

## **Categorizing, Registering and Reporting of Mobility and Stay**

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The project deals with the *Meldewesen* – the registration of changes of place and residence – in Austria from around 1850 to 1938. State authorities regarded censuses, the passport regime, and the registration system as complementary measurements for gaining the knowledge necessary to protect order and security. With the liberalization of the passport regime in the second half of the 19th century, the continuous and ubiquitous monitoring of all persons within the national territory – citizens and foreigners – seemed more urgent than ever. At the same time, the registration system subjected different categories of the population to unequally strict rules; it implied and created differences both in terms of affiliation and with respect to social status, context, and type of stay. It also distinguished forms of mobility and was the basis for statistical representations of migration and tourism.

The registration system was often denoted as the “soul” of police work, yet it fundamentally relied on reports from municipalities, house owners, landlords, janitors, innkeepers, employers, private hosts, heads of hospitals and monasteries, etc. The practical functioning and (often criticized) failure of the reporting system was also based on the willingness and interest of all the parties involved to register and report correctly, as well as to be registered or to avoid doing so. It was also shaped by their various agendas.

The registration system did not only serve state administration or police surveillance. The documentation of residence was also relevant for claiming or denying someone’s right of residence (*Heimatrecht*) in a municipality, and thereby undisturbed residence and poor relief. Not only citizenship and gender but also the duration of residence were crucial for the right to vote. Registration information could be used for police searches; it could also enable creditors or relatives to locate people. With respect to registration and identification requirements questions of privacy and “data protection” were discussed. Registering was often criticized as an imposition or forced confession. At the same time, travel guides highlighted remarkable guest books. For, by signing in, people documented their status as spa guests, mountaineers, or pilgrims.

Building on the FWF project “Co-Production and Use of Identity Documents”, the present project examines the historical development as well as the regional and social differentiation of these registration practices, which have been little studied up to now. It will likewise consider national and transnational debates. The focus of the research is on investigating the often ambivalent interests and the practical interplay of the parties involved. The project will thus reconstruct the everyday interactions and negotiations in the context of the registration system.