

## **Capital Punishment and the Late Socialist State**

This project asks how the legitimacy meaning of the death penalty changed after the excessive killing of the post-war period ended and the death penalty was largely transferred in the non-political sphere of justice. After the Stalinist terror, in which state killing was justified on the grounds that revolutionary violence was a necessary part of the struggle against the class enemy, most communist states refrained from excessive use of the death penalty. In the course of the penal reforms in the 1960s, the number of capital offences was radically reduced, especially with respect to political and economic crimes. In fact, most communist states continued to use the death penalty only for murder and military offences. At the same time, however, new social problems lead to the creation of new kinds of offences. Therefore, the socialist states seemed to be taking the 'normal road' of placing legal state killing under a stricter control. The project argues that the changing practices and discourses of capital punishment help us to understand better the specific sovereignty and legitimacy of the party-states.