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Towards a New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent

Piotr Wciślik, Maciej Maryl

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Towards a New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent

SURVEY OF THE STATE OF THE ART

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SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO:
survey@nep4dissent.eu

I. COVER LETTER

Who is asking?

This survey will contribute to core activities of the [COST Action 16213](#), *New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent* (NEP4DISSENT, 2017-2021). We are an international and multidisciplinary scholarly network some 170 people strong, funded by the COST Association in the framework of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme of the EU.

NEP4DISSENT is founded upon the conviction that resistance and dissent in former socialist Europe 1945-1989 constitutes a remarkable chapter of Europe's recent past, which not only informs in a decisive way the identities of post-socialist societies today, but has also reshaped the continent as a whole and still provides an important reference for contemporary social movements worldwide.

Building on the achievements of this field of study and the respective domain of cultural heritage, NEP4DISSENT will trigger the next phase in the discovery of that legacy through forging new, reflexive approaches and providing a platform for creating an international research network, designed to cross-fertilize and consolidate national research agendas and incubate novel collaborative initiatives, taking advantage of cutting-edge digital humanities tools and methods, as well as strengthening the capacity for dissemination through cooperation with art and cultural heritage curators.

If you are not part of our network yet, we wholeheartedly encourage you to join the activities of our Working Groups, which are described in detail [here](#). Together with this survey, we are launching our first calls for Conference Grants and Short Term Scientific Missions, and our website, www.nep4dissent.eu will become active this Fall. If you want to get involved, please indicate so when submitting your response.

What is the aim?

The aim of this survey is to review the state-of-the-art in research on the legacy of resistance and dissent in former socialist countries. We are reaching out to you to help us identify ascending research trends and to scope possibilities of international collaboration by pooling together new research agendas, approaches and data, but also by putting into focus the uneven distribution and scope of scholarly outputs between local research fields and disciplines. Leveraging the collective intelligence of an international scholarly network is instrumental when it comes to identifying a diversity of scholarly approaches to the matter and describing a vast spectrum of actors, phenomena, events and processes under study.

The main conclusions of this survey will be collected in a Joint Review Report that will not only set priorities for the activities of the NEP4DISSENT research network in the coming years, but will also aim at achieving impact on wider scholarly community in this field of research. By exploring the emerging trends in this research area, we hope this state-

of-the-art report will provide a helpful reference for scholars, evaluators, publishers, funders and policymakers, not least when it comes to requesting funding, evaluating such requests or making editorial decisions.

The report will provide an overview of the results of this survey, interpreted against research on the state-of-the-art carried out by NEP4DISSENT Working Groups. It will be edited by the Action's Core Group. In addition to the overview of the state-of-the-art, the report might also contain a supplement anthology of full responses to the survey, depending on their number, length and overall coherence of the submissions. Regardless whether your contribution will be referenced or quoted in the report, or published in full, you will be listed as a contributor to the report and to the project.

The report will be published as an open-access e-book and actively disseminated to the stakeholder groups mentioned above. English will be the language of the report, however if you'd like to choose another language for your contribution, you are free to do so.

What we want to know?

The questionnaire consists of six parts coterminous with and relevant to the activities of NEP4DISSENT Working Groups (outlined in more detail below):

- 1. Culture under Surveillance**
- 2. Culture in the Grey Zone**
- 3. Alternative Cultures**
- 4. Cultural Memory of Dissent**
- 5. Mediating Research through Technology**
- 6. Art and Cultural Heritage Curation**

We are well aware that not all the parts may be relevant to your expertise, but we expect that you will be able to address at least one of them.

Each part contains a short introduction of the main theme together with some additional questions which may guide your response. In general, given the aim discussed above, we seek for the following information:

What are key works and projects that took up the research in question? What approaches have been used? What are the key findings and results? Which historical actors, processes objects and phenomena has been well studied in this context, and which remain underrepresented? What aspects have been approached from a comparative or transnational perspective, and which are understood mostly as local developments? What is the institutional context of research and cultural heritage activities in the respective domain and which are the key governmental and/or non-governmental actors?

What is the format?

The responses should have a form of a research statement, app. 1,500 words long (however longer and shorter contributions are also welcome). Guided by the survey questions, you may wish to offer reflections on a single field or even a case study closely related to your own research interests. Or you may wish to offer a broader overview. We imagine it as something similar to a response to a survey circulated by a scholarly journal.

The responses, written in the text editor of your choosing, should be formatted according to the Response Sheet appended at the end of this document. Please send your responses to survey@nep4dissent.eu by 30 September 2018.

II. NEP4DISSENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is structured according to the interests of NEP4DISSENT Working Groups, defining their research priorities and proposing a set of guiding questions to which these translate. You are not required to refer to all of these questions in your response. You may wish to offer reflections on a single field or even a case study closely related to your own research interests. Or you may wish to offer a broader overview.

1. Culture under Surveillance

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will explore the effects of exposure of culture under socialism to state surveillance, ranging from monitoring, through censorship to political and judiciary interventions, as well as the counter-surveillance activities and practices of Western cultural diplomacy, transnational institutions, such as Radio Free Europe, and émigré cultural centers.*

Guiding Questions:

- How does recent research address the question of the impact of censorship, the activities of the security apparatus and professional organizations (such as writers' unions, filmmakers' associations) on cultural life, on creators of culture, on institutions and events, and on cultural objects and repertoires of practices?
- How has Western, transnational and émigré counter-surveillance effort been approached and assessed in recent scholarship?
- How has surveillance and counter-surveillance been represented in artistic and cultural production, including literature, music, film and performance art? How have these representations evolved across the 1989 divide? How different approaches connect aesthetic and political dimension of these representations?

2. Culture in the Grey Zone

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will study concepts used in recent research on the resistance and dissent under state socialism to comprehend the grey zone phenomenon, understood as an ambiguous realm of negotiated space for expression situated on the borders between the domain of official and unofficial.*

Guiding Questions:

- Which disciplines (history, anthropology, political science) employ conceptualizations of the grey zone as an analytical category in recent research?

- What concepts are used in recent research to address grey zone phenomena? Is there an agreed upon definition or a set of definitions of the grey zone? Is the category used in singular or in plural, as multiple and possibly mutually intertwined zones?
- To what do recent conceptualizations refer, when speaking of the grey zone: distinct social or professional groups, sets of practices, mentalities and values?
- Are these conceptualizations context-independent, or context-sensitive, including geographical, cultural, or habitual factors that affect the grey zone? Do they employ gender analysis? Do they take the special position of minority groups into account? Do they register conceptual change over time or local use variations?

3. Alternative Cultures

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will study alternative cultures in the former Eastern Bloc. By 'alternative culture' we understand broadly communities formed around cultural practices beyond the state-sanctioned mainstream of socialism, local as well as transnational circuits of unlicensed communication and their media, as well as marginal cultural spaces, either physical, such as home theatres, student clubs, or discotheques, or virtual spaces, such as periodicals.*

Guiding Questions:

- What understandings of alternative culture, as defined above, are exhibited in recent research and what are the methodological and theoretical challenges faced by scholarship on alternative culture?
- What kind of social groups, cultural practices and strategies have been associated with alternative culture in Eastern Europe under communist hegemony?
- Has the relationship between state-licensed culture and alternative culture been defined in terms of coexistence, interdependence, conflict or still differently? How the former has shaped the latter?
- What forms of expression have been designated as alternative media and what media strategies are considered instrumental for the alternative cultural identity?
- Which physical and virtual spaces have been occupied by alternative culture and what kind of significance has been attached to these settings?
- How have processes of cultural transfer and exchange, both among the former socialist countries and between these countries and the rest of the world, affected understanding of alternative culture on both sides of the divided continent?

4. Cultural Memory of Dissent

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will explore the cultures of remembrance of pre-1989 dissent across Europe, with the aim of examining the dissident legacy in both official and alternative narratives as well as the reception of such narratives; the contemporary uses of the dissident*

past; and the efforts aimed at integrating this legacy in the broader European culture of remembrance and their impact.

Guiding Questions:

- What can we learn from recent research about how dissent is remembered, commemorated, reenacted? Which institutions are considered central for canonizing remembrance, and why? What roles are transnational actors, contacts and networks are said to have played in such processes of institutionalization?
- What considerations guided the decisions on preserving the cultural heritage of resistance and dissent, and with what effect? To what extent and how has the ‘dissident heritage’ been digitized? What kinds of documents and archival collections are considered emblematic for representations and narratives of dissent? What are notable gaps in remembrance, what has been retrospectively ignored or overlooked and why?
- How has recent research scrutinized the public functions and significance of remembering dissent since 1989? How do stories about dissent are made to fit into broader stories about the past (such as the discussions of totalitarianism)? How have these stories legitimized or challenged the post-89 order? How and by whom has the language related to dissent and its aforementioned alternatives been appropriated since 1989, and how has this language been transformed as a result? How have the just mentioned questions interacted with the biographies and activities of former dissidents?

5. Mediating Research through Technology

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will examine digital research practices in the study of the legacy of resistance and dissent in former socialist countries, in order to map the needs of research community against the available digital infrastructure and to identify the potential for technical innovation in this regard.*

Guiding Questions:

- How would you describe the the digital dimension of your research into history and culture (esp., but not limited to Eastern European cultures of dissent) including its limitations and challenges? This could encompass your sources, methods or your tools to capture evidence/data, structure, how you document, annotate, visualize/analyze and/or encode your evidence, or, even, your expectations from what a digital approach might bring to your research.
- In terms of applying digital methods to your research, please describe any people, projects, groups, publications, or resources that you see as exemplary for your field, or would like to take as inspiration for your own approach/work.

6. Art and Cultural Heritage Curation

Scope: *NEP4DISSENT will serve as a mutually-beneficial interface between the GLAM community (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) and scholars working on the legacy of dissent and resistance in former socialist countries, by both identifying best practices of their cooperation, and by exploring how exhibition practices of the period were themselves forms of resistance and dissent.*

Guiding Questions:

- What role have exhibitions and/or other forms of popular representations played in shaping public understanding of opposition/dissent to communist rule in the years since 1989? Please identify one or more examples which have set out to narrate opposition/dissent to a non-specialist audience. What circumstances and interests lay behind these representations of opposition? What material or historical evidence has been employed? And what representational strategies have been employed to produce affect and / or understanding? If appropriate, please also reflect on the critical responses which it received.
- How can exhibition practices in Eastern Europe under communist rule be understood as forms of opposition and critique. Exhibitions - for the purpose of this survey - can be understood as a relatively wide spectrum of activities from displays of art and performances in private homes or churches, through to the activities of national institutions; they might be a highly ephemeral event or not. Please identify an example/s from any setting in the 1948-1991 period which offered some kind of escape from and/or critique of the strictures or priorities of 'official' culture? What was exhibited? Who was the author/s of the event/exhibition? What kind of public was gathered? And what was the response - If any - of the authorities?

III. RESPONSE SHEET

PERSONAL DATA:

<i>Name and Surname</i>	
<i>Affiliation</i>	
<i>Gender</i>	
<i>Country</i>	
<i>Home website</i>	
<i>Email address:</i>	
<i>Research interests [use keywords and short expressions separated by semicolons]</i>	
<i>Bibliography [include your most relevant publications]</i>	

RESPONSE TO: *[Indicate relevant part of the questionnaire. Should you wish to answer more than one question, add additional “your response” and “relevant resources” section for each part of the questionnaire you are covering]*

- 1. Culture under Surveillance**
- 2. Culture in the Grey Zone**
- 3. Alternative Cultures**
- 4. Cultural Memory of Dissent**
- 5. Mediating Research through Technology**
- 6. Art and Cultural Heritage Curation**

YOUR RESPONSE: *[Type your response here]*

RELEVANT RESOURCES: *[Please provide bibliographic citations, and links to projects, data etc., and annotate if appropriate]*

PERSONAL DATA CLAUSES:

- *I do agree / I do not agree* to the publication of an excerpt or the whole response to this questionnaire in the Joint Review Report of the COST Action NEP4DISENT (CA16213) under [CC-BY license 4.0](#).*
- *I do agree / do not agree* to have my name and surname disclosed in the report.
delete unnecessary.

DATA PROTECTION DISCLAIMER

By providing your personal data you acknowledge that the colleagues from our COST Action who will write and edit the report, will prepare and present anonymised statistics about the respondents in the report. We take all necessary precautions to store the responses safely, according to local data protection laws. Your responses will not be disclosed to any third party. Access to your responses with your personal data will be granted only to you and the participants of the NEP4DISSENT research network, who will author and edit the report, and to COST Association officials, if required. We will not transfer the responses to any third party.

Without your expressed consent (see the above clauses), we will not cite or mention your name in the report. We will be happy to cite you anonymously, if you so desire. If you choose to provide us with your name and surname and give us permission to cite your response, your input will be quoted in the Report according to customary standards and your name will be feature on the list of contributors published in the Report.

Where to send?

Please send your responses to survey@nep4dissent.eu