

In memoriam: Heinrich W. Ursprung

(September 28, 1951 – August 17, 2021)

by Niklas Potrafke

Heinrich W. („Henry“) Ursprung was an outstanding economist, advisor and mentor. He was born 1951 in Basel, and grew up and studied economics in Basel. Peter Bernholz offered Henry a position as his assistant and supervised his Ph.D. thesis. Henry was trained as a theoretical economist working, for example, on political competition. He was an excellent student and graduated in 1981. He went abroad for seven years, visiting Stanford, the Center for Study of Public Choice in Blacksburg, and the University of Wellington in New Zealand.

From 1985 to 1987, Henry was a visiting fellow at the UCLA. This visit influenced Henry's life to a large extent: Henry met Arye Hillman, an economist from Israel, who was also visiting the UCLA. Henry and Arye became co-authors and very close friends. At the end of July 2021, just before Henry died, Arye described the relationship between him and Henry as being brothers. Their research was awarded the Max Planck research prize for outstanding research in the field of political economy in 1994. Arye wrote about Henry here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-021-00932-8> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0176268021001075>.

In 1988, Henry became a full professor of economics at the University of Konstanz. He received offers from other universities, including the University of St. Gallen, the University of Munich and Georgetown University but remained at the University of Konstanz until his retirement in 2019. Henry enjoyed his location and colleagues and saw importance in being close to his family. Henry trained his students in writing papers for internationally refereed journals (German professors still were more inclined to write books at this time). He established a Collaborative Research Centre financed by the German Science Foundation and invited international visitors to Konstanz. He served as the dean of the faculty of Economics and Statistics and as the chairman of the Economics department.

Henry was a very active member of the European Public Choice Society. He was the president of the EPCS in 1990-91 and organized the 1990 EPCS meetings in Meersburg. Henry liked to discuss research ideas, he liked to listen to others, to reflect and was al-

ways prepared to provide comments that helped to improve the studies of his colleagues. He was interested in the research of young scholars, who he encouraged to develop ideas using the concepts and approach of public choice and political economy.

Henry and Arye initiated the Silvaplana Political Economy Workshop in 1989. The intention was to allow their students to present their research. The format, which has been retained with the expansion of the workshop to the present, is that papers are presented in the mornings and evenings, with mountain walks in the afternoon that allowed personal connection through discussions and conversations.

Henry provided service to the profession in manifold ways. He edited (together with Arye and Jakob de Haan) the European Journal of Political Economy (EJPE) over the period 1994-2013. They established the EJPE as an excellent field journal in political economy. Henry was a member of the review board (economics) of the German National Science Foundation, the chairman of the Research Monitoring Group of the Verein für Socialpolitik, and the deputy chairman of the scientific council of the ifo Institute. Many people benefitted from Henry's advice.

Henry's oeuvre was impressive. He was interested in issues in public choice, international political economy, institutional economics, cultural economics, labor economics and bibliometrics. Henry influenced the German economics profession by establishing rankings for scholars' and departments' research outputs. He was trained as a theoretical economist, had a brilliant mind, and did his own empirical analyses at the end of his career.

Henry was an outstanding supervisor and mentor and encouraged many young economists to pursue an academic career. I can say – in the name of all his students – that we are ever so grateful.