

TITLE Transformations of the Urban. Global Perspectives on the History of Industrial Cities

Conveyors: German Historical Institute Moscow and the DFG-Project “Industriestädte – Krisen, Krisenwahrnehmungen und Entwicklungsalternativen in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts” (Helmut-Schmidt-University, Hamburg, Chair of Modern Social- and Economic History and the History of Technology; University of the Saarland, Saarbruecken, Chair for Cultural and Media History)

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The history of industrial cities is frequently told as a story of decline. At first glance, such a narrative seems obvious, since industrial cities are traditionally understood as places of coal and steel, iron, oil, and mass production. At least since the structural changes of the 1970s, industrial cities thus seem to be a phenomenon of the past. Accordingly and in accord with prominent diagnoses of an end of industrial labour, the prevailing historiography on industrial cities is predominantly concerned with processes of decline and deindustrialisation as well as reorientations and attempts at conversion.

In at least three respects, this seems to be problematic. First of all, these approaches give preference to the spectacular, which can be found more easily in decline and comeback than in persistence. Secondly, this entails an empirical imbalance, as the numerous examples of persisting industrial influence get out of sight. Thirdly, the story of rise, decline, and comeback follows a decidedly Western perspective, which blanks out countless examples beyond this narrow focus.

To counteract these problems, the conference will put an emphasis on two foci. First of all, we intend to scrutinise *processes of transformation*. Following social scientist Rolf Reißig, we understand transformation as the “emergence of the ‘new’ within the ‘old’” with particular reference to the contingencies and discontinuities of this process. In contrast to the more traditional concept from political science, which according to Wolfgang Merkel accentuates “fundamental change”, such an approach allows the description of different tempi and areas of change. Hence, the conference does not merely address fundamental processes of change in industrial cities but rather focuses

on less regarded facets such as processes of adaptation as well as persistence and continuity.

Since neither processes of industrialisation nor commodity or resource flows stop at national borders, a *global perspective* seems necessary. We welcome comparative papers as well as those investigating entanglements and transnational processes of exchanges. It is the comparison of different regions, we argue, which differentiates the conception of an end of industrial cities and, at the same time, allows for an analysis of fundamental geographic shifts of their topology. We are also seeking papers interested in the global within the local, inquiring about the cities' room for manoeuvre.

Against this background, we ask for papers on the following thematic fields

1) Self-Perceptions and their Mediatisation

While early 20th century cities of the so-called Western World proudly referred to themselves as 'industrial cities', nowadays such a (self-)labelling has vanished almost entirely. Yet, the Indian city Jamshedpur still carries the nickname 'Steel City' and the German city of Wolfsburg refers to itself as 'Car City'. These examples indicate that transformations of industrial cities vary geographically and temporally and that they could entail changing self-descriptions. In the perspective of Media History, analyses of the changing representations as well as the inter-relations between self- and public-image seem to be fruitful. In terms of transformations, it seems also promising to approach the images communicated from the vantage point of the topoi evoked, e.g. progress, certainty about the future, tradition, or local history.

2) Crises

Frequently, transformations of industrial cities are processed in the narrative schema of crisis. Instead of adopting this narrative uncritically and, hence, assuming a 'real crisis', as diagnoses of "the Urban Crisis" do, perceptions of crisis should rather be understood as patterns of processing changes of the present. In terms of analysing processes of urban transformations, conflicting or congruent diagnoses of crisis can serve as analytical points of emergence for scrutinising specific constellations of agents or relationships of power.

3) Cultural Policies

For several industrial cities, cultural policies provide an almost traditional mode of

coping with processes of transformation. Therefore, a closer look at the persistence and dynamics of these coping strategies seems worthwhile. Potential topics include the development of cultural infrastructures and urban cultural economies as well as city-specific alternatives or logjams. There are numerous and various examples such as reutilising former industrial sites, city festivals or art projects.

4) Urban Development and Urban Planning

If transformation processes are understood as the emergence of the new within the old, questions about urban development and urban planning are of crucial importance. Besides the differences in terms of urban development, e.g. specific restraints due to different political frameworks, similarities and parallels, such as similar structural deficits of industrial cities, are of particular interest. Furthermore, phenomena such as strategies of revitalisation and modernisation provide promising points of reference.

5) Spaces

Industrial cities are particular spatial constellations. Planned and unplanned, industrial, political, and private, converted and unused spaces: these and further spatialities of industrial cities are important objects for investigations of transformation processes. Branch canals or extensive industrial fallows are prime examples for specific spatial arrangements and their effects on synergies, frictions, and impossibilities in transformation processes.

We are seeking papers, which investigate processes of transformation and address one or more of these aspects. Comparative contributions and case studies are as welcome as papers concerned with transnational entanglements.

Please send an abstract of approx. 300 words and a short CV to Joern Eiben (eibenj@hsu-hh.de) by August 15th, 2017.

The conference languages will be German, English, and Russian.