

Midlife media history

Turen går til and tourist guidebooks in the era of mass travel

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In the age of Wikitravel, TripAdvisor, and Google Maps, the tourist guidebook seems like an antiquated medium. For centuries, guidebooks served as trusted companions for travellers, providing a ‘mediating link’ between tourists and destinations.¹ Yet after decades of booming sales from the 1960s to the 2000s the market for English-language travel guides shrank by 30–40 per cent between 2005 and 2011. The global financial crisis and the rapid growth of free, user-generated travel advice online appeared to spell the end of the printed travel guide. Industry observers declared it dead and its history ‘bookended’.²

The supposed death of a medium invites reflection on its history and potential future. This chapter analyses the overlooked media history of a commercially successful and culturally influential Danish travel guide series, *Turen går til* (lit. ‘The trip goes to’). An immediate bestseller from the outset in 1952, the publisher quickly branched into foreign markets with translations into all Scandinavian and major European languages. In Germany alone, the series sold 3 million copies in the 1960s. Hailed as an ‘institution’ by reviewers just three years after the launch in Denmark, its titles soon covered all of Europe. By 1971, it had amassed a combined sale of more than 1 million copies in Denmark alone—then a country with a population

of less than 5 million. As Europe's post-war societies witnessed the democratization of travel thanks to extended paid holidays and rising purchasing power, *Turen går til* had a virtual monopoly on the Danish market for travel guides.³ The series thus guided generations of new tourists, introducing foreign lands and helping inexperienced holidaymakers navigate alien cultural codes.

Despite *Turen går til*'s critical contribution to the formation of post-war Danish travel culture—defined here as the 'practices and traditions of leisure travel'—the travel series has never been the subject of an academic study.⁴ Aside from a short essay written by its founder, Bo Bramsen, for a volume celebrating the publisher's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1971, there is no literature on this institution of contemporary Danish cultural history.⁵ The aim of this chapter is to account for the series' remarkable success by analysing its communications circuit, focusing especially on its production and distribution.⁶

Studying the travel guide

From a media history perspective, the travel guide is a multi-faceted object treated by some users as an ephemeral object while others consider it a keepsake. Previous research on travel guides has overwhelmingly concentrated on their contents: stereotypical representations of foreign lands, and the hopes and fears harboured by the authors. Such studies have offered valuable insights into past conceptions of the self and the other, but they often overlook the social history of communication in which the travel guides are embedded.

Methodologically, this chapter looks beyond the textual surface of *Turen går til* to provide a wider media history of the travel guide. Considering the changes to format and contents as well as to how travel guides adapt to the transforming media landscape, the study builds on archival sources as well as published accounts. The availability of primary sources is limited, since its Danish publisher has

kept no archival records related to the series. Fortunately, however, correspondence found in the archive of its Swedish publisher offers detailed insights into the publishing process and the international adaptation of the series. The digitization of newspaper collections and local archives also allows us to draw on contemporaneous media coverage and photographs of local bookstore interiors, documenting the promotion of *Turen går til*. Bramsen's account offers historical background, and an oral history interview conducted with a *Turen går til* author provides further insights into the production and publishing process. Yet more information can be gleaned from the travel guides' paratexts. Chronologically, the focus is on the first couple of decades to emphasize the guidebook's continuation and honing of older travel guide traditions.

The attempt to distil the history of a medium involves two potential pitfalls. On the one hand, it carries the risk of generalizing. Technologies such as 'the telephone' or 'film' are far from trivial and straightforward. In media history 'specificity is key', Lisa Gitelman cautions.⁷ Budapest's broadcast telephones of the 1920s have little in common with the 'hardened encrypted devices' used by criminals today.⁸ All media are historically and culturally situated; to generalize risks essentializing. The other danger is that in writing media history it becomes a linear progression towards ever greater sophistication and optimization.⁹ The cordless telephone may well be superior to the corded telephone in most respects, but often 'residual' media survive because of inherent features that users continue to prize. For their users, travel guides seemingly have not only an inherent value as guidebooks, but also as souvenirs. A teleological perspective on media history misses this point. Moreover, as a number of media historians have recently pointed out, the nearly obsessive focus on newness by media historians means that media history is almost by default *new* media history.¹⁰ What is missing is histories of the middle and late stages of a medium's lifespan. Another aim of this

chapter is thus to offer precisely the kind of neglected midlife history of the travel guide using the case of *Turen går til*.

The travel guide—a brief history

The origins of the travel guide can be traced back to antiquity, but its history of blending and borrowing from other literary genres means that its contents and materiality have mutated throughout history.¹¹ Numerous scholars have sought to define what constitutes a travel guide and provide typologies neatly categorizing its various forms. The results of these efforts, however, have been of limited heuristic value as the genre is simply too elastic.¹² One common denominator of the travel guide genre is its descriptive and prescriptive nature. The guidebook typically offers descriptions of places, peoples, and cultures, and it orders the described items in a normative hierarchy of attractiveness. By describing ‘what ought to be seen’, the travel guide communicates a comprehensive set of values prescribing protocols for tourist behaviour and imparting assumptions about relevant knowledge. The style of writing often strives for transparency and a sense of the unmediated dissemination of objective knowledge, masking the selection and exclusion of content that precede its production.¹³ This content is then complemented with illustrations and maps, and with travel writing, art history, ethnography, geography, glossary, restaurant and hotel guides, and an address book.¹⁴ The tourist guidebook is thus a fascinating hybrid medium that offers its users a wide range of affordances. Its contents can serve simultaneously as a spatial roadmap, guiding visitors to the physical site of attractions; a cultural roadmap, helping visitors navigate foreign lands and their symbolic hierarchy of attractions; a phrase book aiding communication across linguistic boundaries; and an encyclopaedia providing facts along the way.

Guidebooks are also material artefacts that can reflect the cultural tastes and economic status of their owners. Lonely Planet’s thick

tomes covering entire continents have long appealed to the budget backpacker; the miniscule design of the more recent Wallpaper City Guides caters to the affluent and design-obsessed, consciously keeping their travel guide out of sight for fear of being considered a 'tourist'. The guidebook's ability to communicate a cultural identity continues long after the holiday is over. Visibly archived on a bookshelf, it signals to visitors what kind of traveller the owner aspires to be. Easily recognizable spines with place names in large print invite conversations about past travels. Dog-eared and full of scribbled notes, the travel guide can become a holiday souvenir co-produced by the publisher and the reader—a feature that no electronic device has so far been able to replicate.¹⁵ In fact, the guidebook is a complex communication technology with too many affordances for straightforward remediation by a single application or device.

Aristocrats were the intended audience of the early modern guidebooks, travelling for months or years untroubled by trivial matters such as time and money. Such guidebooks therefore contained few practical details about travelling distances and accommodation prices. The early nineteenth century marked a turning point in the history of the travel guide. As well-heeled citizens outside aristocratic circles acquired the means needed for recreational trips, the guidebook readership changed. The pioneers of modern guidebook publishing, the German Karl Baedeker and the British John Murray III, packaged succinct and practical travel advice in cheap, pocket-sized books. The publishers updated their guides with a regularity that earned them a sterling reputation as reliable chaperones of Europe's new travelling classes.¹⁶ Baedeker's travel guides with their familiar reddish covers attained the rank of an authoritative voice on refined taste and proper tourist behaviour, respected by hordes of new middle-class travellers across Europe who aspired to a higher social status.

The longevity of the Baedeker publishing house and the reach of their travel guides ensured the publisher a central place in the history of modern tourism. The nineteenth-century Baedeker has long been

a natural focus point of scholarly attention and makes for a perfect example of the newness craze by media historians. Symptomatically, Susanne Müller's excellent Baedeker history, *Die Welt des Baedeker*, concludes at the end of the Second World War. So does Bosse Bergman's heavy tome, *Lustresandets geografier*, while Nicholas Parsons' *Worth the detour* is stronger on the early modern and nineteenth-century travel guides than on their post-war equivalents.

'Where are the histories of "middle" and "late" periods for media?' asked the editors of *The long history of new media* in 2011.¹⁷ One explanation for the disproportionate interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel guides may be gleaned from a short German essay on guidebooks published in 1956. The author remarked that historians had already had 150 years to write a history of German guidebooks, but 'today, faced with a never-ending tide of new publications, it is almost unimaginable to gain a complete overview, order and evaluate this legion of books'.¹⁸ This comment may even carry a broader relevance for media history. As a medium loses its newness and becomes a familiar feature of everyday life, it is harder for scholars to handle the abundance of sources or build a coherent narrative around the medium's sprawling use.¹⁹ This is nevertheless the challenge we seek to meet in this chapter.

Easy guidebooks for busy travellers

In 1951, Bo Bramsen, the executive director of a Danish publishing house, toured France. The Second World War had left all the Danish guidebooks utterly outdated and Bramsen's French was too rudimentary for the local travel guides to be of much use. An idea began to take shape as he holidayed. That year, the tourist traffic between European countries exceeded the highest interwar figures and the forecast was that international tourism would continue to grow.²⁰ With an expanding clientele who, like Bramsen, would prefer to travel with a guidebook in their first language, he eyed

the market for new travel guides, even in a marginal language like Danish. ‘Convinced that the Baedeker era of my youth was long gone’, Bramsen recalled in 1971, the format had to be light and practical.²¹ As travelling became easier, tourists would prefer ‘small, easy books that one could read in one’s hotel bed at night to make the most of the following day’, Bramsen believed. Back in Denmark, he started work on the concept, and by May 1952 the first in the *Turen går til* series, *Turen går til Østreg* hit the shelves.

The inception of *Turen går til* is a good example of the kind of missing ‘middle period’ media history discussed above. Rather than being a history of radical innovation, it is characterized by the local adaptation of familiar formats. Notably, even Bramsen’s celebratory ‘autobiography’ of the publishing house he helped found and led for decades did not tout the successful series as a major novelty. In fact, reading the essay on *Turen går til* in the context of the publisher’s previous ventures, it is evident how the series evolved from earlier experiments and successes. The publisher had produced popular domestic guidebooks for a decade, and ideas for new *Turen går til* guidebooks were piloted in the publisher’s bestselling yearbook, *Hvem Hvad Hvor*. Moreover, the guidebook series should be understood as an integral part of the publisher’s well-established catalogue of handbooks, whose brand recognition and aura of reliability helped make the guidebook series a success from day one.

Producing a series of regularly updated travel guides requires a capacity for the systematic compilation and organization of information. Politikens Forlag, the publisher of *Turen går til*, had such routines in place for managing and updating large amounts of data even before its formal foundation in 1946. The leading centre-left daily *Politiken* had published the comprehensive *Hvem Hvad Hvor* yearbook since 1933. This practical handbook summarized important events of the past year, along with short entries on current affairs, technological developments, culture, and ordinary life. ‘Not a dictionary, not a statistical yearbook, not a teaching manual, not an

entertainment book, but the essence of all of these in one', as the preface read in 1939.²²

The newspaper's publishing house, Politikens Forlag, had also compiled a regularly updated domestic travel guide since 1943. According to Bramsen, the entrepreneurial Axel Dessau—who would later play a crucial role in the tourist promotion of Denmark abroad—recommended that the board venture into tourism in 1942. Although the Second World War was raging and Denmark was under German occupation, the board heeded Dessau's daring advice and in 1943, *Danmark rundt* ('Around Denmark') appeared with almost 400 pages of information for domestic tourists about attractions, accommodation, restaurants, transport, and suggested itineraries throughout the country. The objective was to produce the first comprehensive and credible guidebook containing a three-tiered classification system for attractions and accommodation in Denmark similar to the Guide Michelin. To achieve this, Bramsen and Dessau developed data-gathering and management routines. They first drafted a pilot entry on Helsingør, which they considered 'a typical, Danish tourist town'.²³ Over the course of three days, the editors collected all the relevant information on site. They then drafted the entry and distributed copies of the proof to 88 local tourist organizations across the country, requesting similar information about their towns. The editors then gathered additional information from individual specialists about museums, cinemas, sports, walks, hostels, and so on, while further details were crowdsourced through thousands of letters. Eventually, the editors had built a vast archive of 10,000 index cards from which they assembled the final manuscript. *Danmark rundt* was a success and regularly appeared in new editions, which gave Politikens Forlag the edge in the guidebook publishing business that could be leveraged with the launch of *Turen går til*.

The two handbooks, *Hvem Hvad Hvor* and *Danmark rundt*, laid the foundation for Politikens Forlag's new direction as a specialist in pocket-sized reference books on virtually any conceivable topic.



Figure 7.2. Politikens Forlag had a handbook for everyone. A bookshop window display in Skanderborg in 1959. © Skanderborg Historiske Arkiv.

The literature section of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* was the first to be spun off and turned into a separate handbook in 1945.²⁴ Handbooks on film and music soon followed, and then childrearing, chess, conscription, gardening, and labour law, to mention only a few examples. Politikens Forlag eventually had a handbook for everyone in its rapidly growing catalogue.²⁵ ‘Politikens handbooks you will need every single day’, read an in-store display in the early 1970s.²⁶ The handbooks were encyclopaedic in more than one sense. Not only did they cover a vast number of subjects, they also mediated an encyclopaedic authority down to the page layout with double columns typical of encyclopaedias. The Scandinavian publishing industry was booming in the post-war period, with the 1950s a ‘golden decade’ for cheap publishing.²⁷ Affordably priced and accessibly written, Politikens Forlag’s handbooks provided guidance in a world of dramatic change. Titles from the 1950s such as *Hvad kan jeg blive?*

(‘What can I become?’), *Jeg har et hus* (‘I have a house’), *Hvordan skal jeg bo?* (‘How should I live?’), and *Socialrådgiveren* (‘The social worker’) are indicative of a young Danish welfare society that was expanding rapidly and offered equal access to education, jobs, and housing.²⁸ *Bil og motor* (‘Car and engine’) appealed to the rapidly growing ranks of car owners while *Alverdens flag i farver* (‘Flags of the world in colour’) helped readers stay abreast with the new sovereign states in the wake of post-war decolonization.²⁹

Turen går til and the making of an institution

It was at this crucial moment in European history, with memories of the Second World War still fresh and its consequences visible in redrawn European borders and ruined cities, that Bramsen identified the potential for wholly rewritten guidebooks to the post-war continent. *Danmark rundt* was aimed at a domestic readership touring their home country. Now was the time for a series in Danish covering foreign countries. The first step was taken in the autumn of 1951 when the editors of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* prepared a new, extensive section on touring abroad. Completed in October 1951, the hugely popular yearbook prepared the ground for the forthcoming guidebook series by presenting tours through Britain, France, Austria, and Switzerland across ten pages. Scores of drawings accompanied the suggested routes, inviting readers to imagine themselves at famous tourist sites such as Tintern Abbey, Mont-Saint-Michel, the Grossglockner, or Lake Geneva.

The illustrations were prepared by Politikens Forlag’s in-house draughtsman, Ib Withen, whose distinctive drawings of people, buildings, and landscapes brought *Hvem Hvad Hvor* to life and many other handbooks too, including the *Turen går til* series. Along with a uniform page layout and consistent themes, Withen’s illustrations helped tie the handbook universe together. Not until Withen’s death in 1979 did photographs replace hand-drawn illustrations in the

guidebook series. In hindsight, the decision in 1951 to produce travel guides without photographs seems like an audacious commitment to old publishing traditions. The visual experience, seeing with one's own eyes, had always been a cornerstone of tourism.³⁰ Most international guidebooks began to include photographs in the 1920s.³¹ Readers of newspapers and magazines were long used to seeing photographs among the written content. Denmark entered the television age in the same months as Bramsen decided against photographic images.³² The world was on the cusp of the visually saturated jet age.³³

Bramsen explained his decision by referring to the Michelin guides he had seen in France when on holiday. They had beautiful hand-drawn vignettes of the sights; far more appealing than 'the many, confused brochures with more or less randomly chosen and poorly reproduced photographs'. In fact, *Turen går til* was in good company. The venerable Baedeker was also resisting the trend to include photos of famous attractions and beautiful scenery.³⁴ Photographs would have required better paper quality, pushing up the price, and going against the publisher's ambition to appeal as widely as possible. The bottom line, however, was that the new guidebook series had a visually unassuming appearance that harked back to the nineteenth-century travel guide tradition rather than embracing the glamour of jet-age mobility and photographs of iconic attractions.

The publication of the first *Turen går til* volume, an inconspicuous brochure of 64 pages about Austria, marked another step in the long trend in guidebook publishing towards smaller, lighter travel guides. Two centuries earlier, Thomas Nugent's popular *Grand Tour* had appeared in a practical duodecimo format (c.18×12 cm), and throughout the nineteenth century Baedeker published pocket-sized guides hundreds of pages long, printed on Bible-thin paper.³⁵ *Danmark rundt* guide had appeared in a larger format, but now Politikens Forlag followed the general trend towards inexpensive mass-market paperbacks.³⁶ That said, the book's material features were dictated as much by technical capacity as by a determination

to reconceptualize the guidebook medium. The 64-page format was the largest format the printers could manage in a single frame. It was a choice made to hold down costs.

It was made clear from the outset that the first in the *Turen går til* series was a 'concentrated travel guide'.³⁷ Drivers, cyclists, and walkers looking for detailed maps were referred to other sources. Subsequent titles went one step further and recommended that readers in search of additional information consult international travel guide series such as *Guide Michelin*, *Nagels Reiseführer*, or *Baedekers Autoführer*. Evidently, the *Turen går til* editors were confident that foreign-language guidebooks were no threat, because they catered to a specialist market and were unlikely to dampen Danish-language sales.

Turen går til Østrig explicitly appealed to a variety of readers, 'not only motorists, train travellers, cyclists, and walkers ... but also participants in group trips'.³⁸ The first section of the guidebook consisted of a 15-page introduction with facts about the country's geography, history, inhabitants, and major cities, accompanied by a few maps, all of which the reader was encouraged to study before departing. The page design, including the accompanying diagrams and illustrations, appeared in the familiar house style also used in *Hvem Hvad Hvor*. The introduction was followed by a brief section entitled 'final travel preparations'. Readers were given suggestions for what to wear, what to bring, what to eat, and where to stay. The guidebook provided an overview of prices and transport options at a remarkably detailed level. This made the book highly useful, but at the risk of being out-of-date at the time of publication. The final section, which carried the title 'Now we're in Austria', intended to be read (again) after arriving, contained additional information about the major cities as well as twenty-eight suggested itineraries through the country. These tours were primarily aimed at tourists travelling by public transport, though motorists and cyclists were told the routes were suitable for them too.

The general aesthetic and the sections in *Turen går til Østrig* proved to be a stable concept. Just as the entry on Helsingør in *Danmark rundt* had been the template for the description of other towns, *Turen går til Østrig* was a template for the whole series until the mid-1970s when it received a major overhaul. Politikens Forlag continued to test new potential guidebook material in the *Hvem Hvad Hvor* yearbook. The 1953 edition, ready in October 1952, had six pages of itineraries in neighbouring Norway, Sweden, and Germany, countries that all had dedicated guidebooks within a couple of years. The 1954 edition of *Hvem Hvad Hvor* included itineraries through the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain, again signalling forthcoming country guides, plus practical advice on ‘how to travel to the south’, passports, visa, accommodation, transportation, and prices. The link between the yearbook and the spin-off travel guides lasted until 1972, the last year when *Hvem Hvad Hvor* featured a section dedicated to tourism. For two decades, Politikens forlag thus used its popular yearbook to test ideas for future travel guides, pitch forthcoming books, and repackage previously published content as a gateway to its other publications. The integrated relation between the yearbook and the ever-expanding handbook universe—instilling the idea that Politiken had practical advice on any conceivable topic—arguably provided the impetus that allowed *Turen går til* to take off so quickly and earn its reputation as ‘an institution’ already by 1955.³⁹ The guidebook series not only filled a vacuum on the Danish book market. It also piggybacked on the publisher’s production and distribution networks, as well as its growing brand recognition. The distinctive striped cover design of all Politikens Forlag’s handbooks and Withen’s untiring pen made the guidebooks easily recognizable as belonging to Politiken’s collection of engaging and enlightening non-fiction.

In 1951, Politikens forlag pulled off a carefully orchestrated PR stunt that helped cement its brand, when it offered all Danish bookshops a free, custom-made bookshelf to house the handbooks. This small piece of furniture ensured the material presentation of the books

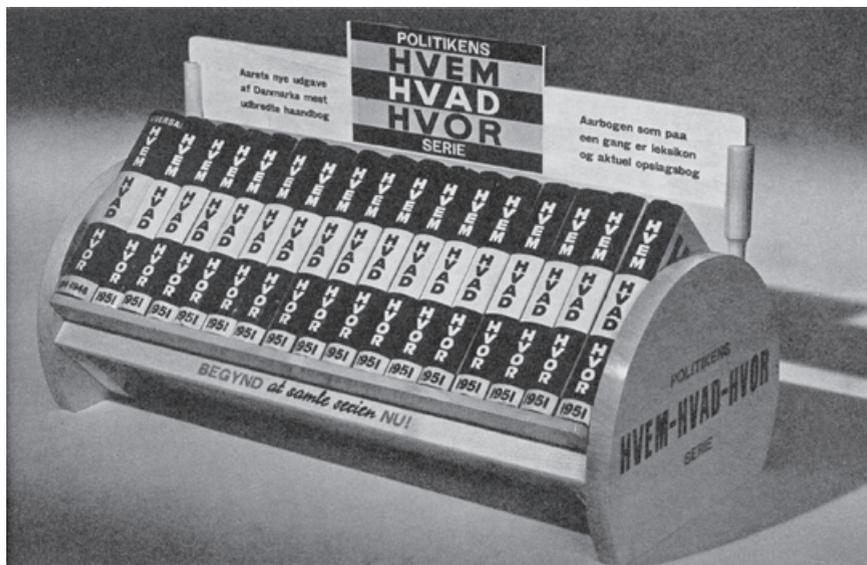


Figure 73. In 1951 Politikens Forlag offered all Danish bookshops a free, custom-made bookshelf to display its handbooks. © JP/Politikens Forlag.

as a coherent series across vendors, and shepherded customers to something of a bookshop in a bookshop, offering a broad range of non-fiction books in a single place. Twelve years later, the number of unique handbook titles was approaching 300, and the publisher decided to repeat the PR stunt. This time, the company designed and distributed a full-sized bookshelf that could accommodate many more books.⁴⁰ Photographs from the interiors of bookstores across Denmark provide visual evidence of how this marketing strategy worked in practice. Images from the 1960s and 1970s show how the handbooks were displayed on the custom-made bookshelves or on separate shelves labelled ‘Politikens håndbøger’, often prominently placed near the entrance or close to the till.⁴¹ Behind the booksellers posing in these photographs, the recognizable features of *Turen går til* occasionally stand out among numerous other Politiken handbooks gathered on the company’s bookshelves. Evidently, the

travel guides were part of a large and popular universe offering practical knowledge.

Authorship, editorship, and transnational circulation

According to Bramsen's brief history of *Turen går til*, the guidebook authors had to be familiar not only with the destination in question, but also with the 'Danish tourist mentality'.⁴² What exactly Bramsen understood by such a mentality, though, is difficult to gauge. In fact, the required familiarity with Danish culture appears at odds with the series' success abroad and Politikens Forlag's occasional import of foreign manuscripts to fill gaps in their list. Assuming there was such a thing as a particular national tourist mentality, how could the travel guides maintain their special appeal to Danish readers and please foreign markets too? Perhaps their much-touted international success relied more on extensive adaptation than outright translation. The scattered archival sources and a comparison of a Danish manuscript with its German edition indeed suggest that the transnationally circulating texts were not merely translated, but heavily revised for their national contexts.

The first guidebook authors recruited by Bramsen were Withen and his friend, Paul Ewerlöf, who also worked for a student travel agency. Once the concept had been established for the Austrian handbook, Withen and Ewerlöf went on to co-author scores of guidebooks on European countries, capitals, and regions until Withen's death nearly 30 years later. In addition to their collaborative efforts, Withen and Ewerlöf also each authored guidebooks for the series. Their long-running partnership naturally helped the publisher maintain a coherent writing style across the numerous issues. Stylistically, *Turen går til* lacked the idiosyncrasies and narrative touches characteristic of many American and British guidebooks at the time; instead, the editors appear to have worked for a fact-oriented approach, largely at the expense of individualistic authorial style. This choice helped

ensure uniformity and coherence in the *Turen går til* series. It also allowed other authors to step in when needed, and assumedly eased the integration of foreign manuscripts into the series. In some cases, Politikens Forlag recruited guidebook authors from among Danish citizens living abroad, and on a couple of occasions bought manuscripts from the German Polyglott publishing company. Polyglott was a subsidiary of the Munich-based Langenscheidt publishing house to whom Politiken also exported a number of guides, which Polyglott successfully retailed on the German market.

Few archival sources survive to shed light on the production, import, and export of manuscripts. In the research for this chapter, however, we were able to interview Ilse Carstens, who wrote the Polish guidebook, *Turen går til Polen*, which appeared in 1970.⁴³ Carstens had already mentioned some of her experiences in her self-published autobiography, *En Vinterrejse*, from 2019, and the interview revealed additional details about her short career as a guidebook author.⁴⁴ Carstens explained how the idea for a Danish guidebook on Poland had come to her in 1967 when on a student exchange at a Polish college. Her class was preparing an excursion to Moscow, so her mother had sent her Politiken's guide to the Soviet capital, first published in 1964. A Polish teacher who had experience writing travel guides noticed the book and asked Carstens if there were similar guidebooks on Poland in Danish. As Carstens had noted before moving to Poland, this was not the case, and so the teacher suggested they write one together. Carstens accepted the invitation and the two, having analysed the *Turen går til* series, set about drafting an unsolicited manuscript with readers like Carstens in mind.

In her early twenties, born and raised far from Copenhagen, and with no previous publishing experience, Carstens was an unknown quantity, and she had to wait a long time for an answer from Politikens Forlag. Eventually, however, the manuscript was accepted and printed. Carstens remembers having minimal communication with the publisher and receiving no guidelines before submitting

the final manuscript. It is thus a fascinating proof of the series' distinctive concept that an inexperienced young student helped by a travel guide author with no knowledge of the Danish language were able to distil the guidebook style and apply it satisfactorily to a new country without editorial support.

In another case, the archived correspondence between Politiken and Almqvist & Wiksell, the Swedish publisher of *Turen går til*, offers a glimpse of the production process. In 1970, Almqvist & Wiksell asked about the rights to publish the guide to Bulgaria, which Politikens Forlag itself had bought from Polyglott a few years earlier. The request prompted the Danes to ask which version they were interested in: 'Save for the itineraries there are no similarities between the two editions. The Danish author, Gunnar Nissen, prepared an entirely new manuscript for the first 36 pages'.⁴⁵ The correspondence supports Bramsen's idea that *Turen går til* was tailored to a national readership by Danish editors with local expertise. At the same time, though, it raises doubts about how readily guidebook manuscripts could translocate and appeal to foreign readers.

Another way to scrutinize the circulation of manuscripts in different national contexts is a manual comparison of different language versions of the same guidebook, word for word, page by page. However, without machine-readable editions and computer-enabled analyses this is extremely labour-intensive work and beyond the scope of this chapter.⁴⁶ A single example will thus have to suffice to illustrate how much work went into the repackaging of travel advice for other national contexts. We chose to focus on Milena Poulsen's guidebook on Czechoslovakia, first published in Danish in 1962, and in German four years later. This manuscript is particularly interesting as it became a staple of Polyglott's catalogue with more than twenty revised editions over the next 25 years.

All the practical information about prices, visa requirements, and driving distances to the border crossings of course had to be revised for the new national context. Still, a close reading of Poulsen's

guidebook shows that the text underwent additional editing prior to its publication in German. In fact, the front matter did not even include a translator; instead, Horst Becker was credited for the German adaptation ('Deutsche Bearbeitung') just as he had been for every *Politiken* manuscript published by Polyglott since 1959. The adaptation entailed moving whole sections, a thorough revision of the historical overview, and greatly modified presentations of the attractions. Whole sentences disappeared; new material was added. The German edition dispensed entirely with flowery narrative and emotional appeal. A comparison of the descent from Prague Castle (Hradčany) to the Lesser Town (Malá Strana) shows some of the differences. First the Danish original.

From Hradčany we can either descent via the Nové zámecké schody (the great castle stairs) from 1674 with a lovely view over Prague, or we can continue down the street Úvoz and its continuation Nerudova ulice, both with numerous small baroque palaces with beautiful facades.⁴⁷

In German, the same passage read:

From the Castle District one reaches the Lesser Town via the New Castle Stairs (Nové zámecké schody) or via the street Úvoz–Nerudova.⁴⁸

Compared to the stripped down German version, the Danish certainly possesses more verve. Whether this is what Bramsen had in mind when he referred to the Danish tourist mentality, however, is unclear. And how extensively the other travel guides were adapted in the translation process is impossible to judge without thorough comparisons of a larger set of titles. At any rate, the heavy editing raises doubt about Bramsen's grandiose claims of *Turen går til* as an international success. Given the fact that Polyglott was *Politiken's*

closest international partner outside Scandinavia for decades while attempts to break into the English and French markets proved short-lived, it seems likely that cultural barriers may eventually have proven too hard to negotiate.

A media archaeology of the travel guide

In the domestic market, *Turen går til* has remained *the* guidebook. In the 1970s it underwent a transformation with a new cover design and doubled page numbers (from 64 to 128). After Withen's death in 1979, photographs finally found their way into the pages of the travel guide. In 2012, the hundredth title appeared, sixty years after the first Austrian guide.⁴⁹ The series is available as e-books, but the sales of print books continue.

Often the apparent demise of a medium is merely a transitory phase between different ways of using it. The process makes hitherto mundane ways of engaging with a device or a communication technology all of a sudden appear odd and antiquated in light of swiftly adopted innovations. Yet 'residual' media have a tendency to survive and find niches after 'new' media seemingly render the 'old' media obsolete.⁵⁰ Quirky old practices suddenly appear attractive. Vinyl records, Polaroid cameras, and Moleskine planners all sell today, even though smartphones have remediated and combined their essential functions in a single device.⁵¹ This is because a medium is more than its technological functionality. To understand the continued popularity of seemingly obsolete media, it is necessary to consider their cultural and material qualities.⁵²

A media archaeological perspective on the travel guide brings out the innate material qualities of the print version as superior to its digital competitors. Its 'battery life' is infinite. The 'search function' works without an Internet connection. The pages are easily read even in direct sunlight. It tolerates exposure to extreme temperatures, sand, and even some measure of water. It is also relatively cheap and

thus disposable, and it is available in light-weight formats. Further, a printed guide has cultural qualities valued by certain customers. It provides curated rather than freeform information, published by established authorities, thus lowering the risk of fake reviews and paid-for recommendations. The facts it contains may be out of date at the time of publication, but for a digital detox that is an acceptable price to pay for a screen-free holiday.⁵³ Before COVID-19 dealt a blow to guidebook publishing, international sales had stabilized from 2012 to 2017, and some observers are confident that physical guidebooks will remain in demand.⁵⁴ The publishing expert Lorraine Shanley has noted that guidebooks are similar to cookbooks, which continue to sell well. ‘The emotional relationship between the reader and the travel book is like the emotional relationship between a reader and a favourite cookbook author ... it summons up a lifestyle to which you have an attachment.’⁵⁵ Websites may have rendered cookbooks and travel guides technologically obsolete, but as another guidebook publisher recently remarked, ‘a book is yours but the internet is everyone’s.’⁵⁶

Notes

- 1 Therkelsen & Sørensen 2005, 49.
- 2 Rushby 2013; ‘Bookend’, *The Economist* (3 Apr. 2013).
- 3 For an overview of the democratization of travel, see Bechmann Pedersen & Anttila 2022.
- 4 For the concept of travel culture, see Koshar 2000, 9.
- 5 Bramsen 1971.
- 6 Darnton 1982.
- 7 Gitelman 2008, 8.
- 8 Smartphones stripped of all conventional functions and reconfigured for messaging only. ‘Police in 16 countries have arrested hundreds following a massive sting’, *The Economist* (8 June 2021).
- 9 Ekström 2008, 34–35.
- 10 Fickers & Van den Oever 2020, 58–9.
- 11 For a vivid narrative history of the guidebook, see Parsons 2007.
- 12 Lauterbach 1989.
- 13 Koshar 1998, 323–40; Grewal 1996.

- 14 Koshar 2000, 16.
- 15 For recent literature on printed travel guides in the digital age, see Mieli & Zillinger 2020; Peel & Sørensen 2016.
- 16 Müller 2012; Buzard 1993; Bergman 2015.
- 17 Park et al. 2011, xiii.
- 18 Merleker 1956, 10–14 at 10.
- 19 For the abundance of historical records, see Rosenzweig 2003.
- 20 OEEC 1951, 47.
- 21 Bramsen 1971, 118; subsequent Bramsen quotes are all taken from this short chapter.
- 22 Hansen & Larsen 1938. For many years the yearbook was the publisher's flagship publication (and a classic Christmas present) with 6.3 million copies sold between 1933 and 2012. Dwindling sales due to online competition eventually forced the publisher to cease publication.
- 23 Bramsen 1971, 80.
- 24 Schyberg et al. 1945.
- 25 Bramsen 1971, 71–2.
- 26 Skanderborg Historiske Arkiv (Skanderborg Historical Archives), Skanderborg, A1698, B38859, Anna Møllers Boghandel interior, c.1973. <https://arkiv.dk/vis/5407540>
- 27 Furuland 2023, 327.
- 28 Boolsen & Engelstoft 1952; Engelstoft 1956; Engelstoft 1957; Boolsen 1957.
- 29 Teisen et al. 1955; Kannik 1956.
- 30 Urry & Larsen 2011.
- 31 Müller 2012, 167.
- 32 The first programme was broadcast on 2 October 1951. Bondebjerg 1993, 27.
- 33 Schwartz 2020.
- 34 Müller 2012, 167. Baedeker only introduced photographs in 1979.
- 35 Parsons 2007, 156.
- 36 Steiner 2012, 22.
- 37 Withen & Ewerlöf 1952, 3.
- 38 Ibid. 3.
- 39 'Paa rejse', *Randers Amtstidende* (23 Apr. 1955), 7; 'Moderne Rejseførere', *Sorø Amtstidende* (26 May 1955), 4.
- 40 Bramsen 1971, 40–3.
- 41 See, www.arkiv.dk, s.v. 'boghandel' for interior photographs from the 1960s and 1970s of Ahrensbaaks Boghandel (Odense), Munch-Christensens Boghandel (Vejle), Anna Møllers Boghandel (Skanderborg), Stenstrup Boghandel (Ringe), Hellemanns Boghandel (Grenaa), and Carl Christiansens Boghandel (Sakskøbing).
- 42 Bramsen 1971, 124.
- 43 This section is largely based on Sune Bechmann Pedersen's interview with Carstens, 7 July 2021.
- 44 Carstens 2019, 112.

- 45 Centrum för Näringslivshistoria (Centre for Business History), Bromma (CfN), AWE/Gebers Förlag AB, Korrespondens, 'Turen går till' E2:63, Steffen Christensen to Ingrid Tydén, 6 Oct. 1970.
- 46 Even computational analyses require large amounts of manual labour. Jarlbrink 2020, 113–126; Jarlbrink & Snickars 2017.
- 47 Poulsen 1962, 17.
- 48 Poulsen 1966, 16.
- 49 Flakstad 2012.
- 50 Acland 2007.
- 51 Bolter & Grusin 1999.
- 52 Jülich et al. 2008, 12–13.
- 53 Travel Writing World 2020.
- 54 Dykins 2020; Dickinson 2018; Mesquita 2019.
- 55 Quoted in Kopf 2016.
- 56 Dickinson 2018.

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