

“Passanten” and transient migration in preindustrial Europe and beyond

Call for papers and participants



*‘A group of travellers in and surrounding a vehicle is approaching a walled city’,
Etching by Alfred Hubert (1869), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.*

The notion of being on the road, or even the concept of mobility, has proved hard to grasp for historians, partially because of the issue of the large dark number of moves that went unregistered. Although individuals travelling often left few traces, from the viewpoint of cities or parishes there was an ever-present but always changing stream of people passing through. These transient migrants would for example stay overnight in a lodging house, or make a stop in the city to change from barges to overland travel. Cities in the early modern Low Countries defined these people as ‘passanten’, a concept which also existed in French as ‘passants’ and could be translated as ‘passers-by’.

In this workshop, we will explore the concept of *passanten* and its different iterations in history, discussing the meaning of and changes in transient migration in early modern European cities and parishes and beyond. Despite the focus on early modern Europe, contributions on other time periods and regions are also welcome to contribute to a comparative perspective. We invite proposals for individual project presentations; contributions focusing on sources and methods, concepts and conceptualisations, current research problems or fresh perspectives; as well as expressions of interest to attend as a discussant. Participants are invited to reflect on recently developed theories on spaces of arrival and transit, infrastructures of mobility, the agency of nature and technology as well as migration networks as units of analysis, to analyse the changes through time and the places transient migrants occupy within public space in urban and rural societies.

The workshop will take place as a hybrid event on Friday 26 November 2021, at the University of Warwick, c. 11 am to 5 pm. Participants wishing to attend in person will be most welcome, but it is also possible to join online. For those physically present, lunch and a reception will be included and it may be possible to reimburse travel costs (please contact the organisers beforehand).

This small workshop will be informal and not open to the public. Please confirm your participation by 1 November 2021 by sending an email to marjolein.schepers@vub.be and indicate whether you would wish to present a paper, offer methodical / source reflections, or act as a discussant. Those wishing to present a paper should include a title, short (max 1-page) abstract and brief biographical note.

Workshop committee: Beat Kumin (University of Warwick), Rosa Salzberg (Università degli Studi di Trento) and Felicita Tramontana (Università degli Studi Roma Tre).

For more information please contact: marjolein.schepers@vub.be

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