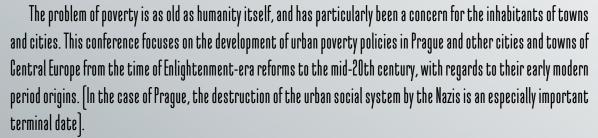


## 'For you always have the poor with you'— From Charity to the Social Politics in Cities Within the 18th–20th Century

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From the organizers' perspective, the central dynamic of the topic is the changing roles of the state and city government in the provision of urban social care. In the 19th century the Austrian state assumed responsibility for a great many aspects of urban social care which had previously been provided by the church, private charities and municipal government. This trend then went into reverse, as the state gradually restored control to the local administrations: unlike its neighbour Prussia, the Austrian state proved much less able at coordinating and financing social policy on this scale. The example of Prague suggests that cities and towns in the Austrian Monarchy embraced their new responsibilities with zeal, devoting great energy to the task of providing care for the poor. A measure of Prague's success can be seen in the 1930s, when, despite the unfolding economic malaise, the provision of care for the poor in the city was remarkably thorough and efficient. Of course, it was not to last: with the advent of the Bohemian Protectorate, and, later, Communist rule, the state once more assumed control over poverty policy, although both regimes delegated responsibilities to cities.

This conference aims to bring together papers which explore these changes in the provision of indigent care. We invite reflections on the various arguments and justifications for various reforms; the internal and 'private' exchanges and discussions which foreshadowed and followed the reforms; and the institutional or managerial dimension of poverty policy. In turn, this will prompt wider reflections on important issues such concepts of power within cities and social politics. We also invite participants to reflect on the important contribution of mass migration and rapid urbanization to the problem, and on the co-existence and inter-relationship of both state (public) and church or secular (private) charitable foundations.

Furthermore, the conference is interested in the problem of poverty in its cultural context. For example, how did journalists and artists represent the problem, and how did these representations shape and reshape wider opinion? Do we see the formation of a 'middle class' attitude that viewed poverty as something essential to city life? How did modern precariat managed to penetrate these 'middle-classes reservations'?

