

CAS /IHRC/MPC

## **Understanding the Migration Experience: The Austrian-American Connection, 1870-1914**

A CAS/IHRC/MPC research project supported by major grants from the Dietrich W. Botstiber Foundation

This project is sponsored by the Center for Austrian Studies in cooperation with the Immigration History Research Center and the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota; the Institute of Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna; and the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, University of Alberta. A team of three researchers, two from Vienna and one from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, will conduct the research and produce the resulting book. They will examine the social patterns of mass migration both within Austria and Central Europe and between Central Europe and North America in the period between 1870 and World War I. This project will yield a better understanding of migrants' social and economic experiences compared with their initial circumstances. It will compare and contrast the experiences of men and women and of members of different ethnic groups who migrated both within Central Europe and between Central Europe and North America.

The research team will be led by Dr. Annemarie Steidl, a research fellow in the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna, and will also include Dr. Wladimir Fischer (Dr. phil. in History, Vienna University; Researcher, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Urban History, Vienna) and Dr. James Oberly (Professor of History, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire). The team will be advised by Professors Donna Gabaccia (Immigration History Research Center) and Gary Cohen (Center for Austrian Studies) at the University of Minnesota and by Professor Josef Ehmer (Institute for Economic and Social History, University of Vienna).

This project will break new ground in a number of ways. First, it will analyze the demographic and cultural consequences of migration both within Central Europe and between Central Europe and North America in broad comparative terms, transcending the study of individual ethnic, national, or religious groups that has long dominated the field. This approach is innovative because most of the previous studies of labor migrants have neglected the transnational cultural consequences of the movements of laboring people, and most researchers have focused exclusively on social and demographic patterns, notably the construction of networks facilitating movement.

To overcome the limitations of narrow national histories, this project will draw comparisons among different states, regions, and nationalities. With its multiethnic population, the Habsburg Monarchy provides a rich field for the intended analyses, and migration from the Habsburg Monarchy across the Atlantic between the 1870s and the outbreak of World War I had enormous significance. It is estimated that 3.5 million emigrated out of the Monarchy between 1876 and 1910,

with nearly 3 million going to the United States, 158,000 to Canada, 358,000 to Argentina, and 64,000 to Brazil. Much is known about Czech, Slovak, Polish, Magyar, Slovene, Ruthenian, Croatian, and German-speaking immigrants as well as Jewish immigrants as individual groups in the United States and Canada, but we understand little about how much of their experience as migrants they may have shared with each other or with various groups who moved within Central European rural areas and from small towns and rural districts to the major Habsburg cities or with those who migrated during the same years from Central and East-Central Europe to Berlin, Hamburg, the Ruhr basin, London, Romania, or the Scandinavian countries.

This project will also examine a greater range of social and cultural variables than previous studies. The migration experience and outcomes of migration will be analyzed in terms of occupational origins and change; shifts in the size and character of the migrants' residential community; differences by gender, family structure, and age group; and the character and extent of cultural changes, particularly with respect to family practices, values, and loyalties. A particularly significant question will be the extent to which migrants developed and maintained "transnational" customs and values with regard to their family relationships and domestic life which transcended their particular locations of work and residence.

#### Research and Writing Activity for 2010-11:

The three members of the research team will be in residence at the University of Minnesota from January through June 2010 for the first period of research and analysis of the quantitative data and documentary evidence which they will be collecting. During late summer and fall of 2010, the team members will complete analysis of the quantitative data and documentary evidence and begin to develop drafts for a jointly authored book. The writing of the book should be completed during the 2011-12 academic year, when the team members will return to the University of Minnesota for several brief periods to review and critique late drafts and make public presentations on their findings.