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Dissidents, Rebels, and Everyday Heroes

New perspectives in the digital archiving of cultural resistance under state socialism

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present and study how a digital archive can shape and create new ways of producing, publishing, and studying historical sources. Based on our analysis of the COURAGE Registry about cultural dissent under state socialism in Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century (and focusing on collections about environmental issues in this registry), we seek to understand how different private, amateur, and professional archivists have shaped the scientific and public legacy of cultural dissent under state socialism.

The COURAGE Registry conveys a unique view of the history of the Soviet Bloc, providing an assemblage of documents concerning people, groups, institutions, events, and pieces from the time. Together, they tell an alternative story of cultural opposition under socialism, shedding light on important but until now marginalized problems, topics, and actors. Our results have shown that cultural opposition in the Registry is understood and constructed as a wide range of forms of engagement and activities, and it is not limited to specific high-cultural or direct political products. The structure of the COURAGE Registry creates a balance among collections that are very diverse in form, and its linked data structure helps connect the information and stories compiled in it. The COURAGE Registry enables

researchers to use it as a tool with which to build their own scientific narratives about dissent under socialism.

Introduction: Cultural opposition as topic of historical inquiry

Resources for scientific study of twentieth-century history, including the history of the Soviet Bloc, are multifaceted. Archival work in state and private archives, statistical analyses, field research in museums, the study of different media sources and oral history data, and innumerable other methods of study are used to conduct historical and social scientific research about the period. Nevertheless, the contributions of post-socialist states to the transnational development of the cultural heritage agenda remain largely unexplored. In the case of some Eastern European countries, several studies analyzed opposition (somewhat narrowly) as instances of collective action, yet in most of these countries, there are simply not enough empirical and archival sources to provide an adequate foundation for profound comparative analyses. Thus, the topic of cultural opposition and the spread of political nonconformist attitudes does not have a "quantitative character."[1] Perhaps only the *samizdat* literature[2] and some avantgarde and art movements[3] have been more or less systematically documented and archived in recent decades. In the case of anniversaries (e.g., 1956 in Hungary, 1968 in Czechoslovakia, or 1989) and sub-themes, of course, numerous document collections were created from selected and intuitively evaluated sources from the world of cultural oppositional activities in the Eastern Bloc.

Since 1989, countries of the former Eastern Bloc have been in the process of reckoning with their recent past. In the first two decades after the regime change, opposition was typically understood in both the public discourse and the scholarly debates[4] as some form of open or

active political resistance against communist governments.[5] The COURAGE (Cultural Opposition – Understanding the CultuRal HeritAGE of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries) H2020 project[6] proposed a broader concept of cultural opposition based on the simple historical fact that many cultural groups were also branded or identified by the regimes as oppositional. Although they did not have any explicit political program, they were still forced underground by the police. This was the case throughout Eastern Europe for avantgarde artists and theatres, alternative religious and lifestyle communities, and punk bands.[7] The COURAGE project shifted focus from former narratives about "political opposition" in the sphere of culture and started to work with a more dynamic concept of cultural resistance and resilience. As we pursued our study of the heritage of cultural resistance, it became increasingly clear that the concept of opposition itself was a historical product which continuously changed over the course of the period in question.

Nothing shows this historicity better than the fact that many of the collections about cultural opposition in Eastern Europe uncovered and registered by the COURAGE project were created as acts of resistance in the first place. The creation of these collections was part of an array of clandestine activities organized by underground movements and individuals (parts of civil rights movements) in the 1970s and 1980s, when even hiding and preserving documents, objects, footage, etc. could, in many countries and many periods during state socialism, lead to political sanctions.

Immediately after the change of regime in 1989/90, the rehabilitation of victims and historical justice became a kind of moral compulsion or exigency.[8] The political debates concerning restitution, compensation and identification of victims, de-collectivization, and reconciliation have greatly contributed to bringing forms of political resistance to the forefront and furthering efforts to archive them. Thus, the history of transitional justice after 1989 determined both the selections of the private collections on political opposition, which became open to the public, and the meanings of these collections in the emerging cultural

heritage of the socialist past. The COURAGE project sought to demonstrate that there are other "hidden transcripts" of cultural opposition, which have not yet reached the mainstream discourses on cultural opposition but which can also become significant.[9]

Our central questions in this paper are the following: How does the picture presented by the COURAGE Registry of collections of cultural dissent differ from other pictures conveyed by other projects on the topic of cultural dissent? Which are the most intriguing new narratives? Which patterns do we see among the people and institutions featured prominently, and which elements are absent or overlooked? How does this digital repository shape and alter our understanding of cultural opposition under socialism? We seek to answer these questions by presenting the history of the building of the COURAGE Registry, which is a unique database containing various kinds and levels of archival documents and research materials on cultural dissent in possibly the widest sense of the term. The principal objective of COURAGE was to create this electronic registry of representative online and offline, private and public collections of cultural opposition in all the former socialist countries in Europe and to study the origins, uses, and changing roles of these collections in their social, political, and cultural contexts. Our paper here aims to analyze the structure of the Registry and discuss some major characteristics of its linked data structure. Additionally, through a case study of collections about environmental movements on which documents have been archived in the Registry, we will illustrate some possibilities for doing research with the COURAGE Registry.

The making of the Registry: between repository, research infrastructure, and archive

EU science policy makers strongly encourage the creation of components of research infrastructures such as digital repositories of documents, as this kind of infrastructure facilitates research and makes documents and information more broadly available. The COURAGE Registry[10] serves as a new type of digital information storage node between repository, research infrastructure, and archive, and it functions as a representation of cultural dissent itself, thus prompting reflection on earlier traditions and at the same time creating new knowledge patterns. In it, we find both historical research on collections of cultural dissent under socialism in Eastern Europe and copies of original documents from that era. Both the historical research and the documents are presented online in a repository based on a state-of-the-art linked data structure. But the COURAGE Registry provides more than just descriptions of relevant items of cultural dissent under socialism found in many different European countries: it also includes descriptions of the collections and of the stories behind them, as well as presentations of important figures and events, crucial institutions, key publications and exhibitions, and significant groups of artists, intellectuals, scientists, activists, and the like. The collections described in the Registry are located in various types of archives, museums, repositories, etc. throughout the region.

How can and how should a research infrastructure as vast as the COURAGE Registry (or any big research infrastructure for that matter) be used? One of the most intuitive ways of using this kind of infrastructure is to browse or to search it for relevant items (much as one would in any other catalogue) to be found in places where data/documents/historically important

sources are present, for example in libraries, museums, and (data) archives. An entirely different approach is to use the catalogue of the COURAGE Registry as a representative and informative index of the overall endeavors undertaken by the actors in cultural dissent movements and initiatives in the countries that were included in the project. This would, however, not be methodologically entirely precise, since there is no accurate way to map *all* the existing collections of cultural dissent under state socialism in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century or to offer systematic samples of items from these collections (in the sense of using a statistically correct sampling process) for the Registry (see the selection process in the following subchapter). Thus, the Registry does not aim to represent a perfect sample of the entirety of the relevant collections, institutions, events, people, or groups.

This database of collections on cultural dissent under socialism conveys a unique view of the history of the Soviet Bloc. A third possible dimension of doing research with a research infrastructure such as this one is to see it precisely as a way of conveying a picture: the Registry constitutes a compilation of stories about the histories and contents of collections on cultural dissent, an assemblage of documents concerning people and events and also pieces of art of that time which together tell a completely new story of cultural opposition under socialism. COURAGE preferred a broad, inclusive understanding of the term "culture," using a Geertzian approach that provides a good basis for grasping culture as embedded in symbolic meanings, as a "web" that surrounds us, as a "text" for which the key to interpretation lies in the search for patterns of meanings. Culture to Geertz is in the cognition, in people's heads, in their acts, in the ways in which people communicate and lead their lives.[11] Cultural opposition embraces a broad spectrum of acts, expressions and performances of culture, politics and everyday life, whether performed by individuals, organized groups, organizations, or loose networks. In addition, culture is a continuously contested term, which is permanently "on the make," as it is based on the need to understand "The Other," which reflects our construction of this Other.[12]

Methodology and the structure of the Registry

Since the end of the twentieth century, large-scale digitization efforts have been undertaken in many traditional European archives and elsewhere, making existing documents more easily accessible. One of the biggest European flagships in this venture is the *Europeana project*, but digitization has been one of the major activities of traditional archives all over Europe. Such digital archives typically provide access to a digitized document also present in physical form and some basic archival metadata about it. Archivists and archives thus provide the basic materials for scholars, but naturally users are the ones who interpret the documents.

Digital academic repositories provide other types of materials for researchers as well. They store not only digitized/digitally born documents which could be of interest to social and human scientists, but also research materials produced and/or collected by researchers themselves (such as interviews conducted by them, survey data, measurement data, etc.). Things deposited in such repositories usually offer ample testimony to the efforts of scholars to produce materials which can then be used in scientific endeavors.

The Registry of the COURAGE project is a combination of these two approaches, and it differs from conventional archival databases due to the particular "collecting-oneself"[13] character of many of the collections. As Richard Brown and Beth Davis-Brown[14] wrote, "Archives are the manufacturers of memory and not merely the guardians of it." The Registry showcases important or typical documents of cultural opposition, and it also provides data for further research projects. The descriptions of the collections on cultural dissent that are featured in the Registry are the result of scientific undertakings including interviews, field studies, desktop research, etc., which are then summarized in descriptions and analyses shown

in the metadata fields of the Registry. These descriptions resemble encyclopedia entries: they are rather short, scientifically well-founded, research-intensive texts. For the more than 600 collections investigated, the project described 1,100 related events, 2,000 related persons, and more than 800 organizations. 1,300 featured collection items and 1,100 illustrations enhance the presentation of the collections. The COURAGE Registry is unique because all descriptions have been produced in both the original language and in English. Due to the transnational character of the Registry, the database also places particular emphasis on minority voices, as it includes ethnic, national, and religious minorities as well. The minority voice inherently represented a certain degree of deviation from and, thus, opposition to the official internationalist ideology of state socialism. The Registry thus sheds light on important but so far marginalized problems related to minorities in the region.

A bottom-up, collaborative research methodology

We seek to further an understanding of how the collections of cultural dissent under socialism work, what functions they serve in their respective societies, and how they represent their holdings to the public. COURAGE discerned eight factors that shape the history and role of the collections under investigation:

- the genesis and trajectories of the collections
- the political and social roles of the collections
- the role of the exile
- the material culture represented in the collections
- the institutionalization of the collections (provenience)
- the working staff of the institutions & stakeholders
- the sociological character of institutions & stakeholders of the collections
- the networking and cooperative capacity of institutions & stakeholders

The Hungarian research groups of the Research Centre for Humanities and the Centre for Social Sciences in Budapest developed a *complex bottom-up, collaborative research methodology* for the data collection. At the outset, all partners (a multidisciplinary, Trans-European group of twelve academic project partners, led by the Research Centre for Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences[15]) discussed and accepted a *Work Manual*, which set the research objectives, defined the concept of collections and provided a working definition of the different types of cultural opposition. Research partners contributed to the appropriate key definitions and the typology of cultural opposition; accordingly, the project identified the main historical agents of cultural opposition. The *Work Manual* analyzed the types of collections that were produced in the former socialist countries and, in particular, how the collections created implicit or explicit understandings of the political system and what the role of the regime in the genesis of these collections was. Thus, COURAGE worked with a dynamic concept which takes into consideration both the diversity of its meanings in various nation states and periods and also the fact that the concept of cultural opposition (and its definitions) is itself a historical product.

COURAGE approached the concept of "opposition" through its agents. The *Working Manual* considered "opposition" as an individual or collective act, a performance, a creation or a symbolic expression which is expressed as a gesture of resistance/dissent towards the ruling regime. Drawing on Hirschmann's classical concept (Exit, Voice and Loyalty), agents (be they citizens or participants, consumers or members of a community) ideal typically have two possibilities to respond when they are dissatisfied: flee or raise their voice.[16] On a similar logic, the exhibition of the project, which was based on the Registry, structures the items of the Registry into three analytical categories according to the actors' relationships to the regime. "Collision" is the category that includes clashes with the system, "hidden paths" embraces items and stories that cover alternative pathways and indirect conflicts with the regime, and "exit and parallel worlds" focuses on exit strategies of dissent.[17]

Last but not least, the term "collection" can be applied to any aggregation of physical and/or digital resources. Those resources may be of any type, so examples might include aggregations of natural or created objects, born-digital items, digital surrogates of physical items, and the catalogues of such collections (as aggregations of metadata records). The criteria for aggregation may vary: e.g. by location, by type or form of the items, by provenance of the items, by source or ownership, and so on. Collections may contain any number of items and may have varying levels of permanence.[18]

Research partners agreed that for COURAGE, collections included museums, archives, photo and film repositories, oral interview records, and digital and material holdings that identify their records or parts of their records as having some relationship with cultural opposition. Thus, the project collected data on how the collections define cultural opposition, but it also reconstructed the roles of the actors who gave rise to these concepts.

The Centre for Social Sciences research subgroup completed the development of the initial structure of the Registry. The so-called *Initial Template for the Registry* was a database structure which contained data categories following the eight objectives of the project. One of the project partners, the Institute for Computer Science and Control, suggested a linked data style approach and implemented and adapted it to the project's special needs. As the next step, the Centre for Social Sciences prepared the first draft of the *Interview Guidelines*.

The *Initial Template for the Registry* was a questionnaire of open-ended and close-ended questions. It was designed to help participants obtain information relevant to the abovementioned factors through data acquisition procedures, including interviews, archival research, and digital data acquisition. The *Template* generated information about the institutional backgrounds, ownerships, contents, and histories of the collections, as well as their relationships to the cultural opposition of the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe. It was designed to be automatically translatable into an online questionnaire and a digital online database structure.

After discussions, revisions and the finalization of the *Template* and the *Interview Guideline*, and the creation of the online version of the Registry, the project partners started to test these through *pilot studies* in each of the partner institutes. The partners have taken a leading part in the development and continuous updating of the Registry. Reflecting on insights gleaned from the pilot studies, the new registry structure was finalized. A new structural principle was introduced that reflects the different needs researchers confront when describing various types of collections.

The final Registry is divided into four major panels:

1. Interview (Interviewer & Interviewee);

2. Collections;

3. Groups & Organisations;

4. Persons.

The Registry includes two further panels, which enrich the information about the collections: *Featured items*, which introduces key items in the collections, and *Events*, which adds descriptions of important changes and occurrences. A *Data Acquisition Guide* introduced the main methods of obtaining information: interviews, archival research, and digital online data acquisition. It clarified the tasks and responsibilities of researchers and provided clear information about the informed consent procedures.

Initial *Lists of Collections* were prepared by each partner. These lists served as research tools to help the national teams select the most important and representative collections in their respective countries and to present them in the COURAGE Registry (representative according to their size, type of owner, and type of content, e.g. secret police archives, film archives, museum holdings, etc). The collections to be studied were selected in cooperation with researchers in the project. The project coordinators also asked for occasional help from members of the Academic and Advisory Board of the project, and they communicated with

external experts. They carefully considered the balanced proportion of collections in terms of size, ownership, content, and the types of movements represented in the collections. The drafted lists of collections were sent out for anonymous peer-review to experts specializing in the respective countries. The completed reviews were then passed on to the partners. Based upon expert opinions and suggestions, all partners revised their lists of collections.

A crucial task of the user testing period was to ensure a smooth workflow by devising a system according to which individual entries could be submitted and checked. To ensure that the descriptions of collections and related items were thorough, methodologically coherent and consistent, each Registry entry went through several rounds of supervision and revision with the help of a dedicated quality management team of researchers.

The data structure of the Registry

Over the course of the past decade, more and more sources for historical research have been published under the paradigm of Linked Data in the Semantic Web.[19]

One could take the collection of János Vargha[20] as an example with which to explain briefly the data structure and contents of the Registry. This collection contains documents related to the Danube Circle Movement, which was the most important environmental oppositional group in Hungary in the 1980s. The collection contains sources on resistance to the planned Gabčikovo-Nagymaros River Dam System, against which various Hungarian opposition groups protested. The collection has long descriptions in English and Hungarian of its history and content. The topics, types, and languages of the content help researchers find relevant research targets. The most advanced feature of the Registry is data linking, which connects various described entities via roles and events. For example, one can find the list of host institutes (operators) in chronological order for the collection; in our case, it is the Open Society Archives[21] (OSA), where seven other important hosted collections are also listed. The

collection is also linked to the founders, collectors, and owners, each presented on a separate page with further relations to other groups, events, and collections. Some authors whose works can be found in the collection are also listed. In this case, the list includes famous poets and writers (e.g. Gáspár Nagy, Miklós Mészöly, and György Petri), as well as architects (Anna Perczel) and environmentalists (János Vargha). The donation of the documents to the OSA in 2016 constituted an important event in the history of the collection. The featured item of this collection is a book titled "Danube. An Anthology, 1988", which is recorded with its bibliographic metadata in the Registry. Figure 1. offers a chart of the connections in the Registry, which one could also refer to as a knowledge graph.
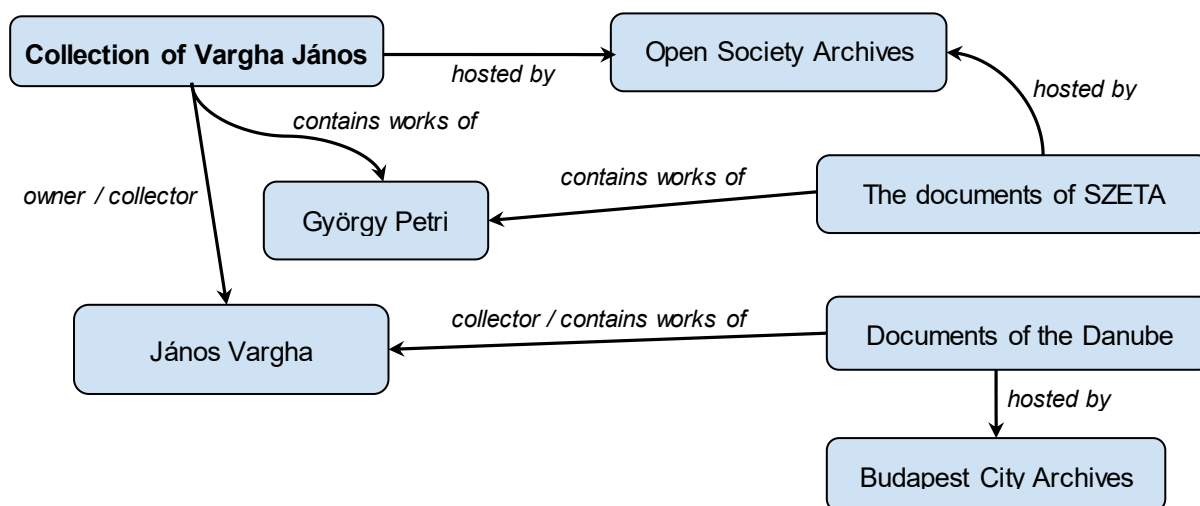
Figure 1. *A part of the COURAGE knowledge graph illustrating the collection used here as an example*

The data schema of the Registry (called the COURAGE Ontology[22]) defines the types of described entities and the potential connections among them. There are approximately 40 types and 30 controlled vocabularies used for description. Typical controlled vocabularies include topics, type of institution, educational background, language etc. The basic types include (geographical) place, illustration, historical item and historical property, most of the visible types are subtypes of the last two, such as 'document', 'person', 'stakeholder role', etc.

The backbone of the Registry structure is shown in Figure 2. Roles and events both represent a group of subtypes: owner, operator, collector, stakeholder, etc. for roles and acquisition, donation, loss, destruction, structural change, etc. for events. In order to generalize the connections among actors and events and roles, the notion of an agent type was introduced. Agents can be organizations, groups, and persons. The lines in Figure 2 symbolize one or more potential relations among entities: for example, an interviewee and an interviewer can be connected as persons to an interview.

This structure (the ontology) has been organically drawn from the questionnaire and the aims and requirements of the project. It constantly improved and grew as new tasks or aspects appeared in the project. For example, exhibition items and learning materials were also added as ontology types in a later phase, when the project partners organized online and on-site exhibitions and started to prepare syllabi for use in high schools and universities. The benefit of this approach is that these new data types are easily managed together with the primary research data and thus can be reused in other contexts (e.g. to select items from an exhibition to be used in learning materials). The registry is fully compliant to linked data principles.[23] The linked data store[24] and the web frontend are hosted in a virtual machine at the Research Centre of the Humanities, maintained by the Institute for Computer Science and Control. Due to its virtualization, the Registry can be easily migrated to other clouds.
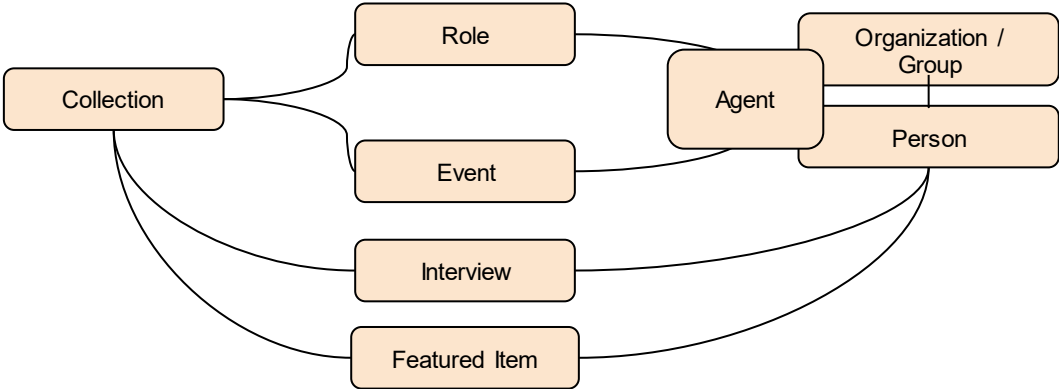

Figure 2. *The backbone structure of the COURAGE knowledge graph*

In the last few years, there have been continued efforts for the international integration of the Registry. In 2020, links of main COURAGE entities with Wikidata entities were established;[25] now there is a link for each person and organization in COURAGE to its registry page in Wikidata,[26] and through this, COURAGE is also connected to large authority databases such as VIAF, ULAN, and ISNI (see the paper cited for more details).

As a next step, in 2021, part of the COURAGE ontology was mapped to the CIDOC CRM[27] ontology, which is a widely accepted format for historical and archaeological data.[28] The core dataset of COURAGE (agents, collections, featured items) has been converted into CIDOC CRM and published on GitHub.[29] This enables future CRM datasets to be merged with the COURAGE Registry, thus facilitating research arching over several projects (unfortunately, there is only a tiny number of CRM datasets covering the twentieth century so far).

The Characteristics of the Cultural dissent in the Registry

There are currently 565 collections published in the Registry and 1,650 different persons, groups, institutions, and organizations which have at least one role assigned to them (such as operator, founder, owner of a collection, creator of a featured item, etc.). Which of these different actors have the most prominent parts in the Registry? What does this reveal about the representation of cultural dissent? To answer these questions, we will discuss the ten actors with the most roles.

The two biggest actors (György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay, 101 and 72 roles respectively) in the Registry are closely linked to each other, as they privately founded one of the biggest

contemporary art archives (Artpool) in Hungary. Avantgarde artistic movements have been documenting their own work in Eastern Europe (and Hungary in particular) rather well, and they have also been very active in the art scene.[30] Artpool is one such initiative, with these two main figures among the biggest actors in the Registry. After them, we mainly see big national archives and a big museum: the Romanian Securitate Archive (68 roles), the Croatian State Archives (56 roles), the Museum of Czech Literature (51 roles), the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (50 roles), and the Soviet Moldavian KGB (46 roles). Archives and museums are among the well-established and well-funded institutions the main function of which is to collect documents, and they are the kinds of institutions which are routinely used by historians, who are one of the main target groups of the Registry. Furthermore, many of those who were active in producing the descriptions of the collections for COURAGE come from the scientific discipline of history. Tomasz Sikorski (51 roles) is one of the people who have the most roles in the Registry. He is an artist and has documented events and artistic works in Poland, and he owns and operates numerous collections featured in the Registry. The ninth actor is Vilém Prečan (43 roles), a Czech (partly exile) historian who has been focusing since the 1950s on modern Czech history. Prečan collected numerous items (on samizdat, music, etc.) now featuring in the National Museum in Prague. The tenth actor is Václav Havel (36 roles), the acclaimed first president of Czechoslovakia after socialism and a prominent opposition leader since the 1960s. The ten biggest actors (institutions and persons) mainly represent two big topics: politics and art, which are among the biggest, most-researched topics around cultural dissent in state socialism. In this sense, the COURAGE Registry reproduces the main focus of the (undoubtedly scarce) narratives regarding cultural dissent under socialism in which these two spheres are prominent.

The number of roles is an indication which can help identify the institutions that hold many relevant collections and the individuals who, in many different ways, have shaped the legacy of cultural dissent in Europe, but it does *not* correspond to any possible notion of the

importance of a person or an institution in the history of opposition in Eastern Europe. The list of these ten actors is very heterogeneous. Moreover, the Registry itself does not identify more important and less important actors. Rather, institutions, persons, groups, and archives small and big appear side by side. Most of the actors mentioned above with the largest number of roles are big institutions, but one also finds many private, often less-known people. The fact that we can observe the links among the actors, places, collections, and stories behind these sometimes very well-known and sometimes only locally known actors is one of the biggest assets of the COURAGE Registry.

It is worth taking a closer look at the main operators of the collections that are represented in the Registry. Operators are actors (persons, institutions, or groups) who or which host, safeguard, control, and manage the operation of the collections. In the case of personal collections, the operators are the individuals who guide the access and daily lives of the collections. In other cases, the institutions holding the collections are usually the operators. There are almost 400 operators listed in the Registry. 34 percent of them are private individuals. This is the largest group among the operators in the Registry. The second biggest group (22 percent) of operators in the Registry consists of archives, while the others (for example museums, foundations, libraries, in this order) are far less numerous. Thus, the Registry represents many different actors regarding the number of collections they operate. On average, each person or institution operates 1.5 collections. The private individuals manage the fewest collections (1.2 per person) and archives are by far the biggest operators (2.5 collections per archive on average). This demonstrates that the Registry also includes smaller collections, often operated by private individuals, and not only big institutions with dozens of relevant collections. As noted earlier, small collections and non-canonical actors have been gaining importance for historical inquiries, and digitization and accessibility of smaller collections through the use of new IT tools have given more momentum to this process. None of the private individuals in the Registry who operate collections have

employees who could help them manage their collections, which is a sign of the precarity of such underfunded collections. Archives are in a better situation: 31 percent have less than 10 employees, and 46 percent of them employ 10–99 people. It is clear that the bigger an archive, the higher number of employees it has and the more numerously it is represented through collections in the Registry.

In the Registry, there are 36 different topics which can be assigned to collections and their contents. Multiple topics can be assigned to each collection.
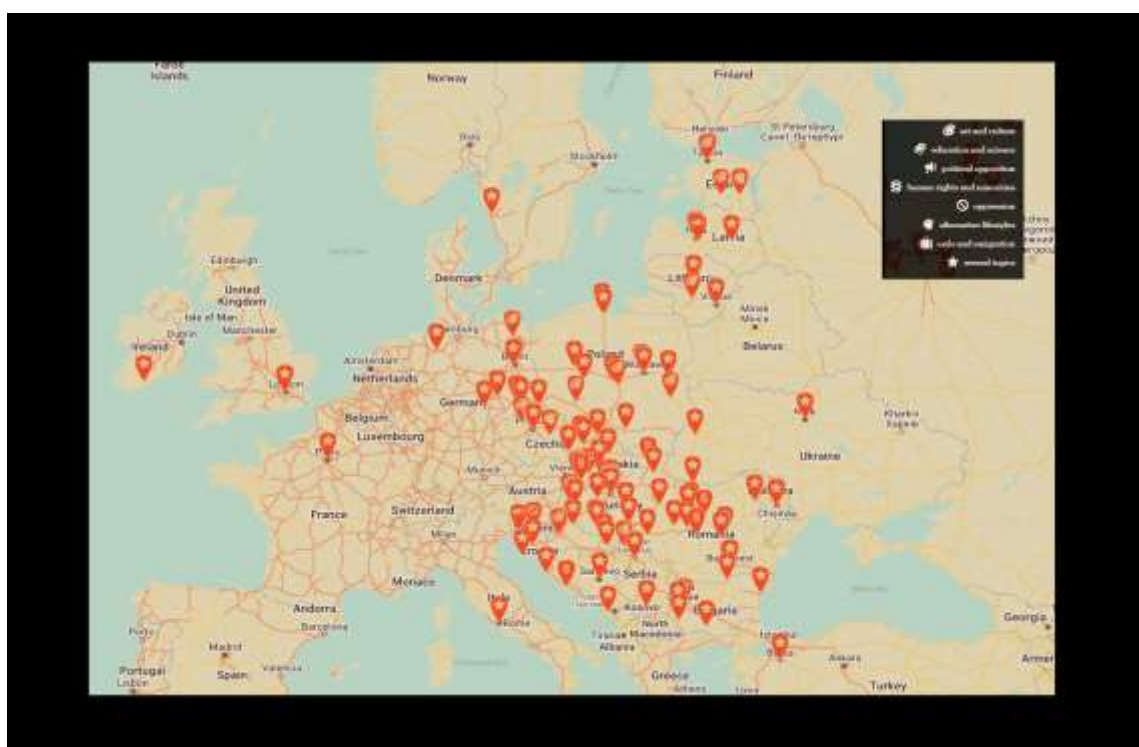

Figure 3. *Geographical locations and topics of the collections in the COURAGE Registry*

One of the most frequent topics (among collections, featured items, and the contents of the documents) in the Registry is "democratic opposition," with 616 mentions in the Registry. The second most frequent topic that is connected to the institutions is "samizdat" (487 mentions), and the third is "human rights movements" (471 mentions).

We see a similar distribution when we look at the topics of the collections in the Registry, though it is worth noting that most of the collections were assigned more than one topic, the

maximum number of topics per collection being 17. Democratic opposition is the most frequent topic, which is related to 151 collections (of the 565 collections in the Registry). There are 116 collections associated with samizdat in the Registry and 112 associated with human rights movements. Approximately half of the collections on these three topics are run by government or state institutions, which corresponds to the overall distribution of the different types of operators in the Registry.

Topic %					
1. democratic opposition	27%	13. visual arts	12%	25. critical science	4%
2. samizdat	21%	14. music	10%	26. environmental protection	4%
3. human rights	20%	15. culture	10%	27. film	4%
4. alternative lifestyle	18%	16. survivors of persecution	9%	28. party dissident	4%
5. emigration	17%	17. fine arts	8%	29. alternative education	3%
6. literature	17%	18. minority movements	6%	30. folk	3%
7. avantgarde	14%	19. student movements	6%	31. media arts	3%
8. censorship	14%	20. theater	6%	32. philosophical movements	3%
9. religious	14%	21. independent	5%	33. ethnic	2%

activism		journalism		movements	
10. national movements	13%	22. popular culture	5%	34. peace movements	2%
11. surveillance	12%	23. scientific criticism	5%	35. women	2%
12. underground culture	12%	24. social movements	5%	36. conscientious objectors	1%
Total 100%					

As the list above indicates, the Registry reproduced the most important topics that have been in the focus of the secondary literature on cultural dissent under socialism. However, as pointed out, there are numerous topics that made it into the Registry but are far less well researched and represented in the current secondary literature. As noted above, one of these topics, the environmental movements, will be discussed in more detail below.

An example: Environmental movements as cultural dissent

In this subchapter, we present the structure of the Registry through a case study, or in other words, we show the advantages of this type of construction for archival collections. The collections can be filtered by different characteristics (topic, content type, country, geographical scope, language, date of founding, availability online). Of these, we opted for "topic" for a more detailed qualitative analysis. There was no limit to the number of topics that could be assigned to describe a collection. The goal was to give a wide variety of possible topics related to cultural opposition in order to describe a collection as accurately as possible. Researchers were free to assign the topics they found most exact and to use as many as they thought necessary (there is no hierarchy among the labels at the collections, which means that

if there are more labels, it is not possible to tell which of them are more important or which are of marginal relevance). Out of the 36 topics, we chose to discuss environmental movements. We did not want to choose a topic that would come up in too many collections and would be hard to grasp qualitatively (such as democratic opposition), but rather sought to choose one that represents a typical category within those collections.

While designing the Registry, we aimed to collect as many categories as possible in order to approach and cover the subject of cultural opposition from as many perspectives as possible. Environmental protection seemed an inevitable category, since environmental movements are generally seen as an organic part of the dissident movements in many places in the former Eastern bloc (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, etc.), and these movements are part of the local narratives of the national opposition movements. Looking at the statistics, however, the topic "environmental protection" hardly seems a category that could be called typical, since this label can be found in only 4 percent of the collections. Altogether, this means 22 collections, but if one looks closely at the collections, one sees that there are only about eight that cover environmental issues explicitly. Further collections touch on the subject of environmental protection. The Pugwash collection,[31] for instance, covers antiwar and anti-nuclear materials, and the Matthias Domaschk collection[32] covers the anti-nuclear movement in the GDR. The rest of the collections are located in large archives and libraries (such as Fortepan in Hungary or the collection of the Vjesnik newspaper) which do not have an environmental "section" as such but which cover a wide variety of subjects. There are only five collections in the entire Registry that feature the label "environmental protection" exclusively and do not list further topics. Among the collections that include further topics besides "environmental protection," "democratic opposition" figures as the other most common topic. "Social movements" is the second most common topic of all collections that deal with environmentalism. It must be stressed again though that these are not exact categories, as they rely on the judgment of researchers, but they inform us about some general trends in this type of collection.

Despite the somewhat unexpectedly weak representation of the environmental collections, we selected this topic for more detailed analysis of the topic category of the Registry for various reasons. First, environmentalism is a relatively universal issue, and while avantgarde, national movements, or theater can have several meanings and a different importance depending on the country or the era (e.g. nationalism is directly related to autonomy from Soviet occupation in the Baltic states, or the case of some nationalistic movements in 1968 in Kosovo, which demanded schooling in Albanian in Pristina), protection of the environment is more independent of national contexts.[33] Secondly, environmental movements had been increasingly present in several countries of the Eastern bloc, gaining strength towards the end of the 1980s. Environmental issues mobilized people in Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc. Also, environmental movements were similar in character. They were successful as "umbrella" issues, embracing various other problems, but could be successful as oppositional movements because environmentalism did not seem directly dangerous to the state. At the same time, environmental movements and separate campaigns had a hidden agenda that entailed criticism of the authoritarian state. This figured to varying extents even within one particular movement (e.g. the variety of groups within the Danube movement[34] in Hungary, which organized against a hydropower station on the Danube, from the point of view of type or intensity of political engagement, worldview, values, etc.), and became emblematic issues which symbolized the relationship of the communist state to its people. The problem of environmental degradation had been already present in the heavy industrialization and environmental degradation from the 1950s on, but it probably reached its peak after the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.[35]

While environmentalism is typically an international issue, these movements and initiatives are well-known mostly in their own countries. The Danube movement has become both part of the Hungarian national narrative and a recurring reference point for environmental movements after the 1990s. Similarly, the protest campaign in Bulgaria against chlorine pollution was an

important factor which led to the fall of the regime. Still, there was hardly any connection between Hungarian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Latvian, etc. environmental movements. Approaching the issue from the perspective of the collections in the Registry, one immediately notices two things: 1) there are generally no further common points among these collections beyond the label "environmental protection." Due to the linked data structure of the Registry, one can easily see that there are no overlaps among the key individuals or institutions that played prominent roles in the narratives of these forms of cultural opposition. The collections vary between small and large, and while the peak of environmental mobilization came in the 1980s, the collections are found at different points in time. 2) The one common point among these collections (that they concern "environmental" movements) reveals a wide variety of similarities among the narratives themselves.

One of these similarities is the aforementioned hidden agenda of the environmental groups. While they typically took stances in support of one particular issue (nature conservation), they were tightly intertwined with other, more confrontative political movements representing other distinct issues. These other political issues are also remarkably similar. Under the framework of political opposition or democracy, environmental mobilizations are seen as "cradles" for civil society and citizen participation, which can be observed at many places. This came up explicitly in a number of cases all over the place, including Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, and the GDR. It is also remarkable how the environmental mobilizations described in the Registry all appeared around the same time. In all these countries, ranging from the Baltic states in the former Soviet Union to the GDR, former Yugoslavia, and Hungary, environmental mobilizations were most active in the second part of the 1980s. It is hard not to see the effect of the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl and the rise of these movements, where the environmental issues could gather momentum in the already weakening, indebted socialist state. It is also remarkable how these movement campaigns turned out to be successful. The Bizjak waterpower plant[36] in Slovenia, the Gabčikovo-Nagymaros power plant on the Danube, the magnesia factory in Omiš in

Croatia,[37] and the Daugavpils hydroelectric station in Latvia[38] were all large projects that were brought to a halt due to the massive protests that were organized towards the end of the 1980s. The protest campaign against the hydroelectric power plant Pļaviņas in Latvia[39] is probably exceptional, as it took place in 1958 and was not successful in preventing the construction of the plant. Still, it was preserved in the national memory of the organization against oppression and played an important role later in the campaign against the Daugavpils power plant. In addition to the environmental dimension of these conflicts, which shielded the protests from the gaze of the state, the evolution of the issues brought about several further forms of dissent, too. The issue of nationalism/patriotism was one of them, which appeared in different forms in the Baltic states under Soviet oppression (for instance) and the rise of patriotism in the Yugoslav republics (to cite a different example), or in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the international interests surrounding the construction by two states working in alliance of a power plant conflicted with the local interests, which included nature conservation but also local pride on various levels.

The topic filter in the Registry is a good example of a means of accessing information concerning local, national cases, and it also links national cases in a unique way. The Danube movement, which serves as an important cornerstone in the history of Hungarian environmental movements, bears close affinities with the anti-chlorine pollution demonstrations in Ruse and the construction of power plants on rivers in Latvia and Croatia, even though there were hardly any active (or at least documented) connections among these movements. The peculiarity of the bloc in the COURAGE Registry concerning environmental issues is, therefore, that it gathers collections with a wide variety of formal characteristics. Some of them are small, while others are large collections; some of them are already established and formalized collections, while we classified a few as *ad hoc* ones. *Ad hoc* collections were created by researchers of the COURAGE project for the purpose of inclusion of relevant and interesting materials and narratives into the Registry. Some of the collections are parts of larger libraries or other

institutions, while others are private. The diversity of form, however, is counterpointed by the many similarities among the contents of these collections, which have no institutional or formal connections. A qualitative content analysis reflects on the special position of environmental mobilizations in the late era of the authoritarian state with the legal or semi-legal presence of environmental groups and associations in these countries and the "soft" character of these issues.

While it would probably be too ambitious to rethink the role and character of the environmental mobilizations within the dissident movements and anti-authoritarian mobilizations in the Eastern bloc, the mere question certainly offers a unique possibility to analyze the forms of mobilization that took place in a certain period of state socialism. It also raises further questions concerning the meanings and roles of environmentalism under state authoritarianism and its connection to the rise of civil society in these countries.

Conclusion

The pursuit of historical research with primary sources has traditionally been reserved for scholars who had the means to visit archives and libraries in person. Over the past half century, social historians have increasingly striven to make research on the history and culture of different societies more inclusive for a broader public.

Oral history has been one of the most important new methodological approaches which has contributed to the democratization of history writing in the twentieth century. It helped to document a wide range of experiences, memories, and stories about the "ordinary" people. Furthermore, it has made history more inclusive, because it has allowed a significantly wider base of people to participate in the doing and making of history. However, as methodologies have changed with the digital revolution, research attitudes have shifted as well. Historical work

can be also undertaken by members of the general public ("citizen science"), enabling a broader variety of people to engage in different forms of knowledge production.

Oral history and citizen science have contributed to the "democratization" of scientific narratives on the methodological level. Another way of democratizing science is to alter the nodes of access to research results. Here, digital archives gain central importance, even more so in times of a pandemic. Traditional and digital/online archives and libraries across the world publish catalogs and primary sources (including oral history ones) which have transformed how we do research, who can access this information, and who can contribute to it.

It is not surprising that, simultaneously with the establishment of large digital archives, a new wave has appeared in the field of research, and private digitized collections have become frequent sources of mainstream historical and cultural studies. The landscape has changed, and considerable efforts have been made to integrate these types of private memories and collections into history-writing and public history, also because sometimes these are the only sources bearing witness to certain historical events.

In this article, we have shown how a digital archive can shape and create new ways of producing, presenting, and studying historical sources on cultural dissent under state socialism in Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. We examined how existing discourses about opposition are reproduced in a digital archive and also how new discourses, topics, and actors emerge.

We studied the often-neglected topic of "the archival voice in the discourse about research infrastructure"[40] by showing how different private, amateur, and professional archivists shape the scientific and public legacy of cultural dissent in state socialism. We aimed to make a unique contribution to archive studies and to reflect on the difficulties of preservation and self-preservation under authoritarian regimes. At the same time, we also offered an analysis which extends the dominant political discourses on resistance in the region.

COURAGE operates with a broad understanding of cultural opposition, identifying cultural opposition not only as direct political opposition, as was typical in the first two decades after the regime change both in the public discourse and in the scholarly debates[41] In the Registry, cultural opposition is understood as a wide range of forms of engagement which includes many different kinds of activities, and it is not limited to specific high-cultural or direct political products. The COURAGE Registry conveys a unique view of the twentieth-century history of the Soviet Bloc and provides a unique assemblage of documents concerning people and events, as well as pieces of art of that time which together tell an alternative story of cultural opposition under socialism, partly with well-known actors, partly with actors who, until now, have been mostly neglected. The Registry documents the lives and fates of the collections and also describes their most important figures, their financial situation, and their visibility. It sheds light on important but so far marginalized problems related to minorities and, in contrast with earlier studies of dissent under socialism, marginalized topics and actors. This is why the Registry also includes smaller collections operated often by private individuals and not only big institutions with dozens of relevant collections.

The structure of the COURAGE Registry creates a balance among collections which, though diverse in form, have many similarities from the perspectives of their topics, actors, and sizes. Some are small (for example the environmental collections discussed here) while some are and large, some are ad hoc (in other words, they are collections which were created by researchers for the purpose of the Registry) while some are established, formalized collections, and some are parts of larger libraries or are private collections.

As the case of the representation of environmental movements in the Registry shows, one of the similarities among them is that, even though the movements typically stand for one particular issue (nature conservation), they are tightly intertwined with other, more confrontative political issues. These other political issues are also remarkably similar, as they turned out to be "cradles" for civil society and citizen participation all over Europe.

Additionally, these environmental movements brought up the issue of nationalism/patriotism in many countries, a topic which gained great importance after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The linked data structure of the COURAGE Registry helps connect the information and the stories compiled in it. It enables researchers and those interested in dissent under socialism to use it as a research tool with which to build their own scientific narratives about cultural dissent and the collections featured in the Registry and to find connections that have perhaps remained undiscovered.

Acknowledgement

Notes

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