



SEMESTRIAL REPORT SPRING – SUMMER 2024

**New Europe College –
Institute for Advanced Study**

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Cover Photo:

These trees will still be here 30 years from now, and under their shadow, New Europe College.
(Text from NEC’s 20th Anniversary invitation postcard in June 2014.)

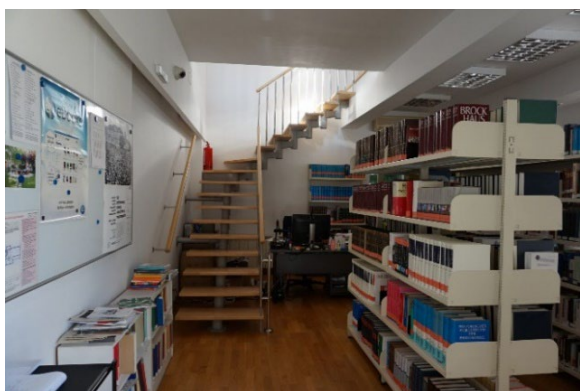
A Word to Our Readers:

New Europe College at 30 – The Library

It has withstood turbulent times with grace and tenacity. In technical terms it is an Institute for Advanced Study: it fosters excellence. In anthropological terms, it is a good place: it favors the good, the truth, the beautiful. In literary terms, it is a home for anyone who thinks for himself/herself or, more simply, for anyone who thinks. New Europe College is an oasis of cultural and human naturalness in a world from which naturalness has almost disappeared.

Ioana PÂRVULESCU, Writer, Professor at the University of Bucharest, NEC Alumna

In 2024, New Europe College celebrates its 30th anniversary. 30 years have passed since NEC offered the first fellowships, 30 years since the first 5 fellows gathered in dialogue about valuable questions, ideas and research interests. Ever since it has fostered excellence and has remained a good place, home for those who think for themselves. 30 years have passed since the first books were received or purchased for a library that today holds over 40.000 items. The library of the New Europe College also celebrates its 30th anniversary and is itself a good place, an oasis of silence and reflection. It was founded in 1994 in direct connection with the core fellowship program. It focused originally on reference literature in the major fields of the humanities and social sciences, but has developed throughout the years into a larger and more diverse collection of books, journals, and electronic resources. The aim has been to provide access to literature unavailable in other Romanian libraries, in fields of major interest to fellows and alumni. These are the primary beneficiaries, alongside a larger community of scholars (students, researchers and academics from Romanian universities and research institutes). The first books were placed on shelves in the seminar and conference room, as well as in Andrei Pleșu's office, in a rented apartment, in Tache Ionescu street. Legend has it that the institute's cat, ingeniously named 0 VAT (for good reason), used to sleep on those bookshelves as a kitten, usually behind Kant's works. When he grew up, he supposedly moved to Nietzsche's works.



Since 2000, when NEC moved into the newly rebuilt Swiss house on Plantelor street, the open-shelf library also found a spacious new home. 10 years later plans were made for an extension – space seems to be an abstract term in connection with libraries. The book holdings have increased along with the number of fellows. Finally, an additional floor was built, replacing a terrace. Not only did the number of books increase, but their provenance also diversified. The library holds several special collections resulting from donations:

The “André Scrima” Documentary Collection, where religion and philosophy are strongly represented, but which also includes works in theory and history of art, theory and history of literature, history and sociology.

The “Marin Tarangul” Special Collection with a focus on philosophy, religion, history and art history.

The “Camil Petrescu” Special Collection, consisting mainly of works in philosophy.

The “Emil Brunner” Special Collection, with works on Christian religion.

The “Dan Slușanschi” Special Collection, with a focus on Classical Studies.

The “Virgil Ierunca” Special Collection with a focus on music, consisting of 18,000 CDs and DVDs covering a wide array of musical performances of the highest quality, and of a number of books on music and musicians.

The “Mircea Eliade” Archive of Mac Linscott Ricketts, with a focus on history of religions.

For more details please visit www.nec.ro/library/

Nowadays, Kant and Nietzsche have no cat visitor, but the holdings on philosophy have grown and exceed several hundred volumes. The same applies on other holdings on various fields of research, such as history, theology, sociology, anthropology etc. All in all, the library has embraced 21st century opportunities and challenges: its patrons have access to an online catalogue and databases, while the digitization process of the archives aims to bring users closer to the valuable documents the library holds. Over the last three decades the NEC library has received significant support from institutional and private donors, who made the existence of this oasis of cultural and human naturalness possible. To all of them New Europe College is more than grateful.

VolkswagenStiftung, Hannover, Germany

The Open Society Institute, Budapest – Hungary (through its now discontinued Higher Education Library Support Program, and indirectly, through its funding of the Relink Program)

The Getty Foundation, Los Angeles – USA (in the framework of the successive GE-NEC Programs)

The Ludwig Boltzmann Society, Vienna – Austria (in the framework of the Boltzmann Institute which functioned for several years under the New Europe Foundation)

The Cultural Services of the French Embassy in Bucharest, which offered NEC for a number of years subscriptions to the journals «Esprit» and «Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale».

Other institutional donors:

Walter de Gruyter Publishing House, Germany

Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris, France

Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Germany

The Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Cologne, Germany

Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany

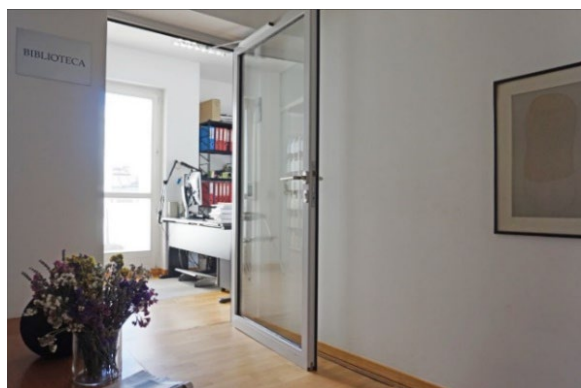
École française de Rome

The Warburg Institute, London, UK

Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, Romania

Zeta Books, Bucharest, Romania

Smaller donations were received from the journals Representations and RES, and from the Eranos Foundation



Current Fellowship Programs and Research Projects

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 wide 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

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

UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2022-2024)

The 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. It 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





CENSORSHIP, CONTROL, AND COMPLIANCE IN BYZANTINE MUSICOLOGY DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME

Cătălin-Alin CERNĂTESCU

(Romania)

Ștefan Odobleja Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Researcher in Byzantine Musicology,
National University of Music Bucharest

Presentation on March 6, 2024

My research proposal aims to trace and reveal forms of censorship and control in Byzantine musicology during the communist regime, based on documents found in the archives of the Union of Composers and Musicologists from Romania. On investigating the phenomenon, I seek to capture the manner in which the domain was forced to adhere to the cultural directions prescribed by the Party and to advocate for mainstreaming themes, such as nationalism, exceptionalism, and continuity. Since Byzantine musicology could conveniently link modern Romanian culture to that existing in the territory of the former Dacia, this branch began to be employed in official publications, having the usefulness of a vehicle that could successfully deliver the themes agreed upon by the regime. Consulting, comparing, and correlating various sources on sacred music has revealed a known, but hitherto never satisfactorily documented reality: that Byzantine musicology had to respond to systemic constraining conditions that shaped the discourse of the Byzantinologists according to the ideological direction imposed by the totalitarian regime. One can observe a thorough censorship enforced on texts discussing religious music, often severe and highly sensitive to the theological terminology specific to this music.

ROADS TO HAPPINESS, ROADS TO DESPAIR: TRAFFIC INFRASTRUCTURE, EMOTIONS, AND POLITICS IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE, 1839-1956

Malte FUHRMANN

(Germany)

N+NFellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Researcher, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

Presentation on March 13, 2024

Traffic infrastructure is the subject of much emotional and political debate in Southeast Europe. Connectivity holds the promise of happiness, but also brings fear of exposure. The promise of good infrastructure and the lack thereof have also repeatedly provoked both epistemic and practical resistance. The project reconstructs the affirmative and subversive role of publications and actions pertaining to infrastructure throughout several regime changes. In a case study of Bulgaria and Turkey as well as their predecessors, the Ottoman Empire and its Danube Province, it investigates the two entangled countries' developmentality, that is both their discourses on and practices of infrastructure, focusing especially on agency and the negotiation process for access to mobility as well as the priorities given to some groups in contrast to the neglect and exclusion of others. It traces this nexus between connectivity, politics, and emotions by using Foucauldian discourse analysis in the vein of Alf Lüdtke and Arlette Farge. It thus develops further recent trends in history and anthropology to see infrastructure within the framework of hegemony and its challenges.





TRANSLOCATIONS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR: THE CASE STUDY OF TROPHY FILMS IN THE USSR

Kristina TANIS

(Russia)

GCE St. Gallen Fellow,

March – July 2024

Assistant Professor, HSE University, Moscow

Presentation on March 20, 2024

This research project is devoted to the domestication of Western movies in the USSR. It traces the Soviet afterlives of trophy films seized by the Soviets from Germany in 1945 and exhibited across the USSR after WWII. The project demonstrates how the technologically reproducible nature of cinema, existing at the intersection of industry and art, and the lack of basic legal codification of the films' status as cultural objects led to a specific 'confiscatory policy' in the Soviet Union. In this context, the seized film collections were seen as industrial assets, not cultural objects. Therefore, the research makes visible the processes of cinema's legitimization as a part of the cultural heritage after WWII. Through collecting and analyzing archival sources, big data, and ego-documents, this study focuses on cinema's perception and defines the semantic contours of trophy films' concept in different contexts from the 1940s to the present. The project also shows how cinema participated in social interaction and policy-making, exemplifying the ability of cinematic heritage to negotiate established norms and values as well as influence the cultural memory of the Soviet past.

THE DYNAMICS OF HOPE IN BYZANTINE FAMILY CRISES

Oana-Maria COJOCARU

(Romania)

Ștefan Odobleja Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

*Researcher, Trivium – Tampere Centre for Classical,
Medieval and Early Modern Studies*

Presentation on March 27, 2024

The project explores the ways in which the Byzantines negotiated the future for themselves and their families and communities via hope, understood as an emotional, social and performative practice, and how hope was used to mitigate negative emotions in moments of crisis, as well as the part it played in bolstering their motivation to still plan their future and live a meaningful life amidst tragic events they experienced in their life. In Byzantium, as in many other premodern societies, traumatic events in people's lives represented major foci of individual and collective concern. Many sources speak of families who lost or were on the verge of losing their children or other members through sudden illness, of women who could not conceive, of people who lost their position in society, or fell into abject poverty. How did they respond to such challenges? What coping mechanisms did they build in order to overcome major crisis? What strategies to maintain a sense of hope and plan the future did they adopt in their everyday life? How was hope articulated in their discourses and how did it manifest in their actions? Analyzing how Byzantine society and individuals found ways of managing anxieties about the future amidst social, economic, and cultural changes is of essential relevance for understanding the cultural and social dynamics within Middle Byzantine society.





SYNAESTHESIA AND ETYMOLOGY. CASE STUDY: THE LATIN WORD FOR 'SEA'

Simona GEORGESCU
(Romania)
Ștefan Odobleja Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

Assistant Professor, University of Bucharest

Presentation on April 3, 2024

Our transmodal capacity, or synaesthesia – i.e., the interference between our senses – commonly leads to the verbalization of a perception in terms of another, which sometimes makes it hard for us to trace back the evolution of the lexicon. For instance, many words denoting a visual perception are etymologically based on terms that originally described an acoustic sensation (e.g., Fr. *éclat* means both 'violent sound and movement' and 'light intensity'; Germ. *hell* 'bright' originally meant 'loud, sonorous'; Lat. *clarus* 'clear, bright, gleaming' is genetically related to *calo* 'call', *clamo* 'cry out', *clango* 'to make noise', Gr. *κλέος* 'noise, glory', *κλαίω* 'cry', *κλαγγή* 'penetrating sound', or Gr. *κλάω* 'break'). We aim at drawing a detailed etymological analysis of words designating luminous phenomena mainly in the Classical and the Romance languages, with a twofold purpose: on the one hand, by identifying recurrent scenarios underlying meaning change in this conceptual area, we could shed a new light on unknown or uncertain etymologies; on the other hand, we could take a step forward towards a new understanding of how primordial linguistic expression functioned, given that linguists are starting to suggest that the origin of language itself can be thought of as a major phenomenon of synesthesia, focusing on the possibility to translate various motorial and sensorial forms into phonetic terms.

URBAN PATTERNS IN TRANSITION: PLOIEȘTI, THE MODERN FACE OF A MEDIEVAL TOWN

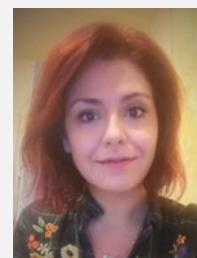
Irina POPESCU
(Romania)
Ștefan Odobleja Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

Assistant Professor, "Ion Mincu" University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Presentation on April 10, 2024

The study aims to provide a comprehensive, comparative and innovative approach on the urban modernization of Wallachian towns during the 19th century. It focuses on the metamorphosis of the urban fabric, seen as the result of the interaction between premodern heritage and modern interventions and processes (both at structural and morphological levels).

Consequently, my approach follows three main goals: identifying relevant patterns in the premodern layer, focusing on the specific elements and structure of the towns at the beginning of modernity; unveiling the 19th century layers of modernization, by identifying, mapping and classifying specific interventions for all the analyzed cases; determining how these two layers interacted, how the urban fabric morphed from premodernity to modernity, how the medieval inherited patterns shaped modern development in its early stages, and how modern development erased or, on the contrary, enhanced some of the specific core attributes. My interest for this study emerged from a personal scientific need of understanding the subtle and specific evolution of the urban fabric in Romanian towns, going beyond empirical observations and what the available scholarship is able to provide. I seek to come up with a new perspective upon the urban modernization process in Romania, based on a new method of analysis of the urban development, designed in direct connection to the specificity of its stages of modernization.





**THE HAND OF WASHINGTON. THE GLOBAL
COLD WAR AND SOVIET PERCEPTION OF U.S.
ROLE IN REGIME CHANGES IN THE THIRD
WORLD**

Dmitry ASINOVSKIY

(Russia, Israel)

GCE St. Gallen Fellow,

March – July 2024

Postdoctoral Fellow, Tel Aviv University

Presentation on April 24, 2024

This project is designed to study the concept of conspiratorial thinking about the revolutions and regime changes in the Global South and its evolution during the Cold War in both the USSR and the United States. The archival materials from both superpowers evidently reveal that the idea of hand of Moscow/Washington often used to be the default explanation for most revolutions and regime changes in the rest of the world. The post-Cold War history and contemporary geopolitical challenges such as the Russian aggression in Ukraine show with no less evidence that the legacy of this way of thinking is very evident in today's international relations. This research is intended to answer a set of questions, the most general of which are: Was there indeed an evolution of this type of conspiratorial thinking and how was it triggered by the Cold War history developments? And what consequences has this conspiratorial thinking had for the decisions made during the Cold War, and what legacy does it impose on the decisions made today?

**TRANSLATING CĂTĂLIN PAVEL, “ANIMALELE
CARE NE FAC OAMENI. BLANĂ, COZI ȘI PENE ÎN
ARHEOLOGIE” (HUMANITAS, 2021) FROM
ROMANIAN INTO TURKISH**

Cătălin PAVEL (Romania)

Assistant Professor of Archeology,
Ovidius University, Constanța

Metin OMER (Romania)

Researcher, Black Sea Institute,
Ovidius University, Constanța

Tandem Fellows,

October – November 2023

Presentation on May 8, 2024

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

Cătălin Pavel's *Animalele care ne fac oameni. Blană, cozi și pene în arheologie* (Humanitas, 2021) is a non-fiction volume of archaeology/history that bridges the gap between academia and the general public. Born out of a science communication project, it retains a substantial bibliography, but no footnotes. In it, Pavel investigated the way humans interacted with animals – chapters on dogs, cats, horses, but also whales, hedgehogs, birds, and bears – throughout prehistory and the Classical Antiquity. Pavel set off to study, with archaeological methods, the interaction between human persons and non-human persons, and to prove that animals have been a major catalyst of our cognitive and emotional development.





FATHERS AND SONS: BYZANTINE REACTIONS TO THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT IN RHETORIC AND SPACE (1071-1143)

Roman SHLIAKHTIN

(Russia)

Gerda Henkel Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

Postdoctoral researcher, Johannes Gutenberg
University of Mainz

Presentation on May 15, 2024

The project investigates Byzantine reactions to the battle of Manzikert (1071). It interprets the battle as a collective trauma of many Byzantine noble families that lost their members in the battle and in the following conflicts. The contemporary literati treated this event differently in accordance with their personal and political affiliations. In his *Chronographia*, Michael Psellos played down the significance of this defeat, while the eyewitness, Michael Attaleiates described his traumatic experience and his survival in the chaos after the battle. Ten years after Manzikert, the new dynasty of Komnenoi took over the power of Constantinople. While Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) had to navigate through different consequences of Manzikert, including the First Crusade (1097) and pacify conflicts among heirs of the victims of the battle. Son of Alexios, John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) and his grandson Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180) used the battle to justify their aggressive politics against the Seljuk Turks. This memory politics found a ready audience among the upper echelons of Byzantine society in Asia Minor. Local nobles and dignitaries benefited from imperial expansion politically and symbolically, thus contributing to the survival of elements of Komnenian heritage in the empire of Nicaea after the Fall of Constantinople in 1204.

KEVIN DEVLIN, ARCHON. THE NOTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE RADIO FREE EUROPE'S ARCHIVES

Adrian George MATUS (Romania)

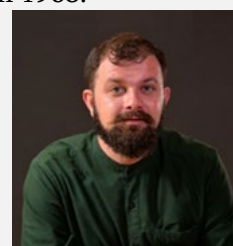
Ştefan Odobleja Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

Tutor, Central European University –
Open Learning Initiative

Presentation on May 22, 2024

The collection *Records of Kevin Devlin and the Communist Area Analysis Department on Non-Ruling Communist Parties*, held by Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, show an alternative story of the Cold War: the story seen by the Communist Parties from non-socialist countries and how they reacted to the Soviet Union's aggressions. The 131 boxes seem to be at odds at first as they contradicted Radio Free Europe's archives. In that regard, the question that naturally arises is: what was the epistemological intention of the Radio Free Europe in trying to map the impact of the Soviet Union's aggressions on Hungary in the 1950s and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s on the Communist Parties from the non-socialist countries?

This research aims to follow changes in categorical and classificatory practices influenced by official and non-official information availability on the impact of the Soviet Union's aggression in the 1950s and 1960s. Having understood the epistemological context, I investigate the role of the mysterious producer of the archive: Kevin Devlin. I intend to understand how the employees gathered information from different sources about the aggression perpetrated by the Soviet Union. Having understood the classificatory practice and the biographies of the authors, I present how this archival collection mirrors the changes outside the archive, focusing on mapping the amorphous forms of revisionisms that resulted after the Soviet Union invasion in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968.





REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST IN ROMANIA AFTER 1945: FROM YIDDISH THEATRE TO POPULAR LITERATURE

Mihai LUKÁCS

(Romania)

Ștefan Odobleja Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

President, The Dialectic Center

Presentation on June 5, 2024

The project comparatively analyzes the Jewish art production after the Holocaust in Romania and Poland, by focusing on theatre scripts, kept by the Romanian National Archives and Polish theoretical exploration of Holocaust-based theatre, in specific political and cultural contexts. The research looks mainly at how the traumatic historical experience was translated into a new aesthetic and cultural approach, moving beyond the theatrical environment. The project looks at Polish literature and primary sources in Romania from 1944 to 1989, in a complex political local context that affected Holocaust survivors and their shared desire to create a memorial narrative of the decimation of the European Jewish community. The project reflects upon the relationship between the archive and contemporary memory culture after “the archival turn” which takes place with the physical disappearance of the witnesses who lived in the times of the Holocaust and the increasing dependence on the younger generation to material forms of memory through various forms of visualization, display, and aestheticization of this relationship. As late as 2023, one of the key issues regarding the Holocaust and art remains the question of representation: how is it possible (if it is possible) to represent the unthinkable, and what are its effects?

LOSS OF SHARED WORLDS: ECOCIDE AND RUSSIA’S WAR ON UKRAINE

Darya TSYMBALYUK

(Ukraine)

IWM for Ukrainian Scholars Fellow,

March – July 2024

Independent Scholar

Presentation on June 12, 2024

Darya Tsymbalyuk writes, researches, and draws. Her work lies at the intersection of environmental humanities and artistic research, and engages with feminist and decolonial methodologies. During her time in NEC, Darya Tsymbalyuk focuses on writing up a book manuscript for Polity press. The book examines environmental impacts of Russia’s war on Ukraine, and is based on report and media analysis, interviews, ethnography and autoethnography. Previously Darya Tsymbalyuk was a Max Hayward Visiting Fellow at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford (2022-23). She received her PhD from the University of St Andrews (Scotland, UK) in 2021, graduating with the Principal’s Medal. Her publications appeared in *Journal of International Relations and Development*, *Nature Human Behaviour*, *Antennae: Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, *Narrative Culture*, *Kajet*, *The Funambulist Magazine: Politics of Space and Bodies*, *NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment*, and many other platforms.





**“I’M NOT A CONSPIRACIST, BUT...”
CONSPIRACIES, DISINFORMATION, FAKE
NEWS AND LONELINESS IN BUCHAREST**

Răzvan NICOLESCU

(Romania)

AMEROPA Fellow,

October 2023 – July 2024

Researcher, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați

Presentation on June 19, 2024

The project explores ethnographically the relation between social trust and the Fake News phenomena in Bucharest, Romania. Fake news has been linked with an unprecedented volatility in terms of trust in information, trust in higher levels of political economy (national and international), and trust in other people in general. On the other hand, my previous research showed that people use social mechanisms – both offline and online – to classify information and attribute markers of trustworthiness in a way in which big data companies still dream to implement, for example by means of algorithms and AI. In this context, the present research focuses on the ways in which levels of trust relate with social relations and the consumption of media that have been identified as the main promoters of Fake News: (1) social media, especially WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook platforms; (2) online media outlets, including (v)blogs and news sites; and (3) television channels that encourage alarmist viewpoints. The project is qualitative and offers an anthropological perspective that balances out and completes the more prevalent observations coming from fellow disciplines such as psychology, political sciences, and journalism. The project, therefore, aims to contribute to the continuing efforts to understand the declining levels of social trust and rising anxieties in the wider world.

**RUSSIAN EMPIRE-BUILDING AND LOCAL
AGENCY IN UKRAINIAN LANDS:
A CASE STUDY ON SHAPING THE FIRST
‘NOVOROSSIYA’ GOVERNORATE IN THE 1760s**

Nataliya SUREVA

(Ukraine)

GCE St. Gallen Fellow,

March – July 2024

Independent Scholar

Presentation on June 26, 2024

In the latter half of the 18th century, Southern Ukraine underwent profound transformations, with the Russian Empire imposing new administrative, fiscal, and social structures. This research project delves into the experiences and perspectives of the indigenous communities of Southern Ukraine during this period, challenging the dominant Russian imperial narrative that portrayed these lands as a "wild field" awaiting cultivation. Relying on primary sources, the project aims to foreground the voices of these communities as they navigated the challenges brought by the empire. Notably, it argues against a binary understanding of oppressor and oppressed, emphasizing instead the complex dynamics of power, negotiation, and adaptation.

The research sheds light on the agency of local communities in not only resisting, but also influencing and shaping imperial policies. By examining the reciprocal relations between the Russian Empire and the indigenous communities, the study offers a nuanced understanding of Southern Ukraine's integration into the Russian Empire, highlighting the region's rich, multifaceted history.





WORLD BANK COMES TO UKRAINE: IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR RESULTS

Ararat OSIPIAN (Ukraine)
SUS-VUIAS Fellow,
October 2023 – July 2024

Non-resident Fellow, Elliott School of International
Affairs Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian
Studies (IERES), George Washington University

Presentation on July 3, 2024

After many years of inaction, the World Bank comes to Ukraine's higher education sector with an approved US\$200 million loan for the 2021-2026 education project. The project, entitled "Ukraine Improving Higher Education for Results Project," has the objective to improve the efficiency, conditions for quality, and transparency in Ukraine's higher education system. It is also focused on increasing the relevance of Ukraine's higher education to the needs of the national and global labor market. When it comes to the project implementation, the World Bank will face the challenge of corruption and Soviet legacies in dealing with Ukrainian academic bureaucracy. The full-scale military aggression against Ukraine that started in February 2014 and drastically amplified in February 2022 makes the realization of the project even more difficult. The World Bank would have to reconsider its approach on investment in university construction. International help is needed to form autonomous world class universities in Ukraine. This will be a lengthy process that would involve reconstruction, reform and development. The World Bank should take a leading role in Ukraine's educational sector recovery, restoration, and rebuilding. This study follows the impact of the World Bank project on the national higher education system in war emergency and crisis.

SHOULD PHILOSOPHY HAVE A NON-WESTERN CANON?

Daria DROZDOVA
(Ukraine)

GCE St. Gallen Fellow, March – July 2024

Assistant Professor, HSE University, Moscow

Presentation on July 10, 2024

For the past two years, the main focus of my research has been the canon of the History of Philosophy. In particular, I have investigated the history of the formation of the canon of early modern philosophy in Russian-language historiography of the first half of the 19th century. This research led me to the necessity to examine discussions of the canon in the history of philosophy in comparison with similar discussions in other disciplines. The problem of the canon in the history of philosophy has many common features with discussions in other fields, but also peculiarities related to the nature of philosophy as specific intellectual practice. My current project aims to identify and describe these similarities and differences and to investigate theoretical frameworks and practices of other disciplines which can be effectively employed for extension and re-elaboration of the philosophical canon.



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
Total:	38

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)

The project “Rocking under the Hammer and the Sickle: Popular Music in Socialist Romania between Ideology and Entertainment (1948-1989)” has aimed 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 has taken an interdisciplinary approach, as it has brought together instruments of analysis from cultural and social history, cultural anthropology, and musicology. The research project has analyzed 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 has focused on the Romanian national context, the project has also relied 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 last two months of the project undertaken at New Europe College focused on archival research, as well as on a workshop focusing on ego-history, as part of the collective volume under preparation, which deals with cultural transfers across the Iron Curtain. In March and April 2024, I have conducted 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. At first glance, the topic of pop music during socialism and the foreign policy of the Romanian socialist state seem to have had little ground in common. 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.

In April, I organized an international workshop, “History Repeating? Researching Cold War Popular Music during the New Cold War: Perspectives, Challenges, and Ego-Histories”, which benefited from the participation of several Romanian and international scholars. The workshop centered around the importance of ego-history in the current context of international political and military conflict. (See page 47 for further details.)

Last but not least, in March the volume “Music, Subcultures, and Migration. Routes and Roots”, edited by Elke Weesjes and Matthew Worley, appeared with Routledge. My contribution to the volume, “From Blackened Valhalla to Hyperboreans’ Dacia: The Romanian Black Metal Scene as a Case Study of Cultural Migration” focused on the local scene of black metal subculture in 1980s and 1990s Romania. The chapter has traced the influences of communist official culture and the development of alternative extreme metal in socialist Romania, in order to explore the features of modern-day metal subculture in Romania and its link to nationalism and political ideologies.

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.

Călin Pop (*Celelalte Cuvinte*)
in concert, 1988 (Călin Pop Photo Collection)



Team members

Mentor:

Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Rector, New Europe College,
Professor, National University of Music, Bucharest

Project Leader:

Claudiu OANCEA, PhD, NEC Alumnus

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)

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 May 13-14 2024, the international conference: *Transportation Infrastructure, (Anti)Corruption, and Power Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* took place at the New Europe College, Bucharest with the participation of: Constantin ARDELEANU, Joan Pubill BRUGUES, Raul CÂRSTOCEA, Malte FUHRMANN, Luminița GĂTEJEL, Bogdan Cristian IACOB, Ferdinand de JONG, Volker KÖHLER, Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA, Silvia MARTON, Frédéric MONIER, Bogdan POPA, Toader POPESCU, Oliver SCHULZ, Andrei-Dan SORESCU. (See page 42 for more details.)

Key analytical elements of the CanCor project are the contested meanings, and the historically constructed and contested layers of key concepts – such as “colonialism”, “corruption”, “modernization”, “infrastructure” – renegotiated in the debates and scandals surrounding transportation infrastructure

construction, and technological development in the process of nation- and state-building in Romania. Consequently, at this international conference, together with presenting the most important conclusions of the team members' respective research, we sought to broaden the inquiry into the historical layers of these main concepts in other settings in Central-South-East Europe and, more broadly, across the European continent, with a focus on major (transportation) infrastructure projects as prime primary sources for polemics and anxieties.

Based on these historiographical and conceptual concerns, the conference addressed key themes and case studies, allowing the CanCor project to horizontally extend its conclusions far beyond Romania, and to give more depth to its conceptualizations.

On June 8, 2024, all team members participated to a video interview, a dialogue with journalist Eugen Istodor from *Hotnews* (in Romanian). They highlighted the historical salience of transportation infrastructure for the Romanian history in the nineteenth century.

On July 5, 2024, Silvia Marton was a guest lecturer at the Technische Universität Darmstadt within KRITIS – PhD Seminar and Colloquium (Summer Term 2024 „Spatialities and Temporalities in Urban Studies and Science & Technology Studies”). She presented her research titled “Railways, Space, Capital, and Power: The Political Imaginaries of Nineteenth Century Romania’s Elite.”



Photo source: The National Library of Romania

PUBLICATIONS:

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 Sapor (eds.), *Quotas: The “Jewish Question” and Higher Education in Central Europe and Beyond (1880-1945)* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2024), p. 67-108.

Silvia MARTON, “Hopeless corruption? Negotiating modernity in Wallachia and Moldavia in the 1830s,” in Ricard Torra-Prat, Joan Pubill-Brugues, Arndt Brendecke (eds.), *Corruption, Anti-Corruption, Vigilance, and State Building from Early to Late Modern Times* (Routledge, 2024), p. 251-267.

This project is funded by a grant from UEFISCDI, as part of the funding agency’s *Basic and frontier research* scheme (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399). It is hosted by the New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study in Bucharest (from June 2022 to December 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)

This project aims to investigate 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 connection with recent developments in the transdisciplinary field of quarantine studies. The quarantine system was intermittently employed since the eighteenth century, but it was only after 1829 that it was institutionalized. It was then subjected to continuous transformation in order to align with the changing political, economic, and sanitary needs of Romania and to reflect the increased scientific understanding of disease transmission.

From March to July 2024, the team pursued further research in a range of Romanian and international archives. Additionally, they delivered presentations at international conferences. In March 2024, Cosmin Koszor-Codrea delivered a lecture at the Department of Romance Studies at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena. The lecture, entitled “Science and the State. Darwinism, Race and Medicine in the Making of Modern Romania”, also addressed the interrelationship between quarantine policies endorsed by international sanitary conferences and their implementation in Romania. Cosmin Koszor-Codrea examined how these policies intersected with developments in bacteriology that employed epidemics and racial narratives to discriminate against local ethnic minorities. In July 2024, Lidia Trăușan-Matu participated in the international conference “Resistance”, which was organized by the Society for the Social History of Medicine in collaboration with the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. At the conference, she presented a paper entitled “Cholera and Society, Epidemics, Health Policies and Social Resistance in Romania, 1830–1878”.



Cosmin Koszor-Codrea examined how these policies intersected with developments in bacteriology that employed epidemics and racial narratives to discriminate against local ethnic minorities. In July 2024, Lidia Trăușan-Matu participated in the international conference “Resistance”, which was organized by the Society for the Social History of Medicine in collaboration with the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. At the conference, she presented a paper entitled “Cholera and Society, Epidemics, Health Policies and Social Resistance in Romania, 1830–1878”.

The papers presented at the workshop hosted by NEC in May 2023 have been edited by Constantin Ardeleanu and will be published as a volume in November 2024. The forthcoming volume addresses a number of key issues, including: the response of the authorities and inhabitants of modern Romania to the challenges of infectious diseases; the role of state institutions in the formulation and implementation of public health policies; the extent of state control over the bodies of its subjects; the social impact of epidemics and the resistance of the population to restrictions imposed by the authorities; urban development projects with an emphasis on improving hygiene and public health; the relationship between economic interests and public health threats in certain epidemic contexts; the modernisation of medical practices, influenced by advances in scientific knowledge and also by the pressure of global commercial interests; the transnational collaboration to limit the spread of pathogens, which travelled at increased speed along sea and rail transport routes, and represented a significant challenge to public health; the influence of bacteriology and modern medical technology in identifying pathogens and discovering new ways of recognizing and combating epidemic risks; the legal or ethical challenges that arose from restrictive (and often discriminatory) policies by which authorities limited the mobility of certain ethnic or social groups.

Team members – Project Leader:

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

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
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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)

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

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)

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. 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.

A special issue has been published within the project at Springer publishing house (<https://link.springer.com/journal/40803/volumes-and-issues/16-3>) in the *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law (HJRL)*, a multidisciplinary journal that aims to deepen and broaden knowledge and understanding about the rule of law: *Core, Periphery, and Universals in Rule of Law Promotion: Contextual (Dis)incentives, Conceptual Shifts*, Volume 16, pages 465–478, (2024)

The next international conference will be organized on September 26-27, 2024: *Core, Peripheral, and Supranational Correlates of the Rule of Law: Emerging Synergies and Tensions*. It will address the categories of centrality and peripherality, rising questions about 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? The conference will be organised jointly with the Romanian Association of Constitutional Law (ARDC). An open call for papers was launched on February 8 and was open until June 15. The intention is to publish edited, revised selections of the proceedings in peer reviewed format (as book sections/special issue articles).

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 BĂLAN, 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)

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. The first objective is to identify the principal characteristics of Romania – considered a Second world country – as provider and beneficiary of 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.

For the March – July semester, all the team members focused on the dissemination of the preliminary research results. On March 21-22, 2024 we organized the international conference *Humanitarian and Development Aid during the Cold War*. The event benefited from the contribution of 22 researchers from 9 countries, including USA, India, Germany, Italy etc. (See page 41 for more details.)

Based on the insightful discussions, we decided to publish the proceedings of the conference. The manuscript has been accepted and a publication contract was signed with Peter Lang Publishing House. In the future publication, the team members are responsible for the following chapters: Ștefan Bosomitu, „*Behind the Curtain*”: *Daily-life Experiences of Third World Students in Communist Romania*, Daniel Filip, *The Oil Crisis of 1973: An Opportunity for Romania to Clarify its approach towards humanitarian aid?* Dalia Báthory, “*Door to Door*” *Humanitarianism in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s: Mechanisms, Beneficiaries, and the Influence of the Secret Police*, Luciana Jinga, *Stop, Change teams, Repeat! Post-communist continuities in humanitarian politics*.

Together with Jill Massino, University of North Carolina, Charlotte; Mioara Anton, “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History (Romanian Academy), Bogdan C Iacob, “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History (Romanian Academy), the project leader signed a publication contract for the collective volume *Global Romania: Solidarity and Development during the Cold War* with Central European University publishing house. In



Red Cross nurses attending to the wounded after the Salonic earthquake, June 1978. Archives of Yugoslavia

the future publication, the team members are responsible for the following chapters: *Romania and the Military Aid for to the Global South*, Luciana Jinga; *Aid as Development and Militantism: Romanian Relations with Namibia and Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s*, Dalia Bathory and Jill Massino; “*Against the Wind*”: *Romania and the Global South at the UN in the 1980s*, Daniel Filip; *Romania's Educational Assistance and Scholarship Programs for the Global South: Practices and Encounters (1960s-1980s)*, Ștefan Bosomitu. Both publications are forthcoming in 2025.

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)

The third 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 in parallel on two of the four articles planned as one of the project's outputs. I presented my research at an international conference, and I was invited to give a lecture at the Romanian Academy's National History Institute and continued the monthly workshop series and a bi-monthly reading group.

Research-wise, this period was dedicated to finishing and submitting the second article and to making headway in writing the third article for this project. This involved a transition from the overarching theme of the first two articles to the one concerning the last two articles: the second article explored how Old English riddles, inscriptions on artefacts such as monumental crosses and caskets simulated 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). My third article, meanwhile, focuses on shame as a social-psychological technology deployed in different ways in two Old English texts never discussed together (the heroic poem *The Battle of Maldon* and Archbishop Wulfstan's *Sermon of the Wolf to the English*), although they belong to the same socio-political context: the turbulent turn of the tenth century, marked by internal dissolution and a wave of ferocious attacks by Viking raiders and then invaders. I read these texts as instilling shame pre-emptively in their audiences by modeling this behaviour through scenes of shaming in the texts. In this argument, I use the work of sociologist Erving Goffman and psychologist Thomas Scheff on the dramaturgic self – the concept that everyone is always engaged in impression management, trying to avoid shame and embarrassment in the social arena.

By way of disseminating my findings and enriching my research via scholarly dialogues, I was invited to give a lecture at the Romanian Academy's *Nicolae Iorga* National History Institute (March 25) and I presented a paper at the 'International Medieval Congress' at the University of Leeds, UK (July 1-4) titled 'Extended Mind, Extended Emotion: Making the History of Emotions without Subjectivity'. In both venues, I discussed extensively with colleagues and received valuable feedback on my work, all of which contributed to my research and the process of writing the articles.

Another crucial part of my project consists in 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 five meetings dedicated to topics drawing a large number of participants. (See page 34 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.

All in all, this has been a productive semester and I am glad to be able to contribute to the vibrant research environment at New Europe College.

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)

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. 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.

During the first year of the project, team members focused on their conceptual and methodological approach and on their empirical/archive-based research, and they presented papers at national and international conferences.

Constanța Vintilă presented the paper “Wealth and corruption in Moldova during Mihail Sturdza’s Rule” at the Annual Convention of the “A.D. Xenopol” History Institute of the Romanian Academy (held in Iasi, May 30 – June 1, 2024). Her paper investigated how society positioned itself in relation to wealth constructed through abusive means and how it reacted by publicly disavowing grand boyar Iorgu Hartulari, her case study.

Constantin Ardeleanu presented his research on the origins and subsequent manifestations of Russophobia in nineteenth century Romania at the international conference “Trust and Technology. From Social Relations to the State of Democracy” organized at the New Europe College in 10 – 11 June 2024. His paper, titled “The abusive power: risk perception, mis/trust and the genesis of Russophobia in 19th century Romania”, analysed several episodes that marked the genesis of nineteenth century Russophobia among Romanian elites. (See page 44 for more details regarding the conference.)

The NEC hosted the first major international TransCorr event from the 17th to the 18th of June 2024. During the conference, *Conceptualizing Corruption: The “Old Regime” and the New Order in East-Central-South Europe (1750s-1850s)*, participants presented their works that employ a (de)constructivist and/or sematic approach to study ‘corruption’ and its relationship to the rise of modernity. Focusing on Central-South-East Europe from the 1750s to the 1850s, panelists situated changing notions of ‘corruption’ in a transnational context. Participants: Constantin ARDELEANU, Elena DENISOVA-SCHMIDT, Augusta DIMOU, Gábor EGRY, Boğaç ERGENE, Lucien FRARY, Niels GRÜNE, Eda GÜÇLÜ, Myrto LAMPROU, Silvia MARTON, Damjan MATKOVIC, Mihai OLARU, Mária PAKUCS, Konrad PETROVSZKY, Andrei-Dan SORESCU, Simeon SYMEONOV, Alex R. TIPEI, Constanța VINTILĂ. (See page 45 for more details.)

Silvia Marton talked about the TransCorr project, its conceptualization and methodology in an interview for *The Review of Democracy (RevDem)*, an online journal of the CEU Democracy Institute, Central European University (Vienna and Budapest), titled *Why Was Central-South-East Europe Labeled as “Corrupt”?* (July 2024).



Why Was Central-South-East Europe Labeled as “Corrupt”? - Silvia Marton on Transnational Histories of ‘Corruption’

Jul 8 · RevDem Podcast



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15

15

39:44



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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

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 18th and 19th Centuries (GRiPs)

Research Group, since 2009

GRiPs promotes current historical research on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by signaling new publications, doctoral theses and scientific events from a wide range of complementary academic disciplines and subfields. Since 2009, GRiPs has fostered and continues to mentor an interdisciplinary community of advanced doctoral and postdoctoral scholars. It has led to invitations allowing emerging scholars to present their work and receive feedback. GRiPs' ambition is also to encourage a wider European and regional scientific network. The research group is coordinated by NEC alumnae **Constanța VINTILĂ** (Senior researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest) and **Silvia MARTON** (Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest). Administrative support is offered by **Constantin ARDELEANU** (Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest; Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest).

Following events have been organized during the timeframe March – July 2024:

Pamânteni din țări străine. Imigranți balcanici în Țările Române în epoca prefanariotă / [Natives from Abroad. Balkan Immigrants in the Romanian Principalities in the Pre-Phanariot Era],
March 7, 2024

Constanța VINTILĂ, Senior researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest

Participants: **Lidia COTOVANU**, Researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest; **Marian COMAN**, Researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest; Lecturer, University of Bucharest; **Ovidiu OLAR**, Researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest; Principal Investigator ORTHPOL ERC Starting Grant, IHB - Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna; **Maria PAKUCS**, Senior researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest

Wherefrom and why did "foreigners" come to the Romanian principalities? On the one hand, because the Romanian principalities were a space of socio-political and economic opportunity. On the other hand, because "foreigners" were a necessity. Before dealing with any other aspect related to the interaction with the "foreigners", from the point of view of identity behavior, it is appropriate to identify the parties involved. The book under discussion, suggests a quantitative and qualitative estimation of the presence of the allochthonous element in the socio-political and economic landscape of Wallachia and Moldavia. The qualitative approach refers to the migrants' area of origin and their fields of activity. The quantitative estimation is focused on the preferred fields of activity of the migrants, with the aim to show, with indicative figures, that their specialization in one field or another was a response to the shortage of specific skills in the social space of settlement. On the whole, it can be said that the foreigners and their descendants constituted a structuring element of what has been modeled over time as being Romanian at the level of discourse and objective socio-cultural realities.

"State merchants". Fresco from the church of St. Apostles in Dpalita, the residence of the Archdiocese of Pogoniani (Epir, 17th century)



Cele două fețe ale lui Ianus. Țăranul – între primitiv și bunul român (Principatele Române/România, 1830-1910) [The Two Faces of Ianus. The Peasant - Between Primitive and Good Romanian (Romanian Principalities/Romania), May 23, 2024

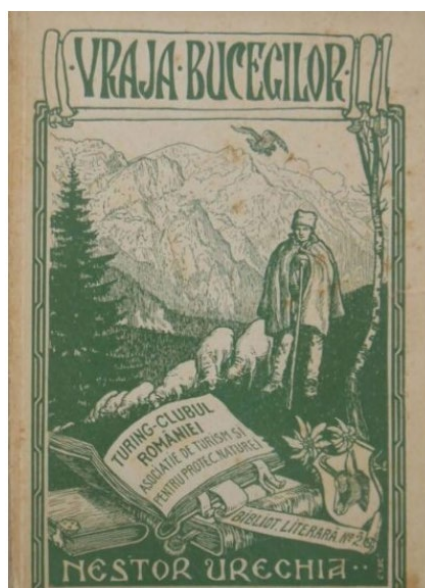
Constantin BĂRBULESCU, Professor, History and Philosophy Department, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj

The multiple images of the Romanian peasant created by the intellectual elite of the 19th reveal a bipolar focus in constellations of representations, leading us through the poverty and rural misery of the long 19th century, as well as through the aesthetic, spiritual and moral splendors to the same peasant, who is the repository of the "national genius".



Munți și păduri: progres, modernizare și natură politizată în narațiunea politică românească spre 1900 / [Mountains and Forests: Progress, Modernization and Politicized Nature in the Romanian Political Narrative Around 1900], June 6, 2024

Raluca ALEXANDRESCU, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest



Towards 1900, the Romanian discourse of modernization also addressed the reconceptualization of the relationship with nature, going through gentrification, territorialization, transformation, commercialization of forests and mountains. The environmental doctrine circulates at the end of the 19th century throughout Europe and the USA using a common platform – Nancy School of Forestry – and a shared ideological base, Saint-Simonist technocratism. Raluca Alexandrescu's talk aimed to exemplify these trends, while also tracing public and political positions on the sustainable exploitation of nature and its relation to development. These discourses must also be understood in an intergenerational perspective of concepts and/or stereotypes, often linked to nationalist discourses: the contemporary patriotic narrative also stems from a certain nationalist cult of Nature.

Cover of "Vraja Bucegilor" by Nestor Urechia (Cartea Românească, 1926)

The Group for Anthropological Research and Debates (GARD)

Research Group, since 2019

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, the group's activity has been resumed, and the monthly meetings 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.

GARD is currently supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P8-8.1-PRE-HE-ORG-2023-0055, within PNCDI IV.

Coordinators:

László FOSZTÓ, PhD, Researcher,
The Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca
Giuseppe TATEO, PhD, NEC Alumnus,
Researcher at the Bruno Kessler Foundation, Trento, Italy
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 March – July 2024:

Turning Rites into Rights: The Remaking of Global Orthodoxy through Law and Politics,

April 4, 2024

Vlad NAUMESCU, Associate Professor, Central European University

This talk explored the changing nature of global Orthodoxy by looking at the transmutation of rites into rights. It drew on ethnographic research in Orthodox communities in Eastern Europe and South India to analyze the entanglement of law, politics and religion between the 'posts.' In the Orthodox world religious rites bind Orthodox Christians together more than institutional structures and hierarchies. As aesthetic formations rites work through familiar sensational forms, demarcating communities and setting the criteria through which Orthodoxy is practiced, debated and defended. This has been undergoing a transformation as Orthodox communities encountered challenges posed by secular governance, migration and globalization/deterritorialization, having to navigate new legal and political landscapes while asserting their religious identity and autonomy. What happens when questions of orthodoxy, canonicity and community are turned to the courts and how does the mutual infusion of law and religion reconfigure Orthodox Christianity today?

Vlad Naumescu is Associate Professor at the Central European University. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Eastern Europe and South India, looking at practices, institutions and politics that shape Orthodox communities. Naumescu is the author of *Modes of Religiosity in Eastern Christianity: Religious Processes and Social Change in Ukraine* (2007), co-editor of *Churches In-between: Greek Catholic Churches in Postsocialist Europe* (2008), and a forthcoming monograph on ritual, history and ethics in Russian Old Belief. His recent work explores pedagogies of prayer, Cold War apologetics, Orthodox theopolitics and religious orthodoxies in comparative perspective. He combines ethnography with filmmaking in his research, producing several documentary films that speak to his writings.



From Socio-ecological Crisis to Socio-environmental Justice: What's in a Hyphen?, May 24, 2024
Natalia BUIER, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Barcelona

The Doñana National Park in south-western Spain is widely regarded as one of the most important wetlands in Europe. Surrounded by the continent's most important berry-producing region, Doñana is also the site of a long-standing conflict over groundwater extraction. The expansion of irrigation in the area led the European Court of Justice to declare Spain in breach of European water and environmental legislation in 2021. This is just one of the most recent measures in a series of ineffective initiatives to halt ecological degradation in the region. Through a historical-ethnographic analysis, this presentation unpacked the Doñana groundwater conflict to explore several related questions: What are the dominant categories through which the conflict between agriculture and conservation is apprehended? How do these categories obscure the unity of extraction and exploitation? What kinds of knowledge and immanent critique emerge from different positions in the labour process? And how does the analysis of historically and geographically situated practices contribute to the integration of environmental and social justice?



Natalia Buier is an anthropologist currently researching water conflicts in southern Spain. After receiving her PhD from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University (Budapest, HU), she continued her interdisciplinary research at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and the University of Barcelona. Her current project is a historical ethnography of groundwater depletion, focusing on the unity of processes of extraction and exploitation. Her previous research has focused on the political economy of infrastructure development, labour struggles, and historical memory.

Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging, in Comparative Perspective,
 June 13, 2024

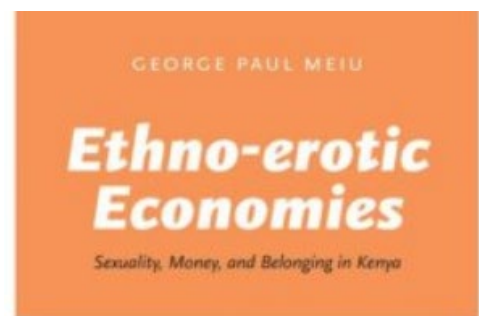
George Paul MEIU, Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel

What happens when a people that have long been venerated and vilified for the difference of their culture and sexual customs use that very same difference to produce livelihoods and craft futures? Since the 1980s, young men of the Samburu ethnic group in northern Kenya have migrated seasonally to beach resorts at the Indian Ocean to sell souvenirs and perform traditional dances for tourists. They have

capitalized on an older, colonial image of the “tribal warrior” or *moran*—a prototypical young man whose tall, slim body adorned in traditional clothes congeals a heroic masculinity and an exotic sexuality. This image became a bestselling brand of East Africa as a tourist destination. Numerous white women from Western Europe on vacation in Kenya engage in intimate relationships with these men. Through such intimacies, Samburu men have found a new path to rapid wealth. They have thus devised a way to circumvent the Kenyan state—a state that has long marginalized them—and access money through relationships with foreigners. Ironically, for these men, economic and political empowerment has required commodifying a colonial image of ethnic sexuality long used to legitimize their marginalization. The stereotype-*cum*-market “fiction” of an inherently different Samburu *moran* sexuality generated a large economy. The effects of these economy reach beyond tourist resorts, as money, goods, and persons circulate widely and encompass, in ever-broader concentric circles, coastal migrant communities and northern towns and villages. They involve complex exchanges and negotiations that play out in renegotiations of age, generation, gender, kinship, wealth, and wellbeing.

How does the commodification of ethnic sexuality in tourism shape how ethnic subjects imagine and claim belonging? And how do their desires to belong inform how they market their ethnic sexuality? Revisiting *Ethno-erotic Economies* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), nearly ten years after the completion of this research, this lecture brings in a twofold comparative perspective. It attends to (i) changes that emerged over the last ten years in Kenya and that have also seen Romanian tourists and travelers growingly involved in these economies; and (ii) emerging research on Romanians involved ethno-erotic economies globally.

George Paul Meiu is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Basel. His research and teaching focus on sexuality, gender, and kinship; ethnicity, belonging and citizenship; mobility, memory, and materiality; and the political economy of East Africa and Eastern Europe. He is author of *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and *Queer Objects to the Rescue: Intimacy and Citizenship in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2023) and co-editor of *Ethnicity, Commodity, In/Corporation* (Indiana University Press, 2020). Meiu is also producer and host of the video podcast *Ethnographic Imagination Basel*.



Emotions Through History

Research Group, since 2023

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.



Photo: Chute d'Adam et Eve – Adam et Eve chassés du Paradis (France, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms 38 f. 006v) | portail.biblissima.fr

Following events have been organized during the timeframe March – July 2024:

Is it Even Possible to Study Historical Emotions? – March 25, 2024: From its relatively recent beginning, the history of emotions has been met with scepticism, sometimes implicit in the work of some of its practitioners: how can one study such an elusive phenomenon as emotion, a private event that is almost impossible to represent through language, a physiological impulse best left to the research of psychologists? Once again, we reach the issue of defining what it is exactly that we study: a mere linguistic shadow of an essentially embodied reality?; a set of scripts that we absorb from the culture surrounding us?; a tool for socialization? What do we talk about when we talk about emotion? The conversation engaged with a very recent survey of the debates in the field and the possibilities of going forward despite a fundamental scepticism built in many of the approaches and definitions used when studying emotion. Recommended reading: Douglas Cairns, 'Emotions through time?', in Douglas Cairns et al., eds., *Emotions through Time: From Antiquity to Byzantium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), pp. 3-34

The 'Civilisational Process': Do Emotions Evolve? – April 22, 2024: If emotional norms change over historical time, can we talk about a progressive refinement of emotion, a betterment of affective capacities and manifestations? In his grand synthesis of the 1930s, Norbert Elias argued for a civilisational process taking European society from a childish, unrestrained medieval emotionality, to the cool-headed reasonableness of modernity. His vision has had many critics, yet it has proven to be a very successful narrative, especially for the larger public, confirming popular ideas about a benighted pre-modernity

contrasting with the benefits of the Enlightenment project. But beyond Elias, we find a recurring tendency to assess emotions on a moral scale even among researchers of emotion (e.g., shame-based cultures are developmentally inferior to guilt-based cultures). Should the history of emotions be guided by a moral compass – if so, on what basis, and using which methods? Recommended reading: Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 5-25

Shame: A Kaleidoscope – May 20, 2024: Shame is the most intensely social and deeply intimate of emotions. A crucial ingredient in all social interactions and central to how we construct our self (always living in the minds of other people, per Cooley and Goffman), shame is also a protean emotion, found in so many shapes and contexts across cultures and societies that all of us have encountered it in our work at some point. During this meeting, participants shared episodes from their sources that they found intriguing, puzzling, or just funny. The central topic was shame in all its forms and linkages (embarrassment, humiliation, violence, honour, etc.). Recommended reading: Thomas J. Scheff, 'Looking Glass Selves: The Cooley/Goffman Conjecture', (paper given at the American Sociological Association's 98th meeting, 2003)

How to Study Historical Trauma – June 17, 2024: Trauma, the emotional response to distressing events that are outside the usual range of human experience, is only slowly beginning to be recognized as a legitimate subject of historical study, meeting even more scepticism along the way than the general topic of historical emotions. And yet, throughout the past and all over the world to this day, distressing circumstances have never been far, and if responses like grief, mourning, and anger are more readily detected and thus have been more thoroughly studied, trauma is still a more elusive emotional experience. Dr. Roman Shliakhtin (NEC Fellow) introduced the topic of historical trauma, sharing some of his work on Byzantine trauma relative to the Battle of Manzikert. Cătălin Țăranu discussed trauma in the Old English elegy 'The Wanderer'. Participants were invited to share vignettes, anecdotes from the sources they work on that relate to trauma.

Shame in Classical Sanskrit Literature – July 22, 2024: Dr. Rainer Grafenhorst offered an introduction to the world of emotions in Classical India. In his intervention, he shared some of his – until now mostly empirical – findings from his research into the concept of shame in Classical Sanskrit literature. He presented a number of examples from various registers and texts of the use of the principal terms in Sanskrit that mean (or at least are usually translated as) 'shame'. Participants read through these specimens and jointly commented on them, bringing in notions and ideas from the amassed treasure of theoretical reflections on the nature and history of shame (Simmel, Elias, Schnell, Neckel, Goffman, Rosenwein etc.). Comparative perspectives from the cultural spaces on which the other participants are experts proved to be most valuable!

NEC-TECH: Technology, Culture, Humanities

Research Group, since 2023

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

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



Photo generated by DALL-E 3

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.

PUBLICATIONS:

Andreea EȘANU, *Scrutinizing the foundations: could large language models be solipsistic?* in *Synthese* 203, 158 (Springer, 2024)

WORKSHOPS:

The Age of Algorithms – A multi-disciplinary exploration of Artificial Intelligence in the context of large language models, smart devices, and social media, June 20, 2024

(See page 46 for more details.)

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)

Doctoral Students:

Petrișor IVAN, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest

Larisa GOGIANU, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest

In Tune with the World: New Europe College at 30

Andrei PLEȘU, Writer, Essayist and Art Historian, President of the New Europe Foundation

Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Musicologist, Rector of New Europe College

Daniel NICA, Professor of Ethics and Critical Thinking, Convener of the series of conferences of the Bucharest National Opera, *Scena gândirii*

April 16, 2024

New Europe College celebrates its 30th anniversary. It is a special moment in the life of an institution that has withstood turbulent times with grace and tenacity – to quote this report's introduction (Ioana Pârvulescu's thoughts about NEC, published in *Dilema Veche* on the occasion of the institute's 25th anniversary). Ever since its founding in 1994 it has been a special place of dialogue and academic excellence. Exceptional people here at NEC, donors and friends made all that possible. Some of them were present on April 16 at the National Opera House in person, others were close (even if they could not come) and sent wonderful messages. To all of them we are grateful.

On this special occasion, the rector, Valentina Sandu-Dediu and the founder and former rector, Andrei Pleșu, met on the stage of the National Opera House and invited all of us to reflect about what it means for an Institute for Advanced Study to be "in tune with the world". They touched upon the stakes and crises of knowledge, the differences between East and West and the role of the institute in the region.



What does it mean to be "in tune with the world" when we talk about academic research? Is Romania's intellectual synchronization with the West a finished chapter or a process that will never be finalized? How does a successful institution come into being and how do ideas come to life? How important are financial issues in the arts and humanities; and how much can the enthusiasm and passion of researchers make up for insufficient funding? Should social sciences and humanities research set out to change or, rather, to understand the world as it is? These are some of the questions that they raised and discussed. The dialog was moderated by Daniel Nica, Professor of Ethics and Critical Thinking at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of the University of Bucharest. The event was part of the series of meetings *Scena Gândirii* – coordinated by Daniel Nica at the Bucharest National Opera.



Soloists of the Bucharest National Opera, accompanied by pianist Mihaela VÂLCEA, offered three musical moments:

Marta SANDU OFRIM – Zoe's aria from *O scrisoare pierdută* / [A Lost Letter] by Dan Dediu

Leonard BERNAD – The aria *La calunnia* from *The Barber of Seville* by Gioacchino Rossini

Marta SANDU OFRIM and Leonard BERNAD – The duet *Là ci darem la mano*, from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Guest pianist Andrei VIERU closed the musical evening with three fugues from Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of Fugue*.

Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship

This event was organized within the *Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship* (SUS) fellowship program hosted jointly by the New Europe College Bucharest and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, with the support of the VolkswagenStiftung.

March 14, 2024

This conference brought together significant names and important institutions supporting scholars from the regions affected by Russia's war against Ukraine. Through the *Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship* (SUS) fellowship program, New Europe College contributes to the initiative promoted by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and supported by the VolkswagenStiftung aiming to found an (for now Virtual) Institute for Advanced Study (VUIAS) in Kyiv. NEC also hosts Ukrainian scholars as part of the *St. Gallen*, *IWM* and *Gerda Henkel* fellowship programs.

On the occasion of this conference, Katherine YOUNGER, Research Director of the project "Ukraine in European Dialogue" at Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna gave a keynote lecture entitled *Thinking Together on, in, and from Ukraine: Frameworks for Intellectual Equity*. Her thought-provoking talk was followed by two sessions on how to support Ukrainian scholarship. Fellowship recipients (NEC and CAS fellows, as well as *Pontica Magna*, *Gerda Henkel* and *Black Sea Link* alumni) had the opportunity to discuss and offer points of view on this matter from their own experiences. Finally, a dialogue between the writers Andrey KURKOV and Andriy LYUBKA highlighted the difficulties artists encounter during wartime: *Artists at the Time of War: Words and Deeds*.



Andrey KURKOV is a Ukrainian novelist who writes in Russian and Ukrainian. He is the author of more than 20 novels and 10 books for children. His work is currently translated into 42 languages, including English, Japanese, French, Chinese, Swedish and Hebrew. He has also written assorted articles for various publications worldwide including *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *New Statesman*, *La Liberation*, *Le Monde*, *Die Welt*, *Die Zeit*. From 2018 till 2022 he was acting President of PEN Ukraine, running international and national literary and socio-political projects. For his novels, for literary and human rights activities he was awarded Halldor Laxness

Prize (Iceland, 2022), "Legion d'Honneur" (France 2015), Medici Prize for Best foreign Novel (France 2022), "Freedom of Expression Award" (Index on Censorship, London 2022), "Readers' Award" (France, 2012), Hans and Sophie Scholl Prize (Germany, 2022), National Critic Circle Award (USA, 2023) and others.

Andriy LYUBKA, NEC Alumnus, is a Ukrainian poet, writer and essayist. He is the author of the books of poetry: "Eight Months of Schizophrenia" (Uzhgorod, 2007), "The Terrorism" (Lviv, 2009), «40 Dollars Plus the Tips» (Lviv, 2012); collection of short stories: "The Killer" (Lviv, 2012), collection of poems in German translation «Notaufnahme» (Austria, Innsbruck, 2012), book of essays "Sleeping with Women" (2014), novel "Karbid" (2015, short-listed to top-5 books of the year by BBC Ukraine; Polish translation was short-listed to the Central-European award Angelus in 2017; Slovenian translation was published in Ljubljana in 2019, English translation was published in London in 2020), collection of short stories "The Room for Sadness" (2016), book of



essays «Saudade» (2017), novel “Your Gaze, Cio-Cio-san” (2018), travel essay about the Balkans “In search of barbarians” (2019), novel “The Small Ukrainian Novel” (2020) and book of essays “Something is wrong with me” (2022). The winner of the prizes “Debut” (2007), “Kyiv Laurels” (2011), recently he received literary award of Kovalev Foundation (USA) and became a laureate of Shevelov Prize for the best book of essays of 2017 in Ukraine. He is the member of Ukrainian PEN. He is also the translator from Polish, Croatian, Serbian, English and the curator of two international poetry festivals. He is an active volunteer who helps the Ukrainian army, including organizing the purchase and delivery of nearly 200 jeeps to the Ukrainian armed forces.

Participants:

Andrey KURKOV, Writer; President of PEN Ukraine from 2018 to 2022

Andriy LYUBKA, Writer; NEC Alumnus

Katherine YOUNGER, Research Director of the project “Ukraine in European Dialogue” at Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna

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

Matthias NÖLLENBURG, Program Director, VolkswagenStiftung

Nora KOTTMANN, Program Director, VolkswagenStiftung

Diana MISHKOVA, Director, Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia

Katharina BIEGGER, Strategic Advisor, Center for Governance and Culture, University of Sankt Gallen



Humanitarian and Development Aid during the Cold War

This conference was organized within the project *The (Im)possible Alliance: Romania as Initiator and Beneficiary of the Humanitarian Aid (1970-1989)*, supported by UEFISCDI – Young Research Teams (TE-PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2021-0778) and hosted by the New Europe College.
March 21-22, 2024

Convener: Luciana JINGA

Participants: Mioara ANTON, Constantin ARDELEANU, Mircea ARTHOFER, Róbert BALOGH, Alexandra BARDAN, Dalia BÁTHORY, Ștefan BOSOMITU, Čarna BRKOVIC, Jawhar CHOLAKKATHODI, Andreea DAHLQUIST, Corina DOBOȘ, Daniel FILIP, Domnica GOROVEI, Laura HERȚA, Bogdan C. IACOB, Katarzyna JAROSZ, Luciana JINGA, Ioana MACREA-TOMA, Mara MĂRGINEAN, Bogdan PREDA, Dora TOT, Shu WAN, WARJIO, Robert Anthony WATERS, Jr.

The fall of the communist regimes in Europe gave the occasion for massive humanitarian actions within European borders in what seemed to be a premiere after the end of WWII. Mass media all over the world broadcasted the touching images of the Berlin wall and the violent Romanian Revolution, uncovering the world hidden behind the Iron Curtain. The western democracies rushed to save the victims of communism and to implement development projects meant to reform an underfinanced, collapsing system. The donors insisted that, albeit survivors, the beneficiaries were communist products suffering from low self-esteem. Therefore, they could not refuse/react to the humanitarian aid even if they did not agree to it. More than that, the involvement of former socialist countries in development aid for “Third-World” countries was deemed communist propaganda. The newest scholarship rewrites the history of humanitarian and development aid by addressing two of the most powerful myths: the impenetrability of the Iron Curtain and the irrelevance of the Eastern Bloc (Second World) as humanitarian actor. For the first time, research recuperates the stories of former socialist countries in the Humanitarian effort. Young-Sun Hong (Hong 2015) analyses the humanitarian commitment of East and West Germany, but she also stresses out that Soviet Union and other East European countries became active in this field since the 1950s.

Former European socialist countries alongside China and USSR represented important actors of the humanitarian aid, both as beneficiaries of formal/informal aid) and donors. Not only did European socialist countries not remain isolated behind the (in)famous Iron Curtain, but, as part of their foreign policy, they deployed economic, medical and educational assistance programs to “Third-World” countries. Nonetheless, after 1990 the western humanitarians devaluated the local knowledge on the subject and assumed total ignorance.

What are the main humanitarian actions deployed by communist regimes? Are there any differences if compared to Western humanitarians? How did they address problems of colonialism, decolonization, racism, while preparing and conducting their actions? Last, but certainly not least, what is the dominant narrative present in the humanitarian discourse when talking about the nature of a socialist approach in all humanitarian response?

By rising such questions, the conference (re)discussed the nature of the humanitarian implication of former socialist countries in the second half of the 20th century, but also what the legacy of this implication is today (if any).



Transportation Infrastructure, (Anti)Corruption, and Power Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

This conference was organized within the research project *Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania* (CanCor), funded by UEFISCDI, 'Basic and frontier research' scheme, PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399 (2022-2024).
May 13-14, 2024

Convener: Silvia MARTON

Participants: Constantin ARDELEANU, Joan Pubill BRUGUES, Raul CÂRSTOCEA, Malte FUHRMANN, Luminița GĂTEJEL, Bogdan Cristian IACOB, Ferdinand de JONG, Volker KÖHLER, Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA, Silvia MARTON, Frédéric MONIER, Bogdan POPA, Toader POPESCU, Oliver SCHULZ, Andrei-Dan SORESCU

Aside from the role of infrastructure as a conduit for modernization, development, and (state) centralization, participants approached the history and role of infrastructure through the lenses of the language of (anti)corruption (1). Most major infrastructure projects engendered controversies, transforming regulatory standards, practices of administration, and political institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and they acted as catalysts for the historical construction of corruption-related categories (such as immoral public official behavior, abuse, influence peddling, favoritism, patron-client relations, embezzlement, rent-seeking, etc.).

Since our focus is on exploring the historical, material-technical, institutional, and discursive production of transportation infrastructure, the international conference also raised questions about the (asymmetrical) power relations, networks, and interests of political entities (nation-states, empires), social and professional groups (capitalists, entrepreneurs, bankers, engineers, peasants, etc.), individuals and communities, (national and imperial) centers and peripheries, urban and rural milieus, in connection with the process of transportation infrastructure construction (2).

Third, taking seriously Holly Case's framing of the (very) long nineteenth century as an "age of questions", the conference provided a forum for discussing the framing of scandals as "questions" in and of themselves, but also as specifically entangled with other "questions" (such as the "Eastern", "social" question, etc.) (3). Understood as framing devices for problematization on this deeper conceptual level, "questions" were omnipresent as a category in nineteenth century public discourse on a global scale, and they also served as a means of, by turns, localizing and internationalizing the relevance of a given process or event. Participants reflected on how infrastructure, corruption, and (imagined) colonial encroachment were connected to the major (and minor) "questions" of the time, and how this shared language rendered them intelligible and open to further contestation to historical actors.

Last but not the least, the international conference invited leading researchers in the field of transportation infrastructure to lay the groundwork for a transnational (East) European infrastructure history in the nineteenth century, and a transnational history of rail and fluvial networks, technology transfer, and international finance as "soft colonialism" / "informal empire" tools in South-East Europe.



Accessing Arcana Imperii: Informal Channels for Early Modern States in Imperial Courts

This conference was organized in the framework of the research project *The Diplomacy of Small States in Early Modern South-eastern Europe* (SMALLST) supported by European Research Council Consolidator Grant – ERC (CoG) 101043451 and hosted by the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest
May 28-29, 2024

Participants:

Giorgio ROTA, Natalia KRÓLIKOWSKA, Zsuzsanna HÁMORI NAGY, Zsuzsanna CZIRÁKI, Radu G. PĂUN, Lovro KUNČEVIĆ, Ovidiu CRISTEA, Oles KULCHYNSKYI, Marian COMAN, Ágnes SZALAI, Domagoj MADUNIĆ, Tetiana GRYGORIEVA, Gábor KÁRMÁN, Matthias SCHNETTGER, Konstantinos POULIOS, Nikša VAREZIĆ, Michał WASIUCIONEK, Giuseppe Pio CASCIVILLA, Vedran STOJANOVIC, Sándor PAPP, Liviu PILAT, Ovidiu OLAR, Magdalena JAKUBOWSKA

Over the course of the past few decades, the question has often been raised in the historiography on European diplomacy that we will inevitably fail to grasp an enormous part of the communication going on between the political players if we consider only official missions with formal princely accreditation. The actor-centred approach highlighted the importance of the individual diplomats' networks in information gathering and exerting influence on the host country's decision-making. Moreover, the role played by non-state actors was repeatedly pointed out: individuals who did not belong to the state apparatus could nevertheless frequently offer important services for the rulers in the realm of foreign policy, while also pursuing their own agenda. This conference, organised in the framework of the ERC project "The Diplomacy of Small States in Early Modern South-eastern Europe" (SMALLST) offered a venue to enlarge the scope of this research that usually concentrates on the western part of Europe and bring into discussion the experiences of the early modern states in both parts of the continent and its immediate surroundings, from Northern Africa to the Caucasus. Also, looking beyond the usual frame of related discussions, which base their results on the cases of empires, the conference provided a space for the diplomatic practices of small states that had much more limited resources than their larger counterparts and thus often had to rely on alternative ways of influencing the decision-makers of foreign courts.

More information about the project can be found at <https://smallstates.org/>



Trust and Technology. From Social Relations to the State of Democracy

This workshop was organized with financial support from the *AMEROPA* fellowship program, and in collaboration with *Spiru Haret*, *N+N*, *DigiHum* and *GCE St. Gallen* fellowship programs at New Europe College.

June 10-11, 2024

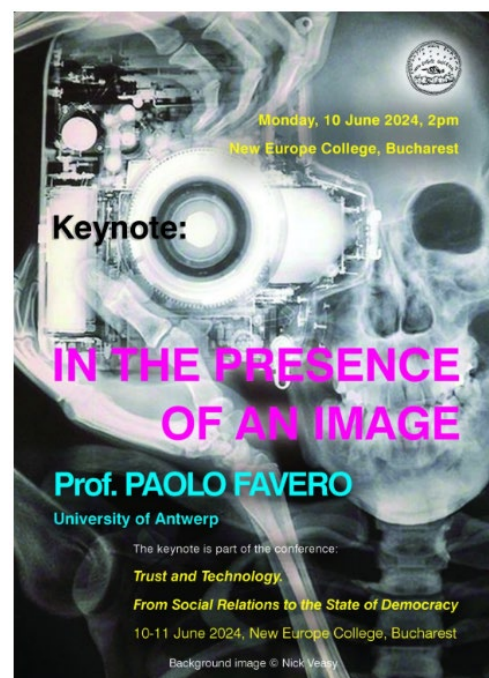
Convener: Răzvan NICOLESCU

Participants: Constantin ARDELEANU, Dmitry ASINOVSKIY, Stephanie BAKER, Roxana BRATU, Magda CRĂCIUN, Alex DINCOVICI, Cristian DUCU, Andreea EȘANU, Paolo S.H. FAVERO, Katherine FURMAN, Malte FUHRMANN, Guilherme Orlandini HEURICH, Ferdinand de JONG, Silvia MARTON, Adrian MATUS, Manuel MIREANU, Răzvan NICOLESCU, Nicoleta ROMAN, Dan Alexandru SĂVOAIA, Mircea TOBOȘARU, Claudiu TUFIȘ, Lucian VASILE, Shriram VENKATRAMAN, Mahika WASON

It has been argued that the proliferation of digital technologies brought unprecedented changes to many aspects of life, from an increase in personal wellbeing to unprecedented threats to democratic life. In just several years it has become common knowledge that organizations target and influence voters via social media, algorithms increase inequalities and cultural bias, and disinformation thrives in the online media. The recent AI breakthroughs combined with pervasive mining of personal data pose supplementary challenges to a series of normative aspects that range from legal liability to personal freedom. Democratic institutions, organisations, and individuals find it increasingly difficult to understand, explain, arbitrate, and regulate the massive technological developments and their consequences to the social and cultural life.

The workshop addressed these relatively recent developments through the lens of trust. Trust is fundamental in everyday relations and across societies. Sharing widely accepted notions of trust is essential for the general welfare of communities and for respecting the social contract. However, new digital technologies have changed the ways in which people trust institutions, governments, and each other. For example, social media can extend social trust but can decrease trust due to misinformation, disinformation, and misrepresentation. E-commerce has brought trust in platforms but has eroded work relations and labour solidarity. Smartphones and smart wearables brought efficiency and comfort but contributed to the general sense of distrust in big data companies that track and collect personal data. Research shows that people have developed social mechanisms to navigate the paradoxes of the media/technological environment, to gain supplementary awareness of others, and to arbitrate if institutions, ideas, and politicians are trustworthy. Such processes are not new. Throughout history, people and institutions always found ways to appropriate, socialize, and trust new technologies, from the printing press to electricity, and biotech industries.

This two-day conference explored the ways in which new technologies challenge and transform notions of trust in relation to various social aspects, from individual wellbeing to democratic life. A multi-disciplinary perspective is crucial in order to make sense of the changing nature of trust, the prospects to uphold the existing social contract, and the emerging threats to democracy at large.



Conceptualizing Corruption: The “Old Regime” and the New Order in East-Central-South Europe (1750s-1850s)

This conference was organized within the framework of the research program *Transnational Histories of ‘Corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe (1750-1850)*, funded by the European Union (ERC, TransCorr, ERC-2022-ADG no. 101098095) and hosted by the New Europe College. June 17-18, 2024

Participants:

Constantin ARDELEANU, Elena DENISOVA-SCHMIDT, Augusta DIMOU, Gábor EGRY, Boğaç ERGENE, Lucien FRARY, Niels GRÜNE, Eda GÜÇLÜ, Myrto LAMPROU, Silvia MARTON, Damjan MATKOVIC, Mihai OLARU, Mária PAKUCS, Konrad PETROVSZKY, Andrei-Dan SORESCU, Simeon SYMEONOV, Alex R. TIPEI, Constanța VINTILĂ



During the age of revolutions, West European politicians, scholars, and popular writers often characterized South-East-Central Europe as a corrupt political space. Notables from the region routinely echoed these claims. Those in and outside of South-East-Central Europe mobilized commentaries on “corruption” for their own political, professional, and personal gains. They used the idea of corruption to assert, for instance, that they knew to run more honest and efficient administrations, military regimes, and commercial operations. Political and economic actors on both sides of the continent linked “corruption” to the supposed cultural backwardness and economic underdevelopment of the region. In doing so, public figures naturalized notions of “corruption,” making it appear both widespread and organic, popularizing tropes that have endured right down to the present.

“Corruption,” however, is a historically specific concept not an ahistorical, moral, universal, or essentialist category. It gained currency in West Europe during the age of revolutions when a particular understanding of “corruption” grew increasingly hegemonic in developing liberal-capitalist discourses. It lent itself to liberal critiques of *anciens régimes*, rival politicians, and societies that they might formally or informally colonize. Public figures agitating for change used accusations of “corruption” to legitimize their political programs and assert (political and/or discursive) power.

This emerging definition of “corruption” drew on novel notions of good government that excluded traditional systems of clientelist relationships — the types of political, economic, and social networks that had heretofore characterized public life in South-East and Central Europe. Leaders in this region gradually adopted and adapted this new view of “corruption.” As such, denouncing “corrupt” acts generated a particular form of political and social capital in an emerging order in South-East and Central Europe.

The Age of Algorithms

This workshop was organized within the framework of the NEC-TECH research group: *Technology, Culture, Humanities*, coordinated by Andreea EȘANU and Răzvan NICOLESCU, funded by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P8-8.1-PRE-HE-ORG-2023-0055, within PNCDI IV.

June 20, 2024

Conveners: Cristian DUCU, Andreea EȘANU, Răzvan NICOLESCU, Andrei SIPOȘ

Welcome remarks: Valentina SANDU-DEDIU

Participants:

Keynote Speaker

Tom STERKENBURG

Alexandru BĂLĂȘESCU, Roxana BRATU, Richard DAVID-RUS, Alexandru DRAGOMIR, Cristian DUCU, Andreea EȘANU, Răzvan NICOLESCU, Elena POPA, Chiara WÜLLER

The aim of this multidisciplinary workshop was to address and explore various dimensions of what we may now call “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.



The keynote speech was held by Tom Sterkenburg and addressed the complex topic of machine learning: *The Epistemic Core of Machine Learning*. Tom Sterkenburg is an Emmy Noether junior group leader at the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy (MCMP, LMU Munich) for the project *From Bias to Knowledge: The Epistemology of Machine Learning*. This project builds on his earlier German Science Foundation-funded project on *The Epistemology of Statistical Learning Theory*. He is also a fellow of the Konrad Zuse School of Excellence in

Reliable AI and a member of the Young Center of the LMU Center for Advanced Studies. He is particularly interested in applying the mathematical field of machine learning theory to philosophical questions around machine learning and artificial intelligence.

The event focused on interdisciplinary aspects of artificial intelligence, and it was organized jointly by the New Europe College, Bucharest and the Institute for Logic and Data Science, with the generous support of BRD – Groupe Société Générale.



History Repeating? Researching Cold War Popular Music during the New Cold War: Perspectives, Challenges, and Ego-Histories

This roundtable discussion was organized within the research project *Rocking under the Hammer and the Sickle: Popular Music in Socialist Romania between Ideology and Entertainment (1948-1989)* supported by UEFISCDI (Postdoctoral research PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2021-0244) and hosted by the New Europe College.

April 2, 2024

Convener: Claudiu OANCEA

Welcome remarks: Professor Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Rector, New Europe College

Participants: Alexandra BARDAN, Marco GABBAS, Mihai LUKACS, Alex MUSAT, Cătălin PARTENIE, Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Adrian SCHIFFBECK, Irena SENTEVSKA, Adelina ȘTEFAN, Kateryna YEREMIEIEVA

Recently published secondary literature on popular culture during the Cold War has started to dismantle the once all-powerful mantras that the Socialist Bloc was an impermeable system in which pop culture could exist only in samizdat form, or that state socialism was a unitary system and way of living. Transnational history, transfers, theories of consumption are useful methodological tools in dismantling simplistic perspectives, which owe more to Cold War perspectives than to historical research.

Notwithstanding, the recent events on the international arena have reminded us once more of Benedetto Croce's famous dictum: "all genuine history is contemporary history". We look at past events from the ever present and we shape our own understanding of historical events based on the cultural practices that we have adopted and on the milieu of which we are a part.

Stemming from an international workshop hosted by New Europe College on the topic of popular music across the Iron Curtain, this roundtable aimed to provide an informal space for ruminating on our ego-histories, not just as personal experiences shared socially, but as an intellectual exercise on how our own cultural experiences form the scientific perspective from which we analyze culture. In this particular case, pop culture as a global phenomenon that we experience locally can prove a most valuable realm of investigative ego-history and present context analysis.



Roundtable on a recently published book: Costică Brădăţan, “Elogiu eşecului. Patru pilde de umilitate” (Spandugino, 2024)

May 20, 2024

Participants: Costică BRĂDĂŢAN, Andrei CORNEA, Cristian PREDA, Ioan STANOMIR

Moderator: Cristian PĂTRĂŞCONIU

For the book *In Praise of Failure. Four Lessons in Humility* (Harvard University Press, 2023; *Elogiu eşecului. Patru pilde de umilitate*, translated by Vlad Russo, Spandugino, 2024), Costică Brădăţan received the PROSE Award for Excellence in Philosophy from the Association of American Publishers in 2024.



Costică Brădăţan is Professor of Humanities at Texas Tech University, USA, and Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the University of Queensland, Australia. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest and he holds a Ph.D. in the same discipline from Durham University (U.K.). Editor of philosophy and religion at the Los Angeles Review of Books, coordinator of two book collections, "Philosophical Filmmakers" (Bloomsbury) and "No Limits" (Columbia University Press), he published essays and editorials in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *TIME Magazine*. His books, in which he argues for an enduring, transformative philosophy by recovering long-ignored sources such as myth, literature, mysticism, and the history of art and film, have been lauded and translated into numerous languages: *The Other Bishop Berkeley: An Exercise in Reenchantment* (Fordham University Press, 2006); *Dying for Ideas: The Dangerous Lives of the Philosophers* (Bloomsbury, 2015; Humanitas, 2018); and forthcoming *Against Conformity* (Princeton University Press) and *The*

Prince and the Hermit (Penguin).

„Costică Brădăţan's reflections convey a luminous resilience in the face of life's inherent conflicts. His parables of humility help us understand that the pursuit of success is often motivated by the fear of failure and that our creative endeavors are often dodges in the face of our own mortality.”

Michael S. Roth, *The Washington Post*

„Captivating and brilliant ...”

Anna Katharina Schaffner, *The Times Literary Supplement*

„Brădăţan writes with verve and elegance, every thought and every expression are harmoniously combined... I was fascinated by Brădăţan's book even if, or especially when, I was troubled by his conclusions.”

Jennifer Szalai, *The New York Times*

„Each of the four patterns of failure presented in this volume – physical, political, social, and supreme – shows us the important role philosophy plays in discovering a good life. How should we live our lives today? We are trapped in a fallen world, and the author encourages us to reflect on how to write our own life story, around and through our failures, on the horizon of a better future.”

Karen Altergott Roberts, *Englewood Review of Books*

Roundtable on a recently published book: “Sub semnul crucii. Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului și construcția de biserici în România postsocialistă” (Polirom, 2024) by Giuseppe TATEO

June 4, 2024

Translation from English by Maria-Magdalena Anghelescu; preface by Simion Pop:

Under the Sign of the Cross

The People's Salvation Cathedral and the Church-Building Industry in Postsocialist Romania

Berghahn Books, 2020

Moderator: Cătălina TESĂR

Participants: Giuseppe TATEO, Emanuela GRAMA (online), Simion POP, Anca ȘINCAN (online)

Based on extensive ethnographic research, this book delves into the thriving industry of religious infrastructure in Romania, where 4,000 Orthodox churches and cathedrals have been built in three decades. Following the construction of the world's highest Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest, the book brings together sociological and anthropological scholarship on eastern Christianity, secularization, urban change and nationalism. Reading postsocialism through the prism of religious change, the author argues that the emergence of political, entrepreneurial and intellectual figures after 1990 has happened 'under the sign of the cross'. More details at: *Sub semnul crucii* (polirom.ro)

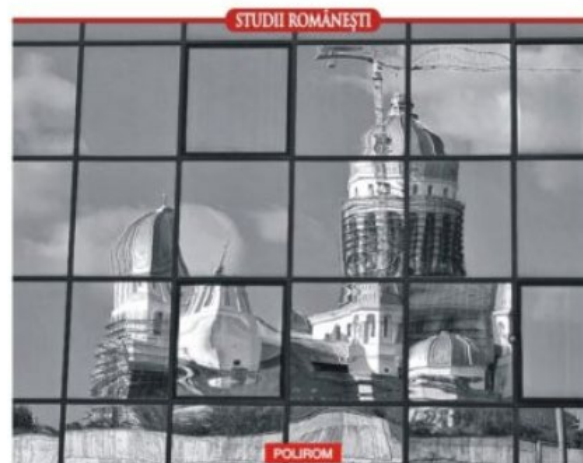
Giuseppe Tateo is postdoctoral fellow at the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest and researcher at the Bruno Kessler Foundation (Trento, Italy). After earning his PhD from the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, he taught at Charles University (Prague) and at Riga Stradins University and was a postdoctoral researcher in Bucharest, Prague and Leipzig. His current research interests focus on the link between political authority and religious architecture in post-socialist Europe with a specific focus on Romania.

Giuseppe Tateo was a fellow at the New Europe College in 2019/ 2020 with the research project titled *Archaeology of an Unfulfilled Project: Rediscovering Romania's Secular Past Through the Early History of the National Cathedral, 1881–1932*.

Giuseppe Tateo

SUB SEMNUL CRUCII

Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului
și construcția de biserici
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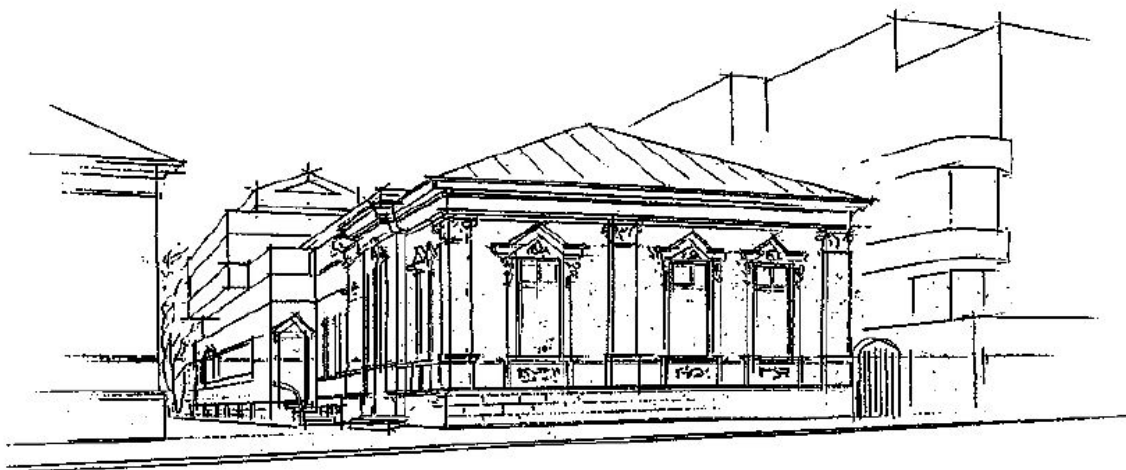


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