

**CfP-International Conference: THE STATE-SOCIALIST  
WORLD TURNED GLOBAL: CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS  
DURING THE COLD WAR**

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

April 15, 2023

Location:

Romania

Subject Fields:

Area Studies, Contemporary History, Cultural History / Studies, Eastern Europe History / Studies, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology

**CfP International Conference**

**THE STATE-SOCIALIST WORLD TURNED GLOBAL:  
CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS DURING THE COLD WAR**

October 5-6, 2023

University of Bucharest, Romania

**Submission deadline: April 15, 2023**

We invite submissions of abstracts for an international conference to take place in 5 - 6 October 2023 at the University of Bucharest, that reflects on the cultural relations of the state-socialist countries between the 1950s and 1980s, from the perspective of “cultural internationalism” and “cultural transnationalism” within the state-socialist world, and beyond.

The call is based on four recent theoretical developments. Firstly, following Apor

and Iordachi's framework regarding the use of transnational approaches on the field of communist studies (Apor & Iordachi 2013), we are interested in how the state-socialist regimes were influenced in their developments by their interactions with each other, and by their collaborations and exchanges with countries outside of the State-Socialist World. Here we particularly encourage the East-West perspective, going beyond the already privileged topic regarding the Soviet Russia and United States interactions; and the East-South perspective. -

Secondly, we encourage approaches dealing with the way in which institutions, actors, events, and values were shaped by the transnational collaborations and circulations, and how, due to these cultural encounters, their dynamics confront the local or regional model.

Thirdly, we are interested in approaches that challenge the narrative of the East-West divide and opposition, favouring the viewpoint of interconnection, exchanges, and cooperation between the two - or multiple - political systems. In this respect, we consider useful the employment of the concepts of "the nylon curtain" (Peteri 2006) and the "semi-permeable membrane" (David-Fox 2014), that emphasize the porous nature of cultural borders.

Forthly, the call's transnational perspective can be placed in relation to the spatial turn in humanities and social sciences, "which insists on the fact that the 'areas' in area studies are historically constructed and therefore the ever-changing products of their times" (Middell 2019).

We invite proposals that explore the different types of links established by (cultural) institutions and individuals; the role played by cultural networks in the establishment of transnational - in some cases even transcontinental - connections during the Cold War; and the cultural circulations, exchanges and entanglements - circulation of people, ideas, knowledge, practices, models and representations - between state-socialist countries, on one hand, and between state-socialist countries and the rest of the world, on the other hand.

The conference aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of culture in the context of the Cold War (as part of Cultural Cold War studies), its political role in democratic and non-democratic configurations, and the potential of the cultural exchanges to foster cultural change and transform political culture.

Its goal is to also contribute to the development of a new perspective regarding cultural collaborations within the State-Socialist World, and beyond it; that is a perspective which is less biased by the concept of the "Socialist bloc" as a monolithic

political construct or by the traditional, uncritical approaches on the relationship between East and West, East and South, etc.

We invite scholars from various disciplines, fields, and methodological perspectives to propose papers within, but not restricted to, the following topics:

#### 1. Patterns

- To identify types of cultural exchanges, circulations and entanglements within the State-Socialist World and beyond;
- to identify preferences or opportunities for cultural collaborations between certain countries and regions, and their motivation;
- to retrace cultural exchanges, contacts and networks by focusing on case-studies;
- to recover cultural outputs of different genres and with different effects connected to the experience of exchange and circulation.

#### 1. Institutions

- To discuss the role of cultural institutions in organizing the exchanges and how these related to other cultural programs and to the general institutional mission;
- to identify the poles of decision-making for cultural exchanges and how did institutional policies connect to political discourse;
- to establish how did different institutions converge or, on the contrary, jam each other in shaping international cultural relationships.

#### 1. Soft-power

- To discuss the role of culture in cultural diplomacy and in the political discourse of state-socialist countries as ideological units promoting the values of Socialism. The cultural policies of communist regimes underwent a rapid series of changes along their history, that affected exchanges and agreements with other countries, within and outside the Bloc. Cultural exchanges and circulations responded to these transformations, even if sometimes anachronistically. Therefore, it is important to identify events and treatises that laid the foundations and subsequently transformed the exchanges among socialist countries, and of the socialist countries with the rest of the world.

### 1. Reevaluating the “official” narrative

- To highlight political, institutional, cultural and artistic practices that transcend or challenge the common knowledge about different stages of culture under communist rule;
- to pinpoint the ways in which the cultural interactions of the state-socialist countries negotiated their home experiences and limits, their specificities, with the differences (in terms of official discourse, cultural practices, organization and display, locations, etc) encountered in other countries.

### Timeline

The deadline for submission of abstracts (no more than 500 words, in English) is **April 15, 2023**. They should be sent to: [irina.matei@fspub.unibuc.ro](mailto:irina.matei@fspub.unibuc.ro) and [caterina.preda@unibuc.ro](mailto:caterina.preda@unibuc.ro) .

The authors will be notified on the acceptance by **May 15, 2023**.

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