

WELCOME TO EUROPE'S CITIES? SYMPOSIUM SHEDS LIGHT ON THE INTEGRATION OF JEWISH IMMIGRANTS

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To what extent did Jewish immigrants at the start of the 20th century find a new home in European cities? Were they integrated or excluded? These key questions will be at the heart of a symposium in Vienna from 10 to 13 December. The event is bringing together more than 30 renowned migration researchers from the U.S., Israel and Europe to examine and compare Jewish immigrant integration throughout Europe. Rather than study Jewish migration in isolation, organiser Dr. Ingo Haar - holder of a Lise Meitner fellowship from the Austrian Science Fund FWF - aims to place it in the context of broad-based migration research.

From the mid 19th century, and to a greater extent from 1880/90, several million Jews migrated west from the then divided Poland, Romania and Russia. This was due in part to the numerous pogroms taking place in these countries. For some of the migrants, western Europe was a staging point for their onwards migration to North and South America. The vast majority of Jewish migrants - like many other groups of migrants - settled in towns and cities.

From 10 to 13 December in Vienna, a symposium entitled "Jewish Migration to the Metropolises of Europe, 1848-1918: A Comparative Perspective" will examine how Jewish immigrants of that period - prior to the rise of National Socialism - were able to integrate into urban societies. The symposium deliberately places Jewish migration within the context of broad-based migration research so as to identify the types of exclusion and inclusion in "modern societies" that affected Jewish migrants.

COMPLEX REALITY

"At present, the story of Jewish migration is often recounted from two perspectives. The first is based on the premise that Jews were victims of anti-Semitism and an associated process of exclusion as early as the 19th century. The second viewpoint is that integration was successful during this period because the migrants largely adapted to fit in with the majority Christian/Catholic society", explains symposium organiser Dr. Ingo Haar from the Department of Social and Economic History at the University of Vienna, adding: "Any such depiction of the process is however somewhat simplistic. Indeed, any crossover between these two models - which could doubtless have existed alongside one another - is unknown and developments that are common in broad-based migration research, such as disintegration, exclusion and segregation, remain unexplored. The complex reality of interwoven and co-existing mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion has still to be incorporated. This symposium will enable us to bridge this gap in the research."

Contributions from over 30 high-profile migration researchers from the U.S., Israel and Europe will shed light on the integration of Jewish immigrants in various large European cities, thus enabling these findings to be compared. Issues that will be examined at the symposium include: How contemporary, newly emerging notions of nationhood impacted on Jewish integration, how Jewish self-organisation functioned and whether there were "parallel societies" and, if so, who made up these groups and how.

VIENNA AND BERLIN COMPARED

The idea for the symposium was born from an FWF Lise-Meitner project - a programme that is available to highly skilled researchers from outside Austria who can further Austrian research through new, innovative approaches - entitled "Jewish Migration and Integration in Vienna and Berlin", as Dr. Haar explains: "As part of my research project, I am currently investigating and comparing Jewish integration under the Hapsburg monarchy and in the German Empire by looking at Vienna and Berlin. The three main focal points of this research are the historical demography and social structure of the Jewish people in these cities, the development of their representative groups vis-à-vis the combating of anti-Semitism and their active and symbolic participation in political culture. I felt it was only logical that the emerging results of this work should be discussed with fellow researchers in a pan-European context. That was my motivation for organising the upcoming symposium."

The organiser hopes that the findings from the FWF Lise-Meitner project and the symposium will help to identify the

complexities of integration processes in general so that lessons from the past can benefit the future.

Programme available at: hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/termine/id=12813

Image and text will be available online from Monday, 7th December 2009, 09.00 a.m. CET onwards:
www.fwf.ac.at/en/public_relations/press/pv200912-en.html

The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) is Austria's central funding organization for basic research.

The purpose of the FWF is to support the ongoing development of Austrian science and basic research at a high international level. In this way, the FWF makes a significant contribution to cultural development, to the advancement of our knowledge-based society, and thus to the creation of value and wealth in Austria.

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