

Call for Papers:

**International Workshop “The Golden Age of Rural-Urban Migrations?
Grassroots Perspective on Global Phenomenon 1930s – 1980s”**

Institute of History, Jagiellonian University
Kraków, 18–20 February 2027

In the mid-20th century, the world remained deeply divided – both politically and economically. The Iron Curtain, colonialism, and economic backwardness marked various boundaries. Yet in this divided world, the same process could be observed in various places: migration from rural areas to cities, and global urbanisation. Although this phenomenon has accompanied humanity ever since cities first emerged, from the 1930s onwards – and particularly after the Second World War – there was an unprecedented acceleration: the second, after nineteenth-century urbanisation, such a rapid and irreversible social change.

During the workshop, we aim to examine this change from a grassroots perspective, focusing primarily on human experience – the ‘lives’ of those at the centre of migration processes, interwoven with political and economic contexts, as well as global change – the ‘system’ with its geopolitical and economic mechanisms.

The workshop, therefore, aims to analyse the processes by which ‘ordinary people’ enter urban, culturally heterogeneous social environments in various parts of the world. The global revolutionary transformation observed between the 1940s and 1970s affected ways of working, communicating, moving about and consuming, resulting in fundamental social changes. We believe that, despite specific contexts, this shared global experience of ‘becoming urban’ and/or ‘remaining rural’ can be identified, compared and summarised. We therefore wish to highlight the agency and actions of ‘ordinary people’ within these global processes and analyse them from a microhistorical perspective – drawing on biographical, local and intergenerational perspectives. We are interested in the origins of urban values and norms that we now take for granted, within politically and economically diverse systems. We encourage you to focus, amongst other things, on the functioning of the family, education, work, the consumption of goods and media, spatial and social mobility, discrimination and racism.

We invite researchers from various academic disciplines (including history, sociology, anthropology, migration studies, and economics) to submit proposals for presentations that fit within the framework outlined above and address one or more of the following topics:

- migration to cities in individual biographies and intergenerational experiences
- mechanisms of migration to cities and transnational/transcontinental biographies (particularly between socialist and capitalist countries)
- the impact of policies and ideologies on migration experiences
- the relationship between horizontal and vertical social mobility: mechanisms of advancement or degradation; emancipation through migration
- mechanisms for creating and maintaining social hierarchies, practices of discrimination
- social mobility and shame in rural-urban migrations
- mechanisms and models of migration: chain migrations, commuting, migration networks
- means of communication and transmission of information
- rural-urban migration and gender order

We particularly encourage you to submit papers on your ongoing research and research projects.

Abstract (up to 250 words) and a short bio of the author should be sent **by 1 October 2026** to the address rural.urban.biographies@gmail.com

The notification of acceptance will be sent in the second half of October 2026.

Participants of the workshop will be asked to share working versions or extended abstracts of their papers (3-5 pages) no later than the end of January 2027.

The organisers will provide accommodation and board during the workshop. There will be no participation fee.

We are delighted to announce that the **keynote talk** at the workshop will be delivered by **Professor Ewald Fire** (Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen), author of the book *Ein Hof und Elf Geschwister. Der stille Abschied vom bäuerlichen Leben in Deutschland*, which won the Deutscher Sachbuch Preis for the best non-fiction book of 2023!

The workshop is part of the research project *Globalising Upper Silesia. Migration from Rural Areas to Cities in the Global North, South and East* (“Oberschlesien transkontinental: Land-Stadt-Migrationen im globalen Norden, Süden und Osten / Górny Śląsk transkontynentalnie. Migracje ze wsi do miast na Globalnej Północy, Południu i Wschodzie”), a joint project between the Institute of History at the Jagiellonian University and the Institute of History at Ruhr University Bochum, supported by the Polish-German Science Foundation from 2025 to 2028.

Organisers:

Marcin Jarząbek (JU Kraków)

Andrzej Michalczyk (RUB Bochum)

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