

Martin Knoll (Ed.)

Cities – Regions – Hinterlands



Rural History Yearbook 2020

Metabolisms, Markets,
and Mobilities Revisited

StudienVerlag

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Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes/Rural History Yearbook
(JGLR/RHY)

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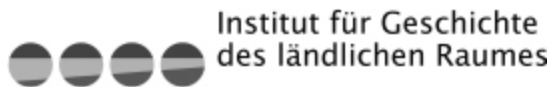
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Cities – Regions – Hinterlands Revisited

Darmstadt and the complexity of urban-rural relations

From 1948 to 1954, an interdisciplinary research project attempted to provide a new and sound understanding of the increasingly multifaceted relationships between cities and hinterlands in early post-World War II Germany.¹ The project was initiated by Nels Anderson (1889–1986), a sociologist trained at the famous Chicago School of Urban Sociology and civil employee of the US military government in Germany's US zone. It was part of the American recovery policy that strove to integrate re-education, reorientation, and cultural transfer.² From 1950 onward, the project was led by agronomist Max Rolfes (1894–1981) and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969). For their "German Middletown Survey", the team of researchers chose the area around the Hessian city of Darmstadt, a community of 91,846 inhabitants by 1949,³ a region well-suited as a study object. Situated between the far larger Frankfurt to the north, the medium-sized cities of Mainz to the north-west as well as Mannheim and Heidelberg to the south, and the peripheral mountainous area of the Odenwald to the south-east, it was (and still is) characterised by a dense structural mix of highly urbanised and industrialised zones, rural areas shaped by agriculture, and communities that increasingly attracted suburban dwellers. In the specific temporal context of the study, the

consequences of the war still interfered considerably with all economic activities and everyday life. In terms of demography, displaced persons and forced migrants from formerly German settlements in Eastern Europe added to the mix of domestic urbanites, commuters, workers, and farmers.

According to historian Franz-Werner Kersting, the project applied an innovative approach for the time in that it aimed to systematically focus on both the historically grown and the contemporary social structure of urban-rural relationships while simultaneously placing special emphasis on the specific individual experiences of the surveyed population.⁴ Kersting sees the study located at a historical turning point of scientific research into the relations between urban and rural spaces. Beginning in the 1950s, Western Europe saw fundamental transformation processes in agriculture, mobility, communication, and individual lifestyles. Suburbanisation was on the brink of becoming one of the most – if not *the* most – important aspect(s) of urbanisation.⁵ In short, the boundaries between cities and countryside were becoming ever more blurred.

Research had to react to this complex constellation while at the same time carrying a heavy cultural burden that could potentially inhibit precise analysis. Kersting is correct in pointing out that research into urban-rural relations is part of

“an overarching, culturally deeply rooted and powerful social discourse. The combination of city and country never was and never stands for only two dimensions of historical reality (in the narrower sense), but also for identity-related or identity-

creating self-images and external images, some of which are strongly normative, ideological, and emotional.”⁶

Basic concepts and stereotypes of “the urban” and “the rural” have tended to overemphasise a binary logic labelling the rural sphere either as provincial, static, and backward in a pejorative sense or as harmonious and in tune with nature in a romanticising sense. The same applies to the image of the urban sphere, which is seen as an arena of modernity and progress respectively as a site of pollution, moral decline, and social unrest. This cultural burden is not only problematic in terms of misleading analyses of recent phenomena. In historical research, it may also blur the fact that even in premodern societies, city-hinterland relations were intense, complex, and multidimensional.

The Darmstadt survey chose four communities besides the midsize city itself that were considered representative for the structural evidence: one community representing residential housing with a partially suburban character, another representing a working-class suburban community, and two communities with a mix of working and farming populations – one of them with a more dominating presence of working-class housing, the other possessing a largely rural and agrarian character.⁷ By measuring several parameters, the survey intended to delineate the “natural area” of Darmstadt. One parameter was the trading distance of dairy products and other fresh agricultural products processed and traded in Darmstadt, the second was the distance travelled by daily commuters, and the third encompassed the “cultural sphere of influence” measured in terms of the dissemination of Darmstadt’s

daily newspaper, the hometowns of students receiving higher education in the city, and the regional spread of audiences attending shows at Darmstadt's provincial public theatre.⁸ Though obviously influenced by older concepts like those proposed by Johann Heinrich von Thünen (1783–1850) in his 1826 work *Der isolierte Staat* (The Isolated State) or in Walter Christaller's (1893–1969) *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (Central Places in Southern Germany) of 1933, the project's research design went significantly beyond a logic merely interested in questions of centrality and periphery – and in doing so perhaps somewhat overestimated the culturally equalising effect of urban lifestyles in the countryside, as Kersting argues.⁹

City-hinterland relations revisited

The research interest of the Darmstadt survey – along with Kersting's question whether and how the Darmstadt team acknowledged the fundamental contemporary transformations in urban-rural relations in their research – provide a valid starting point for this issue of *Rural History Yearbook*. The volume aims to reflect on the historically changing relations between cities and rural areas as well as on the factors that let cities and their hinterlands appear as identifiable “regions” with a distinct social ecology and a specific economic, social, and cultural profile. The editor and authors are well aware that in the nineteenth and even more dramatically in the twentieth century, there was “something new under the sun”.¹⁰ Fossilfuelled, industrialised and globalised economies, transitions in the energy base of societies, and the corresponding policies of national states became major drivers for the blurring and

renegotiation of city-hinterland relations. A variety of new social forms of mobility such as intra- and interregional migration, daily commuting over growing distances, and of course tourism strengthened and simultaneously complicated the interweaving between cities and their environs. But it would be unhistorical to deny the fact that even well before the era of the “Great Acceleration”¹¹ and globalised hinterlands, cities usually entertained close relationships of various kinds and qualities with their – adjoining or non-contiguous – hinterlands from which they drew the provisions to maintain their metabolism in terms of energy, food and feed, and raw materials. Semi-finished products and trade goods as foundations of urban gateway functions could also be part of the story, as could migration patterns. Hinterlands could be structured around transport corridors such as river systems, shipping routes, or railway lines. Finally, issues of political domination, powers granted by state governments to control and monopolise resources in a given area, and ownership of land and the associated resources could likewise be instrumental in creating and maintaining hinterlands. On the other hand, viewed from the perspective of the towns and villages surrounding urban centres, relations to the “central” city could be constituted for a variety of reasons and motives like the search for markets for agricultural surpluses or a centre for education, entertainment, legal services, and religious rituals and worship. Tracing urban-rural relations in their sheer complexity therefore necessitates a long-term historical perspective that transcends the boundaries of contemporary and modern history.

Urban history and the rural space

Urban historians have repeatedly emphasised the need for what David Nicholas calls an “essentially environment-driven view” of urbanisation.¹² In their influential “Making of Urban Europe”, Paul M. Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees put it as follows:

“Urbanization is more than the result of certain global forces acting on many individual towns and rural areas, however, even with due regard to variations in time and space. As urban places grow, they interact with their rural surroundings, with one another, and with larger sociopolitical units. Indeed, if there is a single defining characteristic of urban life, even in the most fiercely independent and secure city, it is dependence. Not only are inhabitants interdependent, but the truly isolated city is both unviable and pointless. Unable to sustain itself, it would have no outlets for the fruits of specialization and complex organization.”¹³

The interest of urban historians in city-hinterland relations developed from origins in economic and social history and has spread far into various subdisciplines. In line with an opening of urban history to environmental history perspectives, city-hinterland relations have become a topic analysed as part of social ecology and questioned as an aspect of sustainability of historical urbanity.¹⁴ A more culture-centred view could benefit from concepts like the “cultural hinterland” advocated by Alex Cowan, whose argumentation convincingly combines the aspects of materiality and cultural practices.¹⁵

Understanding historical change: The potential of a long-term perspective

The fact that this issue of *Rural History Yearbook* is the third within eleven years to address the multifaceted links and blurring boundaries between the urban and the rural suggests that the described scientific interest is by no means limited to urban history. Taking stock of new trends in economic history, Marcus Cerman and Erich Landsteiner edited a *Rural History Yearbook* dedicated to the economic links between premodern cities and the countryside in 2009.¹⁶ Based on the determination of a corresponding research desideratum particularly for continental Europe,¹⁷ they focused on the time period between 1300 and 1600 as a phase of ongoing urbanisation (thereby contrasting older research positions), a formative time for the growing market integration of agriculture, and a period during which regional specialisation laid structural foundations for later industrialisation. Advocating the importance of shifting the focus to small and mid-sized cities, the empiric case studies collected in the volume were able to prove the role of these communities as regional markets and gateways to superregional markets – and thus as drivers of ever more densely knit market networks. Topics such as the role of urban institutions and citizens in rural landlordship or the role of mining regions as consumption centres underlined the importance of regional differentiation. Marcus Cerman convincingly argued that the historical evidence presented in the 2009 issue repudiates the plausibility of a dichotomic conception of urban and rural spheres.¹⁸ With his indication that agricultural activities actually constituted the norm and not the exception in many smaller towns, he highlighted a topic addressed in

detail ten years later in the previous issue of *Rural History Yearbook* edited by Erich Landsteiner and Tim Soens.¹⁹

“Was the presence of agrarian occupations in towns simply a matter of size?”²⁰ The 2019 issue of *Rural History Yearbook* dedicated to the topic “Farming the City. The Resilience and Decline of Urban Agriculture in European History” provided detailed and differentiated answers to this question. Exploring the subject matter with broad geographical coverage and a long-term perspective, the issue first highlighted the historical dimension of urban farming – a topic that is currently attracting much attention even beyond the academic world, although it is mostly being approached with a rather presentist scope. The issue also portrayed urban farming in its twofold nature as an intra-urban as well as a peri-urban phenomenon. Tim Soens identified two strands of literature in historiography, with the more established one seeing urban agriculture flourishing in three contexts: Firstly, there is the already mentioned assumption that a particularly high percentage of the population in small towns (the so-called *Ackerbürgerstädte* in German) are active in food production, making them part of a rural society. Secondly, “alternative urban food entitlements are often associated with contexts of poverty and crisis,” and thirdly, there is the rise of specialised commercial horticulture located within or near the city and providing urban markets with fresh products.²¹ A more recent body of literature, on the other hand, suggests the need to critically evaluate these three categories and assumptions, since they do not cover the entire breadth of historical evidence.²² For example, even in larger cities, private food production in home food gardens could reach considerable dimensions. Furthermore, the connection of individual urban food

production to poverty is questionable to some degree, as control over food was especially relevant for premodern urban societies, causing upper-class urbanites in particular to own agricultural facilities, sometimes even as part of an elitist lifestyle (e.g. consuming and offering self-produced wine as a symbol of status in late medieval Mediterranean towns). Finally, the early modern professionalisation of (peri-)urban horticulture was no universal phenomenon according to Soens, as the many examples of cities in the Low Countries prove. In this context, historical research is confronted with a “still very uncertain geography”,²³ as Soens puts it, suggesting questions of access to land, the share of agriculture in household incomes, the commercialisation of agriculture, the influence of urban and supra-urban politics, the historical development of food cultures, and finally crises as thematic pathways for exploring the field. Case studies such as the changing land use of Stockholm’s Södermalm island, presented in the volume by Åsa Ahrlund,²⁴ underline the need to apply a long-term perspective to the topic.

But what about the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? What about the undoubtedly fundamental processes redefining urban-rural relations from the nineteenth century onward, when industrialisation and the making of agricultural capitalism set the pace nearly all across Europe? Many terms and concepts such as *Zwischenstadt*²⁵ (intermediate town), suburbia, and urban sprawl evoke vivid associations. As early as the year 1900, Herbert George Wells suggested “The Probable Diffusion of Great Cities” and predicted that “[t]he city will diffuse itself until it has taken up considerable areas and many of the characteristics of what is now country.”²⁶ Has historiography taken all the underlying phenomena,

processes, and debates into appropriate consideration? Has it found adequate answers? In 2006, urban historian Friedrich Lenger still viewed the twentieth century as a *Niemandsländ* (no man's land) in urban history.²⁷ He criticised the established concept of the ideal-typical "European city" for overemphasising differences between the urban and the rural sphere, particularly in comparison to US towns, and characterised the neighbouring disciplines of urban sociology and urban planning as being more clear in acknowledging the increasing convergence between developments in Northern America and Europe.²⁸ More willing (according to Lenger) to make prognoses than engage in historical research, these disciplines indicate that the loss of significance of core cities will occur in Europe as well, especially since the (peripheral) suburbanisation formerly related to the centre is increasingly being replaced by a polycentric urbanisation of the country.²⁹ However, Franz-Werner Kersting and Clemens Zimmermann have more recently discussed the limits of this theory of equalisation.³⁰ They distinguish between the transitory zone of the type of Sieverts' *Zwischenstadt*, to whom they assign a hybrid character, and the more remote village which, despite showing signs of suburbanisation and being partially integrated into traffic flows – especially with regard to freight transport – has nevertheless retained strong characteristics of its history, including traditional agricultural orientation, particularly close community relations, and a long-established selfimage in connection with other characteristics of village and small-town socialisation such as the importance of associations, parishes, and the like.³¹

In their study on England and Wales, Gordon E. Cherry and Allen W. Rogers identify two main historical forces of

change in the countryside: “the economic drive of agrarian capitalism, with its related social order, and the impact of urban values on countryside interests.”³² Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, capitalist landlords clearing woodlands, enforcing thousands of enclosures, intensifying agricultural land use by means of technological innovation, and increasingly integrating agricultural production into world markets drove the landless into the industrialising cities.³³ Conversely, urbanites interfered with the countryside over centuries, with country houses and landscape gardens erected and maintained by urban elites followed by middle-class dwellers purchasing holiday cottages or spending their retirement in the countryside.³⁴ Cherry and Rogers also address two further forms of urban exploitation of the countryside: the massive suburbanisation facilitated by possibilities of mass transport – first by train, tram, and bus, then by car – and the “urbanite’s discovery of the countryside for recreation purposes”. Over time, Cherry and Rogers argue, “the result has been that urbanites have treated the countryside as theirs, an alternative place to live in and a resource to take over.”³⁵

Kersting and Zimmermann, whose continental European background obviously guides their analysis, do not subscribe to this interpretation of the processes; to them, the countryside remains much more than a weak residual category in many respects. It continues to exist in its resources, which in part become ever more valuable and important: land for building, nature, recreational functions, land use, agricultural production, animal husbandry. It maintains its role as a place of longing and recreation (e.g. for tourism), as a cultural resource offering prospects for living and a desirable way of life, and as an image in social

imaginations – namely in terms of the still prevailing notion of contrast between rural harmony and urban commotion.³⁶ The latter is cultivated in tourism marketing as well as in literature, cinema, and media. And there is a final important point that Kersting and Zimmermann make: The countryside exists as a life cycle model when the formerly young generation returns there for retirement after a working life, or vice versa when elderly people move back to the cities because the infrastructure there seems more suited to their needs.³⁷ In contrast to earlier centuries, Kersting and Zimmermann conclude, twentieth-century urban-rural relations exhibit a number of contradictory characteristics: On the one hand we have the progressive weight of cities and urbanisation as a force affecting society as a whole; on the other hand, the rural area exists as a region of continuously sparse settlement along with partially distinct social structures and characteristic sociability. The promise of the city as a place offering a better life (e.g. through modernity and diversity) is contrasted with a similar promise of the countryside as an option for a more pleasant existence (e.g. in terms of calm and simplicity).

Friedrich Lenger has proposed a specific periodisation for the development of nineteenth-and twentieth-century European urbanisation:³⁸ He delimits the period between the 1880s and World War I as a first decisive phase which, beginning in Great Britain, saw the creation of urban mass consumer society and the commercialisation of leisure, from a second phase comprising the two World Wars and a third phase from the end of World War II to 1970 that was characterised by distinctly oil-based economic growth, demographic growth, and intra-European labour migration. This periodisation seems plausible and links up with

chronologies of tourism history underlining the pioneering role of belle époque tourism, as well as with concepts from environmental history such as Christian Pfister's "1950s Syndrome". However, as mentioned before, this Yearbook – which aims at a reconsideration of city-hinterland relations – proposes a long-term perspective extending back well beyond 1900 or 1800 for analytical reasons.

Mobilities matter

"All the world seems to be on the move. Asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces—these and many others fill the world's airports, buses, ships, and trains. The scale of this travelling is immense. Internationally there are over 700 million legal passenger arrivals each year (compared with 25 million in 1950) with a predicted 1 billion by 2010; there are 4 million air passengers each day; 31 million refugees are displaced from their homes; and there is one car for every 8.6 people."³⁹

These introductory lines may appear like something of a distant echo when read in times of pandemic-related lockdowns and major airlines staggering on the brink of bankruptcy. Nevertheless, highlighting mobilities as a main driver of historical change has not lost any of its plausibility, and this applies to their role in urban-rural relations as well. Be it the transportation of goods or migration, be it commuting or tourism: All the related

processes have profoundly affected city-hinterland relations. Railway lines made the countryside accessible for tourists, inducing processes of either adaptive or industrial transformation there.⁴⁰ The history of twentieth-century suburbia cannot be written without taking into account the mass diffusion of individual car ownership – including its basis in cheap fuels and national policies heavily subsidising highway construction, as Christopher Wells has convincingly shown.⁴¹

“The rural is on the move, now as always. In rural studies, however, there has long been a bias towards imagining the rural as stable.”⁴² Identifying this bias, Michael M. Bell and Giorgio Osti advocate the potential of applying the recent “new mobilities paradigm” in social sciences to rural studies as well. Doing so considerably broadens the understanding of rural transformation processes, for example by helping to evaluate the “counter-urbanisation” narrative.⁴³ In the meantime, mobilities studies have also extended the scope of historical research,⁴⁴ though the full potential of this crossover has yet to be explored.

The menu

Inspired by the now existing breadth of approaches and convinced of the need to adopt a long-term perspective bridging presumably premodern and modern evidence, a main session of the 2018 EAUH Urban History Conference in Rome⁴⁵ explored the topic “Cities – Regions – Hinterlands”. Three of the papers presented there (Czoch, Mikkelsen, Valenti) are published in this issue. At this point I would like to thank my colleagues Sabine Barles and

Dieter Schott, with whom I had the pleasure of co-organising this inspiring panel. For this issue of *Rural History Yearbook*, we invited a second set of papers not presented in Rome (Geering, Stotten, Tizzoni) that perfectly complement the issue's scope. Together, the contributions provide the intended long-term perspective and introduce approaches from economic and social history, cultural history, environmental history, and sociology.

Analysing Danish towns and their surroundings, *Jørgen Mikkelsen* applies a conventional economic and social history approach inspired by von Thünen's, Christallers's and Ammann's concepts. Tracing the long-term development of Denmark's urban system, Mikkelsen examines both the relations between urban and rural spaces and those between cities of different location, size, and power. Four regions are investigated within the paper: Zealand island with Copenhagen as its centre, Funen island and its most important town Odense, northern Jutland with Aalborg, and eastern Jutland, where Aarhus was able to expand its hinterland considerably with the establishment of the railway system. With its comparative focus and use of a well-defined blend of historical records such as merchant debtor lists, useful for the reconstruction of trade relations and their geographical outreach, the paper allows several conclusions.

First, without the risk of arguing in a geodeterministic manner, one can stress that materiality and environmental change definitely affect the way in which cities and regions develop. Over centuries, the silting-up and reopening of the Limfjord, a maritime estuary in northern Jutland, for navigation was as decisive for Aalborg and its environs as was the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "herring boom"

in regional fishery. Second, with regard to the city-hinterland relations of growing metropolises, the example of Copenhagen proves that urban consumption shapes both ever more globalising long-distance trade relations and structural changes in nearby rural economies. Valby, a village near Copenhagen, is a telling example: During the eighteenth century, its inhabitants had the privilege to purchase poultry from all over Zealand for the supply of the capital. Mobility and mobility-enabling infrastructures matter as well, as shown by the Danish railway system, which not only helped Aarhus to develop a pivotal position in the nineteenth century and led to the foundation of numerous small, relatively rural “railway towns”, but which – on more general level – dynamised the city-hinterland relations in all regions.

The new political border between Denmark and Prussia in 1864 symbolises the interference of national state politics in regional economies, in this case by way of rearranging the trade relations in southern Jutland. As *Gábor Czoch*’s paper shows, this new border between nation states was by no means the only one in Europe to conflict with centuries-old regional identities. Oftentimes these identities were rooted in former feudal lordship exercised by cities in adjacent rural regions. Many European cities in the ancien régime – Swiss or Italian city republics, for example, or the *Freie Reichsstädte* of the Holy Roman Empire – exerted this power outside their walls. Czoch discusses the example of Košice (Kassa in Hungarian), a formerly important free royal town in the Hungarian Kingdom that became part of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

The research interest of the case study is twofold: Firstly, on a structural level, it investigates the manifold

economic ties between the city and the hinterland, especially the role of manorial villages for urban farming. Secondly, adopting a microhistorical perspective, it seeks an understanding of the character of urban feudal lordship in people's everyday lives. Košice's city council controlled 17 villages and a small market town. The city functioned as feudal lord as well as information hub for its villages and granted access to markets and postal stations. Rural subjects had to pay taxes and provide *corvée*. Košice also controlled the parish priests and possessed a broad range of rights and privileges: It held monopolies for operating taverns and slaughterhouses, selling meat, brewing beer and distilling hard liquor, milling, stone mining, and the sale of lime, tiles, and bricks. Last but not least, it also controlled the manifold uses of the surrounding woodlands. Czoch sketches the image of a strict and patriarchal regime that was intensively interwoven with rural everyday life and intimately shaped the city-hinterland relations well beyond the abolition of feudal serfdom rights in 1848.

The intriguing story told by *Salvatore Valenti* begins with the decision of the young Italian nation state to choose Rome as its capital in 1870. This decision initiated a profound transformation process that boosted the city's demographic growth as well as increasing its requirements in terms of resources and infrastructure. The Agro Romano, the region immediately surrounding the new capital, underwent fundamental socio-ecological changes and a multifaceted urbanisation. A mix of land reclamation projects to augment Rome's nutritional basis, hydropower ventures to feed its energy hunger, and hydro-engineering measures to irrigate agricultural production sites as well as providing the city with drinking water created a socio-natural site⁴⁶ with a unique format.

In terms of land reclamation and agricultural intensification, the rhetoric of the young government was telling: The declared renewal of the Roman countryside went hand in hand with the political choice of Rome as capital for a professed national rebirth. In a region where large-scale hydraulic engineering dated back to Roman antiquity, water was a “staple resource for many modernising projects at the turn of the twentieth century”, as Valenti puts it. Tivoli, a city 25 kilometres east of Rome with some 13,000 inhabitants in 1870, constituted one of the hotspots of development. Due to its location on the river Aniene, it had succeeded as a production zone in early modern times while at the same time struggling with the river’s flooding events over centuries. Tivoli now became an arena of conflicting development goals: flood protection, local industrialisation, hydropower production for the nearby metropolis, and last but not least the securing of the beautiful riverine landscape as cultural heritage (the scenic waterfalls had enjoyed Europe-wide popularity and medial representation since the times of the aristocratic grand tours). Ultimately, the industrial potential of hydropower outweighed the ambition to preserve natural beauty. Concentrating the hydro-engineering efforts on the production of electricity for the industrialisation of Tivoli and Rome interfered with the land reclamation processes, however, thereby limiting the water supply and infrastructure needed for irrigation. As a result, minor rivers such as the Marranella had to support the development of new rural and suburban settlements. Overall, Valenti’s paper arrestingly shows how the regional history of a growing metropolis essentially cannot be told other than as a story of socio-ecological transformation. His concrete case study underlines the potential of a

perspective employing materiality (water) and infrastructures as a starting point.

Corinne Geering's case study deals with almost the same late nineteenth- / early twentieth century-epoque, and she likewise examines regional change – albeit that in peripheral regions rather than that in the close vicinity of a metropolis in the making. The economies of the two investigated regions, the Galician Tatra Mountains (today: southern Poland) and Moravian Wallachia (today: eastern Czech Republic), which were based on agriculture and home industries, came under pressure in the late nineteenth century due to industrialisation and imports of ever cheaper agricultural products. Goods manufactured in small numbers in home industry, such as woodwork items or textiles, which traditionally provided important additional income for the rural population, were increasingly replaced by mechanically produced industrial products. State politics reacted to this problem with various efforts to increase the value of handicraft in rural areas and integrate these regions into the market economy of the Habsburg Empire and beyond. Geering's paper analyses the economic, cultural, and political dimension of these efforts. It explores the initiatives taken by the central government, such as the establishment of vocational schools providing training in commerce, crafts, and technologies or the promotion of regional artisanship by way of media outlets and exhibition and collection in museums. Focusing on the example of woodworking (carving, cabinetmaking, turning), Geering presents handicraft as a means of consolidating distinct regional markets in their contemporary context of modern labour, capitalist economy, and mass media. Tourism, a driver of regional change also present in the papers of Elisa Tizzoni

and Rike Stotten (see below), has a place in this story as well, with tourists purchasing items of supposedly regional style with twofold consequences: Souvenirs helped to brand specific regions for tourism and boost artisanal production. In her final section, Geering investigates how crafts were used to construct regional and national identities by means of artisanal products within the modern, urban consumer culture. Her conclusion is that there was a “gradual shift that framed a primarily economic and social issue as a matter of identity serving nationalist and regionalist interests.” Central government and urban elites defined standards of “folk art” and sponsored the display and marketing of products in the European metropolises and even overseas. They organised the training of teachers and artisans. In the regions, these processes spurred not only the modernising of economies but also regionalist and nationalist identities within the multi-ethnic empire.

Modern tourism is undoubtedly a key driver for urbanising formerly peripheral regions, a trigger for the blurring of urban-rural relations, and a major factor of environmental impact. The aim of *Elisa Tizzoni's* paper is to explore the conceptual contact zones between environmental history and tourism history as well as those between materialist and culturalist approaches within environmental history. Her case study leads us to the Val di Magra, a Mediterranean coastal region located in Liguria in north-west Italy. Tizzoni retraces regional change during the *trente glorieuses* of European economic growth between 1945 and 1975, when the tourism industry was part of the boom. Her analysis focuses both on debates and conflicts between regional stakeholders concerning

different development paths and on evidence of the ultimately materialised transformations.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, local communities near the Magra river mouth relied on agriculture, but also on labour migration to the industries of nearby La Spezia. Even in the first half of the twentieth century, there existed only a sparse tourism infrastructure. After World War II, industrial activities such as gravel and sand mining as well as large-scale building projects (such as a bridge for the coastal motorway) and ever-expanding zones for private housing altered the river mouth. A group of famous poets, writers, and intellectuals (Vittorio Sereni, Eugenio Montale, Elio Vittorini, Giorgio Bassani, Italo Calvino, publisher Giulio Einaudi, Hanns Deichmann, and others) owned secondary homes in the region and initially attracted limited, rather elitist tourism. These intellectuals were among the initiators and proponents of an effective opposition advocating the conservation of landscape and natural beauty against damage from tourism resorts, sprawling residential housing, and industrial zones along the riverbanks. Unsurprisingly, their view romanticising and epitomising the river delta as a kind of premodern idyll clashed with the development interests of local communities. In terms of the individual and collective agents in this story, Tizzoni's case study identifies a complex mix of local communities, urbanites, politics at the national and regional level, capital investment from the outside, and NGOs advocating the protection of natural and cultural heritage. In the end, the balance remained ambivalent: The river valley faced environmental degradation and sprawl on the one hand, while protected areas were established on the other, laying the basis for ecotourism.

Questions regarding differing development paths in tourism also guide the analysis in the paper by *Rike Stotten*, which deals with the villages of Vent and Obergurgl (community of Sölden) in the Ötztal valley in Tyrol, Austria. Like in many other mountainous peripheries in nineteenth-century Tyrol, the local economy of the upper Ötztal was primarily based on animal husbandry. The first modest steps towards the development of tourism in the two settlements can be dated to around the mid-nineteenth century. With the completion of the Innsbruck-Bludenz railway connection in 1883, the Ötztal became connected to international train services, and road construction in the valley began in 1898. The two small settlements have much in common: For both of them, priests played a decisive role as agents promoting economic change in the nineteenth century. In Vent, the famous pioneer of alpinism, alpine writer and co-founder of the German Alpine Association, Franz Senn, took the initiative, opening his rectory for tourists and initiating the construction of tourism facilities such as hiking paths and mountain refuges. The rectory in Obergurgl was the first inn for visitors as well, though curate Adolf Trientl's economic initiatives mainly focused on agricultural reforms. During the twentieth century, the two settlements underwent converse developments: While Vent had hosted far more visitors than Obergurgl early on, the latter became a destination of industrialised mass tourism following World War II after having begun to develop winter tourism early in the twentieth century: The first ski lift was built in 1948, initiating the development of a major ski resort. Vent remained a destination for ski touring with a more important summer season, and nowadays promotes itself as a destination of ecotourism under the label of *Bergsteigerdorf* (alpinist village).

Although tourism is of over-whelming importance in both settlements, the local population adheres to agriculture as part of a local identity which, according to Stotten, can be attributed in part to an “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm/Ranger). It can be assumed that not only contemporaries experiencing the dramatic downturn of tourism during the recent pandemic crisis will agree that many destinations of landscape tourism, which have often seen decades of economic success, are now entering a phase necessitating new solutions in order to achieve social and ecological sustainability.

The aim of the papers collected within this volume is to add further evidence and present productive approaches for the revision of the complex urban-rural relations in European history. Applying a long-term perspective shows that this complexity is by no means a modern phenomenon in many aspects, and that the “Great Acceleration” is in fact about further dynamising the relationship between the urban and the rural.

The *Forum* section of this issue opens with my own essay on *Fremdenverkehr als Option*, in which discussions about tourism and social realities in Eastern Bavaria and Salzburg are traced from 1860 to 1938. *Anne Unterwurzacher* then reflects on collaborations in migration studies within *first - Forschungsnetzwerk Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien*. In the second part of the *Forum*, *Brigitte Semanek*, *Ulrich Schwarz-Gräber*, *Florian Ribisch*, and *Almut Hufnagl* explore the potentials of *Niederösterreich privat*, a vast collection of digitised small-gauge films made by private individuals between the 1910s and the early 1990s, and finally *Christina Plank*, *Robert Hafner*, and *Rike Stotten* present a new project in which they analyse value-based modes of production and

consumption in the corporate food regime. I would like to thank all who have contributed to this volume: the authors, the reviewers, the editorial board, and the editorial team.

DOI: 10.25365/rhy-2020-1



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