PLANNING HATVAN: URBAN PLANNING AND REPRESSION IN ONE OF BAIA MARE'S ROMA NEIGHBOURHOODS (1950-1989)

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ABSTRACT: This paper starts from the premise that social space, the state space, is a socially productive territory characterized, among other things, by hierarchical social, economic and political relations. This hierarchical dimension of space comes to the fore when researching the urban marginalization of Roma people in Romania. The mechanisms of exclusion employed by the state against Roma groups are situated in a wide range of other policies, among which uneven territorial development ranks chief. As such, this paper seeks to analyse the junction between these processes. It asks the question: how did the process of urban planning reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during socialism in Baia Mare? In order to address this question, I mobilize the results of two years of archival research in the city of Baia Mare, coupled with the discursive analysis of this archival material. I perform a diachronic analysis of how Roma people were targeted by state practices of urban marginalization, such as stigmatization, criminalization and repression. I show how the policies of systematisation of Baia Mare shaped the territory of a particular neighbourhood – Hatvan, attempting to manage and control the Roma population there. Throughout the 1960s, Hatvan was considered a focal point for crime. This led to a large-scale plan to completely transform the area through evictions, demolitions and the displacement of Roma people. The result was a place that was seen as clean, ordered and lawful social space, which became what is currently known as the Vasile Alecsandri neighbourhood. However, this space continues to this day to be one of social marginalisation, economic deprivation and institutionalised racism.

Keywords: urban planning; socialist Romania; Roma people; criminalisation; archives

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Introduction

This paper[2] starts from the premise that social space, particularly state space, is a socially productive territory characterized, among other things, by hierarchical social, economic, and political relations (Lefebvre, 2009 [1978]: 243-4). This hierarchical dimension of space comes to the fore when researching the urban marginalization of Roma people in Romania. The mechanisms of exclusion employed by the state against Roma groups are situated in a wide range of other policies, among which uneven territorial development ranks chief. As such, this paper seeks to analyse the junction between these processes. It asks the question: *how did the process of urban planning reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during socialism in Baia Mare*?

In order to address this question, I mobilize the results of two years of archival research in the city of Baia Mare, coupled with the discursive analysis of this archival material. The documents analysed were produced roughly between 1950 and 1989. They are in large part minutes recorded from the official meetings of the local administration. These meetings discussed various issues concerning the township, usually in the form of reports from local or national institutions. The voices recorded by these minutes articulate discourses that are at the same time less formal than the official *langue du bois* of the Party, and less casual than everyday informal bureaucrats' talk. As such, they provide a fascinating window into the ways in which Baia Mare officials approached the city's problems.

What follows is a diachronic analysis of how Roma people were targeted by state practices of urban marginalization, such as stigmatization, criminalization, and repression. I show how the policies of systematisation in Baia Mare shaped the territory of a particular neighbourhood – Hatvan, attempting to manage and control the Roma population there. Throughout the 1960s, Hatvan was considered a focal point for crime, where riots and fights were common. This led to a large-scale plan to completely transform the area through evictions, demolitions, and the displacement of Roma people. The result was a place that was seen as clean, ordered, and lawful social space, which is currently known as the Vasile Alecsandri neighbourhood. However, to this day, this space continues to be one of social marginalisation, economic deprivation, and institutionalised racism.

The text begins with a general analysis of how the concept of urban planning – *sistematizare* – has been applied in socialist Romania, arguing for a stance that views the social aspects of this process, rather than its descriptive

or architectural facets. Subsequently, I begin the historical analysis by highlighting the 1950's housing crisis in Baia Mare, and how the urban planning policies sought to alleviate it. I then show how the hierarchisation of the urban space has been implemented through what the authorities called 'construction discipline'. This initiated a first wave of repression against Roma people in Baia Mare, especially in Hatvan, which had beforehand been seen as a space in need of social welfare. This repression dovetailed with a national concern for criminalizing Roma people. Finally, I show how in Hatvan, the process of criminalization was intertwined in the 1980's with the re-drawing of the neighbourhood and the eviction and relocation of the Roma people living there.

Urban Planning in Early Socialist Romania: sistematizarea

The Romanian word '*sistematizare*' can be translated as the process whereby state authorities employ processes of knowledge gathering, problem solving, rational planning and administration in relation to a geographical and social space. Such practices have long been recognized as forming the repertoire of the modern state's project to govern and control its territory and population. As John Ruggie argues, '*the chief characteristic of the modern system of territorial rule is the consolidation of all parcelized and personalized authority into one public realm*'. In other words, modern territoriality is characterized by the differentiation between public and private, on the one hand, and between internal and external, on the other hand (Ruggie, 1993: 151).

In modernity, state power is fixated in territorially distinct and mutually exclusive areas of authority. This power is productive, it is 'governmentality', in the sense that it is constantly concerned with creating the parameters, infrastructure, discourses and institutions, whereby its rule can be perpetually reinforced (Foucault, 1978 [2004]). To 'systematize' a territory implies an effort to ensure that the geopolitical and social conditions are met for the state to function, both in its repressive and control aspects, but also for its welfare and life – fostering projects. The management of territories is, for the modern state, intimately intertwined in its *raison d'être* – it is, indeed, '*raison d'état*'.

Returning to '*sistematizare*', the Romanian state-led project of modernization has had a chronic obsession with managing territories. The official 'birth' of modern Romania is tied to a successful project of territorial annexation, which after the First World War meant a considerable increase in the country's size and population. The subsequent interwar years saw consistent efforts to define, manage, control, and plan this territory in accordance with the hegemonic

nationalist ideology of the state. Romania was to be a unified and centralized state, where there was no ambiguity regarding the authority/territory nexus: one state, one state-space. This nationalist project left little space for social improvement. It was concerned mostly with repression and policing any challenge to this unity between state and territory. However, by the end of the 1930's, this project had failed dramatically, and Romania was plunged into a decade of radical shifts in its authority: loss of territories, war, territorial gains, invading armies, various political regime changes etc. By 1950, Romania was a workers' republic, its territory had been altered, there were Soviet troops inside its borders and the economic and social decline were at their highest.

It was in this context that the Workers 'Party (and later the Communist Party) launched its highly ambitious project to resume and complete the modernisation of Romania. Once again, the state space was the battleground and one of the main stakes of this project: the transformation of the territory into economically efficient, sanitised, liveable areas. In an ongoing (and at times imagined) electoral battle with their political opponents, the Romanian Communists sought to legitimise themselves as the new rulers by ensuring that this project succeeded. At the heart of their discourse was the promise that their policies would bring the prosperity and development that the *ancien régime* had been unwilling to deliver.

From the outset, the Party's modernization project was based on two main pillars: housing and industrialization. On the one hand, the reconstruction of the state and of its relationship with the society after the Second World War required an urgent improvement in the workers 'standards of living, and housing was a primordial concern (Mărginean, 2017: 83). In 1950, the state planned 4.3 billion lei towards building homes for the workers. These houses were planned in 'crowded' industrialized cities.[3] On the other hand, industrialization was also crucial for the Party, since it secured a mass of workers that could be controlled (Culiciu, 2016: 16), and it also upgraded the economic profile of the country. The process of nationalizing and renewing Romania's industries was meant to transform it from an agrarian to a modern and industrial nation: the keystone of the modernization project.

These two processes – housing for the proletariat and industry for the economy – converged in an idealized image of the city as the territory of state productive power at its maximum potential. Urbanization thus became the main thrust of the Party's efforts to achieve and showcase its version of modernity: cities were to become spaces incarnated with the communist ideology, where the

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[3] *Scânteia*, 1 mai 1950, p. 3

population could live and work in prosperity and where the state could freely exercise its control. Cities were also to become the homes of the new proletariat. In contrast to Capitalist visions of urbanity, where workers were dispersed towards the city fringes, the socialist plan was to build urban spaces that the workers could use, live, and celebrate in (Molnár, 2013: 35). This twofold emphasis on housing and industry in the cities implied the sharpening of the rural-urban divide: '*the state encouraged the development of cities economy by redistribution of central investments in urban areas and increasing the rural-urban dichotomy* (Dumitrache et al., 2016: 43)'.

Building houses and urban infrastructure also allowed for '*the emergence of a complex internal economy*', involving factories for construction materials, labour supplies and consumption chains connecting the rural environment with the cities (Petrovici, 2017: 34).

One can also see here the typically modern phenomenon that Ruggie referred to as territorial differentiation. Romanian socialists could not and would not wrap up the modernization project without enacting such differentiations. The rural-urban divide was one among many such boundary-making operations. As Petrovici insists, the Romanian urban areas became 'containment structures' for a number of tensions and conflicts (Petrovici, 2017: 38; 188). Limits and boundaries had to be put into place, in order to manage urban sprawl (Dumitrache et al., 2016: 42). The modernized territory had to be charted, split, and divided according to various functions and rationalities. Within the process of urbanization, the mechanism that was put in place to plan and enforce these differentiations was urban planning, namely *sistematizarea.*

The body of literature that focuses on urban planning in socialist Romania usually draws a grim picture of these processes. Studies focus predominantly on architectural aspects, emphasizing the un-aestheticism of the newly built urban infrastructure. Some authors point out that the incessant drive towards cutting the costs of building new neighbourhoods resulted in a flagrant disregard for their 'aesthetic value' (Mărginean, 2017: 82 – 3). The urbanization plans made way for chaotic territorialities, in which '*the façade of the new neighbourhoods and the style of blocks was the reflection of the authoritarian system*', in other words, bleak, grey 'uniform' buildings situated in densely populated spaces (Pasztor and Peter, 2009: 83). Other authors lament the ideological vector of the planning process, which shifted from the interwar concept of 'garden city' to 'silly building assemblies' (Culicu, 2016: 19). Part of this consensus on grim cities is also the widely discussed argument that 'mass housing' was of 'poor quality' and thus the entire project of urbanization can be regarded as a failure (Turcu, 2017: 55).

Even the nitty-gritty details of these buildings, such as the flooring and the doors are seen to be of 'low quality' (Mărginean, 2023: 78). In the words of two authors, a large proportion of the urban housing fabric was made up of '*small, overcrowded, low comfort flats with inefficient infrastructure*' (Pasztor and Peter, 2009: 90)

This paper challenges this view, not by claiming the superior quality and value of the housing stock built during socialism, but by shifting the focus altogether. Spotlighting architectural and quality aspects gives a one-sided and quite dull overview of a multi-faceted process. The planning of new urban areas during the rule of the Communist Party was a complex endeavour that involved calculations regarding social, economic, environmental, and geographical aspects. The interest here is therefore on the social aspects of *sistematizare*, on its underlying mechanisms and functionalities. Moreover, I pay attention to how various actors, discourses and practices came to shape these processes, and how their effects were incomplete and influenced by unintended consequences. One such unintended consequence refers to the array of practices of repression directed against Roma people. During the various stages of planning urban territories, the Romanian authorities displaced, evicted, and moved Roma people from one place to another.

I will therefore ask: how did the process of urban planning in socialist Baia Mare – the *sistematizare* plans – reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during that period?

For the Romanian communist regime, urban planning implied regulating, bordering, and limiting territories and populations. It was a process that sought a particular engagement with the space. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej stated publicly in 1962 that the new urban spaces were supposed to combat '*the anarchical sprawl that happened during the previous regime*' and also '*the contrast between centre and periphery*' (quoted in Stroe, 2015: 97). This meant that the plans had to tame and manage the building practices of the population. Limits had to be put in place, so that cities would not grow past a certain point (Stroe, 2015: 97). Moreover, there was a coordinated top-down effort to distribute various economic functions in different areas of the city. Urban space was divided between residential areas, industrial zones, roads, parks, social and cultural infrastructure and so on.

By referencing the 'bourgeois regime' and its 'anarchy' in terms of built space, the communist planners regarded themselves as heralds of order and cleanliness. However, this view contained an ingrained element of conservatism, despite its visionary and progressive idealism: urban order needed disciplining practices and repressive interventions to impose and preserve the desired regulations.

As quite a few contemporary historians of architecture are at pains to demonstrate, the Romanian Workers' Party did not 'invent' urban planning as a social and political tool: the previous regime was also aware of the need to reshape urban spaces and to integrate housing and industry in the city's fabric. For example, several social housing projects that had been initiated in the Interwar period were picked up and implemented by the socialist planners (Tulbure, 2016: 148 – 149). It is entirely conceivable that such continuations could also apply to the conservatism mentioned earlier. Between 1919 and 1921, the systematization plan for Bucharest was intended 'to prevent the chaotic sprawl' of the capital. The plan was seen as an urgent necessity to prevent illegal buildings and uncontrolled urban development (Voinea et al., 2022: 51 – 3).

Baia Mare: a town in crisis

The modern territorialisation of Baia Mare began in 1950. The country's regions were redrawn after the national administrative reform. At that time, the small mining town of Baia Mare became the capital of the Maramureş region. As a result of its importance as a mining centre, it was the target of numerous policies and investments from Bucharest. The aim of these policies was to reconstruct Baia Mare and to transform it into an industrial centre in northern Transylvania. The main industry was mining, with four mines in the city. The town also had a large chemical factory, the Phoenix factory, which was responsible for processing materials from the mines. One architect declared in 1951 that '*Baia Mare is an industrial town, after the re-drawing it became an administrative town, and it will become an industrial education centre*'.[4] However, from the outset, the socialist authorities made it clear that they wanted a town that would welcome workers. The planners were therefore to concentrate on the urban fringes, where the workers lived. Baia Mare would become a thriving urban space, with all the facilities that the working class needed.

By far the most important of these needs was housing. According to the 1950s authorities, the city suffered from a housing crisis dating back to the previous regime.[5] A number of factories were renovated or built after Baia Mare became an administrative centre. Their workers, however, had to commute from neighbouring villages and towns and did not live in Baia Mare.[6]

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[4] Proces Verbal, 12 octombrie 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 3, file 4

[5] Issues of systematisation and future development of Baia Mare, 2 March 1957, in 3/1957/735, p. 1, file 53

[6] Report on the need to build housing for workers, 2 December 1965, in 6/1965/735, p. 1, file 257.

This created a housing shortage throughout the decade. The socialist authorities were struggling to build more and more homes. The city began to be considered too large to build housing for the working class. This led to the authorities deciding to create new districts.[7] Despite several researchers arguing that the 1950's saw no visible concern for housing[8], the archives show that in Baia Mare, the state's main priority was building housing for workers.[9] By 1956 there were already 37 housing units for workers, with a total of 587 newly built flats.[10] The workers' demands were usually channelled through their respective workplaces, as the factories could manage their own housing units and distribute the apartments according to their own criteria.

Simultaneously, there was a persistent shortage of funds and materials, which could be explained by the postwar recession. It was also reported that some workers took materials from the workplace for their own private use.[11] Therefore, the local administration in Baia Mare initially preferred to delegate home construction to private beneficiaries. The authorities granted numerous land parcels throughout the city's territory, in desperate attempts to satisfy the ever-growing need for workers' accommodation.[12] This, in turn, generated another dramatic situation: on the one hand people built private houses in a chaotic manner, or in areas that were too close to the factories; and on the other hand they often built without having the necessary permits.

In 1953, the state established the institution that oversaw this situation, the Section for Architecture and Systematization. It was mainly in charge of giving or refusing building permits to citizens who wanted to construct or extend their buildings. As the years passed and the city was expanding, it became increasingly obvious that this institution could not function properly in the absence of wider directives. Baia Mare needed a systematization plan to regulate the administration of its built territory and its infrastructure. This was not only a problem in Baia Mare. In 1959, the national Architects' Commission stated that '*most cities do not yet have approved systematisation plans*'.[13]

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[7] Raport privind problema sistematizării orașului, not dated, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 2, file 301

[8] For example, Mărginean (2023: 72) claims that in the first years of the decade, the regime '*intentionally ignored the visible degradation of the housing situation of the population*'.

[9] Proces Verbal, 12 octombrie 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 4, file 5

[10] Proces Verbal, 7 martie 1956, in 2/1956/929, p. 1, file 133

[11] Proces Verbal, 22 martie 1954, in 1/1954/929, pp. 2 – 3, files 91 – 2

[12] Issues of systematisation…, p. 1

[13] Conclusions of the 5th Assembly, 10 February 1959, in 1/1959/735, p. 5, file 59

Several requests were made to Bucharest, and they were followed by several rounds of measurements, surveys, questionnaires, and discussions with the municipality. A draft of the plan had already been prepared in 1951, but it had not been approved for various bureaucratic reasons.[14] The draft included a provisional division of the urban space into functional areas for housing, industry, commerce, sport, health, transport, the military, cemeteries and so on. The local administration signed a 'Convention' with the Bucharest authorities in 1951, whereby the latter undertook to draw up the general urban plan of the town.[15] However, the central authorities were slow to deliver. The archives of the time illustrate this concern, namely that the plan was always absent, delayed and eagerly awaited by the Baia Mare administration. There were building permits that were being refused because the requested area was 'included in the systematization plan', yet the plan was only provisional. There were industrial projects and housing projects that were put on hold because there was no general urban plan to follow.

The Plan

The resulting plan was delivered in two stages, the first of which was drafted between 1957 and 1959. This initial set of documents drew a highly ambitious vision of Baia Mare. This was a plan for a city that would reach 70.000 people. Baia Mare was to be divided into functional territories.[16] There was an industrial area in the east, where the old heavy industry had been active for decades. In addition, there was a newly projected industrial area in the west, close to the airport, destined for 'light industry'. There was also a project for a 'green area' – an uninhabited area of vegetation that was meant to reduce the pollution generated by the industries.

Inside this protected space, the territory of the city was quartered between new residential areas. At the time the plan was drafted, some of them were in the process of being built, while others were merely projects. There were also administrative and public buildings, as well as areas reserved for old single-storied housing. The subsequent changes to the plan, from the beginning of the 1960's, kept the functional zoning, but added more provisions regarding housing areas: certain territories were meant for intensive neighbourhood

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[14] Ministerul Gospodăriei Comunale și Industriei Locale, 6 December 1952, in 1/1951/735, p. 1, file 1

[15] Convenţiunea nr. 98, ND, in 1/1951/735, files 14 – 17

[16] Notice regarding the systematisation plan, 9 December 1960, in 9/1964/735, pp. 1 – 3, files 178 – 180

building, with panel houses exceeding two stories, while other areas were to be maintained with single-storied houses. Usually, these latter areas would be in the peripheries of the city's expanded limits.[17]

Nevertheless, the socialist government prioritized urban peripheries over the centres because that is where the workers resided, and this was one of the guiding principles of these systematization schemes.[18] And the workers kept moving to Baia Mare and demanding homes. By 1965, the authorities were planning to build 4700 new apartments.[19] This was a frenzy of rational planning, taming the territory, getting rid of the old, and building a new world.

Disciplining the urban space

However, there was a side effect to this rationality. Along with the very first implementations of the systematisation plans, there were concerns from all corners of the governance regarding the so-called 'construction discipline' ('*disciplina în construcții*').[20]As well as managing and building new infrastructure and housing, the division of territory meant that government had to keep a close eye on all civil works to ensure that they did not deviate from its overall urban vision.[21] Special control units were set in place, and their role was to inspect construction sites to make sure that the private buildings were legal and in accordance with the systematisation plan.[22] This meant that any private constructor would face penalties if they build an extra room, a garage or an extra floor above their house. Additionally, there was an increased emphasis on preserving the newly built housing stock in good condition. Thus, the 'discipline' also meant that citizens were required to keep their apartments clean and integral. This was a concern at the national level, and it was reinforced through campaigns meant to influence public opinion.[23]

The focus on building discipline can be seen as part of a wider struggle of the Baia Mare authorities to deal with residents who were not respecting regulations. In terms of built space, this emphasis on legality was particularly drastic. The archives reflect the authorities' interest towards '*tenants who*

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[17] Report regarding zoning based on building types, 28 September 1964, in 4/1964/735, pp. 1 – 5, files 23 – 7

[18] Minute, 12 October 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 3

[19] Observations regarding the systematisation plan, 9 December 1960, in 9/1964/735, p. 2, file 103

[20] Report regarding Regularisation, 1956, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 6, file 305

[21] Report regarding Urban Regularisation, 29 iulie 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 15 (file 59)

[22] Measures Plan, 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 3 (file 43)

[23] See for example in Scînteia, 7 august 1968, p. 2

willingly destroy the property of the state'.[24] A Report of the 'Popular Tribunal'
from 1956 cautioned that '*the matter of housing in the city is difficult,* [as] *there
are cases in which* [people] *break in houses abusively and are not being prosecuted*'.[25]
It is important to point out that at that time the culprits for such trespassing
activities – the criminals – were seen to be '*evil elements, enemies of the regime,
thieves and remnants of the former exploiting classes, who try to earn a living by
not working.*'[26]

Several years later, however, the discourse was altered, and most of the
people liable for breaking the construction discipline were seen to be Roma
people. It is here that the repression against these people begins in Baia Mare.
The discourse constructed them initially as being guilty of this 'construction
indiscipline'. Their first 'criminal acts' were directed against the systematisation
of the city, against the rationality and planning of Baia Mare's territory. This
took place at two levels: on the one hand, the Roma people built houses without
having the necessary permits, or they occupied various buildings; and on the other
hand, they were seen as damaging and destroying the newly built apartments
that they received from the state. One local administrator reported in 1963 that
one Roma person '*chops wood in his flat and causes brawls with his family*'.[27]

Hatvan – social policies in a marginal space

The hotspot for these illegal activities and the area that has been historically
seen as most problematic for the city was a territory situated south of the
centre, which the locals referred to as Hatvan.

It is difficult to determine how and when Hatvan became part of Baia
Mare. We know, for example, that at the start of the 20th century painters from
the famous Baia Mare Artists 'colony, such as Károly Ferenczy, used Roma people
from Hatvan as inexpensive models.[28] However, for the various town authorities,
Hatvan did not officially exist. A Romanian map from 1936 showed a blank
space in the south of the city, where the neighbourhood is currently located.

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[24] Proces Verbal, 14 December 1956, in 4/1956/929, p. 7, file 202.
[25] Proces Verbal, 10 September 1956, in 4/1956/929, p. 1, file 1
[26] Raport privind respectarea legalității populare, 7 September 1956, in in 4/1956/929, p. 1, file 9.
[27] Minute, 23 April 1963, in 3/1963/929, p. 3 (file 80)
[28] http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/cigany-a-kepen;
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferenczy,_K%C3%A1roly_-
Gipsies%281901%29.jpg

There, the two main streets stretch blindly towards the south end of the map. Six years later, the new Hungarian administration also mapped the city. The south part is shown in more detail, all the way to the Craica Creek. There is a pattern of streets just north of the river, approximately where Hatvan is now. However, in contrast to the rest of the city, these streets have no name.

Hatvan earned its name and right to existence with difficulty. In 1951, answering a questionnaire regarding the existence of pits caused by people burning bricks, the scribe of the local administration jotted on the draft reply the pejorative word for territories inhabited by Roma people: *ț****ie.*[29] The final typewritten version replies to the same question by claiming that such pits only exist in Hatvan.[30] This substitution – from pejorative to Hatvan – marks the territory's stigma from the very start: Hatvan is the space of the Roma people. Not yet present on maps, the territory is finally named, along with its designated label. Indeed, Hatvan truly enters into existence in the 1950's. Yet this is an entry through the back door. The area is a 'problem' from the outset. There is no electricity, no water, and no cultural infrastructure.[31] Doctors refuse to practice there, the only school is too small for the neighbourhood's children[32] and the water sources are not functioning properly.[33]

In a series of maps from 1958, the streets north of Craica are finally named. The same street pattern found in the 1940 map is now included in the city. However, this was a problematic juncture: the streets were marked as being not paved, they were 'impracticable'. Hatvan is a liminal space from the start. Throughout the 1950's the neighbourhood emerged as a space riddled with social issues: poverty, lack of infrastructure, housing stock in bad conditions etc. In that decade, Hatvan was a marginal space that the city could not yet contain. However, Hatvan was a problem that the authorities had to deal with urgently because, as I have shown, systematisation implied an emphasis on the peripheries.

The crucial point is that this was a social problem. The neighbourhood was a space that embodied the troubling 'legacy of the past' that the new regime sought to regenerate.[34] The local administration planned to uplift the social and economic level of its inhabitants. This was done through investment in various works of infrastructure, such as paving roads or introducing electricity. The

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[29] Survey for the Plan of Baia Mare, 18 June 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 4 (file 75)
[30] Answers to the Survey, 16 July 1951, 1/1951/735, p. 3 (file 56)
[31] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, files 138 – 9
[32] Proces Verbal, 20 May 1956, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 2, file 87
[33] Proces Verbal, 5 September 1957, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 3, file 293
[34] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, file 139

quality of life for the people living there was raised through 'culturalisation'.[35] New schools and urban infrastructure were being planned.

At the national level, these policies were congruent with the regime's approach towards Roma people. During the first years of the 1950's, the Workers' Party took an interest in the Roma population in the direction of 'integrating' it in the system, primarily as labour force. The central authorities were aware of the racism that was pervasive throughout the state apparatus (Marin, 2017: 129), and regarded this as a problem, a hurdle in the way of co-opting the Roma into the socialist regime. One report stated: '*it is necessary to fight the prejudices against the Roma population, which often take the form of explicit chauvinism*' (Marin, 2017: 118). The authorities were also aware that the recent history of the Roma slavery, their deportation to Transnistria during the early 1940's and the high level of poverty were all factors that prevented easy solutions.

Remarkably, during this period there were no references to Roma as inherently 'criminal'. Any conflicts between Roma people and the authorities were blamed on the latter's inability or unwillingness to deal with problematic situations and on the long-term discrimination to which Roma people had been subjected. (Marin, 2017: 140; 154).

In the first years of the 1960's, the Baia Mare municipality did not yet have a concrete plan for its southern territory. The systematisation suggestions did not include Hatvan, and it was only mentioned as a workers 'neighbourhood, with 'mediocre' single-storied houses.[36]

At the same time, the local government's relationship with the area underwent a fundamental change. From the mid-1960s, with the implementation of the systematisation plan, Hatvan was no longer seen as a social problem. It was now seen as a legal one. Its inhabitants were seen as culprits of destructive and illegal behaviour, rather than as poor people in need of social assistance.

This was largely due to the new emphasis on the 'construction discipline' that I mentioned earlier. With the new systematisation plan almost in place, Hatvan was increasingly seen as an outlier area. It was, at the same time, Roma territory. Generally poorer than the rest of the local population, the Roma living there built shacks without permission, from whatever materials they could find. They also squatted in various empty buildings that they found in the area. The Roma were constantly blamed for damaging the state-owned flats that they

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[35] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, file 140
[36] Report regarding the city's territorial distribution, 28 September 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 2, file 24

lived in. The more the authorities focused on 'construction discipline', the more they pointed the finger at Roma people from Hatvan (and elsewhere), who were allegedly destroying the state's (i.e. the people's) wealth.

In 1970, a number of Roma people from the neighbouring villages were displaced by floods and started to build illegal shacks in the south of Baia Mare. At this point, the need to thoroughly systematize the neighbourhood became stringent for the authorities.[37] This implied evicting and destroying all illegal buildings and gaining a firm legal hand on the activities there. Throughout the 1970's, this idea developed into a comprehensive plan for regularizing and systematizing the neighbourhood of Hatvan. However, this plan soon dovetailed with another discursive shift that emerged after 1970: the criminalization of Roma people.

Discourses and practices of repression at the national level

During the 1970's, twenty years after the initial reports on the 'Roma situation 'in Romania, the discourse underwent a fundamental change at national level. At the end of 1972, the central authorities reported that '*a good part of the Roma population does not contribute to the economic and social efforts towards the progress of the country, and* [moreover] *they perpetuate an uncivilised and parasitical lifestyle*' (Marin, 2017: 158). Among various issues, the report mentions that '*through their disorganised lifestyle, through their vulgar and uncivilised behaviour, the Roma stir the citizens* '*disapproval*' (Marin, 2017: 160). From here there was only a small step to declare that '*for many Roma, the basis of their material existence is crime*' (Marin, 2017: 161).

The party's approach towards the Roma shifted greatly, compared to the 1950s attitudes. It placed a lot less emphasis on the state's responsibility to provide social welfare, and it began focusing more on the perceived incompatibilities between Roma and the rest of the population. Roma were now seen as not fully citizens and not fully 'civilised'. This incompleteness is undoubtedly a failure, but it is a failure for which the authorities now blamed the Roma themselves. It is their own 'lifestyle' that stands in the way of their 'integration' into the socialist economy and society.

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[37] '*We must not legalise these situations* [i.e. the shacks], *rather to systematise this neighbourhood, to force them* [i.e. the displaced people] *to move out, and following the systematisation, to make them abide by the law.*' Minute, 31 October 1970, 2/1970/930, p. 14, file 180

The Communist Party initiated a wave of repressive acts against Roma people. In the words of one researcher, this was an 'ethnic model of repression', targeting various aspects of Romani lifestyle and cultural practices (Fosztó, 2018: 136). This ethnic component could not have been present during the internationalist period of the first years of socialism. Nicolae Gheorghe spoke about the constant police harassment against Roma people in Romania, which started from 1976 – 1977: '*Roma neighbourhoods are often raided in the small morning hours by police troops, accompanied by their dogs, under the pretext of uncovering potential criminals that the Roma are hiding. They break into homes, hit women and children, and take away young and adult men. These are led to the police station, where they are beaten and threaten into confessing actions that are not their own*' (Gheorghe in Marin, 2017 II: 23). Some historians consider these militia raids in Roma-inhabited villages to have been motivated solely by the desire to 'intimidate locals '(Bottoni, 2017: 121).

As early as 1977, Romania's President Nicolae Ceaușescu issued directives to address the 'inadequacy 'of the social and economic integration of the Roma. This process had failed in several ways: Roma were not fully employed, but they did receive social benefits and allowances; they lived in unhygienic conditions; Roma children were not attending school and their families were instable and disorganised; and, last but not least, the crime rate was high. (National Demographic Commission, 1977: 6).

This focus on Roma people suggests a broader shift in the Romanian authorities' discourse at the time. Since the mid-1960s – roughly since Ceaușescu came into office – there was increased fixation on order, justice, tranquillity, and cleanliness, and also on family values. Nor were these entirely new themes, as the government had previously enforced its vision of socialist legality with a heavy hand. However, the Ceaușescu regime shifted the focus of repression from the political to the social. In other words, if the enemies of the people had previously been ideologically incompatible with the socialist regime, in the 1970s the enemy became a threat to the already established social order. It was no longer an enemy planning subversive actions against the state, but one that was lazily free riding on the state's resources. With most of the population already incorporated into the socialist system, being marginal would no longer bring state aid, but state repression. Thus, marginal groups such as ethnic minorities, religious groups, 'dissident youth 'and even yoga practitioners were suspected of sabotaging the regime by refusing to be fully integrated and lacking social discipline (Bottoni, 2017: 122). Notwithstanding the state's actions against such other groups, the repression against Roma people was the

only one that took the form of systematic evictions, displacements, and territorial rearrangements in the name of their social inclusion.

'Defending' Hatvan from the Roma people

I found evidence in the archives that the Baia Mare authorities had been dealing with this national issue as early as 1979. The city was at the height of its urban development. In addition to the many mines and factories built or rebuilt by the communists, it had grown in terms of neighbourhoods. The population had surpassed 100,000 and the local authorities were constantly preoccupied with managing public spaces, buildings, commercial areas, and green spaces. There was a growing concern to improve the quality of life, not only in terms of basic needs, but also to achieve a high level of urban comfort.[38]

At the end of the 1970's the Roma in Baia Mare suddenly appeared as an obstacle to this comfort. The archives abound in discussions, reports, and decisions about the various difficulties these people posed to the people of Baia Mare. By and large, the Roma were seen and treated as a social category that threatened the 'conquests of socialism' in the city. This was the case whether there were neighbourhoods, blocks, schools, but also the general health, well-being, and safety of the inhabitants.

The municipality's main concern at the time was widespread crime in the city. Reading minutes from the early 1980's, one gets the impression that the Baia Mare authorities were having an exceptionally hard time enforcing the law in the city, with issues ranging from 'hooliganism 'and 'disturbing the peace' to theft and murder. Time and again, the Roma people appear in the minutes as the main culprits for this state of affairs.

The municipality wanted to solve '*the problem of civic conduct and social integration of* [Roma] *families, aiming to combat some of their characteristic aspects such as: hooliganism, parasitism, consumption of alcoholic beverages, disturbing public order and peace, vagrancy, prostitution, begging, burglary, theft, robbery, etc.*'[39] After a visit to the Furniture Factory in 1980, a secretary of the Municipal Party Committee stated that '*the people there say that they are terrorized because of the inhabitants of this area - namely* [Roma]*. A more dramatic case - a*

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[38] Probleme pentru instruirea activului de partid pe linia gospodăririi orașului, undated, 2/1976/931, p. 3, file 61; Informare privind preocuparea miliției pe linia respectării legalității socialiste, august 1979, 5/1979/931, p. 3, file 46

[39] Raportul autorității tutelare privind ocrotirea unor categorii de minori si asistență socială, ND, in 7/1983/secretariat, p. 1, file 7

janitor had his ear cut off by a [Roma]. [Roma] *enter the factory, jump the fence, steal,
and nobody has the courage to do anything. Even the police are not able to act.*'[40]

There was a state of anxiety and panic regarding the activities of Roma
people in the city, and this situation was considered to be alarming. It demanded
urgent and firm action, particularly in Hatvan. The authorities called for more
'special measures' to be taken in this neighbourhood. There, residents had been
complaining about their Roma neighbours: '*Some issues were raised at the
hearings in the Hatvan neighbourhood, where on Melodiei Street there are only
six Romanian families on one staircase, and the rest are* [Roma]; *living with them
is impossible, impossible. We have to take measures in this respect.*'[41] Another
complaint that went along these lines is: '*comrades from Hatvan complain that
there is no way to live together, they are beaten, insulted, militiamen are servile
with* [Roma], *we must take urgent measures*'.[42]

Amidst this 'urban panic', the police forces felt powerless: '*the existing
law enforcement agencies can no longer cope with this state of affairs, as there is
only one militiaman, who in all his goodwill and dedication cannot cope with the
multitude of problems in* [Hatvan]'.[43] A 1982 report on the enforcement of law
and order states that '*the militia bodies have been operative and correct in
dealing with the hooliganism in Hatvan, with* [the Roma], *with the support of the
county militia bodies. There have been many convictions, yet we still face difficulties*'.[44]

The Roma were seen as foreign elements of Baia Mare, as people who
did not belong to the city, but who nevertheless endangered the safety of its
citizens. The local administration demanded 'more raid' in Hatvan, because it
was a hotbed for people without 'entry permits'. As a result, in 1981 the local
administration decided to take '*special order and security measures in order to
clear the area of criminal elements from other localities*'.[45] In 1983, the authorities
employed the same discourse of 'clearing the area', but went in more detail: '*the
militia must be more alert, more firm, we must sanitize the municipality and
regardless of nationality, all those who do not work, who do not live in Baia Mare
must be expelled. We have to give every citizen the right to move peacefully and
without fear on the territory of the municipality of Baia Mare.*'[46]

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[40] Nota, 22 November 1980, in 4/1980/931, pp. 1 – 2, file 185
[41] Nota, 8 September, in 4/1980/931, p. 3, file 79
[42] Nota, 20 September 1980, in 4/1980/931, p. 7, file 151
[43] Concluzii, organizatia de partid din Vasile Alecsandri, in 77/1980/931, p. 4, file 39
[44] Proces Verbal discussing Police Report, 28 September 1982, in 17/1982/secretariat, p. 11, file 191
[45] Hotărâre, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 2, file 26
[46] Proces Verbal, ND, in 12/1983/secretariat, p. 15, file 78

During the 1970's and particularly in the 1980's, the Baia Mare authorities devoted considerable energy to eliminate the phenomenon of informal housing among the Roma people. In 1980, the local authorities were discussing '*the action being taken in relation to* [the Roma]*, initiated by the county party committee. Our task is to make an inventory of the dwellings that could be inhabited by* [Roma]*, generally unhealthy places, shacks that will be demolished, also houses owned by the owners that could still be inhabited*'.[47] One report from the following year mentions the '*abusive occupation of apartments by* [Roma] *and other citizens*'.[48]

The authorities chose to address this issue through repressive measures, such as forced evictions. A report from 1980 stated that '*in the course of the action against* [the Roma]*, four evictions were carried out during one week*'.[49] The police also insisted on the '*immediate eviction of those who abusively enter buildings*'.[50] Two years later, the situation persisted, as one member of the local administration put it, while discussing a police report: '*We still have problems in Hatvan and we ask the Minister of Justice to take resolute action to put an end to sources of disorder here. Work is currently being done on two blocks in this neighbourhood and we will remove the* [Roma] *families from the other blocks, hopefully by October.*'[51]

A renamed and reclaimed neighbourhood

After this array of repressive actions, grounded in the discourse of criminalization, by the mid-1980s, Hatvan's territory was radically transformed. The various systematization plans that subsequently came into effect meant that people there were evicted, and their dwellings were destroyed. In their place, scores of new panel buildings were erected. The neighbourhood had been redrawn, as old streets were gone, and a new street pattern took their place. The catalyst of this dramatic change was the need for security: the new neighbourhood had to be a rationally built space, where law was to be respected.

At the end of this process, Hatvan was no longer there. Hatvan had been the problem and now, the problem was partially solved through various policies of systematization and repression. It is telling that some of the systematization

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[47] Nota, 17 May 1980, in 1/1980/931, p. 1, file 61
[48] Proces Verbal, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 15, file 8
[49] Nota, 12 July 1980, in 4/1980/931, p. 3, file 12
[50] Proces Verbal, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 15, file 8
[51] Proces Verbal, 28 September 1982, in 17/1982/secretariat, p. 11, file 191

plans mention intermediary names for the new neighbourhood. At no point was the old name still considered suitable. Eventually, Baia Mare's southern neighbourhood was renamed after a 19th century Romanian poet, Vasile Alecsandri.[52] The city's maps finally started to include this area in its perimeter, which was the newest and largest neighbourhood in Baia Mare.

Starting from 1983, the local authorities built special housing for the Roma evicted from Alecsandri; these were low quality flats, built outside the neighbourhood; they were cut off from heating and warm water infrastructure, so that there would be no situations of further evicting people due to owing debts to the municipality.[53] The former Hatvan remained a marginal space, with low quality buildings, inhabited by a precarious population. In 1988, one member of the local administration reported that the citizens of Baia Mare systematically refused to accept flats in Alecsandri.[54] Throughout the decade, the authorities kept evicting 'undisciplined' people from these flats. They also kept demolishing the informal settlements built on the edge of the area, on Craica Creek.

The new Hatvan – Alecsandri – continued to be perceived as the city's most dangerous area. Due to insufficient funding, the new buildings lacked quality and comfort. The Roma people continued to resist the authorities 'effort to settle and 'civilize' them in the new flats. As one member of the local administration put it in 1982, '*we still have a lot to do in Alecsandri and I think that this name has not been properly given to this neighbourhood, where everything we build is destroyed by* [Roma].[55]' The Roma people that were found to have illegally built shacks continued to be fined and evicted from the neighbourhood throughout the remaining of the socialist regime.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown an instance where urban space and social hierarchies are co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing. I have shown how in Baia Mare, the policies of socialist urban planning and the criminalization of Roma people became interdependent processes that ultimately led to the urban marginalization of Roma people, which continues to this day. The criminalization

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[52]Alecsandri has nothing to do with the city of Baia Mare. However, he is one of the first Romanian significant authors to write a lamentation for a Roma person, a childhood friend named Vasile Porojan, in which he describes the unfair and inhuman treatments of Roma people in Moldova at the beginning of the 19th century.

[53] Zamfir, this issue

[54] Minute, 28 September 1988, in 4/1988/secretariat, p. 5, file 98

[55] Minute, 24 February 1982, in archive folder 15/1982/Secretariat, file 53.

of Roma created marginal spaces. It transformed the territory according to criteria that were not architectural, but social. Through policies against Roma people, the authorities actively intervened in the urban fabric to create and enforce territorial differentiations. The process of *sistematizare* was thus seen as having a civilizing effect. It pacified disorder, instituted legality and facilitated social control. It also cleaned and ordered the urban space. At the same time, the same process experienced failures and unintended consequences. It led to what is still one of Romania's most marginalized metropolitan areas today.

These settlements persisted in the Craica area throughout the post socialist years. To this day, the area is one of the extremely precarious territories in Baia Mare. During the 2010s, several families from Craica were moved to the social housing buildings on Horea Street, where the current mayor notoriously built a wall, allegedly to separate the Roma people from the rest of the city. Recently, the Alecsandri neighbourhood was voted, in a poll made by a real estate company, as one of the most dangerous places to live in Romania. In this list it was called again by its old name, Hatvan.[56]

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[56] https://ziarmm.ro/hatvan-printre-cele-mai-nesigure-cartiere-din-romania/

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