

**Call for Papers: Workshop: European Protest Cultures in the Modern Era (1789–1939)**

**Date and location:** 17–18 September 2026, Prague / in person (not hybrid)

**Organizers:** Pavel Horák / David Smrček / Rudolf Kučera (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

**Host:** Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, GAČR Protest Culture in the Bohemian Lands between 1890 and 1938

**Languages:** English

**Proposal Deadline:** 29 March 2026

**Contact:** horak@mua.cas.cz

**Introduction**

Protests, demonstrations, and riots were central to the political and social life of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. As societies modernized and mass politics emerged, the street became a crucial stage for articulating dissent, negotiating power, and expressing collective identity. This “contentious politics” was not merely spontaneous outbursts of popular sentiments but a deeply cultural phenomenon, rich with symbols, rituals, performances, and continuously evolving repertoires of action.

Recent events—from the United States to Ukraine, Brazil, and Georgia—demonstrate that such collective expressions of discontent remain vital for societies worldwide. Yet Western historiography has been slow to reflect this enduring importance. While the reconceptualizations of the protests of the 1990s and 2000s (such as Ch. Tilly, T. Lindenberger and others) found a lively response among historians, more recent approaches from the political and social sciences have had limited influence on historical research.

This workshop aims to bring new momentum to the historiography of European protest culture during an era of rapid civil society development and political transformation from 1789 to 1939. Protest culture was closely tied to the rise of mass politics and democratization across European states. With industrialization, the growth of labor movements, and expanding political participation, ordinary people’s modes of public expression changed fundamentally. New forms of protest—strikes and demonstrations—emerged; yet, they remained intertwined with older performances such as shaming rituals or pogroms.

Organized as part of the Czech Science Foundation project “Protest Culture in the Bohemian Lands between 1890 and 1938,” this workshop moves beyond traditional state-versus-society dichotomies. Instead, we want to explore protest as a dynamic process of communication, interaction, and mutual learning—conceptualizing them as symptoms of deep social crises when consensus breaks down, and institutional legitimacy faces open challenge. Our focus lies on the interplay between grassroots protest practices and state decision-making mechanisms. We are particularly interested in the anthropology of protest as lived experience: the role of emotions, creativity, improvisation, and local leadership at the “mezzo level.”

While grounded in the Bohemian Lands and broader Habsburg territories, we strongly encourage papers from other geographical contexts that resonate with our themes and chronological scope. We invite proposals from historians and scholars in related disciplines (anthropology, sociology, political science, cultural studies, etc.) that engage with protest cultures.

We especially welcome contributions addressing:

**The Anthropology of Protest:** The role of emotions, creativity, leadership, and improvisation in protest events. Studies of local activists and organizers at the “mezzo level.”

**Protest as Performance:** Theatricality, symbols, songs, rituals, and the strategic use of urban and rural space in staging collective action.

**Changing Contexts and Contentious Politics:** The interplay between broader political developments or social changes and protest practices.

**Communication and the “Learning” State:** How actors interpreted, managed, and learned from protests, including the evolution of police tactics, risk management, public discourse, and the role of media ecosystems in framing public perception.

**The Law and the Street:** Changing legal frameworks governing public assembly and the ongoing struggle over control of public space.

**The Diffusion of Contentious Politics:** How new protest forms spread across time and space, incorporating into traditional repertoires.

We welcome both case studies and comparative or theoretical approaches. Papers may focus on specific movements (Chartism, suffrage campaigns, labor movements, anti-fascist

resistance, student protests, peace movements, etc.), individual cases, or explore protest as recurring cultural practice.

**Submission details:**

**English** will be the spoken language of workshop presentations, but scholars from all linguistic backgrounds are welcome to participate.

**Proposals** of no more than 300 words should clearly outline the paper's focus, methodology, and relevance to the workshop theme, and be accompanied by the participant's name, institutional affiliation, contact information, projected paper title, and a one-page CV. **Please send proposals by 29 March 2026 to [horak@mua.cas.cz](mailto:horak@mua.cas.cz).**

**Individual papers** should not exceed 15 minutes and will be followed by a 5-minute commentary from a discussant and a 20-minute space for a general discussion. Participants will be asked to provide discussants with a draft of their paper (either in note form or as a full text) two weeks before the workshop; these pre-circulated drafts will serve as the basis for commentary.

**Travel and accommodation** grants will be available for scholars with limited or no institutional funding. Please indicate your need for support when submitting your abstract. We can also assist with accommodation booking arrangements.

The keynote speaker will be **Olivier Fillieule**, Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Lausanne (UNIL), affiliated with the Centre de recherche sur l'action politique de l'UNIL (CRAPUL) and Centre recherche LIVES. Participants will have the opportunity to submit their papers for **publication** in a special issue of *Střed/Centre*, a peer-reviewed journal focused on the study of society, culture, politics, and economics in Central Europe from the nineteenth century to the present.