

CfP

Urban Society and Environmental Change in Small and Mid-size Cities, ca. 1700-1900

Salzburg, 10/11 March 2017

Workshop organized by Luisa Pichler-Baumgartner and Georg Stöger (University of Salzburg)

The second half of the 19th century is usually seen as a turning point in the history of urban Europe: Industrialisation and urbanisation led to a variety of social, environmental and infrastructural problems. Environmental historians, that have begun to work on urban issues from the 1980s onwards, largely shared this notion of a caesura around 1850. In many places, the responses to new forms of pollution and urban land use seem to have been similar: Urban and state authorities aimed to establish institutional and technical solutions to these problems, and they usually labelled them as “city sanitation”. Recent studies shed a different light on this, as they point out a variety of environmental changes that have already started during the 18th century. They also emphasise substantial continuities of pre-modern problems and/or practices that have shaped urban environments into the early 20th century. Yet, we mostly lack a longer term perspective on the environmental changes of the 19th century. Likewise, our knowledge on small and mid-size cities, which shaped Western Europe and its subsequent urbanisation, is in this respect still limited. Usually research has focused on certain actors involved in these changes – mainly experts from urban administrations, civil engineers or physicians – but we do not know much about the role of the vast majority of the city inhabitants (the “ruled”) in this process, nor about the interactions between different actors.

Therefore, we want to ask for:

1. the actors of environmental change in small and mid-size cities (i.e. cities with less than 50,000 inhabitants around the year 1850)
2. a systematic consideration of the different actors involved, thus to reconstruct how they interacted with respect to different environmental fields – how did e.g. the inhabitants of a city react to top-down changes of urban environments or to new infrastructures? Can we assume social and/or spatial differences – also in respect to inequality or vulnerability?
3. the perceptions of the actors involved, and their thoughts on environmental questions – which intentions did they pursue?
4. changes in a longer term perspective (between ca. 1700 and 1900)

We invite papers on case studies dealing with specific places and/or specific fields of the urban environment (including – but not limited to: supply with resources, public health and epidemics, climate and natural disasters). The papers should address the question of persistence and change – how and to which extent did the environmental changes affect the social dimension of urban environments?

How to apply? Please send a 400-500 word abstract and a short CV to georg.stoeger@sbg.ac.at by 30 November 2016. The selected participants will be informed by December 2016. We expect a full paper draft (ca. 8,000 words incl. references) by 20 February 2017.

Although we preferably aim for papers written in English, it is also possible to hand in a paper in German. Advanced PhD-candidates are explicitly welcome. The organisers will aim to provide a subsidy to participants without funding.

The workshop will take place at the Department of History of the University of Salzburg, 10-11 March 2017, where the full paper drafts will be discussed with senior experts. A publication of selected papers is intended.

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