

Call for Applications

Eastern Europe's Invisibilities: Politics, Epistemics, Arts

Call for Applications

to participate in the Inaugural Conference of the
Institute for Slavic and Eastern European Studies
(ISOS) of the University of Zurich

Eastern Europe's Invisibilities: Politics, Epistemics, Arts

Zurich, May 6-8, 2026

Invisibility is a political condition of public non-presence. It can be both a product of power and a situation of powerlessness. What is visible to one may be invisible to another – and vice versa. Overlooking, just as much as seeing, is a capacity of power and an ethical practice. Noticing abuse and other forms of violence is both a cultural and individual act, shaped by social and political forces. Historically, humanities have been preoccupied with bringing to light power practices, thus enabling ethical re-consideration and societal self-reflection.

Key questions of the conference on Eastern Europe's Invisibilities include: How is invisibility produced, overcome, and experienced – and what does it mean for Europe's East and Eastern European studies? How do Eastern European perspectives help us better understand current political transformations, and how might they offer insights for shaping positionality in times of disinformation and increasing authoritarianism? What emancipatory responses do Eastern European studies offer to post- and de-colonial thought and vice versa?

The liberation from the dictatorships in 1989 and the related opening of the archives, in particular the partial opening of the secret service archives, and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has made invisibilities visible within research in a variety of avenues. But what exactly makes the perspectives of the viewers change, how are facts reframed and visions

reshaped and what are the preconditions for these changes? Who so far were the producers of invisibilities? What made those invisibilities perceptible for some and invisible for others? What are the active practices of making something or someone invisible? When are invisibilities products of violence, and when are they strategies of power(lessness) or resistance? What role do the arts and humanities play in the undoing and analysis of invisibility?

We welcome submissions from scholars of humanities and social sciences to present their ideas on invisibilities in Eastern Europe by submitting an abstract of up to 600 words and two-page CV to isos@slav.uzh.ch by July 31, 2025.

The University of Zurich is establishing the Institute for Slavic and Eastern European Studies (ISOS) to strengthen interdisciplinary research on Eastern Europe. This new interdisciplinary institute specializes in the analysis of contemporary historical, cultural, social, linguistic, and political developments across Eastern, East-Central, and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The international conference "Eastern Europe's Invisibilities: Politics, Epistemics, Arts" will officially celebrate the opening of the ISOS in spring 2026.



Mykola Ridnyi: Blind Spots (2014/15)

Organisation: Prof. Dr. Tomáš Glanc, Prof. Dr. Botakoz Kassymbekova, Dr. Matthias Meindl, Prof. Dr. Jeronim Perović, Prof. Dr. Sylvia Sasse, Dr. Florian Wandl (Institute for Slavic and Eastern European Studies ISOS)