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Ordinary Organizations.

The Sociology of the Holocaust

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Introduction

In light of the horror of the Holocaust, it is easy to understand the desire for simple answers. It would be something of a relief to believe that the ghetto liquidations, mass shootings, and gassings in the extermination camps took place because the perpetrators had been seduced by Adolf Hitler, or because they belonged to a particularly brutal breed of people, or because they were all eliminationist antisemites and their hatred of Jews was so deeply rooted in their German culture that it was almost inevitable they would become “Hitler’s willing executioners.”

This type of personalization assigns responsibility to just a few while absolving the rest. Personalization means identifying people on the basis of specific biological, medical, or cultural characteristics and marking them out as pathological, criminal, or strange. The actions attributed to such people are thus “personalized out of existence” for anyone who believes these characteristics do not apply to them. According to this explanation – which is reassuring at first glance – it was fanatical Nazis, sick sadists, or particularly driven eliminationist antisemites who bore responsibility for the genocide. If you do not consider yourself a member of one of these groups, you can sit back and take comfort in the thought that you would have acted very differently.¹

But the personalization of responsibility quickly reaches its limits. There is no doubt that National Socialism was embraced by much of the German population, or that some people in the police forces and concentration camps saw their job as an opportunity to act on a deep-seated sadism, or that there were fervent antisemites in Germany who also actively promoted the “eradication” of the

Jewish population. What is surprising, though, is that many people who took part in the mass killings never displayed any such murderous behavior or inclinations either before or after World War II.

This book revolves around one of the most fiercely debated questions in Holocaust research: why “ordinary men” – and, in many cases, “ordinary women” – were willing to humiliate, torment, and murder hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of men, women, and children.² I want to propose a decidedly sociological answer to this question by taking existing insights from historical, political, philosophical, and social psychological research and bringing them together in a comprehensive explanatory approach with the help of sociological systems theory.³

The challenge is to present an analysis which is informed by sociology but applicable to the wider discussion about the Holocaust. The descriptions found in sociological systems theory in particular are often so abstract that other disciplines – such as history, political science, philosophy, and psychology – understandably no longer even bother with them, much less take inspiration from them. When sociologists attempt to explain the Holocaust by throwing around concepts such as binary encoding, autopoietic reproduction, or self-referential closure, they may distinguish themselves as ambitious theorists among a sub-sub-group of fellow sociologists specializing in a particular theory, but scholars in other disciplines will, for good reason, simply ignore what they see as unnecessarily complicated approaches.⁴

Readers can rest assured that this book not only avoids presenting the fundamentals of systems theory in a way that can be intimidating to non-sociologists, it also illustrates its sociological deliberations using a concrete example: Hamburg Reserve Police Battalion 101, the most thoroughly researched “killing unit” of the Nazi state.⁵ Precisely because it seems as though everything has already been said about this police battalion, and because the discussion of the battalion has been so contentious, the strengths of a sociological explanatory approach – as a complement to, and often in contrast with, existing explanatory models in Holocaust research – should become clear.

Beyond the controversy between “ordinary men” and “ordinary Germans”

Reserve Police Battalion 101 has attracted so much attention from researchers because its members were remarkably “ordinary.” Most of the policemen conscripted in Hamburg were family men who had held civilian jobs as dockhands, barbers, tradesmen, or salesmen before they were stationed in Poland as police reservists. Only a minority of the just over 500 battalion members had shown themselves to be committed Nazis or SS men before their assignment in Poland.⁶

The controversial debate about this police battalion revolves around the specific sense in which these men were “ordinary.”⁷ To summarize the debate in a single question: were they “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans”? Unsuspecting readers may be surprised by this opposition because it seems obvious that between 1933 and 1945, most if not all of the police in Hamburg were both “men” and “Germans.” But the emphasis on one word or the other is what makes all the difference in the debate.

Emphasizing the word “men” implies that, in principle, any male person would have been capable of killing Jews if they had found themselves in the same situation as the members of the police battalion. According to Christopher Browning in particular, a number of conditions had to be met for these “ordinary men” to become “murderers”: “wartime brutalization,” explicit “racism,” “segmentation and routinization of the task,” “careerism” especially among the leadership, “obedience to orders, deference to authority” as well as “ideological indoctrination, and conformity.” In addition, there was “a distinct corps mentality,” “considerable peer pressure,” and “excessive drinking combined with progressive desensitization towards acts of violence in any form.”⁸ Behind this bundle of mobilizing factors, we ultimately find a moderate *structuralist approach* which highlights the rather limited scope of action on the part of individuals in the coercive apparatus of the Nazi state.⁹

Emphasizing the word “German” does not rule out the idea that brutalization, peer pressure, or deference to authority might have played a role. Such factors were, so the argument goes, especially important to the non-German participants in the Holocaust, such as the non-Jewish Ukrainians, Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians who were recruited as auxiliary troops in the occupied territories. These aspects cannot be completely ignored among the German police, SS members, or Wehrmacht soldiers either. But these factors are thought to have been secondary at best when it came to the actions of the Germans. According to Daniel Goldhagen in particular, on account of a long history of a type of antisemitism focused on extermination, “ordinary Germans” had reached the conclusion that “the Jews *ought to die*.” “The perpetrators” are said to have oriented themselves on their own deeply culturally rooted “convictions and morality” and therefore felt that the mass extermination of the Jews was justified. This explanation is ultimately a radical variant of a *voluntaristic approach* in Holocaust research which highlights the perpetrators’ own motivations. In brief, the suggestion is that the Germans “did not *want* to say ‘no’” to the Holocaust; in fact, many of them actually wanted to say “yes” to the murder of the European Jews.¹⁰

From a sociological perspective, both explanatory approaches are unsatisfying. The voluntaristic approach, which explains the Germans’ behavior based on a deep-seated eliminationist antisemitism, assumes a simplistic correspondence

between the goals of the police – “extermination of the European Jews” – and the motives of the organization’s members – “eliminationist antisemitism.”¹¹ But this explanation falls short as soon as we look at the involvement of non-German auxiliaries, the “foot soldiers of extermination.”¹² The advantage of a structuralist approach, which takes a variety of factors into account, is that you can’t go wrong with a whole host of explanations at your disposal. But this is also the disadvantage. In this case, the different motives are strung together in a type of staid, factor-based scholarship.¹³ The various aspects are not explained, weighted, or – more critically – placed in relation to one another. This approach assumes that a basic antisemitic attitude, wartime brutalization, careerism, deference to authority, a corps mentality, and peer pressure all played a role, but how everything relates to each other remains unclear.¹⁴

The general opinion in historical scholarship is that the controversy between “ordinary men” and “ordinary Germans” did not have the makings of a major debate. Goldhagen’s monocausal explanation of “eliminationist antisemitism” is thought to have been too theoretically and empirically feeble to mobilize sufficient support from other scholars.¹⁵ What the “Goldhagen phenomenon” – or perhaps the “Goldhagen tragedy” – amounted to was that very few historians thought it was worth discussing his theory in detail, but they were forced into just such a discussion by the “fantastic popular success” of the book and its “favorable reception by some noted intellectuals” such as Jürgen Habermas.¹⁶ Ultimately, however, the historians who predicted that Holocaust researchers would not orient themselves on Goldhagen’s book appear to have been right.¹⁷ The scholarly debate was over before it had even really begun – but the basic question of why hundreds of thousands of men and women willingly participated in the Holocaust has still not been answered.

Attempts at a sociological explanation of the Holocaust

When analyzing the Holocaust, a distinction has to be made between two fundamental questions. The first question is how the decision – or, more precisely, decisions – came about to systematically kill the European Jews. Was there one central decision – a master plan – by the Nazi leadership which was gradually implemented from the start of the war, or can the Holocaust be traced back instead to the competing initiatives of Nazi officials in Berlin and, especially, in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe?¹⁸ The second question is how “ordinary Germans,” “ordinary men,” were persuaded to carry out ghetto liquidations, mass shootings, and deportations to the extermination camps once the Holocaust was underway. In the words of Herbert A. Simon, the first question is about the programming decision that was made to carry out a genocide, while the second is about the programmed decision-making through which a genocide was carried out in a series of individual decisions.¹⁹ Obviously, these two questions are related.

Program decisions made at the top of an organization are only efficacious if they are operatively implemented, and the very act of making program decisions incorporates the possibility of their implementation. Analytically, however, the two questions can be separated.²⁰

In this book I am concerned with the second question, namely, how “ordinary men,” “ordinary Germans,” came to murder tens of thousands of Jews.²¹ A sociological analysis inspired by systems theory cannot claim to offer fundamentally new explanations for the actions of “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans.” On the contrary: Historical, political, philosophical, and social psychological research has produced a number of convincing explanatory approaches for individual aspects such as the role of antisemitism, peer pressure, opportunities for enrichment, mechanisms of coercion, or brutalization. But these approaches can be systematically related to one other from a sociological perspective and thus particularized in terms of their importance for the actions of ordinary men in the Holocaust.

It may come as a surprise that a sociological account – and, moreover, a systems theory account – could help clarify one of the key questions in Holocaust research. After all, in the debate about Reserve Police Battalion 101, the word “sociologist” was used primarily as an insult by each side to discredit the other. The representatives of a voluntaristic approach à la Goldhagen complained that their critics were using “sociologistic accounts” to conceal the police officers’ responsibility for mass shootings.²² And vice versa, Goldhagen’s critics alleged that he was blinded by sociologisms. For instance, Mariam Niroumand accused Goldhagen of producing a kind of “pulp fiction in sociological camouflage,” and Paul Johnson decried Goldhagen’s use of “sociobabble” in place of serious analysis.²³ The irony is that none of the people who were criticized in this way were actually sociologists, none of them worked systematically with sociological theories, and none of them used even a rudimentary sociological conceptual framework.²⁴

Admittedly, sociologists themselves played a part in turning “sociological” into an insult in Holocaust research because, with very few exceptions, they had made no contributions of their own to debates about the Holocaust.²⁵ They were even notably absent from the controversy about the “banality of evil” sparked by Hannah Arendt’s report on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. In the *Historikerstreit* – the debate in Germany about the uniqueness of the Holocaust – a sociologist played a key role in the form of Jürgen Habermas, but his comments revealed that he had participated in the debate more as an intellectual interested in the future of the Federal Republic of Germany than as a sociologist.²⁶ Even the discussion of how ordinary German men could become mass murderers took place among historians, political scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, theologians, and

social psychologists, but hardly any sociologists.²⁷ For decades, sociology – to summarize Zygmunt Bauman – gave the impression of collectively turning a blind eye to debates about the Holocaust.²⁸

As an academic discipline, sociology absolutely needs to systematically determine how National Socialism came to be largely ignored in sociological analyses after World War II.²⁹ But in my opinion, such sociological self-reflection is not as critical as engaging with other academic disciplines and looking at specific research questions to see what new insights can be gained from a sociological perspective. With the theory of “ordinary organizations” presented in this book, I want to show how the actions of “ordinary men” and “ordinary Germans” during the Holocaust can be explained sociologically.

The perpetration of the Holocaust by means of state organizations of force

The point of departure for my theory of “ordinary organizations” is the observation that more than 99 percent of all Jewish killings were carried out by members of *state organizations of force*.³⁰ State organizations of force are organizations such as armies, militias, and police which threaten and exert force in order to implement state decisions. They differ from *non-state organizations of force*, such as groups of thugs, terrorist organizations, and marauding bands of mercenaries, in that their actions can be justified by the assertion of claims legitimized by the state.³¹

There were certainly a variety of non-state forms of organized violence against Jews during the Nazi era. We need look no further than the acts of violence during the boycotts of Jewish businesses shortly after the Nazis seized power in 1933, the public shaming of Jewish and non-Jewish citizens for supposed “race defilement,” and the destruction of synagogues, businesses, and homes during the pogroms of November 1938. Throughout this, there was a line of continuity – one which has been insufficiently researched and must not be underestimated – running from attacks by antisemitic groups against Jews in the Weimar Republic to violent acts by non-governmental Nazi organizations during the Nazi era which were frequently tolerated, and sometimes even supported, by the state.³²

However, the mass execution of Jews and deportations to the extermination camps were not – and this is a key difference – private initiatives by antisemitic interest groups. In fact, they were part of a governmental program to annihilate the Jews of Europe.³³ “Ordinary men” and “ordinary women” started to participate in the killing of Jews as soon as they became members of state organizations and were ordered to do their part for the annihilation program. And nearly all of them

stopped again as soon as they left these killing organizations. In any case, as far as we know, very few former regular policemen, SD employees, or Wehrmacht soldiers continued to participate in the shooting of religious or ethnic minorities as part of a private initiative after they left their respective organizations.

The pure knowledge that the Holocaust was a murder campaign based largely on state organizations is hardly original. Even at first glance, it is clear that the majority of Jews were killed not in the context of wild, “unorganized” antisemitic pogroms but rather by members of state organizations of force in the course of implementing the Nazis’ policies.³⁴ Raul Hilberg, whose comprehensive overview of the destruction of the European Jews is still considered a key reference in Holocaust research, has shown in great detail how Jews were registered by state registration offices in the German Reich and occupied territories, transported to the east by the Reichsbahn, tormented in the ghettos by police battalions, and killed in mass shootings or extermination camps by SS and police units or non-German auxiliaries.³⁵

Beyond the image of organizations as machines

The organizational framing that has taken place to date – especially on the part of the few sociologists who have chimed in on the discussion about the Holocaust – has involved a nearly caricatural view of organizations which can ultimately be traced back to Max Weber.³⁶ Under the influence of Weber’s description of the machine-like “bureaucratic mechanism,” with its “precision,” “speed,” “unambiguity,” “knowledge of the files,” “continuity,” “discretion,” “unity,” “strict subordination,” and “reduction of friction,” the Holocaust has been construed as a product of the use of “bureaucratic mechanisms” that were suited to killing people on a massive scale. In this interpretation, the Holocaust involved the implementation of concepts such as the “optimal use of resources” and a “diligent and professional approach.” As a result of the division of labor, the pencil-pushing perpetrators would have perceived the victims solely as “depersonalized,” “endless columns of numbers.”³⁷

This machine-like understanding of organizations is embedded in an explanation that interprets the Holocaust as a phenomenon of modernity.³⁸ As this interpretation has it, the Enlightenment was the source of the “deadly combination” of cold calculation and bureaucratic machinery that gave rise to the “monster of modernity.” In its efforts to achieve perfection through organizations, the Holocaust – according to Zygmunt Bauman – was a “code of modernity,” a “legitimate resident in the house of modernity.” Bauman says the goal of modernity is a “better,” “more efficient,” “more beautiful” world, and the mass murder of the Jews was an attempt to realize this idea.³⁹

Ultimately, this view of organizations is what caused Hannah Arendt to fail so

spectacularly in her character study of Adolf Eichmann. Based on Max Weber's understanding of organizations, the Holocaust can only be explained as a "bureaucratically planned," "industrially executed" "administrative mass murder."⁴⁰ As Martin Heidegger said shortly after World War II, it is regarded primarily as the "fabrication of corpses," as "hundreds of thousands" being "unobtrusively liquidated."⁴¹ The Holocaust thus comes to be seen as a case of an "entire people" being "obliterated without a trace" in "death factories," in the words of Wolfgang Sofsky. The "death factory" is presented as an "apparatus that functioned smoothly," where people were murdered "at a high capacity and speed" – even though we know from sociological studies of automobile and aircraft factories that a "smoothly functioning apparatus" is a pure management fiction.⁴² From this perspective, the only possible synonym for the Holocaust is "Auschwitz" – not the frequently improvised mass shootings, the sometimes chaotic ghetto liquidations, or the first mass killings in the Belzec, Sobibór, and Treblinka extermination camps, which were plagued by planning problems.⁴³

By basing their explanation on a simplified understanding of organizations, Holocaust researchers have clearly inherited all the problems that were characteristic of organizational research oriented on Max Weber: overemphasizing the goal-oriented rationality of organizations, disregarding the fact that organizations frequently have conflicting goals, underestimating the contradictions in the orientation of the members' actions, ignoring "bottom-up" initiative, and neglecting the importance of the "sousveillance of superiors" which gives subordinates a significant influence over the decisions made by top-level personnel.⁴⁴

This insufficiently complex view of the organizations involved in the Holocaust – in which every single member, almost to the top of the organization, seems to be merely a cog in the machine—makes it easy to reject explanatory approaches which focus on organizations. Such a concept has been justifiably criticized for portraying people as nothing more than "puppet-like protagonists," "chess pieces," or "soulless technocrats." The lasting impression here is that we are dealing solely with "obedient and submissive executors of an ideology," "unfeeling command automatons," or "dispassionate pencil-pushing perpetrators." Critics say that this levels out the "moral impetus of the perpetrators" and ultimately negates the idea "that they approved of their own actions," leaving the assumption that "they were under pressure from external forces which coerced them to act as they did."⁴⁵

Though most of the rival parties neither mentioned nor even noticed it, Holocaust research became the setting for a debate about organizations that had already taken place in a more general form decades earlier. When psychologists, business economists, and sociologists began to take an interest in the phenomenon of the organization in the late nineteenth century, the dominant image was one in which

people were of interest solely in terms of how they fit into a machine-like structure. According to the structuralist assumption prevalent at the time, one merely had to establish an efficient network of rules and chains of command, then identify the people best suited to each position in this network and lure them in with attractive compensation.⁴⁶ This reduction of personnel to a pure “fulfillment function” in a more or less rational organization prompted a critical reaction in the form of a concept shaped by a voluntaristic view of humanity, according to which the human resource factor was critical to understanding organizations. The sociologically naïve belief here was that organizations are made up of people, so their success or failure must depend exclusively on the composition of their personnel.⁴⁷ The result was a fairly unproductive confrontation between researchers who, on account of their machine-like understanding of organizations, paid little heed to the importance of personnel, and researchers who tried to explain organizational phenomena solely through the motivations of the organization’s personnel. Representatives of the former position – as Niklas Luhmann argued – tended to underestimate the importance of the people in an organization, while representatives of the latter tended to overestimate it.⁴⁸

Neither structuralism nor voluntarism

The sociological theory of “ordinary organizations” presented here – and this point cannot be stressed enough – has nothing to do with the insufficiently complex image of organizations as machines, nor does it fall back on a purely voluntaristic explanation for the actions of people in organizations. One of the strengths of sociological systems theory is that it does not pit an approach oriented on structures against an approach oriented on people, as is frequently assumed. Instead – and this is the key point – it views people as structural features of social systems such as organizations, small groups, protest movements, or families. Even non-sociologists can immediately grasp that the certainty of expectations in small groups, protest movements, and families, as well as in organizations, is generated not only through an orientation on roles but also through the knowledge of the different ways in which people act.⁴⁹

By taking this perspective, organizational sociology informed by systems theory can help overcome the opposition between the “structuralist approach” and the “voluntaristic approach” in Holocaust research.⁵⁰ The actions of the members of the regular and security police can then be viewed as more than just actions in the context of a very precisely specified formal membership role – as Hannah Arendt saw it – and we can also explain why these people took the initiative in killing Jews and why they actively contributed to refining the processes for deportation and killing, frequently carried out shootings at the limits of what was tolerated by the organization, and often committed atrocities enthusiastically.⁵¹

I will show that it was their membership in organizations that made ordinary German men willing to follow up on what was, for many, a latent antisemitism by taking part in deportations, ghetto clearances, and mass shootings (chapter 1). This does not mean, however, that the members of the organizations functioned like cogs in a machine – and this is what sets my explanatory approach apart from those in the tradition of Hannah Arendt. On the contrary: Not all of the deployed policemen necessarily identified with the goal of annihilating Europe's Jews, but even those who simply let the antisemitic indoctrination wash over them played a part in making the killing of Jews appear to be a police duty that had to be carried out (chapter 2). Even the policemen who declared that they could not take part in killing Jews, thus evading the demands of their coercive organization, did so by referring to their own weakness, illness, or conscience – meaning that the killing program could continue unimpeded (chapter 3). In many cases, the expectation that someone would participate in the ghetto clearances, deportations, or shootings was not enforced by the hierarchy, it was simply what the men expected of each other (chapter 4). These comradely expectations were strengthened by the fact that the campaigns offered opportunities for personal enrichment at the expense of the Jews, something which went against the rules of the organizations (chapter 5). The high degree of brutality, which often went beyond what was officially permitted or functionally necessary for the task, made it easier for the battalion members to kill their victims (chapter 6). It was, therefore, the deviations, reinterpretations, and initiative of the organizations' members that made it possible for the Holocaust to be carried out.⁵²

A sociologically informed study must do more than merely recount the possible motives of the police battalion members, however. This alone would not offer any obvious value compared to existing studies. Instead, such a study must illuminate the mechanism that prompted people with different motives to participate in mass killings. The political convictions, frequently changing motives, and behavioral nuances of the organization members were in no way irrelevant – something that was overlooked by Hannah Arendt. However – and this is where Daniel Goldhagen went wrong – the Holocaust was not carried out entirely, or even largely, by people whose convictions aligned with one of the organizations' goals, in this case: the destruction of the European Jews. In fact, the participants differed greatly in their motives, their willingness to kill, and their reaction to the killing campaigns. The fact that they ultimately acted uniformly and effectively nonetheless can only – as Christopher Browning failed to see – be understood from a central point: the generalization of motives for membership in organizations (chapter 7).

The use of violence can only be officially expected in state organizations of force if it takes place in a legal framework. The policemen who were instructed by the organizations active in World War II to participate in the mass shooting of women,

men, and children, or to kill sick people, the elderly, and infants during ghetto liquidations, or to immediately kill anyone captured during a “Jew hunt,” could not be sure whether these orders fell within the limits of legality valid at the time. During the ghetto clearances, deportations, and shootings, the men acted in a way that aligned with what was typically expected of the police. As a result, the understanding of what was considered legal was continually validated through the campaigns (chapter 8).

It is important to stress that the Holocaust cannot be explained solely in terms of behavior within organizations. But without a solid understanding of organizations, any explanation of why “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans” took part in the Holocaust will remain incomplete. Holocaust research has come to the distressing realization that it was not necessary to develop special programs for the killing campaigns, or to create special communication channels, or to recruit special personnel for the killings in order to persuade organization members to perpetrate a genocide. Just as the members of the state organizations of force were ordinary people, the organizations through which the mass killings were planned and carried out had the hallmarks of ordinary organizations (chapter 9).

The challenges of a sociology of the Holocaust

For sociologists, this book is a challenge in that it takes an unconventional approach to the topic. The question as to how “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans” came to murder tens of thousands of Jews is a pressing one in Holocaust research. But for sociologists interested in social structures in the tradition of Émile Durkheim, an account which looks at personal motivations is unusual.⁵³ Whenever sociologists have stepped into the discussion of the Holocaust, they have rooted their explanatory approaches in abstract social theory (as did Theodor W. Adorno and Norbert Elias), or they have looked at the Holocaust as an example for exploring different national response patterns to National Socialism or compared the Holocaust with other genocides.⁵⁴ It may come as a surprise to see the focus shifted to the creation of a willingness to kill and therefore to the day-to-day implementation of the killing programs.⁵⁵

The challenge is intensified because this book does not opt for the level of abstraction usually employed by theory-oriented sociologists. “No names of places or people” – this was Niklas Luhmann’s famous requirement for sociological analyses claiming to take a generalized approach. In principle, sociologists are not interested in a single war, and certainly not in a single battle, but rather in the social theory of violent conflicts.⁵⁶ It is not the individual genocide that is interesting to sociologists, it is the generalized theory of the mass killing of civilians based on the ethnic or religious characteristics attributed to them. This book goes against this basic sociological principle and names names: the names of

places where massacres took place, of the Nazi organizational units that were involved in this, and of the people who participated in these massacres as members of such organizational units.⁵⁷

Even though I do not claim to present a comprehensive history of the Hamburg police battalion in this book, each chapter opens with depictions of this organizational unit, some of which are based on new sources, and the theses of the individual chapters are illustrated with references to these depictions, which are contrasted or supplemented with references to other organizational units of the Nazi state where applicable. Illustrating my deliberations with this well-researched example should enable readers to grasp and verify the plausibility of my arguments, and it should also clarify how my theories relate to approaches from other disciplines. This does not mean that the book makes no claims to sociological generalization – on the contrary: The book aims to use this case as an example in order to reveal general insights into how “ordinary men” and “ordinary women” were integrated in organizations.

For non-sociologists, the book probably poses even greater challenges, however. As a scientific discipline, sociology does not approach the Holocaust from a moral perspective. It seems self-evident to us today that the execution of thousands of Jewish Poles constituted mass murder, meaning that the “killers” were automatically “perpetrators” in both a moral and legal sense and, consequently, they were and are to be prosecuted as mass murderers.⁵⁸ But the apparently self-evident categorization of violent acts from a modern perspective makes it more difficult to reconstruct the prevailing rules of legitimacy and, more precisely, the rules of legality of the involved organizations at the time. In a sociological analysis, it is necessary to strive for the most neutralizing choice of words possible. For example, only by first referring to “mass killings” instead of “mass murders” is it possible to imagine how, depending on the perspective and point in time, mass killings can obviously appear to be mass murders – or not.⁵⁹

The challenge is intensified in that sociologists typically reconstruct the rationalities that underlie events.⁶⁰ The attitude among some Holocaust researchers is that the deportations, mass shootings, and killings in the extermination camps cannot be explained.⁶¹ This touches on a sociologically relevant aspect, namely, that many acts of violence cannot be fully understood from the perspective of rationalities, or even motives, due to the dynamics of conflict inherent in them.⁶² But even when we look more closely at the internal dynamics of processes of violence, it is obvious that the participants in such processes often permanently ascribe rationalities to themselves and others.⁶³ From a sociological point of view, however – and this is what makes sociology as a scientific discipline so suspect for many non-sociologists – there is no systematic reason why the Holocaust cannot be reconstructed in the same way as the development of atomic energy, the

emergence of new regimes of factory work, or the genesis of universal human rights.

The challenge is further intensified by the fact that the question of how “ordinary men” or “ordinary Germans” could be persuaded to participate in the Holocaust shifts the focus away from the victims. This contrasts with the increasingly vocal demand that the Holocaust not be explained or recounted from a perspective that focuses on the perpetrators (much less from the perspective *of* the perpetrators) but rather from a perspective that focuses on (or, better yet, from the perspective *of*) the Jewish victims.⁶⁴ This may be compatible with the demand sporadically heard in the field of violence sociology that “thick descriptions” be used to make the “torment of the victims” visible,⁶⁵ but for a sociological approach, the moralistic debate as to whether a “perpetrator perspective” should be replaced by a “victim perspective,” or whether we need a “theory of suffering” instead of a “theory of crime,” is irrelevant.

Whether, or to what extent, forms of violence must be analyzed with a view to the perpetrators or the victims depends on the object being analyzed. For a sociological analysis of the ghettos, concentration camps, or extermination camps, the perspective of the victims must be taken into account because such an analysis – as sociological studies of prisons and psychiatric hospitals suggest – depends on the interaction between the members of the state organizations of force and the residents of the ghettos or the prisoners in the concentration and extermination camps.⁶⁶ By contrast, a perspective which focuses on the victims – or indeed the perspective *of* the victims – plays a subordinate role when it comes to understanding the actions of the men of Police Battalion 101. This is not because we want to close our eyes to the suffering of the victims – who could do that? – but because, in this case, the victims’ perspective does little to help us explain what happened.⁶⁷ It is certainly important to precisely reconstruct the acts of violence during deportations and shootings as mutually observed processes of “suffering” and the “infliction of suffering,” but these processes were generally so short-lived that the battalion members only had to take the suffering of their actual victims into account to a limited extent.

On the terminology of a sociology of the Holocaust

Part of a sociological approach entails choosing one’s own terminology and dealing carefully with terms used during and after the Nazi period. The Nazis’ use of language was heavily characterized by euphemisms.⁶⁸ With the term “*Volksgemeinschaft*” (“people’s community”), Nazi propagandists wanted to suggest that their racial policy was approved by the vast majority of the population. The plan to kill well over ten million Jews in Europe was downplayed as the “final solution” to the “Jewish question.” The transports to the extermination camps were

called “evacuations,” “cleansing,” or “resettlements,” while on-the-spot shootings – which sometimes took place because rail transport to an extermination camp was not possible – were referred to as “local resettlement,” “pacification campaigns,” or “executive measures.” “*Aktionen*” (campaigns) were time-limited schemes, such as the killing of mentally handicapped and mentally ill individuals (“Aktion T4”) or the killing of all Jews in the Generalgouvernement (“Aktion Reinhard”).⁶⁹ In an academic analysis, it is not possible to entirely avoid using such terminology cultivated by the Nazis. However, whenever these terms are used in this book, they always appear in quotation marks to indicate that they are Nazi jargon.

Second, it is important to be aware that when individuals were referred to as Jews or non-Jews, these were not always self-descriptions but were, in many cases, descriptions imposed on others by the Nazis. In the Nuremberg Race Laws, the Nazis declared that having “three grandparents of Jewish descent” made a person a “full Jew,” even if that person did not practice the Jewish faith. If someone was a member of a Jewish religious community, however, it was enough to have just two Jewish grandparents to be declared a “full Jew.” The Nazis developed their own brand of arithmetic, according to which people could be identified not only as “full Jews” but also as “half Jews,” “three-quarter Jews,” “five-eighth Jews,” or even “thirty-second Jews.”⁷⁰ Since the extermination policies of the Nazi state were oriented on the Nazis’ own definition of Jews, this book adopts their designation. It must be noted, however, that many of the people whom the Nazis ghettoized, deported, and killed as Jews would not have described themselves as Jews.⁷¹

Third, a distinction was made – one which can sometimes even be found in the research literature – between groups of “Germans,” “Ukrainians,” or “Poles” who were defined as a nation, and groups of Jews who were defined on a religious and often ethnic basis. The contrast between what was “German,” “Polish,” or “Ukrainian” and what was “Jewish” was one component of a basic antisemitic attitude that had become entrenched as far back as the nineteenth century and was subsequently declared to be a state ideology by the Nazis. For members of the Jewish faith who had fought on the side of the German Reich in World War I, it was a slap in the face when the Nazis made a distinction between a national identity and a religious one. Through continuous repetition, this distinction gained such a degree of plausibility that it characterized the use of language even after 1945.⁷² But ever since the emergence of nation-states, “Jews” – like the members of other religious communities – had always also been “Poles,” “Romanians,” “Lithuanians,” “Estonians,” “Latvians,” or “Germans.” Despite recurrent attempts to dissolve this connection through self-descriptions and external descriptions, Jews were first systematically robbed of their national identities through the policies of the Nazis. In contrast to the language use of the Nazis, we should actually always refer to Jewish Poles or Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Poles or non-Jewish Germans. This more analytically precise usage might work in

reference to the “non-Jewish Germans” who were responsible for ghettoizing, deporting, and killing Jews, but it gets more complicated when we specify “Jewish Germans,” “Jewish Hungarians,” or “Jewish Poles.” It is true that the victims of Police Battalion 101 were primarily Jewish Poles, but on account of the population displacement initiated by the Nazis after the start of World War II, the ghettos of the Generalgouvernement held Jews from all over Europe. Therefore, for the sake of linguistic simplification, I will occasionally refer to “Jews” as distinct from “Poles” or “Germans” despite the imprecision, but as often as possible I will make a more precise distinction between “non-Jewish Germans” and “Jewish Germans” or “non-Jewish Poles” and “Jewish Poles.”⁷³

¹ See Raul Hilberg, “The Significance of the Holocaust,” in: Henry Friedlander, Sybil Milton (eds), *The Holocaust: Ideology*, Millwood 1980, pp. 95-102, here: p. 101f. Regarding the function of scapegoats, see René Girard, *Le bouc émissaire*, Paris 1982.

² The role of women in the implementation of the Nazis’ extermination policy has attracted growing attention over the past two decades. For an early example, see Gisela Bock, “Ganz normale Frauen. Täter, Opfer, Mitläufer und Zuschauer im Nationalsozialismus,” in: Kirsten Heinsohn, Barbara Vogel et al. (eds), *Zwischen Karriere und Verfolgung. Handlungsräume von Frauen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, Frankfurt, New York 1997, pp. 245-277.

³ Readers may notice that I have refrained from referencing certain studies that have become popular in Holocaust research, namely, the social psychological obedience experiments such as those by Jerome D. Frank, “Experimental Study of Personal Pressures and Resistance,” in: *Journal of General Psychology* 30 (1944), pp. 23-64; Craig Haney et al., “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison,” in: *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 1 (1973), pp. 69-97; or Stanley Milgram, “Behavioral Study of Obedience,” in: *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963), pp. 371-378. In my opinion, the Stanford prison experiment and Milgram’s obedience experiment in particular are referenced too haphazardly; see, for example, Christopher R. Browning, *Ganz normale Männer. Das Reserve-Polizeibataillon 101 und die “Endlösung” in Polen*, Reinbek 2005, pp. 224ff., or Zygmunt Bauman, *Dialektik der Ordnung. Die Moderne und der Holocaust*, Hamburg 1992, pp. 166ff. Regarding the applicability problem, see Thomas Sandkühler, Hans Walter Schmuhl, “Milgram für Historiker. Reichweite und Grenzen einer Übertragung des Milgram Experiments auf den Nationalsozialismus,” in: *Analyse & Kritik* 20 (1998), pp. 3-26. My detailed treatment of these social psychological experiments will be published soon as a book: Stefan Kühl, *Simulierte Organisationen. Zur Produktion von Gehorsamkeitsbereitschaft in sozialpsychologischen Experimenten* (forthcoming).

⁴ And if the sociological systems theory comes from Bielefeld, then their wariness is especially justified because Bielefeld – as so charmingly described by Valentin Groebner – is primarily a “sound” that “follows the beat of conditional and relative clauses at the start of sentences, of verbs used as nouns, of thickets of gerunds and gerundives à la ‘that which is to be clarified,’ all operating instructions without a speaking subject.” In “Theoriegesättigt. Angekommen in Bielefeld 1989,” in: Sonja Asal, Stephan Schlak (eds), *Was war Bielefeld? Eine ideengeschichtliche Nachfrage*, Göttingen 2009, pp. 179-189, here: p. 182, Groebner illustrates the “grammatical conditions” at the “theory-saturated” Bielefeld history department in the 1990s, which was heavily influenced by a sociological sound. The sociologists of Bielefeld were (and are) at least on a par with the historians when it came to this sound, sometimes even surpassing

them. It is not uncommon for systems theorists to try to distinguish themselves by presenting their theories in a way that minimizes the ability to link them to other theoretical debates.

⁵ The two key reference points here are the books about Police Battalion 101 by Christopher R. Browning (*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York 1992; published in German with a new afterword by Browning as *Ganz normale Männer*) and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York 1996; published in German with some radically modified passages as *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust*, Berlin 1996). Researchers to date have largely neglected the third book about Police Battalion 101 by Jan Kiepe, *Das Reservepolizeibataillon 101 vor Gericht. NS-Täter in Selbst- und Fremddarstellungen*, Hamburg 2007, which, in my opinion, is the most scrupulous in terms of historical methodology. To supplement this, my analysis occasionally looks at other police battalions that have been covered in the secondary literature, especially Police Battalion 61 from Dortmund and Police Battalion 322 from Vienna-Kagran. The growing body of research on different police battalions shows that, despite differences in the details, statements about the police battalions can largely be generalized. Since the German translations of these works deviate from the original English texts in certain cases, I have provided some references both in the original English version and in the German translation.

⁶ The ordinariness of the men had been noted long before Browning and Goldhagen; see, for example, Fred E. Katz, "A Sociological Perspective to the Holocaust," in: *Modern Judaism* 2 (1982), pp. 273-296, here: p. 275, and Fred E. Katz, "Implementation of the Holocaust: The Behavior of Nazi Officials," in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24 (1982), pp. 510-529, here: p. 511. But see also Hans-Martin Lohmann, "Die Normalität im Ausnahmezustand. Anmerkungen zu Raul Hilbergs 'Gesamtgeschichte des Holocaust,'" in: Hans-Martin Lohmann (ed.), *Psychoanalyse und Nationalsozialismus. Beiträge zur Bearbeitung eines unbewältigten Traumas*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, pp. 259-266, here: p. 263, or Herbert Jäger, *Makrocriminalität. Studien zur Kriminologie kollektiver Gewalt*, Frankfurt am Main 1989, p. 52. Of the roughly one hundred police battalions that were deployed in the occupied territories, only twenty – including Reserve Police Battalion 101 – consisted primarily of older reservists (see Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung*, Munich 1998, p. 306, and Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East*, Lawrence 2005, p. 15).

⁷ While in the USA, the debate that erupted after the publication of Daniel Goldhagen's book was immediately framed as a dispute between Browning's "ordinary men" explanation and Goldhagen's "ordinary Germans" explanation – thanks not least to a symposium at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April 1996 (USHMM [ed.], *The "Willing Executioners"/"Ordinary Men" Debate. Selections from the Symposium April 8, 1996*, Washington, D.C. 1996) – it took somewhat longer in Germany to realize that Goldhagen's book can be read primarily as a reaction to Browning (see Jan Philipp Reemtsma, "Die Mörder waren unter uns. Daniel Jonah Goldhagens Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Eine notwendige Provokation," in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from August 24, 1996, who, as far as I know, was one of the first in Germany to point this out, and Reinhard Rürup, "Viel Lärm um nichts? D.J. Goldhagens 'radikale Revision' der Holocaust-Forschung," in: *Neue Politische Literatur* 41 (1996), pp. 357-363, here: p. 361, who referred to Goldhagen's book as an "anti-Browning" in his review).

⁸ See Browning, *Ganz normale Männer* [Ordinary Men], p. 209, and Ulrich Herbert,

“Vernichtungspolitik. Neue Antworten und Fragen zur Geschichte des ‘Holocaust,’” in: Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939-1945. Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, pp. 9-66, here: p. 30. See also Wolfgang Curilla, *Der Judenmord in Polen und die deutsche Ordnungspolizei. 1939-1945*, Paderborn 2011, pp. 882ff., with a similar list consisting of brutalization, careerism, preparation, practice and habituation, a tradition of obedience, group pressure, and the exclusion of minorities.

⁹ This structuralist approach seems logical when we view the Nazi state as a dictatorship; see, for example, Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, Munich 1978, pp. 82ff.; Richard J. Evans, *Das Dritte Reich. Band II/1 Diktatur*, Munich 2006, pp. 27ff.; and, tententially, Norbert Frei, *Der Führerstaat. Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft 1933 bis 1945*, Munich 2007, pp. 43ff.

¹⁰ Goldhagen, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker* [Hitler’s Willing Executioners], p. 28; emphasis in original. The “yes” does not come from Goldhagen himself, but it is the logical conclusion to his argument. His relativization of other factors reads as follows: “The perpetrators’ beliefs, their particular brand of antisemitism, though obviously not the sole source, was, I maintain, a most significant and indispensable source of the perpetrators’ actions.” Goldhagen says the “actions of the German perpetrators” cannot be explained by “structural factors” but only by “cultural cognitive” ones; see Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, p. 14. Even the terms used here bring up fundamental questions: What exactly is meant by “cultural cognitive”? Aren’t “cultures” actually “structures” that influence peoples’ actions? Which “structural factors” is he talking about if he does not count “cultures” among them? See Volker Pesch, “Die künstlichen Wilden. Zu Daniel Goldhagens Methode und theoretischem Rahmen,” in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 23 (1997), pp. 152-162, for a worthy attempt to reconstruct Goldhagen’s theoretical framework.

¹¹ Historians needed no more than a cursory glance at the sources relating to Police Battalion 101 to see that Goldhagen used these sources in a way that supported his monocausal theory. Goldhagen’s handling of sources has been analyzed in detail by a number of scholars. For an early example, see Wolfgang Scheffler, “Ein Rückschritt in der Holocaustforschung,” in: *Tagesspiegel* from September 3, 1996, or Fritz Stern, “The Past Distorted: The Goldhagen Controversy,” in: Fritz Stern (ed.), *Einstein’s German World*, Princeton, 1999, pp. 272-288, here: p. 275f., and, for an especially detailed analysis, Ruth Bettina Birn, “Eine neue Sicht des Holocaust,” in: Norman G. Finkelstein, Ruth Bettina Birn (eds), *Eine Nation auf dem Prüfstand. Die Goldhagen-These und die historische Wahrheit*, Hildesheim 1998, pp. 137-192, and Ruth Bettina Birn, Volker Rieß, “Das Goldhagen-Phänomen oder fünfzig Jahre danach,” in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 49 (1998), pp. 80-98.

¹² Goldhagen offers a pragmatic explanation for disregarding non-German participants in the Holocaust: He says his book was already so “ambitious in scope” that the topic “had to be restricted so as to be manageable” (Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, p. 476). However, he overlooks the fact that the involvement of non-German auxiliaries fundamentally calls his argument into question, and he could only address this in the book by falling back on seemingly improvisational multicausal explanatory models. There is no doubt that the “decisive impetus for the Holocaust” came from Germany and thus from “the Germans,” but this does not explain how “ordinary Germans” and “ordinary non-Germans” could be impelled to play an active role in the death commandos.

¹³ The accusation of “staid factor-based scholarship” or “staid factor-based sociology” is normally directed at traditional post-war violence research focusing on domestic violence,

juvenile delinquency, and politically motivated crimes in the context of protest movements, but it can also be applied to Holocaust research; see Trutz von Trotha, "Zur Soziologie der Gewalt," in: Trutz von Trotha (ed.), *Soziologie der Gewalt. Sonderheft der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Opladen 1997, pp. 9-56, here: p. 18.

¹⁴ This multicausal approach, with its list-like nature, has become the mainstream in research on the Holocaust and genocides in general (see, for example, Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide*, Oxford 2009, p. 288; Olaf Jensen, "Evaluating Genocidal Intent: The Inconsistent Perpetrator and the Dynamics of Killing," in: *Journal of Genocide Research* 15 [2013], pp. 1-19, here: p. 2). Following this approach, the most that can be said is that, in the material dimension, National Socialist indoctrination may have played a more important role in the treatment of Jewish Poles than in the treatment of non-Jewish Poles, and that in the social dimension, a distinction has to be made between SS units and police battalions, because antisemitism tended to play a larger role among the former, while in the temporal dimension, the focus on authority was critical to begin with, but desensitization became more significant later on (Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 128). But in the end, it is still not clear how all of this relates to each other. This is why even though Goldhagen himself takes a multicausal approach when it comes to non-German perpetrators, he speaks of a "laundry line principle" where all possible motives are strung along next to each other.

¹⁵ Initially, the debate surrounding Daniel Goldhagen's theories on Police Battalion 101 were compared to the great contemporary history debates of the twentieth century: the controversy surrounding Fritz Fischer's book on the outbreak of World War I, the heated controversy surrounding Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and the theories of historians concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust (see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "The Controversy that Isn't: The Debate over Daniel J. Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners in Comparative Perspective," in: *Contemporary European History* 8 [1999], pp. 249-273, here: pp. 250f., though he also points out key differences between the debates). Goldhagen's deliberations have ultimately had remarkably little influence on scholarly discussion, however. The contrast between Goldhagen's tremendous commercial success and the muted scholarly reception of his book was pointed out early on: Ulrich Herbert, "Academic and Public Discourses on the Holocaust: The Goldhagen Debate in Germany," in: *German Politics and Society* 17 (1999), pp. 33-54, here: p. 33, and Peter Weingart, Petra Pansegrau, "Reputation in Science and Prominence in the Media: The Goldhagen Debate," in: *Public Understanding of Science* 8 (1999), pp. 1-16, here: pp. 5ff. One could almost say it was tragic that the simplicity of Goldhagen's approach turned the debate into a one-sided affair, as there was never any critical examination of Browning's book. In the wake of Goldhagen's harsh criticism of Browning, some historians apparently felt they had no choice but to stand by Browning. Compared with Goldhagen, Browning's book – to quote Jacques Sémelin – had to appear to be a "major work," see Jacques Sémelin, *Säubern und Vernichten. Die Politik der Massaker und Völkermorde*, Hamburg 2007, p. 12.

¹⁶ Habermas' encomium for Goldhagen can be found in the original German in Jürgen Habermas, "Über den öffentlichen Gebrauch der Historie. Warum ein 'Demokratiepreis' für Daniel Goldhagen?" in: Karl D. Bredthauer, Arthur Heinrich (eds), *Aus der Geschichte lernen – How to Learn from History*, Bonn 1997, pp. 14-37, and in an English translation in Jürgen Habermas, "Goldhagen and the Public Use of History: Why a Democracy Prize for Daniel Goldhagen?" in: Robert R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, London 1998, pp. 263-274. LaCapra says historians are in a "double bind": "They think that, at least for the most part, Goldhagen's book is not worth serious scholarly attention, and yet they cannot avoid devoting attention to it, because of its fantastic popular success and its favourable reception

by some noted intellectuals and scholars, who for the most part are not professional historians, or at least not experts on the Nazi genocide, but are opinion makers.” Dominick LaCapra, “Perpetrators and Victims,” in: Dominick LaCapra (ed.), *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore 2001, pp. 114-140, here: p. 116.

¹⁷ Such as Rürup, “Viel Lärm um nichts?” p. 361. For a similar view, see, for example Ian Kershaw, *Der NS-Staat. Geschichtsinterpretationen und Kontroversen im Überblick*, Reinbek bei Hamburg ²1999, p. 391.

¹⁸ The literature on this debate – which was long referred to as a debate of “intentionalists versus functionalists” – cannot be reviewed here. A good starting point for a sociological study would be Hans Mommsen’s as yet unsurpassed work on the realization of the unthinkable; see Hans Mommsen, “Die Realisierung des Utopischen. Die ‘Endlösung der Judenfrage’ im ‘Dritten Reich,’” in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983), pp. 381- 420; see also a more detailed recent work by Hans Mommsen, *Das NS-Regime und die Auslöschung des Judentums in Europa*, Göttingen 2014.

¹⁹ See Herbert A. Simon, “Recent Advances in Organization Theory,” Brookings Institution (ed.), *Research Frontiers in Politics and Government. Brookings Lectures*, Washington, D.C. 1955, pp. 23-44. In *Perspektiven der Automation für Entscheider*, Quickborn 1966, Herbert A. Simon softened this distinction – as Luhmann points out – in favor of a continuum between more or less programmed decisions; see Niklas Luhmann, “Positivität des Rechts als Voraussetzung einer modernen Gesellschaft,” in: Niklas Luhmann, *Ausdifferenzierung des Rechts*, Frankfurt am Main 1981, pp. 113-153, here: pp. 134f. In Holocaust research, the difference between the two questions is marked not by different decision types but by perpetrator types. See the distinction between “le décideur,” “le organisateur,” “le propagandiste,” and “le exécutant” in Jacques Sémelin, “Éléments pour une grammaire du massacre,” in: *Le débat* (2003), pp. 154-170, here: p. 164, or between “ideologues,” “managers,” and “ordinary men” in Christopher R. Browning, “Ideology, Culture, Situation, and Disposition: Holocaust Perpetrators and the Group Dynamic of Mass Killing,” in: Alfred B. Gottwaldt, Norbert Kampe et al. (eds), *NS-Gewaltherrschaft. Beiträge zur historischen Forschung und juristischen Aufarbeitung*, Berlin 2005, pp. 66-76, here: pp. 66f.

²⁰ The connection between the two questions is particularly emphasized in studies highlighting the decentralized initiative for carrying out the Holocaust in both the German Reich and the occupied territories. In the cases of the civilian administration in the occupied territories, the Secret Field Police of the Wehrmacht, or Organisation Todt, there was a fluid transition from decisions, to the genocidal premises of the decisions, to the execution of these decisions. See Christian Gerlach, “Extremely Violent Societies: An Alternative to the Concept of Genocide,” in: *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (2006), pp. 455-472, here: p. 456.

²¹ From the perspective of organizational sociology alone, a whole range of other topics could be researched here: the role of the Reichsbahn in transporting Jews to the extermination camps in the east (cf. Raul Hilberg, *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*, Mainz 1981), the “underlife” in the camps (for an enlightening sociological introduction, see: Wolfgang Kirstein, *Das Konzentrationslager als Institution totalen Terrors*, Pfaffenweiler 1992; Maja Suderland, *Territorien des Selbst. Kulturelle Identität als Ressource für das tägliche Überleben im Konzentrationslager*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 2004; Maja Suderland, *Ein Extremfall des Sozialen*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 2009, and, recently, Tobias Hauffe, *Hier ist kein Warum. Willkür in den*

nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern – eine soziologische Analyse, Bielefeld 2013), the role of the Jewish councils (see the seminal work by Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*, Lincoln 1996; an initial sociological attempt at classification can be found in Bauman, *Dialektik der Ordnung*, pp. 132ff.), or the deployment of non-German death commandos in the context of campaigns by the regular police or security police (cf. the overview in Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945*, New York 1992, pp. 87ff.).

²² See Michael Brennan, “Some Sociological Contemplations on Daniel J. Goldhagen’s Hitler’s Willing Executioners,” in: *Theory, Culture and Society* 18 (2001), pp. 83-109, here: p. 93. One did not have to be a sociologist to be confronted with the accusation of “sociologicistic accounts”; in the context of the debate, all it took was for a historian to use the term “peer pressure” – a concept used primarily by social psychologists and one which, from a sociological perspective, is not adequate for describing the informal processes within the police battalion.

²³ See Mariam Niroumand, “Little Historians. Das Buch des amerikanischen Politologen Daniel Jonah Goldhagen wird keinen neuen Historikerstreit auslösen,” in: *taz* from April 13, 1996, and Paul Johnson, “Eine Epidemie des Hasses,” in: Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, Hamburg 1996, pp. 28-31. The “sociologist” label appeared in numerous newspaper and magazine articles. The journalists Matthias Arning and Rolf Paasch (“Die provokanten Thesen des Mister Goldhagen,” in: *Frankfurter Rundschau* from April 12, 1996) wrote about the “American sociologist” Goldhagen who was encountering harsh criticism. Rudolf Augstein summarily titled his dispute with Goldhagen “Der Soziologe als Scharfrichter” (“The Sociologist as Executioner”) and argued that Goldhagen ignored “any prior research that didn’t suit him” – implying that this was typical of the work of a sociologist. See Rudolf Augstein, “Der Soziologe als Scharfrichter,” in: Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, Hamburg 1996, pp. 106-109,

²⁴ Goldhagen was also promptly identified in the mass media as a “professor of sociology at Harvard University”; see, for example, Rudolf Augstein, “Der Soziologe als Scharfrichter,” in: *Der Spiegel* from April 15, 1996, 29f. – and, following Augstein, see Mechtild Blum, Wolfgang Storz, “Killing for Desire: Interview with Klaus Theweleit,” in: Robert R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, London 1998, pp. 211-216.

²⁵ Sociology’s ignorance of Holocaust research is surprising because early works from H.G. Adler (*Theresienstadt 1941-1945*, Tübingen 1955), Eugen Kogon (*Der SS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager*, Munich 1946), and Anna Pawelczyńska (*Values and Violence in Auschwitz*, Berkeley 1979) were at least somewhat “sociologized” on account of their background.

²⁶ This observation by Brennan, “Some Sociological Contemplations on Daniel J. Goldhagen’s Hitler’s Willing Executioners,” p. 81, seems plausible in light of Habermas’s publications relating to the *Historikerstreit*; see Habermas’s essay in Jürgen Habermas, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung. Kleine politische Schriften VI*, Frankfurt am Main 1987.

²⁷ See, for example, the collected volumes from Julius H. Schoeps (ed.), *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, Hamburg 1996; Robert R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, London 1998; Johannes Heil, Rainer Erb (eds), *Geschichtswissenschaft und*

Öffentlichkeit. Der Streit um Daniel Goldhagen, Frankfurt am Main 1998; Jürgen Elsässer, Andrej S. Markovits (eds), “Die Fratze der eigenen Geschichte.” *Von der Goldhagen-Debatte zum Jugoslawien-Krieg*, Berlin 1999; or Geoff Eley (ed.), *The “Goldhagen Effect”: History Memory Nazism – Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor 2000. One exception is the essay by Werner Bergmann, “Im falschen System. Die Goldhagen Debatte in Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit,” in: Johannes Heil, Rainer Erb (eds), *Geschichtswissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit. Der Streit um Daniel Goldhagen*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, pp. 131-147 – however, Bergmann’s contribution to the debate takes the form of a metaperspective informed by differentiation theory.

²⁸ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca 1989, pp. 9f. Prior to Bauman, see, for example, Barry M. Dank, “Review of ‘On the Edge of Destruction’ by Celia S. Heller,” in: *Contemporary Sociology* 8 (1979), pp. 129f., here: pp. 129f., or Katz, “Implementation of the Holocaust,” pp. 511f. The non-involvement of sociologists in Holocaust research has also become something of a monotonous complaint within sociology itself. For more or less recent variations of this complaint, see, for example, Wolfgang Sofsky, “Zivilisation, Organisation, Gewalt,” in: *Mittelweg* 36 3 (1994), pp. 57-67, here: S. 58; Peter Imbusch, “Deutsche Geschichte, der Holocaust an den Juden und die Besonderheit der bundesrepublikanischen Genozidforschung. Acht Thesen,” in: Hartwig Hummel, Ulrich Albrecht (eds), *Völkermord. Friedenswissenschaftliche Annäherungen*, Baden-Baden 2001, pp. 123-134, here: pp. 123ff.; Fred E. Katz, “Holocaust,” in: George Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Malden 2007, pp. 2142f., here: pp. 2142f.; Michaela Christ, “Die Soziologie und das ‘Dritte Reich.’ Weshalb Holocaust und Nationalsozialismus in der Soziologie ein Schattendasein führen,” in: *Soziologie* 40 (2011), pp. 407-431, here: pp. 407ff.; Stefan Friedrich, *Soziologie des Genozids. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Forschungsperspektive*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 5 and 21; or Martin Shaw, “Sociology and Genocide,” in: Donald Bloxham, A. Dirk Moses (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, Oxford, New York 2010, pp. 142-162, here: pp. 144f.

²⁹ Seminal studies of German sociology under the Nazis could be a starting point; see Otthein Rammstedt, *Deutsche Soziologie 1933-1945. Die Normalität einer Anpassung*, Frankfurt am Main 1986; Carsten Klingemann, *Soziologie im Dritten Reich*, Baden-Baden 1996; and Carsten Klingemann, *Soziologie und Politik. Sozialwissenschaftliches Expertenwissen im Dritten Reich und in der frühen westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit*, Wiesbaden 2009.

³⁰ In a certain respect, this book runs counter to the current tendency to explain mass violence through the absence rather than the presence of state organizations; see, for example, Jacques Sémelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, New York 2007, and Christian Gerlach, *Extrem gewalttätige Gesellschaften. Massengewalt im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2011, pp. 8ff. I believe this explanation is plausible for the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965/66, Bangladesh in 1971-1977, and even – with some qualifications – in Rwanda in 1994 or the former Yugoslavia in 1991-1995. But when it comes to illuminating the Holocaust, this explanation only applies to the phase from late 1944 to early May 1945. The difference between the Holocaust and many other mass killings of political, ethnic, or religious minorities is precisely that the Holocaust had the strong backing of the regime.

³¹ It is interesting to note that despite numerous efforts to statistically process data on the Holocaust, there are no exact figures for how many Jews were killed by people who were not members of a state organization. However, since such killings could have been prosecuted as murder after World War II but we know of very few preliminary proceedings against non-members of state organizations, I assume that the number was relatively small. More detailed

historical research has yet to be carried out here. It would also be interesting to reinterpret single-case studies – such as that of Ilse Koch, the “Bitch of Buchenwald,” who had no official function in the organization of the concentration camp – from this perspective. See Jürgen Finger, “Zeithistorische Quellenkunde von Strafprozessakten,” in: Jürgen Finger (ed.), *Vom Recht zur Geschichte. Akten aus NS-Prozessen als Quellen der Zeitgeschichte*, Göttingen 2009, pp. 97-113, here: p.103, regarding the assessment that Koch stood “outside all hierarchies”; see, for example, Arthur L. Smith, *Die Hexe von Buchenwald*, Cologne 1983, and Alexandra Przyrembel, “Ilse Koch – ‘normale’ SS-Ehefrau oder ‘Kommandeuse von Buchenwald’?” in: Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Gerhard Paul (eds), *Karrieren der Gewalt. Nationalsozialistische Täterbiographien*, Darmstadt 2004, pp. 126-133.

³² Because the Nazis’ goal was to merge its party organizations, such as the SS or SA, with state structures, this distinction between state and non-state violence is not as clear as it would be in a state with a multi-party system. For a detailed analysis, see the studies by Armin Nolzen, “‘Totaler Antisemitismus’. Die Gewalt der NSDAP gegen die Juden, 1933-1938/39,” in: Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann (ed.), *“Volksgemeinschaft”: Mythos, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verheißung oder soziale Realität im “Dritten Reich”?* Zwischenbilanz einer kontroversen Debatte, Paderborn 2012, pp. 179-198, and, by Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung*, Hamburg 2007; regarding the difference between state and non-state violence, see Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung*, pp. 96ff. Wildt is right to point out (in *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung*, p. 347) that the “Weimar Republic, despite all its weaknesses, provided constitutional structures” through which victims could take legal action against perpetrators; see also the early study by Peter H. Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika. 581 Early Nazis*, Princeton 1975, and the book by Sven Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende. Gesellschaft und Gewalt 1944/45*, Munich 2013, regarding the use of violence in the final phase of the Nazi dictatorship.

³³ Hans Mommsen has repeatedly called attention to this in Germany by pointing out to so-called perpetrator researchers that “the annihilation process” required “a bureaucratic apparatus,” an aspect which must be integrated into their approach (see, for example, “Probleme der Täterforschung,” in: Helgard Kramer [ed.], *NS-Täter aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive*, Munich 2006, pp. 425-433, here: p. 429).

³⁴ Killings in the context of pogroms are not generally on the same scale as genocides carried out by state organizations of force. Timothy Snyder points out that more Jews were shot by Germans every single day in the second half of 1941 than were killed in pogroms during the entire tsarist empire in Russia; see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europa zwischen Hitler und Stalin*, Munich 2010, p. 236.

³⁵ See the different editions based on the original text, Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, London 1961. In this book I have primarily used the German translation: Raul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, Frankfurt am Main 1990. Regarding the consistency of Hilberg’s premises, see Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, London 2003, pp. 147ff.

³⁶ Even in light of recent sociological works on this subject, one could almost say there was a type of cultivated “organizational sociological ignorance” at play here. For the most prominent example of this ignorance, see Bauman, *Dialektik der Ordnung*, pp. 24ff., who consistently ignores all of the more advanced organizational sociological approaches. But even more recent

innovative sociological studies which look at the interaction between perpetrators and victims by focusing on spaces (see, for example, Michaela Christ, *Die Dynamik des Tötens. Die Ermordung der Juden von Berditschew; Ukraine 1941-1944*, Frankfurt am Main 2011) largely neglect the organizational perspective. One exception is the work by Jörg Balcke which is well worth reading but has been largely ignored: *Verantwortungsentlastung durch Organisation. Die "Inspektion der Konzentrationslager" und der KZ-Terror*, Tübingen 2001. The fact that this book has not been acknowledged even in sociological studies of concentration camps is an indication of the ignorance of organizational sociology even within sociological discussions themselves. It says a great deal about the state of research in sociology that organizations are examined much more closely in critical regional historical studies by scholars such as Walter Manoschek ("*Serbien ist judenfrei.*" *Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42*, Munich, Vienna 1993), Christian Gerlach (*Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944*, Hamburg 2000), Dieter Pohl (*Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, Munich 1996), Thomas Sandkühler ("*Endlösung*" *in Galizien. Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz; 1941-1944*, Bonn 1996) or Bogdan Musial (*Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement. Eine Fallstudie zum Distrikt Lublin 1939-1944*, Wiesbaden 1999) than they are in most works from the field of sociology.

³⁷ According to Bauman, *Dialektik der Ordnung*, pp. 113ff. and 118ff. Bauman's orientation on Weber's understanding of organizations can be seen in the fact that he frequently refers to "bureaucracies" instead of "organizations." However, a similar use of terminology can be found in Raul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, p. 1080. Regarding the bureaucracy-oriented line of thinking running through Hilberg's works, see his book *Unerbetene Erinnerung. Der Weg eines Holocaust-Forschers*, Frankfurt am Main 1994, pp. 50ff. For a critical view of this, see also Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung*, Göttingen 2003, pp. 135f., and James E. Waller, "The Social Sciences," in: Peter Hayes, John K. Roth (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, Oxford, New York 2010, pp. 667-679, here: pp. 670f. An interesting examination of Bauman's bureaucracy theory can be found in Paul Du Gay, *In Praise of Bureaucracy*, London 2000, pp. 35 ff. Balcke, *Verantwortungsentlastung durch Organisation*, p. 14, is the only one to explicitly mention Bauman's narrow focus on Weber.

³⁸ Despite all the criticism, sociology did make a contribution – following the tradition of Raphael Lemkin's thinking during World War II – by exposing as a myth the notion that the Holocaust should be viewed as a "return to barbarism," an "accident of history, or an "aberration of German mentality" (see Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington, D.C. 1944). National Socialism began to be interpreted as a phenomenon of modern society very early on. We need look no further than Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt am Main 1969, or Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, Munich 1986; in response to this, see the (hotly debated) work by Michael Prinz, Rainer Zitelmann, "Vorwort," in: Michael Prinz, Rainer Zitelmann (eds), *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, Darmstadt 1991, pp. vii-xi. See also the critique of this in, for example, Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, pp. 36f., and Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust*, Oxford, New York 2010, pp. 113ff. Regarding modernity as a fundamental condition for "ethnic cleansing," see also the comparative perspective of Michael Schwartz, *Ethnische "Säuberungen" in der Moderne. Globale Wechselwirkungen nationalistischer Gewaltpolitik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2013, pp. 5ff. and 626f.

³⁹ The clincher in Bauman's argument is that, in his view, modernity not only supplied the means for genocide – the bureaucratic organization, the killing technologies, and the binding factors affecting the personnel – but also the goal; regarding Bauman's understanding of the Holocaust, see, for example, Hans Joas, "Soziologie nach Auschwitz. Zygmunt Baumanns Werk und das deutsche Selbstverständnis," in: *Mittelweg* 36 5 (1996), pp. 18-28, here: pp. 18ff., and Peter Imbusch, *Moderne und Gewalt. Zivilisationstheoretische Perspektiven auf das 20. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 449ff. For a critique of Bauman, see, for example, Frank Robert Chalk, Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, New Haven 1990, pp. 5ff.; Michael Freeman, "Genocide, Civilization and Modernity," in: *British Journal of Sociology* 46 (1995), pp. 207-223, here: p. 214; Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, pp. 239ff.; and Klaus Dammann, *Genocide, Individuals and Organization: Choice, Actions and Consequences for Contemporary Contexts*, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 3ff.

⁴⁰ See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London 1984; for a defense of Arendt against accusations associated with the analysis of Police Battalion 101, see Géraldine Muhlmann, "Le comportement des agents de la 'Solution finale.' Hannah Arendt face à ses contradicteurs," in: *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah* (1998), pp. 25-52. The tradition of this understanding of the Holocaust as a bureaucratically organized extermination industry can be traced back to the early phases of Holocaust research. See, for example, Léon Poliakov, Joseph Wulf, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, Berlin 1955, pp. 3f., who spoke of the creation of a "new industry" whose "gears" worked "just as you would expect from German organizational skills."

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, "Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge (Vorträge 1949 und 1957)," in: Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe. Band 79*, Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 56.

⁴² See Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors. Das Konzentrationslager*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 296; for an early reference to the concept of the death factory, see Hannah Arendt, *Nach Auschwitz. Essays & Kommentare*, Berlin 1989, p.11; for a detailed examination of the concept of the death factory, see Alf Lüdtke, "Der Bann der Wörter: 'Todesfabriken.' Vom Reden über den NS-Völkermord – das auch ein Verschweigen ist," in: *Werkstattgeschichte* 13 (1996), pp. 5-18. Sofsky and Bauman do view organizations as a core aspect of explaining the Holocaust, but they almost entirely ignore key organizational sociological research. I suspect that both of them more or less blindly follow Weber's bureaucracy theory, though in Sofsky's case this stands in stark contrast to his thoughts on the figuration of social power as developed with Rainer Paris; see Wolfgang Sofsky, Rainer Paris, *Figurationen sozialer Macht. Autorität, Stellvertretung, Koalition*, Frankfurt am Main 1994.

⁴³ Regarding this criticism see, for example, Kiepe, *Das Reservepolizeibataillon 101 vor Gericht*, p. 58, or Donald Bloxham, "Organized Mass Murder: Structure, Participation, and Motivation in Comparative Perspective," in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22 (2008), pp. 203-245, here: p. 209. Sofsky (*Die Ordnung des Terrors*, p. 297) is aware of the "primitive pattern" behind Belzec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, but for him the "high degree of improvisation" was not an "organizational routine," it was merely the precursor to a more rational form of extermination in Auschwitz-Birkenau; in *Zeiten des Schreckens. Amok, Terror, Krieg*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, p. 69, however, Sofsky himself warns against "applying the concept of bureaucracy to processes of collective violence." The focus on Auschwitz also seems to be important because the uniqueness of Auschwitz rests solely on its factory-like organization of killing. For more on this question in the context of the *Historikerstreit* see, for example, Mathias Brodtkorb, "Habermas gegen Habermas verteidigen! Ein etwas anderes Vorwort," in: Mathias Brodtkorb (ed.), *Singuläres*

Auschwitz? Erich Nolte, Jürgen Habermas und 25 Jahre "Historikerstreit," Banzkow 2011, pp. 5-16.

⁴⁴ For an early collection of these weaknesses in Weber's model of organizations, see Niklas Luhmann, "Zweck – Herrschaft – System. Grundbegriffe und Prämissen Max Webers," in: Niklas Luhmann, *Politische Planung*, Opladen 1971, pp. 90-112, or Renate Mayntz, "Max Webers Idealtypus der Bürokratie und die Organisationssoziologie," in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 17 (1965), pp. 493-502; see also the summary in Stefan Kühl, *Organisationen. Eine sehr kurze Einführung*, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 57ff. and 74ff. Looking at early historical studies by Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen, we can see that they end up at a modified version of Weber's bureaucracy model solely on the basis of working with the source material. Their descriptions of the competition between different centers of power under the Nazis, for example, or the use of mass killing technologies that had been tested on mentally handicapped and mentally ill people before being applied to the "final solution of the Jewish question" reflect the insights of post-Weberian organizational sociology. See also the attempts by Wolfgang Seibel to establish a post-Weberian understanding of organizations in Holocaust research by means of a network concept: Wolfgang Seibel, "A Market for Mass Crime? Inter-Institutional Competition and the Initiation of the Holocaust in France, 1940-1942," in: *Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior* 5 (2002), pp. 219-257, or Wolfgang Seibel, "Restraining or Radicalizing? Division of Labor and Persecution Effectiveness," in: Gerald D. Feldman, Wolfgang Seibel (eds), *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust*, New York 2005, pp. 340-360.

⁴⁵ The terms "puppet-like protagonists" and "chess pieces" come from Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, "Die Notwendigkeit eines neuen Paradigmas," in: Jürgen Elsässer, Andrej S. Markovits (eds), *"Die Fratze der eigenen Geschichte." Von der Goldhagen-Debatte zum Jugoslawien-Krieg*, Berlin 1999, pp. 80-102, here: p. 81, as do the comments about leveling out the "moral impetus of the perpetrators" and the supposed "pressure from external forces." Matthias Heyl, *Zur Diskussion um Goldhagens Buch "Hitlers willige Vollstrecker,"* Hamburg 1996, pp. 1 and 23, talks about "soulless technocrats" in connection with Goldhagen and "dispassionate pencil-pushing perpetrators" in connection with Arendt. "Obedient and submissive executors of an ideology" and "unfeeling command automatons" are discussed by Gerhard Paul, "Von Psychopathen, Technokraten des Terrors und 'ganz gewöhnlichen' Deutschen. Die Täter der Shoah im Spiegel der Forschung," in: Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Die Täter der Shoah. Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* Göttingen 2002, pp. 13-87, here: p. 17. Criticism of the machine model of Holocaust research was often combined with criticism of the so-called functionalist approach, according to which the decision to carry out the Holocaust was a product of the competition between different administrative departments of the Nazi state. Accounts like these are said to result in "individual responsibility" disappearing in a "fog of abstract processes" and "unplanned initiatives"; see, for example, Saul Friedländer, "Wege der Holocaust-Geschichtsschreibung," in: Ulrich Bielefeld, Heinz Bude et al. (eds), *Gesellschaft – Gewalt – Vertrauen. Jan Philipp Reemtsma zum 60. Geburtstag*, Hamburg 2012, pp. 471-488, here: p. 481.

⁴⁶ The foremost representative of this tradition is Frederick Taylor; see Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, London 1967; regarding this view of organizations, see the overview by Alfred Kieser, "Managementlehre und Taylorismus," in: Alfred Kieser (ed.), *Organisationstheorien*, Stuttgart, Cologne, Berlin 1995, pp. 57-90.

⁴⁷ This idea was popularized particularly by the human relations movement. A key contribution to this discussion is Elton Mayo, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, New York 1933; regarding this viewpoint, see also Alfred Kieser, “Human Relations Bewegung und Organisationspsychologie,” in: Alfred Kieser (ed.), *Organisationstheorien*, Stuttgart, Cologne, Berlin ²1995, pp. 91-122.

⁴⁸ Niklas Luhmann, *Organisation und Entscheidung*, Opladen 2000, pp. 279ff.

⁴⁹ Regarding the distinction between people and roles, see the detailed study by Niklas Luhmann, *Rechtssoziologie*, Reinbek 1972, pp. 81ff. Different member-based systems are distinguished from one another in what they attribute to people or to roles; see the foundational work by Stefan Kühl, “Gruppen, Organisationen, Familien und Bewegungen. Zur Soziologie sozialer Systeme zwischen Interaktion und Gesellschaft,” in: Bettina Heintz, Hartmann Tyrell (eds), *Interaktion – Organisation – Gesellschaft. Sonderband der Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Stuttgart 2014.

⁵⁰ Even in sociology, there is a split between action theories on the one hand and structural theories on the other. Ambitious theorists have repeatedly tried to overcome this split, however. Take, for example, the theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann that structures are objectified by the actions of people, or Anthony Giddens’s theoretical enhancement of the sociological truism that structures enable the actions of social agents and these structures are reproduced by the acts of agents, or Nicos P. Mouzelis’s attempt to place structural constraints on the one hand and freedom of action on the other on different levels of society. See Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York 1966; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge 1984; and Nicos P. Mouzelis, *Back to Sociological Theory: The Construction of Social Orders*, New York 1991. But even authors who are often over-hastily branded as structural theorists, such as Talcott Parsons or Niklas Luhmann, have made ambitious attempts to reconcile action and structure.

⁵¹ This makes it possible to overcome the simplistic contrast between voluntariness and coercion, between the person and the structure, in Holocaust research. The aim is also to consistently avoid such Solomonic statements as “impersonal structures as well as collective and individual agents are important” when explaining genocides; quoted in Gerlach, *Extrem gewaltttätige Gesellschaften*, p. 378. In the language of rational choice theory: the precise definition of the relationship between collective and individual agents is the key to understanding what is being attributed to personal or impersonal structures and by whom. For a more thorough application of rational choice theory, see Douglass C. North et al., *Violence and Social Order: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*, Cambridge 2009.

⁵² The observations of Fred E. Katz are representative of the sociological tradition behind this approach. Katz uses the example of Otto Ohlendorf and Adolf Eichmann to show that the “bureaucrats” in the Nazi state had a considerable degree of autonomy; see Katz, “Implementation of the Holocaust,” pp. 522ff.; see also the comprehensive account by Fred E. Katz, *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil: A Report on the Beguilings of Evil*, Albany 1993. Katz’s deliberations on autonomy in Nazi organizations followed on from his earlier empirical study of American hospitals; see Fred E. Katz, *Autonomy and Organization*, New York 1968. While Katz focuses on the autonomy of programming positions in organizations, my examination of Police Battalion 101 revolves more around the autonomy of programmed positions at the technical core of an organization.

⁵³ One exception is the economics-influenced rational choice school of thought within sociology, which builds on the premise of methodological individualism to explore personal interests and thus personal motives. See the foundational work by James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Cambridge 1990; a quick introduction can be found in Thomas Voss, Martin Abraham, “Rational Choice Theory in Sociology: A Survey,” in: Arnaud Sales, Stella R. Quah (eds), *The International Handbook of Sociology*, London, Thousand Oaks 2000, pp. 50-83. To the best of my knowledge, however, this theoretical approach has not been used to clarify the motive question as it relates to the Holocaust.

⁵⁴ See the rather brief comments by Theodor W. Adorno, “Erziehung nach Auschwitz,” in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 92-109, and Norbert Elias, “Zivilisation und Gewalt. Über das Staatsmonopol der körperlichen Gewalt und seine Durchbrechungen,” in: Joachim Matthes (ed.), *Lebenswelt und soziale Probleme. Verhandlungen des 20. deutschen Soziologentages in Bremen 1980*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 1981, pp. 98-122. Chalk/Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, p. 29, compare different genocides with one another; Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*, New York 1979, looks at national differences in occupied Europe. Regarding the trend toward establishing typologies of genocides, see especially Hans Vest, *Genozid durch organisatorische Machtapparate. An der Grenze von individueller und kollektiver Verantwortlichkeit*, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 34ff.

⁵⁵ This issue – as some systems theorists may complain – shifts the focus sharply to the actions of individual people, which may result in formulations that are more typical of an approach based on actor theory. I have decided to take this risk (not least on account of similar formulation techniques found in Niklas Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation*, Berlin 1964), but I want to systematically show how the (ascribed) actions of a person can only be understood in an organizational context, i.e., in connection with the organization as a system reference.

⁵⁶ For an example of the implementation of this principle, see the systems theoretical analysis of war by Barbara Kuchler, who – in keeping with the tradition of systems theory – mentions absolutely no names, dates, or specific wars. See Barbara Kuchler, *Kriege. Eine Gesellschaftstheorie gewaltsamer Konflikte*, Frankfurt am Main, New York 2013.

⁵⁷ I go even further than Browning and Goldhagen by not anonymizing people as they do. As public officers, police are not subject to the anonymization rules of the state archives of the city of Hamburg. The lack of anonymization should make it possible to search for these specific people in other archives and identify the private estates of the battalion members. Connections can easily be made to the works of Browning and Goldhagen because they used abbreviations for the first and last names of the battalion members.

⁵⁸ Regarding the relationship between moral and legal responsibility, see Giorgio Agamben, *Was von Auschwitz bleibt. Das Archiv und der Zeuge*, Frankfurt am Main 2003, pp. 20f. Agamben emphasizes that “the assumption of moral responsibility has value only if one is ready to assume the relevant legal consequences.”

⁵⁹ See Raul Hilberg, *Die Quellen des Holocaust. Entschlüsseln und interpretieren*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, for an explanation of this approach. The problem can be seen in the fact that the titles of books about police participation in the Holocaust (see, for example, Harald Welzer, *Täter. Wie*

aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden, Frankfurt am Main 2005) are nearly identical to the titles of autobiographical accounts of murder investigators in the post-war era (see, for example, Josef Wilfling, *Abgründe. Wenn aus Menschen Mörder werden*, Munich 2010).

⁶⁰ Regarding this problem, see Jan Philipp Reemtsma, *Die Gewalt spricht nicht. Drei Reden*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 89ff.

⁶¹ Regarding this position, cf. Jürgen Müller-Hohagen, *Verleugnet, verdrängt, verschwiegen. Die seelischen Auswirkungen der Nazizeit*, Munich 1988, p. 29; Yehuda Bauer, "Is the Holocaust Explicable?" in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5 (1990), pp. 145-156, here: pp. 145ff.; or Harald Welzer, "Härte und Rollendistanz. Zur Sozialpsychologie des Verwaltungsselbstmordes," in: *Leviathan* 21 (1993), pp. 358-373, here: p. 358. The best commentary on the postulate that explanatory attempts would "ruin the unique and unsayable character of Auschwitz" comes from Agamben, who asks "why confer on extermination the prestige of the mystical?" See Agamben, *Was von Auschwitz bleibt*, p. 28.

⁶² According to Michael Neumann, for example, "Schwierigkeiten der Soziologie mit der Gewaltanalyse," in: *Mittelweg* 36 4 (1995), pp. 65-68, here: p. 67. See also Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 69, with his statement that violence is fundamentally "senseless."

⁶³ Regarding this, see Birgitta Nedelmann, "Gewaltsoziologie am Scheideweg. Die Auseinandersetzung in der gegenwärtigen und Wege der künftigen Gewaltforschung," in: Trutz von Trotha (ed.), *Soziologie der Gewalt. Sonderheft der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Opladen 1997, pp. 59-85, here: pp. 78f., who suggests reconstructing the "reciprocal curtains of meaning" relating to violent interactions.

⁶⁴ See the debate from the mid-1980s between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer regarding the historicization of the Holocaust: Martin Broszat, "Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus," in: *Merkur* 39 (1985), pp. 373-385, Saul Friedländer, "Some Reflections on the Historicisation of National Socialism," in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 16 (1987), pp. 310-324, as well as their correspondence in Martin Broszat, Saul Friedländer, "Um die 'Historisierung im Nationalsozialismus.' Ein Briefwechsel," in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 36 (1988), pp. 339-372. See also Ian Kershaw, "'Normality' and Genocide," in: Thomas Childers, Jane Caplan (eds), *Reevaluating the Third Reich*, New York, London 1993, pp. 20-41. The controversy is recapitulated in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2007. The debate prompted Saul Friedländer to call for an integrated Holocaust historiography which would link the decisions of Nazi organizations, the support and resistance of the population in the German Reich, and the perceptions and reactions of the Jewish population.

⁶⁵ "The theory of action," Sofsky argues (*Traktat über die Gewalt*, p. 68), "misappropriates the situation of the subjugated." He says it is "deaf and blind to the torment of the victims." Regarding both the analytical and normative character of Sofsky's centering of violence, see Trotha, "Zur Soziologie der Gewalt," p. 39; regarding the dangers of "victimism," see Michel Wieviorka, *Die Gewalt*, Hamburg 2006, pp. 103ff.

⁶⁶ To understand the processes in the extermination camps, we must look primarily to the few hundred prisoners who were forcibly recruited over the course of months to carry out activities

associated with the extermination program. See, for example, the account by Thomas Toivi Blatt, who makes a significant contribution to the analysis of the Sobibór extermination camp; Thomas Toivi Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival*, Evanston 1997.

⁶⁷ Sources from Jewish victims do exist, not only in the form of post-war accounts from the few survivors, but also in the form of increasingly well-researched contemporary accounts by persecuted Jews (for an overview, see Henry Greenspan, “Survivors’ Account,” in: Peter Hayes, John K. Roth [eds], *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, Oxford, New York 2010, pp. 414-427, and Amos Goldberg, “Jews’ Diaries and Chronicles,” in: Hayes/Roth [eds], *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, pp. 397-413). I have used these sources where available (see the notes on the empirical basis of this work in the appendix). Of particular interest are the diary entries, letters, and reports from Jews in the Generalgouvernement collected by Klaus-Peter Friedrich – especially in contrast to the official sources of the German occupying authorities; see Klaus-Peter Friedrich (ed.), *Polen, September 1939-Juli 1941*, Munich 2011, and Klaus-Peter Friedrich (ed.), *Polen: Generalgouvernement August 1941-1945*, Munich 2014. Regarding the impressive reports of Emanuel Ringelblum from the Warsaw Ghetto, see the detailed work by Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*, Bloomington 2007.

⁶⁸ The classic is, of course, Victor Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Berlin 1947; but see also the thorough overviews by Karl Heinz Brackmann, Renate Birkenhauer, *NS-Deutsch. Selbstverständliche Begriffe und Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Straelen 1988, or Iris Forster, *Euphemistische Sprache im Nationalsozialismus*, Bremen 2009. For a general overview of the role of language in genocides, see Herbert Hirsch, Roger W. Smith, “The Language of Extermination in Genocide,” in: Israel W. Charny (ed.), *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, London 1988, pp. 386-404.

⁶⁹ While the spelling of “Aktion T4” was standardized based on the name of the headquarters of the central office at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin, the Nazi killing program in the Generalgouvernement was referred to as both “Aktion Reinhard” and “Aktion Reinhardt.” Regarding this – and with references to the discussion in the research literature – see Mommsen, *Das NS-Regime und die Auslöschung des Judentums in Europa*, pp. 160f. In this book I use “Aktion Reinhard,” the spelling that was used in secret wireless messages in the Generalgouvernement. But even in the wireless messages intercepted and decrypted by the British, different spellings were used for the campaign; see Stephen Tyas, “Der britische Nachrichtendienst: Entschlüsselte Funkmeldung aus dem Generalgouvernement,” in: Bogdan Musial (ed.), *“Aktion Reinhardt.” Der Völkermord an den Juden im Generalgouvernement 1941-1944*, Osnabrück 2004, pp. 431-447, here: pp. 439ff. The fact that different spellings could persist within the Nazi administration over the course of years is evidence that there was no primary written order for the campaign, and the lack of mass media coverage meant that no standardized spelling was ever established.

⁷⁰ See Horst Dieter Schlosser, *Sprache unterm Hakenkreuz*, Cologne 2013, p. 233. The concept of half, quarter, and one-eighth Jews shows how ridiculous this Nazi arithmetic was. If the Nazis defined people as half Jews, quarter Jews, or one-eighth Jews, were these people simultaneously half Germans, three-quarters Germans, or seven-eighths Germans? (see Doris L. Bergen, “Controversies about the Holocaust: Goldhagen, Arendt, and the Historians’ Conflict,” in: Hartmut Lehmann [ed.], *Historikerkontroversen*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 141-174, here: p. 161).

⁷¹ See Hazel Rosenstrauch, *Aus Nachbarn wurden Juden. Ausgrenzung und Selbstbehauptung 1933-1942*, Berlin 1988, pp. 11f.; see also Ulrich Beck, "Wie aus Nachbarn Juden werden. Zur politischen Konstruktion des Fremden in der reflexiven Moderne," in: Max Miller, Hans-Georg Soeffner (eds), *Modernität und Barbarei. Soziologische Zeitdiagnose am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 318-343, here: pp. 318f.

⁷² Statements made after 1945 reveal that this schema of a supposed difference between one's national identity as a German and one's confession of the Jewish faith (or the faith of one's parents or grandparents) had become very deeply rooted. To provide just a few examples: The (presumably Christian) president of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education informed the long-standing chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, that Bubis's homeland was actually Israel (cf. Angelika Königseder, "Zur Chronologie des Rechtsextremismus. Daten und Zahlen 1946-1993," in: Wolfgang Benz [ed.], *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland. Voraussetzungen, Zusammenhänge, Wirkungen*, Frankfurt am Main 1994, pp. 246-317, here: pp. 307f.). A similar misstep was taken by Petra Roth, mayor of Frankfurt at the time, when she expressed hopes for peace in "Bubis's country"; the unintentional antisemitism of her comment was highlighted by Bubis's response that he had no idea "[the German state of] Hesse was at war" (cf. Michael Klundt, *Geschichtspolitik. Die Kontroversen um Goldhagen, die Wehrmachtsausstellung und das "Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus"*, Cologne 2000, pp. 29f.). Ignatz Bubis has also recounted the story of a reception where the German and Israeli presidents had given speeches, after which a high-ranking German official approached him and said, "Your president is a wonderful speaker." Bubis replied, "Yes, Mr. Herzog [president of the Federal Republic of Germany at the time] always gives very good speeches." At which point the official said, "No, no, no, I meant *your* president!" (Michael Blumenthal, "Das war meine Rettung," in: *Die Zeit* from October 21, 2010, p. 70).

⁷³ The research for this book was carried out largely in the context of three multi-semester research training projects at Bielefeld University. I am grateful to my students for their productive cooperation while working in various archives and for their sometimes heated debates. I am aware that high-level theoretical discussions like those in Bielefeld cannot be taken for granted, particularly in the age of "mass universities." The research training projects resulted in a number of insightful detailed studies. Some of them will appear in the collection by Alexander Gruber, Stefan Kühl (eds), *Soziologische Analysen des Holocaust. Jenseits der Debatte über "ganz normale Männer" und "ganz normale Deutsche"*, Wiesbaden 2015. Other works from the training research projects are available on my website at Bielefeld University as part of the *Working Paper zur Soziologie des Holocaust* series. When I use the term "we" in describing my empirical approach, I am referring to this cooperative work in the archives. Earlier versions of this text were reviewed by a number of my colleagues in the fields of sociology, history, and social psychology. I would like to thank all of them for their extensive comments on the earlier versions, and especially for encouraging me to see this project through to the end despite all obstacles.