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Gerhard Melinz, Susan Zimmermann, eds. *Wien–Prag–Budapest: BlÖ¼tezeit der Habsburgmetropolen; Urbanisierung, Kommunalpolitik gesellschaftliche Konflikte (1867-1918).* Wien: Promedia, 1996. 319 pp. 39.80 DM (paper), ISBN 978-3-85371-101-9.

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What will readers of HABSBURG make of a book on the Dual Monarchy in which Franz Joseph makes his first appearance only midway through the book–and then merely to approve a plan for urban renewal in Prague? In which Gustav Klimt and Otto Wagner are mentioned in the introduction but nowhere else? This present work, a collection of fifteen essays from a 1993 conference at the Central European University in Budapest, examines the social history of the three leading cities of the Habsburg Monarchy from 1867 to 1918. With its themes of urbanization, local politics, and social conflict, the book shifts our attention from the royal palace to the Rathaus, and from the Secession to the suburbs. While not without precedent, this comparison of Vienna, Prague and Budapest stands out for its balanced and at times innovative essays.[1]

In their intelligent introduction to the work, Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann address the problems raised by urban history in general and a comparison of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest in particular. They warn against overarching theories of urban development, particularly modernization theories which map "successful" paths of urbanization and which underlie much comparative urban history. Even comparing these three cities is difficult: Vienna, the imperial capital, had more than 2,000,000 residents by 1910; Budapest's explosive growth made it an "American city" in the eyes of contemporaries, but its population was only half of Vienna's; finally, Prague was an economic center but a political periphery, and its population–even with its suburbs–was no more than 450,000. In light of these very real differences, Melinz and Zimmermann argue that comparative history has to strike a balance between an appreciation of particularism and an understanding of common trends.

Following these promising prolegomena, the essays on urbanization present a rather familiar picture of economic development and demographic change. The individual essays are rich in statistics, and make clear the differences between the three cities. While Vienna annexed its surrounding suburbs, Prague refused agglomeration with its industrial suburbs, and thus in 1910 fully 45% of the population of "greater Prague" lived outside the city limits. In the strongest essay of this section, Tamas Farago looks at demographic growth in Budapest over the course of a century, from 1840 to 1941. Although Budapest's explosive growth at the turn of the century is usually attributed solely to mass migration, Farago shows that natural increase accounted for one third of the population gain of 360,000 for the period 1890-1910. Because of constant immigration, the percentage of the population born in Budapest remained around 35-40% for over almost six decades. Finally, Farago describes the important relationship between Budapest and its surrounding regions, noting the growing importance of these "commuters" in Budapest's economic life.

The essays in this section suggest directions for further research on urbanization. More work is needed on topics as diverse as family size and structure, the relationship between industrialization and standards of living, and the symbiotic relationship between the inner cities and their suburbs. This section also raises the problem of defining the "city" as an object of study–economically, cities are always part of larger systems; politically, state and regional governments often overshadow local administration. Indeed, refuting a long historiography that has blamed the imperial government for Prague's modest growth, Jaroslav Lanik argues that the state in fact played a neutral role, offering Prague practically the same tax exemptions it offered Vienna.

The second section of the book turns to municipal government, which was universally undemocratic and largely a bastion of property owners in all three cities. The case of Vienna, which has been explored in depth by John Boyer, is well known. The franchise in Vienna was expanded in 1885 to include the "Five Gulden Men," who would eventually propel Karl Lueger to power. Lueger in

turn added a Fourth Curia in 1900, and by 1912 just over 18% of the population (and thus a majority of men over 24) had the vote. But as Detlef Lehnert argues in "The Political Myth of the 'Little Man from Vienna'," Lueger may have enfranchised, but he did not empower this mass of adult male voters–though important to the Christian Socials' political propaganda, the "little men" never figured in their electoral calculus.

In Prague the franchise was much lower–only 5.5% of the population could vote in 1896–and the curial system again made voting highly asymmetrical. The town's German-speakers had not been represented among the aldermen since 1882, and as Cathleen Giustino adeptly shows, the electoral pact in 1896 between the Old Czechs and the Young Czechs effectively closed the door on participation by all other social groups. The two parties justified this electoral deal in different terms: the Old Czechs spoke of the need for national unity, but in truth feared yet another defeat at the polls; the Young Czechs promised that the compromise would allow plans for urban renovation to proceed, but also wanted to stifle a potential challenge from the Christian Socials.

Finally, in Budapest only 8.7% of the population (perhaps one-quarter of males over 24) could vote in local elections in 1910. Moreover, the 1,200 highest taxpaying citizens in Budapest–called virilists–elected half of the city's 400 aldermen. Historians have recently drawn the virilists in a more positive light, showing how a large number of liberal, Jewish reformers entered their ranks. In his contribution to this volume, Andras Sipos demonstrates how reformers had to overcome both the district "chieftains" who controlled most elections and voter apathy as well: as a contemporary remarked, "the only ones interested in registering to vote are either already aldermen or those who want to become aldermen." (p. 112) The leading reformers were Vilmos Vazsonyi, who was the first to issue a municipal party program, and Istvan Barczy, the liberal mayor from 1906 to 1918.

To brand these governments as "anti-political" or "pre-political" (as do the articles by Giustino and Maren Seliger, respectively) is descriptive but misses the point: during this period municipal governments revitalized and reasserted themselves. The emergence of the "active city" is deftly explored in the contribution of Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann, the longest article and by far the most successful in engaging the historiography of all three cities. Evidence for the growth of local government is not hard to find: Vienna's budget rose from 61 million crowns in 1892 to 170 million twenty years later, while spending in Budapest nearly quadrupled to 116 million crowns during the same period. Budgets rose less dramatically in Prague, where out lays topped 48 million crowns in 1911. The authors explore the expansion of local governance by examining first the growth of infrastructure and then the development of social welfare services. The impulse for many early infrastructural projects came from either the state (with the Ringstrasse) or private undertakings, but from the 1890s onward municipal governments took the lead in many areas, including water supply, sewage, gas, and electrical works, schools, market halls, mass transportation, and in Budapest, public housing. This "municipal socialism" not only served the patronage and propaganda needs of local governments, but also provided badly needed sources of income. At the same time, cities began to take a more active role in social welfare, albeit slowly and with many half steps. With this increased activity came new ideas about poverty and welfare, although the shift from a tradition of poor relief based on strict residency requirements and frequent expulsions of "vagabonds" to a system that recognized "unemployment" was a long one.[2] Significantly, this new system valued men's work much more than women's: while women had comprised two-thirds of the recipients of traditional poor relief, they made up only 5% of those receiving "unemployment" benefits.

While ostensibly devoted to "social conflict," the final third of the book says more about the formation of collective identity at the turn of the century. Taken together, the articles suggest that much social conflict and interaction cannot be explained solely on the lines of "class" or "ethnicity"; a much more local and nuanced approach is often required. In an innovative essay on the assimilation of German-speakers in Budapest, Zoltan Toth uses marriage records to document the increasing number of confessionally and ethnically mixed marriages in Budapest. Mixed marriages were highest among Calvinists, who were almost all Hungarian-speakers. Thus, even as Budapest was becoming increasingly homogeneous with regard to language, Toth shows how it was becoming more and more heterogeneous with respect to religion and ethnicity–a subtlety missed in much historiography.

In her article on the early national movement in Prague, Blanka Soukupova highlights the importance of voluntary associations in shaping collective activity–in this case, of women. In Soukupova's account, national leaders wanted women to be patriotic wives and mothers, but saw no place for them in higher education and political life. Women nevertheless took part in public life–in balls and festivals, as well as in charitable and patriotic

associations. Women also play a role in Michael John's article on "street disturbances and excesses" in Vienna from 1880 to 1914. What interests John is not so much demonstrations of the organized labor movement, but the numerous rent protests and food riots of the era. Spontaneous, xenophobic, and directed at local shopkeepers or landlords, these disorders reflected the persistence of a "moral economy" among the poor.[3] Although the Social Democrats attempted to channel this anger, these protests had little to do with factory workers and everything to do with the local culture of apartment buildings and neighborhoods.

This book serves as a good introduction to the urban history of the Dual Monarchy, and many of its essays should provoke debate and further research. For the interested reader, the thirty-page bibliography provides a good guide to the field as a whole.

Notes:

[1]. For a brief but insightful comparison of the three cities, see Gary Cohen, "Society and Culture in Prague, Vienna, and Budapest in the late Nineteenth Century," *East European Quarterly* 20 (1986): pp. 467-84. Many of the questions raised by this book will be familiar to readers of the *Wiener Geschichtsblaetter*, *Tanulmanyok Budapest Multjabol* (or more recently, *Budapesti Negyed*) and *Prazsky Sbornik Historicky*.

[2]. For a more extensive treatment of this question (excluding Prague), see Melinz and Zimmermann, *Ueber die Grenzen der Armenhilfe: Kommunale und staatliche Sozialpolitik in Wien und Budapest in der Doppelmonarchie* (Wien and Zuerich: Europaverlag, 1991); on gender and welfare, see Susan Zimmermann, "Das Geschlecht der Fuersorge: Kommunale Armen- und Wohlfahrtspolitik in Budapest und Wien, 1870-1914," *L'Homme* 5 (1994): pp. 19-40.

[3]. The term "moral economy" is taken from E.P. Thompson; for an equally compelling view of the transformation of collective protest, see Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1986).

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