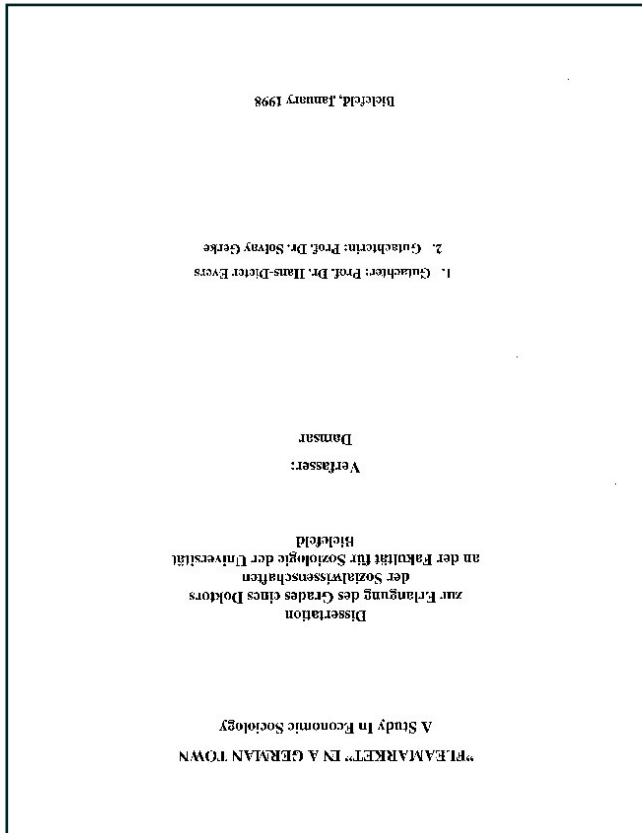




Damsar (Autor)  
**Fleamarket in a German town**



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# PART I : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION : THE FLEAMARKET AS A SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE OF SOCIOLOGY

#### A. Studies on the Fleamarket

Studies of the fleamarket are not yet developed in the social sciences. The fleamarket is still regarded by social scientists as a marginal aspect of their research. There are two reasons which can be proposed why examining the fleamarket is still not a major project in the social sciences. Firstly, the fleamarket emerged, especially in Germany, as a social economic phenomenon around 1960 and the fleamarket has flourished in almost all German cities only since the 1970s (Oberbel, 1985; Winter, 1996). Secondly, fleamarkets are seen as only a kind of informal aspect of the economy the contribution of which for the German economy is not significant enough to be considered as a proper subject for the scientific enterprise. Up to now there have been only four studies of the German fleamarket by social scientists.

The first empirical study of fleamarkets in Germany was carried out by Gisela Schessing-Krusch in 1982. Her "Diplomarbeit" (M.A. thesis) focused on the spatial planning. She sees the fleamarket as the new urban adventure and communication space in the city. The second study on this topic was conducted by Hartmut Heller in 1984. He looked at the *Tempelmarkt* in Nürnberg as origin of the German fleamarket. Thirdly, within the framework of their introduction to the method of the empirical social research at the University of Marburg, Carsten Claus et al. carried out the empirical research twice, in 1983 and 1989, at the Fleamarket in Marburg. They interviewed both sellers and visitors who engaged in activities at the Marburg fleamarket. They found that engaging in the fleamarket activities of trading and visiting can be seen as an institution of leisure and communication. In his dissertation "Trödelmärkte: Eine empirische Untersuchung zur sozialen und ökonomischen Struktur einer Institution privater Öffentlichkeit", Günter Winter argues that the fleamarket is a "private public" and leisure institution. The term "private public" institution means that the fleamarket is located between the private and the public sphere. The actors in the fleamarket, especially the sellers, present aspects of their private lives, like their style, through displaying their clothes in the public sphere. The fleamarket itself is also seen by Winter as a place for leisure.

Furthermore, some other studies have discussed the German fleamarket, but as a minor topic. Gebhardt mentioned the fleamarket, when he explained operation of the market for secondhand goods (1986). Like Gebhardt, in his dissertation "Der institutionelle Handel mit gebrauchten Konsumgütern: Strukturanalyse und Marktpolitik" (1987) Fuhrmann also discussed the fleamarket as an institution of the trade in secondhand goods.

Based on these studies of the flea market, we argue, however, that sociologists have not yet elaborated on the flea market as a significant aspect of the scientific enterprise of sociology. Most of these studies have explained the flea market phenomenon in the perspective of urban sociology, namely the flea market is seen as a way of using urban space for social purposes (Claus et al., 1990; Winter, 1996). Departing from this situation, therefore, I would like to take the flea market seriously as a part of the scientific enterprise of sociology. In contrast to these other sociologists, I see the flea market as an entry point for the "new economic sociology".

## B. Historical Sketches of the Flea Market

The buying and selling of secondhand goods are not something new for Germans. These activities have taken place for a long time. Through the social, economic, and historical process, these activities take a new form in the flea market. The flea market, in its current form, is very common throughout Germany at present time, also in Bielefeld. In this part, it will be discussed two things : history of German flea market and of Bielefeld flea market.

### a. A History of the German Flea Market

According to Hartmut Heller (1984) the history of German flea market can be traced to the "Trenpelmarkt" which was held from 1494 until 1914 in Nürnberg. This market was attended by the cobblers, who repaired worn shoes and by sellers of secondhand clothing.

After the Second World War, in Berlin the *Schwarzmarkt* (the black market) emerged as a market-place where barter and cigarettes were used as the general medium of exchange. Hermann Glaser (1991: 32) pointed that :

Der Schwarzmarkt entstand, weil die Reichsmark als Zahlungsmittel fast wertlos geworden war; bedingt durch die hohen Ausgaben für Kriegsrüstung war in Deutschland zuviel Geld im Umlauf; angesichts des geringen Umfangs der für den Handel verfügbaren Konsumgüter tauschte man Ware gegen Ware, oder Zigaretten ersetzen das Geld als Währung.

In this *Schwarzmarkt* people exchanged not only new goods and foods but also secondhand goods. In its development, this *Schwarzmarkt* continued in a formal form, namely the *Secondhand-Markt*. This latter form did not use parks or streets as market-places, but rather in-door place like kiosks, shops, etc. In this new form, the seller of secondhand goods follows the German regulations for market activities, in general, such as paying tax (Klocke and Spellerberg, 1990).

The flea market in its present form emerged around 1960 in Germany (Jüllich and Jungst, 1977). By the 1970s, the flea market had emerged in various cities in West Germany. During this decade, the sellers were usually not professional traders who engaged in trade in order to make money, but only pseudo traders who attended the flea market to fulfill a value rational orientation. After the 70's, the flea market became more developed in both number and kind. At the beginning of the 1980s the

commercialization of certain flea markets appeared through the combining of flea market and trading. In other words, some organizers of flea markets hold flea markets to earn a profit and also some traders sell their goods to make a profit. Today, this type of economic activity is very common throughout Germany, especially in the former West Germany. (Winter, 1996; Oberbell, 1985). There were 1500 flea markets in 1985, as estimated by Oberbell. According to Jüllich and Jungst (1977) and Winter (1996), the flea market can now be found throughout cities in Germany.

### b. A History of the Bielefeld Flea Market

According to on interviews, before the Second World War in Bielefeld there were the sellers who bought and sold secondhand goods by going from door to door. They were known as the *Lumpensammler*. In addition, at the "*Kirmesmarkt*", there were also people who sold secondhand goods.

Under the title "Nicht nur in Paris, auch in Bielefeld gibt es seit kurzem einen 'Flohmarkt'", Hannes wrote an article in the *Neue Westfälische* on the emergence of "the flea market" on May 5th 1963. For the first time in Bielefeld, a seller sold the secondhand goods, meaning here antiques, in a shop located in the *Stressemannstraße*.

On May 6th 1972, the first flea market was held in Bielefeld. This flea market was organized by the city of Bielefeld through the *Ordnungsamt*, at the "alten Markt". With the passing of time, this flea market was only located at the *Klosterplatz* area and its surrounding area. To run this market-place as effectively as possible, in 1992 the Bielefeld officials gave Otto & Grote GBR a chance to organize the flea market. Besides this, Bielefeld city government, through the *Freizeitzentrum*, organized an in-door flea market, at the end of 1981 in *Baumheide*. This flea market became the pilot project for the other *Freizeitzentren* flea markets, like *Stieghorst*, *Stricker*, and so forth.

According to interviews, Otto & Grote GBR was the first private company to organize flea markets in Bielefeld. This private company held a flea market in 1984 for the first time. They organized about 42 flea markets in 1995. We will discuss the role of this company in the next chapter.

### c. Why Study the German Flea Market ?

There are several reasons for doing a sociological study of the German flea markets. One reason is that this topic is basically undeveloped in sociology in Germany. Through this study of the flea market, as described, I hope to contribute something to sociology, especially to the New Economic Sociology. Secondly, I who come from a developing country, Padang in Indonesia, wondered when I visited the German flea market for first time in Göttingen, why rich Germans go to the flea market. There I saw that people sold their own used goods for a few marks, while beside their stand a "Volvo" car was parked. For Indonesians, the "Volvo" is a "minister's car". In addition, in my country, especially in Padang, the flea market is called as "pasar miskin" (the poor market). This means the market for the poor people. It is called this because the traded goods are too worn or old or are stolen things. If someone goes to this market, he or she will be stigmatized as poor. Therefore the "have" people do

not go to the flea market. Since, if someone visits the flea market, it can lower her or his social status. Seen from this point, as a student of sociology, at the time, I thought there must be something involved in the German flea market which differs from Indonesian flea markets.

Thirdly, if we compare Germany with other advanced European industrial countries, i.e., with France, England, and Italy, Germany is located in the center of Europe and borders on the ex-communist countries, Poland and The Czech Republic. This situation makes Germany the gate to the European Union for people from the ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Fourthly, in comparing with other advanced industrial countries grouped into the G7, Germany has an environmental movement more active on both the political level and the social level. In Germany, the Green party is able to influence government policy on the environment both in the federal government and in some "Bundesländer" (the federal states). In some states, like in North Rhine Westphalia, the Green Party together with the Social Democrats (SPD) are the governing parties. In social level, in everyday life Germans take care of their environment. Germans preserve their natural environment through various activities such as disposing of damaged household goods, garbage, and other unwanted objects to different garbage containers and recycling some materials.

## D. The Concept of the Flea market

Based on observations and interviews, Germans use several words to denote a market place where people can sell their own used goods:

- Der Flohmarkt
- Der Trödelmarkt
- Der Antikmarkt
- Der Trödelbasar
- Der Krammarkt
- Der Sammlermarkt
- Der Adventsflohmarkt
- Der Weihnachtsflohmarkt
- Der Sommerflohmarkt
- Der Frühlingflohmarkt
- Der Kinderflohmarkt

According to interviews with a number of flea market organizers, the words above refer to one situation only, namely the marketplace where people can bring secondhand or new goods to sell. The words like "Floh", "Trödel", "Antique", "Kram" mean goods which have been used or have become "secondhand". Some organizers of the flea markets add these words to other words which are related to the season like "Sommer" (summer) and "Frühling" (spring), or at certain time's like Advent and "Weihnachten" (Christmas), and to certain groups like "Kinder" (children) and "Sammler" (collectors), etc.

Based on observations and interviews, the organizers use "Flohmarkt" more than any other destination for their market. As already mentioned, "Trödel" is German for secondhand things. Seen in this context, goods traded in this market-place are

secondhand things or used items. It does not mean that traders sell only secondhand goods, at certain flea markets, sellers also offer new goods, handicrafts, vegetables, etc. If the organizers of a flea market allow traders to sell new goods and vegetables, they will announce this fact in their advertisements. We will return to this topic in the following chapter.

In principle, anybody can sell things at the flea market. This means that at the flea market, there are different traders who have various purposes for being there, such as having fun, spending leisure-time, meeting other people, finding a new atmosphere, and making money. Thus we can distinguish the flea market from the secondhand shop. In contrast to the flea market, at the secondhand shop one engages in trade only to earn money. She or he trades there because this shop belongs to him or her. Furthermore, the visitors attend the flea market also have varying motivations like having fun, engaging in social contacts, collecting something, etc. On other hand, customers who come to the secondhand shop are that they want to buy used goods. There are no people there who seek to fulfill a value orientation like having fun, making new friends, spending leisure time, etc.

Based on the time of the activity, we can also distinguish between the flea market and the secondhand shop. The flea market is by and large held at the weekend, namely on Saturday and/or Sunday. In contrast to the flea market, the secondhand shop generally is open on workdays. Also the traders who sell secondhand goods at the flea market do not need a license. On the other hand, owners of secondhand shops need a trade license. From this point of view, therefore, the economic activity which is conducted at the secondhand shop can be classified as part of the formal sector of the economy. In this sector one has to pay tax to the state or city in order to do this kind of business. In contrast to the secondhand shop, at the flea market one pays only a small fee for using space in order to set up table and display goods. Therefore, this activity can be regarded as part of the informal sector of the economy.

The following is a table indicating the differences between the flea market and the secondhand shop.

Table 1.1. Distinction between the Flea market and the Secondhand Shop

Items	The Flea market	The Secondhand shop
Traders	public	Private
Purposes engaging in trade	profit & nonprofit	Profit
Kinds of exchanged goods	various kinds	one kind
Purposes for visiting	heterogeneous	Homogeneous
Market-place	public sphere	private sphere
Market-day	weekend	work-days
Kinds of economic activity	informal	formal