

# EDITORIAL

The current issue of the journal *Dějiny – teorie – kritika / History – Theory – Criticism* owes its initial idea to the workshop ‘Keeping Track of People on the Move – Archival and Methodological Challenges’, which took place on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2019 in Prague and was organized by Charles University’s Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Arts in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences. This scholarly meeting reacted to a growing interest among historians in the study of human mobility and a growing need for critical reflection on the related methodological apparatus, which has been inspired by contemporary developments in the social sciences.

In Central European historiography there has been traditionally more emphasis on people who left the region rather than on new arrivals. This seems to have been the result of a long term concern with nationally-defined geographical units. Only relatively recently have historians become more aware of the inadequacy of those dominant national frameworks and the presuppositions of cultural homogeneity and territorial rootedness they are associated with. The study of movements, flows and circulations across borders is now not only attracting increased attention but also often seems an outward necessity and at the same time a useful tool in destabilizing the established lines of historical interpretation.

The long underestimated complementary perspective of people and objects in motion entails certain problems that now seem of more pressing relevance than before. The Prague workshop encouraged scholars to explore what impact various forms of mobility had on record keeping and artefact preservation. What materials did administrative authorities and institutions produce to document and discipline people in motion? How did historical actors themselves take the initiative to leave traces, frame their experience, justify their causes and gain support? Did the records produced by people on the move reach archives via the

established administrative channels or did they follow less conventional paths? What other items (such as books, maps, coins or images) moved along with people and how did they reach present-day collections? Was the communication axis between homeland(s) and host land(s) of fleeting or rather of long-lasting nature?

What possibilities and limits of interpretation do these sources pose? What questions do they raise and what analytical categories can be particularly useful in tackling them? Moreover, how do we extract knowledge from historical records in the age after the linguistic turn, which questioned the referentiality of our sources? How do we access the lives of migrants on the basis of material that is often fragmentary or highly narrative, formulaic and repetitive? How do we reconcile these cognitive restraints with the need to have the voices of displaced people heard, represented and recognized?

The Prague workshop invited scholars to address these shared problems of both pragmatic and epistemological nature, which result from travelling, dispersed or fragmentary archives (in the broad sense of the word). Explicit reflections on archival, conceptual and methodological challenges can provide valuable insights into the historian's craft and the ways individual scholars work.

The workshop was opened with a keynote lecture delivered by the distinguished French historian of Central Europe, Marie-Elizabeth Ducreux, whose research has significantly redressed scholarly interpretations of the religious situation in the post-White Mountain Bohemia as she prefers to write of a galaxy of 'heresy suspects' rather than of clearly defined groups of non-Catholics. Moreover, she shows the importance of the careful (re)construction of the migration pathways that many of these nonconformists undertook.

This issue also presents paper by Vladimír Urbánek who revisits the theme of 'innovation through migration' opened by Heinz Schilling in 1983. Another paper, contributed by Radmila Prchal Pavlíčková, which analyses textual practices and exile experience of Jan Jiří Harant of Polžice and Bezručovice, confirms the growing interest in and changing approaches to people on the move.

In mobility studies, the concepts of mobility and stasis are often juxtaposed. While this first issue of DTK in 2020 was being prepared, a form of stasis occurred as a result of the coronavirus pandemic that was unprecedented in modern times. I believe this issue reflects not only the symptomatic slowing of the usual pace of work but also DTK's readiness to tackle new challenges and attract new authors and readers.

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