



University of St.Gallen

Center for Governance
and Culture in Europe



Sailing the Waves Beyond the Nation: Transnational Encounters in the Black Sea Region during the Cold War

International Workshop, on October 13, 2025, at New Europe College, Bucharest, Romania

One of the longstanding precepts of academic literature dealing with the Cold War has been to underline the divisions which laid the basis for international relations during the second half of the 20th century. According to this view, the Socialist Bloc was basically a closed system, made of several satellite states, which followed the same communist path, as designed by the USSR. Recent scholarship has argued in favor of a more nuanced approach to this dictum, searching for the loopholes that have turned the Iron Curtain into a Nylon Curtain.

The purpose of the workshop “Sailing the Waves Beyond the Nation: Transnational Encounters in the Black Sea Region during the Cold War” is to construe the Black Sea region as a place of transfers and convergences during the Cold War era, which bypassed the Iron Curtain, despite its plethora of riparian countries from the both the Socialist Bloc and Asia. Based on a transnational perspective, the workshop aims to examine cultural transfers and consumerist practices on the Black Sea Coast, from the 1950s until the late 1980s, in order to construe how the Black Sea coast acted as a special geographic and cultural realm, in which official cultural ambitions interacted with everyday lives of ordinary socialist citizens and foreign tourists.

The workshop takes an interdisciplinary approach, as it relies on social and cultural history, economic history, cultural anthropology, as well as oral history and cultural studies, in order to analyze how the Black Sea coasts of countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, USSR, and Turkey influenced the development of popular culture and music, tourism, and consumerist practices from the 1950s until the late 1980s.

As part of this international workshop, we seek to provide answers (as well as new research questions) to topics such as:

- the economic, cultural, and social characteristics which have turned the Black Sea coast into a gateway for socialist countries, as well as for Turkey, despite (and in spite of) the ideological and economic restrictions caused by the Iron Curtain, or the Turkish nationalist regime.
- the cultural and economic practices that were implemented by riparian countries, such as music festivals, regional radio broadcasts, and economic and consumer practices, as a result of interactions between foreign tourists, domestic tourists, and artists.
- the technological transfers that were implemented by riparian countries, either through formal or informal collaboration.
- how Black Sea ports acted as gateways for socialist countries, or for Turkey, despite ideological restrictions.
- how official ideologies of the riparian states incorporated the values of global trade and international circulation of consumer goods, and popular cultural phenomena that originated in the capitalist West.
- is there such a thing as a specificity of the Black Sea, in a Braudelian sense and, if so, how did it interact with the historical context of the Cold War era, in terms of cultural and technological transfers? Furthermore, how did it shape the economic and political relations of its riparian countries?

Further topics which revolve around the main idea of the workshop are also welcome.

Those interested in taking part are kindly asked to submit a **300 word paper proposal** and a **100 word short bio** to the following address: oancea_claudiu@yahoo.co.uk.

Deadline for submission: June 20, 2025.

We intend to publish the papers, in extended and revised form, in an **edited volume**, with an **international publishing house**. When submitting your paper proposal, please mention whether you are also interested in contributing to this volume.

The workshop will be held in a **hybrid form**. We invite presentations to be held online, or on site, at [New Europe College](#), an institute for advanced study in Bucharest, Romania. Organizers will be able to cover, in part, accommodation and travel costs for international participants.

Working language: **English**.

Organizer: Claudiu Oancea (Project Coordinator, New Europe College)

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