Initially, **Joshua R. Goldstein** didn’t know exactly where Rostock was located. However, he was lured by the excellent reputation of the *Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research* – and recently took over as Director.

The view is impressive. The new Director at the Institute for Demographic Research, Joshua R. Goldstein, is fortunate to have an office directly overlooking the Warnow River: a view of seafaring ships, din- gehäuser and sailing vessels making their way either to Rostock’s interna- tional port or out to the Baltic. With the dynamic yet contemplative river- scape stretching away into the dis- tance, it is hard to imagine a better place for a scientist to indulge in creative thinking.

But it was neither the river nor the sea that motivated Goldstein, a historian, sociologist and demogra- pher, to leave the east coast of the US and bring his family to live on the Baltic coast of Germany. “Nor- mally, we think of Europe as the old world and America as the new,” says Goldstein. In the case of the Max Planck Institute in Rostock, however, the reverse is true. “In a matter of just ten years, the Rostock Institute has succeeded in becoming one of the finest demographic insti- tutes in the world.”

That made the prospect of moving to Rostock particularly attractive to the 42-year-old American. In his es- timation, “half of all of Europe’s fu- ture demographers will train here in the coming years as students, post- graduates and scientists.” The insti- tute’s outstanding position is also recognized internationally: Goldstein well remembers the bon mot offered up by an American colleague who said that the light of demography presently shines nowhere more brightly than in Rostock.

At first, neither his American family nor his friends were able to form much of a picture of Rostock itself. “No one even knew exactly where Rostock is,” Goldstein recalls, pouring Japanese tea in his sparsely furnished, white-painted office. On each occasion when he came to visit, the old university town, steeped in the history of the Hanseatic League, presented itself in the best light. And there has yet to be a sin- gle day on which the family of five has regretted the move – even if the initially delightful weather was too good to last. The family enjoys the prospect of driving to the coast ev- ery weekend.

Since August 2007, Goldstein has lived with his wife and children in a rented apartment in the old town. Barbara Zuber-Goldstein also works as a scientist at the institute, and their three children attend the mun- icipal kindergarten. “Because of the length of time we spent in Vienna, my eldest daughter never put any roots down in the US, and the twins were too small, anyway,” Goldstein explains. He is most impressed by the kindergarten in Rostock. They went out of their way to accommo- date the new arrivals – even a lan- tern-lit children’s procession ended as an impromptu Halloween party. “I’ve discovered that a lot of the stet- rectypes I’d heard about East Germa- ny are simply not true,” he adds. In Goldstein’s experience, the people of Rostock are open and helpful.

### Mathematics Is a Standard Tool

Before Goldstein and his mathemati- cal and statistical methods of demo- graphic research found a new home at the Rostock institute, he already had an impressive scientific career behind him. His chosen path took him from a study of history at Yale to the world of demography that he became acquainted with while working on his master’s at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He later consolidated his skills in the demographic field with a Ph.D. at the University of California in Berkeley. From 2002 onward, he taught at the Woodrow Wilson School in Princeton as a full professor of soci- ology and public affairs, and pursued his scientific work at the tradition- rich Office of Population Research, on which the renowned American demographers Irene Barnes Taub and Ansley Coale made their mark. In 2006, he became the youngest of ten members who formed the Com- mittee on Population of America’s National Research Council.

In the course of his career, Gold- stein has somewhat revolutionized his own research, in that he no lon- ger focuses solely on quantitative as- pects, but instead tries increasingly to answer questions on a quantita- tive basis. Whereas, in his earlier work, he made no more than inter- mittent use of formulae, his later publications are dominated by com- plex mathematical equations.

Initially, Goldstein took an interest in the effects of demographic devel- opments on such long-established social categories as ethnic and reli- gious identities. In his first publica- tion, Goldstein considered this phe- nomenon by taking Irish immigrants in the US as his example. He was keen to discover how the people who had abandoned Ireland for America beginning in the first half of the 19th century had developed into the Irish- Americans of today.

The diversity of religion, the high levels of education among many immigrants and their strong sense of ethnicity have all contributed to the fact that this segment of the American population retains a spe-
The city of Rostock itself also benefits from the openness of the institute, which has for some years now been cooperating successfully with the university and other local institutions both on matters of research and in the marketing of science. In the meantime, the city, in turn, has grown closer to the institute: a new housing development is being built along the riverside promenade, the old shipyard buildings have undergone a renaissance as a shopping mall, and the Warnow has sprung up.

Rostock is changing, becoming more open and urban. The institute has a role to play in this process, and its new Director, Joshua R. Goldstein, is actively involved. The Warnow may be a long and placid river, but there are some exciting things happening on its banks that will be worth keeping track of.