

Conference programme

Postsocialist Transformation as a World of Meaning: Domination, Agency and Sense-Making

12-13 February 2026

Vila Lanna, Prague
(V Sadech 1, Prague 6, 160 00)



The conference is organized by the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, in cooperation with the Hannah-Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies and the Research Center for the History of Transformations.

Thursday 12 February 2026

9:00 **Welcome** (Veronika Pehe, Martin Babička, Michal Kopeček)

9:15 **Thomas Lindenberger**, Introductory remarks: Lost and Found in Transformation: "Sinnwelt" and "Eigen-Sinn" Before and After 1989

10:00-10:15 **Coffee break**

10:15-12:00 **Panel 1: Gendered and feminist approaches to postsocialist meaning-making**

Celia Donert, Capitalising on Gender? The Creation of Gender Studies in the Post-Socialist Sinnwelt

Zsófia Lóránd, 1989 Feminism between Post-Modern Theory, Liberalism, Democracy, and Negotiating the Socialist Past

Alexandra Ghiț, Postsocialist Meaning-Making and Meaning-Adjusting: Feminist Theorizing and Liberal Democracy in 1990s Romania

Anna Dobrowolska, The Rise and Demise of Home-Made "Playboys". Making Sense of Post-Socialism Through Erotic Magazines

Chair: Michal Kopeček

Discussant: Friederike Kind-Kovács

12:00-13:00 **Lunch**

13:00-14:30 **Panel 2: Navigating structures of power between institutions and everyday practice**

Tjaša Konovšek, Negotiating Democracy: Everyday Parliamentary Practice in Early Post-Socialist Slovenia

Florian Peters, Municipal Self-Government in a Neoliberal World of Meaning: Explorations in Post-Socialist Poland

Annina Gagyiova, School Maturity and the Quest for Normalcy: How Parental Eigensinn Shaped Expertise

Thursday 12 February 2026

and State Policies in Socialist and Democratic Hungary, 1970s-1990s

Chair: Zsófia Lóránd

Discussant: Michal Kopeček

14:30-15:00

Coffee break

15:00-16:30

Panel 3: Hegemonic ideologies, knowledge production and lived experience

Sandra Plaskoňová, Continuity and Fragility: Independent Cultural Practices in Post-Socialist Slovakia

Muriel Blaive, Anticommunism as a World of Meaning: The Memory Regime of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ÚSTR)

Alexa von Winning, Measuring Opinion and Making Sense: Polling and the Economic Transformation in 1990s Belarus

Chair: Ulf Brunnbauer

Discussant: Ondřej Daniel

17:00-18:00

Roundtable: New applications of Sinnwelt two decades later: Reflections from the project "Socialist Dictatorship As a World of Meaning"

This roundtable will bring together participants of the project "Socialist Dictatorship As a World of Meaning" (2007-2010) to reflect upon the development of the concepts of Sinnwelt and Eigensinn over the past years and where they see the potential for further application to the postsocialist period and beyond.

Moderators: Veronika Pehe, Martin Babička

Panelists: **Matěj Spurný**, **Celia Donert**, **Annina Gagyiova**, **Michal Pullmann**

18:30

Dinner

Friday 13 February 2026

9:00-10:45

Panel 4: The market as a site of domination and self-realization

Szinan Radi, Red Gold: The Moral Economy of Fuel Arbitrage and the Limits to 'Disembeddedness' in Hungary, 1980s–1990s

Karel Němeček, Retail Investing in an Inter-Generational Perspective: From the Frugal Socialist Selfhood to the Entrepreneurial Post-Socialist Selfhood

Paulina Gundarina, 'Naïve Business' During Transformations: Eigensinn and Market Economy at the Houses of Culture in the 1990s

Matej Ivančík - Jonáš Jánský, Booksellers' Archipelago: Urban Community, Bookselling and Making Sense in Slovak Post-Socialist Transformation

Chair: Thomas Lindenberger

Discussant: Michal Pullmann

10:45-11:15

Coffee break

11:15-13:00

Panel 5: Eigensinn and strategies of negotiation

Thục Linh Nguyễn Vũ, Migrant "Eigensinn" and the Complexities of the Transformation: The Case of the Vietnamese in Poland

Eszter Bartha, The Use of the Concept of Eigensinn in Postsocialist Labour History

Tereza Juhászová, Forging a New State Through Privatization: Ordinary People's Narratives from Urban Postsocialist Slovakia

Yaner Li, Building Ships, Rebuilding Meanings: Preliminary Reflections on Chinese Shipyard Workers

Chair: Friederike Kind-Kovács

Discussant: Ulf Brunnbauer

13:00-13:10

Closing remarks