



# SEMESTRIAL REPORT AUTUMN – WINTER 2023–2024

New Europe College –  
Institute for Advanced Study

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# A Word to Our Readers:

## New Europe College at 30

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In 2024, New Europe College celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We would like to take this opportunity to look back with gratitude on the founding and development of the Institute for Advanced Study, which we owe to many wonderful, strong-willed people. One of them is Heinz HERTACH, at that time Director of the Landis & Gyr Foundation in Switzerland. In his recently published book *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben [Memories of My Life]*, he devotes a chapter to the New Europe College. The following fragment is a slightly abridged and translated version of his text.

In 1994, the Landis & Gyr Foundation, again together with the Wissenschaftskolleg, with Prof. Dr. Wolf Lepenies and Dr. Joachim Nettelbeck, participated in the founding of a second Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Central Eastern Europe, this time in Bucharest. The foundation was established following the award of the first *New Europe Prize*<sup>1</sup> to the Romanian philosopher, religious scholar and publicist Andrei Pleșu. He used the prize money to offer six young academics from various disciplines in the humanities in Romania to work on a project of their choice for a year, undisturbed by financial problems. In line with the concept of the Institutes for Advanced Study, the fellows would meet once a week to discuss their work, the first year in Andrei Pleșu's apartment, in Bucharest.

Prof. Dr. Wolf Lepenies and Dr. Joachim Nettelbeck attended a Wednesday colloquium with the fellows of this project in Andrei Pleșu's home in Bucharest. The gentlemen from Berlin had invited me to accompany them. We were impressed by this relatively low-cost enterprise and decided that this initiative should be continued. After convincing some of the partners of the Collegium Budapest of this initiative, the New Europe College Bucharest was founded in 1994. The Landis & Gyr Foundation and the Swiss Confederation were again involved.

Andrei Pleșu was mainly responsible for setting up the institute, while Marina Hasnaș, an active architect with Swiss roots and friend of the Pleșu family, was in charge of the institute's premises and administration. In its first years, the new institute was housed in two rented apartments. However, the aim was to house the institute in its own building in the long term. Andrei Pleșu, Marina Hasnaș, Joachim Nettelbeck and I visited various buildings in Bucharest that had been restituted to their owners and were now for sale, as well as the new government's proposals for buildings and land, without finding a suitable property for the institute.



**Wolf Lepenies, Heinz Hertach, Nicolae Vlădescu, Marina Hasnaș**

Suddenly, I received a phone call from the Swiss ambassador in Bucharest, Jean-Claude Joseph.<sup>2</sup> He told me that Switzerland was the owner of a centrally located large plot of land with a house that had not been inhabited for several years and was temporarily occupied. I immediately went to Bucharest and visited the house with Ambassador Joseph and the two Romanian partners. The house was in a pitiful

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<sup>1</sup> The New Europe Prize was founded by six of the most prominent Institutes for Advanced Study in the USA and Europe, including the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. This prize was awarded to outstanding scientists from the former Eastern Bloc from various disciplines in the humanities. The prize money was intended to support a research project of the recipient's choice in their home country. The first of these prizes went to Andrei Pleșu and the classical philologist Alexander Gavrilov in St. Petersburg.

<sup>2</sup> I had met Ambassador Joseph shortly before he took up office in Bucharest through the Director of Development and Cooperation in Bern. Ambassador Joseph was very interested in "our project" in Bucharest and promised to help us at any time within the scope of his possibilities.

state. The floor in the pavilion facing the street had collapsed. The squatters had removed all the radiators and ripped the pipes out of the walls before they were ordered to leave by the authorities. A "Property of the Swiss Confederation" poster hung on the door to the street, and the space between the pavilion and the street appeared to be the neighborhood's garbage dump. According to the architect, the property was



suitable for the construction of an institute building. Ambassador Jean-Claude Joseph's predecessor had been in the process of selling the property. With the active support of Ambassador Joseph, I managed to persuade the heads of the Departments of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and Finance to forego the sale and make the building available for the Institute. I was then able to negotiate a very favorable 50-year building lease agreement with the Department of Finance with a symbolic building lease interest rate of CHF 1,000 per year. (...)

**Heinz Hertach, Andrei Pleșu**

As I could not yet fully trust the political development, I included this institute building in the NEC Bucharest Science and Culture Center Foundation, Zug. The purpose of this foundation is to make the building available to the New Europe College free of charge. The partners of this foundation are the Swiss Confederation, the Landis & Gyr Foundation and New Europe College.

Marina Hasnaș, together with an experienced architect she knew, took on the planning for the renovation of the neo-baroque pavilion and the subsequent construction of the institute building, a single-storey plenary hall and a new three-storey building. (...)

The aim was again to finance the construction from donations, which was possible thanks to international support, especially significant contributions from Switzerland, not only from the Landis & Gyr Foundation, but also from the Canton of Zug and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Bern.

The new building was opened on October 6, 2000 in the presence of Annemarie Huber-Hotz, the personal representative of the President of the Swiss Confederation (...) and numerous ambassadors. The New Europe College has developed well, with a positive impact on the entire region. Of particular interest are still the programs in which fellows from partly hostile countries around the Black Sea are part of the same academic community.

Andrei Pleșu and Marina Hasnaș have since retired from the NEC for reasons of age. Fortunately, the institute continues to thrive under a new directorate and enjoys a high reputation in intellectual circles in Romania and Central Eastern Europe.

Heinz HERTACH, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (2023)



# A Term Called *Epiphany*

Professor Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Rector of the New Europe College,  
IAS Fellow at Hatfield College – Durham University, January – March 2024

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I am delighted to share some of my experiences as a fellow of Durham University's Institute for Advanced Study in the *Epiphany* term of this academic year. I will start by telling you that my favourite literature as a teenager was British. I read everything my parents and maternal grandfather could get their hands on in an isolated communist country where translations were few and quickly out of print. The trademark English countryside with its green plains dotted with grazing animals (where the heroines smeared the hemlines of their dresses with mud on their walks), the steep romantic seashore viewed from the garden of a (more or less derelict) castle, the skillfully landscaped flower gardens, even the impossible weather where you learn to appreciate every ray of sunshine: all this I dreamed of exploring one day. Of course, I have visited a few British places in the last few decades, but the experience of living in a university college in Durham for 11 weeks (January-March 2024) alone brought back my idyllic image of yesteryear.

Generously and warmly welcomed by Hatfield College, I gaze out of my bedroom window at Durham Cathedral (with over a millennium of history), listen to the well-tuned bells day and night and admire the constant training and rowing races

on the River Wear from my living room window. I make my way to Cosin's Hall (where the IAS is housed and which I can reach in two minutes) and each time I look at the wide square in front of the Cathedral surrounded by all the buildings dedicated to the university with a sigh of pleasure: Opposite the IAS is a library (with marvelous rare, old editions) as well as the University's Music Department (how convenient for me!). It's only a two-minute walk to Durham Castle (the 11<sup>th</sup> century building that became the home of University College in 1837), where I share an office with American musicologist Kevin Bartig. Kevin (coming from Michigan State University), was already known to me through his work on 20<sup>th</sup> century Soviet music, and now we marvel together at the



IAS, Durham University

incredible sight: We are working in a castle! Both of us are members of an interdisciplinary research project, *Understanding Offence: delimiting the (un)sayable*, initiated and led by Helen Fenwick (Durham Law School) and Patrick Zuk (School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Russian Studies), a project that includes several other IAS-affiliated researchers in political and legal sciences. Other University research projects also involve IAS fellows: there are nine of us this term (from England, India, Romania, USA and Ukraine), who add anthropology, history, cultural studies to the disciplines mentioned above.

Our activities are much like those at the NEC: the weekly seminar in which we each present our research takes place on Mondays (preceded by a light lunch), moderated in turn by the IAS co-directors. Further public lectures by fellows are hosted by various colleges scattered across the university campus. Research groups meet regularly every two weeks. In addition, I attended two symposia: one in February (BASEES Study Group for Slavonic and Eastern European Music Annual Conference 2024), the other in March (for the *Understanding Offence* project). Moreover, I responded to the invitation of colleagues from the Department of Music and the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies, interested in learning more about Romanian music, and accepted (too) many conference invitations. To these were added formal and informal meetings with staff and students at Hatfield College, where the Principal – Professor Ann

MacLarnon – organised, for example, an instructive debate on *Life as a young person during the communism-post-communism transition in Romania: cultural expression, restrictions and freedoms*. I am not sure how the international students perceived us, the two middle-aged Romanians who had landed here from a quasi-unknown Romania, with the "I also lived under communism" speech... Fortunately, Dan Dediu (who had accompanied me) offered to orchestrate the Hatfield College anthem and won everyone's sympathy.

I was surrounded by extraordinary people: alongside Kevin there was musicologist and specialist in Russian and Soviet cultural studies Patrick Zuk, who speaks some 12 languages (including Romanian),



a wonderful and spirited host, a promoter of knowledge about Romanian music. We look forward to seeing him at the NEC towards the end of the year, together with the Director of the IAS, professor of psychology Alex Easton, to develop a partnership and an intensive exchange of scholars among our institutions.

Apart from coming back to Bucharest with a head start on the book I have been working on for many years (about nationalisms and other ideologies embedded in 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian music), I was enriched by great friends, by discussions from which I learnt a lot, and by all sorts of new projects from which something will emerge. Oh, of course, and with experiences like muddy boots on the trip to Hadrian's Wall, mighty whirlwinds in the ruins of Whitby Abbey, marvelous views of the seashore from Bamburgh Castle or the picturesque hamlet of Robin Hood's Bay. Glimpses of my youthful readings have come to the surface, even if they have nothing to do with what I am currently reading. But they have all contributed to the *epiphany* of this term.

Valentina SANDU-DEDIU

# Current Fellowship Programs and Research Projects

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## Fellowship Programs

### NEC Fellowships (since 1994)

At its foundation in 1994 NEC was offering up to ten Fellowships to young Romanian scholars. This program represented its core and still does, while developing in time two branches, which have distinct sources of funding: The **International Fellowships**, enjoying the financial support of NEC's institutional sponsors, complemented through funds resulting from an award granted for the first time in 2016 by the Romanian *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation*, the **UEFISCDI Award Program**; and the **Ștefan Odobleja Fellowships** (since 2008), targeting young Romanian researchers, supported also by UEFISCDI. The Fellows are chosen by the NEC international Academic Advisory Board for the duration of one academic year or one term. They gather for weekly seminars to discuss the progress of their research and participate in all the scientific events organised by NEC. The Fellows receive a monthly stipend and are given the opportunity of a research trip abroad, at a university or research institute of their choice. At the end of their stay, the Fellows submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the New Europe College Yearbooks.

### Gerda Henkel Fellowships (since 2017)

This program, developed with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany), invites young researchers and academics working in the fields of humanities and social sciences (in particular archaeology, art history, historical islamic studies, history, history of law, history of science, prehistory and early history) from Afghanistan, Belarus, China (only Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice.

### Spiru Haret Fellowships (since 2017)

The *Spiru Haret* Fellowship Program, sponsored through a UEFISCDI grant, targets young Romanian researchers/academics in the humanities and social sciences whose projects address questions relating to migration, displacement, diaspora. Candidates are expected to focus on Romanian cases seen in a larger historical, geographical and political context, in thus broadening our understanding of contemporary developments. Such aspects as transnational mobility, the development of communication technologies and of digitization, public policies on migration, ways of employing transnational communities, migrant routes, the migrants' remittances and entrepreneurial capital could be taken into account. NEC also welcomes projects which look at cultural phenomena (in literature, visual arts, music etc.) related to migration and diaspora.

### Lapedatu Fellowships (since 2018)

According to its Statute, the Lapedatu Foundation supports research activities on 'the life and work of Lapedatu family members and the socio-cultural and political context' during which they lived. Thanks to a generous financial contribution from the Lapedatu Foundation, NEC invites to Bucharest a foreign researcher specialized in the field of Romanian Studies, who is currently conducting research in one of the world's top universities. On this occasion, he will spend a month in Romania and work with a young Romanian researcher to organize an academic event hosted by the NEC. At this colloquy, the Lapedatu fellows and their guests will present scientific papers and initiate debates on a theme that covers important topics of the Romanian and Southeastern European history in both modern and contemporary epochs.

### **Porticus N+N Fellowships (since 2020)**

The *Nations and Nationalisms* (N+N) program, developed with financial support from the Porticus Foundation, aims to approach one of the main challenges faced by societies around the globe, but mostly in Central and Eastern Europe: a growing tension between nationalizing and globalizing forces in a world dominated by migration, entanglement, digitization and automation. The N+N Fellowships are open to international researchers working in all fields of the humanities and social sciences with an interest in the study of nations, varieties of nationalism and/or populism, and the effects of globalization on national identities. Fellowship criteria are aligned with those in the other programs hosted by the institute. NEC aims to use the expertise of the N+N Fellows to encourage scholarship and critical thinking among targeted groups of students in Romania and the region.

### **Ameropa Fellowships (since 2020)**

Organized with financial support from Ameropa and its subsidiaries in Romania, and with academic support from the Centre for Government and Culture at the University of St. Gallen, this program aims to investigate the conditions and prerequisites for democratic stability and economic prosperity in Romania and the neighbouring region. The *Ameropa* Fellowship Program is open to early career Romanian researchers in history, anthropology, political science, economics or sociology. Their projects should focus on aspects relevant for the challenges to democratic consolidation, economic development and strengthening of civil society in Romania and the region. Each year, an annual workshop will be organized in the framework of the *Ameropa* Program.

### **DigiHum Fellowships (since 2021)**

The 'Relevance of the Humanities in the Digital Age' Fellowship Program, proposed jointly by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia and the New Europe College Bucharest and developed with the financial support of the Porticus Foundation, aims to underscore the cognitive functions of the Humanities and their potential as critical disciplines by opening them up to issues relevant in/for the contemporary digital world – issues that are “practical”, but also epistemological, ethical, philosophical, etc. The program is intended to accommodate a broadest range of themes pertaining to Humanities and Social Science disciplines provided that they link up to contemporary debates about or major challenges to the human condition stemming from the technological advances and ‘digital modernity’. The program is guided by the belief that there is a considerable added value for Humanities scholars across the academe, whatever their field, to be encouraged to rethink their topics in terms of their broader contemporary relevance (be it political, ethical, religious or academic), yet necessarily of significance for the world we are living in. The program addresses international scholars.

### **Botnar Digital Wellbeing Fellowships (since 2022)**

The *Botnar Digital Wellbeing* Fellowship Program supported by the Botnar Foundation is addressed to Romanian and international researchers in the field of social and human sciences, interested in studying the effects of digital technologies on the quality of life of young people. The program aims to strengthen the role that New Europe College plays in this field, contributing to the production of knowledge and competences on the impact of digital transformations. To this end, the program uses the potential of the humanities and social sciences as key disciplines to analyze the opportunities and risks posed by the digital revolution (particularly in post-communist and transitional societies), while encouraging the exchange of ideas and critical debates between researchers in the social humanities and those in the IT production and development sector.

### **GCE St. Gallen Fellowships (since 2022)**

This program is supported by the University of St. Gallen's Center for Governance and Culture in Europe (GCE) and targets Ukrainian and Russian scholars in the humanities and social sciences whose academic careers have been affected by the current war in Ukraine.



### ***IWM for Ukrainian Scholars Fellowships (since 2023)***

This program is supported by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna, and targets mainly Ukrainian scholars in the humanities and social sciences whose academic careers have been affected by the current war in Ukraine.

### ***Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship Fellowships (since 2023)***

The *Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship* (SUS) Fellowship Program, proposed jointly by the New Europe College Bucharest and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, aims to support scholars from the regions affected by Russia's war against Ukraine. The program is aimed at qualified researchers (post-doctoral level) in the humanities and social sciences, including law and economics, who intend to pursue a project of their own choosing. The selected applicants will have the opportunity to spend an extended period (ideally one or two semesters) as fellows, resident in either Bucharest or Sofia, where they will enjoy all the benefits associated with a fellowship. By agreement, financial support can also be granted to researchers who are not in residence for the full period and who want or need to continue their work in their country of residence. Seed funding to support the fellows' scholarly activities is also available, e.g., for the organisation of small events, for cooperative projects with partners in the host country or at home, or for the provision, development or reconstruction of research infrastructure, especially in the digital arena. Overall, NEC and CAS hope to contribute with this programme to sustainability and renewal of scientific life and work in Ukraine and beyond. Through this fellowship program, NEC contributes to the initiative promoted by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and supported by the VolkswagenStiftung aiming to found a (for now Virtual) Institute for Advanced Study (VUIAS) in Kyiv.

### ***Mattei Dogan Fellowships (since 2023)***

These fellowships, organised with academic and financial support from Fondation Mattei Dogan (Paris), targets early career scholars (within five years of receiving their doctorate) from Central and East European (CEE) and Black Sea states (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Belarus, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) who are attached to an academic institution in these countries at the time of application. Candidates should propose original approaches to comparative social science research. The program is open to all academic disciplines in the social sciences. The selected post-doctoral researchers will have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice for one or two semesters, as fellows in Bucharest.

### ***Tandem – Author with Translator – Translator with Author (since 2023)***

This innovative fellowship program, supported by S. Fischer Stiftung, Berlin is exclusively dedicated to *literati*, writers and translators, with the aim to promote authors from the Black Sea Region by encouraging the translation of their work into local languages. Stemming from the idea that societies and cultures that are geographically close often know startlingly little about each other, Tandem seeks to deepen and disseminate the knowledge in and about the literary landscapes around the Black Sea and strengthen understanding and respect among the peoples and cultures all around. *Tandem* means a stable partnership of one author and her/his translator, who have applied jointly to elaborate the translation of a specific work. Within the well tried-and-trusted setting of the NEC, they will be able to concentrate fully on the text that shall be translated while they enjoy, like the other fellows, the comprehensive support of the Institute and share in the stimulating intellectual atmosphere of the NEC.

### ***Landis & Gyr Fellowships (since 2000)***

These fellowships are awarded under the umbrella of the studio program for artists, writers and cultural critics in London, Zug, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia, offered by Landis & Gyr Stiftung, Zug (Switzerland). Landis & Gyr Foundation (one of the main supporters of NEC since its inception) has the use of one of the apartments on the NEC premises, where recipients of a grant offered by the Foundation are hosted. They work on their own projects, give presentations of their current work and are welcome to take part in all NEC activities.

## Research Projects

### **Yiddish Culture in Greater Romania (1918-1940): in the Aftermath of the Empires and Challenged by the New National State (YIDCULT)**

**UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2021-2023)**

The project aims to investigate one of the most prolific periods in the history of Yiddish culture in Romania, starting from the fact that, after the creation of Greater Romania, old traditional Yiddish centers such as Tshernovits/Czernowitz, Satmar/Szatmar or Keshenev/Kishinev, but also Yos/Jassy had to reconfigure their position within the Yiddish-speaking Eastern European world as a consequence of the fall of empires and construction of new nation states such as Greater Romania. In this context of peripheralization of old centers within the new state, the activity of the traditional Yiddish centers declined as local activists and intellectuals started to migrate to Jassy or Bucharest, looking for better professional opportunities and visibility and, as a consequence, new centers of Yiddish culture flourished in regions without a previous strong tradition (Bucharest), while communication and synchronization with reputed centers such as Vilna/Vilnius or Varshe/Warsaw increased. The project aims to investigate what were the socio-cultural mechanisms responsible for restructuring Yiddish cultural life after the changes brought by the end of World War I and by the creation of Greater Romania, and how this process occurred by tracing relevant individuals, institutions and projects until the first laws and decrees of the political regimes forbid the activity of Yiddish theatres, press and, eventually, the usage of Yiddish, thus making cultural life impossible.

The research project is coordinated by **Camelia Crăciun**, NEC Alumna and Associate Professor in Jewish Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of *the Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-0317.

### **The Oldest Romanian Manuscript and Printed Versions of the Akathistos Hymn (17<sup>th</sup> C). The History of a Liturgical Masterpiece Between Text and Image (AKATHYMN)**

**UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2021-2023)**

The interdisciplinary team involved in this project intends to study a most influential liturgical piece dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Akathistos Hymn, from a philological and historical perspective. They will focus on the multilingual textual tradition (Greek, Slavonic and Romanian) of the Akathistos Hymn which develops simultaneously in the Romanian-speaking regions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and on the flourishing iconography of the Akathistos cycle, present in mural representations and in illuminations. The first Romanian versions of the Akathistos Hymn appear as manuscripts and printed texts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These important documents for the history of old Romanian and for the history of liturgy in Romanian remained unstudied, although two metropolitans, key-figures of the old Romanian literature, Dosoftei and Antim, printed the Akathistos Hymn in 1673 and 1698 respectively. The relation of the Romanian tradition with the contemporary Slavonic texts, from which it originates, has never been studied, nor have been its connections with the Greek illuminated manuscripts of the Akathistos Hymn which high Greek clergymen executed in Wallachia in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The present project attempts to evaluate the dynamics of this multilingual 17<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of the Akathistos Hymn, to edit the oldest manuscript and printed Romanian versions, and to assess the relation between the textual and the iconographic traditions.

The NEC Alumna **Emanuela Cristina Timotin**, Senior Researcher at the “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, is coordinating this research project. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-0995.

## **Rocking under the Hammer and the Sickle: Popular Music in Socialist Romania between Ideology and Entertainment (1948-1989)**

**UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2022-2024)**

The proposed project aims to examine the history of popular music in socialist Romania, from 1948 until 1989, focusing, in particular, on the genres of jazz, rock, and light music and on their role in performing communist and nationalist ideologies, as well as in addressing demands of cultural consumption for various audiences. The project takes an interdisciplinary approach, as it brings together instruments of analysis from cultural and social history, cultural anthropology, and musicology. The research project construes the popular music genres of jazz, rock, and light music as spaces of interaction/negotiation between audiences and musicians, musicians and cultural activists/representatives of political authority, as well as between musicians themselves, depending on their social background, musical education and influences, and administrative authority/ies. While it focuses on the Romanian national context, the project also relies on an asymmetrical historical comparison with other national case studies of popular music behind the Iron Curtain (Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union).

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumnus **Claudiu Oancea**, under the mentorship of **Valentina Sandu-Dediu**, Rector of the New Europe College, Professor at the National University of Music in Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Postdoctoral Research PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2021-0244.

## **Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania (CanCor)**

**UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

The CanCor project examines the surprising historical relevance of rail and fluvial-maritime transportation infrastructure for the self-imaginings of nation-building and the narratives of modernization in the Romanian Principalities/Romania, from the 1840s to 1914. Given the dual nature of such transportation infrastructures, imagined as both “progressive” and “disruptive”, their construction brought immense pressure upon local decision-makers. The project has three main goals: First, it will examine anxieties over the possibility that the Principalities/Romania would be subject to economic and even demographic colonization, fears generated by the asymmetrical political and economic interactions with Europe’s Great Powers and neighbouring empires. Second, it will examine the corruption scandals surrounding infrastructure construction that generated and constantly reshaped colonial anxieties in the process of nation-state-building, when faced with Great Powers and their imperial and colonial-like aspirations of political and economic influence. Third, the project will historicize the semantic usages of “colonialism” and “corruption” and their inherently political uses in nation-building in Romania and in the process of infrastructure construction, arguing that, on both accounts, reflexively situating their meanings is necessary as a way of disentangling them from the ex-post analytical vocabulary normatively employed by (contemporary) scholars.

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumna **Silvia Marton**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399.

## **Entangled Histories of the Danubian Quarantine System (1774–1914) (DaQuaS)**

**UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

This project aims to investigate – from an entangled and global histories perspective and in connection with recent developments in the transdisciplinary field of quarantine studies – the various functions of the quarantine system established in the eighteenth century and institutionalized after 1829 along the Lower Danube. A special focus will fall on the period stretching between 1829 and 1853, the climax of the Danubian preventive system, but it will also document quarantine arrangements made, in

the second half of the nineteenth and in early twentieth centuries, by an international organization, the European Commission of the Danube, and by riparian states (Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania).

The project will bring empirical and theoretical insight to the burgeoning field of quarantine studies, turned mainstream in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Empirically, it will showcase the Danubian quarantine system as a hybrid version of the Russian, Austrian and Mediterranean models and will reveal how transnational sanitary cooperation looks like from the vista of small states. Lazarettos will be turned into paradigmatic hubs for the transfer of knowledge, technology and human resources in peripheral societies. Theoretically, the project aims to devise a model for how sanitary crises fuel modernization, based on a polynomial function that considers geopolitical, political, economic, societal, and sanitary factors.

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumnus **Constantin Ardeleanu**, researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies in Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-1374.

### **Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts (ROLPERIPHERAL)**

#### **UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

The project deals with the way in which evolving rule of law conditionalities and associated institutional discourses influence the operation of national constitutions of the EU member states and, conversely, contribute to the shaping of European constitutionalism at the interface between legal orders. The rule of law is the dominant contemporary constitutional discourse, both at the national and supra/international level. However, the mechanics of its unfolding, the determinations contributing to it, and the complexity of the conceptual and contextual strands intertwined in legal practices are largely ignored and understudied. The project focuses on systemic interactions at (related to) the “periphery”, since the growth of rule of law instruments at the level of the European Union and its sister organization, the Council of Europe, is directly correlated with developments related to the liminal, Central and Eastern European, jurisdictions, i.e., the new member states and the current candidates in the so-called Western Balkans (as well as, more recently, Ukraine and Moldova).

The NEC Alumnus **Bogdan Iancu**, Associate Professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science, is coordinating this research project. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0319.

### **The (Im)possible Alliance: Romania as Initiator and Beneficiary of the Humanitarian Aid (1970-1989) (RoHumAid)**

#### **UEFISCDI Young Research Teams (2022-2024)**

RoHumAid analyses the participation of Central and East European countries in the humanitarian aid effort, both as initiator and beneficiary, using as case study Romania, between 1970 and 2004. A first objective is to identify the principal characteristics of Romania – considered a Second world country – as provider and beneficiary of the human aid, and how the fall of the communist regimes, by modifying the geographic imaginary of Global North and Global South, dramatically changed the general discourse towards the region and subsequently the role as humanitarian aid actor. A second objective is to identify and to compare the Romania’s humanitarian grassroots actions, both as initiator and beneficiary, before and after 1989. A third objective is to identify and catalogue the most important transnational humanitarian networks that worked in Romania/for Romania.

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumna **Luciana Jinga**, Researcher at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile and Associate Lecturer at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of History. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Young Research Teams TE-PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2021-0778.

## **Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures (GRAMMOTION)**

**UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2023-2025)**

This project will provide a holistic and fine-grained understanding of the emotional life of medieval Northwestern European elites by investigating the emotional performance of shame and its function in the socio-cultural economy of honour across a broad corpus of heroic verse and saga from the ninth to the twelfth century. It proposes a novel approach combining sociological and computational methodologies with the history of emotions and literary analysis that will establish a comparative cross-cultural synthesis of medieval emotional vocabularies and functional grammars of honour by using shame, the most social and most intimate affect, as a privileged entry-point.

GRAMMOTION will open new horizons in the study of historical emotion by approaching its performance as structured social action whose linguistic and stylistic patterns can be identified, formalized, and compared on an unprecedented scale by using statistical corpus analysis in synergy with culturally-situated case studies. This work enables the tracing of patterns of change over time, in transition between cultural spaces, and in adaptation to various socio-political needs. This project will set the standards for more sophisticated approaches to analyzing emotion in the digital study of language and literature, also providing novel pathways for future work at the conjunction of all these cutting-edge areas of research. Its main output will consist in four articles providing a methodological toolkit for future researchers investigating emotions in premodern corpora, for Digital Humanists, and for social historians, as well as an interdisciplinary workshop bringing together scholars in all of these areas.

The NEC Alumnus **Cătălin Țăranu**, a literary-historical scholar working on the vernacular poems and cultures of early medieval Northwestern Europe, is coordinating this research project. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Postdoctoral Research PNRR-III-C9-2022-19.

## **Transnational histories of ‘corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe (1750-1850) (TransCorr) ERC Advanced Grant (October 2023 – September 2028)**

Politicians, scholars, and popular writers between 1750 and 1850 routinely characterized South-East-Central Europe as a corrupt political space. A wide range of foreign observers portrayed graft, nepotism, and bribery as endemic. Indigenous critics echoed many of these assessments. Regional insiders and outsiders alike mobilized commentaries on ‘corruption’ for their own political, professional, and personal ends, claiming they could run more honest and efficient administrations, military regimes, and commercial operations than those in power. These notables linked ‘corruption’ to the region’s supposed cultural backwardness and economic under-development. In doing so, public figures naturalized notions of ‘corruption’, making it appear both widespread and organic in the region – popularizing tropes that have endured right down to the present. Yet, ‘corruption’ is a historically specific concept. TransCorr seeks to construct a history of the idea of ‘corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe in conjunction with the rise of modernity. It demonstrates how in the context of new ideas about modernity emanating from West Europe, regional leaders reframed a host of traditional customs and practices as corrupt. It examines how Great Power attempts to transform these borderlands into formal and informal imperial provinces further entrenched novel understandings of ‘corruption’, often pejoratively associating them with the Ottoman legacy. By tracing out this history, TransCorr reveals a genealogy of ideas, discourses, and attitudes that continue to inform analyses of and discussions within the region today. The project brings the study of this geographic area into greater dialogue with a global story of modernization and aligns the region’s historiography with new innovations in the scientific literature. It also reframes contemporary debates on patronage and graft and reconfigures broader understandings of centre-periphery relations within the region and across the continent.

This ERC Advanced Grant is coordinated by the NEC Alumna **Silvia Marton**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest. It is funded by the European Union (ERC-2022-ADG no. 101098095).

# 2023 – 2024 Fellows



Christos  
ALIPRANTIS  
(Greece)



Dmitrii  
ASINOVSKII  
(Russia, Israel)



Anca Diana  
AXINIA  
(Romania)



Lesia  
BIDOCHKO  
(Ukraine)



Cătălin-Alin  
CERNĂTESCU  
(Romania)



Oana-Maria  
COJOCARU  
(Romania)



Ferdinand de  
JONG  
(The Netherlands)



Daria  
DROZDOVA  
(Russia)



Andreea  
EȘANU  
(Romania)



Malte  
FUHRMANN  
(Germany)



Simona  
GEORGESCU  
(Romania)



Susanna  
HARUTYUNYAN  
(Armenia)



Mariya  
HORYACHA  
(Ukraine)



Petro  
KUZUYK  
(Ukraine)



Szabolcs  
LÁSZLÓ  
(Hungary)



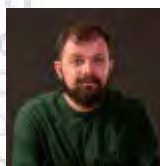
Markenc  
LORENCI  
(Albania)



Mihai  
LUKÁCS  
(Romania)



Francesco  
MAGNO  
(Italy)



Adrian George  
MATUS  
(Romania)



Manuel  
MIREANU  
(Romania)



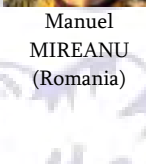
Răzvan  
NICOLESCU  
(Romania)



Metin  
OMER  
(Romania)



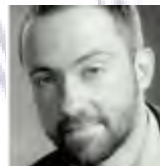
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OMLIN  
(Switzerland)



Ararat  
OSIPIAN  
(Ukraine)



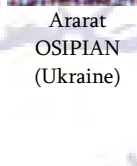
Gheorghe  
PAȘCALĂU  
(Romania)



Cătălin  
PAVEL  
(Romania)



Mathis  
PFÄFFLI  
(Switzerland)



Irina  
POPESCU  
(Romania)



Nicoleta  
ROMAN  
(Romania)



Ani  
SARUKHANYAN  
(Armenia)



Dan-Alexandru  
SĂVOAIA  
(Romania)



Roman  
SHLIAKHTIN  
(Russia)



Nataliya  
SUREVA  
(Ukraine)



Kristina  
TANIS  
(Russia)



Darya  
TSYMBALYUK  
(Ukraine)



Lucian Florin  
VASILE  
(Romania)



Nataliia  
VUSATIUK  
(Ukraine)



Edward  
WAYSBAND  
(Israel)



## THE VITALITY OF RUINS: SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL AFFORDANCES OF RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

**Ferdinand de JONG**

(The Netherlands)

*NEC International* Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Independent Scholar

Presentation on October 11, 2023

The relics of Saint Edmund have been lost since the Reformation, but recently a rumour ran that the bones of Edmund lie buried in the ruins of St Edmundsbury Abbey. This led to the foundation of the Heritage Partnership, which aims to restore and reinterpret the legacy of St Edmund. Converting the ruins of an Abbey into a religious heritage, this process of heritagisation seeks to reclaim a Pre-Reformation legacy to repair relations.

The work of heritagization of the remains of this Benedictine abbey will be analysed as a re-assembling and remediation of materials, knowledges and affects as “religious heritage”. This raises several questions: how do we conceptualize the transformation of relations between different religious and secular actors as the production of post-secular futures? Can this work of heritagization be conceived as care for religious legacies and repair of conflicts dating back to the Reformation -- or rather as a return to this religious conflict? This project explores the potentiality and vitality of the material remains of this Benedictine abbey.

## ABSORBING EMPIRES. IMPERIAL LEGAL LEGACIES IN MODERN ROMANIA

**Francesco MAGNO**

(Italy)

*DigiHum* Fellow,

October 2023 – February 2024

Postdoctoral Research Fellow,  
University of Trento

Presentation on October 18, 2023

After WWI, Romania gained control over Transylvania, Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, previously part of the Habsburg and Tsarist empires. Consequently, the Kingdom absorbed three different legislative traditions, which had to be harmonized with the Romanian one. However, the task turned out to be much harder than expected. The project aims to analyze the process of legislative unification, focusing on the relationship between imperial legal cultures and nationalism. In particular, I focused on local Romanian legal professionals, analyzing how they balanced their new sense of national belonging with the legal culture they had absorbed within Austria-Hungary and Russia.





**THE TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF THE  
KODÁLY-METHOD: HUNGARIAN AND  
AMERICAN MUSIC EDUCATORS  
IN THE COLD WAR**

**Szabolcs LÁSZLÓ** (Hungary)

*Mattei Dogan* Fellow,

October 2023 – February 2024

Research Fellow, Institute of History,  
Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest

Presentation on October 25, 2023

The project examines Cold War encounters between East and West as a distinct episode in the long international history of the trans-Atlantic mobility of people and ideas. By looking at Hungarian–U.S. interactions during the 1960s–80s, it explores how academic and cultural mid-level mediators brokered official and informal ties between separate geopolitical “worlds” and how these interactions shaped the cultural and scholarly environment of both countries. Instead of focusing on high-politics, the project follows the transnational adventures of writers, pedagogues, and area studies experts as they crossed the Iron Curtain literally and figuratively, facilitating the circulation of knowledge between the global centre and periphery. Capitalizing on intellectual traditions that reached back to the nineteenth century and personal connections that spanned the twentieth, these transnational mediators ushered in processes of inter-reliant modernization in cultural policy, education, and science within both countries. Their collaborative dynamics could not merely undermine ideological dichotomies, but rewrite the history of Cold War and the imbalances of centre-periphery relations.

**THE TRAIL OF SUFFERING AND HOPE.  
ROMANIAN REFUGEES DURING THE FIRST  
YEARS OF COMMUNISM**

**Lucian Florin VASILE**

(Romania)

*Spiru Haret* Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

*Expert Researcher, Institute for Investigation of  
Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian  
Exile, Founder/President, Association for Education  
and Urban Development*

Presentation on November 1, 2023

Some crawled through barbed wire. Others swam the treacherous Danube. A few hid in the ships that departed the ports. The daring ones seized planes and flew beyond the Iron Curtain. All of them hoped to escape Communist Romania.

Not everyone succeeded: many were captured and sent to prisons, others were killed on spot or perished in accidents. Yet a significant number of them managed to cross the border, but that was just the beginning of the harshness they faced as political refugees. The camps where they were interned were, in many cases, a place where survival was a matter of luck and death a real possibility. Those sites, common points in the struggle of many refugees, remain to these days mostly unknown. And those who survived those hard experiences and reached the other side of the Iron Curtain had a last challenge: to start a new life in a different society.

My research will examine this flow of Romanians that, in the first years of communism, fled the country, analyzing its reasons, its numbers, its paths and its places of interment. And, mostly, its human dramas.







**TRANSLATING SUSANNA HARUTYUNYAN,  
“AGRAVNERƏ NOYITS ARAJ” / “ԱԳՌԱՎՆԵՐԸ  
ՆՈՅԷՑ ԱՌԱՋ” / “RAVENS BEFORE NOAH”  
FROM ARMENIAN INTO TURKISH**

Presentation on November 8, 2023

Moderator: Katharina BIEGGER,  
Strategic Advisor, Center for Governance and  
Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen

Susanna HARUTYUNYAN, Tandem Fellow;  
Writer

Ani SARUKHANYAN, Tandem Fellow;  
Translator; Former Lecturer, Department of  
Armenian Language and Culture, Ankara  
University

Participants: Mihaela DANGA, Tandem  
Program Coordinator

Marina VRACIU, Tandem Alumna;  
Associate Professor, Alexandru Ioan Cuza  
University of Iași; Russian interpreter

Maria RYBAKOVA, Tandem Alumna;  
Assistant Professor of Literature, Nazarbayev  
University, Kazakhstan; Writer

**THE RUSSIAN-ISRAELI LITERARY  
INTELLIGENTSIA MEETS THE LEVANTINE  
REALITY: A CASE STUDY**

**Edward WAYSBAND**  
(Israel)  
*DigiHum* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Associate Researcher, Metacritic Centre,  
Babeş-Bolyai University

Presentation on November 15, 2023

The notion of Levantinism designates a transnational, multicultural alternative to a separatist vision of an ethnic, political, and cultural map of the Middle East and highlights the intersecting effects of colonialism, decolonization, migration, and Orientalism. Drawing upon the burgeoning scholarship on Levantinism, the project aims to explore an uninvestigated voice in the multicultural discussion on Levantinism, namely, the contribution of Russian-Israeli literature. Having mobilized the Levantine notion to valorize their position in literary contexts, self-proclaimed Russian-Israeli Levantines did not pass its main test on multiculturalism; instead, they exploited this notion to consolidate their elitist Russo- and Eurocentric cultural identity. To substantiate this premise, the project uses a threefold interdisciplinary approach – (1) cultural, (2) sociocultural, and (3) comparative.





## GENDER AND VIOLENCE IN THE ROMANIAN LEGIONARY MOVEMENT

**Anca Diana AXINIA**

(Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Independent Scholar

Presentation on November 22, 2023

This project will examine the interrelations between gender, the representation of violence, and transitional justice in relation to the Bucharest pogrom. The pogrom, which occurred during the so-called ‘legionary rebellion’, was one of the first very violent episodes of the Holocaust in Romania. Torture and assassinations, which resulted in hundreds of victims, were accompanied by the destruction of more than a thousand Jewish stores, houses, and workshops. In the immediate aftermath of the pogrom, rumors started to circulate on the involvement of legionary women and their savage cruelty. The project aims to reconstruct the participation of legionary women in the pogrom and to analyze their roles and their actions in relation to the broader context of gender relations and women’s political activity within the Legionary Movement before the pogrom. Secondly, another line of inquiry aims to analyze the interrelations between gender and violence and the ways gendered beliefs and stereotypes shaped the narratives, perceptions, and judgment of violent acts. Lastly, the participation of legionary women and the representation of their violence will be analyzed through the lenses of the trials that convicted the perpetrators in the aftermath of the pogrom.

## UKRAINIAN FAR-RIGHT: UNRAVELING CONTROVERSIES AMIDST THE ONGOING WAR

**Lesia BIDOCHKO**

(Ukraine)

*GCE St. Gallen* Fellow,  
October 2023 – February 2024

Senior Lecturer, National University of  
Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

Presentation on November 29, 2023

The study aims to determine discrepancies between Ukraine’s and Russia’s rendition of Ukraine’s far-right movements before and after Russia’s full-scale invasion. Holistic cultural-materialistic research strategy and emic-etic approach will provide an integrated exposure of retrospective and discursive patterns of the portrayal of the Ukrainian far-right by Ukraine’s and Russia’s media, public figures, and human rights organizations. The research covers the period since the Euromaidan revolution, during which Russia has deliberately fueled a radical image of the far-right in Ukraine. This manipulation has included exaggerating the situation to the extent of labeling Ukraine’s legitimate government as a “Kyiv junta.” Prior to the invasion, Ukraine’s and Russia’s far-right had shared ties and ideologies, even participating together in conflicts such as the Moldo-Russian war in the early 1990s. This study sheds light on the complex dynamics surrounding Ukraine’s far-right and the impact on the perception of events within and beyond the region.





**THE MAKING OF MONASTIC HAMARTIOLOGY:  
THE ISSUE OF TERMINOLOGY IN MACARIUS,  
MARK  
AND DIADOCHUS**

**Mariya HORYACHA**  
(Ukraine)

*Gerda Henkel* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Independent Scholar

Presentation on December 6, 2023

The aim of the project is to show the significance and implications of monastic hamartiology for the Christian doctrine of sin. Based on important sources of Byzantine ascetic literature of the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the project focuses on three aspects of Eastern monastic theology of sin: doctrinal questions, the historical development and spiritual implications of the monastic theology of sin. The first research question will concern important dogmatic issues, such as origin, nature and consequences of sin. I will explore how early ascetics' ideas of sin influenced their daily life and determined their positions in theological controversies such as Messalianism in the East and Pelagianism in the West. Secondly, the project explores the main approaches of the early monks to the problem of sin and show how attempts to solve it prompted ascetic writers to systematize their views on sin and elaborate them in subsequent generations. This analysis will highlight the main stages in formation of monastic hamartiology and trace the course of its development. The third part of this study will concern spiritual implications of monastic theology of sin for human sanctification and perfection. This consideration should demonstrate the originality of ascetic approach and its actuality in both their and our times.

**SOCIAL REFORM STRUGGLES IN INTERWAR  
EASTERN EUROPE: THE INTRICACIES OF  
ROMANIA`S MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY**

**Dan-Alexandru SĂVOAIA**  
(Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Assistant Professor, 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University  
of Iași, Faculty of History

Presentation on December 13, 2023

The project seeks to explore Romania`s dilemmas that arose from the practice of multilateral diplomacy within the International Labour Organization system of conferences and networks of knowledge, as means of integrating the national case in the larger discussion of social policies development in interwar East-Central Europe. It will analyse in a comparative fashion the ways in which work sought to be represented, while also focusing on how the preoccupation for social harmony came under continuous recalibration by political disputes, diverging views on economic strategies or the nature of state interventionism. The leading hypothesis informing the research questions of my research is that Romania`s participation in the International Labour Organization system proved not only an opportunity to catch on and explore the avenues of multilateral diplomacy, by setting common topics for debate with other member states, but also brought a major challenge in harmonising the tripartite practice with the diverse perspectives of the social structures from the Romanian economy and society.





**DISCURSIVE ROOTS OF ENDURANCE OF THE  
IDEA OF UKRAINE'S 'EAST-WEST' SOCIETAL  
DIVIDE: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION**

**Petro KUZYK** (Ukraine)

*Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Associate Professor, Department of International  
Relations and Diplomatic Service, Ivan Franko  
National University of Lviv

Presentation on January 10, 2024

This research project addresses the problem of Ukraine's regional and cultural cleavages and their exaggerated representation in the Western political and expert discourses. The study will focus on uncovering the international context and underlying discursive roots pertaining to the emergence and endurance of the conventional idea of the 'east-west' divide as a salient characteristic of Ukrainian society. The main objective of the study is to trace the conceptual roots of the idea of Ukraine's alleged domestic 'east-west' divide in the European and American discourses as an important environment shaping and reinforcing such an interpretation of Ukraine's regional and cultural differences. It will investigate how the idea of Ukraine's east-west divide has been shaped in the Western thought, identify the possible causes of the concept's endurance as well as trace its transformations over time. The study aims to assess to what extent the inertia of Cold-War geopolitical thinking influenced this specific conceptualisation of Ukraine's societal cleavages. It will also examine the role of some perceived international security risks associated with the dissolution of the USSR and complex and often polarizing processes of state- and nation-building in the post-communist region that followed in consolidating and securitising the idea of Ukraine's domestic divisions.

**COMING FROM RUSSIA, BECOMING A SCHOOL  
PRINCIPAL. POLITICS, EDUCATION AND STATE  
PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS IN MID-  
NINETEENTH CENTURY WALLACHIA**

**Nicoleta ROMAN**

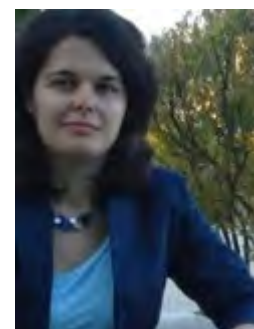
(Romania)

*Spiru Haret* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

Researcher, 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History,  
Romanian Academy

Presentation on January 17, 2024

The project explores the immersion of foreign female teachers into the local structures and communities from Wallachia, a principality in the southeastern part of present-day Romania. As transnational intercultural educators, they shaped and influenced the Romanian educational system for girls. The project engages with the professional relationship that these women teachers had with the Romanian state and the strategies they employed to survive on the educational labour market. It follows them in their becoming, transformative role as principals of private and public schools. The project also engages in highlighting the routes they took to have a constant presence in the urban centres, and to be in dialogue with the community's demands and needs. Therefore, the approach is to look into women teachers from abroad as specialists that cross geographical and ideological borders, in shaping and changing communities and educational structures. These women teachers are seen as social actors with agency and the development and survival of their schools and communities is also their personal and professional development.





**WHEN CIVIC BECOMES EXTREME.  
ACCOUNTING FOR FAR-RIGHT GROUPS'  
READINESS FOR ACTION IN ROMANIA**

**Manuel MIREANU**

(Romania)

*NEC International* Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Junior Researcher, Babeş-Bolyai University,  
Cluj-Napoca

Presentation on January 31, 2024

In recent years, Romanian far-right groups have shown that they are more than capable of transposing their ideas into actions. They are engaging in practices that go beyond declarations, speeches and social media posts. All of this is happening in a volatile international context. Far-right activism is also a central element of contention in the current Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The project asks how we can conceptually make sense of this shift to action in the case of the Romanian far-right. Such a conceptualisation is needed in order to better understand the current development of extremism in Romania. When extremist groups switch from discourse to praxis, social peace is placed under a question mark.

Two sets of literature will be combined, tackling the far-right – the security literature (with its focus on vigilante groups) and the anthropological one (that explores the concept of vigilance) – into an analytical framework that is tailored explicitly for the analysis and understanding of Romanian far-right. Two research questions will be followed: How do Romanian far right groups uphold the culture of vigilance that fosters their readiness for action? How do these groups employ mechanisms of threat definition and security supply in order to legitimise their practices?

**PROBLEMS CONCERNING PLATO'S  
"UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES"**

**Gheorghe PAȘCALĂU** (Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Postdoctoral Fellow, KU Leuven

Presentation on February 7, 2024

We all know Plato as the author of the famous dialogues and as a theorist of “ideas” existing above material reality. But Plato was not only the author of wonderful dialogues. He was also the founder of a philosophical school called “the Academy”. How did Plato’s teaching activity within the Academy look like? At first glance, this question seems impossible to answer, because Plato’s teachings must, of course, have been oral. However, we are lucky to possess certain ancient reports about Plato’s teachings in the Academy, which do not quite match Plato’s doctrines as developed in the dialogues. In his “unwritten doctrines”, Plato seems to have posited certain “principles” higher than the “ideas” and to have identified the “ideas” with “numbers”. However, the lucky situation of having reports about Plato’s “unwritten doctrines” is not always appreciated as such. Many scholars contest the reliability or the importance of these testimonies. My research endeavors to continue and endorse the efforts of those scholars who tried and still try to make sense of the testimonies concerning Plato’s “unwritten doctrines”. In my talk, I will first present the controversy around Plato’s “unwritten doctrines” and define my position within this controversy. Secondly, I will give an overview of the supposed content of Plato’s “unwritten doctrines”. Finally, I will sketch an interpretation of a controversial point of these “unwritten doctrines”, namely Plato’s identification of the ideas with numbers and the generation of order in the realm of ideas.





**BETWEEN UKRAINIAN MODERNISM AND  
SOCIALIST REALISM: AN INTELLECTUAL  
BIOGRAPHY OF MYKHAILO DRAI-KHMARA  
(1889–1939)**

**Nataliia VUSATIUK** (Ukraine)  
*Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship* Fellow,  
October 2023 – July 2024

PhD Candidate, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla  
Academy, Department of Literature

Presentation on February 14, 2024

The aim of this project is to write the intellectual biography of Mykhailo Drai-Khmara and to examine his poetic, translation, and academic activities against the background of the Ukrainian cultural process of the 1920s and 1930s. Drai-Khmara was a key figure in Ukrainian Slavic studies and one of the representatives of Ukrainian modernism. He belonged to the Ukrainian intellectual elite, who was intensively involved in various areas of culture in the context of the national revival. Drai-Khmara had contacts with the Romanian language and culture. In his poetry Drai-Khmara attempted to adapt himself to the “bloody era” and strived to face moral dilemmas related to that. His poetic style transformed from neoclassicism to socialist realism under political pressure. Drai-Khmara’s individual literary toolkit was formed at the intersection of the theoretical positions of the cultural-historical school, biographical, philological approaches, and comparative studies, however, he was forced to apply the sociological method more widely in his literary-critical studies in the 1930s. The issues of Drai-Khmara’s interaction with the Soviet authorities and Marxist criticism, the censorship history of his publications, and the circumstances of his imprisonment and death in the GULAG will be covered by this research.

**THE SNAKE ISLAND – FROM ACHILLES  
TO ZELENSKIY**

**Constantin ARDELEANU**  
(Romania)

New Europe College / Institute for South-East  
European Studies, Bucharest

Project Leader, *Entangled Histories of the Danubian  
Quarantine System (1774–1914)*

(Exploratory Research – UEFISCDI)

Research Member, *Transnational Histories of  
‘Corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe  
(1750–1850)* (ERC Grant)

Presentation on February 21, 2024

During the past two centuries, the Snake Island has been caught in all geopolitical tectonic movements and political deluges that ravaged the larger Black Sea region. The island was part of imperial Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Romania, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Putin’s Russia and it has returned to Ukraine once again. As part of all these polities, it has enjoyed much fame, making it play, as most accounts like to mention, ‘an outsized historical role’. This presentation sketches the most important moments in the modern history of the island, its contested role in post-1991 Ukrainian-Romanian relations and its significance and symbolism since 2014 and especially since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.





**FROM ILLEGAL TO RULERS: THE ALBANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY FROM ITS FOUNDATION TO THE SEIZURE OF POWER (1941-1944)**

**Markenc LORENCI**  
(Albania)

*Mattei Dogan* Fellow,  
October 2023 – February 2024

Presentation on February 28, 2024

This project aims to trace a social and political history of the Albanian Communist Party [Partia Komuniste Shqiptare - PKSh], in a period of time ranging from its foundation on November 8, 1941 until the seizure of power on November 28, 1944. The PKSh will be deconstructed in the indicated period by adopting an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, and at the same time I will analyze the partisan resistance led by it, namely the National Liberation Movement [Lëvizja Nacional-Çlirimtare - LNÇ]. Among the various aspects that will be addressed, much importance will be given to the social background and motivation of the members of the PKSh, to the presence of women, to the policies followed in the liberated territories and to the exercise of violence. The ultimate goal of this project is to analyze and draw some plausible conclusions about how the PKSh, a pretty new party that at the time of its foundation did not present the conditions necessary for success, managed to gain power in just three years. What were the internal and external factors that determined this success?

**Fellows in the 2023–2024  
Academic Year: Citizenship**

Albania	1
Armenia	2
Germany	1
Greece	1
Hungary	1
Israel	1
Italy	1
Netherlands	1
Romania	16
Russia	3
Russia / Israel	1
Switzerland	2
Ukraine	7
<b>Total:</b>	<b>38</b>



## Yiddish Culture in Greater Romania (1918-1940): In the Aftermath of the Empires and Challenged by the New National State (YIDCULT)

Report on activities by **Camelia Crăciun**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2021-2023)

The last trimester of the YIDCULT project represented a very intense period of work as several deadlines were approaching; the final corrections for the manuscript of the monograph submitted in April 2023 were expected by our publisher as well as the final versions of the articles submitted in July 2023 to the international journal on Jewish Studies were also to be finalized. Eventually, the volume of documents to be published by a Romanian academic publisher were due in December 2023, therefore being still a work in progress. As far as the dissemination of the results of our work is concerned, November 13-14, 2023 represented the dates of the international conference organized by the project team and gathering colleagues and specialists in the field in order to receive a final feedback and intellectual support before wrapping up the project altogether. (See page 52 for more details regarding the conference.)

**PUBLICATIONS.** The process of transcribing, translating, editing, organizing in chronological order and drafting explanatory notes for the volume of documents *Cultura idiș în România interbelică* represented the main activity of our team during these last months. Structured into four sections (*I. Context; II. Language and education; III. Literature and culture and IV. Theatre*), the volume was submitted to the Romanian academic publisher and is due to appear in 2024. Our second volume, the monograph *Yiddish Culture in Greater Romania (1918-1940): in the Aftermath of the Empires and Challenged by the New National State*, authored by the YIDCULT team members and expected to be published in 2024 by an international academic publishing house, was restructured according to the reviews received from the evaluators and underwent significant changes in order to be accessible to the general international public; the final efforts were dedicated to drafting a comprehensive introduction able to provide the readership with sufficient information on the Romanian context, sources employed, methodology and history of Romanian Jewish culture. Finally, the articles submitted in the summer of 2023 to a reputed international journal needed to be adjusted to the reviews we received in the fall and resubmitted by the end of the year in order to appear in 2024; aside from these articles, another article was submitted to a reputed Romanian academic journal and is currently under review.

**DISSEMINATION.** The most important event of the last months of the project was represented by the final conference of the YIDCULT project, *Romania and Beyond: Yiddish in Central and Eastern Europe. Challenges to New National States*, where the project members had the chance of presenting an individual one-hour lecture each in order to disseminate the results of the project and to receive feedback from specialists in Jewish history and culture from several countries (Hungary, USA, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, Moldova, Romania) before submitting the final results to the publishers. The following lectures were presented on November 13-14, 2023, at New Europe College, Bucharest: *Yiddish Language and Culture in*





*Interwar Romania: Context and Challenges* (Valentin Săndulescu); *The Issue of the Yiddish Education in Greater Romania* (Irina Nastasă-Matei); *The Emergence and the Evolution Process of the Yiddish Cultural Field in Interwar Romania. Political, Cultural, Literary and Journalistic Landmarks* (Francisca Solomon) and *Yiddish Theatre in Interwar Romania: Between Tradition and Reform* (Camelia Crăciun).

A three-year project, YIDCULT represented a lot of research, lecturing and writing and is expected to present great results as a pioneering work in the field of Jewish Romanian history and Yiddish Studies. The whole YIDCULT activity would have not been possible without the financial support of UEFISCDI as well as the administrative support of NEC to whom the YIDCULT team is deeply grateful.

**Team members – Project Leader:**

Camelia CRĂCIUN, PhD, Associate Professor in Jewish Studies,  
Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest

**Experienced Researchers:**

Irina NASTASĂ-MATEI, PhD, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest  
Francisca SOLOMON, PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Letters, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași  
Valentin SĂNDULESCU, PhD, Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies,  
Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest

## The Oldest Romanian Manuscript and Printed Versions of the Akathistos Hymn (17<sup>th</sup> C). The History of a Liturgical Masterpiece Between Text and Image (AKATHYMN)

Report on activities by **Emanuela Cristina Timotin**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2021-2023)

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The project (ended in December 2023) focused on one of the most influential liturgical pieces dedicated to Virgin Mary, the *Akathistos Hymn*, a text which was composed in the fifth century and was included in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church not before the ninth century. Its 24 stanzas represent the source of the iconographic theme known as the ‘Akathistos cycle’ since late thirteenth century – beginning of the fourteenth century.

The researchers involved in the project were philologists (Emanuela Timotin, principal investigator; Cristina-Ioana Dima, Mihail-George Hâncu, Daniar Mutalâp), historians (Lidia Cotovanu; Ovidiu-Victor Olar, affiliated researcher) and art historians (Oana Iacubovschi). They endeavored to edit the oldest Romanian versions of the *Akathistos Hymn* and to describe the literary, theological and artistic context in which they emerged.

In the last months of 2023, the researchers have worked to finish the main publications of the project:

*Imnul Acatist în literatura română din veacul al XVII-lea*, study, critical edition and glossary by Emanuela Timotin, Cristina-Ioana Dima, Mihail-George Hâncu and Daniar Mutalâp, Bucharest, Editura Universității București, in press;

*The Akathistos Hymn in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Tradition. The History of a Liturgical Masterpiece between Text and Image*, ed. by Emanuela Timotin, Lidia Cotovanu and Ovidiu-Victor Olar, Herlo Verlag, Heidelberg [Supplementa Études byzantines et post-byzantines 5/1-2], in press;

Dosoftei, *Carte de rugăciuni, 1673*, edition, introduction and glossary by Cristina-Ioana Dima, Bucharest, Editura Universității București, in press.

The last book is about to appear very soon, that is why it will be at the core of this presentation. The book will make a significant contribution to the study of Romanian religious literature in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, since it gives a first edition of a prayer book printed by Dosoftei, metropolitan bishop of Moldova, in Uniev (Ukraine) in 1673. Dosoftei's *Prayer Book*, of ca 100 pages, included seven texts, among which the *Akathistos Hymn*. Only several copies of it have survived, most of them in a fragmentary state; they

are all scattered in various large or small libraries in Romania. The research focuses on the place that translations occupied in the context of Dosoftei's life and work and reveals the connection between the seven texts present in the Prayer Book.



Image 1: Book cover, Dosoftei, *Carte de rugăciuni, 1673*, edition, introduction and glossary by Cristina-Ioana Dima, Bucharest, Editura Universității București

### Team members

Project Leader:

Emanuela Cristina TIMOTIN, PhD,  
Senior Researcher of the Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy

Experienced Researchers:

Lidia COTOVANU, PhD, Senior Researcher  
at the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History of the Romanian Academy  
Cristina Ioana DIMA, PhD, Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest  
Oana IACUBOVSCI, PhD, Senior Researcher at the Institute for  
South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy

Postdoctoral Researcher:

Mihail-George HÂNCU, PhD, Scientific Researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the  
Romanian Academy

PhD Student:

Daniar MUTALĂP, Junior Researcher at the “Iorgu Iordan – Alexandru Rosetii”  
Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy

Affiliated Researcher:

Ovidiu Victor OLAR, PhD, Senior Researcher at the “N. Iorga” Institute of History of the Romanian Academy

# Rocking under the Hammer and the Sickle: Popular Music in Socialist Romania between Ideology and Entertainment (1948-1989) (POPCOM)

Report on activities by **Claudiu Oancea**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2022-2024)

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This project aims to construe the history of popular music in socialist Romania, from 1948 until 1989, focusing, in particular, on the genres of jazz, rock, and light music and on their role in performing communist and nationalist ideologies, as well as in addressing demands of cultural consumption for various audiences. The project takes an interdisciplinary approach, as it brings together instruments of analysis from cultural and social history, cultural anthropology, and musicology. The research project analyzes the popular music genres of jazz, rock, and light music as spaces of interaction/negotiation between audiences and musicians, musicians and cultural activists/representatives of political authority, as well as between musicians themselves, depending on their social background, musical education and influences, and administrative authority/ies. While it focuses on the Romanian national context, the project also relies on an asymmetrical historical comparison with other national case studies of popular music behind the Iron Curtain (Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union).

From October 2023 until February 2024, I undertook archival research in several archives in Bucharest, as well as in the cities of Cluj and Oradea. In Bucharest, I continued my previous research in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, covering the late socialist period, more precisely from the early 1960s until the late 1980s. The topic of pop music during socialism and the foreign policy of the Romanian socialist state seem to have had little ground in common, when approached superficially. However, my archival research during this project has shown that pop music could play a very important role in the foreign policy of communist Romania, both in terms of its relations with other socialist states from Eastern Europe, as well as with Western capitalist states. One example lies in the cultural treaties of collaboration between socialist Romania and other states (socialist or not), from the so-called Global South, which form the subject of numerous subject files in the Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially from the 1970s and even the 1980s. These files detail how socialist Romania sought to present itself on the global arena, in particular in its relations with other developing countries, and how it constructed its official cultural image, while also incorporating elements of popular music genres. Although the basis for such collaboration treaties relied on education and scientific cooperation, cultural issues were never left aside, and, even more so, they constituted an important realm of diplomatic collaboration and political propaganda. Socialist Romania sought to disseminate its national culture among other countries and boasted about the cultural ties it linked with and artistic visits it received from musicians of other countries.



Fans at a Metrock concert, Oradea, early 1980s (Marius Luca Collection) and cultural transfers between countries whose

So far most of the secondary literature published on the cultural transfers between the capitalist West and the socialist East has stressed the flow of influences and cultural products from the West to the East. Consequently, such literature argues, this dependence on Western cultural products proved one of the factors which contributed to the Socialist Bloc's downfall in 1989. While such patterns existed and they proved influential, they only represent a portion of a more complex web of economic, political,

leaderships and population had no idea that a “1989” moment would be inevitable, or even possible. While the West proved influential in terms of popular culture and popular music, especially when regarded as a cultural construct in socialist states, communist regimes also sought to create their own pop cultures and to distribute it abroad. Thus, popular culture became not just a Western product, but a global one, with a myriad of facades at local and national level. My work for this project has aimed to research and explain the formation of this web of cultural transfers, which often ignored ideologies and economic systems.

During this period, I have continued my extensive research in several libraries in Bucharest (The University Central Library, The Metropolitan Library, The Library of the Academy, The National Library). I was primarily interested in the collections of several cultural magazines from the socialist era, such as “Săptămâna”, “Cronica”, “Tribuna”, “Viața studentească”, „Contemporanul”, or “Scînteia tineretului”. These magazines were primarily devoted to a variety of issues, primarily highbrow cultural issues, but they also covered popular music, in particular the new “young music”, as jazz, pop and rock music were called in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the printing space allotted to such an issue was scarce and varied over time, these magazines put forth various international and domestic rock bands and jazz ensembles. They also had their own music charts, and, at times, even indulged in essays regarding the importance of pop music for the construction of socialism.

In December 2023 I went on a research trip to the cities of Cluj and Oradea, where I investigated the county archives of Cluj and Bihor, and conducted several oral history interviews. The county archive of Cluj proved particularly useful when investigating how socialist radio and TV local stations interacted with the pop music phenomenon throughout the 1970s. Since Cluj has been foremostly a university town, as well as the most important city in Transylvania, a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural region, the environment has proved extremely welcoming to new music genres, such as jazz and rock music, and this was evidenced, in the 1970s, in the numerous media broadcasts, which featured music charts that had to do more with British pop than with socialist revolutionary music. Notwithstanding, one also finds detailed accounts of how Romanian musicians interacted with such music and how they tried to present their own music, so as to appease both their fan base and the cultural activists who owned the keys (sometimes literally) to rehearse spaces and concert halls. In Cluj I have also interviewed several key figures of the local music scene, as well as relatives of several musicians, who have mental recollections and physical collections of the latter’s musical existence.

In Oradea I continued my archival research, which I had started in May 2023, as well as my interaction with the local music scene. I interviewed musicians, former disc jockeys, and concert organizers from the 1970s and 1980s. So far, Oradea has proved to be an unexpectedly worthy case study, not only in terms of the local music scene and its history, but also in terms of interacting with the veterans of this scene, which has enabled me to investigate and get a better grasp of how intricate the interactions between various political, economic, and cultural factors could be at a local level.

As I have mentioned in my previous reports, I should stress once more that my work for the project during this time, whether in terms of research or writing, has been facilitated significantly by the promptness and efficiency of the New Europe College academic and administrative staff, without whom many of my academic endeavors would have been considerably less methodical.



**The band Experimental Q in concert, early 1970s (Valentin Farcaș Collection)**

# Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania (CanCor)

Report on activities by **Silvia Marton**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

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CanCor examines the surprising historical relevance of rail and fluvial-maritime transportation infrastructure for the self-imaginings of nation-building and the narratives of modernization in the Romanian Principalities/Romania, from the 1840s to 1914. There has thus far been no attempt to systematically look at how transportation infrastructure construction in the nineteenth century had an impact on shaping the political vocabulary of Romanian nation-state-building via the historical actors' notions and historical controversies over "colonialism" and "corruption".



On October 19-20, 2023, the *Workshop on method: Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development* was organized at the New Europe College, Bucharest. (See page 49 for more details regarding the conference.) The event included, besides the panels of papers and corresponding Q&A sessions, a guided tour of the Bucharest railway stations and the railway urban planning, entitled *Stories of the Main Railway Stations in Bucharest*. The tour was organized and commented by Toader POPESCU.

On October 5, 2023 team member Toader POPESCU talked about the railway's heritage and the urban planning of train stations in Romania (interview in Romanian).

On January 25, 2024, team member Andrei SORESCU gave a talk entitled *Pentru un secol al nouăsprezecelea colonial: anxietăți, ambiții și imaginarii românești în context global* [*For a Colonial Nineteenth Century: Anxieties, Ambitions and Romanian Imaginaries in a Global Context*] (the fourth CanCor research seminar). The larger NEC academic community attended the event.

## PUBLICATIONS:

Constantin ARDELEANU, „Despre prezentul și viitorul navigației pe Prut în trei rapoarte din anul 1861”, *Archiva Moldaviae*, vol. XIV, 2022, p. 175-208 (published in December 2023).

Constantin ARDELEANU, “Commercial and political needs demand the establishment of a Black Sea port’: Infrastructure development, opportunities and anxieties in an Eastern European periphery (1860s–1870s),” *The Journal of Transport History*, Volume 44, issue 3, 2023: 436-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00225266231180284>

Andrei Dan SORESCU and Raul CÂRSTOCEA, “The (Great) Numbers Game: Demographic Anxieties and Quotas in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Romania and the Global Antisemitic Imaginary”, in Michael Miller and Judith Szapor (eds.), *Quotas: The “Jewish Question” and Higher Education in Central Europe and Beyond (1880-1945)*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2024.

Project website: <https://cancor.nec.ro/>

### Team members

#### Project Leader:

Silvia MARTON, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest

#### Experienced Researcher:

Toader POPESCU, PhD, Assistant Professor, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest (since October 2023)

Constantin ARDELEANU, PhD, Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest (until September 2023)

#### Postdoctoral Researchers:

Raul CÂRSTOCEA, PhD, Lecturer in Twentieth-Century European History, Department of History, Maynooth University, Ireland

Andrei-Dan SORESCU, PhD, Researcher

## Entangled Histories of the Danubian Quarantine System (1774–1914) (DaQuaS)

Report on activities by **Constantin Ardeleanu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

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This project aims to examine the various functions of the quarantine system established along the Lower Danube, in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia/Romania, from an entangled and global historical perspective and in relation to recent developments in the transdisciplinary field of quarantine studies. Used intermittently since the eighteenth century, the quarantine system was institutionalized after 1829 and continuously transformed to adapt to the changing political, economic, and sanitary needs of Romania and to the increasing scientific understanding of the nature of disease transmission.

Public health crises in the form of pandemics have been critical junctures in the making of the modern world. Scholarship on quarantine has insisted on the role that the fight against pandemics contributed to the formation of nations and states, as well as to transnational cooperation and the ‘unification of the world through disease’. Epidemiological concerns played a similarly important role in the making of modern Romania, an aspect that has not been thoroughly explored in Romanian and international historiography.

This project aims to contribute to this emerging field by focusing on the case of the Danube quarantine from about 1774 to 1914. It will thus capture the clash and cooperation of different interests, from those of the Austrian and Russian empires (initially interested in using the river as a sort of natural barrier against the spread of disease) to those of the new nation-states established in the region (Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia), which struggled to find a balance between the economic function of the river (making it a busy transportation infrastructure) and the risks associated with the mobility of disease.

The project is divided into three main parts, touching on different historical scales. These components are: *1) Setting up an anti-epidemiological barrier along the Lower Danube. From imperial to national projects: 2) Knowledge and technology transfers in a peripheral quarantine system: 3) Life and death in the lazarettos on the Danube.*

The project started in June 2022 and has progressed according to plan. The team members have studied in Romanian and foreign archives and libraries, and several papers have already been published. One of them is authored by Constantin Ardeleanu and is entitled ‘From the “dirtiest to the best water” in Romania. Public health, sanitary diplomacy and water in Sulina (1890s-1914)’. The paper tells the story of the Romanian government’s efforts to improve the quality of drinking water available in the small town of Sulina, strategically located along the Southeast European transport corridors. Sulina was a hydrobiological melting pot of natural and anthropogenic water flows carried by the Danube, the Black

Sea currents, and the tanks and bilges of the thousands of ships that came to load their cargoes in the local harbor and roadstead. With advances in the science of bacteriology, providing Sulina with safe urban water became a Romanian and international public health priority. Investments in the city's water supply and sanitation represent a fascinating but little-known episode of sanitary internationalism, in which multiple actors in Romania and Europe cooperated – institutionally, technologically, and financially – in an attempt to bring sanitary civilization to one of Europe's most important commercial and epidemiological gateways. In line with similar interests in water, disease, and urban infrastructure in a peripheral (quasi-colonial) context, the paper illustrates the growing debates in Romania around water quality in the context of the larger hygiene movement. The rhetoric of 'improvement' and 'progress' in providing access to safe drinking water, based on the idea that 'uncleanliness, with all its consequences, comes mainly from lack of water', was accompanied by calls for the construction of modern water infrastructure.

Project website: <https://daquas.nec.ro/>

#### **Team members**

Project Leader:

Constantin ARDELEANU, PhD, Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest

Experienced Researcher:

Lidia TRĂUȘAN-MATU, PhD, Lecturer, "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest (since October 2023)

Silvia MARTON, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest (until September 2023)

Postdoctoral Researchers:

Andrei EMILCIUC, PhD, Researcher, The Institute of History, Chișinău

Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA, PhD, Researcher (since October 2023)

Andrei-Dan SORESCU, PhD, Researcher (until September 2023)



# Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts (ROLPERIPHERAL)

Report on activities by **Bogdan Iancu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

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The *Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts* project, grapples with centre-periphery interplays in rule of law standard-creation and narratives. On September 27, 2023, a lecture followed by a roundtable discussion were organized at New Europe College: *Transatlantic Functionalism: New Deal Models and European Integration* (See pages 47-48 for more details regarding the conference.) On September 29-30, 2023 the annual international conference took place at the West University of Timișoara. It addressed topics like *centrality* and *peripherality*.

*Centrality* and *peripherality* are not fixed categories. In the context of globalization, directions may even be partly reversed. Nevertheless, in Europe, periphery/center dichotomies and ensuing dialectics are formally constitutive of the Enlargements and arguably still relevant in many ways.

Post-Copenhagen Criteria Enlargement was predicated upon a neat and realistic dividing line separating the EU-15 of 1995 (predominantly Western, stable liberal democracies) from peripheral candidates (poorer, post-communist, unstable). The instruments assumed that EU Enlargement or post-accession conditionalities were/are civilizational, as they should spread “democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights”. In time, the “rule of law” became the dominant narrative of action and reaction towards the periphery. If the status of new member states and candidate countries as peripheral was entrenched as a predicate of the Enlargement, the hypothetical/presumptive Centre was normatively designed at the intersection of supra/international level RoL standard-setting. Specific standards partly originated in Western models but were then not representative of common EU-15 practice. Garden of Forking Paths.



Fantasy map of a flat earth by Antar Dayal. [willigulla tumblr](#)

The conference interrogates the challenges raised by this configuration primarily in European, but also global (Brazil) contexts. Is, for example, anticorruption, when promoted as *the rule of law*, conducive to peripheral *rule of law*, as traditionally understood in central jurisdictions? Does an insistence on particular institutional frameworks, adapted to perceived reform needs at the periphery (e.g., enhanced prosecutorial autonomy or judicial councils) result in systems that function according to (ideal-typical/idealized) representations concerning a functional Western liberal-constitutional justice system? Can reforms created for peripheral stabilization purposes produce ratchet and boomerang effects? How much can be left to contextual determinations and how much should be formalized and generalized?

**Conveners:** Bogdan IANCU and Raluca BERCEA

**Participants:** Petr AGHA, Marius BĂLAN, BENKE Károly, Lucian BERCEA, Raluca BERCEA, Lucian BOJIN, Cosmin CERCEL, Adam CZARNOTA, Rezarta DEMNERI, Bogdan DIMA, Sorina DOROGA, Horatius DUMBRAVĂ, Sarah GANTY, Bianca GUȚAN, Nedim HOGIC, Bogdan IANCU, Dimitry KOCHENOV, Martin KRYGIER, Peter L. LINDSETH, Martin LOUGHLIN, Mariana MOTA PRADO, Martin MENDELSKI, Zoran OKLOPCIC, Teodor PAPUC, Vlad PERJU, Maryna RABINOVYCH, András SAJÓ, Oana ȘTEFAN, Andreea VERTEȘ-OLTEANU



The 2024 annual conference will be organized jointly with the Romanian Association of Constitutional Law (ARDC) on September 26-27 and it will address *centrality*. The topic is apposite in context, precisely 20 years after the so-called ‘Big Bang Enlargement’ and reinvents old questions in new contexts. Where is the core that should provide the RoL model? In the EU/CoE, for instance, are supranational/international institutions the core in terms of rule of law/*Rechtsstaat* norm-generation? Or is the core rather the ideal-typical, historically grounded model of a law-based mature constitutional democracy of the Western variety? Should conditionalities and standards, in European context, be/have been related to specific practices in Western jurisdictions (*Rechtsstaaten*, rule of law-based states)? If so, what would be the properly calibrated common denominator? Are there multiple cores and multiple peripheries? Andrei Pleșu, the President of the project’s host institution (Minister of Foreign Affairs during the pre-accession, 1997-1999), proposed that “[v]iewed historically, Europe looks less like a schematic apricot and more like a pomegranate, with multiple cores.” The Call for Papers is published on [www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro) and it is open until June 15, 2024 (<https://nec.ro/cfp-annual-conference-of-the-rolperipheral-project-roundtable-of-the-romanian-association-of-constitutional-law-26-27-september-2024/>)

#### **Team members**

##### Project Leader:

Bogdan IANCU, Dr.iur, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science  
(Department of Constitutional and Political Theory and History)

##### Experienced Researchers:

Marius Nicolae BALAN, Associate Professor, Al. I. Cuza University of Iași, Faculty of Law

Raluca BERCEA, Professor, West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Law

Bianca SELEJAN-GUȚAN, Professor, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Law

##### Postdoctoral Researchers:

Dr. Cosmin CERCEL, Researcher in Legal History and Theory

Dr. Martin MENDELSKI, Postdoctoral Researcher in Political Science

(February 2023 – December 2024)

## The (Im)possible Alliance: Romania as Initiator and Beneficiary of the Humanitarian Aid (1970-1989) (RoHumAid)

Report on activities by **Luciana Jinga**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Young Research Teams (2022-2024)

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RoHumAid analyses the participation of Central and East European countries in the humanitarian aid effort, both as initiator and beneficiary, using as case study Romania, between 1970 and 2004. The project focuses on three major axes/objectives. A first objective is to identify the principal characteristics of Romania – considered a Second World country – as provider and beneficiary of the human aid, and how the fall of the communist regimes, by modifying the geographic imaginary of Global North and Global South, dramatically changed the general discourse towards the region and subsequently the role as humanitarian aid actor. A second objective is to identify and to compare Romania’s humanitarian grassroots actions, both as initiator and beneficiary, before and after 1989. A third objective is to identify and catalogue the most important transnational humanitarian networks that worked in Romania/for Romania.

For the Semester October 2023 – February 2024, the research efforts concentrated on recuperating the story of Romania as an actor of humanitarian aid during the communist regime, and therefore debunking the main post-communist historiographic discourse that excluded this experience. The team

members identified and retrieved data from both national (The Romanian National Archives, the Diplomatic Archives) and international archives (Archives of Yugoslavia). Corroborated with the previous research findings, the new documentation confirms the first part of our research hypothesis, namely that after 1970 Romania became an actor of the humanitarian aid, as beneficiary of formal (after important natural disasters) and informal aid (directed towards religious and/or ethnic minorities), networks that represented the core for the humanitarian missions during post-socialism. A new aspect that was revealed during this phase of the research is the impact of foreign humanitarian aid during the communist regime. Our findings prove that the general population was not the direct beneficiary and that the communist government privileged the army and the Secret Police. The remaining goods had been sold in local shops. Another important finding is that the communist regime requested for international help and used the Secret Police in order to reach as many donors as possible. Therefore, we can talk about an instrumentalization of the humanitarian aid for internal economic and political reasons.

At the same time, part of its foreign policy, Romania deployed economic, medical and educational assistance programs to “Third-World” countries. As donor, communist Romania initiated and conducted development projects in various fields (agriculture, industry, technology, infrastructure, health and education) in socialist/developing countries from the Global South. In order to understand the economic mechanisms, but in the same time the human resources Romania deployed to the “Third-World” countries the team members conducted several interviews. An important part of this mission was the knowledge transfer. Romania offered scholarships and trained high school, undergraduate and doctoral students. The analysis of the daily incidents reported by the Securitate shows the degree of racism of the Romanian population, but also the involvement of the foreign students in illicit activities, including drug dealing and supplying the black-market.

All the team members focused on the dissemination of the preliminary research results. In December 2023, the team launched a Call for Papers for an international conference to be organized in Bucharest in March 2024, with the title *Humanitarian and Development Aid during the Cold War*. The organizing committee received an important number of applications and selected 21 researchers from 9 countries, including USA, India, Germany, Italy etc.

Together with our partners from the Institute of History “Nicolae Iorga” of the Romanian Academy we submitted a book proposal as a collective volume to CEU Press. The Collective volume will include the materials presented during our joint workshop *Humanitarianism and Development. The Relations between Communist Romania and the Global South*, organized in May 2023.

Last, but not least Luciana Jinga presented the paper „Analiza ajutorului umanitar pentru România după 1989 din perspectiva studiilor de gen”, in the conference *De la istoria femeilor la gender history și studii de gen. Dezbateri și direcții de cercetare*, organized by IFSGen – Network Rețeaua, on December 7-9 2023.



Personal Archive

**Team members** – Project Leader:  
Luciana JINGA, Researcher, Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER); Associate Lecturer, University of Bucharest, Faculty of History

Experienced Researchers:  
Dalia BATHORY, Researcher, IICCMER  
Ștefan BOSOMITU, Researcher, IICCMER  
Daniel FILIP-AFLOAREI, Researcher, IICCMER

# Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures (GRAMMOTION)

Report on activities by **Cătălin Țăranu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2023-2025)

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The second semester in my activity as a director of the project *Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures* included working on the second article planned as one of project's outputs, presenting my research at an international event, and continuing collective work on a monthly workshop series and a bi-monthly reading group.

Research-wise, this semester was dedicated to the second article in this project, which explored how particular uses of medieval verse (Old English riddles, inscriptions on artefacts such as monumental crosses and caskets) functioned as ways to simulate the subjectivities of non-human agents (the cross on which Jesus was crucified, Jesus himself, the whale from whose bones the casket was made, a variety of objects, plants, and animals in the riddles). In this, I draw on blending theory from cognitive science and reader-response theories from literature and psychology to uncover textual strategies by which the audience is invited to emotionally empathize with the poetic voice from whose point of view the verse is composed and furthermore, attribute to it a Theory of Mind, and via blending, to run a cognitive simulation of what it would feel like being the actual agent described in the texts.

In terms of disseminating my findings and engaging with contemporary issues, on December 6, 2023 I gave an invited online lecture at Bates College (Vermont, USA) on the topic 'Dark Emotions: The Role of Shame in Racializing Public Anxieties from *Beowulf* to Brexit', which showcased the relevance of my work to current efforts in the field to identify and overturn the use of medieval and classical studies in public discourses that are discriminatory.



Photo: "Apparition de Dieu", Apocalypse of Saint Sever (www.wikipedia.org)

Here at home, I continued the work of running the two reading and working groups. The monthly meetings of the 'Emotions Through History' Working Group, have been particularly fruitful as a venue for open discussion with colleagues where I disseminated my work and received valuable feedback. The working group is proving to be successful both in Romania and abroad (via online participation) in bringing together academics and graduate students from a variety of fields (history, philosophy, literary studies, anthropology). During this semester we had three meetings dedicated to topics drawing a large number of participants: on October 31 (*Non-human Emotions*), on November 28 (*Authenticity and Convention*), on January 23 (*Affect Theory*). (See page 44 for more details.)

I have also continued leading the activity of the weekly Medieval Literature Reading Group primarily at students and members of the general public, which consists in reading medieval texts in their original language (Old English, Old Norse and Middle English), and discussing aspects of medieval history, society, and

culture. It is enjoying great success, providing a venue for channeling the interests of enthusiastic non-academics to academic activities connected to my project.

# Transnational histories of ‘corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe (1750-1850) (TransCorr)

Report on activities by **Silvia Marton**, Principal Investigator  
ERC Advanced Grant (October 2023 – September 2028)

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For centuries, South-East-Central Europe grappled with the stigma of corruption. From 1750 to 1850, politicians, scholars, and writers painted a grim picture of graft, nepotism, and bribery as endemic issues. These allegations shaped the region's identity, linking corruption to cultural backwardness and economic under-development. This perception persisted over the years. With this in mind, the ERC-funded TransCorr project will explore how regional leaders repurposed traditional practices, labelling them as corrupt when juxtaposed with Western European modernity ideals. The findings promise to change the way we perceive patronage, graft, and centre-periphery dynamics.

During the first months of the project, team members focused on their conceptual and methodological approach and on their empirical/archive-based research. More specifically, they participated to the first Strategic Meeting (in December 2023). These state-of-the-project gatherings, organized on a regular basis over the entire duration of the project, ensure the coordination of workflow across the team as well as the organization of the publications and scientific events.

Team members also attended two Research Seminars on method (in January and March 2024). They discussed the constructivist approach to ‘corruption’, the transnational perspective in historical research, and the uses of historical semantics. The emphasis on the intersection of social and political practice and discourse on ‘corruption’ in a transnational context constitutes TransCorr’s main methodological novelties and contributions of TransCorr to existing scholarship on Central-South-East Europe.

Principal Investigator Silvia Marton presented the paper “Hopeless Corruption? Negotiating Modernity in Wallachia and Moldavia in the 1830s”. She highlighted the surprising centrality of the language of (anti)corruption in Russia’s interventions in the Danubian Principalities in the context of major political and institutional changes in these territories. She also showed that, as a historically specific concept, ‘corruption’ was closely linked to novel ideas in the region about modernization (or westernization).

Alex R. Tipei’s presentation – “Civilization or Corruption: Representing Modernizing Projects of the Early Greek State in the Francophone Press” – illustrated how transnational inquiry allows historians to move beyond the confines of the nation, which have characterized much of the scholarship since the nineteenth century itself.

Constantin Ardeleanu presented his research “*Trading Consuls* and the Blurring of Public and Private Interests at the Lower Danube (1830s-1860s)”. The presentation focused on the activity of two British vice-consuls to the Lower Danube (Charles Cunningham and St. Vincent Lloyd), who served as case studies to illustrate the importance of consuls as key actors in denouncing local authorities in Moldavia and Wallachia as incompetent, abusive, and corrupt.

Andrei Sorescu’s presentation, “The Perils (and Promise) of German Colonization: Civilizational Hierarchies and Anxieties in Nineteenth Century Romania”, focused on the constant recurrence of “colony” and “colonization” as key concepts in nineteenth century Romanian public discourse and on what this recurrence reveals about the nexus between capital, development, civilization, nation, and state.





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European Research Council  
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“Funded by the European Union (ERC, TransCorr, ERC-2022-ADG no. 101098095). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”

### Team members

#### Project Leader:

Silvia MARTON, PhD. Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest

#### Experienced Researchers:

Constantin ARDELEANU, PhD. Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest

/ Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest

Augusta DIMOU, PhD. Privatdozentin, Institute of Cultural Studies, Chair of Comparative European History, University of Leipzig

Lucien FRARY, PhD. Professor, Rider University

Mária PAKUCS, PhD. Senior researcher, “N. Iorga” Institute of History (Bucharest), Romanian Academy

Judit PÁL, PhD. Professor, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj

Alex R. TIPEI, PhD. Assistant Professor, University of Montréal

Constanța VINTILĂ, PhD. Senior researcher, “N. Iorga” Institute of History (Bucharest), Romanian Academy

Ali YAYCIOGLU, PhD. Associate Professor, Stanford University

#### Postdoctoral Researcher:

Andrei-Dan SORESCU, PhD. Researcher

Other postdoctoral and doctoral researchers will also join the team.

#### International Advisory Board:

Gábor EGRY, PhD. Director-general, Institute of Political History / Politikátörténeti Intézet, Budapest

Molly GREENE, PhD. Professor, Princeton University

Frédéric MONIER, PhD. Professor, University of Avignon

#### Host Institution:

New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study, Bucharest

Project website: <https://www.transcorr.eu/>  
<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101098095>

## Reflections on the Political and Social History of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (GRiPs)

Research Group, since 2009

Since 2009, several scholars meet at NEC to discuss topics on the political, social and cultural history of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from various theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. The members of this group and their guests are historians, political scientists, sociologists etc. who conduct research on different themes related to transformations and modernizations in the Romanian area or the Balkans. GRiPs' ambition is to establish a wider European and regional scientific network as well. GRiPs is coordinated by NEC Alumnae **Constanța VINTILĂ** and **Silvia MARTON**.

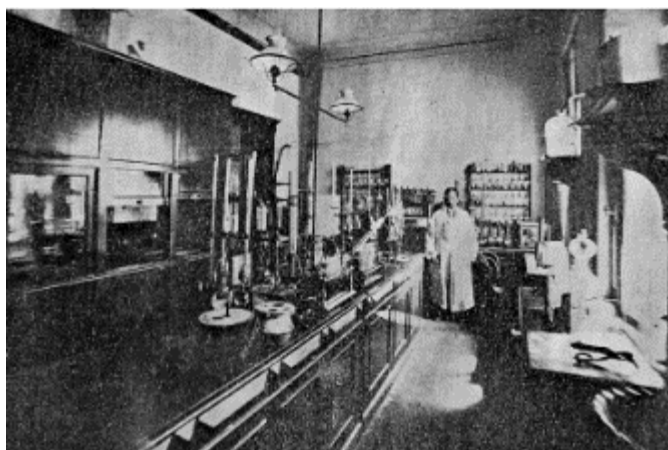
Following events have been organized during the timeframe October 2023 – February 2024:

*La intersecția dintre știință, administrație și alimentație: laboratorul comunal de analize chimico-bacteriologice (1880-1914)* [At the Intersection of Science, Administration and Food: The Communal Laboratory for Chemical and Bacteriological Analysis (1880-1914)], October 12, 2023

**Simion CĂLȚIA**, Lecturer, Faculty of History, University of Bucharest

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, municipal chemical and bacteriological laboratories became an essential tool for public authorities in major cities. They made a decisive contribution to controlling food, ensuring bacteria-free water and combating epidemics.

Bucharest City Hall was calling for chemical analysis since the 70s. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it set up its own laboratory, in the context of the increasing attention paid to sanitary aspects. The laboratory played an essential role in the proper functioning of the drinking water system and helped the municipality to fight epidemics. The main effort was directed towards the food chain, where the laboratory enabled the municipal administration to identify and remove from trade foods that contained toxic substances, had become dangerous due to improper storage, or were infested with pathogens. The laboratory's analyses played a role in the development of trade, identifying foods such as wine, milk and coffee into which unscrupulous traders had introduced other, significantly cheaper, materials.



The section for the analysis of alcoholic beverages in the municipal laboratory for chemical and bacteriological analysis, around 1910

*Război și pace, 1877–1878. Noi preocupări istoriografice la 145 de ani de independență a României* [War and Peace, 1877-1878. New Historiographical Concerns at 145 Years of Romania's Independence], November 23, 2023

**Alin CIUPALĂ**, University of Bucharest

**Constantin ARDELEANU**, Institute of Southeast European Studies / New Europe College, Bucharest

The discussion reviewed some of the concerns of Romanian historians to study Romania's involvement in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, as well as the consequences of the 1878 peace treaties for the independent Romanian state.

*Holera și anarhismul – apariția României moderne, 1831-1914* [*Cholera and Anarchism – The Emergence of Modern Romania, 1831-1914*], December 12, 2023

Debate on **Călin COTOI**'s book, *Holera și 'duhul comunismului': Inventarea socialului în România, 1831-1914* [*Cholera and the 'Spirit of Communism': The Invention of the Social in Romania, 1831-1914*] (IDEA Design & Print, Cluj, 2023)

Moderator: **Silvia MARTON**, University of Bucharest / New Europe College, Bucharest

Participants: **Constantin ARDELEANU**, Institute of Southeast European Studies / New Europe College, Bucharest, **Călin COTOI**, University of Bucharest, **Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA**, New Europe College, Bucharest, **Constanța VINTILĂ**, Romanian Academy / Noua Europe College, Bucharest

“By bringing to life social revolutionaries, anarchists, doctors, bacteriologists, public hygiene specialists, sociologists and reformers who crossed the borders of European empires, I want to show how the social was thematized, materialized and transformed in Romania. Individuals and theories moved, and their trajectories intersected all these national-professional worlds that stemmed from the logic and necessity of negotiating various models of rationality and progress.” – Călin COTOI

*Sănătate și societate. Doctorul Iuliu Barasch și sistemul carantinelor din Țara Românească între 1830 și 1863* [*Health and Society. Dr. Iuliu Barasch and the System of Quarantines in Wallachia between 1830 and 1863*], December 14, 2023

**Lidia TRĂUȘAN-MATU**, "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy / New Europe College, Bucharest

Towards the end of 1829, against the backdrop of the horrors caused by the plague in Romanian society and the panic that preceded its outbreak, the Russian General Pavel Kiseleff, Governor of the Principalities between 1829 and 1834, decided to implement Article 6 of the Adrianople Peace Treaty. This allowed Wallachia and Moldavia to organise quarantines and permanent sanitary corridors "along the Danube and elsewhere in the country where they may be needed" as a deterrent against plague and cholera epidemics from the East and Asia. With the help of the writings of Dr. Iuliu Barasch, a quarantine doctor in Călărași between 1843-1845, the presenter described how the Danube quarantine system of Wallachia worked, according to what model/model it was set up and what functions it fulfilled, where the quarantines were located, what they looked like and who worked in them, what it was like to live in a quarantine for a while and what concerned the people isolated in them. In addition to the work of Iuliu Barasch, the speaker drew on a range of published and unpublished sources, including mortality bulletins, medical reports, and articles from the press of the time.



**Iuliu Barasch (1815-1863). Archives of the Romanian Society of Medical History Library in Bucharest**

*Pentru un secol al nouăsprezecelea colonial: anxietăți, ambiții și imaginarii românești în context global* [*For a Colonial Nineteenth Century: Anxieties, Ambitions and Romanian Imaginaries in a Global Context*], January 25, 2024

**Andrei-Dan SORESCU**, Postdoctoral Researcher, New Europe College

From the imagining of descent from "Trajan's colonies", to anxieties about pan-German economic (and even demographic) intrusion, to similar recurring accusations in the anti-Semitic discourse of the time, or even to the civilizing mission of populating Dobrogea, the long Romanian nineteenth century is marked by the concept of "colonization". The presentation was intended as a plea to include this insistent and ubiquitous category in the historiographical canon and lexicon, placing it in the context of the visions of historical actors. Their acute receptivity to the spatial and temporal dimensions of colonisation processes,

whether regional or global, must be matched by a symmetrical approach to this historical imaginary on the part of historians, placing it in the context of a historiography that can reveal new connections and comparisons.

**Burghezia română. Realitate socială, necesitate teoretică, concept istoric** [*The Romanian Bourgeoisie. Social Reality, Theoretical Necessity, Historical Concept*], February 29, 2024

**Bogdan POPA**, NEC Alumnus; Researcher, "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute, Bucharest

The debate on the existence or non-existence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian bourgeoisie inevitably leads to comparisons with that of a social category specific to the Western capitalist world. The speaker proposed an approach of conceptual history: an analysis of the evolution of the term during the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, independent of contemporary, often irreducible, theoretical constructs.

## The Group for Anthropological Research and Debates (GARD)

Research Group, since 2019

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GARD is a research group within the New Europe College, launched in 2019 at the initiative of our late and much-lamented friend and colleague, **Viorel ANĂSTĂSOAIE**, PhD. GARD focuses on contemporary anthropological research and theories, taking into account their broader relevance within the humanities and social sciences. Building on the continuous support for anthropology during NEC's existence through fellowships, workshops and conferences, this research group aims to provide a space for exchanges, debates, and projects of anthropological relevance for all scholars interested in anthropological research on/in Romania and beyond. Taking advantage of the multidisciplinary and international profile of NEC, inter-disciplinary exchanges between anthropologists and other social scientists are strongly encouraged and anticipated.

The group met regularly in 2019 and in 2020, until the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Since 2022, we have resumed the group's activity, by organizing monthly meetings, which continued to adopt, as they did while being coordinated by Viorel Anastăsoaie, a variety of formats including public talks, discussions of pre-circulated papers, film screenings, debates, and roundtable exchanges on newly published relevant books. The group's range of topics and interests is programmatically left as open as possible. It is expected that further thematic and topical threads of discussion and research will emerge through conversations between the participants.

### Coordinators:

**László FOSZTÓ**, PhD, Researcher,  
The Institute for Research on  
National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca

**Giuseppe TATEO**, PhD,  
NEC Alumnus,

Senior Research Fellow (06/2021–  
05/2022), University of Leipzig

**Cătălina TESĂR**, PhD, NEC Alumna,  
Lecturer, The Faculty of Sociology  
and Social Work, University of  
Bucharest; Researcher, National  
Museum of the Romanian Peasant





The following events have been organized during the timeframe October 2023 – February 2024:

***“Esto”: The Shape of Revolution in Cuba***, October 27, 2023

**Martin HOLBRAAD**, Professor of Social Anthropology, University College London

Revolutions are cosmogonic. More than any other modern political form, their deliberate goal is to precipitate change as a total, all-embracing project: not just a radically new political order, but one that reaches deep into the fabric of social relationships, seeking to transform people at their very core, recasting the horizons that give their lives shape and meaning. If revolutions strive to become all-encompassing, however, then studying them must become a similarly ‘total’ endeavour. Revolutions are compelling as objects of study in that they forge relations across different scales and domains, deliberately connecting the cosmic horizons of revolution as a planetary project inaugurating a New Time, for example, to the intimate asceticism in which the so-called New Man is forged, and everything in between: ideology and neighbourhood, planned economy and sex, mass mobilization and paranoid gossip. Only by tracing and accounting for these seemingly incongruous, often fragile and characteristically tense relational configurations can the shape of revolution as a totalizing project emerge in its distinctive contours. In his talk Prof. Holbraad presented his attempts to do this for the Cuban revolution in his new book, by



discussing a series of diagrammes that chart out these relational shapes in different areas of Cuban life and at different times in the development of the revolutionary process. The talk was accompanied by a pre-circulated chapter from the book, which reinterprets material collected in the late 1960s by Oscar Lewis and his team in Havana, focusing in particular on people’s accounts of their degrees and manners of involvement in the neighbourhood level mass organization of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR).

Martin Holbraad’s main field research is in Cuba, where he focuses on Afro-Cuban religions and revolutionary politics. These ethnographic interests inform his theoretical concerns with such topics as the anthropology of truth and the imagination, abstraction and divinity, and the relationship between anthropological conceptualization and art. He is co-author of *Anthropologies of Revolution: Forging Time, People and Worlds* (California, 2020), author of *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination* (Chicago, 2012), which is an attempt to experiment with the conceptualization of truth in divination and in anthropology, and co-author of *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition* (Cambridge, 2016), which seeks to elucidate the recent emergence of the so-called ‘ontological turn’ as a distinctive anthropological orientation, articulating its core tenets and methodological implications, and exploring its influence in contemporary anthropological research.

***Carriers of Emptiness: Ukrainian Forced Migrants in Romania***, November 16, 2023

**Volodymyr ARTIUKH**, NEC Alumnus; Postdoctoral Researcher within the ERC-funded project EMPTINESS: Living Capitalism and Democracy after (Post)Socialism, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (University of Oxford)

Forced migrants from Ukraine are often seen through a normative temporal perspective that posits an attachment to their homeland, their eventual return, and participation in a post-war reconstruction of the country. Away from teleological assumptions, this talk focuses on immediate practices and imaginaries of the forced migrants from Ukraine between temporary security in Romania and indeterminate danger at home. What is the relationship between displacement and emplacement in the situation of a protracted forced migration? How does this relationship change as the war approaches its third year? How do displaced persons reinterpret their trajectories? These questions were approached through the lens of

emptiness as a specific social formation that is characterised by the disappearance of the elements of a habitual lifeworld and a sense of temporality without an image of the future. Forced migrants may be called carriers of emptiness: although their displacement is contingent on preserving ties with their homeland, these ties undergo constant restructuring as their home communities are affected by the war-related destruction.

Volodymyr Artiukh is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (University of Oxford) with the ERC-funded project *EMPTINESS: Living Capitalism and Democracy after (Post)Socialism*. Volodymyr Artiukh studies migration in the context of war-induced destruction in Ukraine. His project situates their laboural and migratory experiences in Ukraine, Romania and Moldova's changing political and economic situation. His research interests include the anthropology of work and labour organisations in post-Soviet countries, the anthropology of populism, and the comparative study of hegemonic practices in Eastern Europe.

*The Value of Plastics: A View from Romania*, December 7, 2023

Magdalena CRĂCIUN, NEC Alumna; Lecturer, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest

Plastic things keep accumulating, and so do regimes that define their value. This talk elaborated on this observation through an ethnography of engagements with plastics in Romania. This is an almost ideal location for this endeavor – a post-socialist EU country that has a different history to the usage of plastics in other contexts, the lowest municipal waste producer in the EU, subjected to illegal waste dumping from other EU countries, to name just a few characteristics. In this location, different regimes of value coexist. Plastics can be valued as modern materials; (de)valued as cheap, disposable materials; (re)valued positively as recyclable materials; and (re)valued negatively as polluting materials. The talk focused on how these regimes become grounded in the lived experience with plastics. People draw upon their sensuous, practical, and affective engagements with plastic things, and recognise, adopt, articulate, compare, or propagate these regimes. Moreover, the talk foregrounded the larger implications of this focus on the value of plastics. Firstly, the demonisation of plastics as polluting materials is yet to be widely recognised as a regime of value that may disrupt the routine reproduction of other, more familiar, or vociferous regimes, which explains the limitation of this discourse among the public in Romania and elsewhere. Secondly, each of these regimes puts forward not only claims about the value of plastics, but also about their importance for/against the realisation of a 'good life'. Therefore, the valuation of these materials throws new light on a classical anthropological theme, the relationship between value and values.

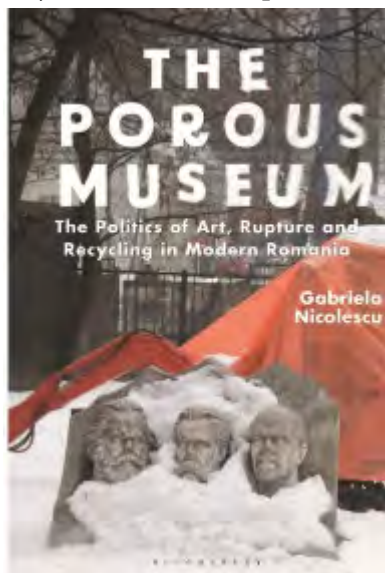
Magdalena Crăciun is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from University College London. She has carried out long-term fieldwork in Romania and Turkey, specialising in material culture, mainly clothing and plastics. She published *Islam, Faith and Fashion: The Islamic Fashion Industry in Turkey* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), *Material Culture and Authenticity: Fake Branded Fashion in Europe* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014; Routledge, 2020) and peer-reviewed articles in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Journal of Material Culture*, *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, *World Art*, *Eastern European Politics & Societies* and *Anthropology and Humanism*.

*Three Faces of Communism: on the Relation Between People and Things in a Contemporary Romanian Institution*, January 18, 2024

Gabriela NICOLESCU, NEC Alumna (2009-2010 GE-NEC Fellow); Anthropologist, curator and writer

What is considered a 'trace' of the communist past is a domain of negotiation. In this desire to identify what was left from communism, there is a blurred boundary between things, people, rhythms of work and values attached to labour, as well as practices. In this presentation, based on one of the chapters of the recently published book, *The Porous Museum: The Politics of Art, Rupture and Recycling in Modern Romania*, the speaker talked about 1. political contestation manifested towards communism as a

whole; 2. care, or standardised organization and 3. playfulness and creativity. These three perspectives unpackage communism as singularity and show the use of heritage as political participation. The museum can be seen as a representative post-socialist institution, a microcosm of the wider nation state and the ways in which the past is remembered, partially integrated, staged or rejected has to do with the



interdependency of politics, ethics and aesthetics called 'porosity.' The Porous Museum considers questions of recycling and rupture, with some exhibits and practices carried over from one regime to another, whilst others have been discarded in favour of the completely new.

Gabriela Nicolescu is a visual anthropologist, curator and writer with research interests in ageing and care, migration, museum anthropology and exhibition making. Gabriela gained her PhD in Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London, and then worked on several projects as a curator and postdoctoral researcher at Goldsmiths, University College Cork (Ireland) and University of Oxford. She curated exhibitions in Austria, Hong Kong, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania, United Kingdom and the Philippines and published in several journals, including *Critique of Anthropology*, the *Journal of Design History*, *Journal of Material Culture*, *World Art and Anthropology* and *Aging*. Currently Gabriela works for the National Library of Romania.

*Debate on MARTOR Journal, volume 28/2023, "Witchcraft, Magic, Divination and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"*, February 8, 2024

Moderators:

**Cătălina TESĂR**, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant and University of Bucharest

**Giuseppe TATEO**, University of Bucharest

**Anamaria IUGA** and **Corina IOSIF**, Editors of the MARTOR Journal

Coordinators of the 28/2023 MARTOR Issue:

**Tünde KOMÁROMI**, Associate Professor at the Institute of Social Studies and Communication, Károli Gáspár University, Budapest

**Ileana BENGA**, Senior Researcher, Institute of Folklore of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca

**Bogdan NEAGOTA**, Lecturer, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Authors of the articles included in the 28/2023 MARTOR Issue

The roundtable was followed by the screening of the film *Desfăcutul* ("The Disenchantment"), directed by Radu Răutu and Vasile Mănăstireanu, 1975 (29.35 min.), courtesy of the Archive of Muzeul Maramureşan (Museum of Maramureş, Sighetu Marmăţiei).



The current issue of MARTOR presents seventeen articles, studies and book reviews that approach the topic of magic, witchcraft and divination practices and representations, seeing them in the wider context of the changes that

occur in the contemporary European world (with examples from Romania, France and Russia), but also Asia (a case study from Nepal). The articles comprised by the volume dwell on the way in which a cultural connection is created through occult practices, not only with the past, but also with the present. The volume is, thus, part of the new trend in Anthropology that has shifted, starting with the 1980s, the researchers' interest from African magic to France, and with this, towards the European space.

# Emotions Through History

Research Group, since 2023

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The *Emotions Through History* research group is the product of the collective interests and expertise of its conveners and participants, open to suggestions, ideas and questions. It was created by **Cătălin ȚĂRANU**, NEC Alumnus and scientific researcher, leader of the research project *Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures*, UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research. His main interest is, obviously, to research emotions – especially the social function of emotions (in particular shame) in a range of Old and Middle English genres, from heroic verse and chivalric romance to homiletic prose. In the cultural production of past societies, we encounter emotional landscapes that appear alien to our sensibilities. Inspired by the recent growth of research dedicated to exploring the inner worlds of people in the past, *Emotions Through History* is a cross-disciplinary working group dedicated to discussing the recent developments on this topic. Scholars and students interested in the theoretical issues arising from the understanding of past affects, passions, sentiments – from antiquity to the modern era, in history, literature, philosophy, and beyond – are warmly welcomed. Below, we list the topics and questions that were addressed in the monthly meetings.



Photo: Chute d'Adam et Ève – Adam et Ève chassés du Paradis (France, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms 381.0069) | portal.librisoma.fr

***Non-human Emotions***, October 31, 2023: Animals, gods, swords, forests: narratives from all ages and places are full of non-human agents that have agency and feel or express emotion. However, the history of emotion has yet to acknowledge this rich corpus of evidence for affect that does not have a human subject as its source or that does not recognize the subject-object distinction. We discussed various theoretical frameworks that might enable us to account for these non-human emotions (animism, mimesis, extended mind theory, cognitive metaphor, actor-network theory etc.) and what we can do with feeling subjectivities outside /beyond a human self.

***Authenticity and Convention***, November 28, 2023: One of the biggest obstacles in studying emotions represented in historical sources appears to be their authenticity. How do we know whether this king's anger or that mother's grief was sincere or went no deeper than a rhetorical commonplace? What is the relationship between the performance and verbal expression of emotions and what people actually felt? Perhaps authenticity itself is a paradigm that needs to be historically contextualized and seen for the post-Romantic expectation that it is. Our discussion focused on these issues and will partly aim to tease out more productive ways of investigating emotions in the past that bypass a perceived disjunction between sincere inner feeling and conventional outer expression.

***Affect Theory***, January 23, 2024: Historians of emotion have only recently begun to engage with this alternative paradigm to emotions, which foregrounds intensities of feeling that go beyond (or come before) language and that engage the bodily senses. Hence, breaking with psychoanalytic or psychological frameworks, affect theory is not concerned with discrete emotions constructed through words via cognitive faculties but with studying affectivity expressed in spaces outside human subjectivity or interiority. We discussed the potential of this framework to cast light on previously unconsidered issues in studying feelings in the sources of the past.

# NEC-TECH: Technology, Culture, Humanities

Research Group, since 2023

Report on activities by **Andreea EȘANU**, co-leader of the group (together with **Răzvan NICOLESCU**)

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NEC-TECH is a multi-disciplinary research group established at the intersection of technology, society, and culture. The group is open to a large variety of perspectives from different disciplines (engineering, data science, anthropology, sociology, philosophy) with the aim to foster dialogue, reflection, and research on the fast-evolving technologies of our times, including social media, smart devices, and artificial intelligence. We evaluate aspects, perspectives, and impact(s) of such technologies in our lives, in our communities, and more generally in our world-views.

The group started in 2023 as an informal reading group with weekly or bimonthly meetings, in which the members of the group and their guests discussed relevant texts (books, articles, and research papers).

In 2024, the research interests of the group narrowed towards topics related to algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI). The group members became engaged in the exploration of various dimensions of what we may now call, without exaggeration, ‘the age of algorithms’. From large language models already proven to be able to complete tasks of human-level complexity, to smart devices capable to make expert decisions in specialized fields like medicine or healthcare, and social media algorithms that filter every bit of information and shape our preferences online, algorithms have become an indispensable part of our world – with the good, but also with the bad, the risks, the uncertainty. In 2014, Douglas Hofstadter, a pioneer of artificial intelligence (AI) and author of the famous book *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, lamented in a high-level meeting at Google that he was terrified by the new developments in artificial intelligence (AI) research, while most of the Google engineers present in the room looked at him with surprise and even incredulity. They did not understand what Hofstadter was so terrified about. Since Hofstadter, however, more Silicon Valley gurus (like Ray Kurzweil, Elon Musk, Eliezer Yudkowsky) have denounced a so-called “existential threat” posed to humanity by AI. Besides being colorful, such episodes in the recent history of artificial intelligence illustrate the fact that it is not easy to make out what ‘the age of algorithms’ is actually bringing about and how to welcome it – with high hopes, with reserve, with fear maybe?

The research contributions of the group in the months to come are intended to shed different lights into such expectations, by tackling questions like: how do currently deployed algorithms work, what are their most pervasive biases, what engineering/theoretical problems do they raise, what are their implications when used in larger and more diverse societal contexts? Some presentations will also enquire into possible unethical (or mis-uses of) algorithms, and discuss issues like misinformation and the erosion of trust, given that most current AI-based technologies lack transparency and human-level interpretability.

## **Coordinators:**

**Andreea EȘANU**, PhD, NEC Alumna; (non-tenure) Assistant Professor at University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy; Publications & Digitalization Coordinator at NEC

**Răzvan NICOLESCU**, PhD, NEC-AMEROPA Fellow; Editorial Assistant, University College London

## **Partners:**

The Institute for Logic and Data Science (ILDS)

The Institute for Logic and Data Science (ILDS) is a non-profit independent research institute dedicated to the spread and advancement of logic-based and data-oriented scientific methods.

## **Members:**

**Alec BĂLĂȘESCU**, PhD, Associate Faculty, Royal Roads University, Head of Corporate Engagement at Casa Paleologu

**Alexandru DINCOVICI**, PhD, NEC Alumnus; Associate Lecturer in Anthropology, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest & National University of Political Studies and Public Administration

**Cristian DUCU**, PhD, General Manager of the Centre for Advanced Research in Management and Applied Ethics (CARMAE)

**Florin GOGIANU**, PhD Candidate in Deep Reinforcement Learning at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca; Researcher at Bitdefender

**Laurențiu LEUȘTEAN**, PhD, Full Professor in the Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Bucharest; President of ILDS

**Andrei SIPOȘ**, PhD, Associate Professor at University of Bucharest, Department of Computer Science; Scientific Researcher at Simion Stoilow Institute of Mathematics of the Romanian Academy; Member of the executive board of ILDS

**Cătălin ȚĂRANU**, PhD, NEC Scientific researcher, leader of the research project Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures (GRAMMOTION)



Photo generated by DALL.E 3

# Transatlantic Functionalism: New Deal Models and European Integration

Lecture given by **Peter LINDSETH**, Olimpiad S. Ioffe Professor of International and Comparative Law, University of Connecticut School of Law

Discussant: **Elena Simina TĂNĂSESCU**, Professor, University of Bucharest; Judge, Constitutional Court of Romania

Convener: **Bogdan IANCU**, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest; Principal Investigator, NEC ROLPERIPHERAL

September 27, 2023

For many advocates of European integration in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the seeming example of technocratic independence under the New Deal offered a justification for the delegation of regulatory power to autonomous supranational bodies. The New Deal represented, from this perspective, the triumph of ‘functionalist’ governance — that is, governance that evolved as a function of the problems it sought to address, rather than being determined by seemingly outdated constitutional categories (‘separation of powers’ in the purported case of the New Deal, ‘national sovereignty’ in European integration). The irony, of course, was that Roosevelt’s New Deal was much less receptive, both in principle and practice, to the sort of technocratic independence that these advocates believed to be inevitable and desirable in the case of integration. Indeed, consistent with a more nuanced understanding of the New Deal model, European integration would eventually secure a durable institutional existence only after being brought more directly under the shared control and oversight of the national executives of the member states. Contrary to expectations of functionalist (and later so-called neofunctionalist) theorists, governance beyond the state in postwar Western Europe did not evolve merely as a consequence of functional demands for technocratic independence. Rather, two additional dimensions of change also proved decisive: the political — or the defense of existing institutional advantages and/or the struggle to realize new ones; and the cultural — or the mobilization of conceptions of ‘right’ or legitimate governance in the face of purported functional and political pressures for change. As a consequence of the interplay of all three dimensions — functional, political, and cultural — European integration ultimately settled on a form of governance in which the political oversight and control of national executives played a decisive role, a feature of European supranationalism that persists to this day. Even if a measure of supranational technocratic autonomy was broadly recognized as functionally necessary to the European project, national executives worked successfully to preserve significant institutional advantages in the integration process by mobilizing conceptions of legitimacy that, for better or worse, remain wedded to national institutions to a significant degree. It was through national executive oversight — eventually supplemented by national parliamentary and national judicial oversight — that integration has been able to maintain a connection to conceptions of democratic and constitutional legitimacy on the national level, even as functional pressures seemed to warrant a shift in governance to autonomous supranational bodies.

The lecture was followed by a roundtable discussion:



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# The Future of European Integration: Between Technocracy and Politics

Moderator: **Ștefan DEACONU**, Professor of Law, University of Bucharest; Director, CDCIP  
Convener: **Bogdan IANCU**, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest;  
Principal Investigator, NEC ROLPERIPHERAL  
September 27, 2023

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## Participants:

Marius BĂLAN, Associate Professor of Law, Al. I Cuza University of Iași;  
Senior Researcher, ROLPERIPHERAL  
BENKE Károly, First Assistant Magistrate, Constitutional Court of Romania  
Bogdan DIMA, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest  
Bogdan IANCU, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest; PI, NEC ROLPERIPHERAL  
Peter L. LINDSETH, Olimpiad S. Ioffe Professor of International and Comparative Law,  
University of Connecticut School of Law  
Alina MATEI, Senior Editor, Juridice.ro  
Zoran OKLOPCIC, Associate Professor of Law, Carleton University  
Constantin Cosmin PINTILIE, Doctoral Candidate, UB Law Faculty/Barrister,  
Stoica & Associates  
Elena Simina TĂNĂȘESCU, Professor, University of Bucharest;  
Judge, Constitutional Court of Romania  
Dr. Cosmin VĂDUVA, Assistant Magistrate, CCR



This event was organized within the research project titled *Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts* (ROLPERIPHERAL), supported by UEFISCDI – Exploratory Research (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0319) and hosted by the New Europe College, Bucharest.



# International Workshops and Symposia

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During the timeframe October 2023 – February 2024 the New Europe College organized and hosted several national or international Workshops and Symposia. They are listed below; further details regarding the one- or two-days programs can be found on [www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro)

## Workshop on method: “Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development”

This workshop was organized within the research project *Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania* (CanCor).

It was funded by UEFISCDI, ‘Basic and frontier research’ scheme, PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399 (2022-2024)

October 19-20, 2023

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### Conveners:

Silvia MARTON and Andrei-Dan SORESCU

### Participants:

Boriana ANTONOVA-GOLEVA,  
Constantin ARDELEANU, Raul CĂRSTOCEA,  
Andrei CUȘCO, Ștefan DORONDEL,  
Gábor EGRY, Jens Ivo ENGELS,  
Malte FUHRMANN, Silvia MARTON,  
Darina MARTYKÁNOVA, Toader POPESCU,  
Andrei-Dan SORESCU, Alex R. TIPEI



Photo: Giurgiu - port and railway, 1901-1915

The workshop focused on major methodological questions pertaining to the study of infrastructure, with a special focus on the construction of rail and fluvial-maritime transportation infrastructure in Central-South-East Europe (from the early nineteenth century to present day). It explored three interrelated directions. First, transportation infrastructure’s both phenomenological and performative nature. Discussions included here, but were not limited to, ‘progressive’, ‘disruptive’, ‘dangerous’, if not overtly ‘colonial’ characteristics of transportation infrastructure; controversies over financial and human capital and technology transfers; debates on paths and rhythms of infrastructure-boosted ‘modernization’. Second, the workshop inquired into the fears generated by the asymmetrical political, financial and economic interactions between Central-South-East Europe’s (emerging) polities and Europe’s Great Powers and empires in the process of transportation infrastructure construction. It discussed methodological difficulties related to the study of the entanglements of economic nationalism with civilization-discourses and xenophobia; fears of economic ‘vassalage’ or ‘colonization’; colonial-like aspirations of political and economic influence; (in)formal dependencies or occupations. Last but not the least, the workshop’s methodological inquires included the relevance of corruption debates and scandals surrounding infrastructure construction that generated and constantly reshaped ‘colonial’ anxieties. Moreover, the workshop looked into the many ways ‘corruption’ as an idea and discourse, as well as a practice, played an important role in the history of modern politics and state- and nation-building processes.

# What Does “Presentism” Stand For? Towards a Critical Appraisal of the Presentist “Turn”

October 26, 2023

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**Conveners:** Veronica LAZĂR and Andrei-Dan SORESCU

**Participants:** François HARTOG (keynote speaker), Hakob BARSEGHYAN, Holly CASE, Raul CĂRSTOCEA, Adrian GRAMA, Gregory JONES-KATZ, Veronica LAZĂR, Ondřej SLAČÁLEK, Andrei-Dan SORESCU, Irina TROCAN

After a decades-long embargo on presentism imposed by the prescriptive views of the historical discipline, the anti-presentist consensus among professionals seems to have begun eroding. Presentism, broadly understood as subsuming the explorations of the past to the needs, vocabulary, and sensibilities of the present, was not long ago decried as a flattening of the past, guided by a narrow-minded interest for the *similar* and a lack of interest in the *different*, and – against the most intimate logic of history itself – a narcissistic preference for the recent past, its proximity and self-evident direct relevance. Worst of all, presentism was sometimes suspected of anachronistically and self-congratulatorily imposing the values and judgments of the present on the depiction and analysis of the past, thereby blocking important attempts at self-criticism and the relativisation of the present as a contingent outcome of historical processes. In short, present-centrism had to be avoided and castigated as much as its cousin, Eurocentrism, another dangerously distortive perspective, and *historical difference* treated as respectfully as *cultural difference*.

Lynn Hunt’s indictment against presentism, formulated twenty years ago, during her tenure as president of the American Historical Association, has since become a classic description of this position. More recently, however, some historians have expressed their concern with the latent conservatism of history’s retreat into a so-called ‘scientific neutrality’, explicitly reclaiming history’s political responsibility (or, in David Armitage’s words, its vital ‘contribution to human flourishing’). With it, it seems, has also come an unapologetic turn to presentism, as recently demonstrated by recent polemical reactions to the anti-presentist intervention of the current president of the very same American Historical Association. Aside from regenerating a venerable historical-philosophical tradition of acknowledging the inherently situated nature of every historical approach – one that extends from the Romantics, and Jacob Burckhardt, to R. G. Collingwood, Walter Benjamin and Hans-Georg Gadamer – the presentist turn has also renewed engagements with critical genealogies of the present and decolonial, anti-racist, or feminist scholarship.

At the same time, newer and older questions regarding the relevance of history of political ideas for political philosophy have begun to gain ground once more, as evidenced in the work of intellectual historians such as Adrian Blau or Michael Sonenscher, as part of a reaction against the waning hegemony of the ‘Cambridge school’, sometimes accused of reducing history to a series of self-enclosed historical contexts, disconnected from, and almost inconsequential, to new ways of thinking about the relation between past and present.

This, in turn, brings us to another recent shift in the meaning of the term. A growing body of literature, taking its cues from François Hartog’s Koselleckian reflections on ‘regimes of historicity’ (understood as historically specific perceptions of the relationship between a society’s imagined past, present, and future) has redefined ‘presentism’ as a condition peculiar to the contemporary global North. On this reading, ours is a hypertrophic present, unable to either break free from the constantly revisited traumatic past it has absorbed via memorialisation, or imagine a future that is distinct from it until some inevitable cataclysmic rupture. The latter standpoint, in fact, is more peculiar to – and by now almost universally popular in – left-wing critiques of how internalized hegemonic narratives have rendered imagining radical change impossible.

Convergent with the above, a further development in recent years has been the democratization of the concept beyond debates in, or around academia: 'presentism' has now become a buzzword in popular culture, broadly writ. With the 'historical' trials of Britney Spears, R. Kelly or Janet Jackson ever-reopened by the media under the pretext of reconsidering their (mis)treatment at the hands of the justice system, the public, or the media itself, this revisiting of the past – which may have been exacerbated by the way the pandemic has affected and inhibited new cultural and media production – assumes an explicitly retro-corrective moral and ideological mission.

Not least, such developments, we argue, should be understood as unfolding in a context in which the politicization of scholarship and culture comes both from within these fields, driven by the progressive political engagements of authors and scholars, and from without, sometimes as intrusions and attacks on scientific autonomy, such as attempts in the US, Eastern Europe, or France to condemn or outright ban discussions or curricula, in schools and universities, of gender, race, or colonialism.

The growing semantic diversity of 'presentism', as is used in contemporary academic and media culture is therefore a useful guide to mapping and understanding our shifting historical (self-)understandings, as well as mutations in knowledge production and diffusion, historical sensibilities, and genres of writing.

## How to Be an Alien in British Cultural Studies

A conference for MA students, PhD candidates and young researchers  
November 9, 2023

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**Convener:** Maria-Sabina DRAGA-ALEXANDRU, NEC Alumna; Associate Professor, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest

**Participants:** Sidonia ARITON, Alessandra CIUFU, Sorana CORNEANU, Teodora DRISCU, Dragoş IVANA (keynote speaker), Teodora LEON, Honya MAJEED, Nicolae-Cristian MOLEA, Daria NEDELEA, Andreea PARIS-POPA, Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Suddhaseel SEN (keynote speaker), Tamara STERMIN, Daniela ŞORA, Bogdan ŞTEFĂNESCU, Irina VASILE

Event organized by the Centre of Excellence for the Study of Cultural Identity (CESIC),  
The British Cultural Studies Centre (BCSC) of the University of Bucharest and  
New Europe College (NEC)

Since its Birmingham School beginnings in the 1950s-60s, with theorists such as Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall proclaiming a radical democratisation and broadening of the boundaries of the concept of culture, the discipline of British Cultural Studies has been changing and enriching continuously. It has been opening up to a largely dynamic inter- (or trans-) disciplinary, gender-diverse, multicultural understanding of cultural phenomena and their socio-political implications, tackling a variety of cultural exchanges that go beyond the UK and the legacy of the British Empire. How do we practice British Cultural Studies nowadays? How do we employ its theoretical tools to address contemporary cultural practices across the world? How do the theoretical mechanisms of British Cultural Studies reshape our perceptions of the past and of history?



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# Romania and Beyond: Yiddish in Central and Eastern Europe. Challenges to New National States

This event was organized within the research project titled *Yiddish Culture in Greater Romania (1918-1940): in the Aftermath of the Empires and Challenged by the New National State* (YIDCULT), supported by UEFISCDI – Exploratory Research (PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-0317) November 13-14, 2023

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## Convener:

Camelia CRĂCIUN, Associate Professor in Jewish Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest; Project Leader, *Yiddish Culture in Greater Romania (1918-1940): in the Aftermath of the Empires and Challenged by the New National State* (YIDCULT)

## Participants:

Camelia CRĂCIUN, Julie DAWSON, Anastasia FELCHER, Anca FILIPOVICI, Gaëlle FISHER, Attila GIDÓ,

Szonja Ráhel KOMORÓCZY, Ferenc LACZÓ, Dumitru LISNIC, Irina NASTASĂ-MATEI, Rachel Merrill MOSS, Corina Liliana PETRESCU, Valentin SĂNDULESCU, Francisca SOLOMON

# Transgressing Boundaries: The History and Memory of the Religious Underground in Romania, Moldova and Beyond

This workshop was organized in connection with the *Lapedatu* Fellowships at NEC, sponsored by the Lapedatu Foundation  
December 4, 2023

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**Conveners:** James A. KAPALÓ and Dumitru LISNIC

**Participants:** Constantin ARDELEANU, Kateryna BUDZ, Julia BUYSKYKH, Iuliana CINDREA, Dumitru DODUL, Dorina DRAGNEA, Eszter GYÓRFY, James A. KAPALÓ, Dumitru LISNIC, Ionel MOLDOVAN, Iemima Daniela PLOSCARIU, Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Eugeniu TOCARSCHII, Andreas and Ioana WILD

The aim of this interdisciplinary workshop was to explore the varied ways in which actors in the communist-era religious underground were able to transcend, transgress and traverse borders and boundaries. The phenomenon of the religious underground is emerging as an important new area of research for historians and anthropologists of religion in Central and Eastern Europe (see Kapaló and Povedák 2022; Şincan and Biliuță 2022) inspired by the desire to gain a more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of communities during communism and how in turn this has shaped the contemporary religious field in the region. This workshop brought together scholars from Romania and Moldova as well as invited speakers from Ukraine and Hungary to explore the ways in which communities such as Greek Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox dissenters, engaged in practices that required them to creatively transcend or challenge multiple types of boundaries or restrictions, whether imposed by the state or their own hierarchies.

The themes that have been discussed included the history and memory of religious travel across borders between Romania and other communist-bloc countries, inter-communal transmission of religious ideas and practices between underground communities, strategies for economic survival and the transgression of gender-based roles and duties amongst clandestine groups. In contrast to the attention that has been paid to the religious Cold War as a geopolitical, East-West phenomenon, the questions addressed by this workshop contributed to a bottom-up, history from below approach to religion in communist Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and the Cold War opening up discussion about the agency and creativity of religions in social, cultural and economic spheres in Romania, Moldova and beyond. The contributors to this workshop explored theoretical and methodological questions emerging from a range of scholarly perspectives including history from below, anthropology of Christianity, vernacular and material religion, and the anthropology of borders.



# Financial support

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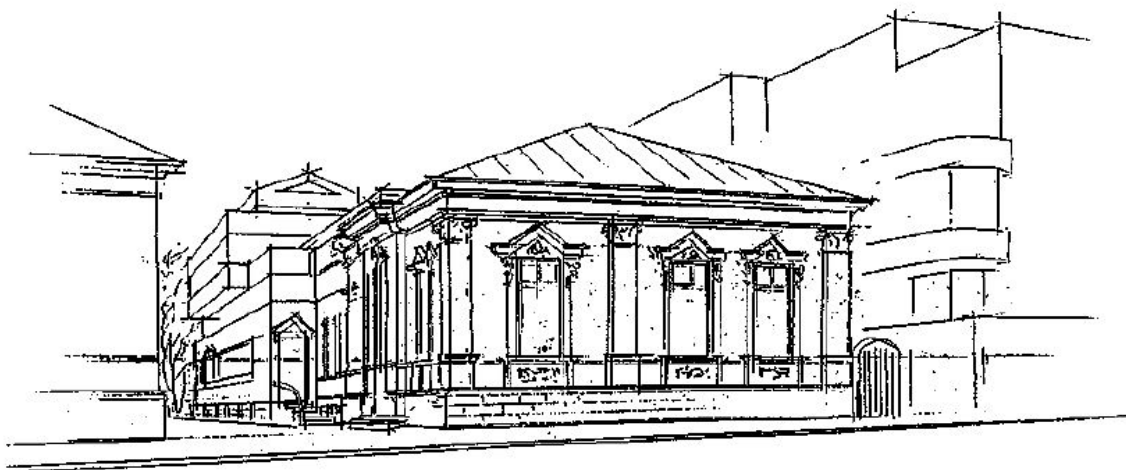


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**NEW EUROPE COLLEGE**  
**Institute for Advanced Study**  
Str. Plantelor 21, București 023971  
Tel.: (+4) 021 307 99 10  
Fax: (+4) 021 327 07 74  
E-mail: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)

<http://www.nec.ro/>