

**Looking for the National Dream.
Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the
Americas in Comparative Perspectives**

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Datum, Ort: 13.07.2017–14.07.2017, München
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From the late 19th century until World War I, more than 3.5 million people emigrated from the Habsburg Monarchy to the Americas. The majority were agricultural laborers, and their main destination was the United States; however, a significant number also went to Canada and Latin America. As mass migration involved all groups from within the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian empire, it resulted in a situation where the rising ethnic nationalisms and conflicts further developed in a transatlantic space.

Both in general and in the particular case of Austria-Hungary, those transatlantic dynamics of nation-building in the age of European mass migration have recently attracted considerable scholarly attention.¹ On the one hand, this is related to the still growing interest in transnationalizing and globalizing history. On the other hand, migration studies have revised their long-standing focus on immigration issues, stressing the multidirectional impacts of migrants on both their new homelands and the countries they left behind.

In this context, the Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) at LMU Munich and the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies (Munich/Regensburg) have co-organized an international conference on Austro-Hungarian migration, focusing on its nationalizing dynamics across the Atlantic. In their opening remarks, both organizers URSULA PRUTSCH (Munich) and ULF BRUNNBAUER (Regensburg) emphasized their joint aim to stimulate international exchange among leading and young scholars in the field and to enhance comparative per-

spectives. Undoubtedly, the wide range of individual topics provided an excellent basis to detect dissimilarities and common stories both in regard to the multiethnic character of Habsburg migrants and to the diverse nature of host countries throughout the Americas. Moreover, several papers focusing on neighboring countries as Italy and partitioned Poland or dealing with the empire's later successor states further enriched the discussion.

In her opening keynote lecture, TARA ZAHRA (Chicago) paradigmatically argued that mass migration never only involved globalization but also caused and still causes „deglobalization“. To illustrate her argument, she gave an impressive general description of the tense situation and atmosphere in late 19th century Europe, contrasting the migrants' mostly very personal problems and dreams with the protectionist and nationalizing responses given by the countries of immigration and emigration.

The four panel sessions that followed addressed a great variety of nationalizing dynamics occurring within the triadic relational nexus between migrants, sending states, and host countries. Compared to the traditional situation where migrants struggle for their identity in between their new home and the old country, the papers demonstrated that the situation was much more complicated in the case of emigration from a multiethnic empire and its contested borderlands. As ethnic minority members were traditionally overrepresented among migrants, hopes and fears about integration and assimilation often receded against competing national homeland projects. KRISTINA POZNAN (Williamsburg) well illustrated this phenomenon by referring to files of the Hungarian prime ministry's office. As she pointed out, Hungarian efforts to reinforce homeland ties and loyalty among migrants were not primarily aimed at fighting Americanization of former impe-

¹See, most recently, Annemarie Steidl/ Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier/ James Oberly, *From a Multiethnic Empire to a Nation of Nations. Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the US, 1870-1940*, Innsbruck 2017; Ulf Brunnbauer, *Globalizing Southeastern Europe. Emigrants, America, and the State since the Late Nineteenth Century*, Lanham 2016; Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure. Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World*, New York 2016.

rial subjects but rather ought to face political and cultural trends of Pan-Slavism in the U.S. Thus, as a main strategy of the so-called „American Action“ of 1902, the kingdom attempted to weaken the predominant position of Slavic Catholicism by bringing emigrant churches under the umbrella of the Reformed Church in Hungary. URSULA PRUTSCH (Munich), for her part, pointed at the real threat that overseas Pan-Slavism posed to the dual monarchy at least in the case of Southern Slavs. She described how Croatian and Dalmatian immigrants in Chile and Argentina became polarized by events in Europe in the years before and during World War I; and she argued that migrant communities turned out to be a main force of the anti-Habsburg protest due to their important financial resources and international networks. According to Prutsch, Austro-Hungarian officials underestimated the influence and power of the Pan-Slavic movement overseas. This might correlate with results that NICOLE PHELPS (Vermont) derived from a systematizing comparative study of consular services and their activities in the late 19th century. They suggested that the Habsburg consular service had indeed been seen as a potential tool to hold onto migrants; however, in terms of its size, it ranked average among other countries.

Similarly to South Slavic immigrants, Italian-speaking migrants from the Trentino region joined the European rivalries for territory and became an important target group of Italy's diaspora engagement policies. JOAO FABIO BERTONHA (Maringa) traced the dispute among pro-Italian and pro-Austrian immigrants from Trento in Italian-language newspapers in Brazil, where not less than a quarter of Habsburg immigrants were Italian-speaking. He, again, pointed at the impact of World War I as a catalyst for anti-Habsburg protest among migrants. However, Bertonha emphasized that the question of national loyalty and identity was deeply mixed with religious identity and political ideologies and often resulted in a three-pole consciousness of catholic identity, Austrian loyalty, and Italian language and cultural affiliation. Italy, by contrast, as MARC CHOATE (Provo) demonstrated, exerted great effort to get unambiguous support of all Italian-speaking

people abroad. Its strong engagement in diaspora policies equally addressed descendants of the old Venetian colonists, settlers of modern colonial outposts in Africa, expatriate businessmen in European cities, and emigrants in the Americas in order to bind all of them to a common consciousness as „Italians Abroad“. According to Choate, however, emigrant engagement policies in particular fit in both of Italy's big „national dreams“: On the one hand, promoting emigration as „informal colonialism“ proved to be a more promising strategy than „real colonialism“ in Africa. On the other hand, the conjunction between Italian irredentism and emigration strengthened the symbolic and political weight of both.

The dramatic political changes in Europe after World War I did not disrupt the close interrelational nexus between emigration and the persisting national questions. On the contrary, new players as Czechoslovakia, independent Poland, and Yugoslavia joined the competition for loyalty among migrants; and the transatlantic sideshows of Europe's competing nationalisms mirrored the post-Habsburg scenario. MONIKA SZANTE-VARGA (Budapest) explored the formation of a small but spatially concentrated Hungarian community in Mexico after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire. She demonstrated how those new immigrants, who had largely escaped their recent minority status in non-Hungarian successor states of Dualist Hungary, desired to get rid of their civic affiliation with Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia while maintaining a close relationship with Hungarian representations and associations. ULF BRUNNBAUER (Regensburg) accentuated the fact that interwar Yugoslavia faced similar problems as Austria-Hungary did before the war when it attempted to unite very heterogeneous groups under a common national label. In this context, he argued that emigration engagement primarily served as an important force in domestic politics. Even though Yugoslavia did not really succeed in its identity propaganda abroad, it still managed to maintain the inflow of money. Furthermore, anchoring emigrants within the national imaginary helped to consolidate the idea of „blood ties“ among South-

ern Slavs at home.

All in all, cases of homeland-oriented migrant nationalism on the one hand, and migrant engagement policies of emigrant countries throughout pre- and interwar Europe on the other hand took center stage at the conference. In comparison, far less attention has been paid to patterns of integration and the nationalizing implications of mass immigration on host societies. ANDREA STRUTZ (Graz) was the only one to discuss Habsburg emigration in the context of immigration policies in the Americas. Focusing on Austro-Hungarian migrants in Canada, she emphasized the impact of a welcoming Canadian immigration policy that particularly encouraged peasants and farm laborers from the Habsburg peripheries by a systematic recruitment of agricultural settlers who were expected to resist the hard farming conditions in the Canadian west. EWA MORAWSKA (Essex), for her part, uniquely raised the question of integration and its nationalizing effects. Taking the case of Habsburg migrants in Pittsburgh at the turn of the 20th century, she impressively illustrated how the perceptions of the newcomers by local American investigators grievously misrepresented the immigrants' life-worlds as seen by themselves. While American social reformers saw the immigrants' misery and tried to assimilate them into the „superior“ American lifestyle, immigrants compared their new life to former living conditions at home and saw themselves to be social climbers. According to Morawska, this deep rift between the immigrants' self-perception and the way they were seen by native-born Americans was crucial for America's failure in preventing the solidification of urban ethnic ghettos.

Last but not least, ANNEMARIE STEIDL (Vienna) pointed to the need to pay more attention to transatlantic returnees, whose number increased considerably in the years before and after World War I. In her study on the Austro-Hungarian case, Steidl identified return migration mainly as a „movement of men“ that European officials met with mixed feelings. Contrary to all mentioned efforts to limit the ongoing exodus of manpower and „national capital“ and to keep in touch with those who had left, transatlantic returnees of-

ten were not welcomed but feared to disturb the given political and social order. According to Steidl, however, further research is still required to get deeper insight into their real impact on societies „at home“ as well as into their influence on later migration trends.

Discussions throughout the conference and during the closing Round Table finally offered additional perspectives for future research. Most importantly, there was general consensus that the national factor often remains far too predominant in writing histories of migration. Other characteristics such as regional origin, social class, religious affiliation, or gender should always be treated as equally important categories of identity that shaped migrants' community life abroad. Apart from this, participants and final discussants focused on three main prospects of further research: First and foremost, they stressed that it would be particularly promising to get deeper insights into the colonial discourse of European migration history. Rewriting colonialism as a pan-European idea that involved the hopes and ambitions of all European elites was identified as an important opportunity to realize a more globalized historiography on Central and Southeastern Europe. Besides, writing a history of colonialism out of emigration stories would enable to overcome the usual focus on migrants in the U.S. and to revalue destination countries in Latin America. Second, all agreed that a closer look at emigration agencies could offer another opportunity to study transatlantic migration in a non-nationalized, global perspective. Third, and finally, it was repeatedly noted that the spectacular transatlantic movement must not monopolize historiography on European mass migration. On the one hand, important internal migration rates as well as „trans-migration“ between the Americas were identified to deserve more scholar attention. On the other hand, in her closing comment, HELENA TOTH (Bamberg) rightly pointed out the fact that any thorough study of Habsburg migration must include the Ottoman Empire as an important destination country for those who were seeking career opportunities abroad even before the „Western world“ became synonymous with „land of opportunity“.

It is undoubtedly to be welcomed that organizers and participants considered a follow-up of the conference. Bringing together an impressive international group of scholars, the conference provided a valuable platform for sharing ideas on Habsburg migration, and it testified to a highly dynamic field of research. It might not be pure coincidence that one of its central messages is also of current interest: Then as today, globalizing and deglobalizing effects of migration go hand in hand. The hope remains that the historical insights into this phenomenon will also enrich recent debates beyond the academic discussion.

Conference overview:

Keynote:

Tara Zahra (Chicago): Hunting for the Man Farthest Down. The Politics of Emigration, Empire, and Deglobalization between the Habsburg Empire and the Americas

Panel I: Patterns of Integration

Andrea Strutz (Graz): Austro-Hungarian Migrants in Canada

Ewa Morawska (Essex): Invisible Lifeworlds of Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Immigrants from Austro-Hungary in American Cities

Panel II: Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the United States

Annemarie Steidl (Vienna): Moving Back and Forth between Continents. Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the United States

Kristina Poznan (Williamsburg): The Development of Austria-Hungary's National Projects in the United States

Nicole Phelps (Vermont): Austro-Hungarian Diplomats and Migrants

Panel III: Creating and Contesting Loyalties Abroad

Mark Choate (Provo): Making Italy Abroad

João Fábio Bertonha (Maringá): „War of Paper“. Struggles About Nationality and Identity in Italian and Austro-Italian Newspapers in Brazil During World War I

Ulf Brunnbauer (Regensburg): De-

Austrianizing and De-Magyarizing Emigrants. How the Kingdom of Yugoslavia wanted to Create its Own Diaspora (1918-1941)

Panel IV: Constructing Identities

Mónika Szenté-Varga (Budapest): Hungarian Migrants in Mexico

Ursula Prutsch (Munich): Pan-Slavic Politics in Chile and Argentina

Elisabeth Janik-Freis (Vienna): Nova Polska, Paraná. Migrant Identities and the Construction of Polishness in Brazil

Concluding Round Table

Hannes Grandits (Berlin), Hélena Tóth (Bamberg)

Tagungsbericht *Looking for the National Dream. Austro-Hungarian Migrants in the Americas in Comparative Perspectives*. 13.07.2017–14.07.2017, München, in: H-Soz-Kult 12.02.2018.