



URBAN RENEWAL AND RESILIENCE

CITIES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Beyond City Gates: Spaces of Arrival and Transit for Migrants in European Cities, 1500-2000**

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Session: Global Trends in the Popular Culture and Night-time Entertainment of European Cities, 1880s-1930s

Title: It's not ALWAYS about politics (is it?): popular culture and entertainment on the southern fringes of Austria-Hungary

Abstract: The southern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was an area of great cultural and linguistic diversity, with shaped by transnational migrations, intense trade and cultural exchange. Consumption of imported products, attendance at cultural and social events and simple everyday interactions between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds all contributed to the formation of complex and shifting loyalties and practices, especially in more urbanised milieus. On the other hand, national movements, often propagating nationalist ideologies, were gaining more and more influence and presence in the public sphere in the final decades of the Empire. This included educational and leisure activities, particularly the ones provided by those civil associations which supported particular national movements (such as sports associations and amateur singing, music or drama groups). Although national and cosmopolitan or supranational discourses and practices are often represented as more or less polar opposites which were pulling the Empire in two different directions, these tendencies can sometimes be observed to complement each other or to co-exist without necessarily producing situations or relations of tension and conflict.

This paper aims to explore how different forms of popular culture and evening and night-time entertainment found or carved out their place in this complex and very dynamic sociocultural and political context. This would have required navigating between, on the one hand, the often strict morally and politically articulated demands of both the leaders of the national movements and the local representatives of the central imperial authority, and, on the other hand, a popular demand for more or less escapist entertainment (as well as the profit-oriented considerations of the purveyors of the entertainment themselves). This constellation is likely to have produced a layered and perhaps occasionally contradictory relation toward genres and trends originating from European metropolises and from further afield. The research will focus on some of the larger and more important cities and towns in the southern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Zagreb/Agram (capital of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia) and Rijeka/Fiume (a Corpus Separatum within Croatia-Slavonia, but directly subject to the Hungarian crown). The most fruitful source of information is likely to be local newspapers, which included both advertisements for different entertainment options, as well as reviews or opinion pieces about them. This material will also allow for an analysis of the discourses used by the printed media in attempting to construct particular representations of certain forms of entertainment in order to steer public opinion and affect practices, in line with the political ideology adhered to by each paper.