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Professional career paths and the labor market for sociologists

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Seismo

Content

Editorial - Professional career paths and the labor market for sociologists

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Introduction

Sociology as a discipline is not linked to a well-defined or even state-controlled profession as it is the case, for example, for law, school teaching, or medicine. Instead, BA/MA and PhD programs in sociology equip sociologists with scientific skills that are based on theory and methods, but do not specifically focus on particular labor market related skills or expectations. Also, sociologists work in a broad range of economic branches, occupational positions, and professions. As such, there is no typical sociological labor market or profession, which may lead to a "labor market confusion" of students who wonder where they will be working in their professional future. The labor market seems to be a puzzle to students, bringing along uncertainty for their future careers, but also causing hesitation on the side of advisors and teachers, what to tell students about their possible career paths. In many cases, employees of job centers also do not have a precise idea, what sociologists do after graduation and which principles, structures and positions are important in their labor market. Occupational guidance by state infrastructures, therefore, is weak and does not seem to be based on sociological knowledge about sociologists' labor market, although some sociological research studying the fields sociologists work in does exist.[1]

This bulletin adds to this literature by presenting contributions that explore the different possible career paths and the spread of sociologists' professional positions, and bring to the fore how sociology as discipline and its students adopt to different requirements of labor related dynamics in long-established fields, but also in upcoming new branches.[2] This way, this bulletin aims to stimulate the self-observation, the self-evaluation and the self-reflexivity of sociology as a discipline, by making sociologists more aware of their impact and success in the academia (which is one job market) and, more importantly, outside the academia (because a big share of sociologists is working in enterprises, administrations, NGOs, etc., and only a minority is employed in universities or universities of applied sciences). Also, graduates in sociology tend to "disappear" as sociologists some years after they have entered the non-academic labor market. What are the career paths that can be observed when following sociologists in the labor market? Paradoxically, sociology is discussed as a "public sociology" (Burawoy 2005), but sociologists are not truly a publicly visible professional category.

Studying sociologists' labor markets cannot be a naïve project. Contributions also discuss struc-

1 See Lyson/Squires (1983), Kim et al. (1998), Misra et al. (1999), Abbott (2001) and Headworth/Freese (2016) for the higher education system; Straus (1991) for market research; von Alemann (2002) and Blättel-Mink/Katz (eds.)(2004) for counseling; for the structure of the German labor market see the contributions in Stockmann et al. (eds.)(2002), Späte (ed.)(2016), Obermeier/Dürkop-Henseling (eds.)(2018) and Diaz-Bone et al. (2004); for social scientists more generally see the contributions in Breger et al. (eds.)(2016).

2 This bulletin was initiated by the workshop on "The labor market of sociologists – structures, trends, perspectives" at the 2019 congress of the Swiss Sociological Association (10-12 September 2019, University of Neuchâtel). The contributions of Diaz-Bone, Jann, and Rosenstein and Widmer were presented and discussed at this workshop.

tural problems (as the question of how to enter the labor market), the inadequacy of conventional vocational classifications (as used by national statistical offices), or the adequacy of qualification on the one side and working conditions (such as salary, position, richness of job reality, etc.) on the other side.

Contributions

The articles in this bulletin mainly focus on the labor market for sociologists in Switzerland, but some also offer a comparison with the German situation. The first contribution of *Rainer Diaz-Bone* (Lucerne) analyses how the situation of Swiss graduates (one year after graduation) has developed from 2003 to 2017. The process of entering the labor market and first occupational positions are studied, thereby comparing sociologists with other social scientists and with the totality of all students. The general result is that sociologists nowadays are established as a "normal" disciplinary group in the labor market. Furthermore, the percentage of sociologists who pursue a PhD is above-average, which points to a high orientation of sociology graduates towards a scientific career. *Ben Jann* (Bern) analyses the occupational situation of Swiss sociology graduates at the Master's level five years after graduation, covering graduation cohorts from 2002 to 2012. Main findings are that sociology graduates do very well on the labor market, but also that the level to which sociology graduates consider their jobs adequate to their qualification is somewhat lower than for other social-science disciplines. The situation of sociology graduates from the University of Geneva in the period of 2005 to 2010 is studied by *Emilie Rosenstein and Eric Widmer* (Geneva).[3] Again, one main result is that the majority of graduates in sociology has found good and satisfying positions. *Birgit Blättel-Mink* (Frankfurt) presents the perspective on the German situation. As president of the German Sociological Association she also points to the precarious situation of the younger graduates in the university system and the initiatives of the German Sociological Association – such as the activities of its committee on "sociology as profession".

Outlook

There is need for sociological research on sociologists' job market. Monitoring of the labor market for sociologists could be the first basis to track trends. However, systematic studies to identify structures and mechanisms of the labor market for sociologists are still rare.[4] We hope that this Bulletin will spark interest in the topic and motivate further research on sociologists' career paths and the labor market for sociologists.

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3 For a first systematic analysis of the sociology graduates from the University of Geneva see also Ruey et al. (2016).

4 Many sociological associations offer a news service about job announcements, as the Swiss Sociological Association does (https://www.sgs-sss.ch/jobs/). This service can be regarded as a data base for the empirical analysis of job characteristics. But one has to go some steps further. The American Sociological Association has its own series of short reports and other resources on the labor market (https://www.asanet.org/career-center/careers-sociology).

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Entering the job market for Swiss sociologists

Rainer Diaz-Bone (University of Lucerne)

Introduction

In this article, the labor market for Swiss graduates in sociology is analyzed for the years 2003 to 2017. The focus is on the situation of graduates one year after graduation. For many academic disciplines no clearly defined labor market does exist. The concept of labor market is a metaphor, which is used by economists to study employment and wages. Like any notion of "market" it presupposes some shared common knowledge about abilities and skills of academics and common knowledge about existing job opportunities. In the cases of teachers, lawyers and medicals, the state is governing the standards for professional higher education and for access to the majority of positions. For social sciences in general and for sociology in particular no such coordination and governance does exist.

How do graduates in sociology manage to enter the labor market? What is their situation one year after graduation when compared to all graduates and when compared to graduates in social sciences more generally? And which changes can be tracked in the course of the last 15 years? By using data from the Swiss national statistical institute, these questions will be answered. The data from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) is presented and the strategy of analysis is introduced (section 2). Then, the development of the number of graduates is described (section 3). Then, the time needed to enter the first position, employment status and kind of position is studied (section 4). Afterwards, the more fundamental problem with labor market classifications is discussed, when trying to identify sociologists' professions (section 5). Finally, a conclusion is offered and research gaps will be identified (section 6).

Data and strategy of analysis

The survey program "Absolventenstudien Hochschulen" (Graduate studies – higher education system) is run by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) since 1998.[1] The target population is formed by all graduates from Swiss universities, Swiss universities of applied sciences and Swiss universities of teacher education. The whole target population of graduates with diploma, licentiate, BA, MA, teacher's diploma and PhD is surveyed (census). The design is a trend design, every two years a new survey is proceeded one year after graduation onwards.[2] The questionnaire was revised in 2003, therefore, comparability is given for the data sets from 2003 on. Available are eight data sets from 2003 to 2017 for scientific purpose.[3] (The survey mode is an online questionnaire, response rates are 60 %.)[4] The eight data sets from 2003 to 2017 represent data of some less than 300 000 graduates (292 957), therein almost 30 000 social scientists (29 409) and more than 1 500 sociologists (1 595).

Beginning from the early 2000er years on Swiss universities and Swiss universities of applied sciences started BA programs and later on MA programs. (Since 2005 BA and MA grades are included in the FSO data sets, replacing step by step

1 See for more details Bundesamt für Statistik (no date, a).

2 Respondents in 2003 graduated in 2002, respondents in 2005 graduated in 2004 and so on.

3 In fact, the trend design is combined with a panel design (of two waves): a second survey is realized with all participants of the initial survey once five 5 years after graduation.

4 Weights are calculated to correct for unit nonresponse. Reported results in this contribution are weighted.

Table 1 Number of graduates (percentages)

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Sociology								
BA	0.0	0.0	1.6	26.3	39.0	45.8	56.4	51.0
MA	87.9	88.3	90.0	64.8	51.0	42.8	29.4	28.5
PhD	12.1	11.7	8.4	8.9	10.0	11.4	14.2	20.5
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	94	168	188	281	235	215	189	225
Social Sciences								
BA	0.0	4.9	17.9	37.9	47.5	52.6	50.6	50.6
MA	92.3	86.5	74.9	55.8	45.4	41.3	41.9	42.5
PhD	7.7	8.6	7.2	6.3	7.2	6.2	7.5	6.9
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	1 741	2 173	2 906	3 563	4 177	4 669	4 967	5 213
All graduates								
BA	31.1	34.4	44.8	50.0	51.6	53.0	52.0	51.0
MA	58.5	47.8	35.4	31.5	30.8	30.3	30.8	31.1
TeachD	0.0	4.7	9.0	9.9	9.1	9.0	9.8	10.6
PhD	10.4	13.2	10.9	8.7	8.6	7.7	7.4	7.3
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	16 003	20 943	28 432	36 297	40 724	46 208	51 128	53 222

older grades, which were running out in the 2010er years and finally almost completely vanished until 2015. To enhance comparability and to simplify the analysis, for some variables FOS has recoded older grades, therefore, older university diploma and licenciate are recoded as MA and diploma of universities of applied sciences as BA.) The result is that four grades are separated in the analysis: BA, MA, teacher diploma ("TeachD") and PhD.

The data analysis compares these degrees and their development on the eight points in time. In almost all aspects, comparison is made between graduates in (a) sociology, (b) all social sciences and to (c) all graduates.[5] The groups compared are not exclusive; the last ones include the former ones. This way, one can detect if percentages in the group of sociologists resemble the average (bigger groups' percentages) or not.

Number of graduates

First, the figures of graduates leaving the three types of Swiss institutions of higher education are studied. In the last round about 15 years the number of graduates has risen for all disciplines 233 % (from 16 003 up to 53 222), social sciences 199 % (from 1 741 to 5 213) and sociology 139 % (from 94 to 225). Social sciences in general and sociology in particular have stabilized their number of graduates in the last years, but social sciences and sociology

5 The category "social sciences" (as built by the FSO) include the categories: psychology, pedagogy, special education, sociology, social work, human geography, political sciences, media sciences, interdisciplinary/other social sciences).

Table 2 Employment status (percentages)

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Sociology								
Employed	84.3	77.7	91.0	68.5	61.4	59.8	49.4	53.5
Unemployed	9.6	14.0	8.2	9.4	5.7	1.4	3.4	2.7
Else	6.1	8.3	0.9	22.2	32.9	38.8	47.2	43.8
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	94	168	188	281	235	215	189	225
Social Sciences								
Employed	84.3	84.9	74.7	59.8	56.2	54.3	52.5	53.0
Unemployed	8.3	8.5	6.4	5.2	3.2	3.0	3.7	3.6
Else	7.4	6.7	18.9	35.1	40.6	42.7	43.8	43.4
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	1741	2173	2906	3563	4177	4669	4967	5213
All graduates								
Employed	88.4	89.7	77.9	66.5	65.0	63.9	63.9	64.4
Unemployed	6.0	4.4	3.0	2.8	2.0	2.5	2.7	2.7
Else	5.6	5.9	19.1	30.7	33.0	33.7	33.4	32.9
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	16003	20943	28432	36297	40724	46208	51128	53222

have not been able to participate at the overall growth of graduates in Switzerland. Especially the number of sociology graduates has been higher at the end of the last decade than it at present is. In Switzerland, sociology has always had a very small share of graduates in the total of all disciplines, only 0.59 % in 2003 and only 0.42 % in 2017. The small share of social sciences graduates has declined from 5.40 % to 4.32 %.

Concerning BA graduates, table 1 presents that half of the graduates are BA graduates in the last years.[6] The percentages of MA graduates are declining. The percentages of sociology MAs and of social sciences MAs converged towards the average percentages (of the total of all MA graduates).

Table 1 also shows that sociology seems to be different in one main regard. The percentage of PhDs has been higher than the percentages in the bigger groups in 2003, but has risen still then. In 2017 the percentage of PhD graduates in sociology (20.5 %) is almost three times the percentage of the general average of social sciences (6.9 %) and of all students (7.3 %).

Employment status

One year after graduation, the majority of graduates is employed. But interestingly, the employment rates are decreasing since 2003 as table 2 shows. More and more graduates do work one year after graduation, but do something else (as continuing their studies).

Unemployment rates are declining and are lower than the national average in Switzerland

6 The missings of BA graduates in the first years are caused by the late effect of the transformation of traditional diploma into BA diploma.

Table 3 Positions (percentages)[a]

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Sociology								
Trainee	8.5	12.2	12.9	4.8	13.7	12.5	9.6	12.0
Ass./PhDStud	14.0	15.6	13.9	16.1	11.1	18.3	11.3	5.1
Employee	41.4	39.6	49.4	57.6	52.4	44.2	65.8	61.8
Management	29.5	27.6	21.9	18.6	18.4	19.3	11.7	19.2
Self-employed	6.6	5.0	2.0	2.8	4.4	5.8	1.6	2.0
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Social sciences								
Trainee	14.6	16.5	14.0	10.1	9.6	9.8	9.5	10.9
Ass./PhDStud	15.6	14.9	11.3	12.6	12.0	8.6	10.4	8.7
Employee	52.5	50.1	53.8	53.9	57.6	61.8	61.0	61.2
Management	15.0	15.5	19.0	21.4	17.7	17.1	16.0	17.1
Self-employed	2.2	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.2	2.7	3.1	2.1
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
All graduates								
Trainee	10.5	9.9	7.3	6.9	6.8	7.0	6.9	7.5
Ass./PhDStud	17.7	13.4	7.9	8.5	7.7	6.9	7.2	6.4
Employee	47.0	54.0	62.3	63.0	64.6	65.6	65.8	66.5
Management	22.2	19.7	20.1	19.2	17.7	17.3	17.3	16.8
Self-employed	2.6	3.0	2.4	2.5	3.2	3.2	2.9	2.9
Σ	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a) Table 3 represents employed graduates only.

of 3.3 % in 2017.[7] In comparison with the bigger groups of graduates, sociologists' rates of unemployment first have been higher in the 2000s and then have fallen down to less than 3 % in 2017.

More and more graduates are not employed or registered as unemployed one year after graduation. Social scientists in general differ in this aspect from the total of all graduates, their percentages in the "else" category have developed to be more than ten percent higher (and the rate of employed resp. to be more than ten percent lower). The increase of the "else" category between 2003 and 2017 is due to the increase of graduates, who decide to achieve an additional grade on the level of higher education. In 2003 only 2 % to 3 % of the three groups of graduates were adding another study program one year after graduation. Until 2017 more than 30 % of graduates of all disciplines and more than 40 % of graduates in social sciences and in sociology have started another study program after their graduation one year before. (Mainly it is the BA graduates, who rise in number because of the implementation of the Bologna reform, and who approach an MA degree.)[8]

What about the position, the employed graduates hold? Table 3 subdivides the graduates into the

7 See Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft (2018, p. 7).

8 The data sets are not completely comparable in this regard.

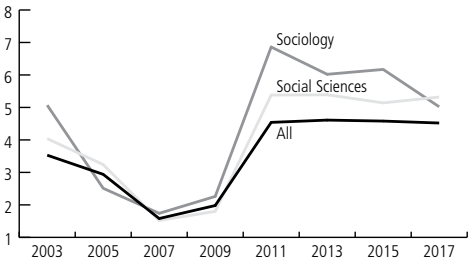
different positions graduates have at the moment of being surveyed. The different categories are: trainee, employed scientific assistant/PhD student, employee (without management function), management (as employee with management function) and self-employed. As one can see, there are no substantial differences between the small group of sociologists and the two much bigger groups they are part of – at least in recent years.

In recent years, more than 60 % of the graduates have started their professional career as employees. Social scientists – and sociologists follow this trend – have (round about 10 % over time) a bigger percentage in the category trainee than the total of graduates. There is a tendency for sociologists to be more often on a position with management elements. The percentage of management positions was substantially higher in 2003 than for other disciplines, but declined. In this regard, sociologists became a "normal" group. The percentage of assistants and PhDs in payed positions has been declining since 2003 for all groups compared. In social sciences and sociology, this decline has been slower than in the total of all graduates. Self-employment is a rare option for Swiss graduates at all.

When being asked if the position is permanent, employed BA graduates in all sciences differ from MA graduates and PhDs. In social sciences and in sociology 70 % (and more) of the BA graduates (at least in the 2010s) have a permanent position, which is below the average percentage of round about 85 % for all BA graduates. For employed MA graduates and PhDs in all disciplines only round about 50 % tend to have a permanent contract in the 2010s.

The working of the labor market – seen from employees – is linked to the duration of job search. Employed graduates were asked about the time needed to enter an adequate position. Figure 1 presents the development of the mean number of months needed. In principle, sociologists have to invest one half up to two months longer than the average of all graduates.

Figure 1 Months needed to enter adequate position (mean)



After 2007 the number of months increased for all graduates for some years. [9] This effect showed sociologists to be a bit more vulnerable to labor market shocks than other graduates.

Classifying sociologists

Asking "in which professions do sociologists work?" points to the problem of existing classifications for professions, which do not adequately grasp the realities and identities of social scientists in general and of sociologists in particular. The survey program "Absolventenstudien Hochschulen" applies the "Schweizer Berufsnomenklatur 2000" (Swiss classification of professions 2000),[10] which has more than 500 categories and can be broken down using the 5 digits classification.[11] Table 4 presents

9 One can assume the financial crisis of 2007-2008 to be one important cause for this.

10 See for more details Bundesamt für Statistik (no date, b).

11 Respondents were asked to name their profession themselves. Because almost no one knows the categories of official classifications of professions, respondents are assigned to categories based on their responses.

the ten biggest categories ranked by percentage of respondents. They gather up to round about 60 % of employed sociology graduates. It is interesting to see that the remaining 40 % of sociology graduates are spread out over 80 categories of this classification (so the remaining categories represent only 0.5 % of the graduates on average).

Table 4 Most answered job categories (2003-2017)

Category	%
"not classifiable"	19.0
Scientific assistant	8.7
Journalist/editor	7.4
Sociologist/political scientist	7.2
Social worker	4.8
Middle management	3.1
Entrepreneurs/directors	2.6
Service occupation	2.5
Administration/civil servant	2.4
Human resource management	2.0
Σ	59.7

Only 7.2 % of sociology graduates in the time period between 2003 and 2017 answer to work as "sociologist". And the category "not classifiable" gathers the biggest percentage of the respondents (because the answers were post-coded and could not be allocated to other categories in the classification). The spread of sociology graduates and the big percentage of not classifiable sociologists demonstrate that this kind of classification is almost unusable to study the labor market for sociologists.

Conclusions and outlook

The number of sociology graduates has consolidated in this decade. In many aspects this group tends to be similar to the bigger groups it is part of – sociology graduates tend to be an average group. In terms of employment sociology graduates are an average group in the social sciences, which are different from other disciplines, because more graduates do not work one year after graduation in the social sciences.

Sociologists today are successful in entering the labor market. Unemployment rates were high fifteen years ago, have declined strongly and are low today. But sociologists tend to need a little longer to find an adequate position than other graduates. Interestingly, sociology graduates tend to have a stronger orientation towards sciences, their proportion of PhDs is round about 10 % above the average percentage.

All in all, Swiss sociology graduates became a "normal" and established professional group on the labor market in many regards. The advantage of the used data sets "Absolventenstudien Hochschulen" is to be capable to track sociology graduates.[12] However, as the analysis of the classification of professions demonstrates, there is some more demand for the analysis, which professions sociology graduates enter and what their career paths are. Sociology graduates "disappear" in labor markets, because very soon they tend to identify with professional categories, which do not signal their original discipline. Also, conventional classifications of professions do not seem to be well-suited for academic professions and science-based jobs outside the higher education system.[13]

Finally, to identify the different strategies to find an open job position would enhance the un-

12 Unfortunately, the used data sets do not offer variables about the main job tasks, which could be combined with economic sector and job position to present a clearer picture of the profession. See for this kind of analysis applied to German sociology graduates Diaz-Bone, Glöckner and Küffer (2004).

13 See for sociological perspectives on the universities as labor market for sociologists Abbott (2001) and Bourdieu (1984).

derstanding how the labor market for sociologists works. French research has shown, that there is a plurality of ways to enter jobs (Eymard-Duvernay/Marchal 1997). Therefore, the concept of a "market" should not be wrongly reified in the sense of a simple and transparent mechanism for graduates.

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Early-career labor market situation of Swiss sociology graduates at the Master's level

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Introduction

The goal of this contribution is to give a brief statistical overview of the labor market situation of graduates holding a Master's degree in sociology from one of the Swiss universities. Due to data constraints, the focus is on early careers, that is, to be precise, on the situation five years after graduation. Based on data from the graduate surveys by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), sociology graduates will be compared to university graduates from related disciplines with respect to labor market participation, occupational position and other job characteristics, earnings, job adequacy, and achievement of occupational aspirations. Descriptive results show that, overall, sociology graduates do very well, with high employment rates and good positions in terms of leadership responsibly. However, levels of job adequacy and the realization of occupational aspirations are somewhat lower than in the other disciplines, especially compared to economics and psychology.

Data and methods

The results below are based on the surveys of higher education graduates (EHA) by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) that are conducted every other year as full population censuses of higher education graduates (i.e., students who acquired a Bachelor's degree, diploma, licentiate, Master's degree, or PhD in the given year) from cantonal universities, federal institutes of technology, universities of applied sciences, and universities of teacher education.[1] The analysis will only include graduates at the Master's level (including licentiate and diploma, which were still common in earlier waves of the survey). Furthermore, the analysis will only focus on graduates from cantonal universities and federal institutes of technology.

The EHA is designed as a panel survey with a first data collection one year after graduation and a follow-up survey five years after graduation. The analysis below will use the data from the follow-up survey, that is, it describes the labor market situation of the graduates five years after graduation. Despite being designed as a full census, the EHA is incomplete in the sense that only a fraction of the covered population actually participates in the survey; the response rates are about 60 % for the first-wave survey and about 65 % (of respondents who participated in the first survey) for the second-wave survey. To compensate for non-response, all calculations below employ the survey weights provided by the FSO. Furthermore, because the yearly number of sociology graduates is small, data from several cohorts will be pooled. In particular, the analysis will include graduates from 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012 (that is, the analysis will be based on the second-wave surveys from 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017).[2] As mentioned, the aim is to compare sociology graduates to graduates from related disciplines.

1 For details on methods and design of the EHA see http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/education-science/surveys/ashs.html.

2 Since the survey weights provided by the FSO are scaled as extrapolation factors (i.e., they sum up to the population size), simple pooling of the data without applying any adjustment to the weights is feasible. The "study population" under investigation thus is the joint population of all graduates from 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012.

Table 1 Sample sizes and distribution of disciplines

Discipline	N	Proportion (weighted)						
		2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	Total
Sociology	364	3.7	5.9	5.2	5.2	4.5	3.3	4.7
Other social sciences	2637	35.3	36.2	35.2	43.5	36.7	40.3	38.1
Psychology	1997	28.4	26.8	29.6	20.0	25.0	24.4	25.5
Economics	498	7.7	9.1	6.9	7.8	7.0	9.8	8.0
History and cultural science	1845	24.8	22.0	23.1	23.5	26.8	22.3	23.7
Total	7341	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sociology has many facets and it thus makes sense to use multiple comparison groups. In the classification of disciplines by the FSO, sociology is categorized under "social sciences", together with disciplines such as psychology, political science, educational science, and communication and media. Psychology is by far the largest discipline in this group and might not be considered a typical social science discipline due to its close relation to medical science. Therefore, psychology will be treated as a separate category. A further comparison group will be economics (but not business) because, depending on specialization, the skills of sociologists and economists can be similar. Finally, again depending on specialization, sociologists can be similar to graduates from history and cultural sciences, which will serve as yet another comparison group. To summarize, the following groups will be compared:

- sociology (FSO code 10405)
- other social sciences: political science, educational science, communication and media, special pedagogy, human geography, social work, multidisciplinary/other (FSO codes 10402-10404, 10406-10410)
- psychology (FSO code 10401)
- economics (FSO code 20001)
- history and cultural sciences: history, ethnology/social anthropology, art history, philosophy, archeology, theatre and film studies, musicology, multidisciplinary/other (FSO codes 10301-10308)

Table 1 shows the sample sizes for the different groups as well as their estimated proportion in the population (by cohort and in total across all cohorts). No clear trend can be observed in terms of the sizes of the different groups across time. The proportion of sociologists fluctuates between 3.3 and 5.9 %; pooled across all cohorts the proportion amounts to 4.7 %.

The results below will report descriptive statistics such as proportions and averages by comparison groups for various characteristics. All tables will also include approximate p-values from tests of sociology against each other group. In addition to the overall results, each table will also contain a break-down by gender, including p-values of tests for gender differences.[3]

3 The p-values will be based on logistic regressions in case of proportions. They will not be adjusted for multiple testing and no finite-population correction will be applied. Because the graduate surveys are censuses, the use of p-values is debatable. In this contribution, the p-values merely serve as a rough indication for whether a difference is "systematic" or whether it might as well just be a result of chance. For example, in a test of sociology against another discipline, the p-value indicates how likely an absolute difference of at least the observed size is, if the observations are assumed to be independent

Results

Labor market participation

In Table 2 we see that a vast majority of about 93 % of sociologists has been gainfully employed at the time of the interview (i.e. five years after graduation). The value is comparable to the other disciplines, with the exception of economists, who were gainfully employed in almost 97 % of cases. Less than 3 % of sociologists have been unemployed, and 4.5 % were not participating in the labor market.[4] These values are again roughly comparable to the other disciplines, although economists had a significantly higher proportion of graduates who were gainfully employed. In terms of gender differences, we see that labor market participation tends to be slightly lower for women, but the differences are mostly not statistically significant (at least not in separate test within disciplines; across all disciplines

Table 2 Labor market status

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Gainfully employed					
– Sociology	92.6		93.9	91.9	0.504
– Other social sciences	93.1	0.762	92.7	93.3	0.624
– Psychology	93.9	0.392	95.1	93.6	0.298
– Economics	96.7	0.013	97.5	94.9	0.146
– History and cultural science	91.1	0.352	93.1	89.7	0.020
Unemployed/looking for a job					
– Sociology	2.8		3.9	2.2	0.400
– Other social sciences	2.9	0.915	3.3	2.7	0.492
– Psychology	1.8	0.223	1.2	1.9	0.335
– Economics	1.3	0.110	1.4	1.1	0.787
– History and cultural science	2.3	0.608	1.7	2.8	0.148
Not in the labor force					
– Sociology	4.5		2.2	5.9	0.125
– Other social sciences	4.0	0.621	4.0	4.0	0.984
– Psychology	4.3	0.862	3.7	4.5	0.550
– Economics	2.1	0.060	1.1	4.0	0.055
– History and cultural science	6.6	0.153	5.2	7.5	0.071

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 7 338

realizations of a random process in which there is no difference between the disciplines. Likewise, the p-value for a gender difference quantifies the probability of a gender gap that is at least as large as observed, assuming the data to be generated by an unsystematic random process.

4 Note that the numbers displayed in Table 2 are not unemployment rates. For unemployment rates the number of unemployed graduates has to divided by the number of graduates participating in the labor market (i.e. the unemployed plus the gainfully employed), not the total number of graduates.

Table 3 Economic sectors

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Public sector					
– Sociology	52.6		54.5	51.4	0.597
– Other social sciences	50.0	0.394	48.9	50.7	0.417
– Psychology	63.2	0.000	56.6	64.6	0.007
– Economics	41.5	0.002	40.5	43.5	0.553
– History and cultural science	61.7	0.002	60.6	62.6	0.426
Nongovernmental organization (NGO)					
– Sociology	15.4		12.4	17.2	0.255
– Other social sciences	16.9	0.515	14.0	18.5	0.010
– Psychology	11.7	0.066	12.1	11.6	0.820
– Economics	5.9	0.000	5.4	6.9	0.511
– History and cultural science	14.7	0.730	11.9	16.6	0.010
For-profit sector					
– Sociology	32.0		33.1	31.4	0.745
– Other social sciences	33.1	0.700	37.1	30.8	0.003
– Psychology	25.1	0.009	31.3	23.7	0.004
– Economics	52.7	0.000	54.1	49.5	0.372
– History and cultural science	23.6	0.001	27.5	20.8	0.002

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 6 766

there is a gender gap in labor market participation of 1.2 percentage points, p = 0.026).

The remaining analyses will focus on graduates who were gainfully employed at the time of the interview. That is, graduates who were unemployed or who were not participating in the labor will be excluded from the remaining analyses.

Economic sectors and types of occupations

In which economic sectors and in what types of occupations do sociologists work? Table 3 displays a breakdown into public sector, NGOs, and for-profit sector. A proportion of 53 % of sociologists were working in the public sector, 15 % were working for an NGO, and 32 % were working in the private sector. Economists have quite a different profile with a much higher share in the private sector and clearly lower values in the public sector and the NGO sector. Furthermore, psychologists and graduates in history and cultural science worked more often in the public sector and less often in the private sector than sociologists. Some gender differences are that women tended to work for an NGO more often than men did and were less often employed in the private sector. An exception is psychology where the gender trade-off seems to be between public sector and private sector. In general, gender differences are less pronounced in sociology and in economics than in the other disciplines.

In Table 4, the distribution across major occupational groups according to the ISCO classification (International Standard Classification of

Table 4 Types of occupations

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Managers (ISCO major group 1)					
– Sociology	16.9		19.4	15.5	0.371
– Other social sciences	19.9	0.207	20.0	19.9	0.954
– Psychology	7.5	0.000	10.9	6.7	0.015
– Economics	15.3	0.569	14.1	18.1	0.302
– History and cultural science	14.5	0.282	15.5	13.9	0.387
Professionals (ISCO major group 2)					
– Sociology	63.9		68.0	61.5	0.253
– Other social sciences	63.2	0.813	61.1	64.3	0.130
– Psychology	81.7	0.000	80.7	81.9	0.621
– Economics	64.5	0.856	65.2	63.0	0.660
– History and cultural science	70.2	0.028	71.3	69.4	0.446
Technicians and associate professionals (ISCO major group 3)					
– Sociology	12.9		8.3	15.5	0.086
– Other social sciences	11.6	0.497	12.3	11.1	0.412
– Psychology	6.6	0.000	4.9	7.0	0.165
– Economics	17.0	0.129	17.6	15.6	0.611
– History and cultural science	8.2	0.008	6.7	9.2	0.069
Other occupations					
– Sociology	6.3		4.2	7.5	0.301
– Other social sciences	5.4	0.511	6.7	4.7	0.058
– Psychology	4.1	0.111	3.5	4.3	0.551
– Economics	3.2	0.050	3.1	3.3	0.883
– History and cultural science	7.1	0.650	6.6	7.5	0.540

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 6 532

Occupations) is shown. Occupational groups that typically do not require an academic qualification have been merged into a single category ("other occupations"). Most sociologist were working in ISCO group 2 (professionals; 64 %), which was to be expected given their qualification. Another 17 % worked as managers (group 1) and 13 % percent worked in group 3 (technicians and associate professionals). Only a small minority of 6 % worked in non-academic occupational groups. This distribution is very well aligned with the distribution observed for "other social sciences". The most notable difference to the remaining disciplines is that psychologists were concentrated much more in group 2. No clear pattern can be observed with respect to gender differences.

Part-time and temporary work

As discussed above, a large majority of sociology graduates has been active on the labor market. However, relevant questions are also how much they worked and how secure their jobs were. Ta-

ble 5 therefore displays the proportion of part-time work and the proportion of graduates who had an employment contract with a fixed duration. About 55 % of sociologists worked part-time (workload of less than 90 %), although in most cases with a workload of 50 % or more (the proportion of part-time employment with a workload of less than 50 % was only 7.5 %). This means that only about 45 % of gainfully employed sociologists had a full-time job. Compared to the other disciplines, this is about an average value. Economists and other social scientists worked more often fulltime, psychologists and graduates from history and cultural science less often. As expected due to persisting gender roles, there is a marked gender difference in the sense that part-time work was much more prevalent among women than among men. Sociology, however, is a notable exception in this regard: in contrast to the other disciplines, there was almost no gender difference in the proportion of part-time work among sociologists.

About one quarter of sociology graduates had a temporary contract at the time of the interview. This appears to be slightly more than for most of the other disciplines, although the differences are not very pronounced.

Leadership responsibility

Another relevant characteristic to evaluate the occupational success of sociologists is the level of responsibility that comes along with the jobs they do. Table 6 displays the proportion of graduates

Table 5 Part-time and temporary work

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Works 90 % or less (N = 6825)					
– Sociology	54.4		52.7	55.5	0.626
– Other social sciences	40.8	0.000	30.2	46.7	0.000
– Psychology	64.7	0.000	48.3	68.3	0.000
– Economics	23.8	0.000	20.5	30.9	0.017
– History and cultural science	61.3	0.020	53.3	67.0	0.000
Works 50 % or less (N = 6825)					
– Sociology	7.5		5.8	8.5	0.365
– Other social sciences	4.8	0.031	2.4	6.1	0.000
– Psychology	7.9	0.820	3.5	8.8	0.002
– Economics	2.5	0.006	2.7	2.1	0.715
– History and cultural science	10.7	0.071	8.8	12.1	0.041
Has a temporary contract (N = 6831)					
– Sociology	26.3		24.8	27.2	0.639
– Other social sciences	20.9	0.028	23.3	19.6	0.042
– Psychology	23.1	0.220	22.6	23.2	0.801
– Economics	20.4	0.057	18.7	23.9	0.208
– History and cultural science	31.7	0.057	28.8	33.7	0.038

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference

who had managerial responsibility (among all employees; excluding the self-employed) and the proportion of graduates who had budget responsibility. With respect to managerial responsibility (i.e., the proportion of graduates in lower, middle, or upper management), sociologists were in a similar range as economists and graduates from other social sciences, whereas psychologists and graduates from history and cultural sciences had substantially lower rates. Interestingly, however, sociologists outperformed the other disciplines in terms of the proportion of graduates who had budget responsibility.

With respect to managerial responsibility and budget responsibility, we see some gender differences in the sense that the rates are higher for men than for women. This gender-gap, however, is only clearly visible in other social sciences, psychology, and history and cultural science. In sociology, the gap is less pronounced and not significant, and in economics the gap even goes in the other direction (not significant).

Earnings

The relatively high level of leadership responsibility among sociologists does not necessarily translate into high levels of earnings. Table 7 shows median yearly earnings (standardized to a 100 % job) for the different disciplines. Here, sociology, together with history and cultural science, is at the lower end with a value of about 88 thousand Swiss francs. However, the differences to the other social sciences (90 thousand) and psychology (91 thousand) are small. Only economists earned considerably more (98 thousand). In all disciplines, the median earnings of women were lower than the median earnings of men, but in sociology, other social sciences, and psychology, the difference is small and not significant. In economics and in history and cultural science, a substantial gender-gap in earnings of about 5 to 6 thousand Swiss francs per year can be found.

Table 6 Leadership position

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Has (some) managerial responsibility (excluding self-employed) (N = 6575)					
– Sociology	37.9		40.8	36.2	0.421
– Other social sciences	36.8	0.693	42.4	33.6	0.000
– Psychology	21.2	0.000	27.2	19.8	0.004
– Economics	39.8	0.602	38.8	41.9	0.537
– History and cultural science	30.3	0.008	32.9	28.5	0.065
Has budget responsibility (N = 6825)					
– Sociology	23.6		26.0	22.2	0.433
– Other social sciences	18.0	0.015	19.9	17.0	0.079
– Psychology	8.7	0.000	13.3	7.7	0.001
– Economics	11.3	0.000	10.6	12.8	0.482
– History and cultural science	17.1	0.005	20.9	14.4	0.001

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference

Table 7 Standardized yearly earnings (in 1 000 CHF)

	Median	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Sociology	87.8		90.9	90.6	0.211
Other social sciences	90.0	0.085	91.8	90.1	0.354
Psychology	91.0	0.010	92.1	91.6	0.450
Economics	98.0	0.000	99.2	93.1	0.012
History and cultural science	87.9	0.888	92.3	87.1	0.000

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 6 646

Job adequacy

A further relevant dimension for evaluating sociologists' occupational success is the degree to which a job fits the graduate's qualification. Table 8 shows the percentage of gainfully employed graduates who indicated in the survey that a degree in their discipline (or a related discipline) was a formal requirement of their job. The disciplines group into two clusters, with values of 56-59 % for sociology, other social sciences, and history and cultural science one the one hand, and a value of 76 % for psychology and economics on the other hand. That is, more than 40 % of sociologists worked in occupations for which a Master's degree in sociology or in a related field would not have been required. For economists and psychologists, the link between qualification and actual job is much stronger. This is not surprising as study programs in these disciplines place a stronger focus on job-specific expertise than the more generalist programs in disciplines such as sociology or history do.

A similar picture is found when asking graduates about whether they consider their current job as adequate to their qualification with respect to position, tasks, skills, and earnings (Table 9). On all these measures, sociology scored worst among the disciplines. The gap to the other disciplines may not be huge in absolute terms, but is statistically significant in most cases, especially compared to economists and psychologists. This may indicate that sociologists had somewhat more difficulties than graduates from the other disciplines to find jobs that met their expectations due to their qualification.

Table 8 Job requires respondent's degree or a similar degree

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Sociology	55.7		57.4	54.8	0.650
Other social sciences	58.8	0.298	55.8	60.4	0.035
Psychology	76.4	0.000	74.0	76.9	0.278
Economics	76.4	0.000	79.2	70.3	0.044
History and cultural science	55.9	0.944	55.1	56.5	0.571

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 6 786

Table 9 Adequacy of current job to graduates' qualification

	Mean[a]	p-value[b]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[c]
With respect to position (N = 6619)					
– Sociology	3.47		3.63	3.38	0.074
– Other social sciences	3.68	0.006	3.63	3.71	0.148
– Psychology	3.87	0.000	3.79	3.89	0.213
– Economics	3.92	0.000	3.94	3.88	0.591
– History and cultural science	3.61	0.069	3.65	3.58	0.285
With respect to tasks (N = 6616)					
– Sociology	3.45		3.65	3.33	0.017
– Other social sciences	3.61	0.019	3.54	3.66	0.025
– Psychology	3.85	0.000	3.77	3.87	0.171
– Economics	3.81	0.000	3.82	3.79	0.756
– History and cultural science	3.59	0.053	3.64	3.55	0.181
With respect to skills (N = 6752)					
– Sociology	3.38		3.45	3.33	0.381
– Other social sciences	3.50	0.086	3.44	3.53	0.071
– Psychology	3.66	0.000	3.58	3.67	0.188
– Economics	3.70	0.000	3.73	3.65	0.543
– History and cultural science	3.48	0.153	3.51	3.46	0.421
With respect to earnings (N = 6608)					
– Sociology	3.11		3.23	3.04	0.172
– Other social sciences	3.26	0.040	3.23	3.27	0.464
– Psychology	3.19	0.257	3.18	3.20	0.830
– Economics	3.56	0.000	3.58	3.54	0.741
– History and cultural science	3.13	0.814	3.21	3.07	0.031

[a] On a scale from 1 "not at all" to 5 "very much", [b] p-value of test against sociology, [c] p-value of test for gender difference

Overall realization of occupational aspirations

The finding of a relatively low level of job adequacy is partially confirmed by results on the question about whether graduates think that they were successful, so far, in realizing their occupational aspirations (Table 10). About two thirds of sociology graduates indicated that they mostly or fully achieved their aspirations, which is considerably less than among psychologists (74 %) or economists (78 %). Interestingly this comparably low level of self-reported occupational success among sociologists is driven exclusively by women; for men, no systematic difference to the other disciplines can be found. A similar, but somewhat less pronounced observation can be made for history and cultural science.[5]

5 Furthermore, note that in these two disciplines there is also some evidence for a corresponding gender gap in job adequacy (see Table 9).

Table 10 Realization occupational aspirations

	Percent	p-value[a]	By gender		
			Male	Female	p-value[b]
Sociology	66.9		75.3	62.1	0.018
Other social sciences	71.1	0.121	70.5	71.5	0.635
Psychology	74.2	0.007	75.7	73.8	0.505
Economics	78.1	0.001	76.4	81.7	0.215
History and cultural science	67.7	0.783	70.9	65.4	0.024

[a] p-value of test against sociology, [b] p-value of test for gender difference; N = 6 775

Conclusions

Overall, the presented results draw a very positive picture of the labor market situation of sociology graduates. Labor market participation is high, unemployment low, earnings are similar as in related disciplines, and sociologists mostly work in high-qualification occupations such as professionals and managers. The share of sociology graduates with managerial responsibility is relatively high and in terms of budget responsibility, sociologist even outperform the other disciplines. Yet, sociologists perceive the correspondence between their work and their qualification as comparatively low. Related to that, the proportion of sociologists who believe that they could realize their occupational aspirations is lower than in some of the comparison disciplines. The relatively low level of job adequacy may indicate that sociologists, due to lack of a clear sociological job profile in the labor market, have to be more flexible than graduates from other disciplines when it comes to finding a suitable job and launching a successful career.

In this contribution, only average results were reported. A natural starting point for follow-up research – especially once data on additional cohorts of sociology graduates becomes available and the sample size increases – would be to look into heterogeneity of labor market situations by detailed characteristics. This seems particularly relevant for our discipline because there is not just *one* sociology and sociological education can have many faces. Furthermore, the results presented in this contribution were at the level of rather crude statistical categories. More detailed research on typical jobs – or typical job characteristics – of sociology graduates, if such types exist, would be highly welcome.

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Supporting information

A full documentation of the analysis can be found at http://doi.org/10.7892/boris.136183.

Career Paths of Sociologists from the University of Geneva to the Labour Market: Recent Trends and Future Challenges

Emilie Rosenstein & Eric Widmer (University of Geneva)

The Department of Sociology of the University of Geneva (UNIGE) has a long tradition of following up its former students (see Pétroff & Pillonel, 1995; Losa et al. 2008). The ambition of this follow-up has been twofold: on the one hand, identify and understand former students' trajectories in terms of employment and training; on the other hand, question the appropriateness of teachings regarding the requirements and challenges faced by sociologists in an ever-evolving labour market. Recently, we had the opportunity to enlarge our inquiry by including all graduates from the Geneva School of Social Sciences, who obtained their diploma at UNIGE between 2005 and 2015 (see Ruey et. al, 2016). This contribution presents some major findings of this study, pointing out three main characteristics of sociologists' career paths: 1. their level of education; 2. their position on the labour market; and 3. the usefulness of their diploma regarding their employment.

Survey and Sample Description

Between 2005 and 2015, 3 885 students got a diploma in social science at the UNIGE[1]. A team composed of Emilie Rosenstein, Julien Ruey and Rita Gouveia, under the leadership of Eric Widmer, was commissioned in 2015 by the Dean of the Faculty of Social sciences to set up a survey on these cohorts of graduates. As such, our first task was to find back these former students in order to invite them answering our online survey. The administration of the UNIGE had a valid email address only for a small part of them, but the majority (70 %) were contacted via LinkedIn or other social networks. In the end, 3 066 persons received by email a personal invitation to respond to our questionnaire. The data collection was completed during three weeks in November 2015. 1 574 persons answered our survey, which represents a response rate of 51 %. The sample includes 42 % of men and 58 % of women, which correspond exactly to the reference population. No major deviations have been observed between the sample and the population, be it in terms of scientific discipline or regarding the level of the diploma, except an overrepresentation of sociologists who answered the survey (they represent 10 % of the sample against 5 % among the reference population. Besides, it should be noted that 29 % of the respondents were still in training at the moment of the study.

Sociologists' Level of Education

The first trend that characterizes sociologists trajectory refers to their level of education. Indeed, most graduates in social sciences completed a Master or a Licence[2] degree (49 %), a Bachelor degree (39 %) or a PhD (7 %). But the distribution is slightly different among sociologists, especially concerning the PhD level.

Indeed, Table 1 shows that sociologists more often completed a Master or a "Licence" degree (59 %), less often a Bachelor degree (26 %), and what is even more interesting, the share of sociolo-

1 This includes diplomas in Political science, International relation, Geography, Sociology, Socioeconomics and Demography, Communication and Media, Economic history as well as Information systems and services.

2 Delivered before Bologna reform.

Table 1 Level of the highest degree in Social sciences obtained at UNIGE

	Bachelor	Master/Licence	PhD	Other	NA
Entire sample	39 %	49 %	7 %	3 %	1 %
Among sociologists	26 %	59 %	15 %	–	–

gists who completed a PhD is more than twice as high (15 %) compared to PhDs in social science in general. Previous study on UNIGE sociologists did not report such a trend for the PhD. It is a new phenomenon among sociologists, confirmed by some statistics at the national level (see other contributions in this bulletin). This tendency reflects a greater interest for, and also an improved accessibility to doctoral studies in sociology. However, it also invites us to pay specific attention to the inclusion on the labour market of this enlarged population of PhDs in sociology. This calls for further investigation about the specific career paths of sociologists who hold a PhD.

Sociologists and the Labour Market

The employment rate of individuals with a degree in sociology is clearly related to the level of the diploma. At the time of the study, 70 % of the respondents with a Bachelor in social science had a job, 85 % among the ones with a Master or a Licence degree, and 91 % among the PhDs. This lower employment rate among former Bachelor and Master students is related to the fact that some of them were still studying when they answered our survey. Only 10 % of the respondents told us they were looking for an employment.

A large majority of respondents have stable positions on the labour market. 86 % worked as employees, 7 % were interns, 4 % were self-employed and 3 % had a fellowship or a research grant. Most of them (78 %) had a full-time job, 18 % had a part time job between 50 % and 89 %, and only 4 % had a lower part-time job (under 50 %). Besides, 87 % of them had one employment at the moment of the study, 10 % cumulated two positions, and 3 % had three jobs or more. Moreover, 63 % of the respondents mentioned that the level of education required to get their job was a Master or a Licence degree, 17 % needed a Bachelor degree, 6 % needed a PhD, while for 5 % a vocational training was required, and for 8 % no specific training was required. The situation is slightly different among sociologists. 54 % of them use to hold a position requiring a Master or a Licence degree, while 11 % of them had an employment requiring a PhD. Referring to previous section, this shows that the higher proportion of sociologists holding a PhD results in a greater access to specific positions requiring a high level of qualification. This however does not exclude a risk of over-qualification for some of them. Finally, job satisfaction is high among respondents, and it tends to increase over the years. We ask them to report their satisfaction concerning both their working conditions and their salary, at to specific moments: one year after their diploma in social sciences at UNIGE, and at the time of the study. One year after their diploma, the average level of satisfaction was 8.2/11 concerning the working conditions and 7.4/11 concerning the salary; while at the moment of the study, both rates increased, reaching 8.8/11 concerning the working conditions and 7.8/11 concerning the salary.

Let us turn now to the market and job sectors. Table 2 compares the positions on the labour market of the graduates in social science in general

and the ones hold by sociologists in particular. If both populations work mainly in the public sector, sociologists are more often employed by the State (65 %) than other graduates in social sciences (48 %). Conversely, the latter work more often for private companies (33 % against 20 % among sociologists) or for Non-governmental organisations or International organisations (19 % against 15 % among sociologists). Again, these results have to be considered in relation to the level of education of respondents. Indeed, 81 % of the respondents holding a PhD in social science were working for the public sector, while 40 % of those with a Bachelor degree used to work for private companies.

These findings also relate to the job sectors sociologists and social scientists are involved in. Table 2 shows that the sector of Education and research is the first provider of opportunities on the labour market for the graduates in social sciences. Twenty-three percent of the respondents work in this area, and this proportion is even higher among sociologists (34 %). This is particularly interesting if we consider the fact that sociology is rarely taught below the tertiary level (as it is the case for geography for example). As such, this important share of sociologists who work in the sector of Education and research within higher education institutions, which again, contributes to explain the trend for PhDs observed above. The second area respondents work in is the Public administration (17 % among the entire sample and the sociologists in particular); the third one is Human health and social work (for 10 % of the respondents in general and 13 % of the sociologists in particular); the fourth one is the sector of Information and communication (for 9 % of the respondents in general and 5 % of the sociologists in particular); the fifth one is the sector of Financial and insurance activities (for 7 % of the respondents in general and 4 % of the sociologists in particular); finally, the sixth one is the sector of Specialised, scientific and technical activities (hiring 6 % of the graduates in social sciences or in sociology more specifically). All in all, looking at the main areas hiring social scientists,

Table 2 Market and job sectors

		Sample	Sociologists
Market sector	Public	48 %	65 %
	Private	33 %	20 %
	NGO/IO	19 %	15 %
Job sector	Education and research*	23 %	34 %
	Public administration	17 %	17 %
	Human health and social work°	10 %	13 %
	Information and communication	9 %	5 %
	Financial and insurance activities*	7 %	4 %
	Specialised, scientific and technical activities*	6 %	6 %
	Other service activities°	15 %	6 %
	Other sectors (industry, transports, trade, arts, etc.)	14 %	13 %

*Job sectors overrepresented among male respondents

°Job sectors overrepresented among female respondents

esp. the sectors of Education and research, Public administration and Human health and social work, these results contribute to account for the large participation on the public sector of graduates in social sciences, and of sociologists in particular.

Utility of the Diploma Regarding the Labour Market

We also ask respondents to assess the utility of their diploma according to their career path, as well as the skills they acquired during their studies in social science at UNIGE. Figure 1 shows a rather high level of satisfaction among respondents considering the utility of their diploma. It also shows that this level of satisfaction is generally slightly higher for sociologists who are among the most enthusiastic graduates considering the usefulness of their diploma in the exercise of their employment. This difference is particularly strong when looking at the proportion of sociologists who agree with the statement "My diploma is useful for my current job" (77 % of them agreed or totally agreed, against 69 % among the entire sample) as well as the fourth statement "My thesis/dissertation has been useful to my career" (65 % of sociologists agreed or totally agreed, against 54 % among the entire sample). This result is again related to the high proportion of PhDs among sociologists. As a matter of fact, PhD thesis prove to have more importance in the career path of respondents than Master thesis or other types of final dissertations. However, it should be noticed that the answers of both the entire sample and those of sociologists in particular are quite mixed considering the last statement "The skills acquired meet the requirements of the labour market" (only 52 % of the respondents shared this view, 50 % among sociologists). In other words, almost one respondent out of two disagrees and considers that the skills acquired during their studies in social sciences do not meet the expectations of the labour market. As such, for an important part of graduates, there is a disconnection between their studies in social sciences and their experience on the labour market.

This observation also echoes the open comments addressed by some respondents at the end of our survey, insisting on their disappointment and difficulties when entering the labour market. Many of them underlined that they were not prepared to face the labour market and asked the University and the Faculty of social sciences in particular to include in the training schemes soft skills and practical tools, like project management for example, in order to soften the transition towards the labour market. However, other comments emphasised that our survey was too much focused on employment, recalling that studying at the university is also a matter of personal development, and that the very mission of social sciences is to enable students to develop critical thinking. All in all, our study shows that the diplomas in social sciences acquired at UNIGE are generally perceived as useful in the career path or respondents, especially among sociologists. It also invites us to pay more attention to graduates' transition towards the labour market.

Figure 2 shows that sociologists are strongly positive regarding the skills acquired during their studies in social sciences at UNIGE. Even if the answers are quite similar between the overall sample and the sociologists in particular, the latter display a higher degree of satisfaction, especially concerning the three following skills: the capacity to define projects and carry them out autonomously (91 % of sociologists agreed or totally agreed having acquired this skill at UNIGE, against 83 % in the entire ample); the methodological and technical skills (87 % among sociologists, against 78 % of the entire sample); and the capacity to debate in public

Figure 1 Perceived utility of the diploma (% "totally agree" + "agree")

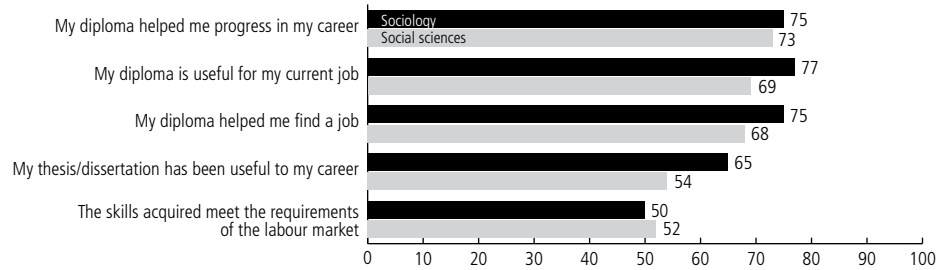
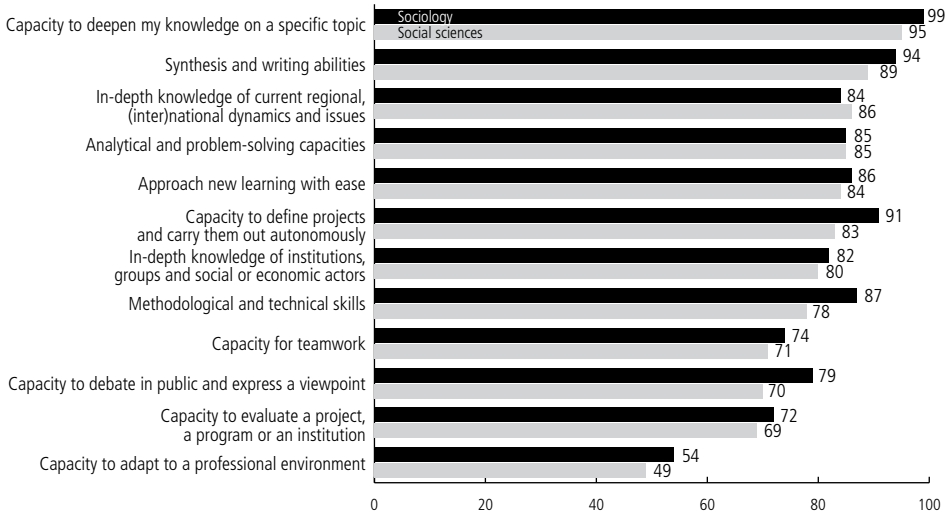


Figure 2 Skills and competences acquired at UNIGE (% "totally agree" + "agree")



and express a viewpoint (79 % among sociologists against 70 % of the entire sample). However, here again, the skill that is more clearly related to the labour market, i.e. the capacity to adapt to a professional environment, reveals very ambivalent responses from both the entire sample (49 %) and the sociologists in particular (54 %).

Conclusion

Overall, our study reveals that graduates in sociology of the cohorts under consideration found high profile jobs which provide them with satisfaction. They see the competencies and experiences accumulated during their time studying sociology as critical for their current job, either directly or indirectly. Interestingly, further analysis using multivariate statistical techniques such as cluster

analysis (see Ruey et al., 2016) revealed a variety of professional trajectories for graduates in sociology, that may be summarized into two distinct logics of personal development through paid work: one characterized by continuous full employment, with very few changes of employers (very often the State), no or very one very short period of unemployment, and no spatial mobility either ; the other logic of occupational development takes more risk as unemployment is more present, the number of employers (including self-employment) much greater and the number of years abroad larger. Both types of careers, although quite dissimilar in their logic of development, provide similar levels of satisfaction. They, to some extent, reflect well-known alternatives stemming from the constrains of late-modernity society and globalization.

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The labour market of sociologists – between chair and precariat? The view from Germany

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The findings of Rainer Diaz-Bone and Ben Jann, according to which the standard degree of sociology graduates is the Master's degree, sociologists, after a certain waiting period, have very good to good prospects on the labour market – above all beyond academics – and about 25 percent of graduates are aiming for a doctorate, apply not only to Switzerland but also to Germany. At the same time, in both countries there is a comparably high proportion of entrants to fixed-term jobs compared with other disciplines, and a large proportion of graduates experience a rather large discrepancy between the skills acquired during their studies and those required in the employment relationship.1

In the following, and in the necessary brevity, I will attempt to outline the labour market conditions for sociologists in Germany in more detail. I will look at the situation of universities in Germany in general and identify the specificities of sociology. All in all, it is less about a data report than about an essay on the situation of young sociologists. Finally, I would like to apply the current labour market theories to the situation of young academics in general and sociology in particular, above all differing according to occupational fields – academic or non-academic occupational fields.

In Germany, the increasing precarisation of young academics ("early career scientists") is caused by a high degree of temporary positions and little chance of transition to a professorship. In recent years, this situation has been exacerbated by an enormous increase in the number of students, up to 30 percent in some federal states, but also by the creation of many project positions as a result of the German Excellence Initiative. This also shows a critical side of success. Younger colleagues create their doctorates from temporary third-party funding positions and subsequently acquire their own research projects, which they can use for habilitation. However, these positions, which have so far been limited in time, are rarely transferred to permanent positions. The share of permanent positions in the German science system for early career scientists is currently about 15 percent. As a result, more and more younger colleagues are forced to give up their scientific careers prematurely and try their luck in industry or the public sector. Habilitated scholars in these fields are often overqualified and have clear disadvantages compared to people with practical experiences.

The attempt to alleviate the precarious situation of young scientists in Germany involves, on the one hand, the creation of new permanent positions – approx. 1 000 – over the last five years, primarily through tenure track professorships, and on the other hand, the reform of the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz (WissZeitVG – Science Time Contract Act), which provides for a fixed term of six years before the doctorate and six years (nine years for physicists) after the doctorate. The 2017 reform of this Act extends the regulations for persons with family responsibilities and for persons with health handicaps. In addition, the time limits for qualification must be appropriate, whatever that

1 Find numbers and backgrounds for the German case in: "Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2017. Statistische Daten und Forschungsbefunde Promovierenden und Promivierten in Deutschland" Hrsg. Konsortium Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs: https://www.buwin.de/dateien/buwin-2017.pdf (access: 2.12.19).

may mean in detail. Further potential solutions are seen in the expansion of basic funding for universities and in the possibility of creating permanent scientific posts outside universities, especially in non-university research institutions. As far as the situation with temporary positions is concerned, there is an increasing trend towards creating at least 65 percent jobs and declaring the 50 percent positions that were previously quite common as unreasonable for young researchers.

All this also applies to academic sociology in Germany, which also shows a strong clustering of age cohorts in professorships. Reunification in Germany at the end of the 1990s defused the situation for young academics until the beginning of the 2000s. This also means that the next major wave of vacancies is not expected until the end of the 2020s.

In 2016, the German Sociological Association (DGS) issued a statement on the increasingly precarious situation of early career scientists[2], in which, among other things, the effects of the German Science Time Contract Act on young researchers were reflected. It was stated: "The WissZeitVG merely pretends that there is the possibility of a time limit, so the universities definitely have room for manoeuvre here." The DGS is aware that the increasing precarisation and dependence on third-party funding enormously limit the ability to plan individual biographies and that, on the other hand, "Good science (is) not least the result of good working conditions."

The DGS also supports the "Herrschinger Kodex der Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW)" (Herrschinger Code of Conduct of the Education and Science Union), which aims to show "how a voluntary commitment by higher education institutions for better employment and qualification conditions can succeed." Higher education institutions should use their increased autonomy to improve internal working and employment conditions. In plain language, this means increasingly foregoing the need for a time limit for junior staff.

There are current disputes over the so-called "Bayreuth Declaration" of the Vereinigung der Kanzlerinnen und Kanzler der Universitäten Deutschlands (Association of Chancellors of the Universities of Germany), which advocate the fixed-term employment based on qualification also for the future.[3] It states: "Universities make an important contribution to society, the economy and the public sector by providing urgently needed specialists with academic qualifications. The model of temporary qualification phases in the different educational formats of the universities is an indispensable prerequisite for the continued achievement of this social goal. The time limit ensures that qualification opportunities can also be opened up to the next generation of students." They see better basic funding as a prerequisite for better employment conditions. In their statement, the Chancellors also refer to the fact that the universities qualify above all for employment outside the academe.

The standing committee "Sociology as a profession" of the DGS, founded in 2019, consistently formulates two objectives: strengthening early career scientists by recording the employment conditions and developing suggestions for improvement as well as monitoring occupational fields

2 https://soziologie.de/aktuell/stellungnahmen/news/stellungnahme-der-deutschen-gesellschaft-fuer-soziologie-dgs-zu-beschaeftigungsverhaeltnissen-in-der-wissenschaft (access: 2.12.19)

3 https://www.uni-kanzler.de/fileadmin/user_upload/05_Publikationen/2017_-_2010/20190919_Bayreuther_Erklaerung_der_Universitaetskanzler_final.pdf (access: 2.12.29)

and non-university career paths. On the second point, it cooperates closely with the Berufsverband deutscher Soziologinnen und Soziologen (BDS).

As far as the occupational fields for sociologists are concerned, the situation in Germany is similar to that in Switzerland, as already stated at the beginning. This means that the prospects are not so bad. Above all, the well-founded and varied methodological training supports the transition to the labour market. In addition to the increasing relevance of jobs in the advisory sector and in personnel acquisition and development, attention has been paid in recent years to higher education management (cf. Späte 2007; Breger, Späte und Wiesemann 2016). This results in diverse employment relationships for graduates: permanent positions in industry, but also in public institutions, the possibility of becoming self-employed – especially in the field of organisational counselling – or of being taken on indefinitely at higher education institutions after an initial project phase. Employment in university management often goes hand in hand with a career, right up to departmental management or even to the position of chancellor. However, there are clear differences between gender groups (see Blättel-Mink, Franzke und Wolde 2001).

If one looks at the situation of sociology graduates on the academic and non-academic labour markets, it becomes clear from a sociological perspective that current labour market theories (cf. Hinz und Abraham 2008) can explain the situation only inadequately. This applies to the human capital approach in Gary S. Becker's conclusion, which assumes that all actors on the labour market are fully informed and that rational individual investment decisions in education and training are responsible for the dynamics on the labour market. The segmentation theory, which is based on structural and institutional distortions of the labour market, and the network theory according to Mark Granovetter (1973), which places the social capital of labour market participants in the foreground, also fail to adequately understand the situation of sociologists on the labour market.

Every course of study requires a high degree of willingness to invest in one's own education, especially courses that do not prepare for a specific occupational field, such as sociology, require a high degree of willingness to take risks on the part of the actors and openness to different fields of employment. The so-called job search theory (Stigler 1961), which is based on the different equipment of labour market participants, incomplete rationality and incomplete knowledge, can probably explain part of the sociological labour market, especially where non-academic activities are concerned. People have to accept a period of unemployment, they have to reckon with a consequence of employment contracts, they have to be prepared to change employers, i.e. to be mobile, and they need to adapt their knowledge to the demands of the job – usually at their own expense. Then one can hope for a reasonably stable career.

The academic path is quite different. The first permanent position is usually the professorship, which is taken over across all disciplines in Germany at an average age of around 40. On a job search portal one reads: "In addition to professional interest and personal suitability, it is mentors and advocates who let their contacts play a role, as well as perseverance and patience, which potential candidates should bring with them in terms of prerequisites. The latter in particular is important, as applicants for professorships at universities are usually around 40 years old. A fast career is rather rare. Until a professor is appointed, the best attitude

is 'the way is the goal'." [4] For women, whose share of professorships in Germany is almost 25 percent, this means that the phase of starting a family is usually behind them and therefore has to take place in the qualification phase, or that they have to quit prematurely on the way to the professorship, since the two (family and academic career) are not or only with difficulty compatible. This also explains the consistently higher proportion of women in part-time positions. In sociology, women account for about 40 percent of professorships.

In the language of labour market sociology, this means that neither the individual investment in education nor the "inherited" and self-acquired social capital, nor the willingness for mobility and patience guarantee a successful career in science. Elaborated theoretical concepts are in demand here.

What does all this mean for teaching and research in sociology at universities? From my point of view, it is crucial to draw students' attention to the heterogeneity of the sociological labour market and to the advantages and disadvantages of both academic and non-academic career paths. I do not see doctorate as an exclusive preparation for science. It is precisely the increase in structured doctoral programmes at universities within the framework of the establishment of graduate schools that opens up the possibility of preparation for non-academic professional fields as well. As far as studies are concerned, I believe it is important to familiarise students with the diversity of sociological theories and methods. It is important to teach them from what different perspectives one can look at sociologically relevant phenomena – and that is a lot – and to what different insights one can arrive without necessarily contradicting each other.

The German Sociological Association, since 2011, has also accepted students as members. This opening meets with great interest from the student body, which subsequently founded its own magazine and hold its own congresses. However, it is still necessary to critically and reflectively accompany the political reforms in the science system and to fight the impending precarization of young researchers with all our might, not least through collective commitments.

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