

Abstract: The State - an Austrian History?

This article reflects on the role of the state and its performance in the process of political and social integration in the Habsburg monarchy. The Austrian state of the 19th and early 20th centuries provides a privileged point of reference as it never developed into a nation state. It thus lacked an imagined transcendent legitimacy and coherence which allowed even contemporary observers to contemplate about the integrative potential of complex forms of statehood. I will pursue this argument in four steps by looking first at the strategies of the government to open the state towards participation of non-state actors. This will be followed by a discussion of the failures of the state to engage systematically with economy and society. I will draw mainly on the continuing relevance of high placed mediators, the solipsistic character of state administration and the puristic bureaucratic logic, which prevented a successful, collaborative deployment of public goods.

Keywords: Austrian History; Habsburg monarchy; Public Goods; Cultural history of the state; Public Administration

Schlagworte: Österreichische Geschichte; Habsburgermonarchie; öffentliches Gut; Kulturgeschichte des Staates; Öffentliche Verwaltung