CfP "Planned Communities in the Age of Enlightenment", Vienna, October 2017

The foundation of towns and cities has always been a crucial element of the appropriation and penetration of remote regions by the state. Especially during the late 17th and the 18th centuries, towns were projected and built in Europe and its overseas colonies in order to make newly conquered, sparsely populated or distant regions accessible. Sometimes such towns were based on existing villages or fortresses; sometimes they were built from scratch in the open countryside, in the forests or in marsh districts. Generally, they were intended to enable settlement, administrative inclusion, military protection and economic exploitation of the surrounding regions. Well-known examples of such planned cities are St. Petersburg and Odessa in the Tsarist Empire, Novi Sad in the Habsburg monarchy, or Washington, D.C. in the United States.

Quintessentially for that age, it was believed that societal developments could be calculated, planned and controlled. So these towns were provided not only with geometrically arranged streets and squares but also with public buildings and institutions for social welfare. But the far-reaching intentions of the planners often collided with the harsh reality of limited resources, unruly subjects and ill-disposed neighbors.

This conference seeks to examine towns and cities which were founded or fundamentally rebuilt during the late 17th and the 18th centuries inside and outside of Europe. We are looking forward to theoretical considerations as well as case studies focusing especially, though not exclusively, on the following topics:

1) Functions: Who initiated the establishment of the town, who governed it and for what purposes? Was the town intended to serve as a fortress or naval port, as an administrative center for the surrounding area or should it mainly serve commercial interests? How were these different demands related to each other and which were given priority over the others?

2) Planning and building: Did concepts from the field of governmentality, as for example cameralism, play an important role in the establishment of the town? What infrastructure was to be provided — e.g., churches, administrative buildings and welfare institutions? Who drew the plans for the town, and who built it? Were international experts involved, as for example architects, engineers or master-builders? From where were the workers recruited, and who paid for the buildings?

3) Interpretation: Into which tradition was the newly founded town inscribed? Were pre-existing
villages or enemy fortresses included? Did the town draw on local building traditions, or did it take foreign cities as a model?

4) Population: To what extent was the town populated according to a plan? Which measures were taken in order to attract ‘suitable’ inhabitants, and which mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion came into effect? What role did autochthonous inhabitants of the surrounding region play? What effects did the often multiethnic composition of the population of the town and its surrounding region have?

5) Development: To what extent did the future development of the town reflect the initial intentions of its founders, and to what degree were their plans implemented? Which unexpected challenges necessitated a re-conception of the town? Was it able to establish itself in the long term? Did it become a role-model for later urbanistic conceptions?

Please send your proposals (max. 500 words) and short CVs by May 15, 2017 to ulrich.hofmeister@univie.ac.at. Conference languages will be English and German. Limited expenses for travel and accommodation will be covered by the organizers.