

**Elizabeth Jones**

**The Settlement Imagination: German Internal Colonization and Empire, 1850–1930**

This book explores state policymakers' efforts to re-imagine and resettle the German countryside in the age of industrialization and overseas expansion. In particular, the book focuses on the environmental challenges posed by the cultivation of high moors and the prominence of agricultural science in the design and daily affairs of new moor settlements in East Friesland, Bavaria, and East Prussia. All three regions had witnessed previous state-sponsored colonization initiatives, most notably under the auspices of Frederick the Great and Kurfürst Karl Theodor, but none had produced the prosperous rural communities envisioned by planners. In the first decade of the *Kaiserreich*, with the help of agricultural chemists and new criteria for settler selection, Prussian and Bavarian authorities set out to improve existing moor colonies and establish new ones. *The Settlement Imagination* explores the unintended consequences and mixed results of these endeavors from multiple perspectives. Thus, together with the maps, statistics, and reports produced by experts in Berlin and Munich, this book also relies on the opinions and testimonies of local officials, as well as those of colonists themselves.

Several fundamental questions have guided my research. First, I am interested in agronomists as key actors in the re-envisioning of inhospitable landscapes and the reactions of moor farmers and their families to these improvement efforts. By tracing how selected settlement projects were made and re-made, I aim to underscore how they reflected a combination of new expert knowledge; the concerns, aspirations, and hard work of settlers; and the environmental and physical complexities of specific sites. In the realm of German state politics, the book traces the ways in which bureaucrats and scientists framed these initiatives as imperative for the strengthening of the Prussian or Bavarian state. Comparing these cases allows me to explore perennial questions about the salience of region in modern German history. At the same time, German agronomists participated eagerly in the transnational discourse on moor science and its potential for creating new settlement models. Indeed, by the beginning of the twentieth century, *Deutsche Hochmoorkultur* was acclaimed as the standard for others to follow. Finally, *The Settlement Imagination* also seeks to intervene in current historical debates over the role of experts in German and European overseas expansion and how colonial discourses of racial difference and environmental improvement may have influenced internal settlement. While historians have stressed the continuities between Prussian and Nazi efforts to settle and Germanize "the wild east," this book highlights new aspects of German internal colonization, which more closely resemble the push by policymakers across Europe to improve agrarian landscapes as a means of strengthening the nation. Moreover, this book also explores the concerted efforts to expand moor reclamation and colonization in the Weimar era, and how this intersected with new postwar ideas about the protection and preservation of Germany's moor landscapes.