

**CALL FOR PAPERS
(extended version)**

**Technosciences of Post/Socialism
Budapest, Hungary – 3-5 September 2015**



europaean association for the study
of science and technology

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Description

Despite the widespread popularity of Science and Technology Studies (STS), the field has remained remarkably silent about the plethora of experiences offered by the former socialist bloc connected to technoscience. While the grand experiment of constructing 'socialism' heavily relied on the ambitious promises of technoscience, this aspect is absent from the discussions of postsocialism and 'transition'. On the other hand, various approaches in the social sciences (e.g. political economic, post-colonialist) focusing on Eastern Europe have often treated knowledge production and technology in relatively underconceptualised and often quite instrumental terms. Connecting these approaches to STS with the aim to contribute to our understandings of technoscience, materialities and knowledge production under post/socialism remains an important theoretical challenge. In addition, empirical studies from the Eastern European region may extend the conceptual framework of STS towards alternative conceptualisations of the 'macro', the 'global', the 'political' or the 'economy'.

A considerable body of research has shown that the often essentialized black-boxes of 'capitalism' and 'socialism,' 'West' and 'East' should be opened up for alternative reconceptualizations (Frank 1991; Verdery 1996; Chari and Verdery 2009), in order to understand the more delicate flows, e.g. the trials, translation effects and assemblages of different actor interests (Bockman, Eyal 2002; Bockman 2011; Lampland 2011; Latour 1987, 1999, 2005). Anthropologists have pointed out that the rather closed and sometimes provincialised concept of 'socialism' – often treated as the Oriental 'Other' of the West – should be situated differentially and relationally (Hann et al. 2002; Outhwaite and Ray 2005; Melegh 2006; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Silova 2010; Cervinkova 2012). However, the traced networks and relational processes producing 'socialism' and 'postsocialism' should also be contextualised historically along long-term economic cycles and globally uneven circulations or relations of exchange in knowledge and technology (Bockman and Eyal 2002; Tulbure 2009; Bockman 2011; Gille 2010; Éber, Gagyí, Geröcs, Jelinek and Pinkasz 2014). Consequently, state socialist ambitions and efforts for convergence in Eastern European countries can be conceived as a series of centralised top-down politics and policies of governance, which were integrated into the *longue durée* cycles of the capitalist world-system (Braudel 1967; Chase-Dunn 1980; Frank 1977; Wallerstein 1976). These insights lead us not only into acknowledging the relational and networked nature of 'socialist'

and 'postsocialist' technosciences, materialities and knowledge production, but also into accepting the necessity to situate these assemblages in structurally conditioned power relations and dialectically reproduced epistemological positions.

The aim of our conference is to address three main questions stemming from the above issues:

- How does our perspective on the socialist and postsocialist conditions change when studying the technoscientific projects, materialities, and modes of knowledge production in Eastern Europe?
- In what ways were socialist societies assembled through various technologies and materialities with different spatio-temporal legacies, manifesting in both utopistic projects or mundane objects?
- Were there any specifically 'socialist' regimes of knowledge production in Eastern Europe, and in what ways can the continuities or ruptures of epistemological endeavors and technopolitics change our understandings of academia, political governance, and everyday lives after socialism?

We are expecting only a limited number of participants in order to provide for more engaging workshop sessions revolving around the above questions. Our keynote speaker will be **Johanna Bockman**. Panel discussants will hopefully include **Martha Lampland**, **Karl Hall**, **Tereza Stöckelová** and **Andrzej W. Nowak**.

Concept & Themes

We would be happy to see presentations focusing on the production of knowledge and technology under post/socialism from the following perspectives:

- Geographical interconnectivity (case studies are much welcome, but expected to avoid de-linked and isolated perspectives, e.g. methodological nationalism);
- Historical sensitivity, especially by identifying long-term historical patterns;
- Reflecting on knowledge and technology in relation to the 'political' and the 'economic';
- Sensitivity to scale in connecting 'micro' and 'macro' perspectives.

Although none of these criteria are mandatory, papers considering these aspects will be preferred in the selection process.

Our potential topics for workshop sessions include:

1. Technoscientific ruptures and continuities: Alternative modernities, shifting technoscientific agendas and material-infrastructure legacies under post/socialism.
2. Scientific socialism applied and post/socialist technopolitics of the environment.
3. Technoscience in the global semi-periphery: Technology transfer and the material or epistemological (re)production of unequal relations.
4. Bodies, subjectivities and affective temporalities in Eastern Europe.
5. Transformations of value and valuation: Practices, methods and technologies of knowing, measuring and distributing economic value under post/socialism.
6. Studying science and technology in Eastern Europe: Technoscientific histories and present possibilities for STS.
7. Modes of knowledge production and the role of technocracy in social sciences.

Programme

On **Day 1**, we would like to raise some key issues and insights with regard to the above questions in the form of short talks and roundtable discussions. Our invited speakers would contribute to these discussions with their own perspective and background.

On **Day 2**, participants will have the opportunity to discuss issues more closely through parallel workshop sessions. Some potential topics are highlighted in the application form, but we would also encourage participants to propose other sessions or to apply for open ones.

On **Day 3**, we would like to organise an optional guided walk in Budapest stopping by at places that may stimulate questions in relation to our conference topic. We would also offer space and time to reflect upon and situate our academic positions, and to think together about future topics based on the insights of the previous days.

Practical arrangements

The conference venue will be held at the historical building of the '**Gólya**' (Stork) community centre and co-operative bar in the inner city area. The intimate atmosphere of the place and the limited number of participants provide ground for intensive discussions.

The idea of this conference sprang from the questions raised at the **subplenary discussion** (<http://easst.net/easst-review/easst-review-volume-334-december-2014/postsocialism-and-sts-a-subplenary-at-easst/>) of last September's EASST conference in Toruń, Poland, and from the discussions at the Hungarian STS conference held in Budapest in January 2014.

The conference received financial support from the **EASST grant**, but is partly based on the voluntary work of the organisers and staff of Gólya. We are only able to offer limited travel and accommodation support for those requiring reimbursement. Find out more about EASST here: <http://easst.net/>

Please upload your paper proposals for the panel organisers via the **application form on** <http://bit.ly/cfp-postsoc-sts> by the **extended deadline of 12 July 2015**. Proposals should include a title, a 250 words abstract, 3-5 keywords and the author(s) affiliations and email address. Please provide a selection of the particular topics you feel your paper would contribute to. The organisers will notify all applicants and selected authors about their decision during **July**. Additional information about the event is available at our **conference homepage**: <https://technosciencesofpostsocialism.wordpress.com/>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!

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