

Academising Sociology: Identifying Four Fields of René Worms’ Communication Strategy for the International Institute of Sociology

Christopher Montel, Charles University, Czech Republic

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Abstract

The French sociologist René Worms (1869–1926) is recognised as a brilliant organiser who managed to recruit prestigious collaborators across borders and vocations for his International Institute of Sociology. This achievement is also held against him—namely, the expected failure to produce anything substantial at a propositional or methodological level from such an assemblage of academics, statesmen, or even novelists. Worms’ recruitment policy nevertheless played a part in a wider communication strategy that contributed to the institutionalisation of sociology as an academic discipline through a logic of academisation. Academisation is here defined as Worms’ adaptive art of communicating, as the leader of the IIS, in terms of an academy, and in a context of setbacks, crises, and competition. Worms referred to his International Institute of Sociology as a “special academy” or “world academy”, an “authorised guardian”, and a “regulating centre” for sociology. Worms’ communication strategy speaks to wider topics, e.g., the vocational challenge facing sociology, or the role of awards and ceremonies, office and authorisation as control mechanisms over an expanding but irredeemably discordant sociological movement during this period. This paper identifies four fields in which Worms monitored events and developments as signs of an inexorable path towards the recognition of sociology: 1) awards and titles, 2) politics, 3) academia, and 4) protocol within the IIS. This approach helps redefine the standards by which Worms has been studied in historiography, by focussing on the organisational culture of the period, which helped shape and orient his communication strategy for the IIS.

Keywords: academisation of sociology, leadership, communication strategy

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Introduction

Between 1893 and 1895, the young advocate of sociology René Worms (1869–1926) founded a set of organisations whose creation represents a landmark in the institutionalisation of sociology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among these organisations were the specialised periodical *La Revue internationale de sociologie* (RIS) in 1893, the *Institut international de sociologie* (IIS) in mid-1893, and its related *Annales* (AIIS) in 1895.

The IIS has often been assessed collaterally to Worms and his overall legacy (e.g., Clark, 1967; Geiger, 1975; Karady, 1974; Mosbah-Natanson, 2008a, 2014; Mucchielli, 1998). Recent studies have focussed on Worms' leadership in his organisations independently of his contributions as a sociologist (e.g., Mosbah-Natanson, 2015; Rol, 2015). They highlight Worms as an “editorial entrepreneur” (Mosbah-Natanson, 2008b, p. 71). Worms' leadership style was highly dependent on his communication strategy. Even his publications discussing sociological theory can be read as communicational rather than propositionally coherent in nature. This was noted, and criticised, by early collaborators (e.g., RIS, 1895, p. 996, 1904, p. 779)¹. Worms was celebrated for his role in the “rebirth of sociology in Europe” in IIS congress speeches (AIIS, 1904, pp. 54–55) before being classified by historiography, at best, as an institutional founder of sociology—in opposition to a theoretical one (e.g., Baehr, 2002, p. 10).

The IIS was created in July 1893. Its stated purpose was to organise congresses and allow its participants to legislate on sociology as its “authorised guardian” and “regulating centre” (AIIS, 1895, p. VI). The formal setting of the IIS was akin to an elite academy of mostly university-based academics (Borlandi, 2015, p. 106). Worms' initiative in this domain would indeed qualify him as an “academic entrepreneur” (Heilbron et al., 2009, p. 327), and the IIS has already been described as a “scientific academy” (Skovajsa, 2020, p. 42). Worms himself occasionally referred to the IIS as a “special academy” (RIS, 1903, p. 3) or “world academy” (RIS, 1914, p. 85), but also as a “grand jury court of sociology” (RIS, 1921, p. 443).

This presentation revisits the International Institute of Sociology as an attempt by Worms to better legitimise sociology as a science through a strategy of academisation.

Academisation as a Communication Strategy for the IIS Amidst Setbacks and Crises

The term “academisation” has already been used to describe reforms in higher education at the end of the 19th century (Lybeck, 2021). However, academisation is here defined as Worms' adaptive art of communicating, as leader of the IIS, in terms of a “world academy”, amidst setbacks, crises, and competition. This concept of academisation should exclude any notion of effectively devising such an academy, having it officially named as such, or overriding the prerogatives of existing academies of sciences. It does, however, reflect Worms' intent in the mid-1890s to convince his audience of the necessity of an academic guardianship for sociology.

The IIS survived for many decades a series of setbacks, e.g., when organicism was resoundingly rejected in the late 1890s (AIIS, 1898, pp. 169–339). Participants at IIS congresses themselves complained about the inability to produce congress resolutions (e.g., *ibid.*, p. 261). Nevertheless, IIS congresses continued to be organised on a triennial basis with ever-increasing participation (e.g., AIIS, 1907, p. 46, 1913, p. 39). In the early years of the RIS,

¹ Worms championed organicism for the value which it enjoyed across disciplines as a “language”, in order to organise a common jargon for sociology (cf. Schlanger, 1992, p. 293).

Worms and other collaborators signed articles that ambitiously called for a radical transformation in higher education, where sociology would become an epistemological hegemon. These expectations drew on the reforms that did take place in higher education during the late 19th century (cf. Musselin, 2001), but they never materialised. Worms' brand of "high institutionalisation" (cf. Voříšek, 2008, p. 89) was dependent on this expected reorganisation (cf. Cuin et al., 2017, p. 75)². Instead, the RIS was left to monitor the slow and incremental process of introducing sociology as a specialised and autonomous university discipline.

By the late mid-1890s, Worms had ceased publishing articles in the RIS as a bold instigator of reform (cf. RIS, 1902, pp. 954–955). He simultaneously began communicating more frequently in the RIS and in his opening speeches at IIS congresses on the recruitment, careers, and distinctions of IIS members and associates. He also defended supervisory prerogatives for the IIS over an increasing number of partner sociological societies, laboratories, and institutes being created across borders³. Worms' communication strategy thus consisted in justifying the relevance of the IIS within an increasingly uncontrollable sociological movement.

The worst period of crisis for the IIS was undoubtedly the First World War and its aftermath. The protracted conflict forced Worms to suspend its activities, and he was never able to resume its congresses in his lifetime. This inability was compounded in the early 1920s by a project that Worms publicly denounced as usurping the IIS and its prerogatives: the Italian Francesco Cosentini's *Istituto internazionale di sociologia e riforme politiche e sociali* (IISRPS). In the RIS, Worms vehemently asserted that the IIS was the only legitimate body for organising international academic congresses in sociology. This exacerbated a logic of hegemony over the sociological movement (cf. Rol, 2015, p. 132, n. 47).

Scope of Audience, Restricted Access and Appropriation of the Sociological Movement

Worms' communication strategy targeted a core of academics while reassuring broader educated publics that sociology was neither a fad nor subversive (e.g., Mosbah-Natanson, 2017; Sapiro, 2004, p. 16). The audience for Worms' communication strategy in the RIS was wider than that of Émile Durkheim's *L'Année sociologique* (AS). The AS was published annually and usually consisted of a section for main articles and a section for peer reviews. In contrast, the RIS additionally fulfilled the function of an observer of the sociological movement. Initially a bi-monthly periodical, it became a monthly publication in its second year in 1894⁴. It could therefore monitor recent events and developments more frequently—developments it interpreted as steps in an inexorable process of institutionalisation for sociology.

Worms wanted his organisations not only to provide the sociological movement with legitimate bodies but also to structure its verticalisation. He emphasised the importance of a clear academic demarcation line. Worms' communication strategy consisted, to the point of

² For instance, Worms identified the *Collège de France* and the *Museum d'histoire naturelle* as possible candidates to spearhead his projected faculty of social sciences (RIS, 1895, p. 952).

³ This contributed to his successor Guillaume Léonce Duprat's federalisation project between the IIS and partnered sociological societies in the 1930s (cf. Rol, 2011), which can be considered, at least partly, as yet another form of institutional communication and leadership assertion.

⁴ Even if it was less impacted by WWI than Durkheim's AS (cf. Mucchielli, 1998, p. 522), the RIS once again became a bi-monthly periodical in 1917 and remained so for the rest of its first series (1893–1939).

redundancy, in the repeated use of the notion of “authorisation” (i.e., prior clearance). The IIS was always presented in terms of restricted access to its congresses (e.g., RIS, 1895, p. 715; RIS, 1905, pp. 574–575) and a “quality of quantity” policy for its interventions (RIS, 1925, pp. 346–347). Audiences at IIS congresses were described as “elite” (AIIS, 1913, p. 39) to distinguish an even higher level of actively participating congressmen.

Communicating on and Justifying Recruitment at the IIS

Worms’ recruitment policy for his organisations has been negatively assessed as counter-productive to professionalisation and specialisation in the field of sociology (cf. Cuin et al., 2017; Mosbah-Natanson, 2008a, 2014; Mucchielli, 1998). He recruited members and associates on a lifetime basis, without any requirement regarding methodological adherence or effective participation. This hindered the credibility of his organisations, which historiography has likened to “empty shells” (Mosbah-Natanson, 2008a, p. 42). Worms’ successors, such as Duprat in the 1930s, later attempted to evict non-active members and associates because this was by then understood to be detrimental to the IIS (RIS, 1934, p. 5).

Similarly, Worms’ recruitment policy was not restricted to profiles that were exclusively academic and dedicated to a “disciplinaryisation” (Blanckaert, 2006, p. 138) of sociology. Yet it remained coherent with his desire to present the IIS as an academy that admitted new members by sponsorship, and for which many spontaneous applications were reportedly turned down (AIIS, 1895, p. XXIV, 1897, p. 26). Worms began monitoring the recruitment of new IIS members and associates in the RIS in October 1896 (RIS, 1896, p. 766). He relied on a specifically academic form of authority (cf. Mosbah-Natanson, 2015, p. 192). Establishing the IIS as an official representative body for sociology required the support of academia. For instance, after referring to it as a “world academy”, Worms immediately added that the IIS held triennial congresses in the “universities of the main capital cities” (RIS, 1914, p. 85). The Paris congresses from 1897 to 1903, as well as those held in London, Bern, and Rome between 1906 and 1912, provided such an opportunity, which Worms had from the outset presented as an achievement for the IIS and for sociology (RIS, 1897, p. 657).

Worms was able to recruit in his lifetime a remarkable panel of academics whose names resonate far more positively in the historiography of sociology than Worms himself (Mosbah-Natanson, 2008a, p. 43; Mucchielli, 1998, p. 149). These names, however, appear in the lists of members and associates of the IIS alongside others that can hardly be associated with the history of sociology, at least by non-specialists—e.g., the statesmen James Arthur Balfour, Georges Clémenceau, Raymond Poincaré, and Woodrow Wilson, the novelist H. G. Wells, or the Esperanto advocate and pacifist activist Gaston Moch. Moreover, dozens of associates were batch-recruited over the years to secure ties with sociological societies abroad in preparation for congresses in their cities of affiliation. This was the case, for instance, for sixteen members of the London Sociological Society (LSS), including Wells (RIS, 1905, pp. 254–255), for the London congress (RIS, 1906, p. 498)⁵. Allied statesmen were batch-recruited in the years following WWI, but Worms always made a point of justifying their inclusion. Clémenceau, for instance, was admitted to the IIS as the translator of John Stuart Mill’s work on Auguste Comte (RIS, 1922, p. 639), while excerpts of Wilson’s publications were printed in the RIS (e.g., RIS, 1920, pp. 1–21), each time in an effort to label them as sociologists.

⁵ Balfour would later be authorised in 1912 as a member of the IIS in his capacity as president of the LSS (RIS, 1912, p. 254).

Four Fields That Were Invested by Worms' Communication Strategy

1. appropriating external honours as indirect validation for sociology,
2. celebrating members' political careers as sociology "entering" government,
3. monitoring academic promotions, especially new sociology chairs, while stressing leadership roles and interdisciplinary prestige to bolster the IIS's academy-like image,
4. emphasising protocol to align sociology with modern scientific internationalism and impose the IIS as its exclusive guardian.

Selected Examples for Each Field

Awards, Orders and Titles

The RIS reported, for instance, that Gabriel Tarde had been awarded the *Légion d'honneur* in 1895 (RIS, 1895, p. 715)⁶ and that Lester Ward had been awarded the *Palme académique* rank title of *Officier de l'Instruction publique* in 1904 (AIIS, 1904, p. 46; RIS, 1904, p. 78). Both Tarde and Ward were early members of the IIS, and Tarde was a close collaborator of Worms (RIS, 1904, p. 398). Worms attempted to appropriate these types of events for the benefit of sociology and/or his organisations. In these reports, he believed that Tarde should have been decorated for his sociological works rather than for his judicial career. He claimed that Ward, who also had several other engagements and connections in France, had been awarded the title for having presided over the fifth IIS congress in Paris.

Some of the distinctions reported in the RIS were as formally disconnected from sociology as the peerage of the first IIS president, the British anthropologist John Lubbock, as Baron of Avebury. This peerage was praised as an academic promotion among others (RIS, 1900, p. 78)⁷. However inconsistent these reappropriations might sound, they can also be read as a way to compensate for the lack of recognition from which many advocates of sociology believed their discipline was suffering.

Monitoring Political Careers of IIS Members

Worms celebrated the entry into politics of some of his collaborators, thereby reappropriating these career evolutions as an advantage for sociology itself (e.g., RIS, 1906, pp. 78–79). To this end, Worms encouraged Léon Bourgeois, an IIS member since 1904 (RIS, 1904, p. 873), to “no longer decline power” as he became French Minister of Foreign Affairs (RIS, 1906, p. 299). He would do the same when Édouard Herriot (RIS, 1905, p. 924, 1906, p. 77). The communicational spin consisted in presenting the IIS as lending its members to Government.

Generally speaking, Worms' recruitment policy was coherent with his widely shared views on the relation that sociology would enjoy with already established sciences. In terms of human resources, this meant that sociology could only be elaborated sporadically and on an avocational basis—unpaid and on the side of a continued professorial, university-based activity. The reward for IIS members and associates was to contribute to sociology at the expense of their careers, often with a vocabulary that conveyed the idea of sacrifice for science. Worms conveyed this sense of sacrifice particularly in his eulogies at IIS congresses and in his

⁶ Worms would also mention Tarde's acceptance into the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques* of the *Institut de France* in 1900 (RIS, 1904, p. 400).

⁷ The RIS also reported that Lubbock, as Baron of Avebury, was later awarded in 1903 the medal of *Grand Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur* (RIS, 1903, p. 606).

obituaries in the RIS. He contrasted this dedication to science with sometimes radically different careers, within or even outside academia. For example, rather than enjoying careers as high-ranking state officials, some IIS members and associates had chosen the less rewarding but more noble commitment to science (AIIS, 1904, p. 34). Worms might also have been evoking his own relationship with academia, as a State official at the *Conseil d'État* (cf. Vanneuville, 2003).

The political and geopolitical upheaval in the wake of WWI also brought unprecedented opportunities to Worms' communication strategy. Past and present political careers of IIS members from Allied and neutral states⁸ were exploited to provide some justification for its continued existence (cf. Rol, 2023, p. 103). In 1919, the IIS boasted of having had, in its history, a total of four heads of state as members, including the Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the American president Wilson (RIS, 1919, p. 215). Worms labelled them as "highly qualified sociologists" (ibid.). The advantages Worms sought from putting forward IIS members were obviously related to these collaborators' stature as statesmen⁹. Masaryk, however, corresponded to a profile that Worms could additionally exploit as a historic¹⁰ IIS member¹¹.

Monitoring Academic Careers of IIS Members and Associates

Worms believed that sociology had to feed on all sciences, including botanical science (RIS, 1909, p. 151). But when it came to communicating on the academic careers of his new recruits at the IIS, he discriminated between more or less relevant disciplines. In 1896, the newly recruited American Ward and the Italian Achille Loria were both presented as authors of reference works in sociology (RIS, 1896, op. cit.). But Loria was also presented as a professor of political economy (ibid.). For Worms, this was one of the more legitimate academic disciplines for a sociological vocation (cf. Papilloud, 2015, p. 69). Ward, however, was working for the United States Geological Survey (USGS), which Worms did not mention. Later, Worms monitored Ward's appointment in 1906 to the chair of sociology at Brown University and his departure from the USGS (RIS, 1906, p. 574). But he also insisted on this occasion that Ward had been an active member of the IIS for the past ten years, as well as one of its former presidents and the first president, still in office, of the American Sociological Society/Association (ASA) (ibid.). Ward's authorisation as a sociologist rested on these titles and functions at least as much as on his newly appointed professorship in sociology. Once again, the use of such terms as "abandoning" and "devoting" (RIS, 1906, op. cit.) also reflected Worms' belief that sociology, as a final legislative science, could only be an object of sacrifice, not career advancement.

⁸ The IIS had also counted a significant number of members and associates from Central European powers who had been involved in politics before WWI, admittedly not as heads of state (e.g., Albert Schäffle, Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Albín Bráf or Albert Apponyi). Worms had indiscriminately communicated on political careers regardless of geopolitics and diplomacy before WWI.

⁹ Worms named Masaryk president of the 1921 bureau, which was vice-presided by Wilson, Poincaré and the former Portuguese president Bernardino Machado (cf. Rol, 2023, p. 103). Clémenceau was the president of the following bureau, and Balfour a vice-president of the 1923 bureau. Moreover, recruiting statesmen was a common feature of scientific academies. Clémenceau had recently become a member of the *Académie française* in late November 1918, while Poincaré had been one of its members since 1909.

¹⁰ Masaryk had been recruited in August 1894, as a professor of philosophy at Charles University in Prague. Worms, R. (1894, August 14). [Letter to T. G. Masaryk]. *TGM Archival Fund* (k. P-65, i. č. P-19-7). Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹¹ Ibid., (1898, May 12). (k. P-197, i. č. P-30-9).

The RIS also published a speech which Masaryk gave in Paris during WWI (RIS, 1916, pp. 325–342).

Worms, however, did recognise the importance of these growing career opportunities for the institutionalisation of sociology, as when he celebrated Durkheim's new title at the University of Paris in 1913 as "Professor of educational science and sociology", calling it a "consecration of our science" (RIS, 1913, p. 596). This formalisation further enhanced the prestige of the IIS when it concerned its members and associates. In 1911, Worms reported on Ward's transfer to Columbia University in a continued effort to "teach sociology" and insisted that the "official titles" of Franklin Henry Giddings at the same university had included sociology since 1894 (RIS, 1911, p. 381)¹². At least 30 members and associates of the IIS recruited before WWI were officially presented at some point in the AIIS lists as "professors/privatdozent/associate professors of sociology"¹³. But a professorial position in the field of sociology, particularly before WWI, could not provide Worms with the kind of authority he sought from his collaborators' *curricula vitae* for the IIS as a "world academy". He complemented, whenever possible, this advertising with leadership positions, not only in the organisational apparatus from which sociology was benefiting¹⁴ – such as specialised periodicals and societies – but also in scientific academies across borders. An IIS member would ideally be presented in full regalia in several domains, e.g., as an academic, an academician, a member of a sociological society, a law official, a diplomat and/or a politician (e.g., RIS, 1897, p. 937).

Monitoring Protocol at the IIS as a "World Academy"

Worms created his organisations during a period of exponential increase in international scientific organisations and congresses, which provided the backbone for scientific internationalism (cf. Sapiro et al., 2009; Tournès, 2016). This movement, whose main epicentre was in Brussels (cf. Davies, 2022; Van Acker, 2014; Wils & Rasmussen, 2012), became highly self-promotional by the 1900s, giving as much importance to communication (cf. Verbruggen et al., 2022, pp. 4–5) as Worms did for his own organisations – for instance with the *Annuaire de la vie internationale* (AVI)¹⁵. Worms invested in this internationalist field mostly for communication purposes. He positively monitored the creation of international organisations in the RIS, particularly when collaborators to his organisations were involved (e.g., RIS, 1903, p. 342, 1895, pp. 1066–1067, 1903, p. 795)¹⁶. Worms also recruited some of the leading figures of the internationalist movement as IIS associates (e.g., RIS, 1909, pp. 317, 765) and in preparation for the 1909 IIS congress in Bern, Switzerland – perhaps the most internationalist of all IIS congresses before WWI¹⁷. Moreover, the RIS reported that the IIS had been represented at the first World Congress of International Associations in Brussels in 1910 by one of its Belgian internationalist members (RIS, 1910, p. 534).

¹² The significant advance that American scholars were enjoying in this domain in comparison with Europe before WWI was monitored early on in the RIS (e.g., RIS, 1893, p. 278, 1895, pp. 623–624).

¹³ This list does not include variants such as "professor in social sciences/social economics/social philosophy".

¹⁴ Even positions of treasurer in sociological societies were put forward (AIIS, 1907, p. 30).

¹⁵ The AVIs provided a number of chapters that dealt, for instance, with the "structure", "object", "types", cooperation between organisations, "offices and congresses", as well as "various activities" of international associations (e.g., AVI, 1908–9, pp. 37–152).

¹⁶ Many IIS members and associates, such as Apponyi, Böhm-Bawerk, Bourgeois, Lubbock, Novicow, Charles Gide or Gyula Mandelló, were implicated in internationalist peace organisations that advocated for peace and/or for the adoption of an international language, as well as in international documentation (e.g., RIS, 1903, p. 342; AVI, 1910–11, pp. 834–836; Congrès mondial des associations internationales, 1911, p. 546; cf. Gülich, 1992, pp. 111–114).

¹⁷ The International Institute for Peace, for instance, had backed the IIS member Ludwig Stein's invitation at the 1906 IIS congress in London to hold the next IIS congress in Bern (AIIS, 1907, p. 45).

An internationalist contextualisation provides an effective methodology to understand the organisational culture (cf. Bogale & Debela, 2024) on which Worms based his communication strategy for the IIS as a “world academy”. He advertised IIS protocol in ways synonymous with modernity and accountability, presenting the IIS as functioning strictly according to “scrupulous regulation” (AIIS, 1899, p. 25)—for instance during administrative meetings (e.g., AIIS, 1907, p. 35). Recruitment at the IIS was presented as respecting carefully organised subsections of an official body that embraced not only the international but also the infra-national, with certain seats supposedly reserved for “non-Parisian French members” (RIS, 1914, p. 619).

There are two domains where Worms’ communication strategy heavily relied on a sense of protocol: (1) the relationship with other organisations – including sociological societies and perceived rivals and usurpers – and (2) the conduct of congresses at an administrative and event-management level.

Relationship With Other Organisations

Monitoring associational life and initiatives in the domain of sociology across borders obeyed Worms’ original declaration of intent for the RIS to “organise sociology” (RIS, 1893, pp. 1–3). Worms monitored co-optation between his organisations and other scientific societies, including his own nomination as honorary member or vice-president (e.g., RIS, 1900, p. 239, 1923b, p. 445). Sociological societies were presented as organic extensions, or “cadet sisters” (AIIS, 1907, p. 50), of Worms’ organisations, either during speeches (AIIS, 1910, pp. 71–72, 74) or in recapitulative lists in the RIS (e.g., RIS, 1907, p. 318). The Italian Sociological Society was allegedly created for the purpose of organising the 1912 IIS congress in Rome (AIIS, 1910, p. 32). Behind this paternalistic discourse (cf. Rol, 2015, op. cit.) lay an attempt by Worms to bring endeavours by IIS members with potentially competing agendas back into the fold of his “world academy”. Similar enterprises to his own were positively monitored, but often with an urge to present them as reiterations of his pioneering efforts, e.g., in the case of the Belgian Ernest Solvay’s and Cosentini’s sociological laboratory projects (RIS, 1901, p. 711).

Worms’s insistence on precedence, hierarchy and legitimism in the organisational endeavour for sociology was exacerbated after WWI. Allied victory in 1918 had not worked to the advantage of the IIS, which Worms had refused to transform into an Inter-Allied organisation (cf. Tournès, 2016). He kept suspending its activities rather than officially exclude its German, Austrian or Hungarian members, arguing that the time had not yet come for “truly international meetings” (RIS, 1923, p. 657). Worms, however, reassured his readership that IIS congresses had been envisaged as soon as 1918 (ibid.) but also publicised his intent to copyright the term “International Institute of Sociology” (RIS, 1921, p. 648, 1924, p. 101) and insisted, for the 30th anniversary of the IIS, on the precedence that it was meant to enjoy over any sociological organisation (RIS, 1923, p. 3). This narrative was meant to preserve the integrity of the IIS from usurping projects, namely Cosentini’s aforementioned IISRPS. Worms adopted an unusually aggressive tone towards Cosentini after the holding of the first IISRPS congresses in Turin and Vienna¹⁸ in 1921 and 1922 respectively, which was noted by IIS members themselves (e.g., Michels, 1930). After criticising the lack of demarcation between scientific and practical issues regarding the topics of discussion, Worms dismissed the IISRPS as illegitimate because Cosentini had been able to gather mostly participants from the still-

¹⁸ Ironically, the IIS had meant to hold its original ninth congress in Vienna in 1915, before postponing it indefinitely (RIS, 1915, p. 665).

ostracised Germanic world, but also because only several “economists”, and no true “sociologist”, were willing to collude with such a project (RIS, 1921, pp. 655–656). Cosentini was no longer presented in the RIS as a former RIS contributor or a member of Worms’ organisations, but simply as the librarian and visiting professor at the University of Turin (RIS, 1921, p. 655). Worms thus used symbolic authority conferred by academic positions to uphold the exclusive prerogative of his “world academy” to decide when and how scientific internationalism in the field of sociology was allowed to resume.

Managing Congresses

Opening and closing speeches by various local and national officials during IIS congresses contrasted with the explicit banning of any such interference at the first congresses of the German Sociological Society (e.g., RIS, 1910, p. 813, 1912, p. 829). The RIS and the AIIS also reported on dancing halls and toasts given during banquets (AIIS, 1907, p. 39, 1910, p. 42, 1913, p. 43). Similarly, Otlet considered receptions, concerts, garden parties, galas and “all kinds of entertainment imaginable” (AVI, 1908–9, p. 134) as part and parcel of any successful scientific congress, albeit sometimes excessively (ibid., p. 135). In the case of the IIS, these receptions were organised by the local organisational committees of the congresses in coordination with partner sociological societies. Worms saluted these efforts essentially for diplomatic reasons with these collaborators. But his descriptions of IIS congress entertainment were also about matching for the sake of sociology what was being lavished in the name of other sciences. The AVI reported, for instance, that a hair salon, among other “accessory services”, was available for “the ladies” at the 1908 Berlin Congress of Historical Sciences and its 8,000 members (ibid., p. 133), according to a strict observance of gender-based social roles during this period. Otlet noted that women benefited from half-price entry cards to some congresses since “many ladies only attend parties, receptions and visits” (ibid., p. 52). Worms similarly commented on the “beauty” and “elegant charm” that women brought to his congresses (e.g., AIIS, 1913, p. 40) and implied that, since women were apparently “averse to abstract matters” (AIIS, 1896, p. 48), their presence might cast doubt on the serious nature of IIS congresses. Worms, a man of his time, was concerned above all with the recognition of sociology as a science and the IIS as its “authorised guardian” (AIIS, 1895, op. cit.).

Conclusion

Worms manufactured legitimacy for his IIS partly by reappropriating the symbolic capital of existing academies. The IIS thus functioned less as a research centre than as a “guardian” that claimed the right to “authorise” what counted as sociology. This high-institutionalisation project, however, remained fragile precisely because it was more communicative than substantive. It survived crises and wars by narrative rather than by a capacity for autonomous, propositional production.

Worms’ discourse framed sociological engagement avocationally rather than as a profession. IIS members were celebrated for sacrificing career to serve a higher calling. Sociology appeared as an avocational crown of sorts: an elite service to science that revealed its pre-professional character. This ethos allowed Worms to recruit polymaths, statesmen, and even novelists, but it also exposed its fundamental aversity to specialisation. The IIS could indeed claim universality only by tolerating a porous boundary between sociology and other fields.

Finally, Worms aligned his academy with the exponential growth of international scientific organisations before WWI. By producing the same type of protocol, congress rituals, and self-

promotional language of the internationalist movement, he positioned the IIS as sociology's exclusive diplomatic representative. His ultimate failure to resume congresses after WWI and the rivalry with Cosentini's IISRPS only confirmed that the international field itself had become a site of institutional competition. Worms' "academisation" strategy therefore reveals institutionalisation as a communicative performance (cf. Schlanger 1992, op. cit.), vocation as an elite sacrificial ethos, and internationalisation as a power-laden process. In this light, the IIS stands as both a pioneering and cautionary chapter in the history of the social sciences.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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Contact email: montelcgz@yahoo.com