

Creative Dissent: Alternative Cultures during Socialism and Beyond, 1945–1991

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The comprehensive regulation of all sectors of society in the socialist states in Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe during the Cold War was not always a successful undertaking. Dissenting and disobedient voices that opposed or ignored Party directives emerged within the political, social and cultural spheres of Warsaw Pact countries, frequently circumventing official spaces and obstructing the creation and functioning of state-sanctioned, class-conscious communities. This proposed volume seeks to explore the origins, practices, and transformations over time of alternative cultures in socialist Europe.

Ordinary people, intellectuals and cultural players responded to repression and control with creativity and inventiveness. In Yugoslavia, for instance, alternative youth culture flourished, creating a parallel universe to the highly politicized official culture. In Lithuania, to satisfy the intellectual hunger for thought other than orthodox Leftism, dissidents engaged with texts of the Daoist and Zen (Chan) Buddhist traditions. Artists in Romania built their own mail-art network to connect with like-minded artists from within and beyond the Iron Curtain. And self-publishing became a widely practiced mode of knowledge distribution outside of Party-run media.

What kind of grassroots or institutionalized protest phenomena are we dealing with in the alternative cultures of dissent in the Soviet and socialist influence zone? How did alternative cultures vary from country to country? And how were they different from their “Western” counterparts? Also, how do these socialist alternative cultures connect to other international/global perspectives?

We seek contributions that will center around the following three main focus areas: alternative information networks and transfers, virtual and physical spaces of dissent, and communities of disobedience.

With regard to these focus areas, we are seeking essays that aim to answer the following questions:

- What are the main genealogical, historiographical and methodical questions we need to ask about alternative culture during socialism?

- What were the origins of opposition in the decades previous to the Cold War and how did they (if at all) differ during the Cold War? And how did modes of opposition change after the socialist states' turn towards democracy in the 1990s?
- How much was grassroots or institutionalized dissent determined by cultural transfer and the transmission of ideas across various borders?
- What kinds of dissidents and representatives of cultural dissent were referenced in non-socialist foreign media and publications?
- What were the "in-betweens" (or grey zones) in which dissent manifested itself, what actions did it generate, and what impact did it produce? How was dissent interlinked with officially sanctioned cultural forms of expression, its institutions and media?
- How can we deconstruct the role of gatekeepers, myths, images, canons and borders in the history of alternative cultures?

Please send us an extended abstract of your proposed contribution (500 words), with a brief bio (200 words) that also includes your name, affiliation and email address.

The editors will invite selected authors to present their papers at a publication workshop to be scheduled in 2020 in preparation for the volume.

Email submissions to creativedisent2020@gmail.com until June 30, 2019.

Reference:

CFP: Creative Dissent: Alternative Cultures during Socialism and Beyond, 1945-1991. In: ArtHist.net, Jun 6, 2019 (accessed Jul 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/21015>>.