The Austrian state apparatus after 1918

When an empire collapses and is dismembered, what becomes of its public employees? My contribution will address the question of continuities and ruptures in public administration after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and during the subsequent creation of the First Republic, focusing on the transformations taking place in the years immediately after the end of the monarchy.

It was stipulated that only government employees of “German nationality” were allowed to be sworn in for service to the new republic. Those of other nationalities whose place of work was in (German) Austria, thus, had to leave. Former imperial government employees who were employed in the successor states (e.g. Czechoslovakia, Italy, Kingdom of SHS) either returned to Austria or joined the civil service of the new states. For a number of them the decision to opt for one of the states was difficult to make, particularly before the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In many cases the assignment of a nationality (based, among other things, on native language, language use, national affiliation of the parents, political activity) was contested.

The first years of the republic saw, to some extent, efforts toward a rollback of the bureaucratic state and a democratisation of public administration on a structural level. The internal logic of public administration sometimes counteracted these aims. Furthermore, the dire financial situation of the First Republic complicated matters. The effects of the period’s political, economic and societal changes on public employees as a socio-professional group will be examined. As regards sources, I will largely draw on the proceedings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (“Zwischenstaatsamtliches Komitee”) and other bodies which dealt with the personnel, financial, administrative and political issues connected with the transformation of public administration between 1918 and 1920.

Studies of Sociology, Russian Language/Literature, and History in Vienna, Moscow and Edinburgh, currently Senior Research Fellow conducting a habilitation project on "Austrian government employees and conduct of life (1918 - 1940) (<http://homepage.univie.ac.at/therese.garstenauer/?lang=en>), main areas of research: history of work and livelihood, history of government employees. Latest publication: Administrative Staff in Global Labour History, in: Marcel van der Linden/Karin Hofmeester (Eds.), Handbook Global History of Work, Berlin 2018, 309 – 327; The Conduct of Life of Austrian Civilian Government Employees in the First Republic, in: Geistes-, sozial-und kulturwissenschaftlicher Anzeiger, forthcoming 2018.