Patryk Wasiak (Wrocław):
Technological fairs in Germany and techno-scientific revolution in Polish media

In my paper I discuss the coverage of technological fairs in West Germany such as CeBIT and Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin in Polish media during the 1980s and early 1990s. As I argue, Polish columnists, popular science authors and economists considered such fairs as the most important sites where recent developments of so called “techno-scientific revolution” were communicated. At the same time such fairs, considered as global events, were sites where the struggle for global technological dominancy between West European, Japanese and American companies took place.

In the 1980s microelectronics became a field, which was supposed to influence a substantial social and economic change in the near future. Recent developments in computer and audio-video technologies were communicated to the public as one of the most instances of technological progress, which have a tremendous economic and social impact. In Polish media at that time reports from technological fairs organized in West Germany at the same time communicated recent developments in microelectronics and were stories about technological domination of “the imaginary West.” For Polish commentators such fairs were sites where a fierce struggle for global domination between European, American and Japanese companies took place. While columnists discussed such struggle, they primarily considered West German innovative companies such as Siemens, Telefunken, Grundig and Blaupunkt as only companies from Western Europe that can successfully challenge the expansion of Japanese multinationals.

With this paper, I communicate research output from my on-going second book project on home technologies and imaginary modernity during Poland’s system transition. While presenting this case study, I would like to join the discussion on the role of diverse social actors that facilitated dissemination of knowledge between Germany and Poland.