The 'iron curtain' has come to be associated with a host of social, political and cultural evils perpetrated by the Soviet-backed Communist regimes that ruled countries in central and eastern Europe from the end of the Second World War until the early 1990s. Behind the iron curtain, state control over every aspect of daily life gave rise to corruption, oppression, deprivation, ethnic conflict, censorship, and general atmosphere of isolation from western democracies and a deep paranoia about western hegemony. Nearly three decades after waves of citizen-led democratic revolutions washed over the former Communist bloc, leaving newly independent nations in their wake, the iron curtain and its legacy continues to leave an indelible mark on contemporary geopolitical relations as well as the socio-cultural development of communities affected both directly and indirectly by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Even popular culture reflects an ongoing preoccupation with the iron curtain era, as evidenced by the popularity of television series such as Chernobyl and The Americans.

Of course, it is possible to identify contemporary echoes of the power dynamics that underpinned the iron curtain. Evidence has confirmed reports of Russian meddling in United States elections in 2016 and 2018 as well as in the 2016 referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain in the European Union. Human rights abuses in Russia and the 2014 annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation have triggered international outrage, with the latter action being punished by Russia's expulsion from the G7. Recent elections around the world have granted power to far-right political parties and political leaders with authoritarian ambitions that are have been compared to the dictatorial regimes that ruled the former Communist bloc countries. In an era where quality journalism is delegitimised, pro-Government propaganda is promoted as 'truth', democratic processes are undermined, education and research are marginalised, the arts and other platforms for dissent are neutralised, and laws are enacted to disenfranchise and discriminate against certain groups, we are once again bearing witness to the evils associated with the iron curtain.
At the same time, it is important to acknowledge any benefits that arose from the Communist regimes who took power at a time when post-war Europe was healing and rebuilding itself. Actions that may seem evil when considered in terms of the values and assumptions of Western democracies may be understood differently when viewed from other perspectives. It is therefore important to abandon the Manichean views of good and evil that prevailed during the heyday of the Communist bloc, and instead strive for more nuanced evaluations of the evils of the iron curtain and its legacy.

Key Topics

Accordingly, this project aims to provide a platform for interdisciplinary engagement arising from presentations, papers, panels, workshops, readings, performances, screenings and installations on any aspect of the iron curtain and its legacy. Potential topics for exploration include, but are not limited to:

- ghost towns (e.g. Chernobyl) and former military basis
- religion in totalitarian states
- technology, industry and innovation behind the iron curtain
- purges, persecution and punishment
- evil in medicine (e.g. banning of abortions in Romania)
- dissent, rebellion, uprising
- diaries, letters, oral histories and personal accounts (Samizdat)
- education and the role of schools in supporting 'evil'
- contemporary tourist attractions and their meaning (e.g. remnants of Berlin Wall, Lenin's Mausoleum)
- lessons to be learned from the iron curtain era
- parallels between the iron curtain era and the contemporary political climate—depictions of the iron curtain era in film, photography, literature, music and visual arts

What To Send

The aim of this inclusive interdisciplinary conference and collaborative networking event is to bring people together and encourage creative conversations in the context of a variety of formats: papers, seminars, workshops, storytelling, performances, poster presentations, problem-solving sessions, case studies, panels, q&a's, round-tables etc. Creative responses to the subject, such as poetry/prose, short film screenings/original drama, installations and alternative presentation styles that engage the audience and foster debate are particularly encouraged. Please feel free to put forward proposals that you think will get the message across, in whatever form.

At the end of the conference we will be exploring ways in which we can develop the discussions and dialogues in new and sustainable inclusive interdisciplinary directions, including research, workshops, publications, public interest days, associations, developing courses etc which will help us make sense of the topics discussed during the meeting. There is an intention, subject to the discussions which emerge during the course of the meeting, to form a selective innovative interdisciplinary publication to engender further research and collaboration. 300 word proposals, presentations, abstracts and other forms of contribution and participation should be
submitted by Friday 4th September 2020. Other forms of participation should be discussed in advance with the Organising Chairs.

All submissions will be at least double reviewed, under anonymous (blind) conditions, by a global panel drawn from members of the Project Team, The Development Team and the Advisory Board. In practice our procedures usually entail that by the time a proposal is accepted, it will have been triple and quadruple reviewed. You will be notified of the panel's decision by Friday 18th September 2020.

If your submission is accepted for the conference, a full draft of your contribution should be submitted by Friday 15th January 2021.

Abstracts and proposals may be in Word, RTF or Notepad formats with the following information and in this order:

a) author(s)
b) affiliation as you would like it to appear in the programme,
c) email address,
d) title of proposal,
e) type of proposal e.g. paper presentation, workshop, panel, film, performance, etc,
f) body of proposal,
g) up to 10 keywords.

E-mails should be entitled: Political Evils Submission

Where To Send

Abstracts should be submitted simultaneously to the Organising Chair and the Project Administrator:
Natalia Kaloh Vid: natalia@progressiveconnexions.net
Len Capuli (Project Administrator):
bratislavaevils@progressiveconnexions.net

Kontakt

E-Mail: natalia@progressiveconnexions.net
URL: https://www.progressiveconnexions.net/interdisciplinary-projects/evil/political-evils/conferences/