

CALL FOR PAPERS

Conference Title: Cities Getting Smaller: Modern Crisis or New Path to Prosperity? Is smaller really better?

When: September 30-October 2, 2010

Where: Columbia University, New York City

The Herbert H. Lehman Center for American History will mount an international conference in September 2010 to address the issue of cities with declining populations in the Americas and Europe. We are accustomed to the modern world of the ever-expanding metropolis, in which populations aggregate in an ever-increasing number of mega cities. While there are countless examples of such growth, there are also numerous large urban centers in which the population is declining significantly, with concomitant social, economic and political impact. We are interested in examining what this means for the future of cities. In the midst of deindustrialization, severe economic challenges, and new immigration patterns, do these "shrinking" cities represent a downward spiral for urban settlement? Or does their contraction signify a way to save cities by making them more workable? What are the factors leading to shrinkage? What historical precedents are there for contraction? How have cities coped with such changes? What are the implications for future planning? Is contraction tied into decay, or is it symptomatic of a new urban reality in which smaller cities can be more efficient and effective? This cross-disciplinary conference will look at both historical and contemporary examples of cities with declining populations, and we expect historians, economists, urban planners, and others to participate in formulating a picture of the 21st century urban future.

This conference is jointly sponsored by CISPEA (Consortium of Northern Italian Universities), The Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, the University Seminars at Columbia University, and the Columbia School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. Conference co-chairs are Professor Lisa Keller, Purchase College, SUNY, and Professor Maurizio Vaudagna, CISPEA. The director of the Herbert H. Lehman Center is Professor Kenneth T. Jackson.

Scholars are invited to submit proposals for papers. Graduate students are invited to attend the conference, which will be open to the public with free, advance registration. Invited participants will be asked to attend a general wrap-up session at the end of the conference.

We are particularly interested in historical papers on cities of the ancient and medieval world (Rome and Venice, for example); and particular periods of change (e.g., the 14th century). Other possible topics include declining or shrinking cities in upstate New York, the United States, and Europe, population shifts and birthrate decline in the context of declining city populations, and deindustrializing cities of the 20th century in both Europe and America.

Please submit by email a précis of no more than 500 words and a curriculum vitae (Word attachments, please). Send email proposals by February 2 to Prof. Lisa Keller, Conference Co-Chair, at Lisa.keller@purchase.edu.

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