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Population Migration and Socio-Economic Transformation in Germany during the Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT:

Migration has been an inseparable part of human history since the time of nomadism. The need to migrate has been triggered by the prevailing socio-economic complexities. In an attempt to cope with these complexities in general and uplift one's economic standing, in particular, migratory processes take place. The current research undertakes the case study of Germany in understanding the various dynamics of migration during the nineteenth century. Germany has advanced from the stages of tribalism to the formation of a nation-state and during this process it has undergone transformation at various levels. . The society and economy of Germany has correspondingly evolved with them which necessitated amplification of the systems at play. Thus, came in processes of modernisation which stirred the need to migrate to improve the economic situation. Until the end of the eighteenth century agriculture was the lynchpin of the economy. The influx of proto-industrialisation and eventually industrialisation upturned the economic scenario. The increasing burden of taxation on the peasantry and the rising pressure on the soil, led to the flight of peasantry marking the first major wave of migration to the urban metropolis. The expanding opportunities as a result of rapid industrialisation established a firm migratory pattern from rural to urban. Germany also became a recipient to a number of immigrants with its quest to expand territories and opening of borders from eastern frontiers. This helped Germany not only strengthen its workforce but was a step towards creating a cultural mosaic.

KEYWORDS: *Population, Migration, Transformation, Germany, Immigration*

INTRODUCTION

Migration is often considered as euphemism of modernisation. A number of socio-economic and political factors may be attributed to the causes of modern day migration. However, migration cannot be seen in exclusivity as post mobility the attributed causes too undergo a transformation to cope with the situation. In this regard Charles Tilly stresses that "The history of European migration is the history of European social life" (Tilly 1978). Migration in not unambiguous phenomena since it can be overturned by a return migration. Hence, the demographic action caused as a result of movement can remain unchanged, for instance return migration. Therefore, measuring migration is difficult. The earliest records on migration before census can be procured from European parish registers which provide substantial details on the population and its density (Eversley, Laslett and Wrigley 1966). In the following centuries prior to the influx of industrialisation, muster rolls, tax list and urban records on citizens provided sufficient details on movement of people. In the present work too an attempt is made to assess the causes of

migration during the nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany along with the socio-economic developments of the time.

MIGRATION PRIOR TO THE AGE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

The origins of capitalism with the parallel growth of industries led to the decline of the traditional feudal system and its mode of production. The increasing pressure of taxation laid by the feudal lords on the landless and hired peasants led to flight of peasantry to the upcoming proto-industrial quarters and urban spaces marking the first wave of migration. Further, the beginning of inventions and discoveries as a result of the Scientific Revolution stressed the need to use modern methods of production and thus paving way towards advancement within the proto-industrial sectors. With the help of proto-industrialisation, small scale cottage industries could be established which mainly concentrated on weaving and metal production. Through these industries, most under trodden population were able to substantiate their income. In other words income from the soil became the primary source of income which was chiefly managed by the peasant's family at the countryside and the peasant who emigrated from the soil engaged himself in proto-industrial production and earned an additional income for the family.

Changes in the nature of society were initiated by the transition in the economic structure and the mode of production in particular. Germany too underwent a similar process of transformation. Scholars have argued that preindustrial rural Germany often witnessed intensive emigration due to absence of sufficient resources for sustenance (Thomlinson 1965; Margolis 1977; Albrecht 1972). Hence, it may be argued that one of the primary causes for migration was the socio-economic status one held; lower the status greater the possibility to migrate. Further, the stratification of the German rural society and the distinction on the basis of class too promulgated the need for migration, as often, the ones who held monetary as well as social position would not be motivated to migrate and thus, leaving the rest at dismay and propelling mobility (Lerner 1958).

Prior to the influx of industrialisation, workers often migrated to the Netherlands and became a part of the 'North Sea System'. The 'North Sea System' encapsulated over two hundred cities from across Europe. The Netherlands during the mid nineteenth century was a trading as well as industrial hub. Almost fifty percent of the total share of good across the world was traded at Antwerp and Rotterdam. Moreover, the centre for Europe's stock market was situated at Antwerp (Lucassen 1994). After the end of the Dutch War of Independence, the 'North Sea System' developed further, and thus, opening greater possibilities for economic advancement. In Germany the 'North Sea System's' influence was from Calais to Bremen. In fact the bulk of labour came from the northwest of Germany and the regions lying south of Rhine. Those immigrating to Holland became a part of the 'North Sea System' and were denoted as the '*Hollandgänger*'. The origins of the '*Hollandgänger*' can be followed back to the Late Middle Ages especially migrants from the Osnabrück and Münster (Lucassen 1994). Further, Holland became one of the desired destinations for migration because first, it offered wages higher than what people earned at their homeland (Lucassen 1994); and second, it was need for the hour as income insufficiency at homeland instigated the need to migrate and gather additional sources of income.

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Often the male members of the domestic household migrated while their wives often looked after the dwarf landholding (if they possessed) and carried out agricultural activities accompanied by other members of the family. Other than male members, unmarried populace too migrated including children. Thus, migration in Germany during the nineteenth century was characterised by three main elements. First, majority of the migrants were men; second, most migrants were unmarried; and third about twenty five to thirty percent of the children from the mountain valleys have emigrated in search for better opportunities (Thomlinson 1965; Margolis 1977; Albrecht 1972), albeit it must also be borne in mind that prior to the influx of industrialisation in certain pockets of Germany there was increased child and infant mortality rate. However, in the latter half of the century about twenty to thirty percent of urban mobility was dominated by family members (*Jahrbuch für die amtliche Statistik*; *Breslauer Statistik*).

Calculating the proportion of migrants from northwestern Germany, about twelve to thirty six percent of individuals emigrated (Page Moch 1992). Majority of the Holland migrants were either landless peasants or hired labourers. Thus, during non-agricultural months, they migrated and returned at the time of harvest. Thus, it may be argued that they followed a cyclical pattern of migration.

The 'North Sea System' existed for about three centuries and derived it main source for labour through seasonal migration. The seasonal migrants were engaged in wide range of activities from grazing grass at dairy farms, turning hay to peat cutting. Klaus Bade (2003) argues that the "pasture jobs, mostly mowing and turning hay, were carried out under harsh conditions as piece work according to the rhythm set by the 'stroke'." The duration of work was extremely long and required intensive physical labour (Lucassen 1987; Bölsker-Schlicht 1987). The living condition was equally poor. Seldom *Hollandgänger* were engaged in maritime industry or in trade and crafts industry which included brick making, carpenters, weavers and domestic help. Irrespective of the nature of job, work was seasonal and mostly through the months of May to September. The only exception was those who were engaged in maritime industry. They often stayed away from their homes for over eight months in a year. It has been estimated that in the 'North Sea System' around thirty five thousand workers migrated out of which about twenty one thousand workers were engaged in the primary sector such as turning hay, crop harvesting, grass pasture; and around ten thousand workers were employed in peat cutting (Bölsker-Schlicht 1987). Peat cutting was one of the most labour demanding industries as the extract from peat cutting were sources of energy and was economically advantageous. About five to six thousand migrants were engaged in maritime trade (Bölsker-Schlicht 1987).

Mobility to the Netherlands had tremendous influence on the style and living patterns of the migrants. In this regard Culemann, a district councillor of Prussia (commissioned by the King of Prussia to journey through the regions of Tecklenburg said: "The people live like the Dutch. They become accustomed to a casual lifestyle and they care little or nothing for order and authority. Young men of draft age avoid being mustered into the Prussian army by going abroad for an extended period of time – sometimes even for good. These people have natural inclination for freedom and a life of peddling. As soldiers they are useless" (Goinga 1995). The 'North Sea System' continued to influence migration even after steady growth and development of industrialisation in all quarters of Germany. It had rather assumed the form of a traditional ritual, though it cannot be negated that proportion of immigrants had deconined considerably. Duisburg, Düsseldorf and Georgsmarienhütte had become important hub for heavy industries

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(Meyer 1991, 1995; Hochstadt 1999). With this the 'North Sea System' was replaced by the 'Ruhr System' of Coal and Steel production

Alongside the 'North Sea System' coexisted the *Tödden* System. The word *Tödden* dates back to the time of Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Major participants for the system came from the Northern Münster. Sources indicate that those who were engaged in the peripatetic trade did not participate in Holland migration and inversely (Oberpenning 1996). *Tödden* System extended from the north to the east and thus, the area covered was larger than that of the Holland migrants (Lucassen 1987; Oberpenning 1996). The *Tödden* System too provided an alternate source of income. After the expansion of the *Tödden* System, traders began to detach themselves from their families began functioning as individual units and thus liberated themselves from the responsibility of providing income to their respective families. A primary reason was their absence from their homes for over nine months and hence prompting them to set up another home in the region of trade. The important centres for *Tödden* pedlars during the nineteenth century were Münster and Lingen County (Oberpenning 1996 and Lucassen 1987). Most wealthy wholesalers of the *Tödden* came from Hopsten which had a population around two thousand people. (Oberpenning 1996; Lucassen 1987).

Although, during the eighteenth century the *Tödden* System served as a profitable business and progressed economically, it the first nail to its development was laid in the first half of the nineteenth century when restriction were imposed by the state in *Tödden* pedlars. This was initiated to safeguard the interests of the regional merchants and thus crushing competition. In the Netherlands where *Tödden* was carried out on a mass scale, emigration restrictions curtailed the mobility of the peripatetic traders. They were subject to taxation. In Prussia, a decree was issued to undermine the efficiency of *Tödden* System. Further, the parish of Hopsten was included into the Prussian County of Tecklenburg. The itinerant trdaers also faced severe competition from other European markets particularly the English. All this led to the fall in economic remunerations especially those who earned nominal income were faced bankruptcy and carried huge debts. The decline of the *Tödden* System promulgated overseas migration particularly in the province of Münster.

The *Tödden* System was useful in determining the financial strength of the trader on the basis of the distance covered. The greater the distance implied mobility was undertaken by a merchant or artisan; shorter distances were usually covered by workers. For instance, in Weissenburg, about sixty five percent of the artisans undertook long distance travelling; while only thirty six percent of the workers travelled shorter distances (Blendiger 1940). Long distance travel required larger financial investment and greater maintenance cost, hence it could only be afforded by those who were financially strong. The financial strength of the traders could also be determined through their urban origins. However, such a classification seems unjustified as a number of peasants migrated from the rural countryside to urban provinces in search for better opportunities and thus, a number of their subsequent generations were born in the urban principalities. For instance, in Durlach around sixteen percent of the workers were born in urban quarters (Roller 1907). Moreover, merchants and artisans in the urban spaces migrated to multiply their profits by trading in other regions. In this context the *Bürger* populace cannot be neglected as they seldom migrated as they were financially established and owned an enterprise within the environs.

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MIGRATION AFTER THE INFLUX OF INDUSTRIALISATION

Holland migration and the *Tödden* System provided useful alternative to substantiate income. While on the one hand Germany was witness to intensive large scale seasonal migration, economic developments within it cannot be overlooked. The rise of industrial power too accelerated the scale of migration within Germany after 1850. Wolfgang Köllmann (1959) argues that the primary direction to migration was from rural to urban spaces especially to the industrialised towns of Rhineland and later from east to west. With the advancement of industrialisation, corresponding changes came about in industrial towns with rapid modernisation and infrastructure development coupled with widening economic opportunities. In fact, at the end of the nineteenth century, most industrial centres of West Germany ushered and pushed for *Binnenwanderung* (domestic migration) (Köllmann 1959). This enhanced the strength of the workforce in the urban conurbations. Further, with refined methods of transport through the construction of railways and roads, migration to farther distances became unproblematic. It thus became easier to plan and execute migration keeping in view the hurdles on the way particularly those directed at the expanding cities (Köllmann 1959). All these developments stimulated changes in the volume of migration in the nineteenth century.

Until the wake of the nineteenth century, *Statistische Jahrbuch der deutsche Städte* recorded migration up to fifty thousand people. However, with the strengthening of industries the number increased with variations in migration rates and thus becoming difficult to calculate. Moreover, the *Statistische Jahrbuch der deutsche Städte* records eighty seven new cities by the end of 1912. The German ports records an annual migration of about 0.19 percent of people (Hochstadt 1999), albeit these rates varied in other cities. A plausible reason is the extent of industrialisation in each of these cities. For instance, the textile hub of Barmen and the port city of Danzig recorded an annual migration of around 0.10 percent or less in comparison to Chemnitz with migration up to 0.20 percent annually (Hochstadt 1999). Parallel to industrial towns, some non-industrial cities too attracted migrants such as Kassel with annual migration around 0.20 percent (Hochstadt 1999).

The strengthening of industrialisation during the last phase of the nineteenth century was characterised by increasing significance of local migration and seldom long distance. Families began to settle themselves in these industrial towns and both men and women became a part of the industrial workforce. As a result of large scale settlements, the confines of the city too enlarged. Further, industrial processes in Germany gained momentum after the Unification of Germany in 1871. About forty percent of the total workforce was engaged in industrial production (Kocka 1973). However, certain provinces of Westphalia-Rhineland experienced industrialisation much earlier i.e., after the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). Within the provinces of Prussia, the Rhineland areas of Düsseldorf and Aachen were regarded as one of the most industrialised regions and were the leading centre for metal and textile manufacturing (Kermann 1972). It has been assumed that outside the frontiers of Prussia, the Kingdom of Saxony was the most industrialised region (Kermann 1972). With Aachen taking the lead as the largest industrial city, Köln, Elberfeld and Düsseldorf followed the league (Kermann 1972). Nearly all cities of the Düsseldorf district were industrialised due to its infiltration in the rural quarters (Kermann 1972). With the active involvement of the rural hinterlands in the industrial production greater importance was laid on textile production, particularly linen. It has been

argued that in 1815 a bulk of the population from Kempen was engaged in textile production (Lademacher 1976). In the cities, factory production of textile continued at a mass scale while the hinterlands became an essential source for the supply of raw materials and thus continued cultivation along with minor cottage industrial production of weaving and spinning of the flax. Silk manufacturing centres of Elberfeld, Kaiserworth, Mülheim, Rheydt and Solingen did not acquire prominence as much as cotton and linen production (Demian 1812). The production of woollen textile was also distributed scarcely in the southern corners of Düsseldorf district (Wilhelmi 1828). Other than textile production, south-western areas of the district of Düsseldorf were known for metal production. It has been estimated that in Solingen there were around twenty three factories which housed around 4,400 labourers for metal production (Demian 1812). They were also known for the production of metal products such as knives, swords scissors and razors (Hunley 1973). With the advancement of industrial production by 1820, the Rhine Valley faced severe competition from the British goods and thereby prompting to an economic predicament (Hoth 1975).

By the mid nineteenth century, Germany underwent an economic transformation with Düsseldorf being the most industrialised regions in Prussia (*Die Statistischen Tabellen des Preussischen Staates nach der amtlichen Aufnahme des Jahres 1843* 1845). In comparison to other districts of Germany, it had almost double the number of textile manufacturing units (*Die Statistischen Tabellen des Preussischen Staates nach der amtlichen Aufnahme des Jahres 1843* 1845). It had over one hundred and thirty two factories and nearly twenty seven percent of the workforce employed in them (Obermann 1972). Further, it was a leading banking centre in the all of Prussia (Tilly 1966). Other than Düsseldorf, Krefeld, Eberfeld-Barmen, Solingen and Lennep were among important industrial centres in Germany. A Huge wave of migration crept in after the shift of major mining centres northwards along the River Lippe, through Essen (Hahn and Zorn 1973; Hunley 1973). Provinces such as Mülheim and Duisburg became centres for mining as well as production. The neighbouring locale surrounding Essen projected a steady and remarkable growth both economically and socially. The population around 1820 was close to 4,600 which increased to 8,900 around 1850 and in 1864, the population was approximately 31,300 (Hahn and Zorn 1973; Hunley 1973).

Wolfgang Köllmann (1959) argues that the huge inflow of migrants came from the agrarian quarters of the east to the cities in the west. Districts of Berlin, Düsseldorf and Saxony recorded the highest number of migrants. The district of Münster and Rheydt too attracted a number of migrants with former being a politico-religious and cultural hub and the latter being a textile centre along the borders of Könchen-Gladbach. Unparalleled growth was also recorded in smaller cities such as Einbeck with a population of about ten thousand in 1870s and subsequently displaying a steady growth of 0.10 percent and 0.20 percent in 1890s and 1910 respectively (Borscheid 1981).

Thus, assessing the scale of migration from above, it makes visible that the paramount to economic change from the second half of the nineteenth century was intensification of industrialisation. The Ruhr Valley became the centre for attraction. Mobility could be seen from both with and outside, particularly after the collapse of the 'North Sea System' (Lucassen 1987). The 'Ruhr System' became a recipient of not only migrants from northwest Germany but also from the Dutch States namely: Garland, Overijssel and Drenthe (Lucassen 1987). Germany by 1906 and 1914 became a host to so many foreign workers that the Prussia's District Council was

forced to maintain records on the 'arrival' and departure' of these workers. By 1914 there were about 111,115 foreign workers in Prussia (Bade 1984).

The growth of cities and the processes of industrialisation, helped in leading a sedentary life, albeit seasonal and temporary migration did not end abruptly (Page Moch 1992). The development of tertiary sector helped in expanding economic avenues within the cities and thereby promoting migration, though seasonal and seldom long-distance (Page Moch 1992). Seasonal migration was also popular among regions which produced coal and steel and some construction centres. The Ruhr Valley was extensively inhabited by the Ruhr Poles (Kleβmann 1978). The Ruhr Poles were the first migrants who were successfully able to develop a migratory pattern initially and later became permanent immigrants of the region until the outbreak of the First World War (Kleβmann 1978).

Migration was an inevitable causality of industrialisation. However, restricting its understanding only to the towns would be injustice to its understanding. As processes of modernisation engulfed the urban conurbations, economic prospects began expanding. These processes of modernisation were not just limited to the urban principalities but to a large extent influenced the hinterlands as well. With the help advanced method of cultivation through the use of modern means of production better yields were recurred and thus uplifted the status of landless and landed poor peasants. The shift to agro-industrial production stimulated the demand for seasonal labour as the return from the same was higher and incurred considerable profits. The agro-capitalists often exploited the workers by offering them low wages. With this one may see the rise of rural proletariats who constantly aimed at reducing the prices of the produce and increase the wages of the labourers. By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, increased unrest in the hinterland led to flight of peasants to seek opportunity in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In East Prussia there was dearth of agricultural labourers as a result of mass migration to urban conurbations.

The situation was put to rest when moderations brought about in the wage system and the means of production. Focus was shifted towards cultivation of beetroot through which substantial profits was earned by the agriculturalists. In the German States of Ahalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Silesia, Braunschweig, Hanover and Saxony significant amount of production was carried out. Crop rotation along with the use of manures and fertilisers helped in maintaining the quality of the soil as well as produce. Further, labour intensive methods were replaced with the use of machines which helped making agricultural processes easier. This also facilitated seasonal migration as the period between sowing and reaping was made use of. At first, production of beetroot was conducted by the Swedish workers and later in 1890s replaced by the Russian Polish workers who were further replaced by the Polish and Ruthenian labourers from Austria-Hungary. (Riegler 1985a). In comparison to the Swedish, the workers from the east were more affordable and they were keen to seek employment (*williger und billger*) due to the rising economic misery in their homeland (Riegler 1985a). It has been estimated that around 605,339 foreign labourers were employed in Prussia in 1906 and in 1913, the amount rose to 916,004 (Bade 1984). Out of the total number of foreign workers, the Poles from Russia and Austria-Hungary outnumbered with their population estimating to 210,692 and 270,496 in1906 and 1913 respectively (Bade 1984). Their proportion in the industrial sector was close to ninety three percent (Bade 1984).

With the rising number of Polish populace and their concentration in both industrial and rural sector made the Prussian government adopt an 'anti-Polish defence policy' to limit the entry of Poles in Germany. Further, efforts were laid on securing the interests of the natives and thus preference while offering a job was given to the German. Menial jobs and jobs which required intensive physical labour were offered to the Poles. With this the basis for the process of Germanisation was laid and finally with the outbreak of the First World War foreigners in Germany were made Prisoners of War who were put to use in its war economy.

CONCLUSION

The advent of industrialisation changed the dynamics of Germany with both society and economy undergoing rapid transformation. One of the conspicuous outcomes of industrialisation was migration. However, migration was initially confined from rural to urban and later expanding to far distances and being a host to large number of immigrants. The rural to urban migration helped in establishing a cyclical process whereby, agricultural as well as industrial processes would be taken care of and thus promoting seasonal employment which also served as medium to additional income for most rural migrants. Moreover, the cyclical pattern of migration helped in establishing a migratory path and thus establishing communication networks which facilitated in the formation of brigade in the region of anonymity which in turn helped in securing economic opportunity easily. A trajectory to migration developed a migratory pattern which came to be followed across generations. Finally, migration in Germany transformed its basis to a heterogeneous society wherein the Poles, the Dutch, French, Russians and others coexisting along with the native German populace. Not until the last decades before the outbreak of the First World War, when an' anti-Polish Policy' adopted, it seems plausible to argue that the existence of a cultural mosaic within Germany was acceptable to the state, albeit the foreigners were instated due to the need of the economy.

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