

## Otto Neurath – Dates and Facts

- 1882 Otto Neurath is born in Vienna on 10 December as the son of economist Wilhelm Neurath and Gertrud Kaempffert.
- 1901–06 He studies mathematics, economics, history and philosophy in Vienna and Berlin. Doctorate summa cum laude in Berlin with the dissertation “Towards a Perspective on Antiquity through Trade, Commerce and Agriculture”.
- 1907–13 Neurath teaches political economy at the Vienna Business School. His first wife, the economist, translator and women’s rights advocate Anne Schapire, dies in 1911 shortly after giving birth to their son Paul. In 1912 he marries the mathematician Olga Hahn. On a fellowship from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Neurath undertakes research trips to the Balkans in 1912 and 1913.
- 1914–19 Military service on the Eastern Front. In 1916 Neurath is appointed head of the “Scientific Committee for War Economy”, a department of the Austro-Hungarian War Ministry. In 1917 he receives a teaching position in political economy at the University of Heidelberg. The next year he is named director of the German Museum of War Economy in Leipzig. In March 1919 the Bavarian Council of Ministers appoints Neurath president of the newly created Central Planning Office. He remains in office through both Munich Soviet Republics, and thus after their overthrow he is arrested as an “accessory to high treason”. After forty days’ imprisonment he is released at the intervention of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner. Neurath is deported to Austria in February 1920, whereby he is prohibited from reentering Germany for seven years and loses his teaching post in Heidelberg.
- 1920–25 Back in Vienna, Neurath becomes an important thinker in Social-Democratic educational and social policymaking. In 1920 he is appointed secretary general of the Austrian Settlement and Allotment Garden Association

(director 1921–25). In 1924 he founds the Museum of Society and Economy in Vienna, of which he remains director until 1934. Various project commissions lead Neurath to begin development of the “Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics”.

- 1926–29 Quantitative pictures and cartograms appear in various journals and in numerous exhibitions in Vienna and abroad. In the course of his participation in the 1926 international exhibition “GESOLEI – Health, Social Welfare and Physical Fitness” in Düsseldorf, Neurath meets graphic designer Gerd Arntz and wins his collaboration. Pictorial education is implemented in Viennese schools on a trial basis. Neurath is a member of the Vienna Circle and co-author of its manifesto “The Scientific Conception of the World” (1929).
- 1930–34 Publication of the seminal work of pictorial statistics, the portfolio *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft* (Society and Economy) featuring 100 color plates, commissioned by the Leipzig Bibliographic Institute. In 1931 “Isostat” is set up in Moscow as a cooperating institute for using pictorial statistics in the furtherance of the Soviet planned economy. Neurath founds the “Mundaneum” in Vienna, with a sister institute opening in the Hague the following year. In 1932 the “International Foundation for Visual Education” is established with branches in several European capitals. Neurath lectures at the “Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne” (CIAM) in Athens (1933). The 1934 February Uprising in Vienna catches Neurath by surprise in Moscow. He and his team opt to avoid the risks of returning to the new Austrofascist state and flee to The Hague. From there Neurath organizes the “International Unity of Science” movement. The “Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics” is renamed “International System of Typographic Picture Education” (ISOTYPE).
- 1935–39 First International Congress for the Unity of Science in Paris (1935). The books *International Picture Language* (1936) and *Basic by Isotype* are published in London. In 1938 the first volumes of the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science: Foundations of the Unity of Science* are published by the University of Chicago Press. In 1939 *Modern Man in the*

*Making* is published by Alfred Knopf in New York. Neurath travels to New York for the book presentation, but returns to Holland immediately on account of the imminent outbreak of war.

1940–45 Neurath and his long-time collaborator Marie Reidemeister flee precipitously to England shortly before the National Socialist invasion of Holland. They are interned for nine months on the Isle of Man and eventually released thanks to the intervention of colleagues (most notably Albert Einstein). In 1941 Otto Neurath marries Marie Reidemeister (Braunschweig 1898 – 1986 London). He lectures on Logical Empiricism and on the social sciences at Oxford, and also serves as a consultant for a project to revitalize the industrial slums of Bilston. In this context Neurath refers to himself as a “consulting sociologist of human happiness”. Founding of the British Isotype Institute, which will later be headed by Marie Neurath. “Animated Pictorial Statistics” are developed for documentary films directed by Paul Rotha. On 22 December 1945 Otto Neurath dies unexpectedly at his home in Oxford.

First excerpts of Neurath’s visual autobiography *From hieroglyphics to Isotype* appear posthumously in 1946 in London. A complete edition of the book is published in 2010 by Hyphen Press, London. Marie Neurath continues her husband’s picture-educational work into the 1970s, eventually transferring the archives and papers to the University of Reading (UK) as the “Otto and Marie Neurath Isotype Collection”.