

Call for Papers (deadline extended)

Borders, Belonging, and Moral Obligation in German History

Radboud University Nijmegen, 27 June 2025.

The Platform for German History is delighted to announce its third annual conference, to be held at Radboud University Nijmegen on 27 June 2025. The keynote lecture will be given by Frank Trentmann (Birkbeck, University of London).

As Germany celebrates the 75th anniversary of its *Grundgesetz*, the country continues to grapple with fundamental questions over borders, belonging, and its transnational moral commitments. After the ravages of Nazism, many Germans sought to redefine their country as a post-nationalist stronghold of moral universalism. However, particularly in matters of migration and foreign policy, this ideal has long been challenged by more restrictive notions of Germany's responsibilities to newcomers and outsiders. Recent shifts in border control and the domestic rift over Gaza are but the latest developments in a long-standing national conversation.

Political scientists have recently argued that these struggles over identity and the boundaries of solidarity reflect a broader divide between universalist and particularist perspectives on moral duty, which opened up in much of the Western world in the 1980s. Yet especially in Germany, these tensions have much deeper roots. Many of the questions dominating today's debates have, in fact, been asked for centuries: What does it mean to be German? Who can rightfully claim Germanness? How should Germans manage their borders, and what obligations do they have towards others, both within and outside their territory?

The aim of this conference is to convene research that sheds new light on these debates throughout German history. We welcome transnational, comparative, (post)colonial, and/or interdisciplinary perspectives on any historical period.

To apply for the 'Borders, Belonging, and Moral Obligation in German History' conference, please send a 200-word abstract and 50-word bio by 10 February (deadline extended) to David de Boer (david.deboer@ru.nl). Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by early March.