

# THE MAKING OF A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY.

## The German Historical Association (Historikerverband) and the conferences of historians (Historikertage), 1893-2000

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The article presents the latest historical research about the German Historical Association, which happened to appear at the 125th anniversary of this institution.<sup>1</sup> No other country in the world, except the USA, has a comparable association of historians with such a lasting continuity and such a highly political and social influence as the one of the Federal Republic of Germany. Surprisingly, the history of this association, founded already in 1895, has not been studied until recently, while smaller national associations of historians and other historical institutions have found their historiographers since long. There are similar institutions like the Allgemeine Geschichtsforschende Gesellschaft der Schweiz (Switzerland) or the American Historical Association which have been studied already. For Germany a study was missing until, finally, at the 52. Historikertag in Münster, Westfalia, in September 2018 a comprehensive book in two volumes could be presented to the public.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my presentation on the 26. 10. 2018 at the conference Investigaciones recientes en historia de la historiografía. Comunidad, género, publicaciones periódicas as the X Seminario de Historia de la Historiografía Juan José Carreras at the Institución Fernando el Católico, Zaragoza.

<sup>2</sup> Matthias Berg, Olaf Blaschke, Martin Sabrow, Jens Thiel, Krijn Thijs, Die versammelte Zunft. Historikerverband und Historikertage in Deutschland 1893-2000, 2 vol., Göttingen 2018. Cf. already from the presidents of the Historikerverband: Gerhard Ritter, Die deutschen Historikertage. Zur 22. Versammlung deutscher Historiker in Bremen, 17-20. September 1953, in: Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 4, 1953, p. 513-521. Karl Dietrich Erdmann, Geschichte, Politik und Pädagogik B aus den Akten des

Many other countries did never established one central organization, but rather numerous specific historical associations. In Spain the *Asociación de Historia Actual* (AHA), founded in the year 2000, the *Asociación Española de Historia Económica* (AHE) since 1972 or the *Asociación de Historia Social* (AHS), founded in 1990, are important *Asociación de Historia Contemporánea* (AHC). In France, the *Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur Public* (SHMESP), founded in 1969, or *l'Association des Historiens Modernistes des Universités françaises* (AHMUF), founded in 1967, care for the interests of specialized historians, while associations like the *Comité de vigilance face aux usages publics de l'histoire* (CVUH), are responsible for protecting the study of history in civil society against political constraints. The *Comité français des sciences historiques* (CFSH), founded in 1926, is the addressee to nominate candidates for the International Congresses. It also publishes an annual bibliography of the historical sciences but has not the same profile and membership or amount of members as other umbrella organizations?

A multitude of similar associations exist everywhere, also in Germany, for example the *Gesamtverein der deutschen Geschichts und Altertumsvereine*, founded in 1852, comprising 200 different associations, the *Gesellschaft für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (GSWG) since 1961, or the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte* founded in 1960. But neither in France nor in Spain there is an umbrella institution like the *Historikerverband*, comprising all sorts of historians no matter in what field or epoch they are working, representing the whole spectrum of professional historians. Why did German historians create such an all comprising organization? What is the purpose of the German association of Historians? It needs to explained what such an institution can achieve?

Only a few important aspects of the project can be presented here. Because the work of 12 years and 832 pages written by five authors can hardly be summarized in this paper. Thus, the article concentrates on four chosen aspects in order to delineate major dimensions of the *Historikerverband*:

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Deutschen Historikerverbandes, in: *ibid.* 19, 1968, p. 221. For the early period Peter Schumann, *Die deutschen Historikertage von 1893 bis 1937. Die Geschichte einer fachhistorischen Institution im Spiegel der Presse*, Diss. Marburg 1974. Gerald Diesener and Matthias Middell (ed.), *Historikertage im Vergleich (Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung.* 6/1996, 5/6), Leipzig 1996.

- I. What does the Historikerverband do?
- II. The growth of the Historikertage from 1893 to 2018
- III. The venues of the Historikertage: Was the association representing German history?
- IV. Six systematic core questions

I. Why was the Historikerverband founded and what are its objectives? Abstractly spoken, it represents and defends the interests of professional historians in Germany. Its main task is to regularly organize the Historikertag, the general assembly of all professional historians in a German city, preferably a city with a university. The Historikertag is largest humanities congress in all Europe. The bi-annual Historikertag brings together over 3500 historians in the selected city to discuss different topics. Other disciplines in humanities organize similar regular meetings - the Sociologists and the Political Sciences but their numbers concerning members and participants at their conferences are remarkably smaller, the appearance of high politicians like the president or chancellor of the Federal Republic is rare, and the public impact low.<sup>3</sup> There is also no other country in Europe that can compete with this huge congress. Even the International Historical Congress of Historical Science, which was initiated in 1898, cannot keep up with the German Historikertag in terms of the number of participants. This international Congress takes place every five years and is organized by the *Comité international des Sciences Historiques* (CISH). Usually about 2000 people appear, for example in Madrid in 1990. In the same year, 3000 historians joined the German general assembly. In Jinan, in China, in 2016 there were nearly 3000 attendees, still less than at the German conference, which took place in Hamburg with nearly 4000 historians.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, founded in 1909, organizes similar conferences with between 2000 and 3000 participants (Soziologentag). Cf. Berg et al., p. 537. Wolfgang Glatzer, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS): Die akademische Soziologische Vereinigung seit 1909, in: <https://www.soziologie.de/de/dsgsgeschichte/#c1571>. Wilhelm Bleek, Geschichte der Politikwissenschaft in Deutschland, München 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For the history of the CISH and the IHC cf. Karl Dietrich Erdmann, «Toward a Global Community of Historians. The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences», 1898-2000, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, New York/Oxford, 2005. Cf. Berg et al., vol. 1, p. 187-200, vol 2, p. 359-394, 602-620.

**Figure 1: International Congress of Historical Science from Paris 1900 to Vienna 1965: Europeans among themselves**



**Figure 2: International Congress of Historical Science from Moskau 1970 to Madrid 1990: policy of détente in the Cold War**



**Figure 3: International Congress of Historical Science from Montreal 1995 to Jinan 2015: Globalization**



The German Historians Association protects the interests of the field - in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu B and represents it in public<sup>5</sup>: It was founded in 1895 and eased historian's internal communication. It was part of the process of building the discipline and the institutionalization of the field, it created international connections, tackled present-day questions, and acted as a venue of conflicts with politics. Nevertheless, the major task of the Historikerverband has been to organize the Historikertag. These monster-meetings are the child of the association. In its beginnings it was the other way around: The association was the child of the first historian days of 1893 and 1894. Historians met in order to oppose Wilhelm II, meddling with history-schoolbooks. The emperor wanted pupils to learn more about German history instead of the Greek and Roman past. His interference touched upon the autonomy of history as a discipline and as a field. After the success of the two first general meetings, the German Historical Association was founded in 1895 at the 3rd Historikertag in Frankfurt.<sup>6</sup>

Since then, it has been the task of the association to organize the following congress in cooperation with a local committee, for example 1896 in Innsbruck etc. All in all there were 52 Historikertage, the last one took place in September 2018 in Münster. When in 2006 the files of the Historikerverband –24 meters of folders filled with paper– were given to the University of Trier, comprising the period since 1949 (a previous archive didn't exist and important files from actors had been destroyed) I was amazed to see that there was only a PhD-study about about the press coverage of the Historikertage between 1893 and 1937 in German media. For the period after the Second World War only Winfried Schulze had used these files to analyse the beginnings of the Historikerverband.<sup>7</sup> Neither the association nor its general assemblies since 1949 had been subject to research yet, which was all the more surprising since there are studies about much smaller associations like the one in Switzerland. The *American Historical Association* (AHA) has been analyzed by historians several times.<sup>8</sup> There were only 15 history professors in the whole of the USA in 1884, which makes the

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction: Olaf Blaschke and Lutz Raphael, «Im Kampf um Positionen. Änderungen im Feld der französischen und deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945», in: Jan Eckel / Thomas Etzemüller (ed.), *Neue Zugänge zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen 2007, p. 69-109.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Schumann, p. 13-66; Berg et al., vol. 1, p. 29-68.

<sup>7</sup> Schumann; pathbreaking: Winfried Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945*, München 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur S. Link, «The American Historical Association 1884-1984. Retrospect and prospect», in: *American Historical Review*, 90, 1985, p. 117; David van Tassel, «From learned society to professional organization. The American Historical Association», 1884-1900, in: *American Historical Review*, 89, 1984, p. 929-956. Cf. Gabriele Lingelbach,

AHA a rather early foundation, compared to its German counterpart. However, the AHA grew to become the largest historian association in the world, the second largest being the German one. The German Historikerverband was a role model for many other associations of historians in other countries, which often were only founded after the establishment of the *Comité international des Sciences Historiques* in 1923. The aim of these associations, in France, Sweden or Japan, for example, was to offer the International Committee (CISH) an institutionalized contact in order to join the International Historical Congress of Historical Science.<sup>9</sup> This all establishes the international and historical context of the history of the German association and explains some basic functions of the association. Talking about numbers - how many historians participated at international and national congresses? B we continue with the growth of the Historikertage.

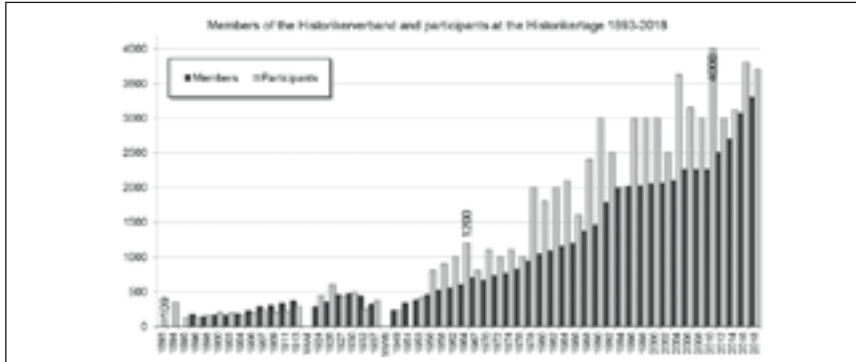
II. The number of participants at the bi-annual historical meetings in Germany nowadays is more than ten times as high than hundred years ago. Figure 4 shows the development between 1893, the first Historikertag in München, and today. The light grey columns indicate the number of attendees at the historical conferences, while the dark columns the members of the German Historical Association. In the first three years (1893-1895) between 109 and one time even 340 assistants joined the conferences. The numbers of association-members and congress-participants were slowly growing, not constantly, but in the long run, interrupted by the First and Second World War. Before the First World War, an average of 190 historians attended the conferences, only men, but in 1911 in Braunschweig already five female teachers were among them.

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«Funktion und Entwicklung von Historikerverbänden im internationalen Vergleich», in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 64, 2013, p. 139-152.

<sup>9</sup> A list of these associations (Germany, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland), though most often other organizations (Academy of Science in Lissabon, Royal Academy in Amsterdam) responsible for the contact with the CISH in 1926, can be found in Erdmann, *Ökumene*, p. 143.

**Figure 4: Members in the VHD and participants at Historikertage 1893-2016**



In recent years, between 3500 and 4000 historians have joined the conferences. In fact, the Historikertag in Berlin in 2010 holds the record with 4000 participants. The size of the city and its reachability always had a certain effect on the congress' popularity. The more provincial town Mainz in the following year experienced a loss of 1000 participants compared with the climax in the German capital, while again in Hamburg 3800 historians gathered in 2016, and finally in Münster 3700 colleagues showed up in 2018.

Membership of the Historikerverband was usually lower, because also history teachers, students and amateurs are invited to join the congresses. In the German Empire the membership grew from 109 to about 300, whereas nowadays the Historikerverband has more than 3000 members. A university degree in history is required for membership, which is why amateur historians are excluded. The columns about numbers of membership and congress-participation –the data were not easy to collect– also reveal the severe crisis of history in the 1960s and 1970s. While the number of participants in the congresses rose between 1949 and 1964, in 1967 there were suddenly far fewer participants than before, only 800 instead of 1200. This might be due to the venue, as Freiburg is located on the German periphery. But since then there was a depression comprising five historical meetings. In these twelve years, the numbers barely reached 1000 participants.

Furthermore, looking at the dark columns, the number of members decreased 1970, which was the unique in postwar history. In 1970 the association shrank from 694 members to 662 members. A similar situation never happened again. History was in a deep crisis for more than a decade, a crisis which had several dimensions. External challenges can be distinguished from internal challenges. A severe external

challenge was that history lost importance. On the German book market history boomed from 1949 until 1966 but then suffered dramatic losses. The proportion of history books in 1966 was 7.2%, but suddenly it fell year after year and reached only half of this proportion in 1984, down to 3.4%. In addition, government spending on historical studies in schools and universities was reduced. Furthermore, the teaching of history in schools was reduced: In some states, such as Hesse or North Rhine-Westphalia, history lessons were replaced by a new school subject, the hybrid so called civic studies (*Gemeinschaftskunde*), which was an obscure mixture of sociology, politics, geography and history. Finally, History was victim of an intense climate change since the mid-1960s. Other disciplines like sociology and politics were more promising to solve the problems of the future. The slogan of the time was to look forward instead of backwards.<sup>10</sup>

The competition with the prominent disciplines of sociology and politics influenced internal problems of history. In 1967, when only 800 historians attended the general assembly in Freiburg, Theodor Schieder was elected president of the *Historikerverband*. Schieder has opened the congress with a prominent speech about history in the system of humanities, deploring the loss of history, which had to do also with the convergence with social sciences. Schieder, as many others, recognized the advantages of history and sociology cross-fertilizing each other. Historians jealously feared the loss of their own subject, if sociology and political sciences take away their issues. Schieder acknowledged the «helplessness of the older generation of historians and the doubts whether history will be unhinged as science» by sharing its subject with other sciences.<sup>11</sup> In 1970 at the assembly in Cologne the crisis of history was even more visible. Many articles about the relevance of history appeared. Some articles by prominent authors like Reinhart Koselleck and Jürgen Kocka were titled: *AWozu noch Geschichte?@ History, for what sake? Why still study history?*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> About the external and internal challenges: Olaf Blaschke, «Der Verband im Umbruch? Herausforderungen und Konflikte um 1970», in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, Jg. 64, 2013, p. 164-173; Berg et al, vol. 2, p. 530-557.

<sup>11</sup> Theodor Schieder, «Die Geschichte im System der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften», in: *Bericht Historikertag Freiburg 1967*, p. 16-19, 17; cf. Berg et al., p. 532-537; Olaf Blaschke, «Der Verband im Umbruch? Herausforderungen und Konflikte um 1970», in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 64, 2013, p. 164-173.

<sup>12</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Wozu noch Historie?*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* vol. 212, 1971, p. 118; Jürgen Kocka, *Geschichte — wozu?* in: Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte. Begriff B Entwicklung B Probleme*, Göttingen 1986 (2. Ed.; first: 1977), p. 112-131 [first short version: *Zu einigen sozialen Funktionen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: Peter Böhning (ed.), *Geschichte und Sozialwissenschaften. Ihr Verhältnis im Lehrangebot der Universität und der Schule*, Göttingen 1972, p. 1217].



There was another internal challenge: the new tendency of social history. It was deeply aligned with sociology, and it challenged the conventional political history. It took until 1978 before a new self-confidence developed on the Historikertag in Hamburg where the numbers rose again and reached 2000 historians. The chancellor of the Federal Republic, Helmut Schmidt, opened the meeting with a remarkable speech, urging historians to write more readable books. This inaugural address was widely discussed in the media.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in 1984, it was claimed that the crisis of history was over. The historians assemblies were a platform to discuss burning issues like this. They helped to define and solve the crisis, and to enhance the self confidence of the participants.

III. The venues of the Historikertage: Was the representing German history? The association is the field of professional historians. But in its early history geographically it reached less than that and professionally more than that. In the first years, also archivists, high-school-teachers, librarians, sometimes even amateurs could play a prominent role, until in 1932 at least a university degree in history was mandatory in order to join the Historikerverband. Since long, university professors dominated the association.



<sup>13</sup> Helmut Schmidt, Ansprache: «Auftrag und Verpflichtung der Geschichte», in: *Bericht über die*, 32. Versammlung deutscher Historiker in Hamburg, 4. bis 8. Oktober 1978, Stuttgart 1979, S. 19-39. Cf. the letters in BArch B 510/52, 151 and 152. Cf. Berg et al., vol. 2, p. 550.

Geographically, the first general assemblies since Munich took place in Southern and Central Germany (see figure 5), in 1896 even as far south as in Innsbruck (Austria). Berlin, the center of German historiography, didn't want to participate. During the German Empire the association had an encompassing vision, including all historians from German speaking countries. As a matter of course, Swiss and Austrian historians were regarded as «natural» members of the German Historikerverband. Three assemblies took place in Austria. The same claim was held up in the Weimar Republic. The 16th General assembly in 1927 took place in Graz. The choice of the meeting place could be motivated by political reasons: to meet in Frankfurt, on the border of the allied controlled zone, was a political and national signal in 1924.<sup>14</sup>



In the Federal Republic of Germany, too, the choice of venue was often motivated by political considerations. The fact that Berlin, for example, was chosen as meeting place in 1964 was to be seen as a sign of loyalty after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. After the reunification of Germany in 1990, it was important that as soon as possible a general assembly was organized in a former GDR city, which in fact happened in Leipzig in 1994. The next map (figure 6) shows all the 52 conferences between 1893 and 2018 in all six German regimes. Some cities like Berlin or Munich were hosting the general assembly three times, and the next general assembly in 2021 will be in Munich

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Berg et al., vol. 1, p. 68-92.

again. In a way the decisions of the Historikerverband were also politically representative for the field in general. On the other hand they did not always exactly reflect what was happening in the field. We should not forget that the decisions about who is allowed to give a lays in the hand of a dozen historians, the managing committee of the Historikerverband. They could exclude certain tendencies or promote them.

IV. Our project tells the long story and the twisted road of this development from the 1890s till today. But it is not only a chronological narrative. Rather, it is shaped by six core questions, among them the question of professionalization:

1. Did the Historikerverband contribute to professionalization and
2. to standardization?
3. How were the practices on the general assemblies?
4. The Historikerverband in interdisciplinary comparison and
5. in its international context
6. The Historikerverband in relation to science, politics and the public

1. Professionalization can be defined as the formation of a specific occupation with fixed training and defined rules to access the field.<sup>15</sup> This was already well advanced in the middle of the 19th century in Germany before the Historikerverband was founded.<sup>16</sup> The Historikerverband didn't create the professional field. Amateurs and professionals were strictly separated, in contrast to Great Britain. In order to become a German Professors it was mandatory to write a PhD and a habilitation. History faculties existed already, and since 1859 the *Historische Zeitschrift* appeared, the so called Amother of all historical journals@. The Historikerverband helped to keep up and shape the professional standards. And professionalization is a never ending process. It means for example to neutralize the masculine imprint of the

<sup>15</sup> Hannes Siegrist, «Professionelle Autonomie in der modernen Gesellschaft, Wissenschaft und Kultur. Einführung», in: Dietmar Müller and Hannes Siegrist (ed.), *Professionen, Eigentum und Staat. Europäische Entwicklungen im Vergleich B 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2014, p. 15-40; Lutz Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme. Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2003; Gabriele Lingelbach, *Klio macht Karriere. Die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2003.

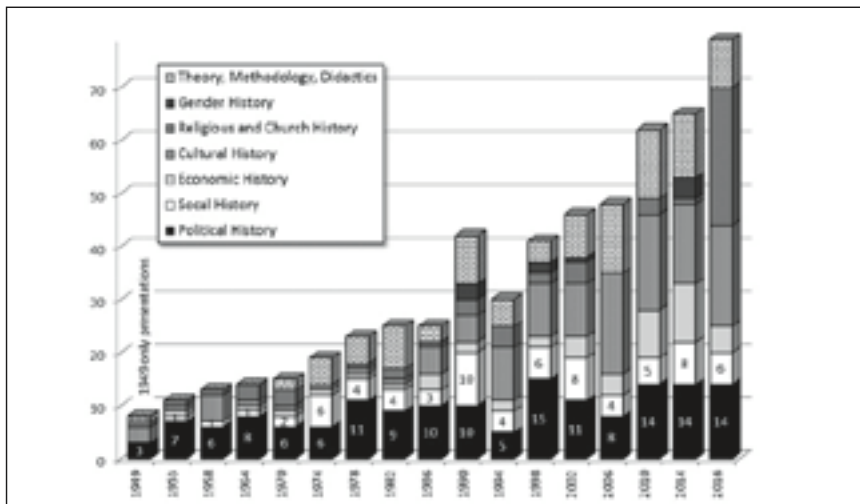
<sup>16</sup> Hannes Siegrist, «Professionelle Autonomie in der modernen Gesellschaft, Wissenschaft und Kultur. Einführung», in: Dietmar Müller/Hannes Siegrist (ed.), «Professionen, Eigentum und Staat. Europäische Entwicklungen im Vergleich B 19. und 20». *Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2014, p. 15-40; Rolf Torstendahl, *The Rise and Propagation of Historical Professionalism*, New York, 2015; Lingelbach, *Klio*.

discipline. Gender was a key to gain access to the rank and files of the field, and it took until 1980 before a women could lead a panel on the general assembly.<sup>17</sup>

History teachers had established their own association in 1913, the Verband deutscher Geschichtslehrer, and the archivist, after having been organized in several associations, in 1946 founded the Verband deutscher Archivare. Both associations send one representative as constant member to the board of the Historikerverband.

2. The standardization of contents and methods also remained in constant fluctuation. As far as epochs are concerned, the emphasis shifted from medieval studies to a more balanced representation of all epochs. Between 1974 and 1990 a hegemony of the 19th century set in, due to the discussion about the German exceptionalism (Sonderweg) leading to 1933, while nowadays contemporary history is dominating.

Figure 7: Topics and approaches on the Historikertage 1949-2016 (n = 570 sections)



As far as methods and approaches are concerned, until about 1970 political history (black) shaped the Historikertage, before social history (white), as well as theoretical and didactic questions, increasingly dominated the panels. Since the mid1990s cultural history has gained exceeding importance. Especially in the theoretical and didactic sec-

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Berg et al., vol. 2, p. 565-592.

tions of the 1970s, standards of the field were negotiated prominently and controversially, for example concerning the relationship between event and process, the individual and structures, theory and narrative in historical analysis.

The general assemblies formed the arena in which the configuration of subdisciplines became visible. Each reinforced its profile through its own chairs, its own language codes, specialist societies, book series and journals, but also through working groups within the Historikerverband and its own panels on the general assemblies. Subdisciplines such as the history of technology, the history of medicine or law, as well as the history of women and gender (since 1984), were able to use the general assemblies to become more visible within the discipline and to successfully promote the formation of their subdiscipline and their establishment in the discipline.

3. Another perspective are the practices and the habitus of the actors of the assembled guild.<sup>18</sup> The Historikertage offered an arena for the performance of social hierarchies in the field, or the allocation of eminent lectures, be it through the exhibition of publishing successes in the accessible space. On every general assembly German and international publishers of historical books present their products. Participants passed experience, while passing the tables the hierarchies of good or bad publishing and good or bad historians in the three dimensional room. Historians write books and want them to be seen and touched, displayed preferably in the neighborhood of other renown books of important authors in a publishing house of decent rank and file. For more than hundred years and even today in the digital age of open access this analog and haptic aspect an important role. «Real» books remain to be the «gold standard» of communication and reputation, while open-access books hardly find reviewers. Lasting about four days, the general assemblies allowed social, cultural and symbolic capital to be displayed. They were a mirror of the discipline and its shopping-window. They displayed socialhierarchical constellations of reputation.<sup>19</sup> In view of this regularly recurring social situation, which condensed what was already valid in the field, some colleagues had to bring back into mind several times that the general assemblies were also working conferences. However, in fact they were also an alcoholized rendezvous of bodies and friends.

<sup>18</sup> About the contested terminus guild (Zunft) cf. Berg et al., vol 1, p. 19f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Olaf Blaschke, *Verleger machen Geschichte. Buchhandel und Historiker seit 1945 im deutsch-britischen Vergleich*, Göttingen 2010; Olaf Blaschke, «Wissenschaftlicher Buchmarkt: Vom Papier zum Pixel?» in: Martin Gasteiner u. Peter Haber (ed.), *Digitale Arbeitstechniken für Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Wien 2010, S. 185-202; Berg et al., vol. 2, p. 719-723.

4. The practice of history and the German general assemblies should be seen in an interdisciplinary comparison. Compared with sociology, a rather young field, the German Historical Association could only accompany the professionalization of the discipline. It didn't initiate it, in contrast to sociology, which was pushed by the German Association for Sociology, founded in 1909. The interdisciplinary perspective also reveals the dramatic crisis of history in the 1960s and 1970s, while political science and sociology in those years were blossoming. The Historikerverband helped to get out of this depression by involving politicians in the struggle for resources for history in school and university and by propagating the importance of history on the Historikertage, backed by front-ranking politicians.

5. The international comparison reveals that the relatively late founding of the Historikerverband did not allow it to play the same role in the discipline as the American Historical Association, founded in 1884, which lanced a central journal called *American Historical Review*. The *Historische Zeitschrift* was already there since 1859, before more than 30 years later the Historikerverband was founded.

Although the Historikerverband acted within a national framework, from the outset it had an international dimension. In the German Empire, during the Weimar years, in the Federal Republic and also in the GDR, the International Historical Congress of Historical Science was held to be of utmost importance and highly prestigious, especially after the First World War and in the Cold War era. It is noteworthy that between 1900 (Paris) and 1970 (Moscow) these congresses all took place on European soil, although they were called «international». (see figure 1).

6. Finally, political and public relations have to be mentioned. In its political agenda, the German Historical Association shared the revisionism of the Adenauer-era when it had to come to terms with the past. In complete harmony with the official governmental Hallstein doctrine, refusing to accept East Germany as a state, the association held firm to his claim to sole representation of all Germans until 1970. Furthermore, every effort was made to prevent other nations from accepting East Germany as an equal partner. Historians from the GDR had to apply for the international conferences via the Historikerverband. This practice was increasingly criticized by self-confident East German historians. In 1958 they finally founded their own historical association (*Historiker-Gesellschaft*). From then on, the International Historical Conferences became the main battlefield between West and East Germany.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Berg et. al, vol 2, p. 394-496, 602-652.

However, politics not only focused on international affairs but were also concerned with education and science policy within each nation: With the help of resolutions and networks the Historikerverband had its share in saving history in school and university in the 1970s. The association was strong in lobbying and fighting for the interests of the profession.<sup>21</sup>

Connections to the public were remarkable. History always was more popular than many other disciplines. People liked to read history books.<sup>22</sup> Though the general assemblies between 1893 and 1964 remained a matter of professionals –university professors dominated them, highschool-teachers and archivists attended them– media took notice of the conferences from the very beginning. The newspapers extensively reported about the discussions. A culminating point took place in Berlin in 1964. This general assembly might be judged as a turning point. There was on the Fischer controversy, I would add one or two explanatory sentences here. was attended by 1500 historians and even broadcasted on television.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

The Deutsche Historikerverband was never navigating or controlling the research done in the field. It had no power and no competence to determine what individual historians had to be interested in. Nevertheless, the importance of the decisions taken in the executive board should not be neglected. They caused the inclusion or exclusion of topics and players. Lobbying and networking also remained important. The Historikerverband didn't steer the field but could at times give the steering-wheel a poke into this or that direction. The association could foster certain tendencies and block other tendencies.

It bundled voices from the historiographic field, represented the interests of those involved and acted as a catalyst for movements within the discipline. The discreet steering function of the board of the association can be seen in the way it dealt with social history: Contributions of social-historians for the general assemblies have been supported since the 1950s, but the offensive of younger social historians (the generation of Hans-Ulrich Wehler, born in 1931) since 1970 has been slowed down. In the end, it didn't prevent social history from succeeding in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Berg et. al., vol 2, p. 496-557, 734-757; Blaschke, Umbruch.

<sup>22</sup> Blaschke, Verleger; Peter Mandler, *History and National Life*, London, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Berg et. al., vol. 2, p. 520-532.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Berg et. al., vol. 2, p. 513-520, 557-565,