

Title: How to Imagine a Future When the Past is so Present

Abstract:

Shaped by a secession war after the collapse of the Soviet Union and more recently by Russia's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine, Moldova is portrayed as a country that remains deeply polarized between a pro-Russian and pro-European tendency. Whilst this obfuscates a far more complex reality, three decades of increasingly neoliberal policies have shown a bifurcated crisis of the social imagination¹. Conceptualizing futurities beyond either neoliberal promises or a nostalgia for the Soviet past seems futile, and the concept of the future itself is generally met with caution.

In this context, the small-scale self-organized communities of Moldova's independent art sector function as an – albeit imperfect – prefiguration for an imagined future.

In this paper, I want to show select examples of the independent art community's responses to crises have had affected them and examine whether their visions for alternative futures reach wider audiences. In particular, I want to focus on two small but very active initiatives focusing on queer and other marginalized communities.

Keywords: art and activism, Moldova, polarization, future

Disciplinary field: Transdisciplinarity, participatory artistic research

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Bio

Rada Leu (from Sofia, BG, based in Zurich, CH) is a researcher and musician. She is a PhD candidate researching the independent art scene in Moldova within the research project "[Contemporary Art, Popular Culture and Peacebuilding](#)". Rada holds a BA in European Studies from King's College London and an MA in Transdisciplinarity from the Zurich University of the Arts. She is part of the queer noise pop performance trio [Acid Amazonians](#); co-founder of the Kazakh-Swiss exchange programme [QWAS](#) (an exploration of post-soviet space through a series of train journeys and radio programmes); and a member of the political theatre collective [Neue Dringlichkeit](#). She has taught a series of educational programmes on decolonization and pop culture across Europe and East Asia. Rada lives and works online.

¹ See B. Cvejić and A. Vujanović, "The Crisis of the Social Imaginary and Beyond", in M. Nerland (ed.), *The Imaginary Reader* (Bergen: Volt, 2016), 139-143.