**(Re)Thinking Migration: Scholarly Discourses from Antiquity to Modernity**

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Migration and its consequences belong to the most relevant societal challenges that present-day politicians, NGOs and social scientists have to face. But debating migration is not the prerogative of modernity: If we assume that man, as *homo migrans*, has always migrated, we can be assured that man has also always reflected upon his mobile existence. Migrations are not only constituted by people on the move, but also by the significance given to these movements. Discourses on migration, our intellectual engagement with human mobility, are an integral part of our existence as *homo migrans*.

The proposed panel presents a research project recently initiated by the Austrian Academy of Sciences’ Institute for Medieval Research in the framework of the Innovation Fund “Research, Science and Society“. Assessing the ideas, views and judgements on migration, and on human mobility in general, that were formulated by scholars between antiquity and modernity, the project team intends to link the fields of historical migration studies and intellectual history. Despite its importance as a political and scholarly term, the conceptual history of migration has hitherto not been the subject of in-depth research. Sub-disciplines such as the history of political thought have only touched upon the topic in passing, despite the intrinsically political nature of migration discourse throughout the ages. The *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, the major achievement of German *Begriffsgeschichte*, does not treat migration, whereas other reference works do contain lemmata on migration, but fail to address the conceptual development of the term.

Historical migration studies, on the other hand, have been primarily interested in factual historical migration movements – either in a quantitative way linked to historical demographics, or in a qualitative methodology focused on the experience of individual migrants. Substantial and far-reaching research has been conducted on migration processes from the Middle Ages to the present day, exploring numerous facets of human mobility. The verve and the versatility of historical migration research have recently been documented by the copious *Encyclopedia of European Migration and Minorities*. Importance and relevance of this approach are beyond question, yet it is necessary to complement them with an analysis of migration as an artefact of historical discourse. Compared to the extensive research on migration as a socio-historical phenomenon, the history of migration as an idea has been largely neglected.

As Rainer Bauböck has argued, migration is a social phenomenon that tends to raise questions on human nature, and therefore becomes the topic of philosophical and scholarly reflection. Comparatively few pre-modern and early modern authors composed treatises exclusively and explicitly dedicated to the topics of migration and mobility – yet many of them included perspectives on human mobility in their writings, which are not immediately apparent at a cursory reading. The project therefore necessitates an in-depth analysis of a number of specialised discourses, each of them a significant aspect of early modern scholarly thought, that approach the topic of migration / mobility from different angles. By contrasting and juxtaposing these sub-discourses – such as ethnography, theology, historiography as well as economic theories –, the researchers will assess the rich plurality of opinions, but also identify possible common features that linked these different fields into overarching, superordinate discourses on human mobility. Opening a completely new field of research, the inquiry will provide the foundation for follow-up projects with the long-term goal of determining the intellectual antecedents of our present-day understanding of migration – and the ideological and symbolic significance attached to it.

Present-day opinions on migration as a phenomenon are no immutable, constant givens. Like all societal discourses, they have been shaped and determined by historical processes. Raising awareness for these historical processes could refute essentialist understandings of migration and enable the general public to reconsider and deconstruct common perceptions and stereotypes of migrants. Thus, the project intends to provide a long-term perspective to a controversial political topic of utmost importance.

Due to its possible political and societal impact, the project promises to be of interest not only to specialists in historical scholarship, but also to the social sciences as well as to policy makers and the general public. The panel at the *Fifth Annual Conference for Migration and Integration Research in Austria* is intended to be a first step in interdisciplinary dialogue, and we hope to encourage an exchange of perspectives between scholars in the humanities and social scientists engaged in migration research.