

## BIO

Victoria Shmidt brings together the issue of historical roots of segregation with the legacy of colonial and socialist policies in Central Eastern European countries. Victoria started her academic career within the field of critical social policy, and this period formed a part of her broader interest to the historical roots of ongoing institutional violence against diverse disfranchised groups. In 2008, Victoria transferred to the Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, and began to elaborate on the issue of institutional violence against Roma and people with disabilities in the Czech lands. It has led her to deepening the approaches towards race science and racial thinking as agents and structures of nation-building and inclined to revise the spatial, temporal and ideological borders in the taken-for-granted approaches toward the role of researchers and academic institutions in the most extremal forms of transgression. Since 2019 Victoria has been cooperating with University of Graz and revises the history of public health and medicine in Central Eastern Europe through redefining the role of epistemic communities and networks in the reproductive politics in local, national and global levels.

### **Project A Critical History of Genetics in Central Eastern Europe, Elise-Richter Project V 1020-G, 2023-2027**

**Theoretical framework** This project tells a critical history of genetics as a dialectical struggle between biologization of human perfection and its consistent negation. With a focus on Central and Eastern Europe, I interpret genetics' inception as embedded in the initial stages of the development of biology as political theology. Conceptualizing the perfection of "man" heavily relied on a biblical notion of "man" as the "crown of God's creation." Emancipating genetics from the threats of its misusing originates in recognizing the perfect person as an unsafe abstraction opposed to the interests of humanity. The variety of considerations of these interests promotes different strategies of negation that ensure epistemic justice.

**Objectives** I examine the different modes of historicizing genetics as a vehicle for producing or minimizing genetics-informed reproductive injustice. This project impacts an answer to one of the most enigmatic questions in the history of medical sciences: "Why, despite numerous campaigns aimed at limiting eugenics-informed politics, intentions directly related to negative and positive eugenics as aimed at eliminating imperfection and rooting perfection respectively continue to be reproduced and are highly probable to be reproduced in the future?"

**Approach** To confirm and deepen the understanding of the connection between genetics, the biologization of perfection, and nation-building in CEE, I link the progress of genetics after 1945 with the development of its premises since the late nineteenth century, when medical experts began to become involved in various colonization practices. I focus on Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and GDR, the leaders of progress in socialist genetics and relevant inter-country networks. The juxtaposition of institutional discourse analysis with the sociological biographies of scholars reconstructs the arguments for perfection and impact of genetic argument on reproductive injustice. Historicizing the critical response to genetics nuances the contexts of the socialist authoritarianism and focuses on the role of critical arguments developed in doctrinal, non-doctrinal, and speculative theology, the response of philosophers to the development of evolutionary theories, and early attempts to introduce biopolitics for deconstructing structural violence within public health.

**Innovation** Literally, this project is the first systematic attempt of negating perfection within the history of genetics. A critical historicization of genetics in CEE countries, the main output of this project, presents an innovative comprehensive toolkit of research strategies for exploring scientific progress in biology as a multi-level phenomenon that accumulates national, inter-country and global sites of internal and external history of biological science. This methodology will be applied for another global “peripheries” of producing biological knowledge.

### **Recent publication**

V. Shmidt & N. Jaworsky 2022 The Ukrainian Refugee “Crisis” and the (Re)production of Whiteness in Austrian and Czech Public Politics <https://sciendo.com/de/article/10.2478/jnmlp-2022-0011>

V. Shmidt 2022 Vocational Guidance in Socialist Czechoslovakia and the Context of Global and National Histories of Disability, in Dinu, R.H., & Bengtsson, S. (Eds.). (2022). Disability and Labour in the Twentieth Century: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003316596-11/vocational-guidance-socialist-czechoslovakia-context-global-national-histories-disability-victoria-shmidt>

V.Shmidt 2023 Vitalist Arguments in the Struggle for Human (Im)Perfection: The Debate Between Biologists and Theologians in the 1960s–1980s [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12604-8\\_12](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12604-8_12)

V.Shmidt 2023 Czech Child Protection after 1989: Between Socialist Legacy and the European Call for Democratic Legitimacy <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/oxford-handbook-of-child-protection-systems-9780197503546?cc=at&lang=en&#>