

In this issue

2007, the 'year of the humanities', is already past. But the question remains whether or not it will go down in (contemporary) history. In a study conducted by Peter Weingart and others for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the authors critically note that the measurable effects of past 'science years' have not been overwhelming – partially due to the fact that goals were not formulated in a sufficiently specific way.¹ In order not to prematurely dismiss the year of the humanities but rather to trace some of its lasting effects or at least desirable impulses, we have designed a thematic focus for the debate section of this issue. Besides assessing this year's impact – in general terms as well as for academic and university politics – it is worthwhile to reflect on the specific contribution of the discipline contemporary history to the humanities and to the cultural and social sciences. Moreover, we would like to point out some areas in which the productive relationship between contemporary history and its neighboring disciplines should be enhanced. The debate thus carries the title 'Dialogue of the Disciplines'. At present, public opinion mostly holds contemporary history in high esteem, which among other things has to do with the popularity of the thematic complex 'memory and remembrance'. This will certainly remain an important field in the near future, but contemporary history will only be able to consolidate its status inside and outside the academic world if it continually develops new problems, subjects and methodic approaches. The 'hunting grounds' (as our cover illustration is entitled) are subject to historical change themselves.

This 'open issue' offers numerous other topics. *Lars Amenda* introduces the article section with a longitudinal study on the development and perception of Chinese quarters in Western Europe (1900–1970). In particular for London, Rotterdam and Hamburg, he shows the changes Chinese migration was subject to, including its contemporary perception. The – initially surprising – success of Chinese gastronomy, which began to take hold in the 1950s, is thus easier to understand. In his article on the newspaper 'Bild' during the 1950s, *Karl Christian Führer* also focuses on Hamburg. It is widely known that this paper very quickly achieved immense economic success. According to Führer, the question of its political influence must, however, be treated in a differentiated way. While the publisher Axel Springer's attempts to influence German politics at the federal level were largely thwarted by the newspaper's editors, 'Bild' attained greater power on the local level, as demonstrated by the example of Hamburg. *Danuta Kneipp's* article addresses a very different topic

¹ Cf. Ulrich Schnabel, *Betstunden für Fromme*, in: *ZEIT*, 17 January 2008, p. 32; idem, *Zeit für einen neuen Push. Was haben die 'Jahre der Wissenschaft' bisher gebracht – und wie könnten sie weiterentwickelt werden? Eine Bilanz*, in: *Gegenworte* 19 (2008), pp. 17–20.

and a different time period: The author traces the desired political functions and the actual social consequences of professional exclusion measures for the Honecker era, i.e. the 1970s and 1980s in the GDR. Those who did not conform to the work-centered society in the GDR – for whatever reasons – were to be forced to do so through the imposition of sanctions. Individual responses to these sanctions were diverse. Often the experience of exclusion led to a further politicization of the individual and to an increase in his or her oppositional tendencies.

In the source section, *Christopher Görlich* and *Ignacio Fariás* demonstrate why reading travel guide books is worthwhile not only for tourists, but also – with a slightly altered vantage point – for contemporary historians. Both authors rely on Berlin guide books as sources, but regard these from different perspectives. Using ostensive quotes, Görlich demonstrates that the theme of the ‘divided city’ with an eastern and a western part was ubiquitous already around 1900, thus well before 1945/49. The different tourist centers were attributed with characteristics that exhibit a striking constancy over the course of the various historical system changes. Fariás relies mostly on newer guide books published since German unification, which on the one hand depict Berlin as a laboratory of constant change and on the other as a ‘haunted’ city shaped in ambivalent ways by the heritage of the 20th century. These two articles also stand for a ‘Dialogue of the Disciplines’: They combine a contemporary history approach (Görlich) with an urban anthropological one (Fariás). Another contribution in the source section offers us an insight into the archives of the cigarette manufacturer Reemtsma, which are currently being examined at the Museum of Work in Hamburg. *Stefan Rahner* and *Sandra Schürmann* scrutinize examples of so-called ‘tobacco trips’ from the 1950s that they selected from the rich material. These were expeditions of renowned photographers to the USA and the ‘Orient’ intended to collect motives for Reemtsma’s advertising campaigns. The article allows for a glance behind the curtain of advertisement planning. Besides addressing aspects pertaining to the history of mentality, of consumption and of photography, the authors draw our attention to ruptures and changes of course in advertising strategy.

Several of the above mentioned articles have to do with imaginations of city and space. This is also the case for *Kay Hoffmann*’s critique of a DVD-study edition of the film classic ‘Metropolis’ in the review section: The attempt at such an edition is no doubt to be welcomed, but not entirely convincing in its realization. In his ‘rediscovered classics’ essay, *Johannes Novy* examines the urbanist Jane Jacobs and her work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* from 1961. This book was primarily intended as a political criticism of American urban planning at the time. Before the backdrop of current urban problems, however, it attains new significance. *Lukasz Stanek* acknowledges a more theoretical work – Henri Lefebvre’s *La Production de l’espace* from 1974,

which analyzes the interrelation between urban space and social practice. It cannot clearly be assigned to one particular discipline, but for that reason all the more contributes an important intellectual stimulus to debates surrounding a 'spatial turn'. Stanek rightly points out that to this day there is no German translation of the book.

Like Lefebvre in the theoretical realm, Klaus Mehnert was a remarkable crosser of borders in journalism. His book *Der Sowjetmensch*, first published in 1958 and thereafter often reprinted, was an attempt to provide (West) Germans with realistic, everyday portraits of life in the Soviet Union and thus to counteract Cold War stereotypes with personal observations. Ulrich Schmid reminds us of Mehnert's study and his ambivalent biography. In another 're-discovered classics' essay, Wolfgang Lambrecht elucidates and contextualizes Georg Picht's *Die deutsche Bildungskatastrophe* (1964) as well as Johannes Hörnig's script on the university system in the GDR (1965). This provides a valuable complement to the debate section: It becomes clear that many problems, arguments and solutions that appear to be new are actually not so new at all from the perspective of university and academic history. We should hope that this insight leads neither to fatalism nor to 'doing things for the sake of doing things', but rather enhances decision makers' sense of reality in academic politics – above and beyond the 'year of the humanities'.

The Editors

(translation: Eva Schissler)