Research framework

for OSA

The framework aims at both accommodating and shaping the institutional explorations of OSA, and staff members' individual research interests. The framework identifies OSA as a historical laboratory where archival work, historical research and public history engagement are closely related activities. Framing is understood here as a process by which the community of the archive defines the broad framework of its research activity; maps the territory of its research interests; delineates the research topics; and identifies the shape of the objects of research. The research frame focuses on the specificities of OSA that provide comparative advantage for researchers working in an archive, and who are also engaged—besides conducting research—in self-reflective archival work.

By focusing collective thinking and integrate diverging research programs, the frame proposes to integrate: (a) the archival tasks of OSA; (b) agreed institutional research directions; (c) accepted individual research programs; (d) current and planned teaching courses; (e) future public programs; and (f) annual or longer-term Visegrad fellowship themes. The in-house seminar topics, whenever appropriate, should also converse with the directions of the research frame.

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This document considers the archives and its holdings a unique research opportunity and infrastructure that should guide rather than constrain research directions. When thinking about or with the archive, we should, at the same time, consider its different meanings: (1) OSA as a specific repository of historically and ethically significant documentary corpuses, as a physical and institutional structure that stores, sorts, preserves, materially transfigures, classifies and makes (whenever possible) freely available documents: and (2) OSA as the embodiment of the (changing) notion, concept, and idea of the

Archive. While working in the archive, we are also learning about, analyzing, scrutinizing, and redefining the (notion of the) Archive. OSA is one of the self-consciously pioneering and leading practicing institutions of public history, and the frame intends to reflect on this role too. The two large parts of the archival holdings, the historical, and the human rights collections, will be used as both basis and object of thinking.

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 Research in the archives will originate from or focus on one of two directions:

 I.

 On problems embedded in the archival process, (Research **On** the A/archive), when the researcher's gaze is directed toward the archival practice, the archival institution, the notion of the archive, or

 II.

 On issues beyond the archives, (Research **Through** the archives) turning the attention to the incidents from the past "out there," "outside the archives," yet even here, we intend to interpret and understand those "external" events and incidents through the archival lens. By collecting, preserving, classifying, selecting, and authenticating, how does the archive constitute the categories, the objects, the incidents out there in the world; what does the archive do with (sources of) specific historical or forensic events? Research program II. (Through) does not deal with archival practices, archival notions, etc, but with "real-world events" (revolutions, the fall of the wall, concrete violations of human rights, propaganda, etc.) as constituted in or through the archives. As we work in an archival institution, we aim to turn our daily routine into intellectually and academically meaningful and interesting activity by reflecting on what we do, how we do it, what we have, and how we, our predecessors, and the outside world manipulate, interpret, and re-present the documents under our care.

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In the case of Research **On** the A/archive, the archival process is taken as the whole sequence of archivism: when working on the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty archive, for example, analysis starts with the informational environment of the early 1950s (including the state of information science, the early history of cybernetics), with the interests and tasks of the Radios, (including contradictory ambitions, assigned tasks, the will to gather and know the information from the "target countries," the needs of the intelligence agencies working with and behind the radios, and the information gathered from the West that the Radios intended to transmit beyond the Iron Curtain), their available channels of information gathering, the nature and characteristics of the information the Radios managed to collect, the (historically changing) methods and guidelines, the language, the logic applied when cataloguing and classifying the information, and the structure and obligations of the Research Institute.

Focusing on the RFE/RL archives as centrally important repositories of information from/on the Cold War is not a marginal research activity. The Cold War was fought primarily by means of producing, collecting, transmitting, and analyzing mis/information from both sides, by the threat of force, containment, and deterrence by mis/perception. Perception was based on the analysis of information horded and classified in the archive—used as a living and expanding knowledge base—which was then reused and recycled as information produced for transmission in order to inform and misinform the other side, which, in turn, used the transmitted information and misinformation as the raw material for knowledge of and evidence on the other. The taxonomies used in the secret archives on both sides of the bipolar Cold War world are now used as self-evident, unproblematic classificatory categories in articles and monographs on the history of the secret police, propaganda, Communism, anti-Communism, dissidents, non-comformism, and so on. The categories are accepted, as if they were not the ideologically embedded product of a specific, identifiable historical period.

The bipolar world era was also the period of area studies, thus "the satellite countries," "the Soviet bloc," "Eastern Europe," the countries and regions, the sources on which the core of OSA's holdings focus, provide relevant material for research. Archival practices of the period were directly and indirectly informed by practices and assumptions of the (mostly Western) social sciences of the time, especially by cybernetics, sociology, anthropology, economics (especially modernization theories), game theory, and so on. In turn, the social sciences were heavily influenced by the language, classificatory schemes, and practices in the emerging Cold War archives. The promiscuous relationship and interdependence between intelligence and social science practices and activities could be analyzed with unusual benefit in archival collections.

The political transition in 1989, and the transfer of the RFE/RL archive to OSA, the subsequent change and changed perception of the status of the documentary collections, and the consequences of the application of international archival standards on the processes of classification, all left important new imprints on the structure of the OSA and other Cold War archives. Studying the practices, and the fate and the history of the Cold War archives/Archive, provide an indispensable perspective for both the historical understanding of the period, the events, and the logic of the Cold War, and the transition, and even the afterlife of the bipolar world.

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Relevant research questions originating from the Research **On** A/archive of the Cold War could be:
- the notion and specific nature of information in the Cold War;
- different information-collecting approaches in the Cold War (intelligence, diplomatic, clandestine, informal, semi-systematic, tapping, inferential);

- comparing contemporaneous East European intelligence information gathering and activities of the Radios;
- the notions and practices of "objectivity" versus manipulation/propaganda or "bourgeois factology";
- the evolution of the interview technique in the Cold War;
- public opinion research and working with "items" (documents based on interviews with unwitting informants);
- audience research and reports on the "public mood" in the satellite countries;
- considerations on quantitative and qualitative data under the strain of limited available information;
- techniques of extrapolation in limited information regimes;
- the perception of the "other" as reflected through data classification practices;
- the impact of cybernetics on informational and archival practices;
- the role of gathering and using information in the planning process and for social engineering purposes;
- juxtaposing the official, semi-official and underground information and the way they were processed;
- the nature of the propaganda archive, including film, and its impact on (planning and manipulating) political and social processes, etc.

OSA's audio-visual collections and the growing film library provide an additional dimension for studying the epistemological and axiological grounds of the Cold War period and its aftermath.

[The period of the transition of and around 1989 obviously suggests different questions: what happens with painstakingly-collected information when it suddenly and unexpectedly becomes politically irrelevant and loses political urgency; how the role and the function of the archives change when information considered contemporary and useable for daily use becomes archival material in an instance; the clash of different languages and

classificatory categories over the transition divide; the impact of creating and opening of new informational sources; when secret Western archives become juxtaposed with the secret police archives, and vice versa; the consequences of the suddenly-available reality check on enormous quantities of accumulated information; and so on.]

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From an analytical perspective, and for the sake of internal research clarity, it is advisable to treat the human rights collection separately from the Cold War historical archive. In the case of our human rights holdings, Research **On** the A/archive should be especially attentive to the moral issues involved, and the ethical implications of the exploration. (This moral sensitivity could and should then inform and influence our treatment of primarily historical documents and questions.) Special attention should be given to the theoretical and specific questions related to information rights, information self-determination, privacy, and human dignity. Unlike in the case of the Cold War historical archive, the primary aim of most information gathering in this field is documentation that has consequences on the creation of archival holdings. Collecting evidence for forensic and legal purposes leads to unique archival practices and questions that can, in turn, influence our practices in other areas of the archive, and our approach to formulating research questions and conducting our work in general. Methodologies of information collecting and analysis in the human rights field does not fully correspond to methods and techniques used in purely historical archives. Working on the human rights materials, however, makes one attentive to specific practices in historical archives. The ethical issues that are unavoidable while working with human rights documents sensitizes the researcher to issues that usually do not surface, or are suppressed while working with documents of a less sensitive nature.

Human rights materials provide a fertile ground for studying
- the relationship and differences between recording and documenting; the use and misuse of documentary work in providing—even legally admissible—evidence;

- the supposedly neutral nature of documentation;
- connections between document and evidence, evidence and proof, and historical versus forensic evidence;
- how to turn raw information into evidentiary document with the help of the geo-spatial data;
- how to handle contradictory information coming from multiple sources by visualizing data;
- the usefulness or superfluous nature of large data sets; and so on.

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The Research **Through** the archives is apparently the usual terrain of normal archival research. It is understood as exploring the incidents of the past out there, with the help of primary sources from the archive; to make use of such primary sources in order to make (or substantiate) factual claims about past events. Our approach and aims also differ from the usual research activity in/through the archive: our object of research, even when we are interested in incidents outside the archives, "events, out there, in the real world of the past," is as much the lens as the picture that emerges thorough it. We are interested in refractivity triggered by the archival material.

A clear and transparent example is our plan to analyze some of the characteristic features of Cold War propaganda by understanding and interpreting the in-house photo collection of the Radios. Our interest here is not in using the photos to demonstrate and represent what was going on out there, but to understand how "objectivity" was manufactured in the Cold War; how information coming from the other side was perceived and constructed as propaganda; how the protagonists self-fashioned themselves as crusaders for objectivity (as opposed to the propagandists of the other side).

Our very first exhibition in 1996, "Representing the Counterrevolution," used documents in and from the archives to demonstrate how the archive of repression had been used by the Hungarian state after 1956 in the service of

assembling a counter-narrative, the "counterrevolution"; how the archive had been turned into an exhibition in 1957 that stabilized the topoi of the counterrevolutionary interpretation. In that instance, we were not interested in the workings of the archive, but rather in the process of constructing of the counter-revolutionary narrative, or the counter-revolution itself before 1989, by means of using, misusing, selecting, shredding, foregrounding, and reinterpreting archival processes and archival documents. The object of analysis in the case of the "Research **Through** the archives" is the event in the "real world", not the process inside the archive. But unlike the research typically carried out by historians at historical research institutes, our approach is to conduct our analysis not with the help of archival documents, but through the archive: what the world of the past (not the Archive!) looks like when looking at it through the archival holdings, practices, and processes.

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We can look at archival practices in (and **On**) the A/archive in order to understand how the (Cold War) concept of objectivity was understood, and also produced, by those practices, and in what ways contemporary social sciences contributed to the understanding and emergence of the (historically contingent) notion of objectivity. However, when we are interested in the use of the notion of objectivity in the ideological and propaganda war between "East and West," we would conduct research **Through** the archives, as the object of interest, in that case, would not be the A/archive itself, but a political, ideological practice outside the archive. Even in this case we would try to find out how information gathering and archival practices aided the activity out there beyond the walls and technologies of the archives; in what ways did the "propaganda state's" perception of the other side, as it emerged through the archival material that had been collected on the other side, influence the practice of objectivity on the opposite side.

Another useful example is our tentatively planned archival research program on "cultural opposition" in the former socialist countries. As it is understood today, "cultural opposition" is a condensed, short-hand, composite

notion, employed retrospectively from the perspective of a post-communist situation. Most activities that could be considered an expression of opposition to or defiance of the pre-1989 authoritarian regimes that called themselves "socialist" or "communist" had a moral, and thus obvious cultural element. Sometimes—as was the case with certain religious groups—the participants consciously refused to consider their activities "oppositional," still, they were perceived and treated as such by the state and party authorities. Artists and scholars have been labeled, classified, treated, and stigmatized as "oppositional" for different reasons at different times, and by different agencies: by the authorities of the official regimes, by the secret services, by fellow artists or scholars, by organizations in the West, and sometimes by themselves.

It is not obvious who and what was considered and by whom as part of the "cultural opposition." What prompted such a designation (or self-identification), what was the impact, and what were the consequences of such labeling? OSA would not take "cultural opposition" as a given category, but question and problematize the notion, and turn it into the object of both archival and research work. OSA intends to analyze the world of the Cold War by trying to understand the way the notion, the concept, and the category of "cultural opposition" was constructed, perceived, used, and acted upon by all those relevant actors, including archivists at different institutions of the Cold War era, who could play a role in defining or actively contesting the construct. We must work in a self-reflective way, and see the differences between our post-communist categories, and theirs, from the late 1940s until 1989.

Activities and protagonists of different strands of something that could be called "cultural opposition" emerge from the archive: who, when, and why someone or something was designated as part of the "cultural opposition"; which documents were archived under that or related categories; what is the world of the opposition that emerges through the catalogues, the labels, the metadata, the documents, the structure, and the logic in the different archives. We attempt, therefore, at classifying and documenting "resistances" as well as

"truthful" behaviors under communism by investigating the practice of "observing", "monitoring" and "commenting" of "deviances" by external and internal agencies during the Cold War.

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We are different from typical historical research centers, since we live in an archive; we work in and on an A/archive; and thus our obligation is to do something with this archive, to contribute to historical, legal, ethical, and moral understanding by making good use of the A/archive as an organizing structure, an organizing principle, and not just as a repository of relevant and useable material. We are interested as much in the storage (in both the physical and abstract sense) as in the content of the storage.

In the human rights area, research **Through** the archives means for us:
- to use the nightly news program recordings of former Yugoslav televisions, and to study the war from the recorded perception of the three belligerent sides;
- to analyze the genocide in Rwanda as it had been conceived by network television programs, stored in the International Monitor Institute archive;
- to study the Srebrenica massacre as it transpires through the Physicians for Human Rights, the Dutch investigating commission documents, and other sources, and to study the work of liberal democratic institutions when we try to understand how the Dutch investigators made use of the archive, what were they looking for, how they narrated their archival findings, and what importance they attached to these findings.

 In this area, too, we aim at arriving at the "real event" via its image; or to understand the image in order to grasp the incident out there.

We are after the archival fact, not the fact in the archives.

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Our samizdat collection provides opportunities for both Fields. These holdings make it possible:

- to study the changes of categorical and classificatory practices influenced by the availability of non-official information from beyond the Iron Curtain;
- to study the use of information deriving from different sources, both official and non-official;
- the impact of tamizdat on the production, circulation and influence of samizdat;
- the changes in intelligence gathering techniques in the samizdat era;
- the changes of the information transmission of the radios;
- the changed status of the information, while before, the source had originated from the free West, until the source of origin moved "over there" to the dark side of the Iron Curtain;
- to study the changing role and self-perception (or lack thereof) of the Radios themselves, and so on.

All these programs could be considered as research **On** the A/archive.

The samizdat collections also provide material for the second research field,

Through the archives:

- through studying samizdat, one can gain a unique understanding of the practices of the opposition;
- the concepts of new political structures beyond "real existing socialism," the process whereby the opposition reluctantly embraced liberal ideas, giving up its East European oppositional tradition of illegality;
- the political economy of clandestine activities in the satellite countries; the work of the secret services both East and West;
- the changing role of propaganda;
- the new methods of ideological warfare;
- the impact of samizdat on Western, especially leftist intellectuals;

- the role of the samizdat in the emergence of the international human rights movements; and so on.

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OSA is the official archive of both the Open Society Foundations and the Central European University, and these archives provide unique angles for investigation:
- analyzing the language of applications at the time of the transition in order to understand how past experiences, routines, and reflexes survived and colored or polluted new ideas;
- the documents of the International Science Foundation could serve as specific sources to study Soviet science at the moment of the Fall;
- the scientific expectations at the moment of transition;
- the mixing of Eastern and Western categories;
- the techniques of persuasion and argumentation at the time when the future seemed completely unimaginable; and so on.

The archives of the national and regional foundations provide valuable additional material for the understanding local history, and the clash of local and American culture. The archive of the Foundation Network tells the story of the fate of global initiatives, a utopian project, and the curious fate of international NGOs. The Roma Repository informs us not only about the Roma programs, the heroic efforts of OSF, but also about the great (and usually unfulfilled) expectations of social engineering, public policy fads, as well as the widespread practice of segregating the Roma population, in particular Roma children at schools in the former Communist countries.

CEU is a child of the transition of ambitious academic and ideological expectations, a mixed breed, incorporating academic and intellectual traditions from different scholarly and cultural backgrounds. The CEU archive offers a specific source for studying the social sciences, especially at the time of the transition, focusing on the problems of transition itself, as the world was

perceived from the vantage point of different disciplines, including history, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, nationalism and gender studies.

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The public programs at or by OSA are, to a certain extent, both part and continuation of our archival and research activities. They aspire to make the content and the practices of the archive visible and comprehensible for the public, bringing the public (and the public's documents) into the archive, or bringing the archive out to the street. The programs can further help to make our archival practices more visible for ourselves, and shed new light on in-house work. If done with a public program in mind, research might make us more attentive to new types of documents, to certain qualities of the material, and suggest new ways of using the documents in the archive, opening up the documents for unexpected uses and interpretations. We will experiment in order to demolish the firewall between strict archival work and our public programs, regarding both as activities at different points on the continuum of our archival life. We consider ourselves and our work as part of the archival ecosystem, regardless of whether we are momentarily engaged in processing, research, organizing the Verzio Film Festival, or any other small or large public program.

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We decided to consider our visitors and external researchers as important sources of information for understanding the nature of OSA. We should try to engage the researchers in our digitization and processing work, having them supply unique metadata for our descriptions and finding aids, using them as providers of data to track research programs, visible or invisible connections among fonds, series, and even unique documents. We should involve the external researchers, together with our students, in the life and work of the archive.