

## MASS MIGRATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE: CENTRAL EUROPEAN CITIES IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Workshop at the GHI, May 11–12, 2007. Conveners: Marcus Gräser (University of Frankfurt/NEH-GHI Fellow), Gisela Mettele (GHI). Participants: Lars Amenda (University of Hamburg), Regula Argast (University of Zurich), Cathleen Giustino (Auburn University), Ulrike von Hirschhausen (University of Hamburg), Michael John (University of Linz), Brian McCook (Leeds Metropolitan University), Susanne Peters-Schildgen (Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum Ratingen), Peter Stachel (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften), Rolf Wörsdorfer (Technical University of Darmstadt).

After a warm welcome by Gisela Mettele, deputy director of the GHI, Marcus Gräser introduced the workshop by placing the themes of mass migration and urban governance in a broader, comparative perspective. American urbanization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has always been described as a unique experience. Yet from a comparative viewpoint, the assumption of an American urban exceptionalism may be questioned because urbanization in Central Europe was no less the result of mass migration, mostly from rural areas. While some Central European cities had an ethnic makeup that resembled the situation in a typical American city, the experience of mass migration, either mono- or multi-ethnic, had a crucial impact on urban governance in both Central Europe and in America. The aim of the workshop, as Gräser concluded, was to examine this impact and to try to differentiate the various outcomes within Central Europe and in transatlantic comparison.

Brian McCook started with a comparison of the Polish immigrant challenge in the Ruhr area and in northeastern Pennsylvania between 1870 and 1924. While Polish associations in northeastern Pennsylvania also served economic functions in the life of the migrants, this was not the case in the more nationally oriented Ruhr associations because of the existence of state-sponsored social security programs. It turns out that the Pennsylvania Poles acted more effectively as an ethnic lobby, making their voices heard on a national stage more successfully than was possible in Germany. Susanne Peters-Schildgen could bolster this observation by looking more closely at the Polish minority in certain Ruhr cities, pointing out that the state's suppressive policy toward the Polish migrants did not lead to Germanization as hoped, but instead caused a rather nationalistic

outlook among the Polish associations. Rolf Wörsdorfer presented a case study of the mining town of Hamborn, which after heavy in-migration in the late nineteenth century became marked by an exodus of Polish workers in the early twentieth century.

Lars Amenda sketched transmigration processes and the ways the authorities dealt with them in the port city of Hamburg around the turn of the century. While in-migration and mobility on the one side were a typical feature of booming Hamburg around 1900, the local control of the migrants became even more restrictive, as the example of the Chinese showed. Although quantitatively a marginal group, their coming evoked fears and threats leading to local measures hindering permanent settlement of Chinese migrants. Turning the attention to Switzerland, Regula Argast contrasted the Hamburg case with that of Basel, where liberal municipal legislation facilitated in-migration and the local naturalization (*Bürgerrecht*) of both Swiss and non-Swiss migrants. Ulrike von Hirschhausen used the example of the Baltic port city of Riga to show how transfers of Western models of social politics yielded a far-fledged communal policy trying to accommodate multiethnic groups of migrants, culminating in Tsarist Russia's first municipal social security system.

Peter Stachel opened the second day of the workshop with some notes on early sociological thought in urban Austria at the turn of the century, which applied the ideas of the Chicago School regarding its works on multiethnic groups in American cities. Cathleen Giustino brought a new scenario into the discussion by highlighting Prague's municipal activities in tearing down the Jewish town around 1900. Although the destruction of the former ghetto brought Prague in line with Central European middle-class representations of order, the reshaping failed to secure the middle class's hold over local power, and gave rise to ongoing lower-class discontent after World War I. Marcus Gräser introduced his comparative research on Chicago and Vienna by focusing on party formations in both cities. He was able to show that, while the American party machines, despite all their deficiencies, did not exclude any ethnic minorities, Vienna's Christian Socialist mayor Karl Lueger built his party's rule on ethnic and religious exclusion. In a comparison of migration patterns between Vienna, Linz, and Czernowitz, Michael John concluded that, while in Vienna and Linz, politics of assimilation, often repressive ones, dominated, Czernowitz managed to accommodate ethnic plurality to a large degree.

The lively discussions during and at the end of the workshop brought to light once more the fact that criteria for a truly comparative urban history are still lacking. Gender and memory, for example, featured only marginally in the workshop's papers, reflecting thereby a general feature

of current urban historiography. Also, future research needs to consider processes of assimilation and acculturation more intensively. Last but not least, the question was raised whether urban history needs a new terminology as well as new conceptual modes and semantics beyond the classical social theories of urbanization. Thanks to the GHI's workshop and the input of the conveners, problems and promises of current urban historiography could fruitfully be discussed, thereby influencing the research currently undertaken by all participants.

*Ulrike von Hirschhausen*