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The Practical Sociologist: Role and Performance of Pastoral Sociologists in the West German Catholic Church, 1945-1970 (Forthcoming in: *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 9 (2016))

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**Abstract:** The article is discussing the practical work of pastoral sociologists in the West German Catholic Church from 1945 to 1970. In this context, the distinction between “consultant”, “practitioner” and “researcher in a practical setting” can be used to highlight different sets of values, forms of engagement and conceptual approaches to sociological work in the church. Using one specific example for each of the three types, the article argues that pastoral sociology during the 1960s was increasingly self-reflexive, and that different notions of “sociological enlightenment” were an important part of pastoral sociology in the wake of the contestation of “1968”.

**Keywords:** Pastoral sociology; opinion polling; organizations research; Catholic Church; Second Vatican Council

During the three decades since the end of the Second World War, the Catholic Church in West Germany incrementally turned to knowledge from the applied social sciences in order to restructure and refine its pastoral structures and services, modes of communicating with the faithful, and internal organisational structures. The first of the empirical survey methods that the church employed since the early twentieth century was the statistical tabulation of practised piety, mostly church-goers and the number of Easter Communion. In a second phase, starting in 1945, the church turned to sociography. This was rather loosely defined approach that combined quantitative and qualitative methods in a survey of circumscribed local settings, i.e. villages or towns. In West Germany, it was mostly used to provide a social stratification of practised piety according to class, gender and age. This was followed by the application of opinion polling and – depending on which terminology one prefers – organisational sociology or organisations research. After long and controversial debates over the question whether Freudian psychoanalysis could be reconciled with the anthropological premises of Catholic moral theology, different groups and bodies

within the church finally started in the 1970s to employ therapeutical methods, mainly humanistic psychology with its “client-centred therapy” according to Carl Rogers.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church in the Federal Republic started to discuss and employ these methods and their empirical results against the backdrop of a rapidly changing societal environment and amidst a dramatically altered religious field. Whereas the immediate post-war years were dominated by the impression that a thorough re-christianisation of society might be imminent, these hopeful expectations gave way to disappointment about the erosion of church practice and active participation by the laity since the mid-1950s at the latest. During the 1960s, the decline of practised piety accelerated while changing patterns of sexuality and of sexual mores added to the perception – held first among a wider public and then also in church circles – that the church was increasingly out of touch with the value systems of a modernising society.<sup>2</sup>

For the pastoral sociologists, pastoral theologians and vicar-generals who were the main proponents of adopting and employing sociology in the church, this was an attempt to get a better grasp of the contours and the complexity of the social environment in which Catholic pastoral practice operated. While the epistemological status of sociological knowledge within Catholic thinking was not undisputed – at least during the 1950s there was a constant fear that it might lead to a *Soziologismus* or ‘sociologism’, i.e. the undue preponderance of sociological, causal explanations – there was also a strong drive to get a firm grip on societal constraints by developing an ‘empirical gaze’ at society. Thus, the practical application of social science methods was a part of what has been described as the “scientising of the social”, i.e. the “continuing presence of experts from the human sciences, their arguments, and the results of their research (...) in administrative bodies and in industrial firms, in parties and parliaments”, and, it should be added, in churches.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, with further details, Benjamin Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity. The Catholic Church in West Germany, 1945-1975* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The best recent survey of changes in the religious field in postwar Germany is Thomas Großbölting, *Der verlorene Himmel. Glaube in Deutschland seit 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); see also Benjamin Ziemann, “Religion and the Search for Meaning, 1945-1990”, in: Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 693-714.

<sup>3</sup> Lutz Raphael, “Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (1996), 165-193, quote 166. On the notion of the ‘scientising of the social’ in broader, comparative perspective see Kerstin Brückweh/Dirk Schumann/Richard Wetzell/Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Engineering Society. The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

In this article, I will focus on one particular aspect of this process that affected the very presence of these experts and the ways in which their expertise was employed. The actual group of people who championed and practised applied sociology in the West German Catholic Church was fairly small throughout the whole period. Including all those who devoted only parts of their time to these endeavours, for instance priests in the missionary orders of the Jesuits or Redemptorists who conducted sociographical surveys of practised piety before the actual mission, this might have been a group of 200 to 300 people during the 1950s and 1960s. If we only include those who were practising pastoral sociology or conducting surveys on religion on a full-time basis, we are talking about a few dozen people. When FERES, the International Association of Catholic Social Research Institutes, conducted a survey among its members in 1969, it turned out that the Dutch KASKI was by far the largest in terms of its budget and had 20 staff members. However, the *Pastoralsoziologisches Institut Essen* (Pastoral Sociological Institute of the Diocese of Essen, PSI), looking back to only 12 years of service at this point, came fifth. It had already published 56 reports and employed five staff members (including both academic and clerical staff).<sup>4</sup> From the late 1960s the church increasingly relied on external expertise mostly from marketing and opinion polling institutes. This was a change of tack. From 1945 to 1970, the church had tried to build institutional resources of its own and to employ people with some kind of sociological expertise also in a technical understanding of the term.<sup>5</sup> It should also be acknowledged that the massive expansion of the number of professional sociologists in the Federal Republic only gathered pace towards the end of the 1960s. At the universities in the Federal Republic, the number of sociology professors increased from a mere 35 in 1960 to a more substantial 190 in 1970.<sup>6</sup> The massive expansion of West German higher education around 1970 also impacted on sociological research facilities that operated outside universities, as they were affected by a constant brain drain of their academic staff. A pertinent example is the *Sozialforschungsstelle* Dortmund, founded in 1946. At its peak it was the biggest sociological research institute in Europe in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> Adolf Holl, "Socio-Religious Research in Europe: A Report on the Activities of Eleven Institutes in Eight European Countries," *Social Compass* 17 (1970), 461-468, 463.

<sup>5</sup> In more detail, see Benjamin Ziemann, "Die Institutionalisierung des Tatsachenblicks. Katholische Kirche und empirische Sozialforschung in der Bundesrepublik 1950-1970," *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 34 (2005), 107-125.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Rainer Lepsius, "Die personelle Lage der Soziologie an den Hochschulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Soziologie. Mitteilungsblatt der DGS* no. 1 (1972/73), 5-25, 18.

academic staff with 36 full-time researchers in 1968. Its staff list reads like a “Who is who” of some of the most influential figures in German sociology, academics who shaped the profession – and the sociology of religion – right up to the 1990s, including luminaries such as Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, Joachim Matthes, Niklas Luhmann and its academic director, Helmut Schelsky.<sup>7</sup> Yet in 1969 the SoFo had to close down, as university expansion had increased staff turnover to unsustainable levels, and many of its staff – including the four just mentioned – were appointed as professors of sociology at the newly founded University of Bielefeld.<sup>8</sup>

In the following, I will rely on a typology of different forms of practised sociology that was developed in the US during the 1960s. In 1968 Robert Angell distinguished between three types of role or affiliation that professional sociologists could face and perform in the context of a practical application of sociological knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The first was the “consultant”, i.e. someone who is only called upon to conduct specific inquiries or report on specific issues while remaining institutionally independent from the institution that commissioned his work. The second type is the “practitioner”, a person whose role is mainly characterised by the routine application of a specific set of empirical investigations and survey methods. The third type is the “researcher in a practical setting”, i.e. someone whose work is equally characterised by routine practices, but who also has the skills and the resources to develop new methodologies for the application of social science knowledge, or at least to reflect extensively on his way of applying sociological knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

As with every typology, there is the danger of applying it in a mechanical fashion and thus restricting rather than opening up space for potential insights. Angell himself, building on the US debates that underpinned his piece, was mainly interested in the implications of the different practical settings for the professional ethics of sociologists. For the purposes of my historical investigation, the focus is more on the practical circumstances of the work of pastoral sociologists and on their relations to decision-making bodies in the Catholic Church. I am fully aware that this typology is

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<sup>7</sup> See the excellent study by Jens Adamski, *Ärzte des sozialen Lebens. Die Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund 1946-1969* (Essen: Klartext, 2009), 13f.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-206.

<sup>9</sup> Robert C. Angell, “The Ethical Problems of Applied Sociology”, in: Paul Lazarsfeld/William H. Sewell/Harold L. Willensky (eds.), *The Uses of Sociology* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968) (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), 725-740; J.A. Banks, “The Sociological Role-Set,” *Sociological Review* 16 (1968), special issue, 21-36.

<sup>10</sup> Angell, “Ethical Problems”.

only useful as a heuristic principle, and that none of the practitioners of sociology in the church from 1945 to 1970 fully fits any of the three different types. However, I will try to highlight some of the differences between the different roles by focusing on specific examples. I will, basically, tell the story of three individuals who provided practical applications of sociological knowledge in the church, and use their examples as a springboard to tease out some wider implications for the debate on the ‘scientisation’ of the churches and on church sociology in post-war Germany and Europe.

My choice of these three individuals is in no way ‘scientific’. However, as will subsequently become clear, they all worked at a critical junction in the postwar history of the church that was related to the spirit and the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Particularly in its Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council had encouraged the use of sociology and other social sciences across the church in order to facilitate the *aggiornamento* or ‘bringing up-to-date’ that was at the core of the council’s message.<sup>11</sup> All three social researchers who will be discussed in this article engaged in one way or another some of the repercussions of the Second Vatican Council, either in that they championed its ideas or in that they had to grapple with problems of its implementation in the West German church. The choice of examples is also informed by the fact that it was only during the 1960s when church sociology accumulated a level of diversity and complexity that brought the differences between the three mentioned role-sets to the fore. During the 1950s and early 1960s, many of the priests and academic sociologists who worked in church service had to be both practitioner and researcher in a practical setting, as they developed the conceptual framework for their – at this stage mostly sociographic – inquiries while going along with their empirical work.<sup>12</sup>

A good example for this situation are two other individuals who would be worthwhile to inquire at more length in this context: Norbert Greinacher (b. 1931–), who acted as head of the PSI in Essen from 1958 to 1963, but continued to be involved in practical and theoretical aspects of pastoral sociology in his subsequent

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<sup>11</sup> See the lucid interpretation by Elmar Klinger, “Das Aggiornamento der Pastoralkonstitution”, in: Franz-Xaver Kaufmann/Arnold Zingerle (eds.), *Vaticanum II und Modernisierung. Historische, theologische und soziologische Perspektiven* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 171-187.

<sup>12</sup> For the Dutch case, Adolf Holl used this typology to differentiate institutes, not individual researchers, assuming that IST (Instituut voor toegepaste Sociologie) und PINK (Pastoraal Instituut van de Nederlandse Kerkprovincie) were by and large only working as research institutes, whereas KASKI acted both as practitioner and as consultant: Adolf Holl, “La recherche appliqué: le cas du KASKI aux Pays-Bas,” *Social Compass* 18 (1971), 621-637.

teaching positions at theology departments in Reutlingen, Münster and Tübingen; and Joseph Höffner (1906-1987), director of the *Institut für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* (Institute for Christian Social Sciences) at the University of Münster from 1951 to 1962. Again, Höffner continued to have a stake in debates over the pastoral use of sociology in his subsequent tenure as Bishop of Münster (1962-1969) and Archbishop of Cologne (1969-1987).<sup>13</sup> Both Greinacher and Höffner were at various stages involved in conflicts over the appropriate use of sociology, conflicts that were highly politicised at the end of the 1960s.

### I. The consultant: Gerhard Schmidtchen

Of all the sociologists who worked on church and religion in the Federal Republic until the early 1970s, Gerhard Schmidtchen is surely the best example of the type of a consultant. And he was, more than anyone else, the publicly recognisable face of this strand of sociology. After finishing his studies, Schmidtchen started to work as a staff member at the Allensbach Institute for Opinion Polling, the IfD (*Institut für Demoskopie*), founded in 1947 by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich-Peter Neumann. The IfD was both the most successful of all commercial polling institutes in the Federal Republic – due to its close links with chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the Christian Democratic Party during the 1950s and 1960s – and the most controversial one – because Noelle-Neumann had started to work on polling under the Nazi regime, following a study trip that informed her 1940 PhD on the topic, and because of the openly conservative bias of her reflections on the public sphere in her book *The Spiral of Silence*, first published in German in 1980.<sup>14</sup> The impact of opinion polling on the political process had been the topic of Schmidtchen's first book

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<sup>13</sup> There is no biographical sketch of Greinacher yet. For his role in debates over pastoral sociology at various stages see Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity*, 68, 83f., 87, 97, 140f., 185, 195f. The recent extensive biography on Höffner has surprisingly little to say about his activities as a social scientist and pastoral sociologist: Norbert Trippen, *Joseph Kardinal Höffner (1906-1987), Bd. 1: Lebensweg und Wirken als christlicher Sozialwissenschaftler bis 1962* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 153-158.

<sup>14</sup> Jörg Becker, *Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Demoskopie zwischen NS-Ideologie und Konservatismus* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013), 29-53. The press had to withdraw the book shortly after publication, due to litigation by the estate of Elisabeth Noelle. See Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence. Public Opinion, our Social Skin* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.).

publication in 1959, at a time when the new social science technique of polling was bitterly disputed among political scientists in West Germany.<sup>15</sup>

Yet after he had worked for years as a by and large anonymous staffer at the Allensbach Institute, Schmidtchen rose to considerable prominence at least in Catholic circles since 1968/1969. At this point he started to work as a consultant to the ambitious plan of the German Bishops Conference and the *Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken*, the umbrella body of all lay initiatives in West German Catholicism, to send out a questionnaire to all 21 million West German Catholics. The aim of this action was to canvas opinions ahead of the Joint Synod of the West German Dioceses (1972-1975) that was tasked with implementing the reform agenda of Vatican II in the framework of the West German church. The whole endeavour, which was accompanied by intensive debates both in the press and among the laity at the diocesan level, took the form of a general poll of potentially all Catholics, accompanied by a representative poll of the laity based on a quota sample, and a general poll of all priests in the Federal Republic.<sup>16</sup>

The preparation of these polls, and the general poll of the laity in particular, was left to a small preparatory committee that was constituted in 1969. Schmidtchen represented the IfD during these meetings and did the practical work, even though Noelle-Neumann also took part in some of the meetings and had prepared and agreed the terms of the work of the IfD. There is only scant information on the nature and atmosphere of the proceedings between the Bishops' Conference – for which Karl Forster, the secretary of the conference, handled the details – and the pollsters from the IfD. Schmidtchen's work on this project gained full traction only once the questionnaire was released to the public in April 1970. Very quickly, Schmidtchen then appeared to be the public face of the polling project.

In June 1970, Schmidtchen discussed the synod on the public television channel ZDF with politician Hanna-Renate Laurien, Klaus Hemmerle, the spiritual director of the Central Committee of German Catholics and later Bishop of Aachen, and the Viennese archbishop Franz Jachym. Schmidtchen presented his views in newspaper articles, too, stating that the “high response rate” compared to similar church polls in Austria and Switzerland constituted proof that the questions had

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<sup>15</sup> On political opinion polling in the Federal Republic see the groundbreaking study by Anja Kruke, *Demoskopie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Meinungsforschung, Parteien und Medien 1949-1990* (Düsseldorf: Droste 2007).

<sup>16</sup> See my *Encounters with Modernity*, 130-144, also for most of the following details.



awakened peoples' "interest" and would confound critics' "distrust" in the questionnaire of the general or total poll. Notwithstanding the fact that the results still had to be looked at in detail, Schmidtchen described the material from the total poll as "sensational". And he did not miss the opportunity to make the obligatory reference to the forthcoming poll of a representative sample with a more extensive list of questions, which would at last mean that those who had wanted "tougher questions" in the total poll would get their money's worth. The consultant Schmidtchen who worked for a polling institute could now also claim his academic credentials, as the University of Zurich had appointed him as a full professor of social psychology in 1970. He was the public face of a major sociological survey that accompanied the church during a period of turmoil and contestation. The public coverage of Schmidtchen's work made it very clear that one key upshot of his conduct of the poll was to paper over any critical questions many lay Catholics would have wanted to ask.<sup>17</sup>

Up to this point, Schmidtchen's work on opinion polling for the church can be characterised as a technocratic approach to applied research. Schmidtchen did not ask critical questions of his client, obviously; in public, he emphasised precisely those aspects of his work that were of relevance for the critical task of defusing a contentious situation that was fraught with conflicts and misunderstandings; and he offered an interpretation of the data that was in line with the expectations of his client, and left it to other sociologists and theologians to challenge this interpretation.

Yet there is another element of Schmidtchen's work in the context of the synod polls that is of relevance for the context of this inquiry. In 1972, Schmidtchen published his "research report" with the most important conclusions from the synod polls, a book that was presented to all members of the joint synod and played a rather diffuse role in its proceedings.<sup>18</sup> Yet only a year later, in 1973, Schmidtchen published another substantial tome. Mostly based on Allensbach polls that dated back to the 1950s, he made a fairly wide-ranging argument about the significance of confessional differences between Protestants and Catholics, their political, reading and consumer habits and their different value systems.<sup>19</sup> Even though one might want to doubt

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<sup>17</sup> See "Wozu eigentlich?", *Spiegel* no. 28/1972, 112f.

<sup>18</sup> Gerhard Schmidtchen, *Zwischen Kirche und Gesellschaft. Forschungsbericht über die Umfragen zur Gemeinsamen Synode der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Freiburg: Herder, 1972).

<sup>19</sup> Gerhard Schmidtchen, *Protestanten und Katholiken. Soziologische Analyse konfessioneller Kultur* (Bern & Munich: Francke, 1973).

whether the statistical differences that Schmidtchen presented were really that significant, the book was mostly read as a confirmation that confessional differences were still an important social, political and cultural cleavage in the Federal Republic.<sup>20</sup> A systematic analysis of citation patterns would probably reveal that Schmidtchen's 1973 book was not only the most widely read German book on the sociology of religion throughout the 1970s, 1980s and perhaps even the 1990s. Thus, it also contributed to the fact that sociology of religion was perceived to be an analysis of confessional cultures, and that the massive conflicts within the Catholic Church that had set the agenda for the synod polls and other sociological work in the period (on which see below) had been forgotten as topics of pastoral sociology.

## II. The practitioner: Josef Scharrer

As a practitioner, I would like to introduce Josef Scharrer (b. 1932–). Scharrer held a PhD in sociology and cultural studies, gained in 1960. Since the mid-1950s, he had worked as a managing director of the “action 365”, a mass missionary movement that was built on activism by the laity and around the public speeches and sermons held in all German cities by the Jesuit Johannes Leppich. Through his public appearances, Leppich tried to introduce a kind of evangelical preaching in Germany as it was practised by Billy Graham in the US. In 1966, however, Scharrer decided to set up his own company, the *Gesellschaft für christliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* (GCÖ, Society for Christian Public Relations Work). It was first situated in Frankfurt. But as the student protests held reign in a rather rough neighbourhood of the city, Scharrer decided to move up the river Main and settle in the much more quiet and splendidly beautiful city of Würzburg, which is dominated by the Cathedral, the fourth-largest Romanesque church building in Germany, and the Residence, in which the Catholic prince-bishops had resided up till the secularisation of 1806.<sup>21</sup>

Even though I label him as a practitioner, Scharrer had in fact a theoretical or at least conceptual underpinning for his new venture. He had closely followed the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council and in particular the Decree *Inter mirifica* on the social communication media. Scharrer took an interest in how the Decree supported the legitimacy of public opinion as an important arena of social exchange, even though it had also stipulated that a crucial criterion for the public use of information that it should

<sup>20</sup> See for instance the enthusiastic review by Gert H. Müller, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 30 (1976), 642-646.

<sup>21</sup> Much of the following is based on an extensive interview with Josef Scharrer on 17 April 2003.

“always be true and complete”.<sup>22</sup> Christian public relations work, in the way Scharrer understood and promoted it, had to use the leeway that the conciliar documents had granted, and to experiment with new ways of forming opinion within the church and among organised Catholics. The “freedom to shape opinions in the church” was the key insight that he adopted from the Council.<sup>23</sup> Scharrer had read David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* with its notion of the “other-directed” persons who are influenced by social pressure and the mass media.<sup>24</sup> But Scharrer’s view of the public sphere was genuinely positive. He saw it as an important feedback mechanism that could offer a “realistic understanding” of human beings in their aspirations and in their disagreements with each other.<sup>25</sup> Scharrer made the effort to develop his understanding of the council and its potential ramifications on the public sphere and public relations work in the church in a number of short booklets and other publications.<sup>26</sup>

The key imperative for Christian public relations work as Scharrer understood it was to rebuild trust into the church among the laity. This implied to say farewell to a one-directional style of communication, to engage with the ways in which members of the laity used the mass media and to adjust and update the public relations work and use of the mass media by the church. When I interviewed Scharrer about his work in 2003, almost forty years after he had started working in this field, he was still in equal measure furious and scathing about bishops he had encountered in the early 1970s who did not even have a television set in their residence and who looked awkward and static whenever they gave an interview.

After he had developed the conceptual underpinnings for his work, the way forward for Scharrer was the practical application of his insights in the field. He was extremely well connected particularly – but not only – across the dioceses in the south of Germany, i.e. Hesse, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg. Over the two decades since 1970, the GCÖ conducted more than 100 opinion polls. But these were not the opinion

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<sup>22</sup> Inter mirifica, online at:

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19631204\\_inter-mirifica\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html) (accessed on 28 September 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Josef Scharrer, *Die publizistischen Mittel in christlicher Sicht. Gedanken zum Konzildekret "Die publizistischen Mittel"* (Cologne: Volkswartbund, 1965), 32f.

<sup>24</sup> David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd. A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1950) (13<sup>th</sup> edn. 1967), 99-112.

<sup>25</sup> Josef Scharrer (ed.), *Was die Jugend von der Kirche erwartet. Konsequenzen aus einer Umfrage* (Limburg: Lahn Verlag, 1971), 15, 108.

<sup>26</sup> See Scharrer, *Die publizistischen Mittel*; idem, *Kirche - noch glaubwürdig? Motive für christliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* (Frankfurt/Main: Gesellschaft für christliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, 1967); idem, “Public Relations und Seelsorge”, in: Karl Rahner/Bernhard Häring (eds.), *Wort in Welt. Studien zur Theologie der Verkündigung. Festgabe für Viktor Schurr* (Bergen-Enkheim: Kaffke, 1968), 344-352.

polls that the German Bishops Conference had favoured when it introduced polling on a grand scale in the late 1960s for the preparation of the Joint Synod of all West German Dioceses. Scharrer was not a consultant like Schmidtchen, whose reputation rested on the affiliation with a major polling institute, academic prestige and the fact that he was presented as an ‘expert’ by the Bishops Conference. To be sure, Scharrer also worked with a professional though lesser known polling institute, the *Institut für Kommunikationsforschung* in Wuppertal, which conducted the actual polling on his behalf.

But Scharrer’s polls were not large-scale operations, and they were not meant to establish a general picture of the areas of consent and dissent among laity with the teaching and value-set of the church. Rather, Scharrer’s work focused on an “image-analysis” that was meant to highlight the expectations towards specific aspects of the work of the church that were held in a city or deanery. On the basis of these insights, Scharrer would then work with local church officials, priests and lay-representatives and develop strategies for how to improve the participation of the laity in areas such as youth work, social work (*Caritas*) and other pastoral fields. The main aim of these efforts to establish areas in which the pastoral lacking trust among the laity, and to develop patterns of behaviour that would allow to regain trust.<sup>27</sup>

Rebuilding trust was also the catchword for another aspects of Scharrer’s practical work in the “contact mission” – a new form of the people’s mission initially explored in 1969 in the area around the city of Marl in Westphalia. Unlike the “regional mission” that had been practised since the late 1940s, based on sociographical data, the more fundamental and longer-term contact mission no longer targeted specific social groups of those abstaining from church, but aimed instead to “awaken and maintain” a “global trust in the church”.<sup>28</sup> The GCÖ prepared a pastoral plan for this purpose that the clergy of the Deanery of Marl then discussed in detail. Unlike many sociographical projects, this plan, which the clergy expected a great deal from, succeeded in “warming the priests to its implementation”. The office of the vicar-general in Münster spoke of an atmosphere of “confidence and optimism” created by the GCÖ’s work, despite the general dismay about declining church attendance. Cooperating closely with those who were affected by subsequent pastoral measures was essential to the success of using opinion polling in pastoral work. The

<sup>27</sup> Scharrer, *Kirche - noch glaubwürdig?*, 3, 5, 22.

<sup>28</sup> GCÖ, “Umrisse für den Plan einer Kontaktmission,” 5 March 1968: Bistumsarchiv Münster (BAM), Generalvikariat-Neues Archiv (GV NA), A-201-377.

personal engagement of social scientists who saw their task not only as making abstract calculations but spared “no efforts, and no amount of travel and personal dedication” for the cause was also crucial.<sup>29</sup> That was at least the description from the office of the vicar-general in a remarkable and very positive appraisal of Scharrer’s engagement. Such a glowing commendation is rarely found because pastoral sociologists were – mainly because their core task was to shake up stale pastoral routines – not really popular among the clergy who worked in the diocesan administrative bodies. But this appraisal is indicative of the way in which Scharrer worked: open-minded, frank, but also fully committed to finding a solution that benefited not his theoretical interests or any general grudge against the church hierarchy, but that was practical and feasible and would actually improve pastoral communication in a specific area.

### III. The researcher in a practical setting: Philipp von Wambolt

As a researcher in a practical setting, I would like to introduce Philipp von Wambolt. In many respects, it is misleading to characterise him in such a way, as he never worked as a researcher while still employed by the church, and has no publications in the sociology of religion or in pastoral sociology to his name. Before he took up a teaching position at a technical college (*Fachhochschule*) for social pedagogy in 1972, he had worked continuously as a staff member of the Diocese of Münster in roles that mostly involved non-sociological work. Yet at the same time, during a brief but significant period for his own professional career and for the development of pastoral sociology in practical settings, he had fulfilled the mammoth task of not only developing and implementing a sociological programme for the targeted reorganisation of pastoral services in the Diocese of Münster – which was the most ambitious programme of organisational reform that any of the German dioceses embarked upon in the late 1960s and early 1970s –, but at the same time also offering substantial reflections on the ways in which organisations research could be applied in the church, and on the pitfalls and problems of such an endeavour. This was the so-called *Strukturplan* or “structural plan”. Basically, it was a wide-ranging agenda to supplement the territorial provision of pastoral services in the traditional *Pfarrgemeinde* (parish community) – which was also a *Wohngemeinde* (residential community) – with a set of offers for specialist pastoral care that would cater for the

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<sup>29</sup> File note, n.a., n.d. [P. Edbert Köster OFM, November 1968]: BAM, GV NA, A-101-336.

functionally defined needs of specific groups (students, parents, youth etc.) and would be delivered at the level of a *Großpfarrei* or “large parish”, roughly equivalent in size to the deanery. Thus, the *Strukturplan* was also part of a larger, incremental process that had started in the 1950s, in which the “intermediary” level of the church was strengthened as an ongoing “delocalisation” loosened ties to specific localities.<sup>30</sup> Wambolt was employed by the department of pastoral services in the administration of the Diocese of Münster to make suggestions on the details of the plan, to analyse the results of a wide-ranging consultation on the plan that took place across the diocese in 1970, and to assess the options that were available for the implementation for the plan.<sup>31</sup>

The *Strukturplan* was in many ways a radical and fascinating attempt to reorganise pastoral services, and by doing so to actively implement a new reform agenda at the very heart of the church. In the context of this article, I am interested in the ways in which von Wambolt understood his role as a professional sociologist in the discussion and implementation of the plan. Wambolt collaborated with another, more junior sociologist on this endeavour, Karl-Erich Englert, who only rarely had an active voice in the proceedings. Wambolt also closely liaised with Hermann-Josef Spital, the head of the pastoral services department, who was the main recipient of the many memos and letters that Wambolt filed and someone who – according to Wambolt’s own testimony – would listen to the opinions of other people, including staff in his department, even though he would not always fully appreciate their relevance.<sup>32</sup>

So how did von Wambolt understand and practice his role as the lead sociologist in charge of assessing and abetting the *Strukturplan* debate? First, he had a clear sense that one of his core duties was to aide the decision-making of relevant diocesan church bodies by offering a structured, “articulate” account of the various alternatives for the structure and implementation of the plan. As a piece of organisational reform, the *Strukturplan* was the subject of decisions, and von

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<sup>30</sup> See Wilhelm Damberg and Staf Hellemans, “Delokalisierung, Neulokalisierung und der Aufstieg der intermediären Kircheninstanzen seit 1945/1960. Zur Einführung,” in: Damberg/Hellemans (eds.), *Die neue Mitte der Kirche. Der Aufstieg der intermediären Instanzen in den europäischen Großkirchen seit 1945* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 7-20.

<sup>31</sup> I have described this in more detail in my *Encounters with Modernity*, 188-202.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance Philipp von Wambolt 29 April 1970 to the vicar-general, Reinhard Lettmann: BAM, GV NA, A-201-15; von Wambolt, “Hinweis auf Alternativen”: 9 September 1970: BAM, GV NA A-201-365; von Wambolt, “Innerkirchliche Opposition und Neustrukturierung”, 10 September 1970: *ibid.*; von Wambolt, “Zwischenbericht über Äußerungen zur Dreiteilung "Wesenskatholizismus [A] -Vermittlungsposition [B] - dynamischer Katholizismus [C]”, n.d. [1970]: *ibid.*

Wambolt wanted those decisions to be as informed and rational as possible. And he was clear about the fact that the alternatives he presented were ultimately based on his judgement (“*Urteil*”) particularly with regard to the potential “consequences” of each alternative. They were not simply objectifiable verdicts that could be detached from the personal involvement of him as a “planning specialist” in the process.<sup>33</sup>

A second element of his role was to point out the theological premises and implications of sociological work in the field of organisational reform. The *Strukturplan* rested on a specific understanding, in fact a “definition” of the church, which in von Wambolt’s view was to see church as a “signifier” (*Zeichen*). Hence, the plan was a way to optimise the ways in which the church as a visible signifier was articulated. Wambolt queried whether it might not be more appropriate to start from seeing the church as a way of exploring the chance of “self-determination” – both with regard to God and with regard to your fellow human beings – in the “service of salvation”.<sup>34</sup> In doing so, he made it clear that a sociological perspective on planning in the church had to reconcile sociological and ecclesiological perspectives, and to make their entanglement visible. His knowledge about the interconnectedness of sociological and theological perspectives led von Wambolt to a third significant articulation of his role, that as a translator. One key element of the *Strukturplan* was the notion of a “*Gemeinde*”, a German term that could also be understood as *Gemeinschaft* (both terms translate as community in English). Here von Wambolt made some effort to explain that the theological use of *Gemeinde* was only a metaphor derived from “natural society” (*natürliche Gesellschaft*), a term by which he probably meant a pre-critical (in the Kantian sense) understanding of society.<sup>35</sup>

Wambolt insisted that sociologists would articulate the notion of a “place” in society not in a “geographical sense”, but as a place in the “overall fabric” (*Gesamtgefüge*) of society and thus in a functional definition.<sup>36</sup> Wambolt was, to be sure, highly critical of sociological neo-functionalism as it presented itself at the time in its

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<sup>33</sup> See in particular von Wambolt, “Hinweis auf Alternativen”, 9 September 1970: BAM, GV NA A-201-365.

<sup>34</sup> Philipp von Wambolt 29 April 1970 to the vicar-general, Reinhard Lettmann: BAM, GV NA, A-201-15.

<sup>35</sup> German eighteenth-century dictionaries such as Campe and Adelung define “natürliche Gesellschaft” as the “Gesellschaft zwischen Alten, Kindern und Geschwistern, in welche sie sogleich bei der Geburt treten.” Other references define it as the “eheliche” society between spouses, and it was also used as a term for the natural state in pre-1800 natural law theories of a social contract. Wambolt used the term in inverted commas, and he might have taken it from another source than the ones I have just mentioned.

<sup>36</sup> Quotes in von Wambolt, “Hinweis auf Alternativen”, 9 September 1970: BAM, GV NA A-201-365

prime through the global reach of the work of Talcott Parsons.<sup>37</sup> Yet he knew that the organicist metaphors that underpinned the implicit theology of most of the stakeholders in the process – right up to the vicar-general and bishop, but also including some of the local university theologians who were involved in the debate, and members of the laity who pushed theological arguments – had no meaningful place in a truly academic discourse. In that sense, the “conflict between theologians and sociologists” that manifested itself during the debate on the *Strukturplan* was only fought over an “illusory problem”.<sup>38</sup> Seen from a functionalist sociological perspective, it seemed obvious that the “*Wohngemeinde*” or “residential community” had been “defunctionalised”. In an era in which cars and communications media such as telephones made it possible to communicate and socialise with ease over greater distances, the residential neighbourhood basically served as a “petrol station” at which busy professionals would recharge their batteries after a long working day. Hence, the claims of the theologians that the “visible” church should materialise and meet at a specific residential “site” was wrong.<sup>39</sup> By adding functionally defined pastoral services to the traditional parish community, the *Strukturplan* had moved in the right direction. But this move was not radical enough, and it was still hampered by the prevalence of traditional spatial metaphors among the priests and theologians.

A fourth element of von Wambolt’s understanding of his own role related directly to his own conceptual rejection of organicist metaphors with their tendency to paper over disagreement. The *Strukturplan*-debate took place against the backdrop of the student revolt and cultural unrest in West Germany in the wake of 1967/68, and while the student revolt was a less immediate context here as in the debate over opinion polling in the church, conflicts and the way conflicts were handled did obviously have a bearing on any implementation of the plan.<sup>40</sup> Hence, von Wambolt was keen to drive home a key point that had not been addressed by the authors of the plan – a planning group that had included Egon Golomb, another pastoral sociologist – and that was lost on most of the people who were involved in its debate: conflicts

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<sup>37</sup> This point was raised von Wambolt, “Schreibhemmungen bei pastoralen Themen”, n.d. [ca. 1971]: BAM, GV NA, A-201-379. Here, von Wambolt criticised that many sociologists who worked for the church employed the conceptual framework of Parsonian functionalism. Among others, he probably referred to Osmund Schreuder, *Kirche im Vorort. Soziologische Erkundung einer Pfarrei* (Freiburg & Basel & Vienna: Herder, 1962).

<sup>38</sup> See von Wambolt, “Hinweis auf Alternativen”, 9 September 1970: BAM, GV NA A-201-365.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> On this context, see the contributions in Bernd Hey/Volkmar Wittmütz (eds.), *1968 und die Kirchen* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2008).



and the emergence of oppositional groups within the church were not only inevitable and facts with which every planning model had to reckon. They were also the result of the structural parameters of the church with its prevalence on official roles and its neglect, if not disregard of unofficial roles and channels of communication.<sup>41</sup> Read in a positive manner – which he suggested one should do –, von Wambolt’s message was here that the *Strukturplan* could be a means of dealing in a structured manner with the existence of oppositional groups at the left fringe of the church. In professional terms, his emphasis on conflicts was – again – a direct critique of Parsonian functionalism in which conflicts were not an intrinsic, relevant part of society.

Another, fifth element of von Wambolt’s understanding of his role were his reflections on the best ways in which the results of his work could be communicated to different stakeholders. This impetus had practical implications, in particular suggestions as to how his compilation of contributions to the debate within the diocese – an effort that had materialised in various lengthy manuscripts – could be condensed. Among the options that he contemplated was a longer report for the information of key persons in the diocese and the administrative bodies of other West German dioceses, a short printed booklet for wider circulation among the laity, and an even shorter precis for a press conference.<sup>42</sup> Yet apart from finding the best outlet for the publication of his findings, von Wambolt was acutely aware that his presentation of the different key positions in the diocese with regard to planning and organisations reform had triggered concerns. He had distinguished between a “*Wesenskatholizismus*” that saw the Catholic Church as a stable and hence unchangeable “essence”, a “dynamic” approach, and a third, “intermediate” position between the two extremes. Erwin Iserloh for instance, a renowned theologian and church historian at the University of Münster, had insisted that the documents of Vatican II would only circumscribe one position, and that theologians who deviated from it were close to promoting a heresy. In such a view, there was certainly no “dynamic” that could be discussed or even acknowledged. The press officer of the diocese also voiced his concern that it would be “dangerous” if von Wambolt’s labels for the three positions would be “publicised” as it would trigger protests from those

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<sup>41</sup> See von Wambolt, “Innerkirchliche Opposition und Neustrukturierung”, 10 September 1970: BAM, GV NA A-201-365.

<sup>42</sup> On this see in particular von Wambolt, 17 September 1970, “Vorentwurf: Alternativen hinsichtlich der Verwendung der Diskussionsergebnisse”: BAM, GV NA, A-201-365.

who rejected dynamism outright, but also from those on the other end of the spectrum who would conclude that any “essence” was lost for good anyway.<sup>43</sup>

At this point, von Wambolt was remarkably unfazed by these and many other objections against the plan and its public discussion within the laity and the various bodies in the diocese. When he reported to the vicar-general in April 1970, he was in fact convinced that the *Strukturplan* would be implemented without any major changes against the original blueprint, even though he sensed that a deeper and bolder reform would be impossible due to the restraints of the setting provided by the framework of dioceses in West Germany (what sociologists call the ‘organisational field’, a field of mutual observation that limits and regulates organisational adaptation) and ultimately by the stance of the Holy See, or “Rome”, the metonymy used by Wambolt. More important, though, was von Wambolt’s drive to convey his own position and his own values vis-à-vis organisational reform. This was the sixth and in many ways decisive element of his work as a pastoral sociologist: to be frank and upfront about his own preferences. And so he minced no words in telling the vicar-general that he was in favour of a church that was not recognizable through a “uniformity of a colour, manner of speaking or membership” role, and that was hence a “pluralistic church”.<sup>44</sup> And anyone in favour of a truly pluralistic church, von Wambolt argued, had to appreciate that A, B, and C, a Catholicism of “essence”, of “dynamism” and the intermediate between these two, were all a legitimate part of the church.

#### IV. The notion of sociological enlightenment

It should be clear by now that the main driver for Wambolt's sociological work in the Diocese of Münster was the idea to promote enlightenment. As far as I can see, the term does not crop up once in the many documents on the *Strukturplan* that Wambolt produced from 1969 to 1971. Yet it is very clear that it was his core operation and aim to enlighten: the top-level administrators about their options, everyone about the difficulties of communicating between theology and sociology, sociologists about the limits of their work, and every interested stakeholder about some key implications of his own work in teasing out different approaches to the *Strukturplan*. And, most crucially, von Wambolt saw a need for critical self-reflection of his own position as a

<sup>43</sup> See von Wambolt, “Zwischenbericht über Äußerungen zur Dreiteilung "Wesenskatholizismus [A] - Vermittlungsposition [B] - dynamischer Katholizismus [C] ”, n.d. [1970]: BAM, GV NA A-201-365.

<sup>44</sup> Philipp von Wambolt 29 April 1970 to the vicar-general, Reinhard Lettmann: BAM, GV NA, A-201-15.

pastoral sociologist and his contribution to the crucial debate over the very future of Christianity that was implied by his plea for pluralism and individual self-reflection.<sup>45</sup> Wambolt found his own way of articulating his concerns, concerns that ultimately motivated him in 1972 to seek employment outside the church, even though he was adamant that his work in social pedagogy was in fact a continuation of his interest in pastoral care, just in another name.

It is helpful to consider von Wambolt's approach to enlightenment against the backdrop of the discussion in West German sociological discourse in the late 1960s. On the one hand, there was Jürgen Habermas as proponent of the critical theory of the "Frankfurt School". Habermas developed the notion that enlightenment had to be based on a rational exchange of arguments in a public debate whose participants had to openly declare their interests and normative presuppositions.<sup>46</sup> Thus, rational debate would enlighten as it could correct distorted viewpoints. Yet there was also another approach to enlightenment through sociology that emerged in the late 1960s, at that point only known to professional insiders in the discipline. It was championed by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann. He built on Talcott Parsons' functionalism to develop a comprehensive theory of social systems that tried to tease out functional equivalents in the structure of societal sub-systems as diverse as the economy, science or religion.<sup>47</sup> In his inaugural lecture at the University of Münster, delivered in January 1967 – and we might want to speculate whether von Wambolt attended this lecture, clearly something he must have been interested in as a professional sociologist –, Luhmann developed the notion of an "*Abklärung der Aufklärung*", a sceptical "clarification of enlightenment."<sup>48</sup>

Luhmann's approach to enlightenment through sociology differed substantially from Habermas', even though this was not the main focus in the controversy between the two that erupted in the late 1960s.<sup>49</sup> Luhmann envisaged a sociology that would

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<sup>45</sup> On this, see the most fascinating of his many memos, "Schreibhemmungen bei pastoralen Themen", n.d. [ca. 1971]: BAM, GV NA, A-201-379. This is also a key theme in his letter to Hermann-Josef Spital, 30 July 1971: *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Oxford: Polity, 1999) (first German edn. 1962).

<sup>47</sup> The key reference is his opus magnum Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Volume I* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Niklas Luhmann, "Soziologische Aufklärung", in: *idem, Soziologische Aufklärung I. Aufsätze zur Theorie sozialer Systeme* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 2006, 6th edn.) (first published in 1972), 66-91, 66.

<sup>49</sup> A short English-language introduction in Eva Knodt, "Toward a non-foundationalist Epistemology: The Habermas/Luhmann Controversy Revisited," *New German Critique* 61 (1994), 77-100.

develop the competence to enlighten on the basis on a refined understanding of the constraints of human action. Sociologists, he argued, should not try to get closer to their object of study, but should remain at a distance in order to see the incongruences between different actors. They should, secondly, develop a sense for latent functions, as for example through the focus on the “informal organisation” that is at work in any formal organisation. And they should use – thirdly – the functionalist paradigm to highlight “dysfunctional aspects” in complex systems. Altogether, Luhmann argued, sociological enlightenment was an attempt to focus on the ways in which complexity was built up and processed in social systems.<sup>50</sup>

It is astonishing how closely von Wambolt’s approach resembled some of the implications of Luhmann’s “clarification of enlightenment”. Wambolt was adamant to look at all contributions to the debate from a distanced observer perspective, trying to tease out the latent motives of both progressives and conservatives. He stressed that the *Strukturplan* had neglected the existence of informal groups in the church, and repeatedly highlighted both merits and limits of functionalist comparisons between the church and other formal organisations. Overall, by advocating an “A, B, C”-position that represented all different groups in the church, including those who were not actively involved in the ongoing conflict between progressives and conservatives, Wambolt argued in favour of an increased capacity of the church to process complexity.

Wambolt presented some more coherent reflections on his approach in a memorandum on the “thirst for a human church”, which he labelled as an exercise in the “critique of ideology”.<sup>51</sup> Wambolt was keen to emphasise that his “critique of ideology” was not meant to be “purely negative”, but rather aimed to introduce some of the structural constraints and contexts that shaped the backdrop for the debate on the *Strukturplan*. In this text, he was scathing about the attempts of many participants in the debate to be “contemporary”, simply by reiterating sociological buzzwords such as “pluralism” or “rationalisation of the organisational structure”. Such superficial references to sociology were indeed tantamount to “sociologism”, he argued, and could only be challenged by a more in-depth understanding of complex organisations. Wambolt also noted that these attempts to be “contemporary” shed a light on the superficial understanding of Vatican II and its programme of “aggiornamento” among

<sup>50</sup> Luhmann, “Soziologische Aufklärung”, 67-73.

<sup>51</sup> Philipp von Wambolt, “Durst nach menschlicher Kirche. Ideologiekritische Bemerkungen zur Strukturplandiskussion im Bistum Münster,” n.d. [1971]: BAM, GV NA, A-201-365.

lay Catholics and priests in the diocese of Münster. Here the church only tried to “catch up” (“*Aufholen*”) with modern society, but did not make an attempt to “draw level” (“*Einholen*”) with it. For Wambolt it was ultimately necessary, though, to restore the spiritual and social relevance of the church, in an attempt to present an “anticipation” (“*Vorgriff*”) of societal challenges that were already visible. In that sense, a conservative reading of the Second Vatican Council was for Wambolt as “ideology” a mere “justification of the present”, “as the theory would posit” (“*wie die Theorie sagt*”).<sup>52</sup> This was clearly a reference to the critical theory of Theodor W. Adorno and Habermas, and demonstrates that Wambolt tried to combine both ‘critical’ and functionalist sociology in his attempt to enlighten the church about the latent premises of the *Strukturplan* debate.

## V. Conclusion

For a more substantial analysis it would be necessary to take a broader look at some of the contexts of the work of pastoral sociologists, in particular to take the work of the various institutes into account that were founded during the sociographic phase of church sociology from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.<sup>53</sup> An emphasis on the late 1960s and early 1970s, as in this paper, will tend to overemphasise the diversity within the group of pastoral sociologists, as the terms of employment and the empirical work during the sociographical phase were much more standardised than a decade later. Yet despite these shortcomings, at least two conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of the three different role-situations in pastoral sociology that I have sketched out here.

The first refers to differences in approach and style of the work of these sociologists, their role-set. The fundamental difference here was not between those who were employed by the church (Wambolt) and those who were not (Scharrer, Schmidtchen). The key difference was between those who were working as pastoral sociologists because they were Catholics, and despite all misgivings and frustrations hoped that they could contribute to a better church with better pastoral services, and those who conducted empirical research on religion because they had a commercial

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> For some observations see Ziemann, “Die Institutionalisierung des Tatsachenblicks”, 107-125. Meanwhile, however, new materials have been made available, in particular the full set of records of the Pastoralsoziologisches Institut des Bistums Essen, now in the Bistumsarchiv Essen, which I had not been able to scrutinise.

contract and were handsomely paid. This difference was noted and emphasised already at the time, not only by Philipp von Wambolt, who argued that the church made a mistake by increasingly commissioning reports from commercial institutes, as it was the case since the late 1960s. These pollsters and consultants, Wambolt argued, were bound to miss the main difference between businesses – their usual clients – and the church, in that businesses had not to reflect on the wider social implications of their work and on the ends of their service to society, as it was paramount for the church.<sup>54</sup>

A second conclusion regards the reflexivity of church sociology. In a seminal article Thomas Luckmann fundamentally criticised the superficial methodology and narrow conceptual framework of those church sociologists who had worked in the sociographic paradigm during the 1950s. He also deplored the lack of any substantial reflection on potential manifestations of religion beyond the confines of church-going and communion. In his view, the sociographic approach was shallow contract research that only served the instrumental purposes of those church bodies that commissioned these reports.<sup>55</sup> From his 1960 article, Luckmann went on to develop the notion of an “invisible religion”, i.e. smaller patterns of transcendence that cannot be conceptualised by the means of church sociology.<sup>56</sup> His charge that pastoral sociology lacked reflexivity, however, stuck, and it has often been argued that no substantial sociology of religion was practised in Germany during the 1960s. Based on the findings of this article, however, we can see that this claim is wrong. All three practical sociologists we have discussed here offered relevant reflections on their conceptualisation of religion, and at least one of them, Philipp von Wambolt, also substantially reflected his own role and performance as a pastoral sociologist. Sociologists and historians of the social sciences should stop to repeat the often made mistake of claiming that Luckmann’s critique is also valid for pastoral sociology during the 1960s, as it was much more diverse, complex and self-reflexive than usually assumed. One reason, though, why this has not been noticed so far is that most of these reflections were articulated in internal memoranda only. From 1969 to 1972,

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<sup>54</sup> See von Wambolt, “Schreibhemmungen bei pastoralen Themen”, n.d. [ca. 1971]: BAM, GV NA, A-201-379. For a similar critique by the sociologist Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, who is an active lay member of the Catholic church and advised various church bodies during the 1970s and 1980s, see Ziemann, *Encounters with Modernity*, 137.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Luckmann, “Neuere Schriften zur Religionssoziologie,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 12 (1960), 315-326.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

Philipp von Wambolt conducted research and jotted down reflections on the sociology of the Catholic Church as an organisation that were as complex and sophisticated as, for instance, the subsequent important publications by Franz-Xaver Kaufmann on these themes.<sup>57</sup> But unlike Kaufmann, Wambolt never published a single line on these topics.

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<sup>57</sup> See Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen. Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979).

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