the individual or collective activities of itinerant sellers. I will begin with the example of peddling *(Hausieren)*, its disputed meanings and contexts, with a focus on material from the city/province of Vienna.[13] This type of selling, from door to door or house to house, was actually very restricted and only conducted legally in very small numbers. Peddling, however, was a somewhat defamatory term used to describe all kinds of (officially unique) sales practices. Disputes over peddling, I will argue, did not only represent a conflict over regulations but also involved the boundaries of what was perceived as economy and work.[14] Itinerant occupations were often accused of not belonging to the (legitimate) economy, their practitioners being seen as unwilling to work and thus part of an *anti*-economic sphere.[15]

2. An Occupation Designated for the Unemployable

At least from the perspective of its critics, peddling in the nineteenth century was already regarded as a historically obsolete and dying profession.[16] Most historians would agree

13 See also Sigrid Wadauer, 'Betteln und Hausieren verboten? Ambulanter Handel im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (2007/1), 181-203.

14 On definitions of work in the context of informal work, see Marcel Erlinghagen, 'Informelle Arbeit. Ein Überblick über einen schillernden Begriff', *Schmollers Jahrbuch* 120 (2000), 239-74, here 240ff. To the author of this paper, however, it does not seem useful to start from ahistorical definitions of work.

15 These practices were suspected of being 'negative work', that is, as the political scientist Rotering put it in 1898: 'the opposite of a positive promotion of the singular economy. Legal persecution is based on the fact that negative work affects the community's proprietary existence, or at least appears as a public nuisance. Another effect of negative work is being without subsistence, which might even result in total homelessness. Being a pathological symptom within sedentariness, it is the characteristic of the fluctuating element of population.' Rotering found this anti-economic behaviour primarily in 'habitual and professional begging and vagrancy'. Moreover, he assumed that travelling salespeople – booksellers, teachers, and commercial agents – were merely making excuses for not have a proper business or occupation. It was a common and persistent idea that mobility and unstable employment suggested an unwillingness to work, an idea that frequently appears also in criminological discourses on begging, those 'unwilling to work', and the anti-social in the 1920s and 1930s. See, for example, 'Die negative Arbeit', Von Landesgerichtsdirektor Rotering zu Beuthen (Oberschlesien), *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft* 16 (1896), 198-223; Roman Loos, 'Die Arbeitsscheu des Kriminellen', *Mitteilungen der Kriminalbiologischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1933), 167-82.

16 On debates on peddling in the late nineteenth century, see Eugen Schwiedland, 'Einleitung. Die Hausierfrage in Österreich', in Untersuchungen über die Lage des Hausiergewerbes in Österreich (Leipzig, 1899), VII-LXXI; Rudolf Kobatsch, 'Wien und das übrige Niederösterreich', in ibid., 1-34; Arnold Raesch, Soll der Hausierhandel abgeschafft werden? (Vienna, 1897); Ignaz Zucker, Der Hausir- und Ratenhandel. Eine volkswirtschaftliche Studie (Vienna, 1892); Wilhelm Stieda, 'Das Hausiergewerbe

with the hypothesis that selling was becoming more important – and less mobile. It is commonly thought that, at least by World War I, the era of peddling and hawking was over.[17] In fact, the number of peddlers' licences issued does reveal a steady decline in the second half of the nineteenth century. This, however, was not an inevitable consequence of economic development or modernization. Peddling was also politically and legally 'sentenced to die'[18] on several occasions. Nevertheless, reports of its death were apparently exaggerated[19] and in debates after World War I, peddling again became a much discussed mass phenomenon.

In these circumstances, the Austrian government attempted in 1921 to reform the 1852 regulations on peddling.[20] The statement explaining the law contained various opinions about the economic relevance and the meaning of peddling: 'Whereas some regard peddling as totally unnecessary, demanding its complete abolition (albeit step-by-step), others still acknowledge that it is somewhat relevant in bringing supplies to regions with insufficient transportation networks; further, it is important in marketing industrial products and preserving possible employment for those incapable of other occupations, especially war invalids.'[21] Since the numbers of peddlers had once again reached 2,000 since the war's end, complaints made by sedentary traders were considered legitimate. Some chambers of labour added the argument that peddling drew away large numbers of people from occupations more 'valuable' to the national economy.[22] The government

in Deutschland', Jahrbuch der Gehe-Stiftung zu Dresden IV (1899), 41-93 resp. 1-53; Georg Ritter von Thaa, Hausirwesen in Oesterreich. Mit Benutzung der amtlichen Quellen dargestellt (Vienna, 1884).

17 Most studies by historians acknowledge the importance of peddling in early capitalism and focus on the period before late nineteenth century. See, for instance, Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe* (Padstow, 1996); Hannelore Oberpenning, *Migration und Fernhandel im "Tödden-System" Wanderhändler aus dem nördlichen Münsterland im mittleren und nördlichen Europa* (Osnabrück, 1996); Wilfried Reininghaus, 'Wanderhandel in Deutschland. Ein Überblick über Geschichte, Erscheinungsformen und Forschungsprobleme', in idem. (ed.), *Wanderhandel in Europa. Beiträge zur wissenschaftlichen Tagung in Ibbenbüren, Mettingen, Recke und Hopsten vom 9.-11. Oktober 1992* (Dortmund, 1993), 31-45, here 31; Roman Sandgruber, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft. Konsumgüterverbrauch, Lebensstandard und Alltagskultur in Österreich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1982), 292ff.; Braudel points out the highly adaptable character of itinerant trades, see Fernand Braudel, *Sozialgeschichte des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts*. Vol. 2: Der Handel (Munich, 1986), 77; Naggar as an exception covers a period up to the 1940s, see Betty Naggar, *Jewish Pedlars and Hawkers. 1740-1940* (Camberley, 1992).

18 'Erläuterungen des Handelsministeriums zum Referentenentwurf', *Der österreichische "Globus". Zentralorgan für das österreichische Hausiergewerbe mit den offiziellen Berichten der Rechtsschutzvereine für Hausierer in Wien, Niederösterreich, Vorarlberg und Steiermark* 5 (1934), no. 3, 4.

19 As it was expressed by the peddlers organization in 1910, see 'Der Hausierhandel und seine Gegner', *Oesterreichische Hausierer-Zeitung* 5 (1910), no. 6, 5f., here 5.

20 'Kaiserliches Patent vom 4. September 1852, giltig für das gesammte Kaiserreich, mit Ausschluß der Militärgränze, wodurch ein neues Gesetz über den Hausierhandel erlassen wird', *Reichs-Gesetz- und Regierungsblatt für das Kaiserthum Oesterreich*, no. 252/1852.

21 *Stenographische Protokolle der Sitzungen des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich*, III. Session 10.11.1920-20.11.1923, Wien 1923, Beilagen, Nr. 716 (1921), 3ff.

22 The Viennese Chamber of Labour, however, spoke in favour of allowing peddling in Vienna again, and chambers of labour usually supported applicants for a peddlers licence. Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierverbot Allgemein S-Z, 735/1924 Hausierverbot für Wien, Aufhebung z.Z.5666/1923: Amtsbericht betreffend die unter dem Vorsitze des Senatsrates Dr. Faber am 22. März 1. J. abgehaltene

therefore acknowledged it was necessary to restrict peddling in the common interest. To completely abolish it was regarded as impossible with respect to industrial interests, which saw peddling as a way to promote sales and production.[23] In postwar circumstances, it also seemed necessary that 'as many ways as possible have to remain open to free the community from the obligation of caring for people unable to be productive.'[24] Peddlers should be allowed to continue if they were not considered to be taking advantage of the economic situation transformed by the war in order to turn to this 'alluring' form of income – and if they had already been peddling previously. The government's statement also requested explicitly that Viennese municipal officials should restrict the number of permits granted, for even though peddling was forbidden within Vienna (with a few exceptions), peddlers might seek to earn income in other federal provinces. (Or, as it was usually expressed in the complaints, they threatened to 'flood' the other provinces with 'worthless goods'.)[25]

In accordance with the new law,[26] licences for peddling were reserved primarily for war invalids and their dependents. It was not an occupation which required formal professional training or competence but rather some physical evidence that a person was permanently unable to practice any other occupation and was without means (a criterion that might include the entire family). Furthermore, peddlers had to be over the age of 30 and free of 'disgusting' or contagious diseases. As with any other trade, the applicant had to have a (mostly) clean record and a good reputation. Obtaining a permit also meant undergoing a rather elaborate review. And it had to be renewed once a year. Thus, peddling was officially made a substitute for decent work and adequate welfare. It was made a legal privilege for those unable to earn their livelihood in other ways.

All these tough controls and restrictions did not give peddling a good reputation. In addition, they appeared rather ineffective in limiting the number of peddlers. Complaints about the 'plague' of peddlers, then, did not cease. The estimates provided of actual peddlers differ from official statistics: There were 2245 peddling licences granted across Austria in the mid-1920s,[27] but it was estimated that there were 30,000 peddlers

Besprechung über die Wiederzulassung des Hausiererhandels in Wien.

23 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Archiv der Republik (AdR), Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Sign. 501g, 1921, Gzl. 17.515, Zl. 46.712/4765-1921, Neuregelung des Hausierwesens, Einbringer: Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie in Wien vom 9.11.1921, Hauptverband der Industrie Deutsch-Österreichs.

24 *Stenographische Protokolle*, 4.

25 On conflicts between Vienna and the surrounding province after WWI, see Sigrid Wadauer, 'Ökonomie und Notbehelfe in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren', in Peter Melichar, Ernst Langthaler and Stefan Eminger (eds.), *Niederösterreich im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2: Wirtschaft (Vienna, 2008), 537-73; Peter Eigner and Andreas Resch, 'Die Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Wiens im 20. Jahrhundert', in Franz X. Eder et al. (eds.), *Wien im 20. Jahrhundert. Wirtschaft, Bevölkerung, Konsum* (Innsbruck et al., 2003), 8-140.

26 'Bundesgesetz vom 30. März 1922, betreffend die Ergänzung und Abänderung einiger Bestimmungen des Hausierpatentes und der Vorschriften über andere Wandergewerbe', *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, no. 204/1922.

27 ÖStA, AdR, Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Sign. 501g, 1925, Gzl. 53.370-1925, Zl. 85.343-12, Statistik über das Hausierwesen in Österreich nach dem Stande vom 31.12.1924. Some 31.8

in Vienna alone.[28] The province of Salzburg, to cite another example, had issued about 100 licences, yet according to the complaints about three times as many people were peddling.[29] Several reasons have to be considered for this deviation in figures. First, the official number of licences was reported according to place of residence, where peddlers did not usually conduct business. This led to conflicts, particularly in Vienna. Although the share of peddlers in the population was not very high, there was a relatively high number of itinerant trades in comparison to other provinces. As already mentioned, itinerant traders had to seek business outside Viennese city/province limits (see figures 1 and 2). Second, much trade was conducted without formal permission or in violation of regulations.[30] Third, these unanticipated numbers were used in political debates, mostly by those who felt threatened by peddling. As a result, the statistics may have been exaggerated. In the end, what actually counted as peddling was variously defined. Peddling served then as a codeword for very different things. I wish to explore this variety starting from peddling as an indigent – and often more or less symbolic – form of labour and proceeding to examine peddling as economic competition to trades in fixed locations.

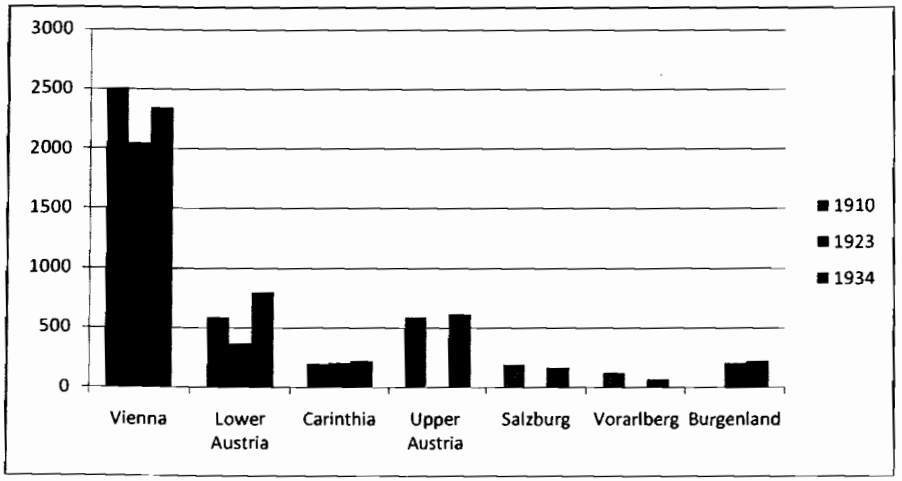

Figure 1: Itinerant sales, street sellers, peddlers, and travelling marketers according to census data (in absolute numbers) in some Austrian provinces[31]

percent of the 1808 persons legally peddling in 1934 were women; see *Die Ergebnisse der österreichischen Volkszählung vom 22. März 1934*, bearbeitet vom Bundesamt für Statistik, Bundesstaat, Textheft (Vienna, 1935), 167, 170.

28 Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierverbot Allgemein S-Z, 735/1924 Hausierverbot für Wien, Aufhebung z.Z.5666/1923: Amtsbericht betreffend die unter dem Vorsitze des Senatsrates Dr. Faber am 22. März 1. J. abgehaltene Besprechung über die Wiederzulassung des Hausiererhandels in Wien.

29 Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierbewilligungen Allgemein, 4027/24 Bekämpfung des Hausiererwesen: Kammer für Handel, Gewerbe und Industrie, Salzburg, 20.5.1924.

30 Yet this does not mean that it was unregulated. All income-generating activities were regulated in one form or other by social institutions; see Morales, *Epistemic Reflections*, 2.

3. A Beggarly Profession

At that time, it was all too common simply to group peddlers along with the masses of beggars in the streets – a prominent problem in the interwar period and especially during the world economic crisis.[32] In many circumstances, peddling was doubtless part of an economy of makeshifts.[33] Before World War I, the peddlers' occupational representatives had often emphasized that peddling was a difficult and not very productive business whenever they addressed their critics. It was perhaps not attractive but still a chance to make a living if one had no formal job, money, or professional training. New legal regulations for peddling actually confirmed and even reinforced the proximity of begging and peddling. Peddling was now officially restricted to invalids and the poor, neither of whom could probably afford to offer a large quantity of goods, especially valuable or high quality ones. Peddling was also restricted in many practical respects, both in terms of the eligible goods and geographic territory. The use of transportation or employees was permitted only in extraordinary circumstances. Altogether, this made peddling a beggarly profession, officially signalling the end of traditional employment. It thus became a substitute to a pension or public welfare for those with little hope of ever doing better.[34]

Those applying for an official peddling licence often emphasized the negligible economic impact their selling would have. Economic rationales – such as peddling having a positive impact on the distribution of commodities – were rarely used in such contexts. In order to meet legal requirements, applicants tended to refer to their poverty and desperation.[35] They stressed that they were unemployable, unable to engage in 'real work' or find a decent job. The majority were not receiving unemployment benefits, a pension, or sufficient poor relief. Further, applicants pointed out that they and their families might be forced to starve or compelled to beg or steal (yet the latter was a less appropriate, suc-

31 'Stand und Veränderungen der Berufsträger nach Wirtschaftsgruppen und ausgewählten Wirtschaftsarten in einigen Bundesländern 1910, 1923, 1934' (Warenhandel im Umherziehen, Straßenhandel, Hausierhandel, Marktfierantie), Source: *Die Ergebnisse der Österreichischen Volkszählung*, 136.

32 Sigrid Wadauer, 'Betteln – Arbeit – Arbeitsscheu (Wien 1918-1938)', in Beate Althammer (ed.), *Bettler in der europäischen Stadt der Moderne. Zwischen Barmherzigkeit, Repression und Sozialreform* (Oxford et al., 2007), 257-300.

33 Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, 'Introduction', in eadem (eds.), *The poor in England 1700-1850. An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester and New York, 2003), 1-38; Olwen H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974); Robert Jütte, *Arme, Bettler, Beutelschneider. Eine Sozialgeschichte der Armut in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Weimar, 2000); Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London and New York, 2004).

34 On the history of the welfare state in Austria, see Emmerich Tálos and Karl Wörister, *Soziale Sicherung im Sozialstaat Österreich. Entwicklung – Herausforderungen – Strukturen* (Baden-Baden, 1994); Ernst Bruckmüller, Roman Sandgruber and Hannes Stekl, *Soziale Sicherheit im Nachziehverfahren, die Einbeziehung der Bauern, Landarbeiter, Gewerbetreibenden und Hausgehilfen in das System der österreichischen Sozialversicherung* (Salzburg, 1978).

35 For more detailed discussion of this kind of source material, see Sigrid Wadauer, 'Asking for the privilege to work. Applications for a peddling licence (Austria in the 1920s and 1930s)', in Steven King (ed.), *Pauper Narratives* (Oxford and New York, forthcoming 2011).

cessful argument). As was commonly argued, peddling was the last possible way not to burden the community while at the same time earning one's livelihood. Although most applicants drew convincing portraits of distress, the authorities rarely granted a licence. The many repeated applications contrast with a very small number of licences granted. As already pointed out, people apparently peddled anyway, but doing so might create an obstacle to legalizing one's activity later on. Was there simply no other way to survive? In the (explicit) rationale given by many applicants, there seemed to be no alternative. Yet certainly not everyone in distress turned to this possibility.[36] Still, in some cases applicants actually preferred peddling to other forms of selling, despite already holding other licences. Peddling was tax-reduced, required less capital, and was more flexible than other sales occupations associated with certain marketplaces. A peddler's licence officially signalled needy status and likely led some customers to buy out of mercy. Selling door to door might offer some opportunities to supplement sales income by obtaining alms or food from farmers.

4. A Cover, a Symbol, or a Survival Strategy?

Distinctions between peddling and begging seemed particularly blurred if the goods were more or less worthless. It is hard to tell if selling goods such as shoelaces or matches – whether legally or illegally – resulted in higher income than representing oneself as a wretched, impoverished beggar. Yet even in this desperate situation, labour practices were not exclusively a matter of material survival. Work – even such a precarious form – always has a symbolic dimension and a moral purpose. An anarchist newspaper commented in the 1930s that the unemployed proletarian 'doesn't demand anything, he doesn't take anything. He asks. (...) He sings on the streets. The unemployed proletarian is well-behaved. (...) Does he think he has to demonstrate his unemployment? No. He demonstrates how well-behaved he is. He doesn't kick up a row and he does not loot. Under no circumstances. He doesn't want food. He only wants work.'[37] Peddling or busking, even by breaking the law, might serve not only as a way to survive[38] but also to reinforce a particular distinction. For it was still a demonstration of one's willingness to work and to earn one's living in a fashion still resembling work while also remaining independent of (largely insufficient) public assistance. We might understand it as proof of a common work ethic. It was not only acknowledged by those giving alms or buying (probably) out of mercy but also in highly controversial decisions of the Supreme Court, which maintained that peddling or busking without a licence were illicit yet (at least) honest ways to make a living.[39] It ultimately qualified as work inasmuch as there were official licences for it. There were no official beggars licences anymore, even if peddlers' licences were often regarded as such. Legally speaking, peddlers and street musicians provided a service in return for payment. Their activities did not (at least theoretically) fall under the laws of vagrancy. Such a willingness to work, therefore, was not only a matter of individual attitudes but also had legal ramifications. It was a key element in the laws on vagrancy and the *Arbeitshaus* (literally 'work house' but designating a 'house of correction').[40] And most social regulations, ranging from the poor laws to the requirements for unemployment insurance, required that persons be willing to work if physically possible.[41]

Nevertheless, people often doubted whether peddling or busking – with or without a licence – was really work at all. It was a common accusation of the authorities, found in newspaper articles and other publications that some people were making a business out of poverty and deliberately avoiding 'real work'. A report of the Viennese police department claimed that 'unscrupulous and work-averse elements take advantage of the pauperization of broad social classes in order to practice begging as a profession and exploit the good hearts of their fellow man often by pretending to have physical ailments. Especially beggars in bars and cafés who pretend to sell matches or other small items belong in this category.'[42] A report on a conference about beggars in Vienna concluded: 'The once distinct boundaries between street musicians and beggars and between peddlers and beggars have become blurred. Making music and singing in the streets or offering shoe laces, stationary, pocket-calendars, bandages and so on are mostly fictitious and thus disguised begging.'[43] Money given to a street musician or a peddler was

[36] On the selectivity of self-employment, see Boyd, *Race, gender, and survivalist entrepreneurship*.

[37] Otto Mero, 'Der Prolet ist brav', *Contra, Anarchistische Monatsschrift* I (1930), no. 6, 1-5, here 3.

[38] Regina Austin, *"An Honest Living"*; Raymond E. Pahl, 'Does Jobless Mean Workless? Unemployment and Informal Work', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 493 (1987), 36-46.

[39] '36. auch ein unerlaubter Erwerb kann ein redlicher Erwerb im Sinne des §1 des Gesetzes vom 24. Mai 1885, RGBl. Nr 89, sein. Entscheidung vom 21. April 1938, 5 Os 268/38', in *Entscheidungen des österr. Obersten Gerichtshofes in Strafsachen und Disziplinarangelegenheiten* Vol. XVIII (1938), 80f.; '42. Sogenannte Bettelmusikanten fallen nicht unter die Bestimmungen des §2 VagGes. Entscheidung nach §292 StPO. vom 2. Mai 1921, Os 229/21', in *Entscheidungen des österr. Obersten Gerichtshofes in Strafsachen und Disziplinarangelegenheiten* Vol. I. (1925), no. 1, 98ff.

[40] 'Gesetz vom 24. Mai 1885, womit strafrechtliche Bestimmungen in Betreff der Zulässigkeit der Anhaltung in Zwangsarbeits- oder Besserungsanstalten getroffen werden'. In: *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* (RGBl) 89/1885; 'Bundesgesetz vom 10. Juni 1932 über die Unterbringung von Rechtsbrechern in Arbeitshäusern', *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich* (BGBl) Nr. 67/1932.

[41] 'Gesetz vom 24. März 1920 über die Arbeitslosenversicherung, BGBl Nr. 153/1920; Paragraph X of the Stadtgesetz vom 28. Juni 1935, mit dem das Gesetz vom 11. Juli 1928, Landesgesetzblatt für Wien Nr. 32, betreffend die Armenversorgung ergänzt wird (Armengesetznovelle 1935)', *Gesetzblatt der Stadt Wien 1935*; 'Bundesgesetz, mit dem ergänzende grundsätzliche Bestimmungen zum IV. Abschnitt des Gesetzes, betreffend die Regelung der Heimatrechtsverhältnisse, RGBl. Nr. 105/1863, erlassen werden (Heimatrechtsnovelle 1935), *BGBl.* Nr. 199/1935, §28c (2)a.

[42] *Jahrbuch der Polizeidirektion Wien. Mit statistischen Daten aus dem Jahre 1926* (Vienna, 1928), 150f.

[43] Wilhelm Börner, 'Problem des Bettlerwesens (unter Verwertung der Ergebnisse einer Umfrage)', in *Das Bettlerwesen in Wien und seine Bekämpfung. Bericht über die am 19. Februar 1933 von der "Ethischen Gemeinde" veranstalteten Konferenz* (Vienna, 1933), 7-19, here 12.

regarded as alms rather than as an equivalent for goods of little value. Exchange seemed motivated only out of pity – or pushiness.

Hence, even peddling or busking were not regarded as trade with an economic impact. Rather, they were viewed as being related to the national economy in different respects. To the extent there was a large unemployed workforce in the streets, alms – in comparison to the limited funds available for systemic public welfare – were seen as an irrational, ineffective expense, a squandering of the gross domestic income.[44] People appeared to spend money irrationally on beggars, and there was no clear way for the authorities to control or stop *that*.

Legal or illegal peddling and begging as a musician did not really work as methods of reintegrating oneself into the labour market. Their distinctive character was challenged even more in the 1930s and particularly during the Austro-Fascist regime (1933-1938)[45], in which the persecution of vagrants and beggars was intensified. When the Austro-Fascist regime implemented tougher sanctions against both groups, it also wished to clarify all the legal obscurities concerning illegal peddling and begging musicians.[46] In addition, from 1934 on, legal restrictions on peddling were tightened up even more. It thus became more difficult to renew a peddling licence and almost impossible to peddle legally.[47] In general, it became more difficult to start a trade due to tightened restrictions in the regulations.

To restrict opportunities for self-employment seems paradoxical amid the economic and social problems of the period. Officially, unemployment reached to 25 % in the 1930s, though estimates of historians go up to 37 % (in 1934). At the same time, the percentage of unemployed receiving benefits declined to 50 % in 1937 (despite estimated unemployment rates between 21.7 % and 31.8 %).[48] Politics, however, still aimed to protect the settled trades which already existed as well as certain notions of what constituted 'work'. As a general concept, *occupation* (or *Beruf*) gained a great deal of political significance during the interwar period, in the era of Social Democratic governments in Vienna, and in the era of Austro-Fascism. Austro-Fascist politics highlighted one's occupation as the basis of a new political order (*'berufsständische Ordnung'*).[49] Within this framework, occupation functioned as an ideal, partly dissociated from employment and mere income. It was also supposed to define one's place within society, and peddling did not fit into the picture. Against all odds, however, even peddlers in this period succeeded in 1936 in forming an official association (a guild) as they had long demanded, together with rag and bone collectors. Yet this circumstance created new problems for peddlers since mandatory incorporation in a guild required funding for mandatory health insurance. Since peddling was a substitute for welfare and most peddlers were in fact poor, raising the required money was very difficult or, as one peddler put it in her grievance, 'economic suicide'.[50] Yet to understand the perception of peddling at that time as well as the struggle against it, we also have to consider its position compared to other sales occupations.

5. Peddlers as Economic Competitors

Peddlers might have been 'survivalist' entrepreneurs, yet they still competed with other trades. For all its disadvantages, peddling could be practiced as a trade in dimensions which made its competitors feel threatened.[51] The original intent of continuing to permit peddling, as an organization of general sellers pointed out, was to allow peddlers a very small income. A peddler equipped with a licence was expected to buy a small quantity of fruit that he could easily carry around. Nonetheless, they also sold in larger amounts: '10 retail shops do not have as much fruit in stock as one itinerant trader carries around peddling.'[52] 'The liberty which these days is granted to illicit peddling', claims another article, 'in order to ruin long-standing (*bodenständig*) merchants has degenerated into a mockery. The mayor's orders forbid peddling, but hives of all kinds of peddlers roam the streets and taverns while also besieging the inns. There are peddlers with horses and carts, peddlers transporting their goods from house to house. (...) The prohibition exists on paper only. This devious form of competition sneaks through 1000 cracks to challenge sedentary trade.'[53] For small sedentary merchants, this kind of peddling appeared dangerous in every respect: 'How many peddlers have a loaded gun in their pockets instead of a licence?'[54] Although peddling was regarded as a bigger problem in the countryside, it appeared to be less necessary in the city. Nonetheless, the trade associations argued

44 *Ibid.*, 16; Maria Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch* (Frankfurt, 1975), 72.

45 Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), *Austrofaschismus. Politik – Ökonomie – Kultur 1933-1938* (Vienna, 2005).

46 ÖStA, AdR, Bundeskanzleramt, Inneres, Allgemein 20/2 Grundzahl 126.964/1936, Geschäftszahl 160.442-6/1936: Heimatgesetznovelle 1936: Bundeskanzleramt (Inneres) zur Zahl 128.705-6/36 Entwurf. Bundesgesetz mit dem ergänzende grundsätzliche Bestimmungen zum IV Abschnitt des Gesetzes, betreffend die Regelung der Heimatrechtsverhältnisse RGBl Nr. 105/1863 erlassen werden (Heimatgesetznovelle 1936), §28 d.

47 'Bundesgesetz vom 19. Oktober 1934 über die Abänderung der hausierrechtlichen Vorschriften', *Bundesgesetzblatt für den Bundesstaat Österreich* Nr. 324/1934.

48 Heinz Faßmann, 'Der Wandel der Bevölkerungs- und Sozialstruktur in der Ersten Republik', in Emmerich Tálos et al. (eds.), *Handbuch des Politischen Systems Österreich. Erste Republik 1918-1933* (Vienna, 1995), 11-22, esp. 20ff.; Fritz Weber, 'Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung', in *ibid.*, 23-39, here 25; Dieter Stiefel, *Arbeitslosigkeit. Soziale, politische und wirtschaftliche Auswirkungen – am Beispiel Österreichs 1918-1938* (Berlin, 1979), 29.

49 Emmerich Tálos and Walter Manoschek, 'Aspekte der politischen Struktur des Austrofaschismus', in Tálos and Neugebauer, *Austrofaschismus*, 124-60.

50 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), Magistratsabteilung 117, A7/1, Kleinkaufmannschaft 1936-1937, KK 92/36: An den Herrn Bürgermeister (Landeshauptmann der Stadt Wien), Betrifft: Einspruch gegen die Verschreibung einer Einverleibungsgebühr seitens der Kleinkaufmannschaft Wien. Wien, 10.12.1936.

51 Similarly Wasserman, *The Good Old Days of Poverty*, 333.

52 'An den Magistrat der Bundeshauptstadt Wien, Abteilung 53', *Reform-Blatt der Gemischtwarenverschleißer* 34 (1927), no. 2, 3f., here 4.

53 'Grober Unfug. Zu der Bedrohung des Gewerbes durch den Hausierhandel', *Reichspost* 39 (1932), no. 267 (24.9.1932), 1f.

54 'Der Hausierhandel und die Wiener Polizei', *Gremialblatt* 32 (1925), no. 361, 4.

that there were already enough shops with sufficient supplies, and that shop-owners were paying more taxes; they also had to maintain their shops and their stocks but were otherwise subject to control and restricted hours of business. Since peddlers did not operate under such restrictions and without such overhead costs, they could be seen as unfair and illegitimate competition. One demand of merchants was that the authorities should instead give pensions to the peddlers instead of ruining the sedentary trade. It was, however, not enough to point out their own interests. Thus, their contentions that peddling damaged sedentary trade were usually accompanied by claims about a lack of consumer protection. It was alleged that customers, especially housewives, were bothered or even threatened by peddlers. Uninformed consumers were said to be deceived by high prices and low quality. Peddlers' goods were depicted as generally worthless and not meeting hygienic standards.

To understand why peddling could be regarded as such a threat, it is also necessary to realize that the number of rather small enterprises in Vienna was extremely high. Peddlers responded that there were perhaps not too many *peddlers*, but too many small shops.[55] Some associations of small sedentary traders more than doubled their membership from 1919 to 1927.[56] And in general, many urban shopkeepers (and even more in the countryside) were in precarious economic situations with incomes below the subsistence level.[57] Their shops had to compete with each other and with all kinds of larger and smaller enterprises, such as department stores, consumer associations, mail-order sellers, and – last but not least – peddlers. The small shopkeepers also had to deal with the effects of economic crisis, with price controls (*Preistreibereigesetz*), social insurance contributions, and new labour regulations such as the reduction of working hours. We might also assume that peddling not only represented additional competition for these traders but also a possible career in the event of insolvency. Many shopkeepers struggled to make ends meet and retain their shops, thereby attempting to distinguish themselves from itinerant traders.

While there were in fact multiple links between them, the business relations between sedentary shops or producers and itinerant sellers were commonly neglected in this context. Small shops, however, were the greatest enemies of peddling. They were successful in uniting politically nearly every type of sedentary trade or craft – whether or not affected by peddlers – in their struggle. They wrote petitions and organized mass protests, which were very often anti-Semitic. Despite the fact that peddling was practiced by a

[55] Egon Kohn, 'Zu viele Hausierer oder zuviele Kaufleute?', *Der österreichische "Globus"* 4 (1933), no. 2, 4.

[56] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4: MA 53, Z 3874: Amtsvermerk der Magistrats-Abteilung 53 vom 16.2.1927.

[57] On the difficult situation of trades in general, see Stefan Eminger, *Das Gewerbe in Österreich 1930-1938. Organisationsformen, Interessenpolitik und politische Mobilität* (Innsbruck, Vienna and Bozen, 2005), 22. On the development of small shops and consumption, see Peter Eigner, '(Detail)Handel und Konsum in Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Geschichte einer Wechselbeziehung', in Susanne Breuss and Franz X. Eder (eds.), *Konsumieren in Österreich. 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck, Vienna and Bozen, 2006), 42-70.

wide variety of people and often by ethnic minorities like 'gypsies'[58], *Karrner* or *Jenische*,[59] and *Gottscheer*,[60] the idea of peddling was closely associated with Jews.[61]

Furthermore, the struggle against peddling went far beyond the door-to-door peddlers (*Hausierer*) but proceeded to include all kinds of itinerant sales practices. Peddling was legally defined as offering goods from door to door or from house to house. Other types of sellers, which by far exceeded the number of actual peddlers (see figure 2), did not wait for customers to come but also went out to find them. There were, for example, the *Wanderhändler*, itinerant traders who, as the *Kaufmannschaft* (official organization of merchants) pointed out in 1936, were *not* to be confused with *Hausierer*.[62] Nevertheless, they were usually designated as peddlers. *Wanderhändler* could be producers, their representatives, or traders granted a permit under §60 of the trade regulations (*Gewerbeordnung*). They were allowed to sell local agricultural and forestry products. Moreover, in troubled economic times, sedentary trades could also get permission to supplement their income by distributing their products in the streets. In Vienna, these were mostly bakeries, confectioners, and producers of toys and balloons. There was an even greater difference between assessments of peddling and the actual number of licences[63] granted. There were thus complaints about the 2,000 icemen selling in the streets of Vienna.[64] In addition, there was the peddling of books and newspapers. Charitable societies sent out peddlers, too. Travelling marketers were supposed to sell at marketplaces but were accused of also selling sometimes house to house. Finally, the activities of salesmen and sales-agents contributed to the image of trade taking place outside shops and locations which could be monitored. Travelling salesmen were not allowed to sell from door to door, only to carry samples and take orders. Opportunities to sell to private households

[58] See Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems, and Annemarie Cottaar, *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach* (Houndmills and New York, 2001); Georg Gesellmann, *Die Zigeuner im Burgenland in der Zwischenkriegszeit. Die Geschichte einer Diskriminierung* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Vienna, 1989), 134; Florian Freund, *Zigeunerpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert.* (unpublished Habilitation, University of Vienna, 2003), 2 vols.

[59] Toni Pescosta, *Die Tiroler Karrner. Vom Verschwinden des fahrenden Volkes der Jenischen* (Innsbruck, 2003); Luis Zagler, *Die Korrner: Grenzgänger zwischen Freiheit und Elend* (Bozen, 1995); Jakob Kronenwetter (ed.), *Das Reisen im Blut. Über 100 Jahre Fichtenauer fahrende Leut'* (Stödtlen-Niederroden, 2005); *Die Fahrenden. "Innen- und Außenansichten." Die Jenischen zwischen Vinschgau, Oberinntal, Graubünden, Schwaben und Bayern. Ausstellung im Schloss Landeck. 21. Juli-19. September 2001* (Landeck, 2001).

[60] Othmar Pickl, 'Die einstige Sprachinsel Gottschee/Kocevje (Slowenien) und ihre Wanderhändler', in Reininghaus, *Wanderhandel*, 91-9.

[61] Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Cologne, 1985), 42f.; Beatrix Hoffmann-Holter, *"Abreisendmachung". Jüdische Kriegsflüchtlinge in Wien 1914 bis 1923* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar 1990), 90.

[62] *Merkblatt über den Wanderhandel nach §60 der Gewerbeordnung im Gebiet der Stadt Wien* (Vienna, n.d. [1936]), 3.

[63] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117 A3/4: MA 53, Z 9836-1925: Wanderhandel, Ausfertigung von Gewerbescheinen.

[64] 'Verhandlungsschrift über die Massen-Protestversammlung gegen das Hausierunwesen am Mittwoch, den 7. Juli 1926', *Gremialblatt* 33 (1926), no. 369, 2-5, here 5.

were thus restricted. According to frequent complaints, however, they actually did sell to individuals and seem to have delivered the ordered goods quite immediately.

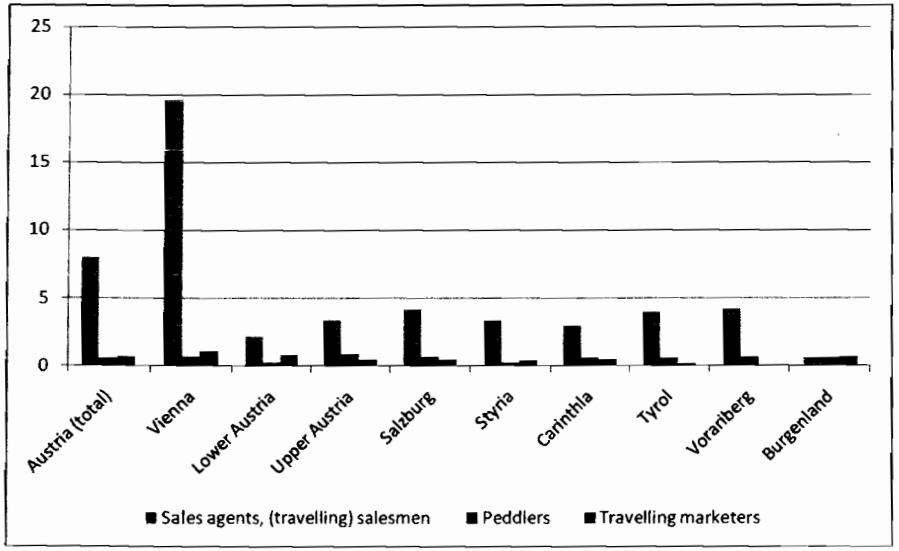

Figure 2: Sales agents and (travelling) salesmen, peddlers and travelling marketers according to the census of 1934 (recorded in number per thousand Berufsträger, i. e., persons classified as having an occupation)[65]

Such activities were in part regarded as illegitimate by competitors, in part as legal, and in part as violating the regulations.[66] All kinds of irregularities could be found: sales carried out with fake licences or no licences, sales made by the wrong person, sale with prohibited goods, and even sales in illegal quantities. Selling was also done at spurious locations and times.[67] Such economic activities likely went undocumented or were not recorded in the tax records, but they were evidently anything but hidden. Taken together, these activities were not a marginal segment of the economy[68] and not exclusively linked with extreme poverty. Itinerant selling was not limited to genuinely itinerant traders and was not always distinct from sedentary business. For ultimately commodities sold by peddlers had to come from somewhere. Despite the designation of peddling and itinerant sales as *superfluous* and despite the warnings frequently published in newspapers, customers evidently did buy from itinerant sellers. We therefore have to ask: how it

[65] 'Von je 1000 Berufsträgern übten 1934 den Beruf des Agenten, Vertreter, Reisenden, Hausierer oder Marktfahrers aus'. In: Die Verteilung der Berufsträger nach ihrem Beruf auf die Bundesländer. Source: *Die Ergebnisse der Österreichischen Volkszählung*, 172-9, here 176f.

[66] Alejandro Portes, 'The Informal Economy and Its Paradoxes', in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (eds.), *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton and New York, 1994), 426-49, here 428.

[67] Various complaints are recorded in Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierbewilligungen Allgemein.

[68] Castells and Portes, *World Underneath*, 24.

was that all this sales activity could work out?[69] There is no easy answer to that question, however. The overwhelming majority of source material deals with criticisms of door-to-door sales. There are numerous documents analyzing why individuals wanted to conduct such business.[70] Yet source material on the advantages of itinerant sales from the perspective of customers is very hard to find.[71] Some of this information can be derived from debates on peddling in the area of Lower Austria, the primary geographic area where Viennese peddlers were active. Peddling apparently fulfilled a need in more remote areas with few local shops. A peddler coming to a house or farm when shops were far away may have made things more convenient for consumers. Peddling also increased the range of goods or commodities available. Yet peddlers could also commute between Vienna and the surrounding districts, offering goods lower in price (and possibly in quality), thus meeting the needs of poorer segments of the populace. Peddlers could also advance credit to customers as well as affording them the opportunity to haggle over the price. They were also satisfied with smaller profits than shopkeepers, as confirmed by one police report.[72] Since local shops would otherwise have an unchallenged monopoly, peddlers' sales might have served to control prices. Peddlers might also accept farm products in exchange for their goods. And apparently, they were not always strangers to the locals, for they had regular routes, thus allowing them to collect payments and to establish a relationship with their customers. In the process, they might establish relationships of trust, in contrast to illicit peddlers just passing by – a common complaint of peddlers' organizations.[73] Itinerant traders selling in large quantities with carts and trucks were presumably still a minority. Their impact was fairly exaggerated but – as seen from records, licensure applications, and finally peddlers' complaints – they were not solely an invention of their competitors. Given that certain goods offered by peddlers (such as crockery) were not something purchased every day and given that the numbers of peddlers frequenting small communities was not insignificant, they might well have reduced the sales of local shops. Various districts in Lower Austria reported about 50 to 150 officially recorded peddlers per year in the early 1920s. As the result of unconcealed anti-Semitism, it was claimed that these were mostly Jews, in particular Galician Jews residing in Vienna, who were also not 'genuine' war invalids.[74] Evidently, several aspects were mixed up in the notion that peddling constituted a significant threat.

[69] Teltscher, *Small Trade*, 172

[70] Alfonso Morales, 'Uncertainty and the Organization of Street Vending Businesses', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 17 (1997), 191-212.

[71] John C. Cross, *Street Vendors, Modernity and Postmodernity*, 38.

[72] Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Niederösterreichische Landesregierung, Präsidium II, Reg. Zeichen I/203, Zl. 987/1923.

[73] This was also mentioned in a court record; Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Bezirksgericht Neulengbach U-Akten, Zl. 91/1933.

[74] Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Niederösterreichische Landesregierung (selbständiger Wirkungsbereich), Gruppe XII, Stammzahl 594/1924, Wiener Hausierbewilligungen.

6. Regulations and Irregularities

In the long run, sedentary trades were rather successful in maintaining their interests were identical with the general good. 'Protection of stable trade' was, to a large extent, also an aim of local authorities. In the 1920s and 1930s, a majority of towns prohibited peddling and hawking. Door-to-door selling became difficult to conduct legally. Of course, there can never be *irregularity* or violations of regulations without there being *regulations* of some kind. Yet these kinds of activities were highly ambiguous and rather difficult to monitor – if nothing else, *because* of all the regulations. There was a wide variety of legal sales practices, along with a variety of barely distinguished competences. Additionally, there were quite a number of exceptions to the regulations. The law, to some extent, acknowledged rights already granted. If someone had acquired a permit, it remained valid even when the law changed. Some permits could even be leased out. Thus, some *Wanderhändler* could still sell lemons, even at the end of the monarchy when lemons were officially categorized as a non-domestic fruit and were excluded from the list of authorized products.[75] In some federal provinces as well, an exception was made for local war invalids even if peddling was generally forbidden in certain towns.

Prohibitions did not necessarily result in the effective or strict suppression of all itinerant trades. There was no uniform will of the state at work but rather different local and provincial authorities. Nor did the authorities in cities express a uniform will. Instead, they exercised different official competences with sometimes contradictory outlooks or interests concerning trade, welfare, security and health. It was still regarded as reasonable to unburden the community by letting traders seek out income in other provinces. In addition, the punishment for violating regulations did not, in general, appear to be reasonable. Authorities claimed that penalties were not effective since illicit traders would come right back into the streets. It all seemed an effort in vain. And because itinerant traders were often old and poor, punishment was not supposed to be too harsh. There were, after all, welfare expenses to be considered if their livelihood were taken away. Such punishments were indeed questionable, particularly in the case of those (more or less) unemployable veterans who had fought for the country. And at least in 'Red' Vienna, authorities sometimes remarked that merchants' complaints were pointless, exaggerated, or even seemed to derive from grudges (or *Brotneid*). Not all districts found the reduction of street selling a desirable course of action.[76]

7. Associations and the Struggle over Regulations

Itinerant sellers were not only subject to regulations and restrictions, but they were quite an active party in fighting against them. To repeatedly violate regulations could be part

[75] See for example, WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4, 1902, 1903, Wandergewerbe. Aktenkonvolut H-3207/1902: MA 53-4457/1927, MA 53 an das Bezirks-Polizeikommissariat Neubau, Wien 10.3.1927, Betreff: Kieseldorfer Karl, Wanderhandel mit Orangen, Berechtigung.

[76] See, for example, WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4, 1902, 1903, Wandergewerbe. Aktenkonvolut H-3207/1902: MA 53/9416-1923: Strassenhandel. Einschränkung der Zahl der Standplätze.

of a collective political strategy, sometimes even leading to change. The example of *Wanderhändler* offers a good illustration. Unlike peddlers, the *Wanderhändler* had an official trade association from 1903 on.[77] After World War I, it had about 2000 members, including several categories licensed to sell certain agricultural and forestry products by walking around in the streets. These included: eggs, honey, live poultry, mineral water, fruits, flowers, vegetables, Christmas trees, candied fruits, sausages, roasted chestnuts, luxuries, haberdashery, cemetery candles, and so on.[78] This association often complained about problems their members had with the police, which mostly concerned illegal stalls. For *Wanderhändler* were not allowed to stay in one place, but instead had to walk around constantly. After World War I, large numbers of illegal stalls were opened around railway stations and regular markets, as well as in parks and streets directly in front of shops. Some of these illegal sites were organized by the association, which leased out stands for a fee and which could reproduce ready-made pleas for their members in case of prosecution. As a result of the organization's efforts, stalls were legalized, albeit in restricted numbers.[79] The association also fought for the unrestricted legal use of carts and trucks – referring to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of occupation – yet it only had temporary success.[80] They also tried to regain the right to sell butter and eggs, which since the turn of the century had not been permitted to itinerant traders within Vienna. They argued that this prohibition was ineffective anyway, having generated a booming black market that had gained a monopoly on these goods without paying any taxes.[81] The authorities of several districts had no objections to *this* argument, although there were some doubts concerning hygiene. In the end, itinerant selling contributed to successfully providing food in times of shortage.[82]

Wanderhändler had to face problems similar to peddlers, including anti-Semitism, police enforcement, and objections about the hygienic handling of goods. In addition, there were complaints about the duplication of licences and defamatory stories of theft or fraud, such as women who pretended to be farmers from the countryside but actually came from the suburbs and sold industrial products.[83] *Wanderhändler* still had a better

[77] *Genossenschaft der Straßen und Wanderhändler in Wien. Gedenkschrift zum fünfundzwanzigjährigen Bestand 1903-1928* (Vienna, 1929).

[78] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A7/1, Kleinkaufmannschaft 1936-1937, KK-7/36: Schreiben der Kleinkaufmannschaft der Straßen- und Wanderhändler an die Kaufmannschaft für die Stadt Wien – Sektion Kleinkaufmannschaft. Wien, 13.1.1936.

[79] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4, 1902, 1903, Wandergewerbe. Aktenkonvolut H-3207/1902.

[80] Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierverbot allgemein A, Zl. 14254/29-1929- Wanderhandel gem. § 60 – Verwendung von Fuhrwerken; Verordnung der Bundesregierung vom 12. März 1933 über verschiedene Abänderungen der Gewerbeordnung und des Kundmachungspatentes (Gewerbenovelle 1933), BGBl. Nr 52/1933, Artikel 23; see also ÖSta, AdR, Bundesministerium für Handel und Verkehr, Sign. 501r, 1933, Zl. 131.069-12/1933, Bewilligung zur Verwendung von Kraftfahrzeugen, bespannten Fuhrwerken oder von Hilfskräften beim Handel im Umherziehen gemäß § 60 G.O.

[81] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4, 1902, 1903, Wandergewerbe, H1 320Z/1902: MA 53/3576/20 Genossenschaft der Wanderhändler in Wien. An den Magistrat der Stadt Wien. Abt. 53., 29.7.1920.

[82] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A3/4, 1902, 1903, Wandergewerbe, H1 320Z/1902.

[83] 'Gegen die Landplage auf den Märkten', von Frau Vorsteher-Stellvertreterin Anny Pichler, *Der Viktualienhändler* (1933), no. 4, 1.

position and were to some extent able to defend their interests more effectively than *Hausierer*, if nothing else because of their official association. In the process, *Wanderhändler* highlighted their different interests and their distinct character with respect to sedentary trades.[84]

Salesmen, commercial agents, and similar occupations likewise had their own official associations or unions to represent them. In fact, salesmen and commercial agents had not been clearly distinguished from peddlers at the end of the nineteenth century. In the interwar period, they were often regarded as temporary occupations chosen out of necessity. Their official associations, however, underscored the knowledge and training required for these professions and the need for them in the modern national economy.[85] From that perspective, these occupations appeared to be something completely different from peddling. What all these different associations had in common, nonetheless, was that they officially represented one occupation and distinguished it from others. They also provided insurance for their members while protecting their rights against (legal and illegal) competitors. Another common aim was also to protect their respective trades from an influx of newcomers – which, in the case of liberal trades, was more or less uninhibited. In general, the associations did not fight against regulations but instead attempted to modify them to their advantage.

8. The Position of Peddlers

If nothing else, because of these established associations, the wide range of sales occupations seems more clearly differentiated in the interwar period when compared with the late nineteenth century. In such a context, peddling unwillingly represented a residual category that symbolized an older, less respectable form of sales. Even when conducted legally, it still seemed an illegitimate trade. Although a broad variety of sales involved mobility, it was not a main feature of the occupation, whereas peddlers represented the very opposite of 'rootedness' (*Bodenständigkeit*), a term which also came to signify 'non-Jewish'. Yet peddlers – even those with licences – were everything but a homogeneous group, a fact which probably added to their weak position in struggles over authorization, markets and legitimacy. However dominated they might have been in their position, they were nonetheless also agents, playing an active role within this field of forces.

[84] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A7/1, Kleinkaufmannschaft 1936-1937, KK-7/36.

[85] Up to now, there has more or less been no research conducted on travelling salesmen in Austria. One study on contemporary salesmen with some historical background is the thesis of Rudolf Moser, *Die Lebenswelt reisender Kaufleute. Forschungsbericht über Nomaden der Konsumgesellschaft* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Vienna, 1998). For the (in many respects) different context of this occupation in the USA, see Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman. The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge and London, 2004); Susan Strasser, '"The Smile that Pays": The Culture of Traveling Salesmen, 1880-1920', in James Gilbert et al. (eds.), *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind. Social Imagination and American Culture* (Belmont CA, 1992), 155-77.

Peddlers had their own organization for legal protection, the *Rechtsschutzverein der Hausierer*, founded in 1896. They only came to be represented by an official guild after 1936.[86] The *Rechtschutzverein* tried to secure its members' rights, and it published long articles demonstrating the necessity of peddling and its substantial contribution to national economy (even though peddlers were also always emphasizing the hardship and limited effectiveness of their trade). The organization also fought against the inactivity and indifference of its members. The problem it faced was: how can we form a strong organization if our members are ashamed of being peddlers? As a national organization, it also had to deal with numerous internal conflicts, with regional competition, and especially with anti-Semitism. The peddlers' organization of Salzburg and Upper Austria temporarily split off from the national organization in the 1930s, forming a new association of *bodenständige und alpenländische Hausierer*. This move was merely regarded by Viennese peddlers as a manifestation of anti-Semitism.[87] In fact there was explicit anxiety that the provinces were being 'flooded' by Jewish peddlers, or by peddlers and sales agents of a 'certain type' (*gewissen Schlages*) from Vienna,[88] who were – it was argued – not at all 'real' peddlers. Despite these (internal) differences, however, the peddlers fought mainly against illicit peddling. They were united in pointing out how illicit peddlers damaged the image of legal peddlers. By violating regulations and defrauding customers, illicit peddling destroyed public trust in legal peddlers as well as the clientele they fostered. Criticism was not just directed against people 'unwilling to work'[89] or those 'unemployed who were peddling as if it were their right.'[90] The legal peddlers also objected to those sedentary trades and larger companies which were sending out their own salesmen. Most of all, they were critical of foreign peddlers and marketers, particularly those from Yugoslavia such as the *Gottschee*. They thus requested a strict official policy against illicit peddling, along with tougher controls and stronger penalties. They also published lists of illicit peddlers, asking their members to consistently report any illicit peddling to the police. Although legal peddlers already had to carry a photo identification card, they were also given badges to visibly distinguish themselves from illicit peddlers.[91] Yet all these efforts did not prevent peddling from continuing to be perceived by many as a legal but highly illegitimate trade. In most cases, it was too unprofitable and generated too little tax revenue to be recognized as a proper business. And finally, whenever it prospered, it seemed only to arouse greater suspicion.

[86] 'Es geht was vor!', *Der österreichische "Globus"* 1 (1932), no. 4, 3f.

[87] 'Welser Neuigkeiten', *Der österreichische "Globus"* 2 (1931), no. 6/7, 3f.

[88] 'Solidaritätsgefühl und Welser Neuigkeiten', *Der alpenländische "Hausierer". Fachblatt der vereinigten Rechtsschutzverbände für Hausierer von Ober-Österreich, Salzburg und die übrigen Alpenländer*, 1 (1931), no. 8/9, 1f.; 'Wo bleibt die Solidarität?', ibid. 1 (1931), Nr. 2, 2.

[89] WStLA, Magistratsabteilung 117, A7/1, Kleinkaufmannschaft 1936-1937, KK-82/36: Kleinkaufmannschaft Wien an Herrn Vizekanzler a.D. Richard Schmitz, Bürgermeister der Bundeshauptstadt Wien, im Wege der Magistrats-Abteilung 4. Wien, 14.11.1936.

[90] 'Das unbefugte Hausieren in Steiermark', *Der österreichische "Globus"* 4 (1933), no. 3, 7.

[91] Archiv der Wirtschaftskammer Wien, Hausierbewilligungen Allgemein, 21713/35: Ob.-österr. Rechtsschutzverein für Hausierer in Wels an die niederösterr. Handels- und Gewerbekammer in Wien. 28.10.1935.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between mobility and work irregularity by starting with the example of peddling. In the interwar period, peddling was very much a restricted occupation on the margins of begging, but it was at the same time used to describe all kinds of sales activities regarded as illegitimate or irregular by competitors. We might, then, see peddling as part of an 'economy of makeshifts'. The conflicts surrounding it also manifested a struggle over what the economy should be like. To understand the contradictions involved in the notion of peddling, it is necessary to place it in a broader context and consider the interrelations of different (and sometimes even controversial) perspectives. In particular, there was the emergence of a welfare state and the establishment of new forms of social support such as unemployment benefits and pensions. These developments were accompanied by a redefinition of work.[92] Hence, precarious practices of earning income such as peddling lost legitimacy when contrasted with 'decent' work or welfare. Yet in the aftermath of World War I and (particularly) the world economic crisis of the 1930s, the number of unemployed or unemployable greatly exceeded the restricted means of the state. There was still official interest in restrictively bestowing opportunities for earning one's livelihood and thereby unburdening the local communities. To understand the situation of peddling, however, it is not enough to consider only 'the state' versus people on the move. To begin with, there was no uniform position on the part of authorities but instead a range of diverse interests at work. Moreover, the legitimacy of peddling was also challenged by other trades and by greater competition. Peddling clearly fulfilled a need which went beyond individual survival, for it was still capable of serving the needs of consumers. Door-to-door sales were carried out not just by genuine peddlers but by a number of occupations. Rather than tending naturally toward irregularity, peddling was made more and more irregular by the imposition of more restrictions that attempted to protect shops with fixed locations. However, peddlers were not just subject to such business policies. Instead, they like others had to fight collectively for regulations that *protected* their rights – if nothing else, for regulations against illicit competition. Hence, among a diversity of formally established sales occupations, peddling continued to struggle from a weak, subjugated position.

[92] See, for example, Bénédicte Zimmermann, *Arbeitslosigkeit in Deutschland. Zur Entstehung einer sozialen Kategorie* (Frankfurt and New York, 2006); Josef Ehmer and Edith Saurer, 'Arbeit', in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2005), 507-33; Werner Conze, 'Arbeit', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1979), 154-215.