DISCUSSION PUBLISHERS
Research Center · Open Access Edition

Sociology of Exile, Sociology in Exile

Christoph Reinprecht

Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1346
Year	2023
Field	Environmental Science
DOI	10.17875/gup2023-2446
Author ORCID	0000-0001-8750-3724
Licence	CC-BY-SA
Original source	Gttinger Beitrge zur soziologischen Biographieforschung
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

Abstract

The following article reflects on the difficult and complex relationship between sociology and exile: difficult with regard to its distinction from migration (including asylum); complex in terms of the need for an open, non-hierarchical and multidisciplinary approach.Taking up the perspectives of different authors, postures and disciplinary contexts, including literature and poetry, features are worked out that potentially characterize both a sociology in exile and of exile.A core question of the article is whether there is a sociology of exile that is not at the same time a sociology in exile.Since the article focuses on sociology, most of the biographical and historical examples are from the history of the discipline.However, exile is by no means limited to members of the intellectual classes.What connects the various forms and experiences of exile is its understanding as something essentially political. "The Place Where Place is Absent" (Georges Perec)For Georges Perec, the great, unforgettable French writer and member of OuLiPo, L'Ouvroir de Littrature Potentielle, Ellis Island represents the "the ultimate place of exile, that is, the place where place is absent, the non-place, the nowhere".(Perec/Bober 1995: 58).Ellis Island, New York's historical arrival point for Millions of people who desired to enter the United States: between 1892 und 1924 around 16 million emigrants first set foot on American soil here, most of them Reinprecht, C.

Republished by Discussion Publishers under the original CC-BY-SA licence. Copyright remains with the original authors; please cite the original work.

Cite as: Christoph Reinprecht (2023). Sociology of Exile, Sociology in Exile. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-1346.

Sociology of Exile, Sociology in Exile

Christoph Reinprecht

The following article reflects on the difficult and complex relationship between sociology and exile: difficult with regard to its distinction from migration (including asylum); complex in terms of the need for an open, non-hierarchical and multidisciplinary approach. Taking up the perspectives of different authors, postures and disciplinary contexts, including literature and poetry, features are worked out that potentially characterize both a sociology *in* exile and *of* exile. A core question of the article is whether there is a sociology *of* exile that is not at the same time a sociology *in* exile. Since the article focuses on sociology, most of the biographical and historical examples are from the history of the discipline. However, exile is by no means limited to members of the intellectual classes. What connects the various forms and experiences of exile is its understanding as something essentially political.

1 "The Place Where Place is Absent" (Georges Perec)

For Georges Perec, the great, unforgettable French writer and member of OuLiPo, *L'Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*, Ellis Island represents the "the ultimate place of exile, that is, the place where place is absent, the non-place, the nowhere". (Perec/Bober 1995: 58). Ellis Island, New York's historical arrival point for Millions of people who desired to enter the United States: between 1892 und 1924 around 16 million emigrants first set foot on American soil here, most of them

Reinprecht, C. (2023): Sociology of Exile, Sociology in Exile. In: Pohn-Lauggas, M./Tonah, S./Worm, A. (Eds.): Exile/Flight/Persecution. Sociological Perspectives on Processes of Violence. Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 81–98. **https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2023-2446**

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

arriving from Europe. A site of border control and health checks, and of the arbitrary power of immigration officers deciding whether entry is possible or whether a return must be undertaken; at the same time a site of hope and metamorphosis where biographies of "men, women and children, driven from their homelands by famine or poverty, or by political, racial or religious oppression" became transformed and redesigned: "from emigrant to immigrant, someone who had left into someone who had arrived" (Perec/Bober 1995: 58).

In *Recits d'Ellis Island, histoire d'errance et d'espoir,* a script for a documentary about Ellis Island, directed by his friend Robert Bober, Perec tells the following story: After leaving the transatlantic steamboat, newcomers had to pass a series of tasks, including answering several lists of questions, concerning their biography, professional skills, health or the readiness to became American, i.e. to share the American way of life. To get to the offices of the New York immigration department, people had to climb to the first floor of the agency's main building, a good opportunity for officers to check the health of immigrants: Difficulties in breathing indicated illness and reduced significantly the chance of entry. The lucky ones were interviewed by an immigration officer – a crucial moment not only in the formal aspects of immigration, but also in the passage to becoming an American: Abandoning one's old identity and adopting a new one was often tantamount to taking on a surname familiar to the new environment. And this is exactly the setting of Perec's story: An elderly Jewish man, who had emigrated from Russia, got advice "to choose himself a nice American name that the civil authorities would have no trouble transcribing" (Perec/Bober 1995: 17 f.). A baggage man he asked for help suggested *Rockefeller*, and the old man tried to memorise this name. However, when he stood in front of the officer a few hours later, he could no longer remember it and exclaimed, desperately, in Yiddish, *schon vergessen.* But the officer who didn't understand the meaning ("I already forgot") wrote down a name he thought he had understood phonetically: "And it was thus he was inscribed under the very American name of John Ferguson." Perec concludes: "This story is perhaps too good to be true, but it hardly matters, in the end, whether it's true or false. For the emigrants avid to America, changing their names could be considered as a benefit" (Perec/Bober 1995: 18). Changing family names is a widely spread practice in contexts of exile and immigration: An expression of the desire to flee contexts of persecution, poverty, social conflicts, and to break the burden of stigmatization, in particular for descendant generations. For many of the children and grandchildren, however, things often look different: In digging for the own family history, they discover the name change, challenge the reasons and arguments for it, some may even try to get the former name back: *Kowalski instead of Smith.*[1]

[1] In France, after World War II, it is estimated that 10,000 Jewish families have decided to change their name, mainly with the aim of protecting their children from anti-Semitism (see Lapierre 2006). Efforts by members of succeeding generations to reverse these changes had no chance of success for a

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

Georges Perec (1936–1982) was the son of a Poland born Jewish couple, Icek und Cyrla (Szulewicz) Peretz, who had emigrated to France in the 1920s. The Peretz had been communists, engaged in fighting Nazism. The father died 1940 as a soldier of French army in fighting Nazi-German troops, his mother was murdered in 1943 in Auschwitz. Georges, who was a child as his parents disappeared, was taken into the care of his paternal aunt and uncle and survived clandestine in a small village on the Vercors plateau, south of Grenoble. There are some aspects in his biography that reminds me always the biography of Pierre Goldman, another "Polish Jew born in France" (to quote Goldman's 1975 first published book of memories), although their lives were very different in many ways, and Goldman was born almost ten years later. Goldman (1944–1979), whose parents, also communists, had taken part in the anti-fascist resistance in Lyon, identified himself as a radical leftist, refused military service and suspended his studies in philosophy at the Sorbonne for joining the guerrilleros in Latin America. Back in France, he was convicted of murder and robbery but was released after the court's verdict was overturned. At the end of 1970s Goldman was killed by extreme right wing in the open streets of Paris; he was 35 years old. Whereas Pierre Goldman, in his way to overcome the traumatism of early childhood, decided to pursue a radical, nonconformist and existentialist way of life, attracted by armed anticolonial fight, becoming affiliated with militants Guerilleros in the entourage of Che Guevara, and being involved in robberies in Venezuela, and also in France after his return to Paris, Georges Perec became a radical writer. Writing, the use of language, literature as the place of exile, far beyond any nostalgia and the myth of a language. *Ancrage* (anchorage) through *encrage* (to use/to put the pen into ink). Perec died young too, a few days before his 46th birthday.

Vilém Flusser (1920–1991), another exilé, refers in a letter to Franz Kafka and his struggles with writing in German: „Firstly, it is impossible to write German, secondly impossible to write other than German, thirdly impossible to write, and fourth, impossible to live without writing" (quoted from Guldin/Bernardo 2017: 373).

Exile as a place where the place is absent: Vilém Flusser, born 1920 in Prague and, similar to Kafka, raised in a German speaking Jewish family, had to escape Czechoslovakia in 1939, both parents were murdered in Nazi concentration camps. Flusser first fled to London, from where he emigrated to São Paulo, Brazil, where he became professor for communication theory. In 1972, the military dictatorship gave reasons to fleeing to Southern France. In 1991 he died in a car accident on his way back from Prague, where he had been for the first time after his long exile to give a lecture.

long time; applications for renaming had been systematically rejected by courts until 2011. Thanks to the activities of the NGO "la force du nom" there was a change in the prevailing case law, renaming applications have since been permissible (see Masson 2020).

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

2 Death as a marker of life in exile

For Georges Perec, as a Jew and descendant of Shoah victims, life is based on the certainty that it is owed by nothing but "chance and exile" (Perec 1990: 58). In his *Souvenirs obscurs d'un juif polonais né en France*, published in 1975 by Éditions du Seuil, Paris, Pierre Goldman writes that he has been obsessed by the idea of death since his early youth, a fact he explains by being born as an atheist and as a Jew. He recounts his life from a standpoint of "not belonging", situating "his identification with the cause of the suppressed in the Third World within his own existential particularity as a Jew born to Polish members of the resistance fighters" (Norden 2003: 58). In his reflections on exile, Vilém Flusser notes:

> "The expelled are uprooted people who attempt to uproot everything around themselves, to establish roots. They do it spontaneously, simply because they are expelled. Perhaps one can observe it when one tries to transplant trees. It can happen that the expelled becomes conscious of the vegetable, almost vegetative aspect of his exile; that he uncovers that the human being is not a tree; and that perhaps human dignity consists in not having roots – that a man first becomes a human being when he hacks of the vegetable roots that bind him. In German, there is the hateful word *Luftmensch,* a careless 'man with his head in the air.' The expelled may discover that *air* and *spirit* are closely related terms and that therefore *Luftmensch* essentially signifies human being. This sort of discovery is a dialectical change in the relationship between expelled and expeller. Before this discovery, the expeller is the active pole and the expelled is the passive pole. After this discovery, the expeller is the victim and the expelled is the perpetrator. This is the discovery that history is made by the expelled, not the expellers. The Jews are not part of Nazi history, the Nazis are part of Jewish history … But this is not the decisive part of the discovery that we are not trees – that the uprooted make history. Instead, the decisive part of it is to discover how tiresome it is not to establish new roots. After all, habit is merely a cotton blanket that covers up everything. It is also a mud bath where it is nice to wallow. Homesickness is a *nostalgie de la boue*, and one can make oneself comfortable anywhere, even in exile. The discovery that we are not trees challenges the expelled to struggle constantly against the seduction pleasures of the mud bath. To continue to experience expulsion, which is to say: to allow oneself to be expelled again and again." (Flusser 2002: 107)

Extraterritoriality ("Unzugehörigkeit") and *groundlessness* ("Bodenlosigkeit"): Flussers view on exile is shaped by his own "course of survival": experiences of displacement, escape, involuntary migration. He got to know feelings of loss and groundlessness but also the conviction that "the expelled must be creative if he does not want to go to the dogs" (Flusser 2002: 104). Flusser prefers the

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

notion "*expelled* rather than *refugees* or *emigrants,* to bring the totality of the problem before our eyes" (Flusser 2002: 105): Exile has a radical and existential meaning, it reflects the destabilization of every-day practices and routines, a chaos of information exiled people are exposed to, a dominance of uncertainty, stress and fear. At the same time, the experience of deracination, related to exile, is a source of freedom. For the expelled freedom means "the freedom to remain a stranger, different from the others. It is the freedom to change oneself and others as well" (Flusser 2002: 108). This is why Flusser regards exile, as "a breeding ground for creative activity": a context that requires reflexivity but also new skills and competences, e.g. in dealing with *(multi-)linguality* and translation or in applying *multisightedness* and *multiple loyalty*.

Exile as an experience of fragile and questioned belonging, of a trans-national, trans-lingual, and sometimes also trans-class (Jaquet 2014) in-between: The term exile evokes the specific, and existentially demanding, role and function what we designate as *passeur*: This term refers to the idea of somebody floating between different worlds, passing on something, sometimes clandestine, who is transmitting, conveying; who is serving as a messenger, interpreter, an expert for knowledge transfer, and as cross-border commuter between the various linguistic, cultural and social spheres (see Reinprecht 2016). Flusser would have argued that people living in exile can only assume this role and function if they resist the attempts to take new roots in the place they have found refuge. "The dialogic atmosphere that characterizes exile is not necessarily part of a mutual recognition, but rather, it is mostly polemical (not to mention murderous). For the expelled threatens the 'particular nature' of the original natives; his strangeness calls them into question" (Flusser 2002: 108).

3 "One Does Not Go to Exile, One is Exiled" (Hammed Shahidian)

The narrative scene developed by Georges Perec in his book on Ellis Island refers to the experience of *emigration* and *immigration*. Is there a difference between e-/immigration and exile? *Yes and No*. In fact, there is some overlapping experience: a movement in time and space, a change of reference systems, the challenge of border crossing, and a specific administrative framing: bureaucratic systems and administrative categories which might you label as migrant or expatriate, as refugee, asylum seeker, a person under subsidiary protection, or as an unlawful, undocumented foreigner. These labels and categories are not fixed, but depending on national, politico-historical and institutional contexts, the particular migration and asylum regime, etc. This can also be illustrated using the example of sociological exile from Austrian after the so called "Anschluss" 1938[2]: Those who found

[2] Annexation of Austria into the German Reich on 13 March 1938.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

refuge in UK – we might take as examples Otto Neurath and Marie Rademeister (see Burke/Sandner 2020) – were first detained as "enemy aliens" in Isle of Man; those who had the chance to find a way to US – such as Otto Neuraths sun Paul Martin Neurath – found welcome and job opportunities at Universities. The context matters.

However, there are some important differences between *emigration* (which, according to the terminology of classical migration studies, can be defined, even under economically and politically restrictive conditions, as based on free decision), *immigration* (which implies an orientation toward the target country as new home), and *exile* as an outcome of violent process. In the case of exile, we assume a predominance of so-called *push factors* – war, persecution, expulsion, banishment. Leaving the country is always by force and violence. Just as the choice of the new environment, the place of refuge, is constrained, living in the host country is imposed and *by definition* transitory; the return from exile remain in long-term the dominant objective.

The distinction between emigration and exile is by no means purely academic; it rather reflects a social, emotional and also political reality that is also strongly perceived by the people concerned, shaping their daily life. Bertolt Brecht, who himself spent 17 years in exile, with stations in Prague, Vienna, Zurich, Paris, Svendborg, Stockholm, Helsinki and Santa Monica, was a sharp, sensitive and critical observer in this respect too. In a poem from 1937 he addresses the conceptual confusion of terms, criticizing the false use of the "label emigrant" (Brecht 2018: 730):

On the Label Emigrant (1937)

I always found the name false which they gave us: Emigrants.
That means those who leave their country. But we
Did not leave, of our own free will
Choosing another land. Nor did we enter
Into a land, to stay there, if possible for ever.
Merely, we fled. We are driven out, banned.
Not a home, but an exile, shall the land be that took us in.
Restlessly we wait thus, as near as we can to the frontier
Awaiting the day of return, every smallest alteration
Observing beyond the boundary, zealously asking
Every arrival, forgetting nothing and giving up nothing
And also not forgiving anything which happened, forgiving nothing
Ah, the silence of the Sound does not deceive us! We hear the shrieks
From their camp even here. Yes, we ourselves
Are almost like rumors of crimes, which escaped
Over the frontier. Every one of us
Who with torn shoes walks through the crow
Bears witness to the shame which now defiles our land.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

But none of us
Will stay here. The final word
Is yet unspoken.

Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten (1937)

Immer fand ich den Namen falsch, den man uns gab: Emigranten
Das heißt doch Auswandrer. Aber wir
Wanderten doch nicht aus, nach freiem Entschluss
Wählend ein andres Land. Wanderten wir doch auch nicht
Ein in ein Land, dort zu bleiben, womöglich für immer
Sondern wir flohen. Vertriebene sind wir, Verbannte
Und kein Heim, ein Exil soll das Land sein, das uns da aufnahm
Unruhig sitzen wir so, möglichst nahe den Grenzen
Wartend des Tags der Rückkehr, jede kleinste Veränderung
Jenseits der Grenze beobachtend, jeden Ankömmling
Eifrig befragend, nichts vergessend und nichts aufgebend
Und auch verzeihend nichts, was geschah, nichts verzeihend.
Ach, die Stille der Sunde täuscht uns nicht! Wir hören die
Schreie
Aus ihren Lagern bis hierher. Sind wir doch selber
Fast wie Gerüchte von Untaten, die da entkamen
Über die Grenzen. Jeder von uns
Der mit zerrissenen Schuh durch die Menge geht
Zeugt von der Schande, die jetzt unser Land befleckt
Aber keiner von uns
Wird hier bleiben. Das letzte Wort
Ist noch nicht gesprochen.

The situations of "John Ferguson", Georges Perec, Pierre Goldman, Vilém Flusser and Bertolt Brecht differ significantly. Whereas Ferguson shares the experience of a typical immigrant to US in a specific historical context, and Perec and Goldman share the experience of families persecuted by the Nazi-terror regime, and the burden of early childhood trauma connected with the history of Shoah[3]; Vilém Flusser and Bertolt Brecht both share the exilic experiences in proper sense and in their own lives. The exilic experience: Exile is not a one-and-forever status, writes the Iran born sociologist Hammed Shahidian, *exile is a real experience and it has a history.* A story of banishment, of expulsion, of rejection from one's homeland, marking and shaping one's life and life horizon. It is, also in that regard, different from (even forced) migration. A refugee, writes Shaihidian, "is an actor; the exile acted upon" (Shahidian 2000: 75).

From 1933 to 1939 Bertolt Brecht found refuge in a house in Svendborg, a small town in southern in Denmark, where the famous Svendborg poems were

[3] Masterfully reflected in Georges Perec's novel "W, ou le souvenir d'enfance" (Perec 1975).

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

written. An intriguing, at the same time touching aspect of these poems is the relation of space and time. Svendborg was also chosen because of its proximity to the German border, so that Brecht could return quickly if the political situation changed. As is well known, the situation was not changing, on the contrary, Nazi Germany was preparing for war, and with no end to the exile foreseeable, Brecht began to doubt whether his hope of returning had any real basis. In that context of uncertainty Brecht wrote the famous "Thoughts About the Duration of Exile" (*Gedanken über die Dauer des Exils*), an interior dialogue about the tension between hope and disillusion. In the following the first lines of the first and the second part of Brecht's poem (Brecht 2018: 731):

> Don't drive a nail into the wall,
> Throw your coat on a chair!
> Why bother about four days?
> Tomorrow you'll go back
> (…)
> See the nail in the wall, the nail you hammered into it!
> When do you think you'll be going back?
> Do you want to know what you really believe in your heart?
>
> Schlage keinen Nagel in die Wand
> Wirf den Rock auf den Stuhl.
> Warum vorsorgen für vier Tage?
> Du kehrst morgen zurück.
> (…)
> Sieh den Nagel in der Wand, den du eingeschlagen hast:
> Wann, glaubst du, wirst du zurückkehren?
> Willst du wissen, was du im Innersten glaubst?

And three years later, written in 1940 in Helsinki, eight desperate, depressing lines with a small door of hope at the end (Brecht 2018: 776 f.)[4]:

> Fleeing from my fellow-countrymen
> I have now reached Finland. Friends
> Whom yesterday I didn't know, put up some beds
> In clean rooms. Over the radio
> I hear the victory bulletins of the scum of the earth. Curiously
> I examine a map of the continent. High up in Lapland
> Towards the Artic Ocean
> I can still see a small door

[4] The tension between despair, disgust at the Nazis on the one hand and of solidarity and small glimmer of hope on the other hand was powerfully set to music by Hanns Eisler in his so-called Hollywood Songbook, composed 1942–1943.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

Auf der Flucht vor meinen Landsleuten
Bin ich nun nach Finnland gelangt. Freunde
Die ich gestern nicht kannte, stellten ein paar Betten
In saubere Zimmer. Im Lautsprecher
Höre ich die Siegesmeldungen des Abschaums. Neugierig
Betrachte ich die Karte des Erdteils. Hoch oben in Lappland
Nach dem nördlichen Eismeer zu
Sehe ich noch eine kleine Tür

Brecht's poetry reflects on the existential dimension of the exilic experience: experiences of persecution and banishment and the absence of free choice; a strong and durable interest in the political development in the home country; feelings of despair and mourning given the situation in home country and the behaviour of the compatriots; an active memory work; the refusal to be silenced; a long-lasting desire to return, to fight for the values and people oppressed in the home country, to be engaged in curing and healing the wounds and violations, the collective and own one's, and to continue the way of exile, even under conditions of uncertainty and restrictions, etc. All these elements constitute not only the condition of exile but also the condition of a sociology in exile. In its next section the article puts emphasis on the specific features and challenges of doing sociology in the context of exile.

4 Doing Sociology in the Context of Exile: Reflexive and Proactive Rather than Interpretative

"Is doing sociology in the context of exile different from its practice in non-exilic conditions?", asks Hammed Shahidian (2000: 72) in his article on Sociology and Exile, without hesitating to answer: Yes, it is! Shahidian's understanding of the relation between sociology and exile is deeply shaped by a personal experience: as an exile who has left Iran as a young man to study in the United States and remained in exile after the Islamic Revolution, and as an academics whose research was particularly focusing on the situation of women and gender-related policies in Iran. Shahidian also died young, only 46 years old. His understanding of a sociology in exile (and a sociology of exile) reflects this biographically anchored position as likewise learning insider and informed outsider.

There are several aspects of Shahidian's argument that can be seen as constitutive of what it means doing *sociology in exile.*, defined as "a real experience of expulsion or rejection from one's homeland" (Shaidian 2000: 75). The following synopsis of his reflections, also in dialogue with other literature, give some indications of what needs to be considered when conceiving a *sociology of exile*.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

(1) Working (and living) "under exilic conditions makes exile sociology political in nature" (Shaidian 2000: 73). The exilic sociologist will remain struggling for social and political change in home country, and this is a struggle not limited to the situation in home country or in diasporic structures but encompasses (often even foremost) the situation in host country. This struggle is not restricted to academic battle fields, but includes an involvement in various political, social and cultural aspects of exiledom. Doing sociology in exile thus means applying a "reflexive and proactive rather than (merely) interpretative" perspective (Shaidian 2000: 73). It implies being critically engaged not only with other academics but also with activists and compatriots, participating in political and public debate, fighting against the silencing of injustice and domination. Insofar, sociology in exile takes a double face: an analytically powerful discipline, and demanded as an effective public voice. Sociology in exile has to serve both needs.

(2) If sociological literature states that migration is a movement in time and space, then it has to be said that living in exile has no clear, predefined time-limit. Exiledom rather nourishes the wish to return, what makes the aspect of time becoming political. Living in exile permanently recalls the reason for expulsion "against which the exile must rebel" (Shahidian 2000: 88). However, the situation is ambivalent. For Goldschmidt, "exile is the moment when presence turns into absence in a timeless moment" (Goldschmidt 2020: 9)[5]. In their daily lives, the exilic condition means for the people concerned multiple experiences of unsecurity, unsafty and, first of all, of uncertainty. The idea of returning represents an act of resistance against these forces of destabilization and social isolation, and of downgrading the socioeconomic status exilic situations empirically are often connected with. In contrast to situations of forced waiting most refugees are exposed to, the raison d'être of exile consists in proactively refusing to be marginalized or silenced, that also means: to take responsibility and to intervene, enter in dialogue. On individual levels, memories, dreams, hopes are mobilized to revision the future of one's homeland, and to embed the story of one's life in it. In collective terms, sociology serves as "a repository of collective memory of social movements. Moreover, it creates a space for disclosing dynamics of social control and resistance" (Shaidian 2000: 80). Sociology in/of exile therefore represents a sociology of resistant and transformative practice; and at the same time a sociology of remembering.

(3) Sociology *in* and *of* exile reflects the interwoven relations between individual biography and general (political) history. Living in exile not necessarily produces nostalgia or idealizations of the old home country; but it always

[5] Translated by the author from German: "Das Exil ist der Augenblick, in dem Abwesenheit in Abwesenheit kippt in einem zeitlosen Moment."

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

constitutes a double consciousness, mirroring a simultaneously living of inside and outside of society, a double presence and absence in the sense of absence in presence and presence in absence at the same time (Sayad 1999). Sociologists are often said they are trained to act as "outsider insiders", from a "third space" position. The exilic condition contributes to the constitution of a kind of "in-between person" (Shahidian 2000: 72). Sociology in /of exile is elaborating, deciphering and re-composing the divided, fragmented habitus (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1996; Bourdieu 2002; Eribon 2009). This said, sociology in/of exile requires a radical reflexive approach, enabling us to study the conditions of exile not in abstract terms, but its actuality in a framework of concrete power-relations also controlling our positions as social scientists. In that sense, sociology in exile produces a knowledge for liberation and thought models of liberation (see Kranebitter et al. 2022).

(4) A sociology of/in exile represents also a *sociology of suffering* (see Wilkinson 2005), based on "the painful realization that where you live is not home and that you do and do not live where home is" (Shahidian 2000: 76). This pain may merge with feelings of guilt (among survivors and its descendants), loss and shame – the most enduring marker on the life of "exiles renegades" (see Jaquet 2014). Moreover, feelings of strangeness and alienation, resignation and fatigue may derive from the often marginal and subaltern position in host society. Suffering reflects the eminently physical dimension of exile, which authors such as Vilém Flusser or Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt repeatedly have referred to in their writings on exilic life. "For the expelled", Flusser noted, "it is almost as if he has been expelled from his own body" (Flusser 2002: 105). And Goldschmidt (2020: 9) writes: "Exile, like fear 'eats the soul', it eats away at the soul's innermost roots, where it begins. It erases all images, voices, feelings, it forces you to turn inside out. Exile turns you inside out, like a sack. Exile never lets you go, it sits in your chest. The strange thing about exile is the sharpness of this boundary, separating two geographically disparate yet intertwined entities".[6] The sharp boundary, Goldschmidt is speaking about, is running through the body, and a mark of the divided, fragmented habitus. A sociology of/in exile will deal with the painful consequences, also in physical terms, illness, early death, suicide, and will discuss strategies to cope with.

(5) Solidarity networks, alliance building, diasporic community. Among the empowering strategies in the context of exile, hospitality is the most relevant one. The experience of exile is essentially linked to the practices of

[6] Translated by the author from German: "Das Exil, wie die Angst, ‚fressen Seele auf', es zehrt am innersten Ansatz der Seele, da, wo sie anfängt. Es löscht alle Bilder, Stimmen, Gefühle aus, es zwingt zur Selbstumstülpung. Das Exil stülpt einen um, wie einen Sack. Das Exil lässt einen nie los, es sitzt einem in der Brust. Das Sonderbare am Exil ist die Schärfe dieser Grenze, die zwei geographisch unvereinbare und doch ineinander verwobene Beschaffenheiten voneinander trennt."

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

hospitality (see Agier 2021): hospitality made it possible to escape, to find refuge, to remain in uncertainty, even to survive economically. Hospitality is constituted by taking over responsibility (often also against state authorities; Laacher 2004) and by actively entering in dialogue with people in search for refuge. Exile relies on (often micro-forms of) hospitality, at the same time it creates by itself a context where hospitality is produced be it in form of informal help such as allocation of accommodation, distribution of information, bridge contacts, or the creation of organizational structures, etc. Exiles as guests and hosts: In that double way of being target and source of hospitality, exile contributes to the institutionalization and anchoring of hospitality in the collective consciousness. Sociology in/of exile is therefore essentially also a *sociology of hospitality*.

(6) The fact that exile has no fix, no predetermined term, that there is no certainty of any end, whereas at the same time, one has continuously to adapt to the environments where one is imposed to live, in continuing one's life in all its various facets, creates a certain worldliness (*Weltgewandtheit*). The "closing of the homeland's border ironically could open new horizons", notes Hammed Shahidian (2000: 82) referring to Edward Said's reflections on the potential gain of autonomy and freedom in exile (1983). Exile reshapes the relationship to space and time, making it more abstract, passive, detached from familiar reality. Exile may produce feelings of homesickness and nostalgia; at the same time, "arriving in new territories, seeing new landscapes 'allows' that the homeland takes on a new appearance when re-visioned" (Shaidian 2000: 83). The relation to time is changing as well: Exile does not mean being thrown into the past or the present, i.e. life in exile is primarily oriented neither towards the past nor the present (even if coping with everyday life requires a lot of survival skills), but is forward-looking and imaginative with a view to the little door is still visible, to use Brecht's formulation again. Sociology of/in exile requires not only a flexible habitus, ready to adapt to new places of refuge and to assimilate new social, cultural and linguistic environments; it also requires, what Ernst Bloch (1959) called "anticipatory consciousness". Anticipatory consciousness is, according to Bloch, inherent to the ambition and desire to change the inhuman, unjust conditions of our world. The power of anticipation lies in identifying "categories of the possible" within the existing reality. All reality has a horizon, Bloch notes, and on the horizon of every reality stands the concrete utopia. Utopia, the imagination of what Bloch calls the *Real Possible*, what could be different, what could be done differently, what could become different, is a driving element of all those living in exile; and it drives us who do not live in exile but doing exile research. In that sense, a sociology in/of exile is always synonymous with a *sociology of concrete utopia*.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

5 Exile and Post-Exile

Can the exile become an emigrant? Flusser would reply: Yes, if he/she accommodates to the new societal and cultural context, when nestled into the blanket of habits, able and ready to *take new roots.*

The history of sociological exile from Nazi-Germany knows some characteristic and almost ideal-typical examples for this transition: Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Marie Jahoda, to give some names, did not remain in a position of exile but decided to settle in the receiving country, to assimilate, to becoming *emigrants*; for most of them, the former home has become a strange country. Well known counter examples are intellectuals such as Theodor W. Adorno or Max Horkheimer who ended their exilic experience by returning to post-war Germany (on the ambivalent exile experience of German intellectuals in the US see e.g. Goebel and Weigel 2012). In most cases, the transition from exile to emigration happened through the integration in academic institutions, a successful academic career, by holding an institutional position, or similar processes of incorporation in other segments of society. Living in exile opened opportunities to detach from restricting academic practices in home countries and to open up to new academic culture, but also coming into contact with new colleagues, entering professional associations and mainstream networks or adapting new research methodologies, epistemologies, and theories. That the exile in the context of Nazi-Germany and World War II went along with processes of reciprocal (transatlantic) enrichment, is well documented (e.g. Fleck 2007). At the same time, the exile situation involved numerous difficulties, also due to the particular historical war/post-war and political context (such as McCarthy in US) where people found themselves again excluded from academic career and positions appropriate to their academic qualification. This was e.g. the situation of Else Frenkel Brunswik, one of the lead authors of the seminal study "The Authoritarian Personality" (Adorno et al. 1950) and particularly interesting with regard to transforming Viennese-related scientific elements (Karl and Charlotte Bühler, Vienna Circle, psychoanalysis) into US-contexts (Ash 1998), who was due to institutional, and here also gender-related framed logics, pushed into long-lasting precariousness. Alfred Schütz, on the other hand, who fled Vienna in 1938 and found refuge in the USA after a stopover in Paris, describes exile as the ultimate experience of alienation. In his famous essay "The Stranger" (1944), which can be read as a reflection on one's own exile, exile is linked to the fact that "man can lose his status, his rules of guidance and even his history and that the normal way of life is always far less guaranteed then it seems" (Schütz 1944: 507). During his exile in the United States Schütz remained a stranger in a strange land. Also because of his difficulties in accessing the academic world, he returned to Vienna after the end of World War II to continue his career as a bank clerk. However, it was thanks to his academic contacts and activities during exile that Schütz received in 1952 a professorship at the New School of Social Research in New York for the last seven years of his life.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

There is no shift from exile to post-exile - returning, taking roots in the host country, moving on elsewhere – without ambivalences, disaccords, unanswered questions. Returning from exile often signified, also in the case of the most prominent members of the Institute of Social Research, a cutting off of experiences and (collective) learning processes: It is no coincidence that the returned members of the Institute for Social Research did not continue their empirical (social psychological) research conducted in the USA, such as the Studies on Prejudices just mentioned. For others, returning home was a situation of despair, disillusionment and shattered hopes: it was not the same country they returned to, reality undermined their hopes, shattered utopian thoughts, shattered the idealizations nurtured in exile. However, the general impression of most remigrants was that they were not welcome. This impression corresponded to the facts: not a single one of the numerous sociologists who were expelled from Vienna was invited to return (Fleck 1987).

It is indeed difficult *not to take new roots*. Vilém Flusser, also in his own biography, reminds us: It requires radical, nonconformist life, accepting a life in-between, the ability to bear complex uncertainty, and a constant (self)reflexivity and high degree of autonomy.

Following Shahidian's argument that "exile is not a once-and-forever status" (Shaidian 2000: 71) but a real experience and has a history, we can say: sociology in/of exile is a political sociology, a sociology of borders and boundary makings and of politicized memories, and a sociology of pain and estrangement; at the same time a sociology of resistance and transformative practice, of concrete utopia and a sociology of hospitality. And in this sense: a reflexive, multi-sighted, multilingual sociology and a sociology of intergenerational transmission.

At the end of this paper I would like to stress again the phenomena of living in-between. Reflecting his exiledom, Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, Hamburg born Jewish writer and translator who survived as a child in French Savoy Alps and who became a wanderer between the German and French linguistic worlds, uses the image of his poetological essay "Une chaise à deux dossiers" ("A Chair with Two Backs"; Goldschmidt 1991). In one of his texts he shares the following observation: "The inversion of languages makes them neutral to the object they express. The German lens on the French things and the French lens on the German things allow this distancing, through which the language achieves accuracy" (Goldschmidt 1991: 91)[7]. Exile as an existentialist experience: "Exile is a sharply drawn, impassable border that not only separates the past from today, the present from the past, but

[7] Translated by the author from German: "Die Umkehrung der Sprachen macht sie dem Gegenstand gegenüber neutral, den sie zum Ausdruck bringen. Die deutsche Blende auf die französischen Dinge und die französische Blende auf die deutschen Dinge erlaubt diese Distanzierung, durch welche die Sprache die Genauigkeit erreicht."

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

also two different worldviews, two different self-horizons, which, however, form a closed unit" (Goldschmidt 2020: 9).[8]

Exile. Translation. Distancing. In-Between, *Dazwischener,* Transition. In summarizing the arguments discussed in this article, we could state that a future sociology in/of exile requires to overcome, and to deconstruct, the still widespread opposition of essentialist (determinist) versus existentialist (free will-based) notions of identity and biography. If we think the phenomena of exile from the idea of a double presence-absence also with regard to the challenging and ambivalent processes of re-rooting, it seems challenging to follow the argument of the French philosopher and sociologist Chantal Jaquet. In the context of her reflections on the phenomena of trans-classe Jaquet speaks about identity not as a "self-creation of the ego", but as a "social co-production of the milieu of origin and the milieu of evolution, insofar as it only happens with or against them" (Jaquet 2014: 219). By applying the term *complexion*, Jaquet shifts the perspective away from identity or biography towards the experience of passage and transition. With regard to our reflections on a sociology in/of exile, applying the term *complexion* means aiming to deconstruct the subtle distinctions that distingue people, the particularities of each person and the conflicting relationships in which they are embedded. It is an approach that makes visible exile as a structured field of action without ending in a too general description of common characteristics nor slipping in pure individualism.

Again, Georges Perec's film script on Ellis Island helps us to sharpen our perspective. For Perec, Ellis Island is emblematic of a nation-state organized sorting machine, where the masses of incoming people are sorted into groups of desirables and undesirables: being on this list or that was a gamble, like in the story of John Ferguson. "Ellis Island was to be nothing other than a factory for making Americans, for turning emigrants into immigrants: an American-style factory as quick and efficient as a Chicago pork-butcher's. At one end of the assembly line, they would put an Irishman, a Ukrainian Jew or an Italian from Apulia, at the other end – after their eyes and pockets had been inspected, and they had been vaccinated and disinfected – there emerged an American." (Perec/Bober 1995) The topicality of this description is stunning: The current Europeanized asylum policy resembles a machine with thousands of people across Europe who put themselves at the service of governments in order to classify other thousands of people through the implementation of a detailed master plan: access or refusal (Dahlvik/Reinprecht 2015). The exilic experience radicalizes this "game" – exposed to arbitrariness, dependent on hospitality –, and this is what comes to mind when Perec is describing Ellis Island as the ultimate place of exile: "What I find present here, are in no way landmarks or roots or relics but their opposite: something shapeless, on the

[8] Translated by the author from German: (Exil) "ist eine scharf gezeichnete unüberschreitbare Grenze, die nicht nur das Einst vom Heute, die Gegenwart vom Vergangenen trennt, sondern auch zwei verschiedene Selbstsichten, zwei verschiedene Selbsthorizonte, die jedoch eine geschlossene Einheit bilden."

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

outer edge of what is sayable, something that might be called closure, or cleavage or severance, and that in my mind is linked in a most intimate and confused way with the very fact of being a Jew" (Perec/Bober 1995: 58).

References

Adorno, T. W./Frenkel-Brunswik, E./Levinson, D./Sanford, N. (1950): The Authoritarian Personality. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Agier, M. (2021): The Stranger as My Guest. A Critical Anthropology of Hospitality. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ash, M. G. (1998): Wissenschaftswandel durch Zwangsauswanderung – Kurt Lewin und Else Frenkel-Brunswik nach 1933. In: Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsch Geschichte, 27, 251–272.

Bloch, E. (1959): Das Prinzip Hoffnung. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Bourdieu, P. (2002): Ein soziologischer Selbstversuch. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Bourdieu, P./ Wacquant, L. (1996): Reflexive Anthropologie. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Brecht, B. (2018): The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht. New York: W. W. Norton.

Burke, C./Sandner, G. (2020): Otto Neurath and Marie Reidemeister on the Isle of Man. A Case Study on Central-European Exiles in British Internment During the Second World War. Paper Presented at the Conference Internment Camps. The (Enforced) Placement and "Custody" of Refugees in the Past and the Present. Österreichische Gesellschaft für Exilforschung. December 2–4, 2020, Vienna.

Dahlvik, J./Reinprecht, C. (2015): Asyl als Widerspruch. Vom Menschenrecht zum Auserwählten? In: Janke, P. (Ed.): Jelinek Jahrbuch 2014–2015. Wien: Praesens, 41–52.

Eribon, D. (2009): Retour à Reims. Paris: Fayard.

Fleck, C. (1987): Rückkehr unerwünscht. Der Weg der österreichischen Sozialforschung ins Exil. In: Stadler, F. (Ed.): Vertriebene Vernunft I. Emigration und Exil österreichischer Wissenschaft 1930–1940. Wien: Verlag Jugend & Volk, 182–213.

Fleck, C. (2007): Transatlantische Bereicherungen. Zur Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

Flusser, V. (2002): Exile and Creativity. In: Ströhl, A. (Ed.): Vilém Flusser. Writings. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 104–109.

Goebel, E./Weigel, S. (2012): Escape to Life. German Intellectuals in New York. A Compendium of Exile after 1933. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.

Goldman, P. (1975): Souvenirs obscurs d'un juif polonais né en France. Paris: Seuil.

Goldschmidt, G.-A. (1991): Une chaise à deux dossiers/Ein Stuhl mit zwei Lehnen. In: Sirene, 4 (8), 89–91.

Goldschmidt, G.-A. (2020): Nach-Exil. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.

Guldin, R./Bernardo, G. (2017): Vilém Flusser (1920–1991). Ein Leben in der Bodenlosigkeit. Biographie. Bielefeld: transcript.

Jaquet, C. (2014): Les transclasses ou la non-repoduction. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Kranebitter, A./Reinprecht, C. (Eds.) (2023): Authoritarianism, Ambivalence, Ambiguity. The Life and Work of Else Frenkel-Brunswik. In: Serendipities, 7 (1–2), 1–12.

Laacher, S. (2004): Éléments pour une sociologie de l'exil. In: politix, 24, 101–128.

Lapierre, N. (2006): Changer de Nom. Paris: Gallimard.

Masson, C. (2020): Habiter son nom. Une histoire française. Paris: Éditions Hermann.

Norden, T. (2003): Pierre Goldman and the Beginnings of jeune littérature juive. In: French Forum, 28 (2), 57–76.

Perec, G. (1975): W, ou le souvenir d'enfance. Paris: Denoël.

Perec, G. (1990): Je suis né. Paris: Seuil.

Perec, G./Bober, R. (1995): Ellis Island. New York: The New Press.

Reinprecht, C (2016): Der Terminus "Passeur" und seine Bedeutungen. In: Anderl, G./Usaty, S. (Eds.): Schleppen, Schleusen, Helfen. Flucht zwischen Rettung und Ausbeutung. Wien: Mandelbaum, 361–376.

Said, E. W. (1983): The World, the Text, and the Critic. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sayad, A. (1999): La double absence. Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré. Paris Seuil.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf

Schütz, A. (1944): The Stranger. In: American Journal of Sociology, 49 (6), 499–507.

Shahidian, H. (2000): Sociology and Exile: Banishment and Tensional Loyalties. In: Current Sociology, 48, 71–99.

Wilkinson, I. (2005): Suffering. A Sociological Introduction. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1346 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/54beea9d-84b8-4d53-8525-9a61c77a11cf