

## PHILANTHROPY, PATRONAGE, AND URBAN POLITICS: TRANSATLANTIC TRANSFERS BETWEEN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Conference at the University of Toronto, May 3–5, 2001. Conveners: Thomas Adam (University of Toronto), Eckhardt Fuchs (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), James Retallack (University of Toronto). Participants: Maria Baader (University of Toronto), Karsten Borgmann (Free University of Berlin), Tobias Brinkmann (University of Leipzig), Andreas W. Daum (GHI), Jon Dellandrea (University of Toronto), Brett Fairbairn (University of Saskatchewan), David C. Hammack (Case Western Reserve University), Dieter Hoffmann (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), John Ingham (University of Toronto), Jennifer Jenkins (Washington University), Roger Keil (York University), Simone Lässig (Technical University of Dresden), Gabriele Lingelbach (University of Trier), Margaret Menninger (Southwest Texas State University), Susannah Morris (London School of Economics), Marline Otte (Tulane University), H. Glenn Penny (University of Missouri), Derek Penslar (University of Toronto), Daniel Porsch (University of Tübingen), Jean Quataert (SUNY Binghamton), Mark A. Russel (Toronto), Oliver Schmidt (Bertelsmann Foundation).

In early May 2001 eighteen scholars met in Toronto for the first international conference on philanthropy in a comparative context. Conveners Thomas Adam, Eckhardt Fuchs, and James Retallack brought together historians and social scientists from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. This mixture and the decision to gather the papers in a conference reader, which was distributed to all participants prior to the conference, enabled the participants to discuss in-depth several aspects of the phenomenon “philanthropy.”

Research on philanthropy in Europe and North America is still in the early stages. Whereas American social scientists have produced a wide range of books on this topic, the limits of their findings are immediately obvious. Most of these writings focus on American philanthropy after 1930 and neglect the origins of these ideas. In other words, the emergence and development of philanthropy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is not discussed. Moreover, American scholars have failed to develop a theoretical concept of philanthropy. In addition, research on German philanthropy has only begun in the last ten years. The impetus for this research stems not

from historical interest but from a change in German political culture. Although the topic of *Bürgertum* has been fashionable among German historians for over twenty years, these historians have neglected or excluded one of the most important bourgeois behavioral patterns from their research, namely, philanthropy. This exclusion results from certain assumptions about German historical development and society. Because many historians assumed that Germany experienced a *Sonderweg* (special path toward modernity), creating a distinct bourgeoisie that lacked political emancipation, no one thought to search for elements of a civil society—by definition a non-German version of modern society. It was assumed that the German bourgeoisie did not develop feelings of responsibility for German society. Rather, historians have expected that the state took responsibility for financing social and cultural public institutions. Therefore, philanthropy has been widely seen as an American invention and as a distinct American approach to modern life.

This interpretation was subjected to much criticism during the conference. Several papers presented a picture of a German bourgeoisie that took responsibility for German society and engaged in a broad variety of social, cultural, and scientific philanthropies, just as their American counterparts did. Margaret Menninger used the example of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra to show how this institution was founded and supported by Leipzig's upper class. Not only did she analyze the social composition of the financiers of this particular orchestra, she also looked at the political connections of the orchestra board within the city. Whereas financial backing came mostly from the commercial bourgeoisie, civil servants and liberal professionals were also important. H. Glenn Penny focused on ethnographic museums in Wilhelmine Germany, arguing that these institutions garnered considerable support from private patrons from all over the world. Eckhardt Fuchs and Dieter Hoffmann argued that German industrialists—contrary to traditional interpretation—promoted and funded scientific projects. Werner von Siemens, for example, donated more than half a million Reichsmarks to the new Imperial Institute of Physics and Technology. Philanthropy for science therefore was not exclusively an American phenomenon—it also had a long tradition in Germany.

Jennifer Jenkins used the case study of Hamburg's People's Home to investigate the philanthropic engagement of Hamburg's upper class. The founders of Hamburg's People's Home were convinced that moral improvement was the precondition for social improvement. Subsequently, the provision of enlightenment through instruction in the fine arts was the main venue of philanthropic activity. Further, Jenkins's paper introduced the second main topic of the conference, namely, the transatlantic transfer of philanthropic blueprints and models. Following Daniel Rodger's approach, Jenkins argued that the People's Home in Hamburg developed in a transatlantic culture of

social reform. The People's Home drew inspiration and practical instruction from examples in Berlin and Dresden as well as examples in Great Britain and the United States. Toynbee Hall in East London and Jane Addams's Hull House in Chicago were models for Hamburg's social reformers. Thomas Adam took this argument further by investigating the travels of American and Canadian philanthropists to Great Britain and Germany in order to find models for museums, art galleries, and social housing projects. Thus, philanthropy was not an American invention but a European one. By comparing social housing projects in Boston, Leipzig, London, and New York, Adam demonstrated the interconnections among philanthropists from these different countries and how American philanthropists implemented European models in U.S. cities. Adam concluded that there were few differences between German and American societies in the second half of the nineteenth century—both depended heavily on private support for social and cultural public institutions.

Karsten Borgmann contradicted this view with his investigation of art museums in Germany and the United States after the turn of the century. Focusing on Berlin he argued that there were fundamental differences between museum philanthropy in the United States and in Germany. Whereas American museums were privately owned, German museums were state institutions that received additional financial support from museum associations. Following the Johns Hopkins study of civil society in a number of countries, Borgmann seemed to offer a new version of the *Sonderweg* thesis. Tobias Brinkmann compared nineteenth-century Jewish philanthropy in the United States with Jewish philanthropy in Germany. By showing the similarities between both countries Brinkmann demonstrated that the same phenomenon ended with different results. Whereas Jewish philanthropy in Germany became a stumbling block on the way to full-fledged integration, American Jews successfully employed philanthropy to further integration. David Hammack's paper examined philanthropy and nonprofit organizations in a variety of American cities over the last two hundred years. Most surprising, at least for Germans, was Hammack's finding that American nonprofit organizations have always been regulated, controlled, and subsidized by government. Local, state, and federal governments in the United States have shaped, limited, regulated, and funded nonprofit organizations in key ways throughout the course of American history.

The most dramatic aspect of this conference was the realization that a multitude of understandings of philanthropy were being presented. The question then quickly arose: What is philanthropy? Every paper was based on a different understanding of philanthropy—a situation that reflects the state of research on the topic. One main objective of the conveners therefore was to discuss the nature of philanthropy. Susannah Morris, Thomas

Adam, and Simone Lässig introduced different theoretical concepts into the discussion. Morris rejected the existing economic and sociological concepts of philanthropy because they are ahistorical. For example, the Johns Hopkins definition is unable to cope with the institutional diversity of earlier periods. Economic approaches argue that philanthropy results from market or state failures. But we cannot speak of a state failure for a period in which the state did not assume responsibility for social and cultural institutions. Frank Prochaska's definition of philanthropy—simple kindness toward others—is too broad. Adam and Lässig argued that philanthropy is always connected to integration into social structures. Adam suggested linking philanthropic engagement to the construction of class. The end result was that all participants tried to find a common understanding of philanthropy.

The participants discovered that many of their assumptions about the historical development of Germany and America were not valid. Germany's history no longer seemed all that different from or more special than America's. Several papers suggested that there existed an intensive exchange of ideas between philanthropists and social reformers in Germany and the United States. This should not be a surprise because American and German cities experienced the same social problems caused by industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century. Despite this fact, comparative history and the history of the exchange of cultural practices and models have not been the topic of historical research. History is still organized along national lines. The conference showed that this differentiation does not reflect a historical reality. Nineteenth-century philanthropists thought in terms of a transatlantic community; perhaps it is time that we should follow their lead.

*Thomas Adam*

## CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN MODERN GERMANY, 1870–1960

Workshop at the GHI, May 11–12, 2001. Convener: Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Participants: Jennifer Evans (University of Victoria), Gabriel Finder (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum), Andreas Fleiter (University of Bochum), Sabine Freitag (GHI London), Petra Gödecke (University of Bielefeld), Todd Herzog (University of Cincinnati), Benjamin Hett (Harvard University), Thomas Kailer (University of Frankfurt), Sandra Leukel (University of Bielefeld), Warren Rosenblum (Webster University), Nikolaus Wachsmann (Cambridge University), Robert Waite (Office of Special Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice).