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Towards the Expert Governance: Social Scientific Expertise and the Socialist State in Czechoslovakia, 1950s–1980s¹

Vítězslav Sommer

vitasommer@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article is concerned with the process of introduction and the further expansion of social scientific expertise in state socialist Czechoslovakia from the mid-1950s until 1989. It presents these developments in the context of the changing policy strategies of the Communist Party elites and describes how closely social scientific expertise, and social scientific knowledge production in general, was interconnected with the broader development of the state socialist governance from the post-Stalinism of the second half of the 1950s to the 1980s perestroika period. This text is structured around three crucial realms of the state socialist governance: state, economy and labor, and socialist society. The first part of the article is concerned with the expertise in the field of state, law and political sciences, which played a significant role during the late 1950s, when the socialist state-building project was finished. The following section focuses on the rise of social scientific expert culture during the reform communist period of the 1960s. The third part of this study analyzes how the reform communist expert culture was transformed by the post-1968 regime in a large expert apparatus in order to build strictly centralized technocratic governance. Finally, this article describes how social scientific expertise responded to the crisis and disorganization of state socialist governance during the perestroika period.

Keywords

Cold War; Czechoslovakia; experts; state socialism;

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The historiography of the Cold War is increasingly concerned with the interaction between policy-making and knowledge production. The so-called “Cold War social science” became the subject of numerous studies and its introduction in the historiographical agenda marked the transition towards more recent emphasizing of the cultural and intellectual dimension of the post-war period (Solovey and Cravens 2012; Isaac and Bell 2012; Gavin and Lawrence 2014; Engerman 2010). Seeing the “cultural turn” in research on the Cold War from a transnational perspective, a substantial part of the field focuses on the United States and Western Europe. As a result, there are numerous books and articles dealing with the emergence of specific Cold War social knowledge in the Western part of the divided post-war world. Some publications contained fundamental insights in the history of political science, psychology and, more generally, military-funded social scientific research (Engerman 2009; Erickson et al. 2013; Gilman 2003; Robin 2001; Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005). Moreover, scholarly literature concerned with domestic issues like economics or welfare shows how these were significantly influenced by the broader Cold War context and were on the research agenda of military-funded institutions like RAND, SORO, or the Office of Naval Research. Thus how important the Cold War agenda was for knowledge production after 1945 is well documented (Amadae 2003; Mirowski 2002).

The intellectual patterns of social thought in Cold War USA and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe are recognized and widely discussed by historians as well as scholars from related fields. The status of research on similar phenomena in the former Eastern Bloc is quite different, however. Scholarship on the history of expertise and social sciences in State socialism is undoubtedly growing, but it is still more appropriate to speak of a field ‘in the making’ than of a fully developed, well established area of scholarship (Brunbauer et al. 2011; Péteri 1998; Shlapentokh 1987; Sutela 1991). Similarly, transnational and comparative research on East-West contacts, knowledge transfers and research collaborations is promising, but nonetheless has been taken up only recently (Bockman 2011; Andersson and Rindzeviciute 2015).²

The attempt to elaborate contextualized histories of the social knowledge production after 1945 would greatly benefit from a discussion of the Eastern Bloc perspective and its incorporation into the recent historiography of Cold War social science. This article presents a national case study of the relationship between the post-war State and social scientific expertise in Czechoslovakia.³ In what follows, the central issue is State socialist governance, characterized as a complex assemblage of governmental concepts, techniques and practices mobilized by the authorities in order to organize and govern the socialist State and society. Immediately after 1948, Communist Party authorities attempted to realize a Stalinist-style “great leap” towards a socialist society. In the mid-1950s, far-reaching and rapid nationalization of the economy, collectivization of agriculture, mass and violent political repression and a cultural revolution, which arose from the introduction of a Soviet aesthetic and intellectual standard in the arts and sciences, resulted in a serious crisis. This crisis manifested in economic decay and social unrest as well as in a decrease in the public legitimacy of the regime.

² The epistemological questions relating to the most recent research on the Cold War social science, primarily the issue of the research field formation, are discussed in Dayé (2014).

³ In the recent research on expertise, this specific activity is characterized as an “interstitial field” located among academic research, politics, media and other domains. As a hybrid and changing entity, the expertise is primarily characterized by its interventions in public affairs. In State socialist Czechoslovakia, social scientific expertise was institutionally based in various research institutions. For example, the most important institutional basis of the social scientific expertise in the 1970s and 1980s was the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology, which was a part of the Academy of Sciences. The expert knowledge was thus primarily produced by the academia and various research institutions funded by the State and affiliated, for example, to ministries or state-owned enterprises. For the sociology of expertise, see Eyal and Buchholz (2010).

Czechoslovakia thus followed a similar pattern to Poland and Hungary, the two neighboring State socialist countries that, at the time, were heading towards the great upheaval of 1956. Although Czechoslovakia did not experience the same level of turmoil as its two Central European allies, it was more than evident that a reconstruction of the state socialist governance was inevitable (McDermott and Sommer 2013; Blaive 2001).

As a reaction to this crisis, the Czechoslovak authorities simultaneously adopted and adjusted the “New Course” policy introduced by Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union (Engerman 2004). Among the substantive features of this concept of socialist governance was the preference of consumption over the Stalinist emphasis on extensive growth and the heroic building of socialism. A general “scientization” of State socialism was also of the utmost importance.⁴ It was thus necessary to introduce more sophisticated methods of planning, management and organization at all levels of government.⁵ Science and technology were highlighted as active and, to some extent, decisive factors in building and governing the socialist State and society. In the realms of everyday life and cultural production these ideas resulted in the establishment of a distinctive socialist modernity, while in the sphere of policy-making the building of social scientific expertise and expert governance were the orders of the day (Reid and Crowley 2000; Pence and Betts 2008).⁶

This article is concerned with the process of the introduction and further expansion of social scientific expertise in State socialist Czechoslovakia from the mid-1950s until 1989. My aim is to present these developments in the context of the changing policy strategies of the Communist Party and to describe how closely social scientific expertise, and social scientific knowledge production in general, was interconnected with the broader development of State socialist governance. In what follows I will not analyze the development of the individual social science disciplines themselves, but rather trace the translation of their findings from theoretical concepts to expert knowledge. The first part of the article is concerned with expertise in the field of state, law and political sciences, which played a significant role during the late 1950s. The next section focuses on the rise of social scientific expert culture during the reform communist period of the 1960s. The third part of this study analyzes how the reform communist expertise was transformed by the post-1968 regime into a large expert apparatus with the aim of building a strictly centralized technocratic governance. Lastly, I describe how social scientific expertise responded to the crisis and disorganization of State socialist governance during the *perestroika* period.

This text does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of particular research projects, scientific controversies or research policies. Rather it strives to present a more general narrative of the relationship between social scientific expertise and socialist governance in post-war Czechoslovakia, which should emphasize continuities and longer trends rather than divide this history into strictly separated and incomparable periods as is more usual in previous historiography. This article argues that the effort to incorporate social scientific expertise in governmental strategies, which was significant for modern governance in general, was increasingly emphasized by the Czechoslovak State socialist regime in all its incarnations from the mid-1950s onwards, albeit with different purposes and results. In order to sketch this narrative, I will give preference to a more general account of long-term development, written primarily from the perspective of intellectual history,

⁴ For the concept of scientization, see Brückweh et al. (2012); Wagner (2008).

⁵ The necessity to de-centralize the Czechoslovak economy by the introduction of more sophisticated and scientific planning methods was highlighted at the Communist Party’s most important public event in 1956, the so-called Nationwide Conference of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, held in June 1956. See Celostátní konference (1956).

⁶ For the concept of “Soviet modernity”, see Kotkin (1995; 2001). For the recent critique of Kotkin, see Krylova (2014).

which analyzes how the rationality of expert governance emerged from the mid-1950s and how it was transformed under reform communism and in the late socialist era after 1968.

Building the Socialist State in Post-Stalinism

In the case of Czechoslovakia, the historical period of High Stalinism was relatively short, lasting less than a decade, (from 1948 to 1953). It was characterized by the introduction of extraordinarily radical policy measures in all fields of government. The relationship between the State, the Communist Party and the social sciences was affected substantially by Stalinist policy that aimed to subordinate scholarship to the needs of the Communist Party policy.⁷ This resulted in the decline of entire disciplines and scholars were reduced to mere propaganda writers, not to mention the massive purge of universities and other research institutions (Connelly 2000; Voříšek 2012). This “Sovietization” of the social sciences helped to establish a fundamentally different academic culture and social scientific research became closely connected with the Communist Party apparatus.

In the mid-1950s, following the most radical phase of the socialist dictatorship, the political function of the social sciences was reformulated during the first critical discussions about the legacy of Stalinism.⁸ According to early post-Stalinist discourse, the social sciences were not seen solely as a propagandist exercise, but as scholarly fields producing knowledge relevant to political decision making. In the late 1950s, legal science was already created as a specific field of expertise that focused on the theory of law, the socialist legal system and the socialist State. This expertise was concerned with theoretical discussions that were politically highly relevant, as well as with direct interventions in the construction of the State socialist legal system.

The phenomenon of the modern State is a prominent object of social scientific examination. Since the 1980s, research projects rooted in various theoretical and methodological traditions from Marxism to governmentality studies have opened up new perspectives on the State and its political and social functions (Burchell et al. 1991; Evans et al. 1985; Jessop 2001; Steinmetz 1999). It is hard to imagine that the research on governance could ignore the modern State as a central object of inquiry. The historiography of State socialism, however, has generally been focused on the Communist Party as a hub of governance in the socialist dictatorship, more concretely on the hybrid governmental setting based on the merging of the party and the State apparatus. Although the centralized, strictly hierarchically organized Communist Party played the role of a sovereign political body, possessing indisputable authority to rule over the institutions of the State, the growing importance of the socialist State can be observed from the late 1950s onwards. In order to resolve the complex issue of the relationship between revolutionary socialism and the modern State, post-Stalinist legal expertise attempted to define a new arrangement of this uneasy partnership. According to the then current theory of State, socialism was developed from the revolutionary movement to the distinct State form. It was thus of utmost importance to theoretically elaborate this new governmental arrangement and to develop a functioning State socialist legislature different from the outdated legal framework of the bourgeois State.

It was significant for the relationship between social sciences and governance in post-Stalinism that the mobilization of legal experts and scholars was initiated by the highly theoretical and interdisciplinary discussion about the socialist revolution and the people’s democracy. The long-

⁷The Czechoslovak conceptualization of historiographical research in the Stalinist era was analyzed in Sommer (2011).

⁸These early “revisionist” debates in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary were analyzed in Kopeček (2009).

lasting controversy interwove issues ranging from scholastic contemplations about the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution to the politically sensitive and highly controversial issue of the relationship between official Marxist-Leninist social theory, based on the particular Soviet experience, and its modifications, which were developed on the basis of distinctive national roads to socialism. This discussion was initiated by an article on the stages of revolution written by legal scholars Karel Kára and Jiří Houška (Houška and Kára 1954). The authors tried to sketch out the structure of the historical “revolutionary process” from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist one. Their concept was based on the definition of distinct “types” and “semi-types” of revolution and the specific theory of revolution reflecting the latest development in East-Central Europe.

This controversy lasted until the late 1950s and was still an influential point of reference at the beginning of the following decade.⁹ It raised several important questions related to acute problems of maturing State socialism. At the very heart of the debate was the uncertainty about the nature of governance in a people’s democracy. If this governmental arrangement was the result of a revolution, as was postulated by the official Marxist-Leninist political theory as well as by the founding myth of the regime, what kind of revolution was the one that took place in Czechoslovakia, and to what extent was this Czechoslovak revolution comparable with its Soviet counterpart? A more general and crucial question also came up concerning the very nature of the political system that was established, and then further developed by, the Communist Party after 1945. The source of disagreement was the attempt by certain scholars, among them by Miloš Kaláb, who later became a prominent initiator of the renewal of sociology in the 1960s, to elaborate a theoretical concept of revolution with respect to the specific historical experience of the Czechoslovak socialism. This attempt implied that besides the Soviet model of socialism there was a distinct Central European people’s democracy. This argument clearly collides with Marxist-Leninist dogma. The serious controversy between the proponents of a more flexible approach to political theorizing and the supporters of a theory firmly rooted in the canonical texts of Marxism-Leninism, and in line with the most recent Soviet policy documents, was thus opened.¹⁰

Although the debate was highly theoretical and scholars aimed to construct complicated historical narratives of “revolutionary processes,” this exchange of opinions had serious consequences for further existence of the social scientific expertise in the country. First of all, this polemic was the first significant occasion since 1948 for social scientists to enter the public stage as policy-relevant experts. Secondly, the issue of socialist State and socialist governance was highlighted by all participants in the debate. It led them to formulate more coherent theoretical accounts of the issue. As was revealed in the critiques of the “Yugoslav revisionism”, Czechoslovak scholars characterized the socialist State as an institutional embodiment of socialism and the most important outcome of the socialist revolution—in contrast to the Yugoslav decentralized self-government, which was portrayed as an anarchist deviation from Marxism (e.g. Kučera 1960).

The post-Stalinist inquiry into the theory of the socialist State was mirrored not only in the publication of book-length texts that aimed to characterize the institutional and legislative

⁹The research on the socialist State and socialist revolution was widely covered and summarized at the major conference dedicated to the building of socialism and communism which was organized in 1961 by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. For the conference papers, see Houška (1962).

¹⁰ Among the dozens of texts, extraordinarily important was the 1955 conference discussion between Kaláb and his critics published in *Otázky národní a demokratické revoluce v ČSR. Sborník příspěvků přednesených na konferenci Historického ústavu ČSAV 28.–30. IV. 1955 v Liblicích* (Prague: ČSAV, 1955).

arrangement of the people's democracy, but also in practical and immediate expert interventions (Bystřina 1957; Houška and Kára 1955; Lakatoš 1957). In order to also complete the socialist construction in Czechoslovakia symbolically, the Communist Party authorities decided to issue a new constitution. The most important legislative document, which was adopted in 1960, introduced a new constitutional framework—Czechoslovakia officially became a “socialist republic”.¹¹ The “socialist constitution” was discussed in depth by a specialized commission of legal scholars from universities and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, who drafted individual parts of the document and completed its final version.¹² In the case of the “socialist constitution”, the authorities mobilized scholars in order to provide policy-relevant expertise. In the late 1950s, discussion about the socialist revolution and socialist State, as well as the involvement of scholars in the completion of the 1960 constitution, helped to set the stage for the following decade of the reform communist experiment. It was during the reform communist period that social science experts occupied a prominent position in the realm of State socialist governance.

Socialism Reformed by Experts: New Model of Socialism and Social Sciences

While the post-Stalinist State-building had already required significant input from social science experts, the reform communist project of the 1960s was built entirely upon expert knowledge. The aim of the reform-oriented Communist Party authorities was to reconstruct State socialism in order to establish an economically more efficient and politically less repressive regime. Although the formulation of the reform program was a source of a bitter conflict from the very beginning until 1968, there were no doubts about the need to mobilize social science expertise, alongside the most advanced technologies, for reformist policy-making. Social scientists became important actors in the so-called “Czechoslovak reform”, as public intellectuals—who were supporters of the reform in the emerging public debates—and as experts involved in the numerous politically significant research projects and policy-advice activities (Kusin 1971; Skilling 1976).

In the 1960s, social scientific expertise was supported by the Communist Party and was developed across the various social science disciplines. In fact, the rise of the reform communist expert culture was among the most significant phenomena of Czechoslovak reform communism. In comparison with the legal expertise of the late 1950s, which was firmly rooted in the Marxist-Leninist discourse and was concerned exclusively with domestic issues, reform communist expertise became increasingly integrated in an ongoing transnational debate on modern governance, which had its participants on both sides of the “Iron Curtain.” Czechoslovak social scientists were eager to discuss and conceptualize original topics such as the future of “industrial societies,” the transformation of labor in the age of automation, the relationship between planning and markets, or the changes of human subjectivity in the face of rapid technological change. This helped establish a common platform for intellectual exchange across the Cold War divide and exposed the Czechoslovak social scientific community to various intellectual influences. This effort to cultivate an exchange of knowledge between the East and West was not only motivated by the necessity to adopt the up-to-date theories, concepts and research methods elaborated by social scientists in Western Europe and the USA. It was also a part of an attempt to produce original theories and, more generally, social

¹¹ The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Prague: Orbis, 1960).

¹² For the analysis of Czechoslovak jurisprudence expertise in the 1950s based on the archival evidence from the archives of the former Czechoslovak Academy of Science and covering its institutional as well as intellectual development, see Sommer (2016).

knowledge that contributed to contemporary debates from the specific perspective of socialist experience of modernity. This effort was very visible in such diverse disciplines as management studies and sociology. The most intellectually interconnected and relevant project to arise from these efforts was the “scientific and technological revolution” (STR) project, interdisciplinary research headed by philosopher Radovan Richta. I will describe this in more detail in what follows.

The establishment of the reform communist expert culture was enabled by changes in the disciplinary and institutional structure of the social sciences. Of utmost importance was the rebirth of sociology, a discipline that was ideologically denounced and institutionally dissolved during the Stalinist period. Interest in the functioning of socialist society was accompanied by the both enthusiastic and critical reception of contemporary Western sociological concepts, most prominently of the various theories of “industrial societies”. The crucial problem of human existence in modern society became a dominant topic of social scientific inquiry during the 1960s. From the philosophical concepts of Marxist humanism to empirical sociology, the relationship between human subjects and the modern organization of the society was considered the most important research question of the reform communist expert culture. This general “humanist” perspective drove the social science expertise involved in the project of political reform. In short, the interaction between individuals, society and socialist governance became extraordinarily important for a reform-oriented social scientist. For example, the crucial part of the economic reform agenda was the idea that a centrally planned economy was required to be more decentralized in order to achieve economic efficiency comparable with the economic performance of capitalist economies. This perspective was also reflected by the establishment of management studies in the mid-1960s, the aim of which was to develop managerial competencies, values and everyday habits that were seen as crucial for the successful management of enterprises operating in an economy based on market socialism.¹³

This “humanist” orientation was closely interwoven with another significant source of reform communist social sciences; cybernetics.¹⁴ The idea that social, political and economic lives are closed systems that are perfectly organizable and governable when proper organizational and decision-making techniques are applied became extraordinarily influential since the 1960s.¹⁵ The image of the world as a system was reflected by researchers dealing with the industrial organization and management as well as, at a more theoretical level, by STR research. In this particular case, reform communist humanism was interconnected with the system-centered perspective, which resulted in the idea of socialist post-industrialism: the communist society in which the automation of production and introduction of perfect planning and organizational techniques will be followed by the development of every individual towards a new humanity freed from manual labor, alienation and other social and psychological burdens of the industrial age.¹⁶

¹³ Apart from numerous books and booklets about management and industrial organization published since the mid-1960s, the most important source for the history of Czechoslovak management studies in the 1960s is the journal *Moderní řízení* (Modern Management), which has been published monthly since 1966 by the Management Institute based in Prague.

¹⁴ For an important work presenting various perspectives on the application of cybernetics in social sciences, see Král (1967). In 1965 the Institute of Information Theory and Automation of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science started to publish the theoretical journal *Kybernetika* (Cybernetics). For its on-line archive, see:

<http://www.kybernetika.cz/content.html>.

¹⁵ For the history of the post-war system thinking in the USA, see Heyck (2015). The Soviet case study is analyzed in Rindzeviciute (2016).

¹⁶ For the history of the STR project in the context of Czechoslovak futures studies and forecasting expertise see Sommer (2015). Richta’s Theory of science is recently analyzed in Sommer (2016).

The effort to produce internationally relevant knowledge, or at least to reflect contemporary debates, and interconnect that knowledge with the particular case of Czechoslovak socialism was observable across disciplines and institutions. The STR project was the most ambitious attempt to gain international recognition within this general effort. The interdisciplinary collective of scholars gathered by Richta reflected a wide variety of contemporary social knowledge, ranging from Marxism, Western theories of “industrial societies” and the concepts of automation and post-industrialism to fields like social psychology, urban planning and organization studies. The concept of the STR, which was elaborated by Richta himself, was based on the reception of young Marx, most importantly on his elaboration of the relationship between science, production and labor in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1993).¹⁷ Richta then developed the thesis of the “science as a direct productive force,” initially elaborated by philosopher of science James D. Bernal in the late 1930s, and used it in conjunction with the Western theories of “industrial societies”, the works of Jürgen Habermas, Raymond Aron, Herbert Marcuse, Walt W. Rostow and Daniel Bell, for example. Richta developed the STR within the original Marxist theory of socialist post-industrialism. It interconnected the changes in labor and production caused by scientific and technological progress with the call for political reform based on broader social participation in decision-making and more individual freedom in socialism. Richta aimed to reconcile the necessity of planning and sophisticated organization with the emancipatory appeals of Marxist humanism (Richta 1969).¹⁸

The STR research aimed to elaborate the socialist theory of post-industrialism and simultaneously prepare reformist policy-proposals. The most important publication by the STR research collective gathered by Richta with the approval of the Communist Party leadership in 1965 was the widely translated *Civilization at the Crossroads*. It contained a theoretical outline, an empirical analysis of the political economy of socialist industrialism, prospective chapters dealing with the forecasting of the future post-industrial society, and detailed policy advice for Czechoslovak reformers. Richta became a prominent public intellectual of the Prague Spring and his contribution to the *Action Program of the Communist Party*, the official reform document of the 1968 Prague Spring written by experts closely connected to the reformist Communist Party leaders, was also significant.¹⁹

The STR project was a prime example of the experts’ aspiration to interconnect theorizing with the elaboration of concrete policy proposals and, in general, to produce expert knowledge that could be used by politicians and applied to the introduction of far-reaching political and economic reforms. Richta’s scholarship was intellectually the most ambitious of the reform communist social scientific projects, mainly because of its conscious effort to merge social theory with expertise relevant to policy and to reflect the vision of a “more humane socialism” rooted in the dominant discourse of academic Marxism as well as the popular political imagination. Other reform communist expert activities also gained political and intellectual significance. A great deal of attention was paid to the economic reform proposals elaborated by the economics experts gathered in the research collective headed by Ota Šik.²⁰ Their proposals built upon the concept of market socialism, which had been widely discussed by economists for decades and which they recognized as an influential model of modern economic organization (Bockman 2011). Šik’s aim, along with his colleagues, was to reform economic governance in order to increase the efficiency of the socialist economy; it was crucial to

¹⁷ Richta wrote a preface to the Czech edition: Richta (1971–1977).

¹⁸ For the earlier STR texts, see Richta (1963a; 1963b).

¹⁹ For the Action Program, see Remington (1969).

²⁰ For the history of economic reforms in Czechoslovakia, see Myant (1989).

solve the problem of the interaction between the plan and the market. Moreover, the idea of a socialist market was accompanied by the conflicting and politically sensitive issue of workers' self-management and its relationship to the hierarchically structured administration of companies by managers and other experts on labor and its organization (Šik 1968a; 1968b; 1968c; Kouba 1968).²¹ According to Ota Šik, the interplay between markets and planning, organized as a dialectical coordination of these two central principles of the economic organization, had the capacity to foster efficiency of the socialist economy as well as to substantially strengthen predictability within economic governance. The carefully managed balance between the plan and the market was characterized by Šik as an important outcome of the scientization of socialist governance characterized by the introduction of expert knowledge into economic decision-making (Šik 1968c).

Although the reform communist expert culture had been emerging since the late 1950s, rising to prominence in the middle of the next decade, its existence was interrupted by the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and subsequent serious political changes that took the country towards a more authoritarian regime. As a consequence, social scientific expertise, which was organized as an influential actor in reformist policy-making, became the rather short-lived project of the Prague Spring. In 1969 and 1970, the collapse of reform communism was followed by massive purges, most importantly in the Communist Party apparatus and rank and file. These "consolidation" and "normalization" policy measures were extraordinarily harsh in the milieu of social sciences.²² As well as from removing some key actors, the purges imposed in significant discipline upon those individual scholars who were allowed to keep their positions in academia, and also in the introduction of a different knowledge production regime (Oates-Indruchová 2008). When all of the important ties with the reform communist democratization agenda had been cut off, social scientific expertise usable for the purposes of the post-1968 dictatorship remained in place. The late socialist governmental arrangement refused to realize any meaningful reform of political system or economic organization. However, the aims of the "normalization" governance were structured around notions of economic efficiency, socialist consumption and a depoliticized public, and were thus could hardly be achieved without employing social scientific expertise.

Thus the introduction of significantly more authoritarian rules of knowledge production after 1968 did not result in the entire dissolution of existing expertise. Still, the former reform communist expert culture was substantially reorganized in the course of the personal purges, institutional transformations and more-or-less forced adaptation to the new political discourse. This was based primarily upon the strict rejection of the reform communist political project. Quite a smooth transition to the new kind of expertise was facilitated by those authoritarian and technocratic elements, which had already been present in the reform communist social sciences, however. In the reform communist expert knowledge, humanist claims for more democracy and liberation of human subjects in socialism were in permanent conflict with the demand to scientifically organize the complex social reality of State socialism. Reform communist scholars and politicians sought to establish governance based on scientific rationality, a high level of predictability and policy application of expert knowledge. When strategies of political democratization were removed by

²¹ For the reform communist expertise in the field of organization studies, see Král et al. (1967).

²² The words "consolidation" and "normalization" were used by the Communist Party authorities as the official terminology related to the post-1968 purges. After 1989 this terminology was adopted by historians and is still used in scholarly texts dealing with late socialism in Czechoslovakia. For the purges in Czechoslovak academia, see Míšková et al. (1998) and Tůma (2003).

force, the mechanisms and techniques of planning, management, organization and social control remained highly relevant and useful for the political elites of late socialism.

Centralized Technocracy and Decline of State Socialism

After 1968, scholars and experts had to respect new rules of institutional life and social scientific conduct. Among the most important principles was depoliticization, alongside careful following of the ideologically rigid and intellectually narrow-minded official Marxist-Leninist theoretical framework. If depoliticization meant the rejection of any activity reminiscent of independent and critical intervention by experts in the public and policy domains, conformity with obligatory ideological rules required not only vocal denunciation of the reform communist “revisionism” but also active engagement of individual scholars in the system of mutual control and evaluation. As described in the brilliant case study analyzing the “consolidation” of the Charles University Faculty of Arts after 1968, this mechanism was established in the aftermath of “consolidation” purges and enabled effective self-discipline from individual scholars to entire institutions. It resulted in a high level of political and intellectual conformity (Jareš et al. 2012). Since the early 1970s, the expression of controversial attitudes towards the late socialist social reality was restricted almost exclusively to private personal networks or semi-official institutions at the margins of the disciplinary and institutional structure of social sciences.

From the Communist Party authorities’ perspective, the new arrangement of social sciences was in perfect accordance with the attempt to establish more centralized, authoritarian governance. As mentioned above, the first substantial move towards a new kind of expertise was made in the course of the personal purges and a different knowledge production regime was subsequently introduced. Where the reform communist expert culture had been intentionally involved in reformist policy-making and was in a relationship to the Communist Party elites—albeit complicated and conflicting, though not entirely subordinate—late socialist expertise was organized primarily as a supplier of expert knowledge for the ruling *apparatchiks* and technocrats. The authorities did not deny the importance of expert knowledge for governance. On the contrary, the governmental rationality of the late socialism was built upon the idea of scientific organization. In political discourse, the Prague Spring was described as a time of chaos and general disintegration that had to be eradicated in order for socialism to be saved and preserved in Czechoslovakia; saved and preserved by the policy based on centralized planning and sophisticated top-down organization of economy and society.

The repressive policy of the late socialism, which was based on the public order imperative, produced the culture of conformity by means of social exclusion and enforced discipline of politically and culturally non-conformist collectives and individuals.²³ However, the application of social scientific knowledge in the field of governance was promoted as a way to elaborate sophisticated techniques for planning, measurement, evaluation and centralized control and organization of social phenomena such as welfare, labor, production, leisure, and consumption. If the central task of public order policy was the repression and exclusion of otherness and dissidence, late socialist governance was structured primarily around the search for predictability of social and economic processes.

²³ A classical account of “consolidation” was elaborated by dissident scholar Milan Šimečka, who characterized the political and social transformations in Czechoslovakia after 1968 as “restoration of order”. Šimečka argued that the “consolidation” was a far-going process which was realized not only through direct repressive measures but also on the level of the governance of everyday life. See Šimečka (1984).

Social scientific expertise was thus mobilized in order to reestablish and maintain control of the State and society after the allegedly disorganized and decadent era of the reform communist experiment.

The centralized control of institutions, the authoritative Marxist-Leninist theoretical framework, and expert governance of economy and society seemed to serve as safeguards against social disintegration, political unrest and economic decline. Market socialism reform was replaced by the effort to elaborate more advanced techniques of economic planning enabling the more effective organization of a centrally planned economy in order to produce significant economic growth. Similarly, the reform communist emphasizing of futures studies and prediction, which was reflected predominantly in the STR research, was transformed in the project of *prognostika*—centrally organized forecasting expertise concerned primarily with economic issues (Rocca 1981; Sommer 2015). While leisure and free time were discussed by reform communist scholars as a part of a much broader debate about the transformation of human subjectivity in socialist society, under the new regime of labor under advanced industrialism and emerging post-industrialism, the late socialist research on the “socialist life style” was focused on planning and organization of consumption, particularly on the top-down management of the distinctive socialist way of life.²⁴ Emancipation of individuals by self-fulfillment and self-cultivation, conceptualized in the 1960s as a philosophical problem of human subjectivity as well as in the context of the attempt to enable much broader social participation in the socialist governance by creation of genuine civic life, was reversed after 1968 in an effort to create and technocratically organize the “socialist lifestyle”. This research sought to invent techniques enabling everyday life to be governed by mass consumption and authoritatively prescribed social values and cultural preferences (Filipcová and Filipec 1976; Filipcová and Filipec 1980).

It was thus quite logical that the last two decades of Communist Party rule were characterized by further expansion of expertise in fields such as economic forecasting, social planning, management, and organization research (Bauerová et al. 1972; Kutta 1973, 1976, 1980; Pavelka 1979). The late socialist technocratic governmental rationality emphasized careful planning of complex social processes and centralized organization of labor, from scientific management of workplace to administration of large sites of production. An inseparable part of this expertise was the effort to employ the most advanced technologies and planning methods. It mirrored the idea that the existing organization of society and the economy was governable by a centralized apparatus of control as well as the application of expert knowledge. The technocratic character of the late socialist expertise was thus reflected, for example, in social planning expertise, which was initially developed in the mid-1960s in the USSR.²⁵ It was an attempt to interconnect economic planning and management with organization welfare in order to “program” various social processes at the individual enterprise level and in surrounding towns and regions.²⁶ An important field of expertise was *prognostika*, forecasting research. Where reform communist STR scholarship had followed a path similar to the post-economic thought of its Western counterparts, after 1968 this trend was disrupted and replaced by the primacy of economic performance and efficiency.²⁷ Forecasting scholarship became subordinate to the economists’ perspective and increasingly dominated by the discourse of economic productivity. This, in turn, led to a significant narrowing of the forecasting discourse. In the course

²⁴ For the reform communist research on leisure, see primarily Selucký (1966).

²⁵ For the comparison of social planning in the USSR and Czechoslovakia, see Stíbalová (1976).

²⁶ The Czechoslovak experiments with the application of social planning at the level of cities and regions are described in Novotný and Štráchal (1980).

²⁷ For a wider context of the post-economic thought, see Brick (2006).

of the 1970s, the reform communist theory of socialist post-industrialism was replaced by mere technical processing of empirical data in order that forecasting reports could be elaborated for the purposes of centralized economic planning. Instead of being home to critical engagement with the future, *prognostika* was concerned with the production of allegedly objective knowledge about the prospects of the national economy. It aimed to foster central planning by providing predictions required for the successful management of a socialist economy. The late socialist fusion of technocratic governance and forecasting expertise aimed to produce the image of harmonious development towards prosperous and economically more efficient socialism.²⁸

Unsurprisingly for a time when expert discourse was so dominated by economic rationality, economics rose to prominence. It was, however, not before the 1980s that economists became the most visible social scientific experts and luminaries of the emerging public debate about Czechoslovak *perestroika*.²⁹ In the early 1980s, deterioration of the Czechoslovak economy became a serious concern and some kind of reform, or at least adjustment, of the economic arrangements seemed to be inevitable. It resulted in the relaxation of the strictly ideologically controlled discourse on the economy. In order to cope with the shortcomings of central planning, the Communist Party authorities did not seriously obstruct the economists' effort to formulate reform strategies and to discuss the reform agenda publicly. Moreover certain decisions made by the authorities encouraged the economists, most importantly the establishment of a specialized forecasting institution in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The Forecasting Institute, established in 1984 as the Forecasting Center under the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and transformed into an institute in 1986, became a hub of *perestroika* economics.³⁰ This institution was in charge of elaborating a long-term prognosis of the Czechoslovak economy until 2010. It gathered together a faculty composed of economists and other social scientists of various theoretical preferences and with different approaches towards the reformist agenda. However, it soon became clear that in this central and politically important forecasting project it was the economists who secured a prominent position in the *perestroika* reform oriented expert culture. Where other social scientific disciplines struggled with the still extremely limited space for independent and critical scholarship without much success, the *prognostika* economists were allowed to formulate their reform proposals comparatively officially. They did not hesitate to utilize the highly technical discourse of economics in order to link the critique of the already existing centrally planned economy with the critique of State socialist governance.³¹ Bringing together promoters of market socialism with monetarists and neoliberal free-market enthusiasts, they were vocal participants in the *perestroika* debates and managed to establish themselves as irreplaceable, influential experts attaining high visibility as representatives of critical and non-conformist social scientific thought.

Although the debate about State socialist governance was first opened since 1968, the significant dominance of economists in this discussion seriously narrowed the *perestroika* expert discourse and related social and political thinking. Compared to the reform communist expert culture of the 1960s, with its rich disciplinary background and conceptual diversity, 1980s social scientific expertise was

²⁸ For the introduction to *prognostika*, see Šulc (1987). For the application of *prognostika* in economics and economic planning, see Komárek (1976; 1977).

²⁹ For the Czechoslovak *perestroika* and economic reform debates, see Pullmann (2011); Myant (2014). The Czech translation of *perestroika* was *přestavba* (reconstruction). It is worth to mention that the Czechoslovak *přestavba* had a different, slower, dynamics than its Soviet counterpart due to the overall ideological dogmatism of the majority in the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership.

³⁰ For the short history of the Forecasting Institute, see Sommer (2015): 154–156.

³¹ For the role of economists in Czechoslovak policy debates, see Havel et al. (1998), Eyal (2003).

over influenced by one particular epistemic community. This development mirrored the economic determinism that prevailed in the late socialist expert discourse and was also in accordance with the global phenomenon of the expansion of economics during the 1970s and 1980s (Fourcade 2009). Similarly to the USA and Western Europe, economics gained extraordinary presence in intellectual and policy debates. The economic style of reasoning, supported by economists' claims about the allegedly objective nature of the knowledge they produced, became an almost universally accepted rationality penetrating various domains of social thought, policy-making and everyday life (Rodgers 2011; Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael 2010). In Czechoslovakia, this development occurred under the strictly ideologically controlled and technocratically oriented regime of knowledge production imposed on scholars and experts after 1968. Social knowledge underwent its economization under the specific conditions of the late socialist dictatorship when pro-growth development of the centrally planned economy was a political priority and authorities labeled critical thinking about society as non-acceptable ideological subversion.

The rise of economists was thus extraordinarily important in a country where social scientific discourse was guarded by ideological watchmen until 1989, where every opportunity for public critical discussion was controlled by censors. Any relaxation of these rules that could potentially lead to a more open exchange of opinions significantly affected the further development of whole disciplines or the wider reception of these debates by the Czechoslovak public. In the case of economics, such relaxation of ideological control went quite far during the *perestroika* period. In the course of the officially sanctioned debate about the “rebuilding of economic mechanism”, understood by the Czechoslovak authorities to be crucial for the future of socialism, the economists were allowed to discuss politically important questions and set the agenda of the *perestroika* expert discourse.³² Although alternative reform proposals were elaborated, for example, by scholars dealing with research on environmental problems and the relationship between the environmental crisis and governance, such expertise was less important for the authorities and also politically more controversial than economics because of its ‘subversive’ questioning of late socialist power relations.³³ With its specific language and purely technical style of reasoning, economics was seen as a value-free and objective technology of governance. Such specific, and to some extent one-sided, construction of the *perestroika* expert discourse thus resulted in the leading role of economists in the late 1980s reform debates. Simultaneously the impact of other branches of expertise on the non-expert public was limited and the policy relevance of these alternatives remained marginal.

Conclusion: With Experts from Socialism to Capitalism

The collapse of State socialism in Czechoslovakia in November and December 1989 was extraordinarily quick and smooth. Gathered under the banner of “non-violence” and “humanity”, the Czech and Slovak revolutionary public gave birth to the civic movement aiming, among other things, to overcome the alienation between the State and its citizens caused by the technocratic and over-bureaucratized late socialist regime.³⁴ For a while it seemed that a new form of governance based more on the civic values of the revolution than on the economic calculation and, more generally, authority of expert interventions was possible. However, the revolutionary enthusiasm gradually

³² The most important policy-oriented forecasting texts written in the late 1980s were Komárek (1990), and Zieleniec, (1990). *Prognóza a program* (Komárek 1990) contained the text of the so called “General Prognosis”, which was the main outcome of the Forecasting Institute’s research activities.

³³ For the most comprehensive reform proposal based on the environmental perspective, see Vavroušek (1990).

³⁴ The culture, values and future imaginaries of the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia was analyzed in Krapfl (2013).

receded and the everyday governing of a former socialist state in post-socialist conditions became the most important task of a new administration composed of dissidents and *perestroika* economists (Eyal 2000). When the second round of the economic reform debate was launched after 1989, the continuity between the post-socialist and late socialist expert cultures became more than evident. In the transition from the socialist, centrally planned economy to the new economic organization, the economists' authority was significantly strengthened and their expertise gained even more attention among the non-expert public. The economists were eager to reinforce the impression that their prominent presence in policy-making, as well as in public debates, was a necessary condition for the success of the transition from the socialist dictatorship to liberal democracy. Immediately after the Velvet Revolution, several economists influential in the *perestroika* period entered the halls of power and occupied prominent positions in policy-making bodies, most importantly in the Czechoslovak government (Myant 2003; Burian 1998). Although different concepts of economic reform were proposed, the most influential one was its free-market and, more precisely, neoliberal variant authored by the former Forecasting Institute researchers Václav Klaus, Tomáš Ježek, Dušan Tříška, among others. It seems that the strong presence of economists in *perestroika* debates, during the Velvet Revolution and on into the 1990s, enabled the breaking point of 1989 to be bridged and brought about significant continuity between late socialism and post-socialism.

The almost unquestioned personal continuity between the late socialist economic expertise and the post-socialist political elite was accompanied by the continuity of governmental rationality, in a specific form. Similarly to the late socialist regime, post-socialist governance was backed by a highly economic expert discourse and was structured around the primacy of economic calculation, efficiency and productivity. After 1989, this one-sided understanding of the social reality merged with the discourses of "democratic transformation", the "return to Europe", and the building of a prosperous economy based on free-market competition and large-scale privatization. The reform strategies elaborated by the community of free-market economists during the 1980s and after 1989 were presented to the public in a highly authoritative way as the only realistic, strictly rational, objective and truly scientific alternative and as the proven, solid knowledge background of the policies leading to a prosperous future (Zieleniec 1990). Under the guidance of those economic experts who became policy makers after 1989, the transformation of governance from technocratic socialism to neoliberal capitalism was carried out with a high degree of continuity and on the common ground of robust economic determinism in social thought and related expert knowledge.

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