

CfP: Identity Documents in Use (Workshop)

Date: September 22th to 23th, 2022

Location: University of Vienna, Austria

Organizer: Sigrid Wadauer

Deadline for proposals: June 7th, 2022

This workshop aims to discuss practices of identification and registration in a historical and interdisciplinary perspective. “Establishing the identity of individual people – as workers, taxpayers, conscripts, travellers, criminal suspects”, is, as Caplan/Topey put it in their path-breaking volume, “fundamental to the multiple operations of the state.”¹ In the course of the last centuries, various forms of identification and registration became subject to ever more precise state regulations and were adapted or fully taken over by state authorities. Yet, at the same time, practices of identification, registration and categorization of individuals were never *exclusively* a matter of statehood and citizenship, an aspect of governmentality, bureaucracy, surveillance and migration control. Identity papers were not only produced and used by or vis á vis state authorities. Historically, various parties could be and remained involved in practices of identification and registration, ranging from religious organizations, trade or occupational associations, employers, unions, political organisations, landlords, welfare organizations, companies, creditors, or clubs for recreation Such parties provided information, produced data, checked documents, or even issued their own papers. They fulfilled tasks assigned to them, while following or adopting regulations issued by authorities with (more or less) enthusiasm or accuracy. At the same time, those involved in such tasks often pursued their own agenda, producing and using papers for their own purposes. It not always apparent or established once and for all where in such entanglements state bureaucracy started or ended. Consequently, people often were in possession of several documents which described or categorized them in various ways and which were more or less significant, more or less coherent, and varying in validity.

To understand why certain modes of identification worked, were successfully enforced, failed, or were modified, we have to consider these constellations in which such parties interacted in consensus or conflict. We have to equally include the practices and perspectives of those who often appear as merely subjected to identification, surveillance or control, but who participated

¹ Jane Caplan, John Torpey: Introduction. In: Idem (eds.): Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World. Princeton, Oxford 2001, 1-12, 1.

and contributed to their identification in various ways: by abiding or cooperating with authorities, by initiating procedures, by coping with missing documentation, or by voluntarily avoiding or boycotting identification.

This workshop aims to address in a historical and interdisciplinary perspective the following aspects:

- It intends to explore the *diversity of contexts* in which identity documents were produced and used.
- It will focus not on legislation or technologies but on *practices and interactions*, on the modes in which documents were produced, used and abused, interpreted, handled, stored, lost, misappropriated, forged or destroyed.
- It aims to address how people co-produced their (official) identity by interacting with authorities and other parties, how they represented themselves by delivering (or withholding) information, and how they reasoned or coped with inconsistencies in their data or documents, or with their lack of valid papers.
- It aims to discuss the diverse and ambiguous notions and purposes attached to identity documents as well as attitudes towards official documents. What impact did categorizations implied by certain types of papers or their contents have on self-perception, possibilities of self-presentation or on establishing trust?
- It suggests exploring in a systematic way the aspects according to which such papers, practices and perspectives varied and differed (instead of discussing singular “groups” or categories of the population separated from each other). We particularly invite contributions which present results of empirical research or work in progress, concerning (but not necessarily limited to) the period from the late 18th to the 20th century.

The workshop will take place in Vienna from September 22th to 23th, 2022. The organizers will provide accommodation as well as (limited) reimbursement of travel expenses. Should travel restrictions or other impediments to on-site events be in force due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we will consider switching to a partially digital format.

Please send proposals comprised of a title, an abstract of about 300-500 words and a short biographical note by June, 7th 2022 to sigrid.wadauer@univie.ac.at

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