

Echoes of Central and Eastern Europe Underground Scenes in French Fanzines Before and After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

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Abstract

ETIENNE, Samuel: Echoes of Central and Eastern Europe Underground Scenes in French Fanzines Before and After the Fall of the Berlin Wall.

This paper scrutinises how alternative cultural scenes from Central and Eastern European countries have been represented in fanzines published in France since 1977. The study focusses principally on the geographical and temporal rather than the qualitative or cultural aspects of the question. Four countries clearly stand out, representing 57 % of the analysed corpus: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary. These special interests may be explained by macrosocial factors (for example, the search for alternative information to counterbalance those diffused by French mainstream media) or microsocial factors (i.e. personal interest/linkage of a zinester (zine publisher) to a country of Central and Eastern Europe). Fanzine analyses underline the importance of individuals in the cross-border diffusion of alternative scenes' echoes, rather than established professional networks.

Keywords: fanzine, French media, underground scenes, alternative media, Central Europe, Eastern Europe

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2020.14.1.5>

Fanzines are amateur and do-it-yourself (DIY) publications related to alternative media.¹ The adjective “amateur” underlines the fundamental non-professional and non-commercial characteristics of these media,² wherein the DIY ethos is embodied in the cheap aspect of the printed products. Scrutinised under the objective prism of media efficiency, amateurism and DIY practices might be considered as fundamental handicaps for information circulation; but their main advantage resides in the immediacy of (fan)zine production, thereby providing visual and verbal rants freed from the pressures of censorship, editorial dictates, subbing and deadlines, allowing insight into cultural preoccupations and socio-political understandings.³ Under political regimes with a high level of media control (i.e. where media are constrained to a blind and unquestionable allegiance to the ideology of the regime party and the ruling party), fanzines, like

1 ATTON, Chris. *Alternative Media*. London : SAGE Publications, 2002.

2 DUNCOMBE, Stephen. *Notes from Underground. Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*. London : Verso, 1997, p. 6.

3 WORLEY Matthew, et al. Introduction: Adventures in Reality: Why (Punk) Fanzines matter. In THE SUBCULTURES NETWORK (ed.) *Ripped, Torn and Cut. Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2019.

“samizdat”,⁴ were supports of expression for alternative or opposition voices.⁵ In a context where the European Union was built solely on the mental map of Western Europe, thus throwing out “the other Europe”,⁶ alternative media helped to fight against long-lasting prejudice and clichés built on erroneous mental maps.⁷ Despite their low print runs, fanzines have established an international circuit of distribution using postal mail or “punk post”, i.e. individuals transporting copies of the journal by train, car or bus, slowly building some exchange networks that can be mapped afterwards.⁸ Thus, fanzines were also a means of communication across frontiers. The main object of this paper is to identify how alternative cultural scenes from Central and Eastern European countries have been presented in fanzines published in France over the last four decades. This study focusses principally on the geographical and temporal aspects of the question rather than the qualitative or cultural aspects (e.g. typology or sociology of scenes). I try to establish where the information came from at the country level, and how it arrived in France.

Methods

This study relies on the analysis of a corpus of fanzines published in France between the 1970s and 2018. I selected a corpus of fanzines echoing with consistency the alternative cultural scenes of Central and Eastern European countries. Consistency means that the written material is not limited to, for example, record or book reviews of music bands or authors from Eastern European countries, but includes scene reports, interviews and photo documentaries. In these latter cases, personal interactions of the zine writer with the country or its inhabitants were presumed. Book or record reviews were excluded, as they may only reflect the opinion of the writer acquired through reading or listening and did not require any direct contact with the distant scene.

A mapping problem arose with the shifting geography of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In fanzines, especially those published in the 1990s, location after the Fall may refer to the geography of the socialist era (e.g. Czechoslovakia) or to the post-socialist one (the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia).

4 For instance, *Revolver Revue / Jednou Nohou* was published clandestinely in Prague between 1985 and 1989 but became a literary media after the Velvet Revolution. The first legally printed issue of the magazine for literature and art *Revolver Revue* came out in December 1990. At the present time, *Revolver Revue* has about 300 pages and appears four times a year. Source: <https://www.eurozine.com/journals/revolver-revue/>

5 Following Jim McGuigan, Raymond Williams opposed alternative and oppositional practices: Alternative culture seeks a place to coexist within the existing hegemony, whereas oppositional culture aims to replace it. MCGUIGAN, Jim. *Cultural Populism*. London : Routledge, 1992, p. 25.

6 RUPNIK, Jacques. *L'autre Europe, crise et fin du communisme*. Paris : Points Seuil, 1990.

7 TRUCHLEWSKI, Zbigniew. Généalogie Des Perceptions Est-Ouest. In *Emulations - Revue de sciences sociales*, 2009, No 6, pp. 143-169.

8 ETIENNE, Samuel. Le fanzine DIY comme élément de structuration des réseaux punk. In EDWARDS, Paul et al. (ed.) *Disorder. Histoire sociale des mouvements punk et post-punk*. Guichen : Mélanie Sèteun, 2019, pp. 83-96.

I maintained the geography in use in fanzines to fill my database, but to create a map (fig. 3), I had to gather post-socialist data in the socialist states geography for Central Europe (Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). Exceptions to this rule are the countries of the former USSR, where I have considered the post-communist borders to avoid dilution into a USSR category, where the weight of Russia could conceal the interest in the other Soviet provinces of Eastern Europe.

Corpus

Here, I explore the zine collection of La Fanzinothèque⁹ library from Poitiers, France. La Fanzinothèque, established in 1989, is one of the oldest and biggest zine collections in Europe and currently has archived circa 56,000 volumes.¹⁰ I have searched keywords related to Central and Eastern European country names (the keywords are in French, Table 1). In total, 618 volumes matched the selected keywords. In the next step, I checked all the paper versions in the library to evaluate their relevance for the study: That is, were they published in France? Does the content substantially deal with Central and Eastern Europe countries? This allowed me to screen out the area results: e.g., *Gabriel*, a French-speaking fanzine is excluded from the corpus because it was published in Belgium and Romania; *Stripburger*, published in Slovenia, is also excluded, while it counted 55 occurrences over 89 results for this country. Some cataloguing mistakes appeared in the database (e.g., fanzines *K9* and *Dark Warriors* are identified as Belarusian fanzines in the database, although they were published in Kiev, Ukraine). *Svoboda* (c. 1990) – the title seems to refer to the Slavic word “freedom”, but in issue N°2, a newspaper *fac-simile* reveals a tragedy that occurred in an “asylum” (psychiatric hospital) in Brno (Czechoslovakia) concerning a patient called Svoboda, thus explaining the choice of the zine title. In this latter case, the title evokes Central-Eastern European countries but not the content of the zine, so I considered this fanzine as a false-positive. The corpus of zines suitable for analysis was thus reduced to 171 volumes. However, in addition to La Fanzinothèque archives, I also searched for information on the web forum punxforum.net (active since 2003) dedicated to punk DIY culture with a special interest in fanzines and punk writings (“*Punkpress, la bibliothèque est en feu!*”¹¹). There I identified a further 29 relevant items. With the zines from my personal collection that were not present in the two mentioned databases (15 items) the studied corpus grew to 214 volumes of amateur journals published in France between 1977 and 2018.

⁹ www.fanzino.org

¹⁰ The collection database can be harvested online at <https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/>

¹¹ Translation: *Punkpress, the Library Is on Fire!*

Table 1. Fanzine corpus (1977 – 2018)

Keywords	Database				Total
	La Fanzinothèque		Punxforum	Personal	
	Items	Pertinent items	Supplementary items	Supplementary items	
Pologne	119	33	13	0	46
Hongrie	61	28	0	0	28
Yougoslavie	33	18	1	1	20
Tchéquie	39	14	5	0	19
Roumanie	50	12	0	3	12
Bulgarie	11	8	0	0	11
Ukraine	18	11	0	4	11
RDA	5	5	1	1	10
Tchécoslovaquie	11	7	1	4	9
Lituanie	8	3	1	0	8
Moldavie	4	4	3	0	7
Serbie	61	4	2	0	6
Slovénie	89	4	1	0	5
Croatie	51	4	1	0	5
Biélorussie	12	5	0	0	5
Bosnie	5	3	0	1	3
Albanie	3	2	0	0	3
Macédoine	10	2	0	0	2
Estonie	6	2	0	0	2
Lettonie	19	1	0	0	1
Slovaquie	3	1	0	0	1
Total	618	171	29	14	214

Note: keywords are labelled in French consistently with the database interrogation process.

Data treatment

Data were computed in spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel) and analysed for their temporal and spatial dimensions. The dataset was subdivided into two parts considering the year 1989 as a dividing point between two historical periods: 1977 – 1989 as “before the fall of the Berlin Wall”; 1990 – 2018 as “after the fall of Berlin Wall”.¹² Eight fanzines had no date and were excluded from the temporal analysis. Fanzines were classified in five categories following their main content: music zine, artzine (including poetry and photozine), comics, graphzine (graphic art zine) and political zine.

¹² Although the establishment of the new political geography of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) spread between 1989 and 1995, I am using the Fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbolic change in mind, both in CEE and Western Europe. Because the paper presents a French point of view, the Fall of the Berlin Wall is a crucial moment on how French people – here French zinesters – looked at CEE in general.

Results

Temporal and geographical evolution of the zine coverage

Temporal coverage is variable during the period, with four years without a match (i.e. no fanzines were uncovered, which does not mean that no relevant fanzines were published during these years), and a maximum of 14 fanzines in 1994 (fig. 1). The mean is 5.1 fanzines per year with a slight difference between the Berlin Wall period (1977 – 1989: 55 fanzines = 4.23 fanzines/yr) and the post-Berlin Wall period (1990 – 2018: 153 fanzines = 5.26 fanzines/yr). The period 1985 – 1994 is the most prolific, with 92 fanzines exhumed (9.2 fanzines/yr), i.e. 43 % of the corpus.

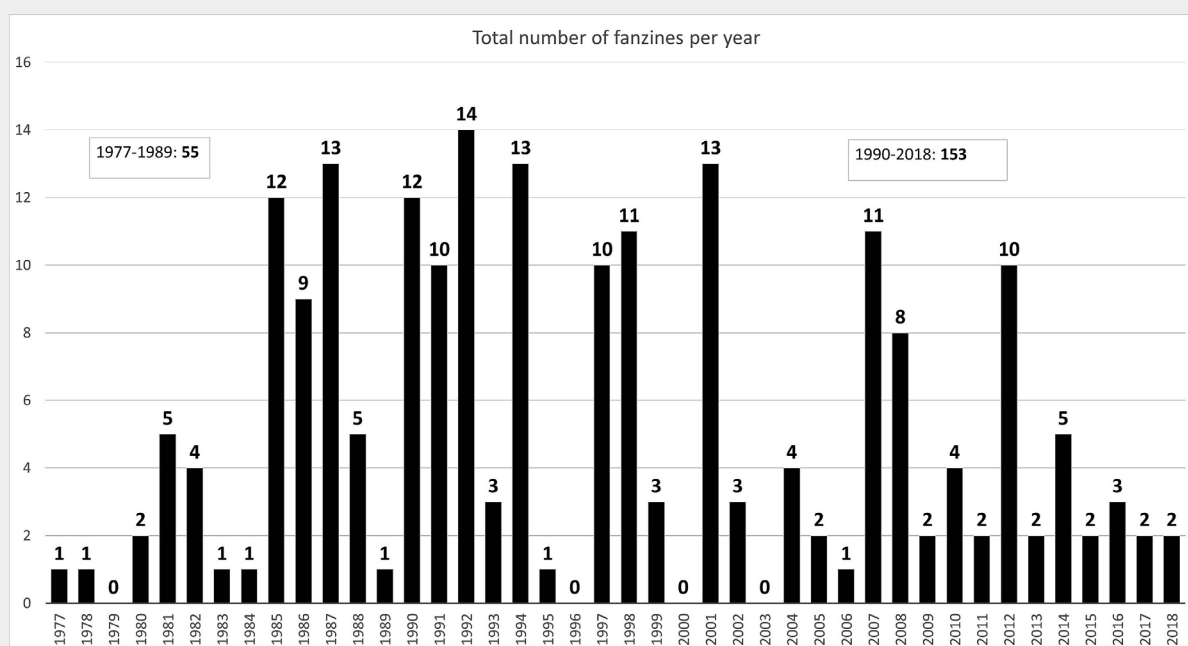
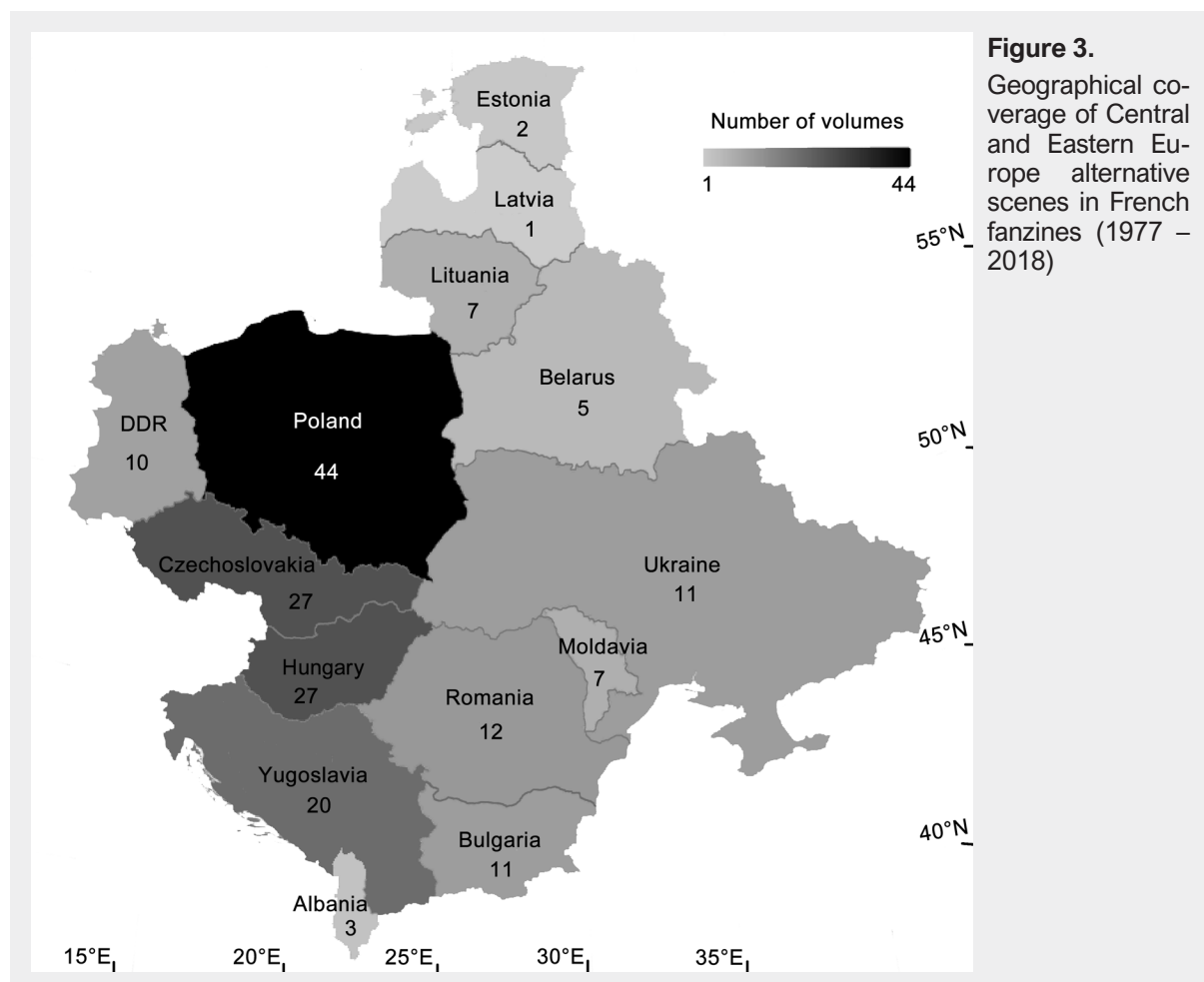
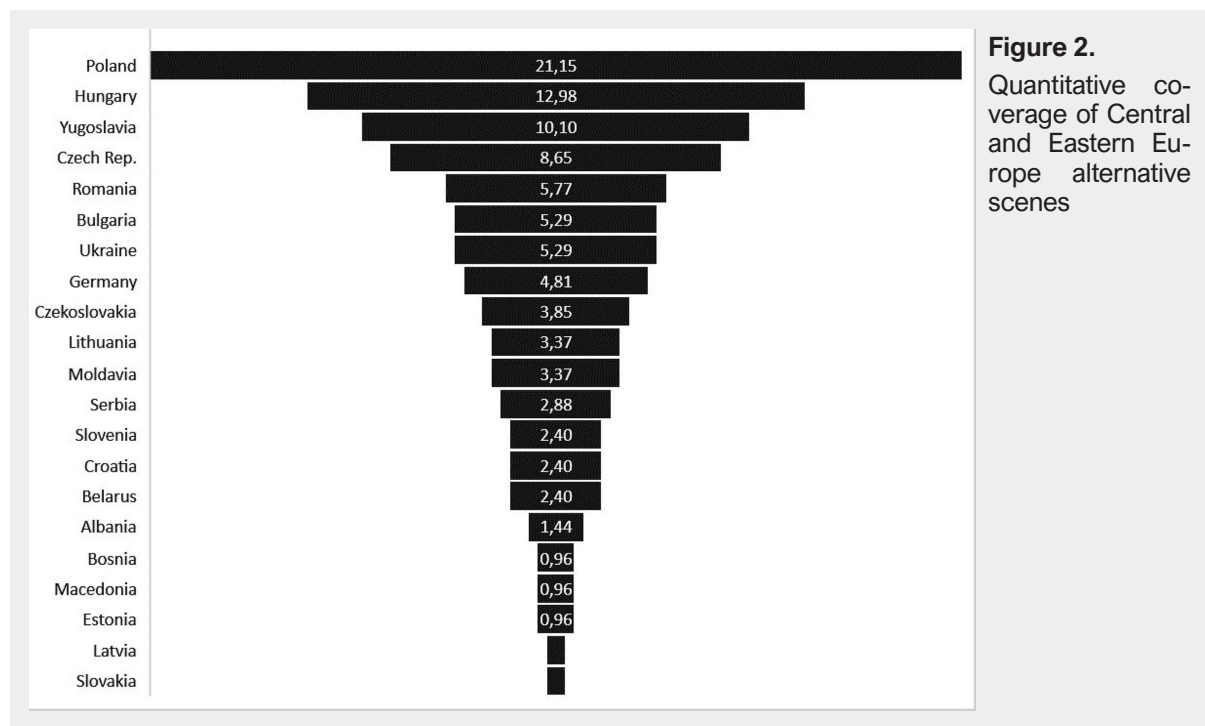


Figure 1. Temporal quantitative dispersion of French fanzines in the selected corpus.

Geographically, a group of four countries (socialist/communist period frontiers) gathered 57 % of the corpus: Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (fig. 2). Poland appears as the most covered country, with 44 volumes publishing information on this country (21 % of the corpus, fig. 3). This interest is especially strong in the period 1985 – 1993 (54.5 % of the sub-corpus). Hungary and Czechoslovakia (including the Czech Republic and Slovakia after the separation in 1993) follow with a similar coverage (13 %). Yugoslavia (including individual countries of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the separation in 1992) completes the “Big-4” with 10 % of the corpus. The easternmost countries, especially those from the former USSR (Baltic countries, Belarus, Moldavia), were covered less, with 5 % of the corpus at most. Albania also appears as very poorly covered (three occurrences during the whole period, 1.4 %).



Note: In this map, post-socialist data are gathered with Berlin Wall-period data for Central Europe, though former country boundaries are adopted for mapping simplification (e.g. Czechoslovakia [27 volumes] embeds Czechoslovakia [8 vol.], Czech Republic [18] and Slovakia [1]).

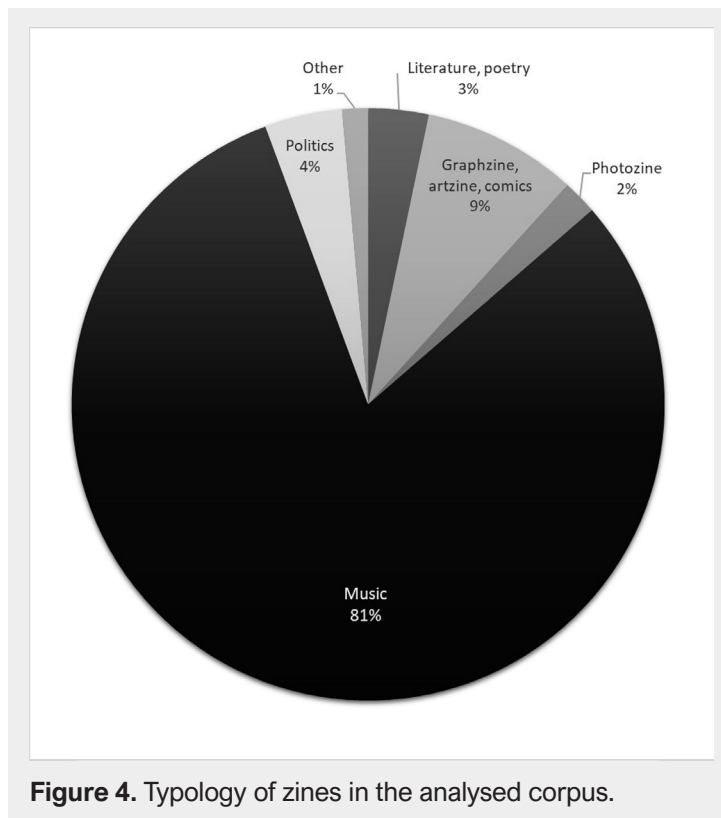


Figure 4. Typology of zines in the analysed corpus.

Zine Typology

Eighty percent of the corpus consists of music zines, essentially punk-hardcore genres; 8.5 % are graphzines, artzines and comics zines; and nearly 5 % are political zines (fig. 4).

Music zines

The Paris fanzine *New Wave* (1980 – 1989, fig. 5), one of the most important French fanzines in the 1980s,¹³ published articles on the Central and Eastern Europe scenes on a regular basis, but despite 30 issues published over the decade, only four countries were covered (Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary). Patricia Herrsang, the cofounder of *New Wave*, remembers: “First, we built an international network long before the existence of Facebook, with contacts in 128 countries. For Poland, as early as 1978, we were in contact with the punk club Furious

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Figure 5.

Fanzine *New Wave*, 1981, No. 8, (April), with a paper on rock music in Poland. (Source: author's archive)

13 RUDEBOY, Arno. *Nyark nyark. Fragments des scènes punk et rock alternatif en France. 1976 – 1989*. Paris : La Découverte, 2007, pp. 49-52.

*Dogs. In Yugoslavia, with the label Skuc and their groups (we brought Borghesia in concert in France, for example). For Hungary, everything went through Lucille Chaufour (director of the documentary T-34 Le rôle des genêts on the Hungarian punk-skin-rock scene). And Lük Haas, from Strasbourg, who published a book on East European rock, was one of our regular correspondents”.*¹⁴

The fanzine *Totalitarizm*, from the Auvergne region (central France) with articles on nine different countries covered the largest area geographically during its publishing period (1995 – 2002, 29 issues). The fanzine *Are you a man or are you a mouse?* was short-lived (1990 – 1994, nine issues) but brought to its readers information coming from eight different Central and Eastern Europe countries.

Graphzines, artzines, comics zines

Lola Fish was published at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s by Bruno Pommey (fig. 6). It was an artzine dedicated to mail-art but also including an international zine review and sometimes information on punk-rock scenes. Contributors from Central and Eastern European countries were present on a regular basis, for instance Robert Rupocinski¹⁵ and Belin Czechowicz,¹⁶ both from Poland. Also advertising articles calling on eastern artists for participation were published, for instance by

Birger Jesh from the German Democratic Republic (GDR).¹⁷ *Anthraxite* was another mail-art zine from the 1980s that gave space to contributions from the GDR (Manfred Martin) and Yugoslavia (Nenad Bogdanovic).¹⁸ Although mail-art is a kind of abstract non-textual contribution, it indicates that relationship and exchange were established between artists and zinesters from both sides of the Iron Curtain.

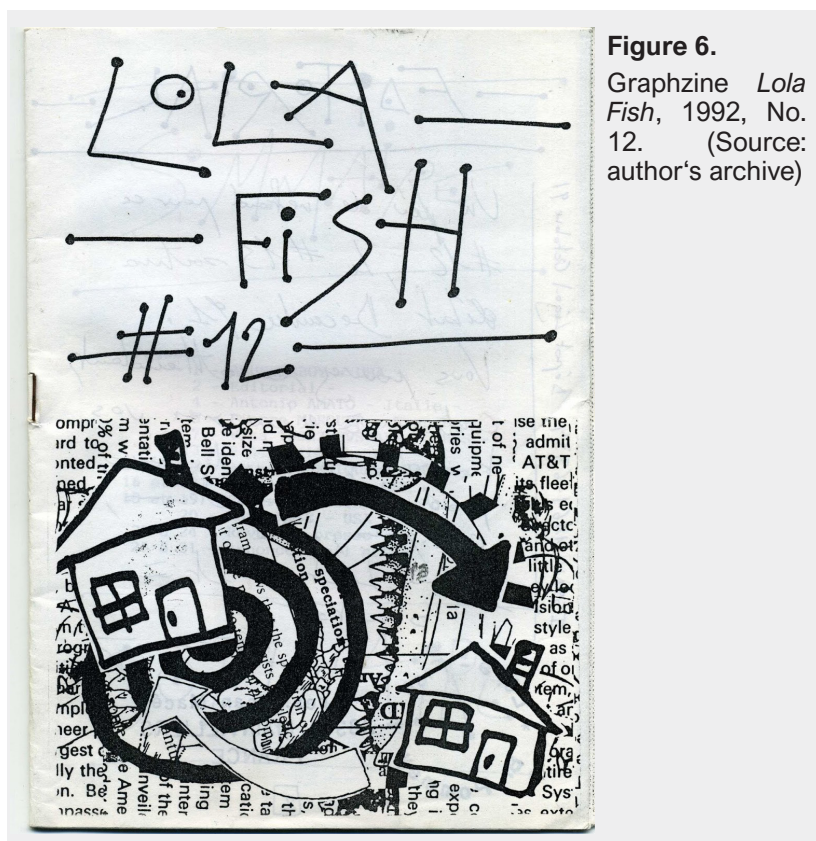


Figure 6.
Graphzine *Lola Fish*, 1992, No. 12. (Source: author's archive)

14 Patrice Herrsang, personal communication with the author, Facebook Messenger, 13 April 2020.

15 *Lola Fish*, 1990, No. 7, p. 13; *Lola Fish*, 1991, No. 10, p. 4.

16 *Lola Fish*, 1991, No. 9, p. 3.

17 *Lola Fish*, 1990, No. 7, p. 2.

18 *Anthraxite*, 1987, No. 4, (May), p. 42

Political zines

Articles on alternative cultural scenes and actors were not the most important written matter in this category of zines, where social and political contents predominate. They appeared in the mid-1980s (*Sherwood*, 1985) and their presence has been stable over the years (*AIM* in the 1990s; *Bilan et Perspectives*, *Contre-Culture*, *Spasme* in the 2000s).

Information typology

To analyse and quantify the mere content of papers published in these zines would deserve a separate study. I propose here only a concise overview of the main categories of information to give a rough picture about what kind of information about the Central and Eastern European scenes came through to France. Interviews are privileged channels to get first-hand information. For example, when Central-Eastern European bands toured in France, they offered a direct opportunity for French zinesters to get information. I remember having the opportunity to interview Aldo Ivančič from Slovenian electro-rock band *Borghesia* during their *Resistance* tour (Nantes, 8 February 1992). Besides the usual questions about the last album and their musician's life, interest in the politic situation of the country (Slovenia had just declared its independence) arose at the end of the interview, which was later published in issue N°0 of the *Armageddon* fanzine.¹⁹ At that time, I believed that gaining direct information from Central and Eastern people was necessarily more valuable than facts reported on French television, for example. Tour reports from French bands that played in Eastern European countries were also one of the ways of bringing back exclusive material from abroad and sharing it through fanzines. Local correspondents were an important source of information on alternative cultural scenes. They might produce scene reports like the reportage by Pavel Tušl from *Stříbro* (Czechoslovakia) published in *Guérilla Urbaine* (fig. 7).²⁰ Tušl explained that his motivation was to inform foreigners about the evolution of the Czech and Slovak punk and hardcore scenes since the fall of the communist regime in 1989. Similarly, Gvido Obradović, a member of the fanzine *24 Casa* (Belgrade, Yugoslavia), also bassist for the band *Crist*, contributed regularly to the French fanzine *Gabba Gabba Fuck!* (1983 – 1989). He wrote a paper on punk in Yugoslavia, several reports on punk concerts in Belgrade and another one on anti-nuclear activists.²¹

19 ETIENNE, Samuel – DENESLE, Loïc. *Borghesia*. Entrevue. In *Armageddon*, 1992, No. 0, (Spring), pp. 21-22.

20 TUŠL, Pavel. Tchecoslovaquie: scene report. In *Guérilla Urbaine*, 1992, No. 6, p. 14.

21 OBRADOVIĆ Gvido. Yugoslav punk. In *Gabba Gabba Fuck!*, 1985, No.10, p. 17; OBRADOVIĆ Gvido. Dans la série "Pas question de ne plus en parler": la Yougoslavie. In *Gabba Gabba Fuck!*, 1986, No. 11, (January-February), p. 4; OBRADOVIĆ Gvido. Yougoslavie encore et toujours par Gvido. In *Gabba Gabba Fuck!*, 1986, No.15, (September); OBRADOVIĆ Gvido. East block: la Yougoslavie. In *Gabba Gabba Fuck!*, 1987, No. 17, (January-April).



Figure 7. Right: Scene report from Czechoslovakia written by Pavel Tuší, a pen-pal from Stříbro, published in *Guérilla Urbaine*, 1992, No. 6, p. 14. Left: cover of the fanzine. (Source: author's archive)

Lyrics in vocal music are a way of expressing emotion, telling and retelling stories, developing fictional characters and commenting on events.²² Translation is the interlingual transfer of content from one language to another, which might offer a particular information and understanding of a foreign culture. In issue N°2 of the fanzine *Manifestes* (1985), an article on punk in Hungary, based on testimonies by Lucile Chaufour, is documented with the translation of song lyrics from two Hungarian punk bands²³: *Primitív bunkó* (*Rough hick*) from CPG and *Droque communiste* from Qss.²⁴ In the early 1980s, Lucile Chaufour travelled to Hungary with a Super-8 camera and clandestinely documented the Budapest punk scene.²⁵ As previously mentioned, she contributed to the Parisian fanzine *New Wave*, being a precious source for first-hand information on Hungarian scenes. In 2013 she returned to Budapest and again met some actors of the 1980s punk movement. Her sequel documentary, *East Punk Memories*, was finalised in 2014 and released in theatres in 2016.²⁶ All this work, from lyrics translations to documentaries, was intended to offer an alternative view of the official history

22 LOW, Peter. *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts*. London : Routledge, 2016.

23 *Manifestes*, 1985, No. 3, (June), p. 21. (https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/doc_num.php?explnum_id=530)

24 The original title of the Qss song is not provided in the text. It is *Kommunista kábító* (*Communist drug*) (information provided to the author by the band via its Facebook page QSS.zenekar, 18 May 2020).

25 CHAUFOR, Lucile. *T34. Le rôle des genêts*, Super-8 movie, 1985.

26 <http://eastpunkmemories.blogspot.com/>

built by the Communist regime. It also contributed to drawing a more nuanced picture of everyday life under communism.²⁷

Social papers are a means of presenting the originality of lifestyle in different countries. They are quite common in fanzines whose editors have travelled abroad, but they also fit well with the centres of interest of the concerned subculture. For example, in the skinzine²⁸ *Symphonie Urbaine* N°6 (1990), an article titled *Beer in Czechoslovakia* was published, whereas in the anarcho-punk fanzine *Outrage* N°2 (2009) a report on the Milada squat in Prague confessed the living experience of the French zinester in this alternative place (fig. 8). In *Calade Shnikov* N°4 (June 1990), a paper on the illegal press in Hungary highlighted the difficulty of publishing freely in the 1980s even for the small press like fanzines. In this issue



Figure 8.
Cover of *Outrage*, 2009. No. 2 referring to the Milada Squat in Prague. (Source: author's archive)

of *Calade Shnikov*, zine and band contacts are grouped on a full page with the following recommendation "N'écoutez jamais le nom du groupe ou le nom du zine sur l'enveloppe !!!",²⁹ a statement which frequently appeared in other French fanzines. This recommendation maintained the idea for French readers that the regime in Central and Eastern European countries was very oppressing.

Discussion

Zines help to draw a portrait of alternative cultural scenes, but is it an accurate one? The above outline is probably partly biased by the corpus itself: La Fanzinothèque library gathers all kinds of zines, but its original background is rooted in music zines with graphic and comics zines becoming more important in the last twenty years. This might explain the relative overrepresentation of music zines in the corpus. However, among the music zines, punk and hardcore zines are the most common, and it is well known that these subcultures relied preferential-

27 BLESSING, Benita. Legacies of Punk Rock in Socialist Hungary. In *Contemporary European History*, 2017, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 413-416.

28 A skinzine is a type of music zine dedicated to skinhead music and subculture.

29 "Do not write the band name or the zine name on the envelope!!!" In *Calade Shnikov*, 1990, No. 4, p. 6.

ly upon zines to disseminate their information and build their networks.³⁰ Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the general interest of French zinesters for Central and Eastern European countries was justified in the writings by the feeling that it was more difficult to be an actor in alternative scenes there than in Western countries. For example, in *Alienation* N°11 (1985), the author introduced a paper on punk in the GDR: “Some will think that I have special sympathies for communist countries. This is not the case, but I truly feel deep respect for these people because their struggle is much more difficult than the one in the West.”³¹

The interest of the French press in Poland was particularly high during the 1980s, when France, under the François Mitterrand presidency, offered long-lasting humanitarian and financial help to both the Jaruzelski regime and the Solidarność syndicate.³² The French press also contributed significantly to support Solidarność morally and materially during the decade. However, by often conveying the wrong stereotypes because of incompetence or ideology, French newspapers also offered a distorted image of the situation in Poland.³³ Karolina Pietras described the “informative interference” of French political parties with the media treatment of information at the time, i.e. how French politics used masked propaganda to build a false image of Poland.³⁴ The interest of French fanzines is interpreted as an attempt to offer alternative pictures of Poland. Hence the high interest of French fanzines in the Polish scenes is a direct reaction to the biased image built by mainstream media.

The interest in Hungary appears more enigmatic if we try to fit it in with general news coverage. Here we must shift from a macroanalysis to a microanalysis, i.e. underline the importance of individual interest or familial roots to explain the importance of information coming from Hungary. In December 1986, Eddy Basset (b. 1964) from Villefranche-sur-Saône, host of the radio program “Apunkalypse Now” (1983 – 1985), started to publish a fanzine called *Il fait froid chez nous* (*It’s cold at home*). The subtitle was “samizdat du groupe post-punk hongrois Trottell!” (“samizdat of the Hungarian post-punk band Trottell!”) because it was a translation of the zine originally published by this Hungarian punk band. A few months later, in April 1987, Basset started his own punk fanzine *Calade Shnikov*. Eventually, the two zines were merged and published head to tail with the subtitles *Vent d’Ouest/Vent d’Est* (“Westerlies/Easterlies”) until 1990. Basset went to Berlin three times between 1982 and 1984. Then up to 1985 he headed to Eastern Europe

30 ROBINSON, Lucy. *Zines and History: Zines as History*. In THE SUBCULTURES NETWORK (ed.), *Ripped, Torn and Cut. Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2019, pp. 39-54.

31 “Certains vont penser que j’ai des sympathies particulières pour les pays communistes. Il ne s’agit pas de cela, mais j’éprouve véritablement un profond respect pour ces personnes car leur lutte est bien plus difficile que celle menée à l’Ouest.” NAUDIN, Nathalie. Punx en RDA. In *Alienation*, 1985, No. 11, (October-November), p. 25.

32 MITRACHE, Marius-Mircea. La solidarité tranquille. Comment la France a aidé le peuple polonais pendant les années Solidarność. In *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai*, 2013, Vol. 58, pp. 125-140.

33 PENOT, Pierre-Etienne. *La Pologne, de la naissance de Solidarité à la mort du POUP (août 1980-janvier 1990), à travers la presse française*. Doctoral Thesis, Université de Nantes, 2011.

34 PIETRAS, Karolina. *L’image de “Solidarność” dans la presse française et ouest-allemande (1980 – 1982)*. Doctoral Thesis, Université Paris 4-Sorbonne, 2011.

"from Finland to Hungary"³⁵ during several trips, where he established direct contacts with local cultural actors. The year *Vent d'Ouest/ Vent d'Est* stopped its publication, a new zine, *Are you a man or are you a mouse?*, appeared under the hand of Bruno Szöllösi aka James le Hongrois, born in Hungary but living in the suburbs of Paris (fig. 9). *AYAMOAYAM* lasted nine issues, until 1994, when it became a newsletter for a couple of issues. In 1995 *Totalitarizm* appeared, with a title from Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule, a small town in central France, published by Fabrice Migeon, who had already edited one issue of *Primitiv Bunko* [sic] in 1993 (fig. 10). The title refers to a song by Siberian anarcho-punk band Гражданская Оборона (Grazhdanskaya Oborona). At least 29 issues of *Totalitarizm* were published until 2003. The author confessed in an extensive interview published in *Deviance* N°8 (2002) that he had always been interested by Eastern European countries because during his childhood in the 1970s the existence of the Iron Curtain, splitting Europe into two parts, prevented him from getting information.³⁶ In that same period, he often stayed at his grandmother's house and there loved talking with her neighbours, who were Polish. He also confessed that he had stayed in the southern parts of Poland and the GDR twice, allowing him to get privileged contact with local punk scenes, thus substantially extending his network. Finally, over a 16-year period, three successive fanzines covered the Hungarian alternative/punk scenes.

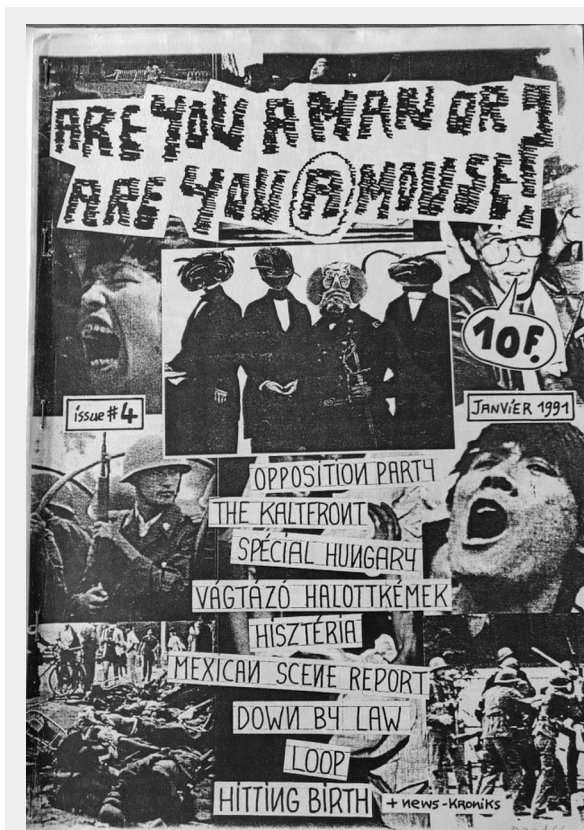


Figure 9.

Fanzine *Are you a man or are you a mouse?*, 1991, (January), No. 4. (Source: author's archive)

35 "Après l'Allemagne de l'Ouest et Berlin (trois ans consécutifs), Londres, ce fut l'Europe de la Finlande à la Hongrie, toujours dans le but de ne pas se cantonner au trop peu qui franchissait nos frontières." ("After West Germany and Berlin [three consecutive years], London, it was Europe from Finland to Hungary, always with the aim of not being confined to the little that crossed our borders.") BASSET, Eddy. Editorial. In *Calade Shnikov*, 1987, No. 1, (April), p. 1.

36 "Depuis toujours, je suis intéressé par ces pays (et par d'autres). Quand j'étais petit (dans les années 70), l'Europe était coupée en 2, on entendait quasiment jamais parler de ces pays de l'autre côté du rideau de fer, de plus, les voisins de mon arrière grand-mère (chez qui je vivais souvent quand j'étais gosse) étaient polonais et j'allais souvent les voir, alors peut-être qu'inconsciemment cela m'a influencé." ("I have always been interested in these countries [and others]. When I was young [in the 70s], Europe was cut in half, we almost never heard of these countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain; moreover, the neighbours of my great grandmother [where I often lived when I was a kid] were Polish and I went to see them often, so maybe that unconsciously it influenced me.") SERRIER, Stéphane. *Totalitarizm* Zine interview. In *Déviance*, 2002, No. 8, p. 19.



Figure 10.

Fanzine *Tota-litarizm*, 1995, No. 4. (Source: author's archive)

On a more micro scale, a person like Lük Haas was very active in disseminating information on Eastern European countries through his own fanzines (*Lük Haas's Hairrising Travel & Tour Unltd*, *Mala Ewolucja*) or by contributing to several zines in France and abroad (*New Wave*, *Sub-Rock*, *Aga*, *Maximum Rocknroll*, *Flex Digest*, *Zap*, *Trust*, etc.). Based in Strasbourg, Haas used to travel by car in Eastern Europe and report on his travels and contacts with local artists through a perzine writing style. He had a strong per-

sonal interest for discovering new places and new people; however, he had no familial connections with Eastern Europe.³⁷ His networks steadily cover Poland, GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, the Baltic States and Bulgaria, and later Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia. These networks were established with punk or underground activists, e.g. Jazzová sekce (Jazz Section) or musicians like Mikoláš Chadima in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. He was also in touch with Janus activists in Paris who had underground contacts in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1980s Haas ran the cassette label Ukutnost Tapes and released several recordings from Czechoslovak bands. In 1993 he founded the label Tian An Men 89 Records, releasing more punk music from Central and Eastern Europe and beyond, a label that is still active today. Sometimes Lük Haas published the same papers or interviews in different zines: for example, a paper on punk in Czechoslovakia published in *Gabba Gabba Fuck!* N°15 and *Invocation Macabre* N°2 in 1986; or an interview with Imad, the guitarist of the band L'Attentat (GDR), published simultaneously in *Calade Shnikov* N°1 and *Invocation Macabre* N°3 in 1987. This strategy of disseminating information through identical texts published in several fanzines was particular to zine production, allowing information to diffuse over larger territories than the one covered by a single zine. Replication was possible because the exclusivity of the published material was not mandatory and copyleft was widely accepted.

³⁷ Lük Haas, personal communication with the author, e-mail, 13. November 2019.

Conclusion

This study focusses on the French reception and knowledge of Central and Eastern European underground cultural scenes and actors. Fanzines appear useful for drawing a diachronic panorama of their international influence. Variations in time and space are strong, and they translate more the importance of zinester's network (microsocial scale) than the political context (macrosocial scale), with the exception of Poland during the 1980s. Here, mass media information disseminated in France might have favoured a counterpoint view in French fanzines. A strong interest in Central and Eastern European countries seemed to emerge between 1985 – 1993 (more than 50 % of the corpus), a period also characterised by the growth of free speech linked with the “glasnost” policy. However, the popularisation of Eastern European punk and hardcore scenes in France during the 1990s relied strongly on the role of two French zinesters (Lük Haas, Bruno Szöllösi) with Eastern Europe roots or personal interests. Both built their own information network between France and Central and Eastern Europe. The permeability of the frontiers for information on underground scenes between France and the Central and Eastern European countries was better achieved at the microscopic level of fanzines than in what mainstream journals offered their readers, though fanzine analyses underline the importance of individuals in the cross-border diffusion of alternative scenes' echoes rather than established professional networks.

Acknowledgements

The author warmly thanks Marie Bourgoïn from La Fanzinothèque de Poitiers for her help in the database research. Suggestions by reviewers and editors were greatly appreciated.

Cituj:

ETIENNE, Samuel. Echoes of Central and Eastern Europe Underground Scenes in French Fanzines Before and After the Fall of the Berlin Wall. In *Forum Historiae*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 1, s. 53-67. ISSN 1337-6861. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2020.14.1.5>

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