

Kateřina Liřková will present the project “ExpertTurn” together with her team members Natalia Jarska, Annina Gagyoiva, Jose Luis Aguilar Lopez-Barajas, Theo Finsterschott and Vjaeslav Glazov.

While postwar Western expertise has garnered significant attention, notable gaps exist in the scholarly understanding of socialist countries behind the “Iron Curtain.” ExpertTurn seeks to redress this imbalance by placing expertise at the forefront and scrutinizing its role in state-socialist governance, focusing on Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany. By examining the dynamics of human science expertise (medicine, psychology, sociology, demography, pedagogy), particularly in maternal health and child normalcy, our project sheds light on how experts communicated with one another, the state, and ordinary citizens. Importantly, we compare the developments across countries and disciplines, emphasizing transnational knowledge circulation.

Our findings highlight strong and relatively uninterrupted socialist expert connections to the West and a marginal Soviet influence, especially on medicine; a shared post-Stalinist rise and subsequent strong influence of psychology in all our countries; lively debates and even disputes between experts within our region; divergences in the developments in social sciences shaped by specific national political contexts; and strong emancipatory accents on women’s work and equal marriage in socialist medical expertise. Overall, making this “expert turn” brings a novel understanding of governance in modern, yet authoritarian societies.

More information about the project: <https://ExpertTurn.hiu.cas.cz/>

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The project presentation is part of the research colloquium “History and Social Anthropology of Southeast and Eastern Europe”. The colloquium is organised by the Chair of History of Southeast and Eastern Europe at the University of Regensburg and the Leibniz Institute of East and Southeast European Studies (IOS).

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