

## **Negotiating Belonging: Local Administrative Practices of Migration Control in Modern Europe**

### **Abstract:**

In migration history, two conflicting images of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coexist. On the one hand, the period up until the First World War appears as a singularly liberal age, in which migrants were freer than ever before or after to move and stay where they wanted. On the other hand, it is described (with various qualifications, of course) as an age of rising nationalism and of expanding state bureaucracies who became more and more able and determined to effectively control the movements of people – epochal trends that only intensified in the wake of the war. What unites both perspectives is that they generally focus on the state: in the modern era, so the conventional assumption goes, the (nation) state defines migration policy, based on a sharp discrimination between its own citizens and aliens, whereas the pre-modern autonomous power of local communities to decide about the admission or rejection of strangers allegedly faded away. One consequence of this focus on the state is that we know relatively little about how migration policies were shaped at the local and regional levels. It was still here, however, that practical decisions had to be taken on how to interpret and implement state regulations, and this required infrastructures for identifying, registering, interviewing and checking the records of newcomers. Moreover, in many parts of Europe, municipalities still had a considerable say and discretion in matters pertaining to settlement and the conferral of (layered) citizenship rights well into the twentieth century, and thus not only implemented state regulations, but also acted on their own behalf with sometimes diverging goals. This section aims at deepening our understanding of how migration policies were also the outcome of administrative procedures, in which regional state representatives, municipal authorities, local inhabitants and migrants (or migrants’ descendants) themselves played important roles. Based on sources such as questionnaires for inhabitant registration, applications for the right of residence, petitions for naturalization, and appeals against expulsion, the four papers take close looks at the complex everyday negotiations on the ambiguous meanings and boundaries of belonging in the era of modern nation-state formation.

## Participants and Papers

Levke Harders (author),  
Universität Innsbruck, Austria,  
[levke.harders@uibk.ac.at](mailto:levke.harders@uibk.ac.at)

Translating Migration – Negotiating Belonging

Christina Reimann (author),  
Stockholms Universitet, Sweden,  
[christina.reimann@historia.su.se](mailto:christina.reimann@historia.su.se)

Migration Policy in Late Nineteenth Century Antwerp and Rotterdam

Beate Althammer (organiser, author),  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin,  
Germany, [beate.althammer@hu-berlin.de](mailto:beate.althammer@hu-berlin.de)

Policing Migrants in Prussian Cities (ca. 1850 to 1914)

Sigrid Wadauer (organiser, author),  
Universität Wien, Austria,  
[sigrid.wadauer@univie.ac.at](mailto:sigrid.wadauer@univie.ac.at)

The Bureaucracy of Belonging (Late Habsburg Monarchy/Austria)

Anne Winter (chair, discussant),  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium,  
[anne.winter@vub.be](mailto:anne.winter@vub.be)