

BIOGRAPHY



ISTVÁN KOLLAI

Faculty of Social and
Economic Sciences CU

Project number
3348/03/03

Project duration
9/2022 - 8/2025

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Along my academic development and research projects, my research interest has shifted from a historical perspective towards a more interdisciplinary aspect, scrutinizing today's Central European societies in a comparative perspective, analyzing contemporary patterns of both nationalism or capitalism within this region, embedding the research into a global context. In this personal career development, SASPRO2 stipend offers me a golden opportunity to continue my investigation on Slovak sociocultural structures, namely castle renovation and utilization projects: how they are embedded into local cultural landscape and local community development. My intention is to follow an interdisciplinary approach and methodology, to unveil the role of local identities and local initiatives within Slovakia – which can hopefully offer fruitful contributions to global academic discourse, too. Planned results of my work is English-language academic articles and a monography.

István Kollai graduated as an economist and a historian, at Corvinus University of Budapest. Afterward, he conducted here PhD studies too, within the International Relations PhD Programme, writing his dissertation about the evolvement of Slovak historical consciousness and its opinion on Hungarians as 'neighbors'. Beside working in diplomacy and as a coordinator of Terra Recognita Foundation – focusing on Central European intercultural dialogue –, he edited several books or contributed to them with chapters about Central European inter-ethnic relations. Recent years, as the assistant professor of Corvinus University of Budapest, István Kollai attempts to issue English articles about the role of cultural codes in contemporary Central European societies, tackling patterns of both capitalism and nationalism within this region. He participated in Horizon2020 projects lead by University College London and initiated projects funded by International Visegrad Fund.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Castles within the Post-Peasant Cultural Landscape of Slovakia: Social Embeddedness of Local Initiatives for Renovation and Utilization

Present project aims to investigate the fragmented but interrelated local initiatives for renovating and utilizing castles in rural Slovakia. Since a vast number of castles had been suffering from devastation during the 20th century, the fall of Communism left Slovakia littered with castle ruins. The afterward democratization, decentralization and marketization opened room for a great variety of contemporary local initiatives of renovation and castle utilization, colouring 'heritage arenas' of local cultural landscape with reinvented narratives.

This research project intends to scrutinize these castle maintenance projects, analysing primarily their embeddedness into local cultural landscape. The primary hypothesis of the research is that castles have had a significantly deeper-rooted embeddedness in post-peasant Slovak countryside than it could be judged purely from official nation-building narratives which speak about Slovak nation from the perspective of (re)constructed and purified peasant traditions. Precisely what (latent or manifest) values are attached to these heritage sites, and how these values are represented as well as reinvented in castle utilization projects, it would be revealed during the research project. During this research work, the particular role of local players – i.e. castle owners, managers, civil activists, etc – in castle utilization projects is also to be scrutinized.

The work can be categorized most precisely as piece of social anthropology, conducted with a mixed methodological apparatus of comparative fieldwork:

- collecting local materials (accessible official documents, local news materials, etc),
- conducting semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders,
- and small-scale surveys in some cases among local civilians.

As a result of the project, academic articles and a monograph is also planned to be issued.



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PUBLICATIONS

[Kollai, István](#)

[Developmental or impoverishing urban cores? The case of Slovakia](#)

In: Gerócs, T; Ricz, J (szerk.) [The post-crisis developmental state : perspectives from the global periphery](#)

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan (2021) 343 p. pp. 197-216. Paper: Chapter 10 , 20 p.
[DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-71987-6_10](#)

[Kollai, István](#)

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KÖZ-GAZDASÁG 15 : 1 pp. 122-132. , 11 p. (2020)

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[Kollai, István](#)

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[István, Kollai \(szerk.\)](#)

[Rozštepená minulosť: kapitoly z histórie Slovákov a Maďarov](#)

Budapest, Magyarország : Terra Recognita Alapítvány (2013) , 255 p

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