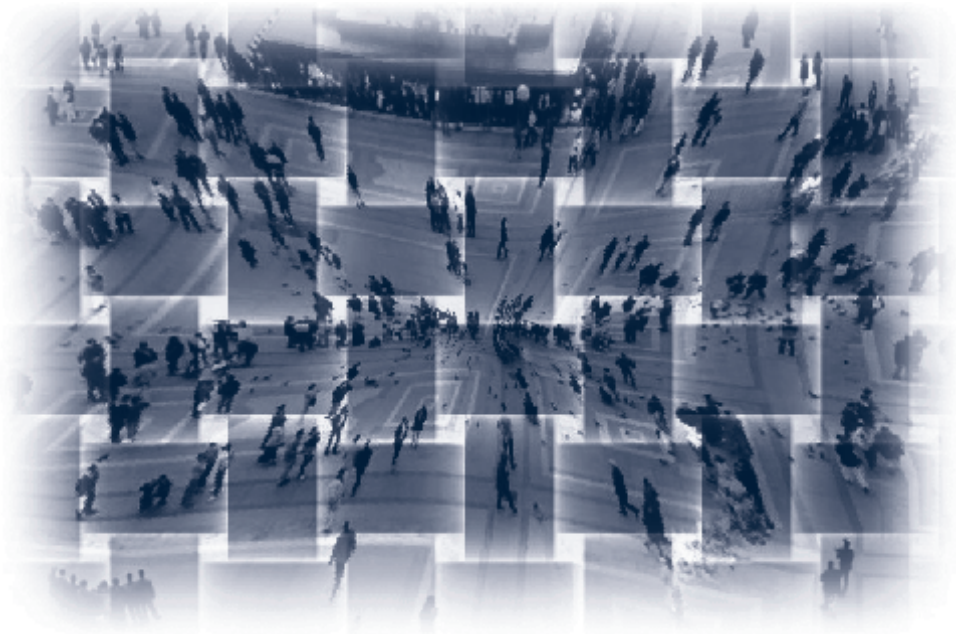




STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
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# SOCIOLOGIA

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## ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE AS COUNTER-CONDUCT: THERAPEUTIC SPACES AND MEDICAL RATIONALITY IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

CORINA RUSU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This study analyses the practice of medical pluralism in contemporary Romania, addressing the phenomenon of alternative medicine through the Foucauldian concept of counter-conduct. Employing in-depth interviews with general and alternative practitioners from two towns in Transylvania, and participant observations in spaces where they practice their knowledge, I describe how certain discursive acts reformulate the body and the subject-patient. Alternative therapists construct their practice in direct opposition to several parameters of biomedicine, such as the logic of diagnosis, treatment, and the praxis of patient's visit to the general practitioner's office, discussed in the paper. They define their approach as psychosomatic, and set-up the medical space as a confessional space, envisioning a holistic corporeality and the idea of the "inner doctor" in each patient. This conduct would supposedly make the subject "active" and "empowered", as opposed to the "passive" patient succumbed to the diagnosis of conventional doctors.

**Keywords:** counter-conduct, biomedicine, alternative medicines, patient subject

### Introduction

Postsocialist Romania, especially in the last decade, opened up to a breadth of non-conventional medicines, also named holistic, alternative or complementary medicines. Romania accommodates a wide range of such practices, mainly clustered around big cities; in 2009, 7% of the population resorted to alternative medicines within the last 12 months (Dragan and Madsen, 2011). The possibility of diversity made way for new therapeutic figures on the medical market – naturopaths, homeopaths, osteopaths, Reiki therapists, modern shamans - all of them working next to family practitioners, popular healers and plastic surgeons. Looking into this space of medical pluralism, this

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study examines the discourse and practice of alternative medicines through the conceptual framework of *counter-conduct*. I claim that, in a governmentality that promotes mostly conventional medicine, alternative practices respond as counter-conducts, having an inherent critical positioning towards biomedical conduct. This becomes apparent in the new, reorganized therapeutic spaces, and in the discursive constitution of alternative practices.

In response to the scarcity of ethnographic studies concerning medical practices in Romania, and in particular alternative ones, I have used a combined methodology of empirical observations in the medical rooms, exploratory discussions, semi-structured and in-depth interviews with 25 patients, family practitioners and complementary/alternative doctors, taking place in 2011-2012. The majority of family practitioners interviewed were middle-aged women, while alternative practitioners were males and females, in equal distribution, with ages ranging between 25-55 years old. I visited six individual surgeries and three alternative medical centres in Cluj-Napoca, the second largest city in Romania, and Mediaş, a smaller-town in Transylvania. The time spent in the offices of family practitioners and alternative ones, allowed me to observe in a comparative way the interactions between doctors and patients, the temporal organization of medical visits, and the spatial distribution of therapeutic facilities.

In a manner that takes into consideration all therapeutic possibilities, by alternative medicine I mean practices and products of healthcare that are not included or are rarely included within conventional biomedicine, such as homeopathy, acupuncture, osteopathy or Ayurveda<sup>2</sup>. Although there are some differences in nature, yet lacking a definitional consensus, I chose to use the terms alternative, naturist, complementary, holistic in an interchangeable way. In practice, medical pluralism is a syncretic phenomenon, a combination of different “schools of thought”, rather than a process that requires either separate or hierarchical use of various kinds of therapies (Leslie *apud*. Lock and Nichter, 2002)<sup>3</sup>. Biomedicine is understood as a system of knowledge and practices

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<sup>2</sup> Law no. 118/2007 is the formal framework that organizes alternative medical practices in Romania. These are grouped in six categories: pharmacological and biological practices (immunity-boosting therapies, argil therapy, apitherapy etc.); herbalist practices (aromatherapy, oligotherapy, algotherapy, herbal therapy); diet, nutrition, lifestyle (Gerson therapy, macrobiotic therapy, vegetarianism, Feng Shui etc.); alternative systems of medical practices (acupuncture, homeopathy, naturopathy, Yoga, Ayurveda, Su Jok, medical astrology, etc.); manual therapy (acupressure, chiropractic therapy, osteopathy, reflexology, etc.); bio-electromagnetic and energetic applications (electro-acupuncture, spectroscopy, magnetic resonance therapy, crystal therapy, color therapy, Reiki, holographic therapy etc.).

<sup>3</sup> This is particularly visible in Romania because medical legislation authorizes the exercise of these practices by doctors, dentists and pharmacists, psychologists and other university graduates, provided they have permits and certificates approved by the Ministry of Health and the Romanian College of Physicians.

that establishes a specific way to look at the body, suffering and healing, and at the same time institutes the patient as a subject with a certain conduct. This biomedical “culture” has been historically analysed by Michel Foucault, whose work provides our main conceptual frame. In this sense, I have examined the discourses that define, redefine and categorize medicines, and connect or differentiate one from the others. I depart from a binomial approach that opposes modern medical knowledge to traditionalist knowledge (folk medicine), and assimilates alternative medicine with the latter. In the current alternative practices, we cannot speak about a regression to a premodern view of the body and illness; but, at least as far as my fieldwork has revealed, these practices act out a critical reflection on modern medical knowledge and practice. Postsocialist pluralism allowed the existence of multiple approaches to the patient and its body, and these have easily found a niche in the current capitalist economy, which commodifies healthiness and promotes consumer-oriented medical services and a neoliberal governing of health.

### **Knowledge and biomedical surroundings**

Proponents of alternative practices bring forward a series of critiques to biomedicine: the technical nature of diagnosis and care; the negative effects of using (chemical) pharmaceuticals and excessive pharmacological treatment; the rigidity of the doctor-patient relation; the ignorance of psychosomatics and the envisioning of the body as autonomous to the individual; the portrayal of patients as ignorant subjects (as opposed to the medical specialist) and passive receivers of treatment.

To understand how biomedicine has managed to impose its discourse upon subjects who had been already governmentalized as patients of conventional medicine, some contextualisation is needed. As Conrad (2007) rightfully argues, holistic approaches propose a reformed medical model, one that actually supports a process of de-medicalization concerning diagnosis, doctor-patient relationship, and the view of the body and disease. The medicalization of society, as Conrad (2007) defines it, is the expansion of the medical jurisdiction onto a variety of aspects of human experience, a jurisdiction that exceeds pathology and thus the demand of the patient. This view assumes a conceptual triad: knowledge, authority and subjectivity (Foucault, 2003). In other words, to govern the health of a population, starting with the eighteenth century to the current period, means to incorporate a system for the production of medical truth: anatomy-physiology, hygiene, medical casuistry, treatment schemes, prophylactic programs etc. Because governmentality asserts the norm, its operability and deviations from it (Miller and Rose, 2008: 6), medical knowledge is based on compared dichotomies: normal -



abnormal, pathological - healthy, true - false. The disease presents itself to the eyes of the clinician (*the medical gaze*), his smell, ears and hands, through signs and symptoms that separate pathology from normalcy. In order to diagnose, the medical practitioner combines examination techniques with the confessional account of the subject (case anamnesis); first encoding the signs and symptoms, then reinterpreting the patient's narration. For a more extensive surveillance, a whole system of registration is organized: visit records, prescription records; the individual files of patients, which in turn, must include: personal data, the diagnosis received, the doctor's instructions, the investigations that were carried out, treatments and reactions to the treatments.

This alternation of sight, touch and listening compared with the informational baggage of formal medical education, is the protocol for establishing a disease diagnosis. This process is supplemented with the information provided by a number of devices: ultrasound, endoscope, electrocardiograph etc. that, because of their "objective" character, employing machineries in trend with the latest discoveries of natural sciences, make medical interpretation more "scientific". Because a disease consists of an ordered set of symptoms, with a detectable cause, the individual is no longer a sick person but a "pathological fact indefinitely reproducible in all patients similarly affected" (Foucault, 1998: 130). Medical casuistry uses a probabilistic logic; the effectiveness of a treatment is revealed with statistical evidence as well. So, most often, the lack of this type of evidence, the proof of numbers, is used as a ground to discredit the therapeutic results of alternative medicines.

Returning to the conceptual triad mentioned earlier, medical knowledge becomes performative when regimes of authority are employed: a series of experts - the medical personnel - and premises - hospital, clinic, ambulatory. At the same time, this type of government enables technologies of subjectivity: the patient-subject has and *is expected* to have certain behaviour inside therapeutic spaces, towards medical professionals, regarding his body and the way *his body* deals with *its* ailments. This topic will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

The offices of conventional general practitioners (or "family doctors" in the Romanian medical vocabulary) that I have visited are disciplinary spaces, and certain elements encountered are common to all. The whiteness of the walls, robes and shoes, the presence of a sink and soap provide the space with a visual portrayal of hygiene as the highest norm. The room is symbolically dominated by the doctor's desk, a symbolic barricade in front of which the patient sits. This reaffirms the practitioner's authority in this space. His healing power is doubled by a bureaucratic power, suggested by the stacks of registers, patients' records, prescriptions, and exclusive access to the on-line register of patients.

This bulk of paperwork, performed in a coded system hardly known to laypersons to the profession, materialize the physician's knowledge and supervising authority. This multi-record keeping provides also the basis for potential controls of the doctor's activity by other medical authorities, which still hardly ever occur in front of the patients. Consequently, his exhibit of professionalism, materialized in books, medical and pharmacological treatises, deposited randomly on shelves or the occasional library found next to the desk, remains an unchallenged proof of medical authority. Walls are enlivened by either anatomical representations of the body, posters containing prevention messages, or by advertisements for different medications. In this space, one will also find the most common medical paraphernalia: stethoscopes, sphygmomanometers<sup>4</sup>, blood glucose devices and consultations beds. As in a laboratory, the information provided is unaltered, objective, the diagnosis thus gaining credibility. The uninterrupted presence of a medical assistant, and her position (in all cases the assistant has been a woman, moreover, in colloquial Romanian this position is called "medical sister") in this hierarchical space, usually occupying a side or corner of the desk, reinforces the superior status of the doctor. Her activities, as I observed during my visits, are those of a clerical worker: if not inviting patients to step into the treatment room, the assistant is almost always seated at the desk, silently dealing with records and centralizing data.

The visit to the family doctor is entirely ordered, technicalized and timed, as one of the practitioners admits: "we do it... how to say... like on a conveyer belt, like in a factory" (dr.G; female, 40 years old). The number of patients per day is regulated "from above" and is an average of 20 patients in the five hours spent in the office (although in practice this number is often exceeded, particularly during outbreaks of viral diseases); to this number then adds those "from the field", the patients visited at home by the doctor. Similarly, for each patient, the visit is strictly timed: up to 20 minutes, but in all cases doctors admit that more than half of this time is spent with registering their actions into various databases. The protocol for the medical visit is precise:

First, a rapid history, because we're on the clock, and then the consultation, physical examination, treatment, prescription and then home (Dr.O; female, 45 years old).

For a productive efficiency, time is measured to the minute:

About 5 minutes case history, about 5 minutes examination, and the time left is spent discussing with the patient, understanding what it is that he wants to do next. And then all the writing down... this is how it was set-up by the National Health Insurance House. There are exceptions, of course, if I have a special case and need to clarify it, I'll stay more (Dr.G, female, 40 years old).

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<sup>4</sup> Instruments for measuring blood pressure in the arteries.

For the sick person, the medical visit actually means receiving a diagnosis and a written down treatment to be carried out outside their interaction, and occasionally a reference-letter for consultation by a specialist.

Diagnosis, in turn, is clear-cut, ordered and follows a predetermined route: anamnesis, perceptual examining of the body, and a possible reference for further inquiries (specialist consultation, blood tests, imaging techniques). For an allopathic doctor, to treat means to prescribe a treatment, most often a pharmacological cure. Using a diagnostic scheme, one that traces the cause and symptoms of the disease, exceptions and complications that may intervene, the doctor tries to alleviate a depersonalized illness through a standardized therapeutic reference system, which is called a therapeutic guide. A disease corresponds to a medication: a series of drug formulas enhanced by a certain regime of daily life (diet, rest and work habits). The treatment is indicated for each disease and adapted to other factors of the case: other diseases, age, constitution, financial capacity to afford certain medication.

I mean, medicine is nevertheless a science and we conform to the treatment guides, we don't invent the treatment schemes, we just adjust them to the associated pathology, age etc. (dr.H, family practitioner; female, 50 years old).

In this circumstance, the role of the doctor is to uncover the correct diagnosis and to prescribe the corresponding medication. The duty of the patient, being an ignorant figure, is to accept and follow the professional's advices, and to wait the effects of medication. The passivity of the individual in the process of healing his body can be observed in practice. The sick person patiently waits its turn in the waiting room until he/she is called in by the medical assistant. Inside the medical office the space is configured in such a way, that he/she is directed to sit before the professional. The patient is then polled with a rapid, yet precise series of questions. During the physical exam, his/her body is free from its mind, emotionality or cultural customs of privacy and shame, becoming an anatomo-pathological alien, an object to be seen, touched, handled and measured. The next step is to be either forwarded to a specialist, subjected to further technical investigations, or to retire with a piece of paper, the prescription that promises healing.

### **The alternative therapeutic space: a space for counter-conduct**

In order to understand how alternative therapeutic spaces function, it is useful to focus on the elements that breach the mainstream governmentality of the patient-subject and the conventional sources of medical authority. The notion of *conduct* is a main feature of governmentality, a political technique inherently

modern that was shaped over the XVII-XVIII centuries. The term captures the complex meaning of governing: to govern others, to govern oneself, to allow yourself to be governed in a political, ethical, spiritual and civic way. Counter-conduct is then an opposition to the mainstream, socially legitimated conduct.

In his courses delivered at Collège de France in 1977-1978 and later included in the book *Security, territory, population* (2009), when discussing the extent of biopower and possibilities of resistance, Foucault mentions the largest and well-known counter-conducts in modern history – Luther’s Reformation. Author considers that this schism contested mainly the pastoral organization, rather than the doctrinal theological system of the Catholic Church. This movement challenged the importance of the shepherd figure as mediator of everyday experiences and of the transcendental, once these relationships exercised a priest-lay dimorphism. Luther and Calvin’s religious renewal repealed the sacred-secular distinction regarding things, behaviours, spaces and people; they claimed that divinity is omnipresent in everyday life.

In a similar way, biomedical institutions were targeted by a series of smaller counter-conducts: rejection of medications, refusal to vaccinate or to participate in medical monitoring programs (Foucault, 2009). Power is not omnipresent and omnipotent; resistances occur. When analysing the phenomenon of medicalization in recent decades, Conrad (2007) also mentions the social implications of this development; one social echo takes the form of resistance. Without naming them explicitly as counter-conducts (these movements being of such nature) examples range from the campaign for gay rights, aimed at de-pathologizing this social category, to the movement reclaiming natural births, that promotes ways of giving birth less medicalized (mainly non-hospitalized).

My view is that alternative medicines work as counter-conducts in two ways. First, they profess certain knowledge and practices that are infrequent or even publicly discredited by the conventional medical establishment. Second, the alternative discourse builds itself by referring in a critical manner to several crucial aspects of the biomedical conduct: diagnosing techniques, doctor-patient interaction, patient position, design of the treatment space, recovery methods employed. Consequently, alternative medicine results from discontent and appears as a reaction, a challenge to the medical status quo and to the legitimacy of treatment.

There are two social logics by which to determine the legitimacy of treating: the doctor ensures his knowledge through formal education and clinical practice, proved by his diplomas; the folk healer, either mentored or self-educated, relies on the social recognition of his therapeutic work. For the alternative/complementary practitioner, these two ways of legitimating are tied together. He holds a formal proof of his medical training, but his reputation is that of a healer (not only an “expert”), and it is transmitted verbally, between relatives, neighbours, acquaintances or through forums and virtual communities.

In order to analyse how the dominance of conventional medicine has declined, my first move was to index all “alternative” offers on the medical market of the second largest city of Romania, Cluj-Napoca, also a university centre in medical sciences and the location of numerous public and private clinics and hospitals<sup>5</sup>. I have identified 24 units of alternative medicine<sup>6</sup>, and out of these, 16 have been individual medical offices and 8 medical centres. A medical centre consists of a space that offers multiple healing and healthcare techniques performed by two or more therapists: converted doctors and non-doctors, physiotherapists, psychologists, masseurs, reflexologists and healers with skills that are not formally indexed, but who have graduated from a higher education institution (as mentioned in Law No.118/2007).

During my fieldwork, I carried out regular visits to three alternative medical centres and one individual office. In each of these spaces, various types of therapies are simultaneously practiced: homeopathy, biofeedback, acupuncture, Bach floral remedies, apiphytotherapy, Reiki, detox etc. Some of the therapies, like homeopathy or acupuncture, use different methods of diagnosing. The alternative centres consist of treatment rooms, toilets and a waiting room, where the atmosphere is often animated by ambient music at a low volume. From the beginning, the place is organized and decorated so as to create a calm, relaxed climate, to be perceived as an intimate space, and this is achieved through pastel walls and decorations, plants, music and by burning incense. Daily schedule depends on how many appointments have been previously made, but the place is very rarely crowded. The visit usually lasts one hour, or more if it's the first consultation. The timing is in fact versatile, depending on which therapy will be employed. For example, in dr.M's office, an acupuncture session lasts 30-40 minutes, a hirudotherapy (leech therapy) session extends up to an hour, and for mesotherapy, injecting homeopathic remedies, 5-8 minutes suffice. Dr.M. also mentioned that almost in all cases patients stay longer for friendly talks.

We've made our schedule in such a way so they [the patients] do not suffer, do not have to wait, or become impatient, so as they can make their own schedule and be prepared for this kind of consultation; because it is different and the type of treatment we do here is different. And the time for each patient has to be a full hour. So that he will have an hour to confess, to detail his symptoms and benefit

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<sup>5</sup> Because of the fact that the Internet web is an important space for promoting these medical offers, a detailed search was deemed necessary, one that includes: sites of alternative medical centres and of practitioners' offices, forums, urban guides, medical sites and sites that only register the legality of firms. The results obtained correspond to the period of December 2012 – January 2013.

<sup>6</sup> The number of complementary medical offers is certainly higher because these are also embedded into the public health system, particularly in individual medical offices; this is made possible by the fact that the Ministry of Health recognizes acupuncture, homeopathy and apiphytotherapy as additional medical competences.

from a treatment in silence, not pressured by other patients who stand by the door, emergencies (...) I thought of it this way because I know from my experience that the patient should leave the office 50% healed and cleared; the rest of it, he will figure out for himself and the medication. A good word and the psychotherapy that we start here, in the office, is 50% of the treatment effect (Dr.R, general practitioner, homeopath, apiphytotherapist; male, 50 years old).

The emphasis is on communication and a close interaction with the patient; this is pursued even before patients step into the treatment room itself. Dr.R. tells me that he prefers to greet the patient personally, and lead him into the treatment room, while performing a series of techniques that have a relaxing role: from the first physical contact (shaking hands with him), conducting a brief amiable chat, to performing certain subtle movements, like pressing "spots learned from Bowen (therapy) and acupressure, between the shoulder blades". Once the patient is in the treatment room, the appearance seems familiar: the sanitary whiteness of the robes, sink and soap, the desk, diplomas and certificates hung on walls. Some of the medical gear found in surgeries of family practitioners, such as consultations bed, electrocardiograph or stethoscope, occurs in alternative spaces as well. Even if the look is familiar, or more accurately, precisely because the look is familiar, these elements have the role of investing the space and therapist's actions with credibility, his knowledge being intensely repudiated in other places. The position of the patient in this space follows the logic of horizontality; usually, the room is organized in such a way so as the patient will sit in an armchair next to the therapist. This will create the impression of equality and cooperation, involving the patient in the process of treating. Sensing the inequality of the doctor-patient relationship, and the passive character contained by the word "patient", some alternative practitioners discard it altogether, using instead the term "client".

In biomedical spaces, confession has the role of pin-pointing the elements that make up a pathological case, while in alternative ones confession has an intrinsic therapeutic function, an end in itself. The time provided for each person being longer, patients are able to narrate their sufferings, disclose issues that often are not directly related to the materiality of their body (emotional and personal history), to get the feeling of being listened and understood. These are considered as part of the very process of healing. Stressing the value of communication, dr.R says that the explanations received by the patient are equally important as is the remedy given. So a therapist should be skilful in explaining, in a vernacular language, why the patient is suffering, how to heal, what different therapies and medications are available and suited for the suffering, how do they work etc.

What does biofeedback mean? It means that.... and then I use different stories. The one with Pavlov, for example (...) So, the dog's reaction to the need of food was greater; here you'll find the principle of resonance: if I give you a substance as information on an electrode, the other electrode will measure your body's reaction (dr.R, general practitioner, homeopath, apiphytotherapist; male, 50 years old).

The alternative practitioner usually practices more than one therapy. Choosing to use one or more therapies is left to his personal experience, what he thinks fits a patient and where he perceives the limits of a therapy: "you cannot treat a fracture with homeopathy. That's absurd! So each therapy has its place" (Dr.E., general practitioner, homeopath, phytotherapist; female, 30 years old). This choice also takes into account the personal beliefs of patients, religious precepts, whether they are sceptics or don't relate to a specific therapy or medication. Complementary practitioners are highly adaptable. For example, dr.R claims: "For me, the patient before me is the king. He guides my choice of treatment. If he says *'Mm, I do not believe in it'* then I [interviewee's emphasis] do not believe in it". Treating is a process of negotiation.

In biomedical terms, the body is seen as a machine, an object to be manipulated, brought into a healthy state by doctors. Furthermore, this body is partitioned by biomedical specialties into isolated organs, functions, cells, diseases: neurology, cardiology, urology, oncology etc. Alternative medicines, some even adopting the term holistic, contest this type of knowledge and treatment that divides an individual and its body.

You reach such a fine and precise diagnostic, but you forget that the body is a whole and that those cells are not functioning on their own, but they function in a whole organism, which has a mind, emotions, it breathes, has a heartbeat and so on. (...) This is the medicine that takes off and grows increasingly far - holistic medicine. Classical medicine has reached a limit, it cannot do more (dr.R, general practitioner, homeopath, apiphytotherapist; male, 50 years old).

Dr.M also shows the benefits of this holism:

These therapies are global therapies; I mean, a person that comes here to cure a sore shoulder, will also cure his depression, because by means of acupuncture, phytotherapy, through flower or bee remedies an overall balance will occur (dr.M, general practitioner, acupuncturist, mesotherapist; female, 35 years old).

Traditional medicines<sup>7</sup> are based on a similar principle of networking, a network in which all elements of the cosmos are connected to each other: the environment, animals, stars, plants, human beings, bodies and the invisible, spirit world. Acupuncture, Bowen therapy, Ayurvedic medicine, Reiki, crystal healing

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<sup>7</sup> In Romania, for example, folk medicine is currently defined as phytotherapy or herbal medicine.

and many other alternative therapies set up a different dimension of physiology, of a body that is not separated from its mind, emotionality, personality and agency, nor from the outside world, visible or invisible.

So, Man, in its entirety, is not a being limited to the body and psyche, but it is a much more complexly built being, in a permanent state of, say, transformation, in a permanent exchange with what surrounds it, with the animal world, the mineral world, the unseen world - which is increasingly perceived as a living world that hides entities identified by more and more people (dr.F, general practitioner, acupuncturist, osteopath; male, 50 years old).

Le Breton (2009) finds that 'parallel' medicines are treating a patient that is first and foremost suffering in his personal life; this suffering may then materialize on his body. Indeed, since the 1970s, a theory of clinical practice embraced a certain tendency towards holism. George Engel developed the biopsychosocial model of illness intended to replace the dualist, Cartesian view. The model states that biological, psychological and social factors all play a significant role in human functioning in the context of disease or illness. In this regard, alternative medicines validate psychosomatics in the strictest sense of the term, of *soma* and *psyche* in mutual resonance; yet alternative medicines base their practice on holism to a much greater extent than permitted by current medical practice.

In light of these considerations, alternative practices focus on creating a space and a relationship in which the patient will be able to reveal himself, through this open communication the doctor will be able to discover the origins of suffering, most often attributed to mental and spiritual imbalances. But this physiosemantics (Le Breton, 2009), the symbolism of a holistic man, goes beyond the dualism of psychosomatics, as seen earlier in the statements of interviewed alternative practitioners.

### **The “inner doctor” and medical rationality**

Another essential feature of the alternative medical discourse is the vision of an all-knowing body and self. This view is either implicitly accepted or it is acknowledged using the expression “inner doctor”, as does dr.R: “Everybody has an inner doctor that knows what it’s needed”. If it has vitality, that is life expectancy, strong immunity and “energy balance”, this integrated body is able to heal itself. This stream of thought is often associated with vitalism, namely the idea that within any living organism there is an energy that gives it life. And the therapists working with such a view (often called “naturopathic”), is intended to guide the body to self-healing through natural, non-invasive methods.



The healing capacity exists in each patient; the patient has his own doctor. And the doctor should be able to teach the patient how to heal himself. Not with what, but how to heal himself (dr.J general practitioner, homeopath, acupuncturist; female, 40 years old).

Furthermore, dr.J adds that in the healing process a “divine spark” or vital energy is, above all, the most important factor.

Likewise, dr.F declares that:

The physician is the enzyme that makes this link possible, he is like a binder between phenomena that have long been buried in the inner science of each of us. We have a knowledge that we discarded long ago because we were accustomed to depend on what comes from the outside (dr.F, general practitioner, acupuncturist, osteopath; male, 50 years old).

Thereby, the intervention of a therapy actually works as a stimulator for the body’s own capacity. For example, the highly-trafficked online medical guide [www.romedic.ro](http://www.romedic.ro)<sup>8</sup> presents various alternative therapies with a similar definition of the body: “Naturopathy is a complete and coherent medical system that focuses on stimulating the natural self-healing mechanisms of the body”, “Reflexology aims at mobilizing the body’s self-healing processes”. Presenting quantum treatments, the site offers this description: “Health consists of the harmonious energy-informational relations between individual and nature. This harmony is expressed by optimizing the mechanisms of self-regulation, self-defence and self-healing of the living organism.” Harmonizing, energy rebalancing and adjustment are some of the terms often used in this discourse.

In addition, this “holistic” body has the virtue of manifesting itself, externalizing its imbalances and needs. Dr.R explains:

This is what Bowtech [Bowen therapy] does. What does it do? By working on specific points [on the body], first the patient relaxes and you prompt him to show you what his priority is and deal with that (...) You let the body tell you. That’s holistic (dr.R, general practitioner, homeopath, apiphytotherapist; male, 50 years old).

In crystal therapy a consultation requires the use of a crystal pendulum, which locates, by spinning over body, unbalanced energy points (chakras), points that are related to functions and organs in the area. The body also expresses its needs, such as the need for vitamins or carbohydrates, through various cravings (cravings for sweets, fruits etc.) or other marks. Man has an intrinsic science of the body’s needs, but as dr.F said above, he has forgotten it, always receiving a help from outside, or, as dr.R claims, that society and advertising pollute this knowledge of “real” bodily necessities.

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<sup>8</sup> Accessed on 12.05.2012.

What is also distinctive about the alternative discourse is the use of the term “healing” with a greater frequency than in other discourses. By contrast, biomedicine uses “diagnosis”, a term abused by doctors, according to some promoters of alternative practices. They contest biomedicine’s focus on finding an exact diagnosis, at the expense of searching for means of healing and self-healing.

Scientific validation of processes involved in healing does not occupy a central position in this discourse. The fact that a treatment or remedy enjoys a cause-effect type of explanation, proven by positivist criteria, is often surpassed by using different sorts of arguments brought to justify the effectiveness of an alternative practice: seniority and patient feedback. First type of reasoning, most often found concerning folk and oriental medicines, employs the logic of continuity in time, as is apprehended by dr.A’s statement:

In acupuncture, as well, in recent years, let’s say in the last 70 years, diverse scientific grounds are brought to traditional Chinese medicine. True, it’s nice that we have a scientific basis, but let’s not be lost in these. The law of time is very important for therapy. And what does the law of time mean? Something that works for years, for thousands of years, right? (dr.A, general practitioner, acupuncturist, homeopath; female, 35 years old).

The second type of reasoning raised by alternative practitioners consists of valuing their individual work experience and feedback received from patients. All that counts is the end result:

I don’t have a scientific explanation, but I did that patient good. Isn’t it much more important to make him better than to ascribe a super-fancy diagnosis? (dr.E, general practitioner, homeopath, phytotherapist; female, 30 years old).

Evidence-based medicine does not fully discredit alternative therapies, but not having a somatic way of tracing therapy’s effects by conventional methods, what is left is to place their efficacy solely on the placebo effect, namely on the role of autosuggestion in the psyche of individuals<sup>9</sup>. There is a tendency to distinguish two types of rationality: evidence-based medicine and faith-based medicine<sup>10</sup>. Seeking to move away from this explanatory limitation, as it is perceived, a number of alternative practitioners tend to adopt some concepts and laws from quantum physics, claiming that it is this domain that holds the methods to prove the “real” effectiveness of a treatment. In this view, efficacy is revealed by using the same terms and methods as in evidence-based medicine, the search for a scientific explanation gains significance, “proof” prevails, but it differs by what is accepted as proof.

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<sup>9</sup> Most often, indicating the placebo effect as an explanation for the results of alternative therapies is accompanied by an attitude that borders on arrogance, as if the placebo effect is not applied to any conventional medical practice.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the work of Robert Park (2006) on “Voodoo Science”.

Other alternative practitioners, such as dr.F, point out the fact that scientific truth is relative in time, and in fact a matter of belief and social control:

These scientific bases are actually some game rules established by a handful of people, according to several coordinates. That does not mean that the scientific truth set by a person will be super-imposable to the truth that I see in a certain matter. That's why, for me, to enrol, to enlist, to respect those levels of scientific arguments, it's a choice that limits you... (dr.F, general practitioner, acupuncturist, osteopath; male, 50 years old).

Then, dr.F rejects the universality of scientific grounds, which actually are, in his view:

... norms founded by people that are educated in a certain way, with certain creeds, beliefs, certain theses, ideas (dr.F, general practitioner, acupuncturist, osteopath; male, 50 years old).

## **Conclusion**

Speaking about medical practices involves multiple and complex facets from political, institutional, and epistemological standpoints to ethics and worldview, conceptions about man and body. The first part of this paper focused on the practice of conventional biomedicine in contemporary Romania, revealing how the subjectivity of the patient is moulded in the disciplinary space of the family practitioner's medical office, constructed simultaneously as a space of scientific and bureaucratic authority.

The second part analysed the discourse and practice space of alternative medicine, exploring how it delivers a different conception of knowledge (one proven by experience and time, and not by mainstream science) and corporeality (as holistic and interconnected with the psyche). The alternative therapeutic room is an intimate space of confession, of building a close relationship between therapist and patient. Combining different schools of thought, techniques, ways of diagnosis, remedies from various medical systems, the alternative practitioner is open to conceptual syncretism and negotiations with the client-subject over the "best-deal" treatment for her or him. Legitimization coming from traditional medicine (such as phytotherapy) or from academic science (such as quantum physics) is duly accepted. While biomedicine sees the body simply as an organic whole, alternative therapies aim at a holistic conception of the body, guided by the principle of interconnectedness with the psyche, spirit, cosmos and nature. Using the term of "the inner doctor", this body is invested with properties of self-knowledge, self-sufficiency and self-healing.

My ethnography unfolded how alternative medicine functions as a counter-conduct in contemporary Romania and how it opens to door for a new forms of governmentality. Health and medical practices described here happen at the junction of social and ideological developments: patient movements, neoliberal reforms of the public healthcare system and changes in medical management discourse, the commodification of healthiness and the increasing emphasis of brain and body-control, to name just a few. Further research on this topic might focus on the ways in which disciplinary prescriptions are internalized, on patients' motivations and rationales to use alternative remedies and therapies, and on how the notion of freedom of choice is guiding not only the reform of public health services (Miller and Rose, 2008), but also the practice and consumption of alternative or complementary medicines, and the new technologies governing health that seek to "empower" the individual.

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## REFLECTED BODIES: WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE MARITAL EXPERIENCE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MATERNAL BODY. A CASE STUDY OF MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN IN SUBURBAN ROMANIA

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**Abstract.** Even if concepts of marriage and motherhood are subject to continuous changes and reinterpretations, women and men still marry and have children following more traditional or more unconventional patterns. My major interest in this research was to unveil Romanian middle-class women's narratives regarding their perceptions over their own bodies and identities, by focusing my analysis on lived experiences, intimate scenes, daily practices and activities within marriage and motherhood. Qualitative empirical work was conducted in 2012 and 2015 in a post-socialist suburban neighbourhood, known as a place mostly inhabited by young, middle-class families. The analysis unfolds women's class affinities and dispositions, their perception of the marital experience, identity and corporeal transformations, and their reflections on maternity as a transformative stage in terms of subjectivity, agency and body.

**Keywords:** marriage, motherhood, experience, embodiment, intimacy

### Introduction<sup>2</sup>

*The wager is that all the effects of subjectivity, all the significant facets and complexities of subjects, can be as adequately explained using the subject's corporeality as a framework (...). All the effects of depth and interiority can be explained in terms of the inscriptions and transformations of the subject's corporeal surface. Bodies have all the explanatory power of minds.*

*(Grosz, 1994: vii).*

The complex relationship between women's body, identity and emotions within marriage is often analyzed separately from their experiences of motherhood.

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Women's concerns about corporeal transformations during maternity cannot be reduced to aesthetics, overweight and slimness or breastfeeding, topics that most of the literature is apparently engaged with. An analysis of maternal body should ask for more in-depth observations and should emphasize women's narratives and self-perceptions regarding their experiences. Existing literature often relates to marriage only as a sexist or as a patriarchal institution and attempts to deconstruct it. I argue that it is insufficient to study marriage and motherhood only from a social, institutional, cultural or financial perspective. Marriage and motherhood, as important episodes in many people's lives, imply possible collisions between the actor's involved subjectivities and agency, disruptive and disordered bodies, desires, shame, emotions, networks, complex experiences, mirrors, recognition, rejection or sexuality. Nevertheless, all aspects mentioned above are socially, politically and culturally situated and constructed. In order to better understand women's experiences as wives and mothers, great interest and attention should be paid to those micro-aspects and practices, feelings and changes that are equally important in the way individuals conduct their lives, construct their opinions, reject or reinforce certain discourses.

Therefore, my aim in this article is to offer an analysis that manages to give voice to women's marital and maternal experiences and to construct through these voices a more detailed picture of gender, sexuality, family organization and bodily practices in post-socialist Romania's, as lived by middle-class women. In other words, it intends to provide a detailed perspective on women's narratives and self-perception regarding their own bodies and identities, by focusing on their experiences, intimate scenes, daily practices and activities as mothers and married women. My focus is on middle-class women in their 30s or early 40s, living in the suburbs of the Cluj-Napoca metropolitan area, in the village Florești, with newly built housing estates aimed to establish a de-facto middle-class suburban neighbourhood. Florești provided a fruitful location for my research, not only because it hosts more than one hundred middle-class families that opted out from the city to the suburbs following an American fantasy, but also because of its chaotic and dense residential buildings, with almost no green areas, that constrain families to spend most of their time within their flats. I want to discover how women living there reflect on possible changes regarding their bodies, sexuality and emotions, firstly after they got married, and secondly after they became mothers. Thus, the main question is: do these women perceive marriage and motherhood as strong or absolute transformations of their bodies, identities and subjectivities?

### **Research design**

My qualitative research inquiry tried to mirror two essential periods in the lives of middle-class women from Florești: marriage and motherhood, with constant reference to their corporeal transformations, the embodiment of

marriage and motherhood, and their emotions in connection to the internalized experience of change or stability. Drawing on Miller (2007), Bailey (1997) and many other feminists, I consider that there is a need to continue bringing to light women's discourses and personal narratives by transmitting their biographies and private experiences into the hands of the reader, and making their own voices and bodies heard.

In Massumi's words, "change is something that 'includes rupture, but is nevertheless continuous, but only with itself, without complement'" (Massumi, 2002:57 cited in Lambevski, 2005:581). In the realm of the quotidian, marriage and motherhood are seen as essential steps, an abidance because they manage to synthesize the powerful desire of excluding the others by invoking a clear cluster of restrictions, and opening another cluster or permissions. Consequently, my interview questions were centred on the idea of what women "should/should not" and "have to/don't have to" be or do after each of these "ceremonial" moments (i.e. marriage or maternity) took place. Do they have to change the way they dress? The way they act? Or the way they talk once the child is present? Should they wear their bodies differently after marriage and birth, or should they confirm in front of others the fact that they're married and mothers? Do they have to start doing certain things as married women or mother and stop doing other things that characterized them before? How each of them relates to these changes in their lives, how was the transition to motherhood and how they feel about all the changes that inevitably occur?

It can be easily seen that my questions aim towards the personal and intimate aspects of their lives, towards their emotions and difficulties faced in relation to themselves, their partner and their children. It is not an easy task to offer confidence and reciprocity during discussions like these, but all of them realized that we can create safe spaces for them to move beyond timidity and reticence and start opening heavy chapters of their lives and experiences. Being simultaneously situated and perceived from an exterior position (as an educated woman, but who is unmarried and childless), I was allowed to ask questions in a direct manner, as somebody not (yet) initiated into marriage and motherhood, and thus they let me unveil and grasp moments from their life's episodes.

### **Accounting for women's experiences and bodies**

My methodological approach comes thus in close connection with the ways feminist literature engages with the concept of the "body", and with feminists debates over the importance of emphasizing women's experience in how knowledge is generated. Miller's (2007) asserts that there's a broad tradition in feminist scholarship that managed to critically engage with "unrealistic assumptions embedded in gendered discourses that pattern women's lives' most often present



‘in relation to reproduction, mothering, and experiences of motherhood’ (Miller, 2007:337). A study centred on women’s transition to motherhood can offer the possibility to test “a number of theoretical claims pertaining to identity, including gendered corporeality and the construction of self-identity in contemporary society” (Bailey, 1997:337).

Moreover, there is a need to bring the analysis on motherhood and pregnancy back on the list of priorities in feminist and gender studies, as it does not have to be perceived as something strange or unusual, because it is “after all an experience which the overwhelming majority of women can expect at least once in their lives to undergo” (Bailey, 1997: 337). There’s little possibility to combat this statement as we can observe plenty of evidence in our proximity, albeit in a different manner for every particular social and cultural setting. An analysis centred on bodies has a complex history and the issue started to be reconsidered during the last three decades.

Amidst the linguistic turn, Butler (1993) argues that bodies are discursively created and mediated, and the matter of the body needs to be perceived as an “effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects” (Butler, 1993:2). In this sense, an essential condition for these norms to have an effect upon the process of materialization is for them to be constantly reiterated and reinforced. The fact that there’s an ongoing need for norms to be reiterated, shows the fact that the process of materialization “is never quite complete” and the bodies never fully “comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (Butler, 1993:2). Although Butler (1993) agrees that the very contours and fixity of the body are fully material, the materialization itself is power’s most productive effect (Butler, 1993:2).

Alternatively, new-materialism asks a slightly different question and tries to rethink the position of bodies within discourse. Barad (2003) argues that language gained too much power, and matter was turned into language along with Nature and Culture. Thus, her main argument is centred on the lack of actual matter of the body within discourse by invoking its agency and its constitutive ability to be an active participant in the world’s constant process of becoming<sup>3</sup> and transformation (Barad, 2003:801-3). As Bordo (2003) eloquently points out, bodies are not just “tabula rasa, awaiting inscription by culture. When bodies are made into mere *products* (author’s italics) of social discourse, they remain bodies in name only” (Bordo, 2003:35). Concerning the tensions between the linguistic and the new-materialistic approaches, I do not consider that we should perceive the matter and the discourse as being totally opposed or separated,

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<sup>3</sup> According to this, the world (Nature and Culture) is never fixed, crystallized nor separated, but rather it’s intertwined and undergoes a constant process of change and transformation by invoking the principle of differentiation.

but rather we should create a viable link between them in order to gain further understandings of body issues and its lived experiences. Otherwise, how can we make sense of the concept of “experience”?

Rationality and objectivity that emerged from the dominant group proves that the knowledge is not always highly objective. Knowledge is produced, therefore it is socially situated or located (Harding, 1993:49-60). Embracing this perspective, standpoint theory tries to deconstruct the whole idea of truth, objectivity and good practice integrated in positivist paradigm, offering by these alternative trajectories for “voiceless” individuals. This process is constituted simultaneously by explicit and implicit history, and at the same time, it manages to create oppressed individuals as collective “subjects” (Harding, 2004:3).

The role of standpoint theory in my thesis is to empower and highlight women’s experience by taking into consideration their values, emotions, perceptions, ways of living and thinking about their bodies, sexuality, desires, discontents or pleasures. In this case, building new forms of knowledge from women’s experiences by women becomes another legitimate way within the process of knowledge production, especially in terms of human experience, thoughts, labour, visions or various positions regarding marriage or motherhood.

### **Women’s marital experience and the embodiment of marriage**

The subject of marriage was mostly analyzed from two perspectives: one that envisions marriage as a sexist institution and the other that envisions marriage as a patriarchal institution (Brook, 2002:47-8). Regardless of the perspective under which marriage was perceived and analyzed, the entire discourse upon it was a totalizing one and more attentive to its social implications, disregarding men’s and women’s lived experience and personal relations to the notion of marriage, (Brook, 2002:47-50) and the effects of “being married”. Then, is marriage still a sexist and a patriarchal institution, or these categories are no longer concordant with current societies and realities? We can assume that marriage is a sexist institution as long as most women are changing their names after their husbands’ as a consequence of the marital contract (Brook, 2002:47), but this is only a part of the complex story that marriage is supposed to be. For example N., in her mid 20s, is not married to her partner, but they are in a relationship. They will have a wedding when they will feel the moment is right. This is how she relates to the idea of “married woman” for this perspective.

Romanians in general, they are changing their names after they got married. This is killing me. If I want to continue to be ‘Pop’ it doesn’t mean that I’m married or not married (N. 24 years old).

Furthermore, is marriage still a patriarchal institution in a sense that the man rules over woman's body, sexuality, labour and money? More than this, is the notion of marriage strongly internalized by these women in a sense that they have to perform their marital status in a visible manner for the *others*<sup>4</sup>?

Almost all of the answers on this matter by the interviewed women were *no*, but my inquiry could not end at this point. Throughout my interviewees' narratives upon marital identity, most of these women claimed to keep the integrity of their subjectivity as women and to care much less for a transformation into a "veritable" homemaker. Then how their discourse on marital relations can be conceptualized? On one hand, their narratives made visible that they internalize a nuanced liberal perspective, where parenting must be as equally distributed between spouses as possible, government should support child care and education, and women should be more independent in terms of labour, income or marital arrangements (Okin, 1999:320-5). On the other hand, their perspective did not agree with the assumptions of radical feminism and its concept of patriarchy, where women are oppressed by men on every level, from their labour power to their sexuality and reproduction, often reinforced by physical violence and verbal abuse within monogamous heterosexual marriage (Hartmann, 1981:101-4).

Then, how both partners manage to negotiate, reconcile and perform their marital identity? More precisely, how does the concept of independence find its place in this complex picture represented by marriage? Drawing on women's narrative upon their identity within marriage, this section is dedicated to an analysis that correlates the notion of independence with the idea of marriage, and negotiations, compromise and resistance with the conservative or traditional mechanisms of control.

As Svendsen (1996) argues, women's bodies become a mean for showing how "independence is not only a question of spending time and money on one's own body (...) and is not only about being conscious of one's own worth, but it is about exposing this consciousness in relation to others (...)" (Svendsen, 1996:140). Expanding this idea, it is essential to mention that along body practices, every aspect in a subject's life, from money to decisions, from public actions to resisting the norm can be a potential factor in constructing women's independence, subjectivity and agency. E. has an interesting story centred on the idea of independence, security and autonomy.

When I was young I was very independent in a sense that I never let anyone to help me. I wanted to everything by myself. But I started to see that I can count on him for so many things and as years passed and we had some issues to resolve, I let him help me and deal alone with different things. The car it's his responsibility. Before him, I never thought that I could be like this. I wanted everything to be under my name. Now the electricity, the gas is under his name. And I was like this

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<sup>4</sup> In this case the "other" is the outside of marriage "presence", the general "third".

because I saw that my father was not capable to do anything, not even to put the food into his mouth by himself. And I imagined that all men are like this, and I never wanted to end up without anything like him (E. 33 years old).

In order to highlight the dynamics between spouses within marriage, I devised the notion of *co-independence*. Even though they have to justify their daily actions or decisions to one another, marriage in this case is not a strong indicator of restrictions. In my interpretation, “co-independence” refers to a continuation of performing the same cluster of practices, that transcends the boundaries often imposed by virtue of being married. Furthermore, co-independence is a form of embodiment of consent or approved freedom. For example N. is still a student and this thing makes her want more from marital life.

When you decide to get married and be with that person, everybody should still have that freedom...I mean we have out moments when I'm out with a friend having coffee. Every Thursday, for the past five years we have coffee. When I'm getting married I want to have the same possibility to have my coffee with my friends. You are not going to restrict the things that I was doing before I met you. You are going with your guys to play football, and I'm going to have my coffee with my girlfriends (N. 24 years old).

Thus, the relationship between spouses results in a refusal to create a closed space and an institution out of marriage where women and men are “institutionalized”. I am referring only to envisioning of marriage as an open space by most of my interviewees, where their subjectivities and body practices are not fully altered or alienated.

In this case, N. is 24 and she's not married to her partner. She wants to be sure about the decision of getting married:

... instead of taking a foolish decision, only because everybody's doing it...  
I'm not doing what everybody does, I do what I feel [...]

He makes me feel me, he doesn't change me. I am exactly who I am with my good side and my bad side. When you want to change somebody it means that you don't want him or her anymore. If you want an improved version or...a different one...it means that you want something else. He accepts me together with my dog, although he doesn't like it (N. 24 years old).

For women that I interviewed, marriage is not perceived as a condition for transition from a “free” adolescent to a “proper”, “real”, or “serious” woman, and they relate to marriage not as a common space where bodies and identities are invited towards crystallization, but rather as a space where bodies perform their multiple forms of identity in an unfixed manner.

## **Women's body within marriage: sexuality and the embodiment of emotions**

So far I have focused on women's narrative upon marital identity and the difficulties of self-reflexivity regarding clear or visible changes that marriage brought in relation to their selves and their subjectivities. When it came to discussing bodies and emotions, they all agreed that a woman should not consciously change only because an official act united her with a man. But after a few more questions and examples, they realized that actually they themselves started to change, not only physically, but emotionally as well.

For example, an episode centred on a husband's attempt to appropriate his wife's sexuality and body, but she refused his dominance in a subversive manner, by making her voice heard. I. is in her mid 30s and she and her husband got married when they were very young after a short period of relationship. For long periods of time she was alone with her children, while her husband was in Afghanistan for many interrupted years. Her marriage was a long process of readjustments with her husband while he was leaving for six months and returning home to visit. Thus, how this reconnection with her husband worked in terms of her sexuality and their sexual relations?

He was coming home, and he was tired, I was tired and I felt used. I was just ironing, and cooking all day and all he needed was... *(she didn't make it explicit but she referred to sex)* and I told him that I can't...that's it (I. 34 years old).

Through "and I told him that I can't...that's it" she reacted, she said "no" and he had to step back. She did not comply with his desires and by this she managed to control access to her body and sexuality. The fact that some of these women are questioning their role in partnership regarding the type of work they are supposed to offer and perform, leads to various forms of subversions in terms of normative frames of relating to one's sexuality and body. By this, they are questioning the entire spectrum of elements that compose a conjugal life. Sexual intercourse does not have to be a proof that the marriage is "consumed", and does not have to be activated only if results in reproduction. On the contrary, it has to be liberated by the constraints that marital law brings, often perceived as a package with multiple gendered obligations and duties.

In another case, a woman in her mid 30s, married with her partner after a month of relationship describes her marriage in a very positive note:

We have two wonderful children, five and half years passed since we got married, and I want to say now that we still tell each other "I love you" countless times in a day, we are still holding hands, we still tell each other "sleep well", although these things disappear in most of the families. We have friends that got married two years ago, and they don't have that sweetness from the beginning. We have problems too... So, what? I am a happy person and I'm 99% convinced that my husband is not cheating on me. That 1% is half doubt. And I would never cheat on him (S. 36 years old).

For S. marriage is composed by a set of actions that need to be present and invoked after they marry as well. More than this, from her discourse it becomes visible that marriage does not imply settling down and routine, but rather she argues further in the interview that marriage needs to be supported by performing some specific acts of validation and confirmation in order for the relationship between them to persist. Also, S. has a very interesting vision upon knowing that "he's the one" and the fantasy around the other's body is not limited only to appearance. In fact, this aspect is the least important when it comes to making sense of love and choosing one person. A very interesting answer in this regard is centred on smell and how one's body somatizes to other's scent. In this regard, S. continues:

You will think that I am a freak, but the scent is very important. Or the way they look, the similarities I mean. I read somewhere once, that metabolism needs to be similar, and the specific smell of that person...you need to like that to your partner. Who is not compatible in this sense, it's an assured divorce (S. 36 years old).

Drawing from S.'s answer, scent is about compatibility, attraction or fantasies about one's presence. In this case my interviewee did not refer to the quality of scent, or specific perfumes, but going way back to oedipal phase, we can compare this phenomenon to moments when the child rejects certain objects according to their taste or smell, apparently without any reason. Hence, in this case we can focus on the idea of rejection or attraction, internal objects and feelings or liberation and control.

Another interesting observation regards women's hair and skin. Love within marriage somatizes with the body in a way that clear physical changes are starting to be visible. E., is in her early 30s, has three children and she's married for seven years to her first and only partner, while being together since the first year of university. When we started to talk about the possible changes regarding her body after marriage, she told me that at some point right before marriage and immediately after, she realized that emotions such as happiness, joy, and confidence had a great impact upon her hair and skin.

Emotionally, yes, I've changed. I know that when I fell in love I was very very happy, and my hair was growing like crazy because of happiness. It had volume, and it was shinning. And my friends were seeing me from far away and they were saying "You look so happy! I've never seen you so happy before!" And I was making people happy around me only because I was that happy (E. 33 years old).

The feedback of friends provided reassurance to E. that being in love and preparing to marry brought on visible, observable positive transformations to her body and psyche, as powerful as to diffuse towards other persons as well. E. and S. were two examples through which I tried to reveal specific ways of how the marital body is (re)constructed and how women relate and perceive their own

corporeal transformations within marriage. Furthermore, we proceed to ask if women's narratives undergo a different trajectory once they become mothers. Thus, do women relate to their bodies differently after they gave birth?

### **Incorporating motherhood: (non)recognition, control and affects**

This section offers an analysis on the close relationship between the individual maternal body, namely the intra-psychoic dimension with its post-birth emotions, anxieties, fears and affects, and the constitutive part of this, namely the social body, by focusing on the corporeal aesthetics, temporality and (non)stability.

Although the interviewed women relate to marriage as the validation of the relationship between two individuals and an intimate process that includes only the two partners, motherhood changes the way women relate to themselves and several intimate practices belonging to women's or the couple's privacy become externalized. Drawing on the discussions with my research subjects, I argue that once a woman perceives herself as being mother, she engages in a complex set of practices, expanding outside of the nuclear family, which will validate her status according to her new identity, the sense of self, the integrity of her body and her personhood as a mother.

Her post-birth body, subjectivity and agency will be differently set. The relation with the child, once part of her body, changes radically after birth but the infant is still perceived as fully dependent on the mother, and that generates a disruptive process in which the mother transfers her subjectivity to the child, perceived as being passive and lacking agency. But what is subjectivity in this sense? Bordo (2003) points out that "the body can never be regarded merely as a site of quantifiable processes that can be asserted objectively, but must be treated as invested with personal meaning, history, and value that are ultimately determinable only by the subject who lives 'within it'" (Bordo, 2003:74).

Furthermore, when it comes to articulating different perspectives on maternal body, it becomes visible that during pregnancy and maternity, women are starting to have "little jurisdiction over their body's appearance and demeanour and which belies the modern Western conviction that we possess our own bodies and we are able to mould them accordingly" (Warren and Brewis, 2004 cited in Haynes, 2008: 329). Continuing this argument, I consider that within motherhood women start to be more aware of their own body, its rapid and sometimes radical changes, and they realize that they ceased to have total control over it. As Bailey (1999) argues, women's bodily changes that occur during the transition to motherhood and after child's birth are relevant in order to reveal "embodied aspects of the self". Furthermore, a focus on the process of becoming a mother can reveal significant aspects of their private and intimate lives (Bailey, 1999:336).

Stone (2014) makes a very interesting remark by emphasizing the fact that “often mothers feel that they have fallen into a formless realm that excludes meaning and agency: the agency to organize one’s own life and to organize one’s own experience into meaningful patterns” (Stone, 2014:236).

The notion of responsibility and sacrifice is present in women’s discourse as well as in P. is in her late 30s and mother for the second time, now with her second husband. She experienced two marriages and two births and the way she envisions maternity now is mostly in opposition to the first one. This is the way P. relates to the status of being mother for the second time:

Many things changed, but not necessarily after I got married, but after I became a mother. I started to feel responsible, to give an example to my child [her daughter]. I could not behave as I did before, like a teenager, flighty, and I stopped wearing long earrings, and started having much shorter nails (P. 37 years old).

For P. the experience of her second marriage and second birth made her feel more responsible and aware of how a “real” mother should behave or wear herself around the child. Her imaginary around maternity and the right identification with her status is something that is widely shared among the women I have interviewed. The notion of being a “good mother” had great impact on the way they dress, communicate in front of the children, make distinctions between women with children and women without children, or the attention of the latter regarding their own bodies. For P., the discipline of being a mother does not mean coercion or control over her own body, but a change of interest and priorities.

I have friends that I met again after many years, and one of them came to our home and my first daughter was little. I didn’t know at that time if she had children or not, because I couldn’t ask her directly. The fact that she kept moving her boots for my daughter not to step on them with her bicycle, and she kept worrying not to scratch her purse, I immediately realized she did not have children because she didn’t understand things like these (P. 37 years old).

The materiality of the body cannot be conceptualized as a distinctive, separated entity from social and cultural settings. Therefore, discipline in this case is not a form of coercion that comes with giving birth, but rather it is a conventional discourse internalized by women when they face motherhood. Women-mothers disordered subjectivity is not to a sudden effect of a cause (the birth), but rather an ongoing, disruptive process, which is sometimes felt as hurtful and coercive, in other moments as loose and somewhat controllable, but it is present at any moment. Thus, I argue that the sense of lack of control over their own pregnant and maternal bodies constitutes a fundamental feature of being a mother, which disrupts their identities beyond mere bodily experiences and practices. Re-gaining control over their bodies becomes a major concern and women apply different strategies to gradually domesticate and dominate their bodies.



### **Restrictive and restricted body. Narratives of the distorted maternal body**

In my attempt to unfold this lack of control when women face motherhood, I devised the concept of *restrictive body* and *restricted body* defined here as mechanisms imposed by and on women during their maternal life. Therefore, I envision the restrictive body as the material body that restricts a woman's activity, desires, agency, and the restricted body is the body that is restricted by social conventions and norms, collisions between discourses or social and intergenerational reproduction.

We should add that we talk about a post-socialist state, marked by double-expectations towards women as both mothers and workers (Kligman, 1998), but also a widely religious society with conservative views upon gender roles, femininity and masculinity. Although state socialism brought a new wave of atheism and a distance from religious practices, post-1989 these countries experienced considerable religious revival (Gog, 2006: 37) and Romania is currently “one of the most religious societies in both Eastern and Western Europe” (Müller, 2004; Pollack, 2001; 2004, cited in Gog, 2006: 39) in terms of practices, beliefs, or moral and pious demeanour. Then, how this close relation to religion beliefs is embodied at the level of maternal practices?

B.'s case is a good example when it comes to correlate religion with the notion of restricted body and the impossibility of displaying the immediate post-birth body to the outside world. Although she has strong affinities towards the moral aspects of maternity, she decided together with her husband to end her “molifta”<sup>5</sup> sooner, but not for her to continue her activities, but because it was more difficult for her husband to face every aspect of their lives that were carried outside the domestic sphere.

Before giving birth, we did everything together. After, I wasn't able to leave the house for 40 days. Well, actually 20, because I did my 'molifta' sooner than I was supposed to. My relationship with my husband suffered a little bit, as we were not able to continue our activities together. It was difficult for me and for him especially during the first month (B. 29 years old).

E.'s narration contains the most radical example of how a restrictive body manifests, and how her body reacted to the changes produced by every pregnancy. Her body became rigid, uptight from inside, correlative to pain and turned against her will to give birth and carry the pregnancy without difficulties.

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<sup>5</sup> Romanian word – it signifies a procedure done by a priest to the mother and the child in order for them to be able to leave the house. The orthodox canon promotes the idea that a woman who recently gave birth is 'dirty' and she should not reveal herself to the world. Therefore, the priest prays for the mother and the new born child, blesses them both and purifies her dirty body. In this sense, the body is dirty because the woman is not a virgin anymore, as she gave birth. Source: <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/forum/showthread.php?t=16080>

It matters less how you look, but how you feel...there are all sorts of pain, all over your body. I got sick with these children, because my back [i.e. spine] was vulnerable. Due to the pregnancies and for holding the babies in my arms I actually became paralyzed for a while. I couldn't move at all (E. 33 years old).

The narrative of the distorted maternal body was another strong element in the discussions with my subjects. Post-birth body is transformed not in a sense that turns it into another state, but rather it becomes volatile (Grosz, 1994) and subjected to continuous change. Thus, appearance and emotions are constitutive parts of bodily construction, when it comes to emphasizing the alteration of the maternal body. Then, how can we make more sense of the maternal body and emotions? E.'s case is relevant in this respect, not only because her narrative was centred on the fear of her own genitals, but because she fully relied on her partner's account of the damages and gradual healing of her own vagina after giving birth. E. told me that she never had the courage to look "down there" not even before the birth of her first child, but she always wanted to know how it looks like. She knew how it feels, she felt the pain after every birth, but she wanted to connect these feelings to an image. The great fear that her vagina is not healing properly scared her deeply. Therefore, she asked her husband to examine her and to make sure that everything is healing alright. Every time after bath, her husband told her that her vagina is healing fine, but it looks like a "red traumatized meat".

As a consequence, she created a whole fantasy of how a post-three births vagina should look like, how it should heal and when to reactivate their sexual life. This scenario is extremely interesting not only because she still has a fear of her own genitals, and her picture of the post-birth vagina is actually her husband's discourse upon it.

Bailey's (1999) concludes her qualitative research on women's perceptions on their pregnant and post-birth bodies that women saw their bodies "as being invaded", both from the exterior, by those who gaze at their bodies as carrying a child, and from the interior, by the child. More than this, "for a pregnant woman, the edges of the self become blurred as the body no longer seems to operate as a physical marker of individuality" (Bailey, 1999:340). Therefore, for E. the fear of looking at her vagina might come from knowing that her vagina (envisioned here as a possession) alongside her uterus and her womb was invaded by others, and recognized as fertile and functional.

All the multiple faces of conjugal and maternal body and identity need to be joined into a certain time frame in order to make sense of the transformations women faced. It can be argued that my subjects were not fully aware of the changes they embodied after they got married and before they became mothers, because they relate to their marriage not as being a temporary stage in their lives or a transition towards something else. Therefore, when it comes to talking about

marriage, temporality is not a core-matter, whereas pregnancy and the first stages of motherhood are envisioned as having an important temporal dimension, corporeal transformations occur in time, have a certain speed, acceleration and duration. Nonetheless, the internalization of “being a mother” and the performance of this new identity evades temporal limitations and it is envisaged as indefinite and irreversible.

Continuing my argument, I am interested to see if women seek for a closure between their new identity and their maternal body. Women soon realize the opposition between the myth of the beautiful pregnant body and their physiological changes, the impact of the impersonal dimension of medicalization, and the difficulties faced when one comes to realize that bodily pain, fear, discontent, social isolation and emotional unavailability are superficially mentioned in books or forums. Interest and preoccupation regarding bodies, especially among women, is not a recent issue. Inevitably, the anatomical body undergoes several changes while pregnancy, but the transformations do not end there. Once the child is born, the mother’s body enters new stages of changes, from physical (gaining or losing weight) to emotional (post-birth trauma, fear, anxieties, body shame and tiredness). Very often and in very different ways, the responsibility that comes with taking care of a child situates the mother into chaotic temporalities paradoxically constituted by routine and repetition, day after day.

I have a very strong personality, but inevitably I have got a feeling of invalidity (*after giving birth*), me being very active and doing all sorts of stuff. Being at home with the child I was doing the same thing every day, monotony appeared and I felt that I am not appreciated by my husband (I. 34 years old).

An interesting way of coping with this chaotic episode that managed to engage most of the women that I talked to and many others that I observed before and during my fieldwork is the haircut, and the reasons are mainly centred on the idea of practicality and time saving. A long hair asks for time and care and after the child is born the perception of time changes radically. But also, a short hair derives from a need to identify with the child, a practice through which these women can reveal the fact that they are mothers now. Even if they cut their hair short, their husbands did not fully agree with this.

It is true that I cut my hair without asking him. When I came back home he said that it doesn’t suit me. But I said that I like it and that’s it. It will grow back (F. 37 years old).

Another major aspect women focused in their narratives is the aesthetics and the shape of the body. P. and F. are both 37 with two respectively three children. In relation to their maternal body, this is what they said:

Except for the fact that I gained weight? Many years ago I was wearing short skirts, and I started to wear long skirts (P. 37 years old).

What I liked the most with three children is for the world (she meant the people) to see that I look good (F. 37 years old).

Along P. many other women were discontent regarding their post-birth bodies starting with the fact that they gained more weight than they initially thought they will, and ending up with physical pain or immobility. Although these bodily processes are widely experienced by women during their early maternity, I identified two reasons that lay behind these aesthetical dissatisfactions.

I didn't have a problem with my body immediately after birth. Now I start to realize that I'm fat, I'm looking in the mirror and I cry and I want to lose weight. Right after I gave birth I didn't have problems with me, I was too proud of her to care about me (D. 28 years old).

Once they gave birth, they realized that their bodies are functioning against their will and that they cannot fully control it anymore. This aspect leads to another issue. By trying to get back in shape right after birth, in cases when women considered that they gained too much weight during pregnancy, they engage themselves in a mirrored process. Through this, many of them are struggling to look the same as they did before getting pregnant, creating by this a mechanism of restoring control over their own bodies. In this regard, an important aspect raised by Bordo (2003) is the way diet and thinness became gendered by associating the slender body with the female one. It is widely argued that if men are virile and rational, women are more directly connected to their bodies, sexuality, hunger, emotions and desire in an androcentric culture<sup>6</sup> (Bordo, 2003: 204-6). In Grosz's (1994) words, "women have been objectified and alienated as social subjects partly through the denigration and containment of the female body" (Grosz, 1994: xiv).

### **Body shame and the difficulties of "being": embedded emotionality**

This section's aim is to connect the maternal transformative body to post-birth emotions, anxieties and affects such as shame. Motherhood implies changes in women's life and the most visible ones are centred on women's body and the presence of the child. Bodily perception creates a wide range of emotions and it's impossible to track down a specific spectrum of feelings when it comes to talk about one's body experience, especially during motherhood. In this regard, many scholars already emphasized "the profound negative consequences of our culture's pervasive practice of sexually objectifying women's bodies" (Noll and Fredrickson, 1998: 623). One of the most powerful affect that occurs when it comes to experiencing one's post-birth body is shame. In analyzing shame from

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<sup>6</sup> This subject is also accurately analyzed by Grosz, Elizabeth (1994). *Volatile Bodies. Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

a broad perspective, Biddle (1997) starts from a position that situates shame at the intersection of psychoanalysis and social context by attaching the shame to the “so-called ‘disgust/contempt response’ that is surprisingly a punitive response often denied by parents” (Biddle, 1997:229).

As Sedgwick (2003), who is influenced in her inquiry into shame by Tomkins’<sup>7</sup> complex work on affect theory argues, shame does not distance itself from identity, in my case the maternal one, but rather shame is part of identity construction and it is always relational (Sedgwick, 2003:36-7). But one’s ashamed by something he/she is, not by something he/she does (in this case we talk about guilt). Therefore, shame is a totality, clearly exemplified with the syntagm “I am a bad person’ rather than ‘I did something bad” (Noll and Fredrickson, 1998:624). In this case, shame is attributed to a failure that is centred on being and not on doing, and the result is always manifested through negative emotions. E. has three children and throughout her pregnancies she experienced only negative effects regarding her body. For her, the glowing and beautiful pregnant body is truly a myth considering that it was very difficult to adapt her mind and perceptions upon pregnancy to the continuous uncontrolled and transformative body.

Physically there are so many transformations, only bad ones. I never had a good one. You can’t hold pee, but women are not saying this because of shame. People don’t realize what this means. It’s not a big deal, you don’t pee yourself, but one drop it’s enough, and if you’re used to always be dry and clean, that drop is enough to drive you crazy and embarrass you, even if people don’t know anything about this (E. 33 years old).

For E. the major discontent does not necessarily derive from the fact that she urinated a little bit, because there’s nobody there who can notice and recognize that, but it’s about the shame of knowing that she no longer controls her body, and therefore she cannot be as clean as she used to be before pregnancy. Along E., many other women associate the maternal body with the notion of cleanliness rather to the concept of beauty. Being aware of the impossibility of fully controlling the pregnant and maternal body, the ideal of beautiful body is re-signified under the notion of “natural” body, closer to pristine than artificial and closer to simplicity than exaggeration and “plasticity” in their words. Hence, “that drop is enough to drive you crazy and embarrass you” is not about beauty and to some extent overpasses the culture of cleanliness and hygiene that most of the mothers that I talked to embrace, but it is about the anxiety provoked by the fact that your body gains a sort of autonomous agency never conceptualized or experimented before by them.

Furthermore, women conclude that the exteriority, the shape of the body and its weight can be improved by controlling the emotional interior. Not only

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<sup>7</sup> For more references please consult Tomkins, Silvan (2008 [1962, 1963, 1991]). *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

diet or beautification, but every form of bodily construction, appearance or transformation is mainly invoked as a restoring component through which the body shame will disappear. Pregnant body experiences a wide range of difficulties that women in general are ashamed to utter them in order not to make them “real”.

It is true that shame hurts. It is a somatic process that occurs when psychic distress turns into physical pain and illness or discomfort. Not being recognized as yourself, not being acknowledged for your controlled body might turn into depression and multiple forms of disorders. The question is, then: how can one internalize shame not through its blighter effect upon us, but from an affirmative and transitory viewpoint?

### **Conclusions**

Okin (1999) concluded that “marriage has become an increasingly peculiar contract, a complex and ambiguous combination of anachronism and present-day reality” (Okin, 1999: 321). To this, we can add that along marriage, the concept of maternity is in a continuous state of transformation and reinterpretation. Thus, my major interest in this work was to approach these experiences in women’s life from a perspective that manages to unveil detailed, intimate and personal aspects derived directly from their narratives, perceptions and opinions. Therefore, drawing on Brook (2002), who critically engages with the idea of marriage being analyzed mainly as a sexist of patriarchal institution, I argue that marriage should be perceived more as a lived and grounded experience which is constantly reconceptualized by those who are involved in it.

In this regard, my Romanian middle-class subjects’ narratives were centred on the idea that within marriage their subjectivity, agency and independence should not be completely altered. For them, marriage was not a closed space where their identities were invited towards crystallization; they did not relate to marriage as a strong indicator for restrictions either, and refrained from a strong discourse on the meanings of being a “proper wife”.

However, when it came to the issue of motherhood and their own experiences of pregnancy, giving birth and caring for their children, the narratives changed considerably. The discourse upon the necessary transformations of the body and one’s social identity was invariably present, as well as the clear division-line between women who were mothers and women who were not. In their narratives, women’s subjectivity did not simply vanish when they became mothers, but the experience of losing control over their corporeal and social bodies, the experience of a restrictive and restricted body, together with envisioning their children as fully dependent on them, conducted to a disruptive process by which their subjectivities were distorted. The quest to regain control over their bodies belonged to a larger effort to redefine their identities and re-affirm their subjectivities.

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## POSTSOCIALISM OR WHEN 'HAVING' IS ANOTHER WAY OF 'BEING'. THE RECONFIGURING OF IDENTITY THROUGH LAND RESTITUTION AND THE NARRATIVES OF THE PAST

ELENA CHIOREAN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** In this paper I examine the consequences of the 1989 political overturn in Romania on the selfhood. To this purpose, I initiate a twofold analysis: the official discourse of both socio-political systems, socialism and liberalism, and the individual's quotidian discourse. The first one will enable a comparative view, over the 'bottom-up' constructed realities, and the second will account for the degree of pervasiveness and naturalization of ideological views and, in this way, of a "top-down" identity construction and its configurations. One of the most apprehensible provisions through which liberalism endeavoured to institutionalize its own way of setting out reality is land restitution. Thereafter, I will discuss the way re-appropriation was experienced and its various subjectivization trajectories, but also the wider frame of the postsocialist economic transformations: rethinking work, money, the state and the interrelations between them. This particular angle of sight will disclose the mechanisms through which liberalism has deconstructed the system of socialist meaning and representation, at the same time replacing it with a socio-political order which reconfigured these meanings.

**Keywords:** property, ideology, selfhood, socialism, liberalism

### Introduction

*But labor and land are no other than the human beings themselves of which every society consists and the natural surroundings in which it exists. To include them in the market mechanism means to subordinate the substance of society itself to the laws of the market.*

*(Polanyi, 2001:75)*

Anyone interested in the present will be bound to glimpse at the past, and one of the most authentic ways to grasp it is social memory. Away from being a sheer subjectivization of one objective history, social memory turns out to be a

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vehicle for social identity, by means of which temporality can be inverted, thereby traversing a series of configurations of the self. Although always implicit – thus difficult to investigate – these configurations become nevertheless apprehensible when they undergo a process of restructuring, i.e. in times of social change.

The central aim of this paper is to understand the repercussions of the perspectival turn engendered by the 1989 political change in Romanian, thereby, the passing from state-socialism to liberalism, on the selfhoods that were subjected to this change. More precisely, I focus on the connection between political power and its discursive practice, and the process of social construction of reality by distinct ideologies in order to shed light on their consequences on identity construction. The fundamental premise of this paper is that, on the one side, the holders of central positions within the power structure define social reality in a particular manner and, on the other side, that this discursive production of reality will generate a more or less high level of naturalization of the respective definitions, and that these transformations will engender the reconfiguration of identity. As such, I will discuss of both socialism and liberalism in terms of ideologies that have the capacity to shape selfhood through a series of discursive strategies. Identity, on the other side, is conceptualized as the object of political struggle, hereby as a *container* of power relations, thus following the conceptual lines of Jenkins, Berger and Luckmann and Verdery.

Besides the fact that the land restitution (regulated by the Law 18/1991), initiated in 1991 and carried out painstakingly for a decade or more, was envisaged as a restoration of the situation before the communist takeover, thus implicitly assuming the legitimacy of the restated inequalities, the new liberal order used it in as a manoeuvre to reconstruct the previous conception over property relations and to restore private property as a value and a goal in itself.

This paper aims to contribute to the study of identity-transformations after the fall of state-socialism in Romania by investigating one of the most heavily idealized property relations, namely land ownership. The case of Romania is very interesting among the countries of the former Soviet-bloc, as Romania has, similarly only with Poland, a sizeable agricultural sector and rural population (almost 40% of the population in the 1990s). However, unlike in Poland following Gomulka's reforms, in Romania the communist government did not rescale its *kolkhoz* policies and state-owned agricultural production units (*Întreprinderi agricole de stat - IAS*) and cooperatives for agricultural production (*Cooperative agricole de producție - CAP*) remained in place until 1990. Consequently, given the size of the agricultural sector and of the rural population, the fact that the newly-formed industrial working class had overwhelmingly rural origins, as well as the strongly idealized nature of land (as the land of the fatherland) and peasants' life at the countryside by nationalist discourses, it is right to assume that the process of land-restitution had effects beyond the mere restitution of former properties. That is, the reconstruction and re-legitimization of the pre-socialist *individual*.

In order to understand the identity transformations produced by the fall of communism and the role of land restitution, I carried out a comparative micro-analysis of several distinct cases of land restitution in a village located in the historical region of Transylvania, Nădășelu. The case of Nădășelu is illustrative for the purposes of this study, firstly as collectivization had been performed here in the last wave, as late as the early 1960s, so memories are still vivid. Secondly, due to its spatial proximity to Cluj-Napoca, a large part of its younger labour force has been absorbed by the expanding city and its industrial enterprises under state socialism. However, most of these new workers were either commuting, or regularly returning to the village, and have contributed to the local agricultural work during their free time. In these conditions, land restitution engendered a variety of responses, from a reverted migration wave (workers who relocated in the village), to an urban-rural wave of commuters, engaged in agricultural labour not as a complementary activity, but as a second main workplace. At the same time, Nădășelu provides a distinct postsocialist story – at least in the first few years after the fall of communism – given that former local elites initiated the creation of a farmers' association which took over most of the properties which have been part of the former CAP, and which utilized the agricultural machinery of the former station for the mechanization of agriculture (SMA).

I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with former CAP members whose land entered the collective, as well as with CAP workers with no or little land at the time, and also with commuting industrial workers. Altogether, in April 2012 I have interviewed eleven villagers (eight women and three men, with ages between 61 and 80 years old at the time of the interviews), of which six have participated in CAP work (most of them as members of the cooperative), while the other five have only done so occasionally or have not.

### **Building postsocialist identity through possession: land restitution**

Among other major transformations, land restitution was instrumental for the naturalization of the liberal discourse – with its claim for the hegemonic definitions of individual's social identity and legitimate social relations – and in setting an ensemble of significations and representations, that engendered a partial restructuring of these identities. Lampland endorses this view when she asserts that decollectivization has been a process that, more than a simple restructuring of economic institutions, entailed a more general transformation of social relations and social representations (2002:32). Or, in Verdery's terms:

The story of property restitution is a story of forming (or failing to form) potentially new kinds of persons, along with new social identities based in property and possessing. This story is part of the larger drama of transforming Romania's class structure, economy, and system of state power (Verdery, 1996:135).

This is precisely the core assumption of the following discussion, one that I will endeavour to explicate throughout this paper. However, the eventuality of these profound identity reconfigurations is partially undermined – if we were to line up with Humphrey’s argument – by the general incapacity of a socio-political system to abruptly and integrally substitute the previous social practices and institutions, as well as – paradoxically, yet understandably – by the pervasiveness of socialism, whose echo in the everyday life and social narratives are undeniable (Humphrey, 2002:12).

One of the central concepts that I instrument in analysing the emergent transformations after 1989 is that of *social identity*, as the object of the modalities and strategies of instituting a distinct social order, hereby of redefining reality. Social identity is therefore regarded here as a social product that is institutionalized by distinct ideologies, or, in other words, as the objectivation of distinct realities. Jenkins (2008) argues that collective identity and individual identity ought not to be treated separately, since both are based on interaction and are built in the same way (2008:37-8). The *selfhood*, as an individual identity is constructed through a constant interaction with others, thereby being a „dialectical synthesis of internal and external definitions” (2008:41), i.e., of self(-) and hetero(-) social definition of the individual. In Jenkins’ terms, individual identity is the one that is altered once liberalism takes socialism’s place, both by institutionalizing a different perspective on the world (which provides a new set of conditions for social interaction, by authorizing other relations, and, at the same time, by the reconstruction of social categories in accordance to different criteria), and by relocating individuals within the social space, in terms of self-representation. Following his argumentation, the distinction between *group* (as a community that represents itself in these terms) and *category* (a hetero-assignment of the similar character of its members) is relevant in understanding the manner wherein the formal discourse operates and its naturalization. Starting from Marx’s distinction between *class in itself* and *class for itself*, Jenkins asserts that transposing a category into a group is a political process which implies the institutional definitions of reality. Identification is, as such, one of the objectives of political struggle, and power relations are intrinsic to identity (Jenkins, 2008: 44-5). This is the driving force behind the reconfiguration of identity that takes place after 1989 – if socialism and liberalism are understood as fundamentally distinct manners of ordering reality – which entails the reconceptualization of legitimacy. Or, as Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue:

Since the identity that is known or knowable by the gods, by psychiatry, or by the party is at the same time the identity that is assigned the status of paramount reality, legitimation again integrates all conceivable transformations of identity with the identity whose reality is grounded in everyday life in society (Berger and Luckmann, 1991:118).

Social change implies, as such, objectivating a subjective reality and imposing a series of significations progressively distanced from the previous symbolic system, which produces a complex of restructured identities, a process that is facilitated by the flexibility and multidimensionality of identity – as Corduneanu says, identities „are not just pre-given, stable, unmovable concepts. On the contrary, they might be at the core of different processes of negotiation” (Corduneanu, 2002:5). In this way, those who hold the power are also those who have the power to shape the process of identification (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 137). As such, although in socialism the distinction between private and public identities was rather sharp, certain *public* representations have been pervasive. However, this pervasiveness has been undermined by simultaneous experiences and conceptions that unfolded outside of the public life (Kideckel, 1993).

The second fundamental concept that I rely on in analysing postsocialist transformations is that of *property*. According to Kornai (1992), private property is founded on the principle of exclusivity, such that it regards, on the one side, a relation between the individual and an object and, on the other side, a relation between individuals, which is founded on the norms and the rights which emerge from possession. The first of these rights is the right to benefit from the income that property engenders. The second, the right to freely utilize this property, that is, to sell, to rent, to donate etc., even though they might not overlap. The last one is that of deciding on the manner wherein it will be used and the possibility of transferring administrative rights. These three types of rights can be associated in certain ways, which is what Kornai calls *property forms*. Kornai argues that even though theoretically the number of such combinations is infinite, particular societies institute specific property forms. The dominant property form in socialism, for instance, is state property, which is devoid of alienation rights, places decisional rights in the hands of the bureaucratic apparatus and appears as “depersonalized”, since it does not have an identifiable human owner. The second property form in socialism is collective property, institutionalized as a cooperative, which formally entails the collective ownership of the means of production by voluntarily associated individuals. Empirically, however, coercion was utilized to form the communist collectives, and members’ rights were insignificant. Therefore, in this case, collective property becomes state property.

Marcuse’s comparative analysis of property rights (1996) as they have been defined in the Soviet Union (in its maturity stage, since they have been significantly changed over time) and the capitalist West adds to Kornai’s analysis, through the differentiation of the different specific configurations of the system of rights intrinsic to property in the two regimes, seeing that one of the central discrepancies between them regards the legitimacy of instrumenting property with the aim of profit, which is absent in socialism. At the same time,

another distinctive factor regards the agencies that sanction these rights: in capitalism, the judiciary system; in socialism, executive and legislative forces. This distinction is explained as a product of the unclear delineation between power institutions in socialism, such that the judiciary system is not a defendant of individual rights against the state. On the contrary, these rights are regarded as components of a mechanism that ought to work for the common good (Marcuse, 1996:136-7). Kornai suggests, further on, that private property and market economy are essential to a democratic system, which becomes untenable if they are absent (1992:36).

Kornai's view on property as a system of rights based on exclusion is opposed by that of MacPherson, who argues that the meaning of property is neither universal nor fixed, but it is transformed according to the aims that property institutions are directed to, which, in turn, are configured by the dominant classes. As such, property is a "political relation" between individuals, ideologically authorised, which differentiates it from material possession (1978:1-4). Equating property with the rights attached to it is actually a product of 16<sup>th</sup> century market capitalism, and parallels the marketization of land and other possessions, which corresponds to a commodification of rights. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the meanings of property have been refocused on the rights attached to it. However, the latter did not regard the quality of owner, but the potential of the object to generate benefits, its profitability (MacPherson, 1978:7-11). More than that, in a remarkable critical endeavour, Humphrey and Verdery (2004) plead for the dismantlement of the ideology of property – closely connected to the legitimization of liberal democracy – by questioning all concepts that it operates with, including that of *right* (which entails a universal prioritization and a simultaneous exclusion) or those of *relation*, *individual*, or *object*, all with a West European (colonizing) cultural bearing, wherein the individual is defined as a unitary entity, with a fixed identity, and a clear delineation between it and the material world (Humphrey and Verdery, 2004: 5-7). Following the principle embraced by the two authors, I agree that:

...property can be regarded as a set of relations, as a powerful political symbol, as a process of appropriation or, perhaps more important, as a historically contingent western "indigenous category", with strong effects in the world (Humphrey and Verdery, 2004: 20).

A similar take is that of Hann, who asserts that privatization does not function as a provision that could counteract the deficiencies created by socialist economic policies or as one that appertains to an attempt to restore moral justice, but rather as an enforcement of the postsocialist hegemonic ideology (2002:3).

Turning back to Kornai, some amendments should be drawn to his analysis of the relation between property and the political system. Firstly, capitalism is seen by Kornai as the natural order of society, as opposed to socialism, an artificial system

whose driving force is coercion (Kornai, 2000: 31-2). By contrast, I line up with an approach that sees both regimes as ideologies. From a constructivist stance, both are distinct modalities to *create* social reality and to impose a specific definition of reality, thereby normatively dividing between the *natural*, thus the legitimate, and that *against the nature*, i.e. the illegitimate. Consequently, Kornai's assertion that private property is *natural* constitutes a political statement embedded in a liberal worldview. Therefore I refer to private property not as a *natural phenomenon*, but as a typical *artefact* of liberalism.

### **The liberal discourse. The naturalization of possession and the reification of genealogy**

The story of one of the families I have talked to about what happened after 1989 offers a quite revealing outlook on the aftermath of the Revolution. In 1991 family Q. is given property rights over almost ten hectares of land, located near Cluj-Napoca. The husband (I, 63 years old<sup>2</sup>) had been working as an electrician in a machine tool plant in Cluj (until 1993), and the wife (B., 56 years old) at Agrocoop, a state-owned company commercializing fruits and vegetables during socialism. B. went on maternity leave while Agrocoop was still in place, but after her maternity leave was over, she did not return to her job, but took on the double role of a housewife and agricultural family worker. Once the family land was restored to the family, I. decided to take a loan in order to purchase agricultural machinery, as he had planned to start cultivating the newly acquired land. However, a few years later the interest rises to almost 100%, so that he was forced to sell their apartment in Cluj in order to pay the loan. Consequently, I., B. and their three children moved in with I.'s mother, in Nădășelu.

The mechanization of agriculture during socialism induced a particular view on the cost-benefit rapport and small-scale production: a particular understanding of the labour force relative to technical means, where surplus value can only be obtained by calibrating the two, through the rationalization of production. Yet, the new emphasis on the individual/the private rather than on the state/the collective determines a direct connection between the idea of *profitability* – closely connected to the technologization of agriculture – and the entrepreneurial capacity of the individual. As Verdery argues, in socialism *efficiency* is not linked to profit, but to the full utilization of resources and means of production, which separates the socialist and the liberal rationalities (1996:47). Once land property was restored, regardless of the absence of technical means of production and of the negative cost-benefit rapport (simply put, the value of the

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<sup>2</sup> The age of my informants is that at the time of the interviews, April 2012.

investment, including paid or unpaid labour, is higher than that of the product), a newly (re)created affective relation between the individual and the land, build on the romanticized vision of peasantry and the countryside as containers of the genuine *nation*, leads to a sense of moral onus in cultivating the land. This is not only the case of the family Q., but also of several other informants. V., for instance, whose family owned a rather large land tract (fourteen hectares) told me:

I went to Berind and I have there a piece of land from my mother's side, I received my mother's land, 66 years old. Hear me out, when I saw myself stepping on it, I felt such joy that I didn't know what to do: to shout, to laugh, to welter in it, that's how much I loved it! Wonderful! I can still see it! (V., 78 years old).

Returning to family Q., in order to conciliate the need to cultivate the land and the need for subsistence, a micro-division of labour was set within the family: B. turned to the land, while I. turned to entrepreneurship. A simultaneity of a temporality that was conceptualized in distinct ways: turning to the future, on the one hand, and the attempt to recreate a lost connection with the past, on the other. B. told me: „you felt that justice has been made for your forefathers, who fought for that land” (B, 56 year old woman, agricultural family worker).

The restitution of land – as a strategy to reinstate the pre-communist order, as a modality to create the postsocialist identity and as an anti-communist provision (Verdery, 2000) – brought about a new approach to property and the proprietor-property relation. Not only that the former needs to be capitalized on, but its restitution was perceived as an *ancestral recoil*. As a consequence, the owner is morally obliged to safe her property even at high costs:

[...] and then he sold the apartment, to pay the loan, 'cause my mother-in-law would have died of a broken heart if he sold her house; and the land was here [in the village], 'cause the land was the reason why he took the loan (B., 56 old year old woman, explaining why her family chose to sell their apartment in the city instead of the countryside house, located near their land property).

The reinstatement of landed property, on the one side, was a symbolic break from a social order centred on the worker, the industry, hereby the urban, a return to the valorization of agriculture and of the “rural culture”, such that decollectivization had direct consequences on the reconfiguration of the postsocialist selfhood. On the other side, it was signified as an act of justice, aimed to “return” a series of rights that individuals had been deprived of. Setting the emphasis on right restoration, coupled with obscuring the obligations that the new owners will have, is one of the dimensions of land restoration that Verdery criticizes, as part of a transfer of rights from the state to private actors (2004:140-1). In regards to the first understanding of land restitution, the land and its ownership was represented as an extension of the self or the rehabilitation of a lost part of the self. As part of a liberal worldview, it attempted to re-naturalize individual material possession.

In this way, a regeneration of *traditional* (as opposed to socialist) values unfolds, as an act of axiological disengagement with a political order deemed deleterious and as an endeavour of societal reformation. Moreover, as a return to the past by planning an utterly different future, a normative approach to a *world*<sup>3</sup> which is thought to be built negatively, since it aimed at reconstructing the individual and her ontological identity in an artificial manner. Communism is represented, as such, as the overturn of a natural order, as a counter-narrative, due to its attempt to suppress private property and even individuality (through homogenization) and the attempt to build an "artificial" equality. Or, put otherwise, the attempted replacement of equity with equality, which threatens the ontic status of the individual. As such, socialism and liberalism are discursively constructed as being in total opposition, as antagonistic categories.

### **The chimera of abundance: minimal state, privatization and reorganized labour**

One of the central postsocialist transformations in regards to the reconstruction of identity is that of the morphology of categorization. Kideckel argues that „[p]ostsocialism elides the significance of class not only by defining new relationships between state, society, and the individual, but also by creating those relationships in new ways” (2008:10). Liberalism relies on the idea of minimal state intervention and competition – and thus individual success as given by entrepreneurial qualities in all social spheres. The emphasis is set, as such, on the *individual*, who although constitutes a unitary ontic category, shares the same rights and liabilities as the others, consequently social hierarchy should be seen as *quasi-natural*, arising from inequalities of psycho-social qualities between different individuals. The state, in this way, is an organism external to society, which is bound to monitor the preservation of these free relations between people. Seeing this conceptual framework, it will not come as a surprise that private property is privileged, since it is seen as the premise of all social-economic relations. To the extent that the *private* is identifiable with the *individual*, and the status of singularity is superior to that of plurality (i.e., community), a delineation should be done between that which appertains to the collective and that which is attached to the individual.

All these created an illusion of fairness and meritocracy, which added to the representation of capitalism as superior to socialism and to the appearance of an unlimited possibility for individuals to increase their economic capital, with

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<sup>3</sup> I utilize this concept in Verdery's acception, as the union between a 'view on the world' and intentionality, as an actional impulse, and the behaviors that mesh with them or derive from them (Verdery, 2000:34).



the *sine qua non* condition of entrepreneurship. The individual is given the freedom to organize her work and adopt the cost-benefit rationality, but the results of this organization of labour are unpredictable. Responsibility is transferred from the state to the individual and from the public to the private.

### **Postsocialist agricultural associations: making possession profitable and the monetization of the land**

Returning to the restitution of landed property, the village I have done fieldwork in provides an interesting instance of a postsocialist form of labour with socialist roots, which aimed at preserving the organization of the CAP, but made use of capitalist forms of rent, which was however dismantled after a short while. The owners were given the possibility of registering a share of their land, or their entire property, in the association, in exchange for a share of the resulting produce. The association was created with the support of the former Station for the Mechanization of Agriculture (SMA) in the nearby village, which provided the agricultural machinery that the cultivation of large areas of land required – and which the new owners did not own. It is no coincidence that the former local elites have been the founders of the association, since they were the ones who controlled the former SMA, thus those who were in charge of its property. However, the association often appealed to the help of the owners in farm work – an element of resemblance with the CAP. As such, local elites seem to have endeavoured to preserve the illusion of continuity, of security, in this sense, but eliminating the previous system's deficiencies: the new owners did not need to make any effort in cultivating the land (in principle), they benefited from a large share of the production, while they were given the sense of possession, with the adjunct decisional rights in regards to the usage of the land. Concerning the strategies that local elites made use of in order to maintain and reinforce their positions, Lampland (2002) provides a pertinent source for explanation. Following Bourdieu's (1986) view on social capital, she examines the construction of collective farms in postsocialist Hungary and the manner wherein the former administrators of the farms instrumented the social relations they had formed during socialism, which generated farm viability by maintaining a high area of land within the farms. In the case of the association in Nădășelu, the downgrading of the administrator's relation with the new owners brought about, to a certain extent, the dismantling of the farm.

Entrepreneurship, another dimension of the postsocialist identity, was deemed necessary in agriculture as in other domains, in the sense of managing resources – including property – in a rational way with the aim of profit, a phenomenon that, as Verdery argues, is paramount to the process of privatization, as a “panacea for all social ills” (Stanilov, 2007:272), in its entirety, which “created

new types of persons, who would be economically responsible individuals bearing not just rights but risks and debts" (Verdery, 2004:140). This managerial skill manifests itself here through the distinctive understanding of the relation between property, amount of human labour spent, technology, and the equitable assignation of products, according to the quality of owner, on the one side – which contains in itself the right over the product – and, on the other side, the quality of worker, by the energy that is spent in the labour process, which affords the right to a share the products as well. The conceptualization that emerged once liberalism took hold with regards to this relation resides in the possibility to separate labour from ownership. If technical means of production were absent, surplus value could be obtained only by dividing the two. The idea of profitability-efficiency (*rentabilitate*), and its intrinsic connection with technology emerge once more, as a central conception of socialism. Efficiency entails, as I mentioned earlier, a positive rapport between investment and output, which is related to a rationalist understanding of economy. This rationalization is noted by Goina as well, who asserts that „the construction of the cooperative produced a novel perception over time, a rational and normed one, different from that of the peasant, which is a homogenous and a continuous one" (2005: 382-3). Property becomes efficient (*rentabilă*), as such, only in so far as, in the conditions of the absence of technical means, land is exploited by someone who owns them, but who does not possess it. The bankruptcy of the association was explained precisely as an effect of the lack of profitability, given by the macro-economic conditions: inflation, higher fuel prices and wages, which made it so that the cost of labour exceeded the produce:

The association worked for some years, but they had no profit, 'cause in the meantime the prices of diesel oil, nitre, herbicide kept rising, the wages kept rising – of the tractor drivers, 'cause they had to pay them. It didn't work out and they gave up. They are the ones who gave up, not us. Later on, people were very displeased, 'cause they were the ones who had to work the land now. And if you have no machinery, it's not efficient (B., 56 years old, woman agricultural family worker).

The idea of *association* is recurrent in all of my interviews, under different forms, as a viable solution for obtaining a profit on the land. As I mentioned above, the desideratum of raising efficiency in agriculture is part of a particular manner to conceive the relation between labour force, means of (agricultural) production and possession, as it was construed in socialism, an economic rationalization that within liberalism fuses with entrepreneurial principles. The liberal touch is given here by the finality that any such labour must have, that is, profit:

If they had made an association – but who knows for how long it would have worked – then you had a half hectare garden that would have been enough. And you rented the rest and then you got something in exchange. You see, nobody came here to give you anything. They didn't rent the land here (N., 68 years old, farmer).

Therefore, subsistence agriculture or the affective dimension in the relation with the land become irrational, and the connection with the land will be assessed according to liberal principles. In the pre-communist times, this connection was generated by a direct conditioning of one's social status by the land area owned, which amounts to construing a strong interconnection between the owner and land, to a point where the two entities merge (Kideckel, 1993: 48-53). After the fall of communism, however, a process of mediation through abstractization – and, at the same time, standardization – of the value of the land unfolds, monetizing it. Land becomes a commodity, whose value is quantified according to its capacity to enter the market, and ownership is merged with entrepreneurship, which entails here, on the one side, transactional skills and, on the other side, shifting the reference frame from the communal to the societal, i.e., the land is no longer a direct indicator of social status in a relatively small community, but only through its transference in the abstract sphere of money. Hereby, the individual positions herself in a wider system of social statuses. As a consequence, an impersonal economic element that synthesises the complex relation between the owner and her land is interposed between the two. The affective-emotional and culturally-symbolic components are transposed in a clearly circumscribed, abstract unity, the product of a social convention which creates a commodity whereby all other commodities are assessed and which provides a conceptual instrument which embodies their value. This process however is not abrupt, but progressive, unfolding as the liberal discourse is naturalized and becomes more and more intrusive. As such, a shift has occurred, from the manner in which the restitution of the land had been reconceptualised right after 1989, to the liberal view on property:

People were happy, but they can't do anything with the land [...]. There's nobody to cultivate it, and if you want to sell it, there's nobody to buy it (N., 68 years old, farmer).

Notwithstanding, social reality is far from being univocal. The above reasoning is only partially valid and only for some cases. The other side of the story appears in those cases where the restitution of the land was a purely formal event, seeing that the sense of possession was preserved during socialism as part of an informal counter-discourse and merely the official ownership rights were lost back then. The explanation of this fact is twofold. On the one side, there is the idea of genealogical continuity; on the other, the relation between labour and possession. In the first case, sensing the nationalization of the land as something final, unchangeable, would have produced a symbolic genealogical cleavage, seeing that land had a significance that transcended its economic value. The second case entails a conceptualization of property rights as partially generated by the energy that is spent in exploiting the land – partially, since possession is socially

authorised by the lineage system, despite changes in the legal system over property. For the members of this category, labour contains the right to appropriate its product, consequently taking some products from the CAP “illegally” was not perceived as morally wrong. If in the case of the postsocialist association in Nădășelu the division between labour and possession was voluntary – and connected to a certain understanding of rational property management – in CAP it was seen as a forced one, and not felt as authentic: “So you were cultivating your own land, and they were giving you something extra [...] for your labour” (N., 68 years old, farmer).

Therefore, it is not without grounds to distinguish between a series of *realities*, according to the degree of pervasiveness and naturalization of the ideological discourse. The liberal view partially superposes with the social order that is deemed just by the former owners socialised before socialism and transferred to the next generations as cultural heritage, through a process of representational succession which contributes to the naturalization of private property.

### **Social memory and the construction of past narratives: intersubjectivity and comparative assessments of “communism” and “democracy”**

The past, as it is mapped by historians, seldom coincides with the past which is imprinted in the collective memory or, taking one more step towards subjectivity, with the individual memory and the vernacular discourse over memory, as different from the dominant discourse of political elites. As Corduneanu argues, in regards to the interaction between the subject and the institution that strives to impose an identity, one of the modalities whereby the latter can be constructed is rewriting history, which creates an “official memory” that „tried to silence any other alternative forms of social memory” (2002: 6). All these varieties are primal to understanding social reality, pre-eminently to explaining the nature of certain representational systems at a given time.

Along with individual interviews, I was given the chance to participate in a micro-group discussion about socialism, the Revolution and liberalism, which opened the possibility to juxtapose the unfolding of this conversation with those created by the context of one-on-one interaction. The former case implicated three women relating their lives under state-socialism, without much verbal interference from my side (I only displayed my interest for the conversation to go on). However, my presence – as an individual who was socialized in liberalism – shaped a complex of discursive elusions, whose purpose was setting out a shared register, a common ground. It would not be unlikely for this to be another determinative, which has influenced to some extent the other aspects of the narratives, as an

adaptive strategy to the particular situation created by the interview. Although I take this into consideration I believe, however, that talking to people I knew very well before the interview, the provoked derogations do not have such powerful outcomes as to completely obliterate the validity of these interviews. Nevertheless, whether I made explicit what was a matter-of-course – the fact that I had not been living under socialism, so I do not possess any experience-based knowledge – or whether my interlocutors did so, during the most successful discussions a virtual negotiation of temporality occurred *i.e.* an extension of each selfhood, which resulted in the prompt establishment of a shared memorial arsenal, through intersubjectivity (in the sense of a reciprocal empathetic approach, and the employment of an implicit social register, without appealing to explanatory linguistic constructions, which would facilitate understanding; this alludes, actually, to empathic comprehension). In other cases, the distinct memorial background was marked out, a setting which reverberated over the discourse's construction and which ended in resorting to a series of additional explanations (and, in turn, this brought about particular hesitations, caused by the assumption that it will turn out to be utmost troublesome to find a common ground). Contrariwise, in the case of the discussion with three women, my interferences were minimal once I delivered the subject, a stage followed by a process of calibration of narratives and memory negotiation between them. Narrating their shared experiences, certain discrepancy of their memories unfolded, and, in addition, divergent evaluation of socialism, a theme I will address later. Thus, while being enlisted in a collective memory recovery, they engaged in a process of configuration of past narratives, in an effort to trace some points of convergence, with the scope of designing an outline for a conjoint discourse of social memory, which would prevent supplying contrastive information and thereby an equivocal reception of the message, thus placing themselves in the posture of reliable sources of social knowledge. Hence, from the dialogue's onset up until its end there was an upspringing of an almost unitary, incorporated memorial 'entity'; the three women cease to contradict one another and begin to round off each other's sentences, which substantiates the strategy of memory's social construction and the fusing tentative of the narratives of the past.

Arguments surrounding the dilemma "socialism versus liberal market-economy, which is better?" abounded in these conversations. The most salient aspect in favour of socialism concerns the workplaces and relatively decent salaries provided by the state. The withdrawal of the state under the new liberal regime and the enfranchisement of the economic sphere from its tutelage was perceived as a loss. In this way, most of my interviewees were supportive of the tenet of the welfare state. In this view, the state and society overlap almost integrally (the state can be understood as a *supra-network*, which annexes itself to society, and shapes its structure; a *meta-society*), and the latter encloses a regulatory apparatus of the everyday life. The state is, at the same time, a source of meaning for social reality and for the legitimate manners of interrelating. The

individuals are no longer entities whose ontological status would grant them the generation of a complex of *a priori* distinction principles, but their ontological morphology is correspondent, even coessential. Whatever distorts this identity unity can only be linked to a set of corporeal, tangible, external appendages whereby the social self will be objectified (precisely because these material extensions will determine social relations, as well as the individuals' self-definition, through their subjectivation). The state is vested with the mission to deplete the dynamic system of social relations, to "streamline" it, by suppressing the material extension of identity. While in the liberal view the state is – more than an external arbitrator which ensures the observance of the individual rights – in its turn a free and competitive agent, in this case it is a polymorphic resort: on the one side, it organises social life, in its entirety, by instituting an order in which the individual concedes a fraction of her peculiarity for the category to which she is attached and, on the other side, it is a collective actor in social life (the state is, actually, the sole owner and the decision maker, but also the human collective within the national borders – this is why I defined it earlier as a *meta-society*), thus having a dual nature.

Within the socialist social order labour is central. First, labour ensures the free contribution of each member of society to the common wealth. Second, work (and communist labour) is understood as the fundamental human activity, around which the rest of the social life is interlaced. Third, labour is the source of social prestige and access to state redistribution. Finally, labour counterbalances the protection that the individual receives from the state – conceived not solely as security, but also as ensuring the living conditions that would generate predictability – embodying at the same time a liability towards the state (and therefore to the community and by this to itself). Hence, labour is not apprehended as a strategy of accumulation and it carries an innate restrictive mechanism originated in the process of social uniformization and the lack of private property. The case of the CAP members is extremely revealing in this respect: those who were registered in the CAP were given 30% from the total of production, while 70% belonged to the state. Certainly, these data correspond to formal proportions. Given that agricultural production was often over-reported, and the share of the state was computed from the fictitious (and not the actual) production, the real share of CAP members was often minimal. Conversely, they found alternative ways whereby they acquired additional produce. Thus, as opposed to liberalism, where private property dictates social relations, socialism is seen to be founded on labour:

Still, it seems to me that there weren't so many needy people back then, as you can see now, 'cause back then one was forced to work, willy-nilly. And the salary was enough too, enough to build a house, to buy some furniture, to... and our children had everything, so... the salary was big enough (M., 61 years old, former telephonist).

The money was scarce, but one could pull through. Now, even if there is more money, you can't. And nobody starved. There are even more needy people now than there were back then. Back then you did what you could and still... those who couldn't handle it were very rare (N., 68 years old, former employee of the local cooperative).

You know what?! It was way better back then! You hadn't so many as you can have now. Everybody had a job, if they had a higher salary, not so much... [a high salary was uncommon]. Almost everybody had the same (L., 65 years old, former employee of the local cooperative).

But back then, in Ceaușescu's time, you had what you needed, everything! (A., 78 years old, former employee of the local cooperative).

Retrospection generates a negative account of liberalism, even by those who profess themselves as the advocates of the liberal-democratic view, assessment which is based on the decline of production and the rise in consumption, but also on the depreciation of privatization. The latter is seen as a dynamic phenomenon directed against the nation's best interests, the postsocialist elites being the ones responsible for its initiation:

We were happy that he [Ceaușescu] won't be [in charge] anymore. But then we saw Iliescu, who positioned himself in power. 'oh, it will get better now!'; but you see, it wasn't any bit better. Was it? What was done in the past 22 years? They have all stolen, isn't it? [They stole] Everything they could, they built villas, they made fortunes, they bought lands (V1., 65 years old, former employee of the local cooperative).

The manner in which this process is conceived accounts for a complex of socialist reminiscences of the modes of representation of the state: privatization is regarded as a regression of the nation-state's hegemony, which can only be influential by possessing the whole of elements framed within its borders (this includes not only the territory but also the safeguarding of control over the economic sphere). Here is the statement of one of the people I talked to concerning this matter (the context for this assertion is a discussion about the privatization of the 'Beer Factory' [the brewery] in Cluj, where he had been employed for fifteen years, a fact which provoked him a great wrath):

Slowly, slowly, one fine day we'll dawn as a part of Hungary. It's not ok to sell the country this way. Especially its agriculture... (V., 70 years old, former employee of the local brewery).

The reprobation of the coercion system that operated during socialism, although present in my interviews, weighted less in the discussion.

## Conclusions

The fall of the communist regime and the novel blossoming of liberalism reverberates over social identity, which is reconfigured through the redefinition of reality and through the institutionalization of a distinct view over it. The configuration of power relations is essential for this process, yet the analysis of power cannot be reduced to the investigation of political elites and their attempts to impose a reclassification of social positions and a new social order. In this paper, I explored how the ideological turn occurred or failed to occur among the large segment of former agricultural or industrial workers who regained their land properties, collectivized or nationalized under state socialism. Their “resocialization”<sup>4</sup> as land-owners and farmers involved not only a restored social role, but a different *world*. This perspectival shift has been felt as the dislocation of previous identities, even though the socialist discourse was not fully internalized. The construction of an entrepreneurial society engendered the progressive transformation of the manner wherein the individual is conceptualized and the naturalization of the liberal discourse. The *entrepreneurial self* is something to be learned even by those who maintained their sense of possession over “their” land under state socialism, regardless of its incorporation in the cooperatives or state-owned farms. Simultaneously, the quotidian discourse unravels socialist reminiscences, accounting for the relative rigidity of identity and, in this way, for the production of a series of distortions within the social world as it is shaped by liberalism.

The personal narratives of the past and the social memory that they engendered disclosed all these mechanisms in plenty of details. The manner where in these subjective memories are constructed unravels identity reconfigurations, through its juxtaposition with, or distancing from the ideological discourse, the construction and reconstruction of history in different regimes.

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<sup>4</sup> Although generally understood as a politically neutral concept, my understanding of the concept of socialization is far from such a neutral stance. The former understanding is usually generated by a conceptual division between the “social” and the “political”, such that the latter could not be sufficiently pervasive as to impose a certain worldview through a similar learning process. However, I consider that society is by its very nature political and that different ideologies have the capacity to produce such transformations in worldviews, seeing that each society is an ideology.



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# ***Romanian Sociology Today***

## ***Editorial Note:***

***This is a special section dedicated to research articles  
from the field of Romanian sociology.***





## TURNOUT DECLINE IN ROMANIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS: IS IT THAT BIG?

MIRCEA COMȘA<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** According to official data, Romanian voter turnout decreased by half for the period 1990-2012. Gaps between official and self-reported turnout are larger than those from similar countries. Starting with these findings, this paper questions the official data regarding turnout and brings evidence that turnout in Romanian elections is increasingly underestimated. Three factors are responsible for this: the quality of the electoral registers, ineligible voters and emigration. The effect of these factors grew over time inducing the idea that turnout is sharply decreasing. In fact, the decrease is less pronounced, and most of it took place between 1990 and 2000. In the last part, I discuss the implications of the findings in three domains: theoretical debates, methodological and practical issues.

**Keywords:** turnout decline, official turnout, voting age population, voting eligible population, apparently voting eligible population

### Introduction: two questions about voter turnout in Romania<sup>2</sup>

Voter turnout (VT), regardless of the type of election and country, has decreased in the last 50 years (Franklin et al., 2000; Heath, 2007; Wattenberg, 2002). The average turnout rate for 22 countries for the period 1945-1999 decreased from 83% to 77%, with the decrease being more significant after 1965 (Franklin et al., 2000). The decrease in turnout appears to characterize the majority of the democracies. The turnout rate in Britain has decreased over the last 50 years (1950-2005) by 20%, from around 80% to around 60% (Heath, 2007). The turnout rate in the United States (US) increased until 1958, then it decreased (Teixeira, 1992; Wattenberg, 2002). Canada has registered a seven-point drop in turnout rate (Blais et al., 2004). Turnout rate decreased in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden too (Gallego, 2009).

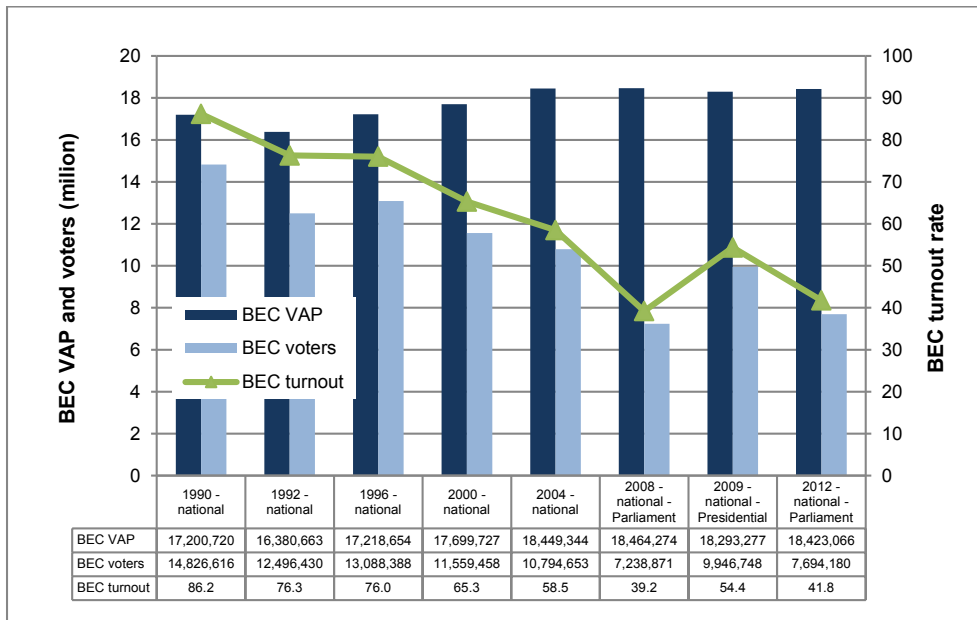
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Also, voter turnout dropped sharply in post-authoritarian Latin America and post-communist Europe after the founding elections (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Kostadinova, 2003; Kostadinova and Power, 2007).

The official turnout rate in Romania follows the same tendency. As shown in Figure 1, according to official data (Central Electoral Bureau - BEC), the decrease in turnout is quite large. Even if one ignores the founding elections and the last two parliamentary elections (these took place detached from the presidential elections and are arguably different compared to previous elections), one observes that the official turnout rate in the national elections has decreased by approximately 20% (from 76.3% in the general elections of 1992 to 54.4% in the presidential elections of 2009).



**Figure 1.** Official (BEC) turnout rate in Romania, 1990-2012

**Data sources:** BEC ([www.bec2004.ro](http://www.bec2004.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro>, [www.bec2009p.ro](http://www.bec2009p.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2012.ro>), ROAEP (<http://www.roaep.ro>), INS (Tempo Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro))<sup>3</sup>

The literature proposes a set of hypotheses about the factors behind turnout decline in former Communist countries, Romania included. Rose (1995) states that turnout decline is the consequence of post-communist demobilization:

<sup>3</sup> For the 1990 election no official data is available regarding the size of the electorate and turnout. Presented data are from Bejan (1991: 112).

because the citizens are now free, they choose to not participate. A weak civil society and a low level of social capital (Howard, 2003; Norris, 2002) are other possible factors that could lower the turnout. The 'post-honeymoon effect' hypothesis (Inglehart and Catterberg, 2002; Kostadinova, 2003) states that right after the fall of communism the citizens are enthusiastic and have high expectations but, shortly after that, they feel deceived and, consequently, absenteeism grows. Following this line of thought, literature identifies two other hypotheses: deteriorating economic conditions and deteriorating political conditions. The first years of new democracies are characterized by severe and growing economic hardships (hyperinflation and high unemployment rates), which have a negative impact on VT (Bell, 2001; Mason, 2003; Pacek, 1994; Tworzecki, 2003). Also, after an initial phase of relative stability, the political conditions change for the worse (extreme inter- and intra-party instability, political scandals, corruption, illegal practices within parties) (Hutcheson, 2004; Kostadinova, 2003; Kostadinova, 2009; Stockemer et al., 2013; Sundström and Stockemer, 2013; White and McAllister, 2004), and this contributes to turnout decline. The 'electoral stakes' hypothesis (Pacek et al., 2009) states that after the fall of Communist parties, people start to learn to identify the elections that are more important and, consequently, worth their time and effort. *Are these explanations complete, or there are some other important factors behind the turnout figures?*

Survey-reported turnout is always higher compared to official turnout (Bernstein et al., 2001; Clarke et al., 2004; Comşa, 2010; Denver, 2003; Duff et al., 2007; Mattila, 2003; Rotariu and Comşa, 2005). This is true no matter which population is under study or which data collection technique is used (face-to-face or telephone surveys). From this point of view, Romania is no exception. Some recent examples are relevant towards this point. In a survey carried out immediately after the 2000 general elections in Romania, 84% of the respondents stated that they had voted, when the official turnout was only 65% (Comşa, 2004). The official turnout (Central Electoral Bureau - BEC) at the general elections (parliamentary and presidential) of 2004 was 58.5% for the first round, and 55.2% for the second. Six months later, for the same election, the self-reported turnout was 83% for the first round, and 77% for the second (BOP, May 2005). Approximately six months after the parliamentary elections of 2008, 69% of the respondents of the Romanian Electoral Studies (SER) survey stated that they had voted, with the official turnout reported as just 39.2%. The official turnout (<http://www.bec2009pe.ro/statistici.html>) for the European Parliament of 2009 was 27.7%, but 49% of the respondents of the SER survey carried out immediately after the elections stated that they had voted. In the case of the presidential elections in the same year the difference

is even bigger, reaching almost 30% for both rounds. According to the BEC (<http://www.bec2009p.ro/statistici.html>), the official turnout was 54.4% in the first round and 58% in the second (53.9% and 57.2% if voters from diaspora are excluded). The self-declared turnout was 82% for the first round and 85% for the second round (SER 2009).

Turnout overestimation by 20-30% is high in itself. Additionally, compared to the average situations of other countries, overestimation appears to be significantly higher in Romania (at least for the elections taking place after 2000). Regardless of whether I compare Romania to other European countries or just the former Communist ones, or look at the parliamentary elections or the European ones, the conclusion is the same (Figure 1). Thus, utilizing the CSES II and IDEA data (both official and voting age population - VAP), I have calculated that the average overestimation of VT in the last national elections of the European states (19 countries)<sup>4</sup> is 6.9/8.9% (the first value represents the average of the overestimation using the official turnout, and the second the average using the VAP turnout according to the IDEA turnout data), 11.8/14.1% if I consider only the former Communist states and 18.7/17.4% in the case of Romania. Utilizing data from ESS round 3 (24 countries) and the IDEA turnout rate (both official and VAP for the latest national elections) I reach somewhat higher values of overestimation: 9.4/13.6% at the European level, 12.4/16.9% in the former Communist countries and 24.5/19.8% for Romania. Following the same procedure, but using ESS round 4 (3<sup>rd</sup> version, 26 countries) data, I obtain values rather similar to the ones from round 3: 11.9/13.3% at the European level, 16.0/17.3% for the former Communist countries and 28.6/26.3%<sup>5</sup> (parliamentary elections) or 28.5/25.1% (presidential elections) for Romania. In the 2004 elections for the European Parliament (22 countries), I obtained overestimations of 16.7/18.2% at the European level, 13.7/14.6% in the former Communist countries and 21.3/20.2% for Romania. The inherent question that arises from these findings is: *Why is the difference between official and self-reported turnout so high in Romania?*

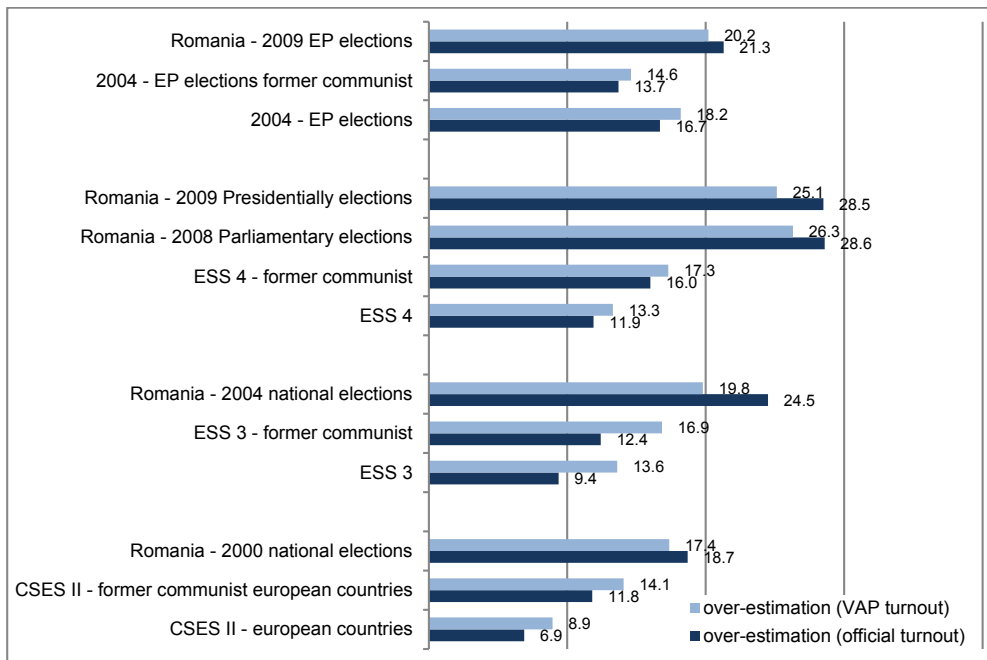
Even though these two questions seem to be unrelated, I will show that they have a common answer: there are problems related to turnout computation, and more specifically, the estimation of the total number of voters (turnout rate denominator or the size of the electorate). In the Romanian post-communist context, the number of voters that can really vote is difficult to estimate for three reasons: the problems associated with maintaining accurate electoral lists, ineligible voters and a large (temporary) migratory population. Taking these

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<sup>4</sup> All these data are available from author, upon request.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the same elections, but at a distance of 6 months, the over-estimation observed in the SER study was 29.7/27.5. ESS data for Romania were collected by CSOP after approximately two months from the Parliamentary elections.

factors into account, I show that the turnout rate in the Romanian national elections is increasingly underestimated. The effects of these factors are growing over time, falsely inducing the idea that turnout is sharply decreasing (as in all the states analyzed in the literature), when in reality this decrease is less pronounced and most of it is concentrated between 1990 and 2000. Our findings about the Romanian turnout are supported by validation analyses: the link is not a spurious one; the re-estimated turnout pattern is closer to the average turnout pattern from Communist countries, and the same findings apply to Moldavia and possibly to other former Communist countries.<sup>6</sup> Finally, I present conclusions and discuss the implications of the findings about turnout decline for three areas: theoretical debates, and methodological and practical issues.



**Figure 2.** Turnout overestimation in comparative perspective: differences between survey data and official turnout

**Source:** Personal computations based on CSES, ESS, and SER surveys.

<sup>6</sup> In a working paper that takes into account 30 former communist countries and 272 elections I show that turnout decline is strongly negatively correlated with emigration size even after controlling for most relevant determinants of turnout.



### **Turnout overestimation and electorate size**

Systematic turnout overestimation can be the result of several factors (Holbrook and Krosnick, 2010): survey-related measurement errors (methods: social desirability, memory errors, and acquiescence; sampling: selection bias and panel conditioning) and official data-related measurement errors (incorrect denominator and/or an incorrect enumerator). The errors specific to the survey methodology have been discussed extensively in the scholarly literature. However, relatively little attention has been given to errors that might occur in terms of official data. The official turnout is computed by dividing the number of voters (enumerator) by the number of the electorate (denominator).

The number of voters is, broadly speaking, usually estimated without major errors. In the case of new democracies and for the founding elections in particular, this statement is debatable. The reason is linked to the occurrence of electoral fraud of the following types: multiple voting or voting for another person. The possibility of these situations occurring is mentioned, among others, by Carey (1995), regarding the general elections of 1992 in Romania. According to the author, the proportion of fraud is difficult to estimate, but it can reach approximately 10% of the total votes cast (in the case of the aforementioned elections, the proportion of the votes cast on special lists was 13% of the total votes, that is to say, 1.57 million). Very likely, the proportion of such situations decreases over time. This fact is backed up by the decrease in the number of votes cast on special lists, and the decrease in the percentage of these votes out of the total votes cast (0.2 million in the case of the parliamentary elections of 2008 and 0.8 million in the presidential elections of 2009, that is to say 3% and 8%). The proven situations of fraud due to multiple votes are much less, but I do have at disposal data for the general elections of 2004 and the elections for the European Parliament in 2009. Thus, the percentage of multiple voting situations in the general elections of 2004 in Ilfov County (only 9,322 votes from several localities have been analyzed, most probably from rural areas; of these, 351 were cases of multiple voting) was 3.8% of the total votes cast (APD 2005: 477). Regarding the elections for the European Parliament in 2009, the Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP)<sup>8</sup> recorded only 12,034 possible cases of multiple voting at the national level, that is to say 0.25% of the total votes cast. The situations of multiple voting and voting in another person's place lead to an artificial increase in the official turnout. Additionally, if the weight of such a situation has decreased significantly over time, the decrease of the turnout in Romania is not as steep as the official data show. Estimating the real percentages of the situations that artificially increase the number of votes cast is difficult, if not impossible, for all elections; therefore I choose not to discuss it here.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.apd.ro/publicatie.php?id=2>

<sup>8</sup> Press release from 15.01.2010, <http://www.roaep.ro/ro/section.php?id=9>

The same thing cannot be said of the size of the electorate. I think that, at least in the case of certain countries, Romania included, relatively large errors can occur in estimating the size of the electorate, with consequences for turnout computation. This idea is not new. In the context of the discussions concerning the decrease in the turnout rate in the US over time, a series of analyses have contested the validity of such observations, stating that the decrease in participation is just an illusion (McDonald, 2003; McDonald and Popkin, 2001). Same authors show that a decrease in turnout can only be seen if VAP is used as a denominator. This happens because VAP includes different categories of individuals that are ineligible to vote (felons, non-citizens, mentally incapable).<sup>9</sup> Given that the number of ineligible voters has increased over time, it appears that turnout has decreased. By excluding people that are ineligible to vote from the VAP, one obtains the voting eligible population (VEP). According to these scholars, if VEP is used as a basis for reporting turnout, the conclusion is completely different - turnout is relatively constant after 1972. Another analysis (Burden, 2003) shows that even using VEP, the turnout still decreases, although the decrease is not as large as when using VAP as a basis for reporting. Based on these findings, one can conclude that the turnout measures constructed using VAP estimates understate turnout size and overstate turnout decline in the US.

In the following, I show and discuss similar problems that are affecting the estimation of VAP in Romania. I argue that turnout decline has two sources: the decrease in the number of voters (from 12.5 million in 1992 to almost 10 million in 2009 and 7.7 in 2012) and the increase in the size of the electorate (BEC VAP). In the 1990-2004 period the electorate size increased from 16.4 to 18.5 million, only to oscillate afterwards around the 18.3 million mark (Figure 1). This finding is startling if one takes into account the fact that the population of Romania (total, but also the adult population) has decreased during this period, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INS) data (TEMPO-Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)) and other analyses (Rotariu, 2010). This has happened because the computation method of the total number of voters in Romania has three major faults: the quality of the electoral registers, ineligible voters and emigration (permanent, but unofficial, and temporary or cyclical) (Comşa, 2004; Comşa, 2010).

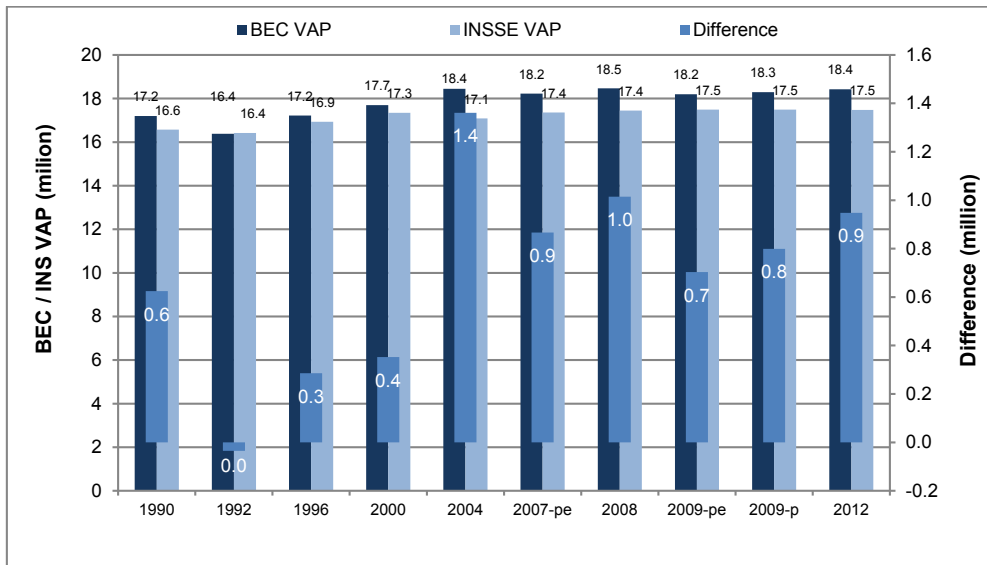
### **The number of voters and the quality of the electoral registers**

According to the Romanian Constitution (Article 36), in order to vote, a person has to be an adult Romanian citizen, who has not had this right revoked. In 2009, according to the INS data, the number of adults in Romania was approximately 17.5 million. In the same year, the official BEC documents

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<sup>9</sup> The percentage of those excluded (overseas) is significantly lower (McDonald and Popkin, 2001).

put the total number of eligible voters in Romania (based on existing electoral lists) at 18,197,316 in the European Parliament elections and 18,293,277 for the presidential elections.<sup>10</sup> Given that the two elections were separated by only 6 months, the increase in the adult population by 100,000 is rather surprising and highly improbable. However, even more surprising is the difference (0.7-0.8 million) between the number of eligible voters estimated by the two sources (BEC and INS). This difference is not specific to the year 2009, it can be found in the other electoral years too (with the exception of 1992, where the two estimates are similar), as Figure 3 shows.



**Figure 3.** Voting age population according to BEC and INS, Romania 1990-2012

**Data source:** BEC ([www.bec2004.ro](http://www.bec2004.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro>, [www.bec2009p.ro](http://www.bec2009p.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2012.ro>), ROAEP (<http://www.roaep.ro>), and INS (Tempo Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro))

The difference between the BEC and INS data originates from the method of constructing, keeping and updating the electoral registers in Romania. According to the law 370/2004 (article 12, paragraph 2), the electoral lists are based upon the lists provided by the National Centre for the Administration of the Databases Regarding Population Records. Due to some errors, these lists (and implicitly, the electoral lists) contain more adults than are present in Romania. Of course, there

<sup>10</sup> Sources: <http://www.bec2009pe.ro>; <http://www.bec2009p.ro>.

are also situations in which people are not present on the lists. At elections, this type of voter is counted on supplementary electoral lists. For example, in the elections of 2009 for the European Parliament, 668,217 persons voted on such lists. There are two major sources of errors in BEC's electoral registers: double inclusion (people that have moved are sometimes counted twice, at both the old and the new address) and un-exclusion (some deceased people are still included in the electoral registers).<sup>11</sup> This situation can be best observed by analyzing survey research responses with samples based on the electoral lists. After analyzing the contact forms from surveys carried out between 2000 and 2009,<sup>12</sup> on similar samples, it was found that, on average, from the total number of people selected from the electoral lists, 13.6% were incorrect entries (1.4% non-existent/uninhabited residences, 2.1% deceased, 10.1% no longer lived at the respective address).<sup>13</sup> Even if one assumes that these figures are much smaller in reality, it still adds up to the fact that approximately<sup>14</sup> 1.2 million people out of the 17.8 million total should not be included in the electoral lists. Consequently, the real number of eligible voters is around the 16.8 million mark, a value closer to the INS estimation (17.1 million, average for the entire period). The aggregate effect of this situation leads to 'supplementing' the number of adults in Romania by a figure comprised within the 0.3-1.4 million range (with the exception of the 1992 elections). Even more startling, according to the electoral registers, the adult population in Romania has increased by almost 150,000 in a very short period of time (June-October 2009), a very unlikely situation if one considers the negative natural growth rate of the population of Romania according to the INS data ([www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)). Relative to all of the elections, on average, the size of the electorate according to the BEC is higher by almost 0.7 million compared to the size calculated by the INS. Another point of interest for our analysis, this 'supplementing' was not constant; it tended to increase over time with the highest value reached for the 2004 elections (on average, 0.3 million before 2004,

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<sup>11</sup> Estimations referring to Great Britain point out that between 6 and 9% of the number of entries are redundant or duplicate (Swaddle and Heath, 1989). On the other hand, persons that have moved are also under-represented in surveys, leading to an over-estimation of the turnout due to sampling.

<sup>12</sup> The surveys included are: Political Barometer (MMT, October 2000 and October 2002), Public Opinion Barometer (May 2001, May 2003, May 2006, May 2007), Interethnic Relations Barometer (2002), European Values Survey (2008), The attitudes of Romanians towards work (May 2008), Romanian Electoral Studies (June 2009 and November 2009).

<sup>13</sup> The quality of the electoral lists varies not only in time (the percentage of double inclusions and un-exclusions has decreased from 15.7% for the period of 2000-2004 to 11.5% for the period of 2005-2009) but also during an electoral cycle. In regards to the latter part of the statement, the percentage of the reasons pertaining to the sampling framework of the totality of the reasons why the questionnaire was not applied to a certain address has increased for the period of 2000-2002 from 32% to 47% (Comşa, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Average values referring to national elections from 1990 to 2012.

0.8 million after 2004). In these conditions, even if the electorate participated in the elections to the same degree, the turnout would still have decreased due to the false increase in the voting age population.

### **Apparently voting eligible population (AVEP)**

Not all adult citizens of Romania have the right to vote. According to the Constitution (Article 36, paragraph 2), 'the mentally debilitated or alienated, placed under interdiction, do not have the right to vote, nor do the persons convicted, by an irrevocable judicial sentence, to the forfeiture of the electoral rights'. Even if the suspension of the right to vote in the case of the irrevocably convicted is sometimes up for discussion,<sup>15</sup> the general situation is usually that convicted and incarcerated people either do not have the right to vote or they do not vote. Data provided by the Ministry of Justice to the INS (Figure 4; Table 3 in the Appendix) indicate that approximately 22,000 to 36,000 potential voters most likely did not have the right to vote. Although the number of these individuals varies greatly, it does not follow an increasing or decreasing tendency. Important for our endeavor is the fact that the percentage of people in this category is relatively small compared to the total VAP (0.2% at most). The same thing cannot be said for the percentage of adults with psychological or mental disability. According to the data provided by the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities (ANPH), the percentage of these adults in the VAP increased from 0.1% in 1990 to approximately 1% in 2012 (Figure 4; Table 3 in the Appendix). The majority (95%) of these individuals fall into the first two categories of disability (severe and accentuated). Consequently, I can classify them in the categories of people who most likely do not have the right to vote or who can find difficult to cast a vote.

All of the previous studies (Czesnik, 2006; Kostadinova, 2003; Kostadinova and Power, 2007; Kostelka, 2010; Pacek et al., 2009; Rose, 1995) have ignored a major phenomenon that affects most Eastern European countries, namely, migration, as a potential explanatory variable of turnout decline. Migration can lower turnout by increasing the cost of voting due to higher distances to the polling stations. Moreover, if migration flows are increasing over time, the turnout decline will be

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<sup>15</sup> According to Article 3 of the additional Protocol of the European Court of Human Rights, limiting the right to vote in the case of the convicted is an infringement of human rights. For example, by the Sentence of the ECHR of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 given in the case of 'Calmanovici versus Romania', the ECHR condemned Romania for the first time for the interdiction of parental rights and electoral rights as an accessory punishment to a criminal conviction, towards the plaintiff Viorel Calmanovici. He claimed the infringement of several rights provided by the Convention, among others the right to vote during incarceration within the country.

more pronounced. For Romania, temporary migration<sup>16</sup> represents the biggest source of VAP reduction. From certain points of view, the exclusion of this category from VAP is debatable. Even if, according to electoral law, the temporary migrants do not lose their voting rights, their exclusion from the voter pool is justifiable if one takes into account the high cost of voting in their case. The largest number (294) of polling stations abroad was recorded during the 2009 presidential elections. Even though a large share of these are located in countries with a high percentage of Romanian emigrants (Italy 55, Spain 38, US 28), the number of stations is still insignificant relative to the size of the countries that they cover. Therefore, the time and money needed to reach a polling station are significant. Consequently, the emigrant turnout rate is quite small: around 1% for the 2009 European Parliament elections, 5% for the 2009 presidential elections (first round), and 3% for the 2012 parliamentary elections (the number of votes from abroad was computed using data provided by the BEC; the method for estimating the total emigrant population is described below).

In one of the first studies on the subject (Sandu, 2000), the rate of cyclic migration during the year 2000 was estimated at 19% of the adult population, or approximately 0.4 million. In subsequent studies (Comşa, 2002, 2004), the number of Romanian emigrants in 2002 was estimated at nearly one million. Meanwhile, most sources indicate that the number of emigrants (for longer periods of time) has at least doubled by 2006 (\*\*\*, 2006; Sandu, 2006), with an upward tendency after 2006 (as a consequence of Romania's accession to the EU). A more recent source (Sandu, 2010) estimates the total number of temporary Romanian emigrants at 2.2 million in 2006, 2.7 in 2007 and 2.8 in 2008.

An estimation of the number of Romanian emigrants for the period 1990-2012 is difficult to carry out. Official data are missing, incomplete, or are affected by errors. Some examples are relevant towards this point: the INS

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<sup>16</sup> Here we talk only about external migration. In some cases, being an internal (temporary or not) migrant reduces also the turnout probability. The extent of this phenomenon is difficult to estimate, but it is present, especially in the case of 2009 elections. The number of persons that voted on supplementary lists at the last two presidential elections (2004 and 2009) supports this statement: 705,739 persons voted on supplementary lists in 2004 and 479,613 in 2009. The difference between the two figures is at least partially a direct result of the electoral law change. According to the new electoral law (The Government Emergency Ordinance no. 95, Official Gazette of Romania, no. 608 / 2009, September 3), a citizen can only vote in the voting station to which his respective address is allocated, with two situations possible: he or she is included in the permanent electoral lists or he or she is not included in those lists but can prove with an identification document his or hers residence in the area covered by the respective voting stations. If neither applies, then voting is possible only in special voting stations. For previous elections all voters unable to vote in the voting stations corresponding to their domiciles could vote in other voting stations, where they were included on special lists. The introduction of special voting stations for these persons, usually limited to one per local government, raised the costs of voting for the more mobile citizens, the consequence being lower turnout of this category (Rotariu, 2010).

measures only permanent emigration, ignoring temporary emigration; the volume of remittances estimated by the National Bank of Romania (BNR) is based only on the institutional channels of money transfers; and most often, the EU countries' statistics only present the number of emigrants for recent years. In order to avoid errors associated with only one source and method of estimation, but still cover the whole period of interest, I decided to use three methods of calculating the number of adult emigrants: an estimation based on the volume of remittances, estimations from the official statistics of countries that have attracted the largest part of the Romanian emigrants, and estimations based on the analysis of electoral registers. The resulting data are presented in Table 2 in the Appendix. I briefly present the estimation methods below.

Starting with the method of estimating the number of emigrants on the basis of remittances put forward by Sandu (2010), I propose a partially modified version. Given that the volume of remittances estimated by the BNR includes only formal channels, I have weighted the values to cover for informal channels as well, thus estimating the 'real' volume of the remittances. Then I estimated the average volume of remittances transmitted by an emigrant in a year, starting with the average value of these for the year 2008: 4700 euro according to the survey data (Sandu, 2010). Then I weighted the data with the real GDP growth rate at the level of the EU (according to the IMF data) in order to obtain the estimations for the entire period of interest. By dividing the "real" volume of remittances by the average volume sent by an adult emigrant, I obtained the number of adult emigrants that have sent remittances. Because not all adult emigrants send remittances, I have weighted the values with the percentage of those that most likely do, thus resulting the estimated number of adult emigrants. According to recent survey data (Sandu, 2010), of the total number of emigrants, approximately 60% send money to their relatives in their country of origin. I estimate that this percentage has decreased over time, therefore the percentage was higher in the previous years (I have approximated a decrease of one percentage point per year).

At least in recent years, the majority of Romanian emigrants, approximately 66% for the year 2006 according to the survey data (Sandu, 2010), live in Italy and Spain. Based on the official statistics provided by the statistical offices of these countries,<sup>17</sup> and considering that the percentage of migrants in these countries was on the rise during the period of 1990-2012 from 30% to 72%, I have obtained the total number of emigrants. Of these, only some are adults

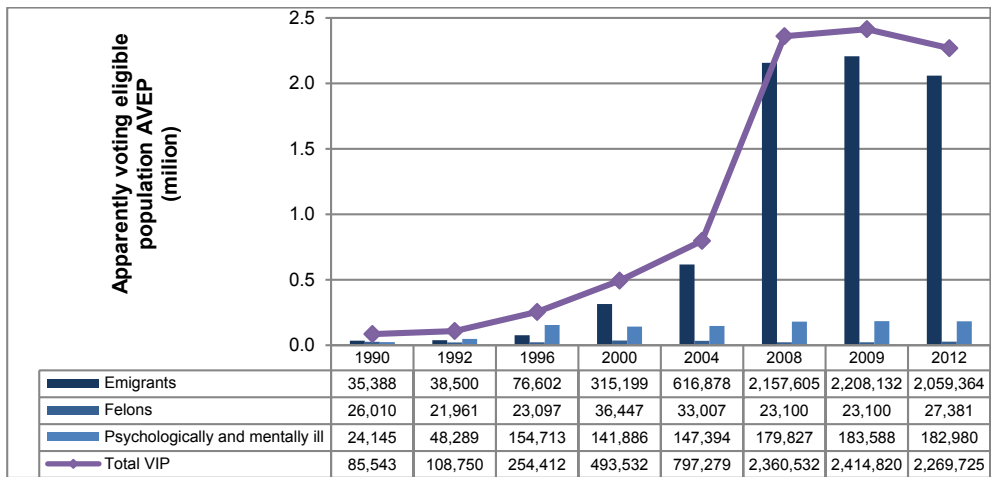
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<sup>17</sup> Italy: 1990-2002 (MPI, <http://migrationinformation.org/GlobalData/countrydata/data.cfm>), 2003-2009 (ISTAT, <http://demo.istat.it>), Spain: (INE, [http://www.ine.es/en/daco/daco42/migracion/evr2008\\_en.xls](http://www.ine.es/en/daco/daco42/migracion/evr2008_en.xls)).

(approximately 90% up to 2000, 80%<sup>18</sup> after). Given that most likely the official statistics underestimate the number of Romanian emigrants, I have corrected the estimations, taking into account the declining rate of underestimation from 70% in 1990 to 29% in 2012 (Table 2 in the Appendix).

An analysis of the reasons why some of the individuals selected from the electoral lists to take part in a survey were unreachable shows that 7-8% of them were working abroad (based on surveys: SER, June and November 2009, and ‘The attitudes of Romanians towards work’, May 2008). If one considers the situations that are not reported to the interviewers (entire families migrating or single people migrating), the percentage of emigrants is probably much higher, maybe almost double. Therefore, approximately 10-12% of the electorate, that is to say 1.8-2.2 million, is not in the country most of the time.

In the end, for each year, I have calculated the average of the obtained estimations. For most years, only one or two estimations were available. For the founding elections, the number of emigrants is relatively negligible, but starting with 2004 one can observe an exponential increase that leads us to more than two million adult emigrants in later years (Figure 4). In the same figure, I present what I call the “apparently voting eligible population” (the sum of the voting ineligible population and the migrant population).



**Figure 4.** Apparently voting eligible population (AVEP), Romania 1990-2012

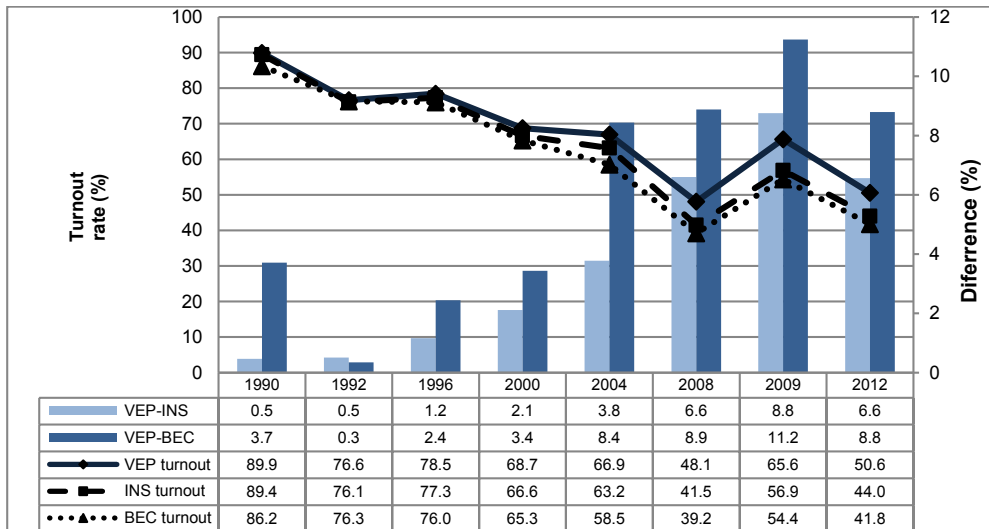
**Data source:** The number of psychologically and mentally ill adults - ANPH (<http://www.anph.ro/tematica.php?id=13&idss=41>); the number of adults' irrevocably convicted - INS (TEMPO-Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)); number of adults temporarily emigrated - personal estimations (Appendix, Table 2).

<sup>18</sup> According to data from surveys carried out in recent years (Sandu, 2010).



### Voter turnout re-estimation

Starting with the previous findings, I calculate the VEP and thus re-estimate the turnout in the Romanian national elections for the period 1990-2012. Subtracting AVEP from VAP gives VEP, which is used next as the denominator for turnout computation. The official (BEC) turnout rate, the VAP INS turnout, and the VEP turnout are presented in Figure 5 (the corresponding figures are presented in Table 4 in the Appendix).



**Figure 5.** Official and re-estimated turnout rates, Romania 1990-2012

**Data source:** Personal computations based on data from BEC ([www.bec2004.ro](http://www.bec2004.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro>, [www.bec2009p.ro](http://www.bec2009p.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2012.ro>), ROAEP (<http://www.roaep.ro>), and INS (Tempo Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro))

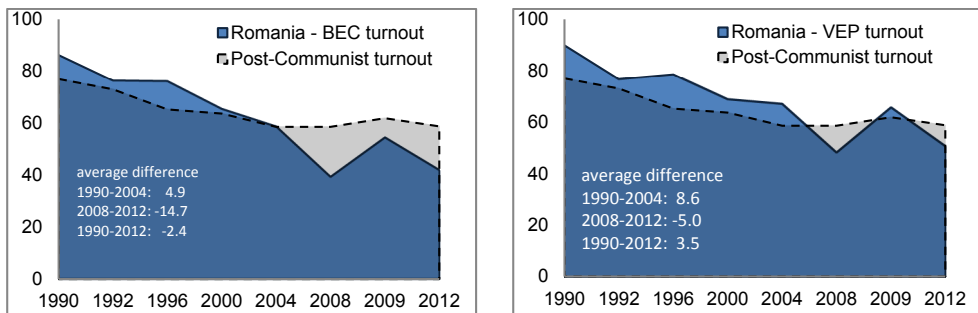
Regardless of the estimation method considered, VT is decreasing. If, at the beginning of the period, VT was almost 90%, at the end it decreases to 40-65%, depending on the elections (presidential or parliamentary) and estimation method (BEC, INS, or VEP). However, the VT decrease varies greatly according to the type of data utilized. Considering the BEC and INS data, from 1990 to 2012, VT has decreased by approximately 45% for the parliamentary elections, and 32% for the presidential elections. The VEP turnout, although it still indicates a substantial decrease, shows that the decrease is significantly smaller: around 39% for parliamentary elections and 25% for presidential elections. Before the 2004 elections, the differences between the three estimations are rather small (1-4%), but after that the differences increase quite a lot (7-11%). Consequently,

the VT decrease is not as big as the official data suggest. In addition, most of the decrease took place between 1990 and 2000. Even more, if one takes into account the fact that starting with 2008, the presidential and parliamentary elections are held separately, and one considers as a reference point the 2009 presidential elections, one can observe only a slight decrease in VT (3.1%) during the last decade.

### Looking for external validation

Increasingly inaccurate electoral registers and outward migration account for a large share of the observed decline in official turnout. To increase the validity of this finding, I have done two tests: a comparison between the Romanian official turnout, the re-estimated turnout, and the average turnout pattern from other post-communist countries and a test for spurious relationships between turnout and migration. Each one of these tests will offer additional support for the hypothesis.

The comparison between the Romanian turnout, the re-estimated turnout, and the post-communist turnout (Figure 6) reveals that beginning with the 2008 elections (migration increases at higher rates after 2004 and, especially, after 2007), the pattern of the VEP turnout in Romania is closer to the pattern in post-communist countries: the difference between the BEC turnout and turnout from post-communist countries is -14.7%, but the difference between the VEP turnout and turnout from post-communist countries is only -5.0%.



**Figure 6.** Official and re-estimated turnout rates in Romania vs. average post-Communist turnout

**Data source:** IDEA ([www.idea.int/vt](http://www.idea.int/vt)); average post-Communist turnout is computed as average from all Parliamentary elections held in the reference year +/- 1 year; for 2009 year Presidential elections are considered.

The observed relationship between turnout and emigration could be a spurious one. In order to test for this, I have computed several time-series models with turnout rate (BEC and VAP) as a dependent variable, migration rate as an independent variable, and several control variables included one at time: GDP (per capita at PPP), party fractionalization, opposition fractionalization, inflation rate (log), unemployment rate, human development index, Gini index, overall globalization index, trust in government, and trust in Parliament (Table 1 in the Appendix). Due to the fact that most of these variables are non-stationary, dependent over time, and correlated among each other, I used ARIMA. With two exceptions, controlling for other variables does not change the relationship between turnout and migration. Even for these two control variables (opposition fractionalization and GDP), the sign of the relationship does not change, only its significance is reduced. So, the negative relationship between migration and turnout remains, even after controlling for these variables.

### Conclusions and implications

In this paper I argue that the official data related to voter turnout in Romania (and possibly in other post-communist countries) are misleading. More precisely, the official VT in national elections<sup>19</sup> is considerably underestimated. The main sources of the underestimation are the quality of the electoral lists, emigration and the voting ineligible population. If we take the actual VEP into account, turnout becomes significantly higher. Even more significantly, the difference between BEC turnout and VEP turnout shown in this study tends to increase over time. Therefore, even if there was a decrease in turnout between 1990 and 2012 in Romania, this is smaller than the official data count. Additionally, the largest part of the turnout decrease is concentrated between 1990 and 2000, and is less pronounced after that.

The analysis presented in this paper has at least two limitations. The first one concerns the fact that the methodology used to estimate the number of migrants is based upon partial and debatable data sometimes. Although multiple sources were used, the resulting values are most likely approximate only. However, large errors in the estimation of the number of migrants are transformed into relatively small errors in the estimation of the turnout. Therefore, the conclusions

<sup>19</sup> The findings also apply in the case of the elections for the European Parliament. Applying the same methodology, the values of the turnout in the case of the euro-parliamentary elections in Romania are as follows:

Elections	VEP	INS	BEC	VEP-INS	VEP-BEC
2007	35.8	30.9	29.5	4.9	6.3
2009	33.2	28.8	27.7	4.4	5.5

did not suffer any significant changes. The second limitation pertains to the fact that I investigated only the size of the VEP. A complete perspective would include an examination of the total number of votes cast. There are clues that the real number of votes cast is in fact smaller than the official one, especially in the case of the first elections (electoral fraud has decreased over time). If this is true, then in reality the turnout in the first elections was smaller, and therefore, the decrease in the turnout was smaller. Unfortunately though, estimating electoral fraud is difficult to carry out.

These findings have implications in many areas, such as scholarly and political debates (for example, people's support for democracy and democratic values, the legitimacy of government, and representation bias), methodological aspects (such as questioning the validity of empirical analyses that use official data as a measure of turnout and explaining some apparent turnout puzzles), and practical aspects (for example, the validation of elections where a threshold is present).

Most scholars and politicians consider the political participation of citizens to be one of the pillars of democracy. Without citizens' involvement (seen as a continuum from choosing representatives to participating in decision-making processes), a democracy cannot function (properly) (Czesnik, 2006; Lister and Pai, 2008). Among the different forms of political participation, voting is the most frequent and basic one (Blais, 2000; Verba et al., 1995). From a normative perspective that sustains a large amount of participation (Lijphart, 1997), a low turnout indicates a weak democracy. Even more, low turnout can be seen as a threat to democracy or as a lack of legitimacy of the elected government which, in return, could decrease the degree of acceptance of governmental decisions (Czesnik, 2006; Hadjar and Beck, 2010). Moreover, low turnout is associated with unequal political representation of different socio-demographic groups (Patterson, 2002; Teixeira, 1992; Wattenberg, 2002; White and McAllister, 2007) and, consequently, unequal political influence (Lijphart, 1997, 1998). In addition, low and falling turnout is considered a sign of disengagement and a decreasing commitment to democratic norms and duties (Norris, 1999; Teixeira, 1992). In the context of new democracies, these concerns are even more relevant, taking into question the unidirectionality of the democratization process (Huntington, 1991; Lijphart, 2000). Based on this paper's findings, one can argue that citizens from Romania, and from other post-socialist countries too, have not turned away from politics and democracy, at least not as much as the official statistics and current literature seem to imply.

A correct estimation of VT could be extremely important to the analyses that utilize this variable (mostly as a dependent one). Regardless of whether one analyze the dynamic of the turnout, compare turnout in different countries, or

attempt to explain variations in turnout, the use of official data can be misleading and lead to incorrect results. The findings from this paper could also explain some apparent turnout puzzles: because educational attainment, party identification, mobilization by political parties, and ideological polarization are increasing, one should observe an increase in turnout too, but the opposite is seen.

In some (new) democracies, elections and referendums are considered valid only if a certain turnout threshold is surpassed. For example, in Romania, a referendum is validated only if 50%+1<sup>20</sup> of the total registered population votes.<sup>21</sup> For situations like these, the answer to the question of how much the turnout was becomes a decisive one for transposing people's preferences into laws and political decisions.

### Abbreviations:

VT	voter turnout
VAP	voting age population
VEP	voting eligible population
AVEP	apparently voting eligible population
SER	Romanian Electoral Studies
BOP	Public Opinion Barometer
BEC	Central Electoral Bureau
INS	National Institute of Statistics
AEP	Permanent Electoral Authority
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
BNS	National Bureau of Statistics

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<sup>20</sup> According to the Law regarding the organization of referendum, article 5, paragraph 2 (Monitorul Oficial, 24.02.2000).

<sup>21</sup> Recently, the law was changed and now the electoral threshold for referendum validation is 30% from total registered population.

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## Appendix

Table 1.

Turnout decline and emigration, Romania 1990-2012 (ARIMA models)<sup>22</sup>

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Turnout BEC</b>	<b>Turnout VAP</b>
Migrants share in total population		-2.54** (0.43)	-2.48** (0.45)
Migrants share in total population		-2.23** (0.42)	-2.14** (0.42)
Party fractionalization		-16.40** (4.81)	-18.10** (4.65)
Migrants share in total population		-1.44 (0.90)	-1.39 (0.94)
Opposition fractionalization		46.78+ (27.03)	46.67 (29.13)
Migrants share in total population		-0.19 (2.04)	-1.13 (2.14)
GDP per capita PPP		-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Migrants share in total population		-1.63+ (0.87)	-1.87* (0.81)
Inflation rate (log)		9.29 (6.90)	6.24 (6.87)
Migrants share in total population		-2.37** (0.44)	-2.32** (0.45)
Unemployment rate		2.56* (1.07)	-2.49* (1.17)
Migrants share in total population		-2.50** (0.56)	-2.58** (0.57)
Human Development Index		-12.91 (71.83)	33.96 (66.91)
Migrants share in total population		-2.40** (0.42)	-2.35** (0.43)
Gini Index		-1.00 (0.61)	-0.96 (0.65)
Migrants share in total population		-1.09* (0.55)	-1.11* (0.56)
Overall globalization		-0.61** (0.14)	-0.58** (0.18)

<sup>22</sup> Sources of control variables: party and opposition fractionalization (DPI 2010), GDP, inflation, and unemployment (International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2013), HDI and Gini index (WB), overall globalization (Steiner, 2010), trust in Romanian Parliament and Government (Tufis, 2012).

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Independent variables	Dependent variable	Turnout BEC	Turnout VAP
	Migrants share in total population		-2.05** (0.38)
Trust in Government		0.29** (0.06)	0.33** (0.06)
Migrants share in total population		-2.19** (0.34)	-2.10** (0.32)
Trust in Parliament		0.32** (0.06)	0.35** (0.05)

Standard errors in parentheses; + significant at 10%; \* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%

**Table 2.**

Estimation of the number of Romanian emigrants

Year	Adult population (INS)	Remittances (US\$ million) (BNR)	Remittances (US\$ million) (corrected for unofficial channels)	Real GDP growth rate - EU (IMF)	Real GDP growth rate - EU (base 2008)	Average remittances / year / emigrant (US\$) *	Adult emigrants with remittances # *	Adult emigrants % *	Adult emigrants # # <sup>1</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>2</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>3</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>4</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>5</sup>
1990											35,388		35,388
1991											63,600		63,600
1992											38,500		38,500
1993											39,055		39,055
1994	16,678,735	11	176	2.9	64.9	3,980	44,219	0.750	58,958		44,986		51,972
1995	16,812,270	9	142	3.0	67.9	4,166	34,132	0.745	45,815		55,119		50,467
1996	16,933,214	18	281	2.0	69.9	4,290	65,461	0.740	88,461		64,744		76,602
1997	17,029,060	16	246	2.8	72.7	4,459	55,263	0.735	75,188		112,403		93,795
1998	17,128,234	49	745	3.0	75.7	4,642	160,458	0.730	219,806		111,070		165,438
1999	17,247,528	96	1,440	3.0	78.7	4,828	298,269	0.725	411,406		127,190		269,298
2000	17,347,395	96	1,421	4.0	82.7	5,071	280,179	0.720	389,138		241,260		315,199
2001	17,421,518	116	1,694	2.1	84.7	5,198	325,833	0.715	455,710		315,614		385,662
2002	16,956,124	143	2,059	1.4	86.1	5,283	389,755	0.710	548,951		307,284		428,117
2003	17,018,741	124	1,761	1.5	87.7	5,378	327,403	0.705	464,402		569,013		516,708
2004	17,088,071	132	1,848	2.7	90.4	5,543	333,405	0.700	476,292		757,464		616,878
2005	17,181,515	4,733	4,780	2.2	92.5	5,676	842,197	0.695	1,211,795		926,551		1,069,173
2006	17,270,591	6,718	6,785	3.4	96.0	5,886	1,152,733	0.690	1,670,627	1,838,547	966,153		1,491,776
2007	17,357,765	8,542	8,627	3.1	99.1	6,075	1,420,093	0.685	2,073,128	2,181,078	2,010,050		2,088,085

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Year	Adult population (INS)	Remittances (US\$ million) (BNR)	Remittances (US\$ million) (corrected for unofficial channels)	Real GDP growth rate - EU (IMF)	Real GDP growth rate - EU (base 2008)	Average remittances / year / emigrant (US\$) *	Adult emigrants with remittances # *	Adult emigrants % *	Adult emigrants # <sup>1</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>2</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>3</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>4</sup>	Adult emigrants # <sup>5</sup>
2008	17,449,417	9,381	9,475	0.9	100.0	6,133	1,544,806	0.680	2,271,773	2,224,733	2,320,606	1,813,306	2,157,605
2009	17,494,061	4,952	5,002	-4.1	95.9	3,067	1,630,930	0.675	2,416,193		2,443,386	1,764,818	2,208,132
2010	17,495,174	3,883	3,922	-1.1	94.8	3,067	1,278,858	0.670	1,908,743		2,425,384		2,167,063
2011	17,488,264	3,750	3,788	2.2	97.0	3,067	1,235,054	0.665	1,857,225		2,376,158		2,116,691
2012	17,475,017	3,750*	3,788	0.7	97.7	3,067	1,235,054	0.660	1,871,294		2,247,434		2,059,364

Values with grey background are estimations from surveys.

\* Own estimation based on previous year.

<sup>1</sup> Own estimation based on remittances.

<sup>2</sup> Estimations based on remittances (Sandu, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Own estimations based on official data about the number of emigrants in Spain and Italy.

<sup>4</sup> Own estimations based on analysis of field operators sheets (sampling frame: BEC electoral lists).

<sup>5</sup> Mean of estimations (1-4).

**Table 3.**

The number of adults with psychological or mental disability and of those irrevocably convicted

Year	Adults with psychological or mental disability <sup>1</sup>	Adults irrevocably convicted <sup>2</sup>
1990	* 24,145	26,010
1992	48,289	21,961
1993	104,244	21,838
1994	139,987	21,869
1995	135,733	24,556
1996	154,713	23,097
1997	141,229	26,714
1998	145,135	37,566
1999	144,240	38,110
2000	141,886	36,447
2001	146,639	37,406
2002	146,732	37,448
2003	143,351	36,104

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Year	Adults with psychological or mental disability <sup>1</sup>	Adults irrevocably convicted <sup>2</sup>
2004	147,394	33,007
2005	154,971	31,122
2006	160,451	29,756
2007	172,840	26,443
2008	179,827	23,100
2009	182,674	22,308
2010	183,025	23,614
2011	183,060	27,381
2012	182,980	** 27,381

<sup>1</sup> official data (ANPH, <http://www.anph.ro/tematica.php?id=13&idss=41>).

<sup>2</sup> official data (INS - TEMPO-Online, <https://statistici.insse.ro/>).

\* estimation from a linear regression model (predictors: time and number of adults with disabilities)

\*\* estimation based on previous year.

**Table 4.**

BEC, VAP and VEP turnout in Romanian national elections: 1990-2012

Elections	Votes BEC	VAP BEC	VAP INS	AVEP	VEP	Turn out BEC	Turn out VAP	Turn out VEP
1990	14,825,017	17,200,720	16,576,328	80,173	16,531,543	86.2	89.4	89.9
1992	12,496,430	16,380,663	16,415,313	98,010	16,355,803	76.3	76.1	76.6
1996	13,088,388	17,218,654	16,933,214	254,275	16,755,541	76.0	77.3	78.5
2000	11,559,458	17,699,727	17,347,395	492,608	17,169,985	65.3	66.6	68.6
2004	10,794,653	18,449,344	17,088,071	796,727	16,908,222	58.5	63.2	66.3
2007-EP	5,370,171	18,224,597	17,357,765	2,287,585	17,158,265	29.5	30.9	35.6
2008	7,238,871	18,464,274	17,449,417	2,360,300	17,246,721	39.2	41.5	48.0
2009-EP	5,035,299	18,197,316	17,494,061	2,413,115	17,289,079	27.7	28.8	33.4
2009-P	9,946,748	18,293,277	17,494,061	2,414,421	17,287,773	54.4	56.9	66.0
2012	7,694,180	18,423,066	17,488,264	2,269,725	17,277,903	41.8	44.0	50.6

**Data source:** Personal computations based on data from BEC ([www.bec2004.ro](http://www.bec2004.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2008.ro>, [www.bec2009p.ro](http://www.bec2009p.ro), <http://www.becparlamentare2012.ro>), ROAEP (<http://www.roaep.ro>), and INS (Tempo Online, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro))





## MAPPING DEPRIVATION IN RURAL AREAS FROM TRANSYLVANIA: REFLECTIONS ON A METHODOLOGICAL EXERCISE

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**Abstract.** The aim of the present paper is to present and critically discuss the potentialities and limits of using official data (collected and reported by state-institutions) in order to shed light on consequences of uneven development and measure area deprivation in present-day Romania. Our argumentation is based on a quantitative inquiry at the level of rural communes and small-towns from three counties located in the historical region of Transylvania. It presents the reasons for choosing certain statistical indicators, the construction of composite indexes and the profiles of localities according to their values. We explore the statistical correlations between our indexes and the poverty rates measured for 2002 (CASPI, 2004), as well as the Local Human Development Index proposed by Sandu (2011) and revised by the World Bank (2014). Unlike other poverty-mapping inquiries, our goal was not to identify compact, segregated and severely impoverished settlements, but to measure the extent of material deprivation at the level of the entire administrative unit. In this way, we refrained from seeing poverty as the problem of a socially (and sometimes spatially) marginalized settlement, and instead defined poverty as a problem of the entire local community, that should be addressed by the local community as a whole. Our data reveals that, after controlling for poverty and local resources, the share of the Roma ethnic minority is a strong statistical predictor of registered unemployment, however, it does not correlate with the frequency of granting social assistance benefits.

**Keywords:** area deprivation, social mapping, Roma minority, rural Transylvania

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## Introduction<sup>4</sup>

The aim of the present paper is to present and critically discuss the potentialities and limits of using official data (collected and reported by state-institutions) in order to shed light on unequal development and measure area deprivation in present-day Romania. We present the reasons for choosing certain statistical indicators that local authorities regularly (yet not publicly) report at the level of localities, the construction of composite indexes based on these indicators and the profiles of rural communes (administrative units comprising one or several villages) and small-towns (with less than 20,000 inhabitants) according to these indexes<sup>5</sup>. Unlike other poverty-mapping inquiries, our goal was not to identify compact, segregated and severely impoverished settlements (Sandu, 2005; Fleck and Rughiniș, 2008; Vincze, 2013; Vincze and Hossu, 2014), but to measure the extent of material deprivation at the level of the administrative unit as a whole. In this way, we refrained from seeing poverty as the problem of a socially (and sometimes spatially) marginalized settlement, and instead defined poverty as a problem of the entire local community, that should be addressed by the local community as a whole.

Our argumentation is based on a quantitative inquiry at the level of rural communes and small-towns from three counties from Transylvania, situated in the central part of Romania and partly corresponding to the historical region of Szeklerland (*Székelyföld* in Hungarian and *Ținutul Secuiesc* in Romanian): Mureș (Maros), Harghita (Hargita) and Covasna (Kovászna). Although in terms of ethnic distribution these three counties have a specific profile, with considerably larger shares of the Hungarian population<sup>6</sup>, in terms of economic and labour force indicators they largely resemble the central-region of the country and Romania

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<sup>4</sup> This article is based on a research report elaborated within a joint project of the “Caritas – Social Assistance” Branch of the Caritas Alba Iulia non-governmental organization, the Babeș-Bolyai University and the County Offices for Child Protection and Social Services from Mureș, Harghita and Covasna, entitled: *United Networks: Integrated initiatives for the social inclusion of marginalized communities*, code PEH 100, contract 05/H/SEE/30.04.2015 (12 months), with the financial support of the RO10 – CORAI Program, financed through the SEE 2009-2014 grants of Norway and administered by the Romanian Fund for Social Development (FRDS). Neither the initial report, nor the present article represents the views of FRDS or of the SEE 2009-2014 Grants. We are grateful to the project promoter and our partner organizations for their invaluable help in collecting the data for social mapping and for their insightful comments on the initial report. The graphic design of maps is courtesy to Aura Moldovan, PhD student at the Babeș-Bolyai University. We hold full responsibility for the content and validity of the information and arguments from the present article.

<sup>5</sup> The full dataset, the SPSS syntax for the construction of indexes and performing the statistical analysis are available upon request from the authors.

<sup>6</sup> According to the latest Census (INS, 2011), Hungarian ethnics comprise the very majority of the population in Harghita county (84%) and Covasna (72%), and more than one-third of the total population in Mureș (37%).

as a whole, but score slightly worse on several indicators. Whereas in 2012 the GDP per capital was almost 30,000 lei/inhabitant in Romania and 28,400 lei/inhabitant in the Central Development Region (comprising also three other counties, namely Alba, Braşov and Sibiu), in our selected counties it reached only 23,400 lei/inhabitant in Mureş and it remained below 21,000 in Covasna and Harghita (see Table A1 in the Appendix). For cultivated agricultural land and meat production per inhabitants, seen as good indicators of agricultural production, the statistics were somewhat better for Covasna and Mureş, yet not for Harghita county; however, all three counties scored relatively well for milk production (Table A1). Concerning labour force statistics, the occupation rates for 2014 were similar to those registered at the national level (67%), slightly worse for Covasna county (63.5%), while the registered unemployment rates showed somewhat higher values than the national average (5.4%): 5.8% in Mureş, 6% in Harghita and 6.5% in Covasna (see Table A2 in the Appendix). The share of employees in the active-age up-to-work population in 2014 was lower in Harghita (30.5%), while in the other two counties scored very close to the national average (35%). The ratio of temporary migrants who left Romania for 12 months or more per total inhabitants almost equalled the national value of cca. 0.8 temporary migrants per one hundred inhabitants (Table A2). However, this value cannot be considered as a good estimate of temporary labour migration, given that the latter often occurs for shorter periods of three to six months, corresponding to seasonal work abroad (see Eurostat, 2011; Sandu, 2013).

Acknowledging that historical structural disadvantages and still existing ethnic prejudice harden the work opportunities and everyday life of the Roma ethnic minority<sup>7</sup>, and in particular of those who visibly lack adequate living conditions and dwell at the peripheries, it was important to take into account the share of the Roma in the local population. Overall, their percentages vary from 8.5% in Mureş to 4% in Covasna and 1.7% in Harghita county, according to the official estimates of the 2011 Census. Nationwide, the Roma ethnic minority is proportionately more affected by unemployment (40%, as compared to 6% in the total population) and financial deprivation (74% of the Roma live in households with incomes below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, as compared to 26% in the total population) (see the UNDP/World Bank/EC, 2011). The data sources employed in the present study do not allow to split micro-data

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<sup>7</sup> Romania has developed since 1997 several national strategies and action plans for the social inclusion of the Roma, mostly at the recommendations of the European Union. As part of these strategies, institutions such as the National Agency for the Roma, with its regional chapters, school mediation and health mediation for impoverished Roma living in segregated settlements were also established. However, due to the lack of political will and the underfinancing of these institutional mechanisms, only little progress can be seen in the living conditions and work prospects of the Roma (see Moisă et al., 2013).



based on ethnicity, however, we were able to explore the statistical relations between area deprivation at the level of territorial administrative units and the share of persons self-identified as Roma in the 2011 Census.

### **Measuring area deprivation in Romania - connection with previous studies**

Measuring multiple deprivation at the area-level is a widely used statistical tool for policy makers in empirically grounding and testing the impact of certain policy interventions. At the global level, probably the best known measures are the Human Development Index and the Human Poverty Index used by the United Nations Development Programme<sup>8</sup> and designed following Amartya Sen's approach on human capabilities (Sen, 1983; 1999; Alkire, 2000). There is also a growing interest in developing more complex and context-adjusted indexes, well illustrated by the work of the Human Development and Capability Association<sup>9</sup>, yet difficult to implement due to the lack of data for the most impoverished regions. In the global North, the availability of detailed Census data allows the construction of multidimensional indexes, such as the British area-level multiple deprivation index<sup>10</sup>, which has been serving for targeting social intervention in the most deprived neighbourhoods since 1970. In the US, measures of area deprivation, coupled with Census data on ethnic distribution, were employed to demonstrate the higher risks of poverty and poverty-related diseases in the case of the African-American population, most recently in a project of the the School of Medicine and Public Health from the University of Wisconsin-Medison<sup>11</sup>, that followed the earlier approach of Gopal Singh (2003).

In Romania, the most comprehensive study on multiple deprivation dates back to 2003-2004 when the National Commission for Combating Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion (CASPI), led by Cătălin Zamfir, constructed a poverty map using the 2002 Census data at the level of territorial administrative units (communes, towns and municipalities). The indicators were based on the EUROSTAT methodology (see Atkinson et al., 2002) on computing the at-risk-of-poverty

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed technical discussion, see the Technical Notes of the latest, 2015 Human Development Report, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2015\\_technical\\_notes.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2015_technical_notes.pdf) (Accessed: 20.10.2015).

<sup>9</sup> See The Human Development and Capability Organization, [www.capabilityapproach.org](http://www.capabilityapproach.org) (Accessed: 20.10.2015).

<sup>10</sup> The most recent report was published in 2015 for the *English Multiple Deprivation* by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government, see Index, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/465791/English\\_Indices\\_of\\_Deprivation\\_2015\\_-\\_Statistical\\_Release.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465791/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Statistical_Release.pdf) (Accessed: 15.12.2015).

<sup>11</sup> Details about the project and its methodology are available at <http://www.hipxchange.org/ADI> (Accessed: 15.12.2015).

threshold (60% of the median equivalent income), poverty rate, mean poverty gap, and also the rate of severe poverty (CASPIIS, 2004). These data are still employed in order to set priorities and apply for funding in rural development, as they are listed, for example, in Annex 11 of the application guidelines for projects to be submitted to the National Agency for Financing Rural Investments<sup>12</sup>.

Parallel to that, measures of area-level social development were developed by Dumitru Sandu, and later embraced in a slightly revised version by the World Bank country report of 2014: *Competitive Cities: Reshaping the Economic Geography of Romania*. The Local Human Development Index (LHDI) is composed of four main dimensions: *human capital* (indicated by the average level of education of the local population), *health capital* (life expectancy at birth), *vital capital* (medium age of adult population aged 18 or older) and *material capital* (average living floor area by house, distribution of gas for household consumption by locality inhabitant, and private cars to 1,000 inhabitants; these three indicators were first synthesized in one measure, and then introduced in the final index). The weights of each dimension in the composite index were computed based on factor analysis. In order to avoid the volatility of measure for smaller localities, those with a population below 1,000 inhabitants were excluded from the analysis.

In the case of the original Local Social Development Index (LSDI) constructed by Sandu (2011), the three indicators of material capital were introduced individually in the final composite index, and the size of the locality was also taken into account. For the “vital capital” dimension, the lower-age limit was set at 14 years instead of 18 years. The following weights were used:

- Human capital:
  - o average educational level, 2002 data: 0.295
- Vital capital:
  - o average age of those aged 14 or older in 2008: -2.237;
  - o life expectancy at birth, average for the 2006-2008 period: 0.093;
- Material capital:
  - o Private: number of cars per 1,000 inhabitants (natural logarithm): 0.218;
  - o Private: average floor area by house in 2008: 0.201;
  - o Public: gas consumption per inhabitant in 2008: 0.245;
- Size of the locality:
  - o Total population in 2008: 0.266 (Sandu, 2011: 5, authors’ translation).

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<sup>12</sup> See the site dedicated to Measure 322: The Renewal and Development of Villages, implemented under AFIR, [https://portal.afir.info/informatii\\_generale\\_pndr\\_pndr\\_2007\\_2013\\_masura\\_322\\_renovarea\\_si\\_dezvoltarea\\_satelor](https://portal.afir.info/informatii_generale_pndr_pndr_2007_2013_masura_322_renovarea_si_dezvoltarea_satelor) (Accessed: 15.12.2015).

As Sandu (2011) rightly emphasized, the index of local social development captures different aspects of local realities than measures of area deprivation do. Indeed, neither LSDI, nor LHDI contain any measures of inequality (such as the Gini coefficient, the quintile ratio or the poverty rate) or local public resources (such as the local budget per inhabitant) that could serve social development. The choice of the indicators suggests that the indexes better capture an envisaged *potential* for social/human development defined in terms of “human” and “vital” capital, than the existence of development as such, which could be depicted, for example, by the (low) rates of long-term unemployment, (high) average life expectancy at turning 65 or the (high) share of the adult population who completed at least secondary education. Moreover, the greatest weight is actually given to the age-profile of the local community, a younger average age of the adult population leading to a considerable increase of the value of the index. Furthermore, whereas cars and gas consumption can be easily identified as material capital (productive assets for development), average floor area by house is rather an indicator of material wellbeing (similarly to other goods in the sphere of distribution, and mostly alien to the sphere of production), also influenced by cultural options concerning family-size. While the fact that the index can be applied for both rural and urban areas is an important feature, highlighted by Sandu (2011) and the World Bank team (2014) as well, it is difficult to assess whether this provides advantages or disadvantages for its actual use, given the high disparities between rural areas or semi-rural small towns, on the one hand, and larger municipalities and their satellite neighbourhoods in rural metropolitan areas, on the other hand.

Our goal was not to create a unifying indicator of social or human development, given the fact that we wanted to avoid the conceptual and implicitly political framework of “development” and “social capital”, which critique we share (Harvey, 2003; Somers, 2005; Kashir and Carbonella, 2008). In particular, we were aware of processes of uneven development related to global capital ventures, that have changed the economic and social geographies of rural areas and cvasi-rural small towns (Petrovici, 2013), often depending on their infrastructure for transport and proximity to larger cities. Also, high rates of labour migration towards other European countries produced effects of increasing domestic consumption and improving housing conditions, but these effects are difficult to be captured in statistics otherwise than approximating the value of remittances sent home (Anghel, 2009; Sandu, 2010).

Instead, we propose to investigate more narrowly two dimensions of local-level needs with the help of an index of unemployment and income deprivation (IUID) and an index of housing deprivation (IDH). The following sections describe the construction of these two indicators, while the rest of the article tries to capture the their relations with existing measures of area-level poverty for 2002 (CASPI, 2004), the values of the above-discussed LHDI for

2011, and selected indicators of local-level resources such as the share of wage-earners in the total population (2013), agricultural land per inhabitant (2014), local budget from taxes, before county-level redistribution (2015) and the share of the population with low level of education (2011).

### **The index of unemployment and income deprivation**

With the construction of an index to measure unemployment and income deprivation we intended to provide a statistical tool that makes use of regularly collected and reported data by the main public institutions in charge of social inclusion, namely local-level welfare offices or social referees from the mayor's office, and county-level Agencies for Social Benefits and Inspection (*Agenția Județeană pentru Plăți și Inspectie Socială - AJPIS*), Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (*Direcția Generală pentru Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului - DGASPC*), and Labour Offices (*Agenția pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă - AJOFM*). This approach carries the advantages of using "official" data that should be regarded as reliable at least by the institutions that produce them, the possibility of longitudinal area-level studies, given that they are monthly reported (as compared to Census-based data), and cost-efficiency, in the sense that they do not require additional surveys. At the same time, it has several limitations: our indicators are liable for the very same errors of inclusion/exclusion, over/under-reporting that the rules and the social practice of the implementation of existing laws on social benefits and unemployment contain. Consequently, our index cannot be considered a precise measure of poverty and joblessness at the local level, but rather a mirror of income deprivation and registered unemployment designed by the state authorities themselves. Let us discuss these limitations for each indicator in detail below.

1. *The numer of registered unemployed in January 2015 divided by the number of persons aged between 20 and 63* (data source: AJOFM). The indicator certainly underestimates the extent of unemployment, but unfortunately the figures on ILO unemployment are neither registered, nor reported for the level of territorial administrative units. Moreover, the indicator is different from the registered unemployed rate as such, given that the latter excludes from the active-age population persons with disabilities or those still in education. However, given that registration at the Labour Office is necessary in order to apply for any subsidized vocational training, job-mediation or social benefits and services, moreover, given that we have purposefully measured it in January, when seasonal agricultural work at home or abroad is hardly available, we can assert that the indicator may serve as a proxy for the *relative* job deprivation in a certain area as compared to the national or regional average.

2. *The number of families receiving social assistance benefits in January 2015 according to the Law on the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) No. 416/2002 divided by the total population* (data source: AJPIS for GMI beneficiary families and INS for population size). Due to the reporting system, which does not differentiate between family sizes higher than 4, it was not possible to measure the number of beneficiary persons as such. The problems in the implementation of GMI in Romania had been already extensively analyzed (World Bank, 2009; Rat, 2009) and it is suffice to synthesize that benefits frequently do not reach out to the poorest segments of the population either because they do not hold valid identity papers, or because they fail to meet other bureaucratic requirements, such as obtaining monthly certificates from the Labour Office, located in the main municipalities often far away from their homes. Due to the stigmatizing nature of the compulsory community work (mostly cleaning public spaces, digging ditches etc.) and the lack of confidentiality concerning GMI receipt (the nominal list of beneficiaries should be placed on the walls of the mayor's office), some of the needy families shy away from claiming GMI. Despite these limitations, at which one should add the low amounts of benefits, GMI remains the main tool for social inclusion, as it also provides beneficiaries coverage by the public health insurance system and access to other in-kind benefits, such as heating allowance or occasional material aid. According to the law on *Social Marginalization* No. 116/2002 beneficiaries of GMI who face the risks of social exclusion should receive additional support from state authorities in terms of housing, subsidized jobs etc., but due to the underspecified norms of implementation the latter law is hardly applied. In order to have a better proxy of the number of families not only receiving, but needing GMI, we have used the figures for January, when the number of beneficiaries is usually the highest, given the lack of seasonal agricultural work that could be imputed as income. To conclude, the indicator is policy-wise very important, but it cannot be regarded as a direct measure of poverty. It captures the recognition of poverty by local authorities and, in the limits of existing regulations, their willingness to target social assistance benefits from the national (and not the local) budget towards the needy.

3. *The number of families receiving support allowance for needy families with children in January 2015 (Law 277/2010, that revised the earlier G.O. 105/2003 on the complementary allowance) divided by the total population* (data source: AJPIS for GMI beneficiary families and INS for population size). The reasons for choosing this particular indicator consist of the fact that, similarly to the GMI, eligibility is established based on a complex social inquiry and means test, thus family incomes should be under 530 lei/family member (cca 117 Euro) corresponding approximately to the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for Romania according to the Eurostat methodology. Still, this threshold is much more generous

as compared to those of the GMI (142 lei for a single person and 442 lei for a family of four), and no compulsory community work is requested. Since 2002, child poverty rates and especially the poverty rate in the case of families with three or more children have been consistently higher than the poverty rate for the general population, and this indicator may better capture these phenomena than the previous one. However, there is a serious limitation: eligibility is conditioned by the fact that *all* school-aged children, i.e. children aged 6-16, should prove their school attendance. The benefit of the whole family is cut in case of 20 or more absences per semester, and ceased for 40 absences, even if only one child is in that situation. The adverse effects of the law for the most severely deprived families, that might not have the means to properly equip their children or who live in marginalized settlements with difficult access to school have been pointed out in several studies (Popescu, 2006; Rat, 2012). Moreover, as “Second Chance” programs are hardly available in rural areas, and many children from impoverished families were not registered at school on due time<sup>13</sup>, schooling remains out of reach and families are denied the allowance altogether. Consequently, this indicator should be used with caution, as it better approximates child poverty in areas with relatively easy access to all forms of education, including “Second Chance” programs and free after-school services, but it may considerably underestimate the number of children living in severe poverty, in spatially and socially marginalized settlements. As Roma children are overrepresented in the latter category, the indicator also underestimates child poverty among the Roma.

With all the above-discussed advantages and limits, we constructed a weighted additive index of unemployment and income deprivation, based on the results of the Chronbach’ Alpha test for internal reliability (Alpha=0.674, Sig.=0.000, see Table 1) and a principal component factor analysis for establishing the weights based on the factor loadings (Table 2).

As expected from our previous discussion on the choice of indicators, the measure of support allowance for needy families with children shows the lowest correlation with the intended additive index. The factor analysis (KMO=0.643) reveals a similar result: although almost 80% (79.08%) of the common variance of the three variables is explained by a single latent factor, the correlation between the measure of support allowance and the factor is lower than for the other two measures (see Table 2).

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<sup>13</sup> Often this happens because families migrated to work abroad together with their children and failed to register them at school on due time, and in the meanwhile the child turn 9 years old or older and s/he can only be registered at “Second Chance” programs located mostly in the cities.

**Table 1.**

Descriptive statistics for the Chronbach's Alpha test applied for the indicators of unemployment and income deprivation

Indicators of unemployment and income deprivation (for 204 territorial administrative units)	Average	Standard deviation	Expected correlation with the additive index	The value of Alpha if item deleted
Registered unemployed per population aged 20-63	.0607	.05716	.805	.737
GMI per total population	.0219	.02048	.881	.378
Support allowance beneficiary families per total population	.0231	.01291	.586	.705

Source: Authors' calculations.

**Table 2.**

The Matrix of Principal Components\*

N=204 territorial administrative units (villages and small towns)	Correlations between variables and the factor
GMI per total population	0.947
Registered unemployed per population aged 20-63	0.909
Support allowance for needy families with children per total population	0.805

\*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Source: Authors' calculations.

Consequently, the index of unemployment and income deprivation was computed using the standardized versions of the variables (Z-scores) and the weights derived from the principal component analysis, as follows:

$$\text{index\_unemployment\_income\_deprivation} = 0.947 * \text{GMI\_per\_population (standardized)} + 0.909 * \text{unemployed\_per\_population\_20-63 (standardized)} + 0.805 * \text{support\_allowance\_families\_per\_population (standardizat)}$$

The descriptive statistics for each indicator and the composite index are presented, separately for the three counties, in Table 3.

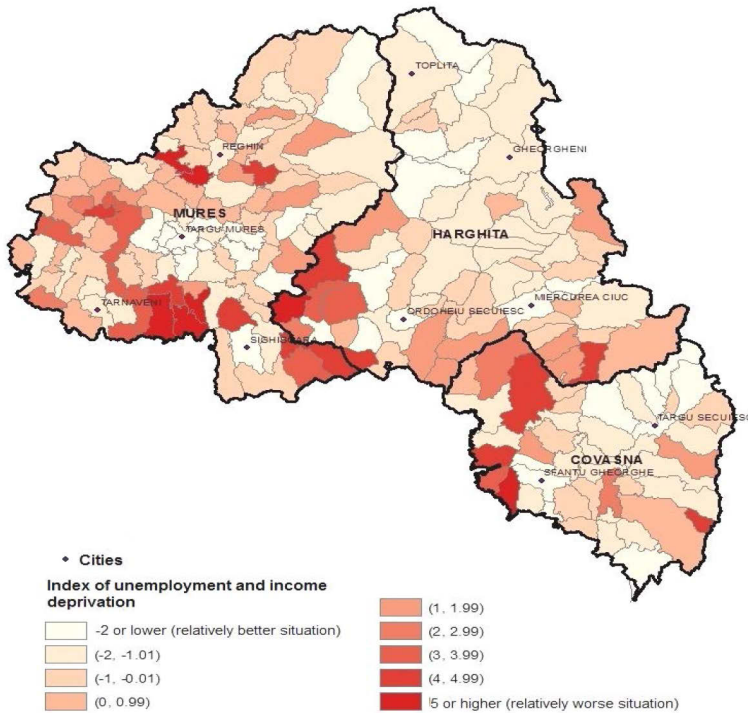
The specific values of the indicator and the index for those localities that registered values above 2 (i.e. at least two standard deviations above the regional mean of the index) are presented in detail in Table A3 from the Appendix. The most severely deprived localities were Fărăgău – Mureș (11.8), Zagăr – Mureș (8.3), Săcel - Harghita (8), Vâlcele - Covasna (5.7), Viișoara – Mureș (5.4), and Voivodeni – Mureș (5.2). The regional mapping of the values of the index are illustrated by Graph 1.

**Table 3.**

Descriptive statistics of the indicators for unemployment and income deprivation

N=204 territorial administrative units (villages and small towns)		Unemployed per population aged 20-63 (%)	GMI per total population	Support allowance for families with children per total population	Index of unemployment and income deprivation
Covasna	Median	4.671	0.014	0.015	-1.335
	Mean	5.951	0.018	0.019	-0.452
	Std. Deviation	5.163	0.018	0.012	2.239
Harghita	Median	3.545	0.011	0.022	-0.923
	Mean	5.139	0.020	0.022	-0.288
	Std. Deviation	4.937	0.021	0.012	2.111
Mureş	Median	4.345	0.016	0.024	-0.462
	Mean	6.728	0.025	0.025	0.383
	Std. Deviation	6.344	0.021	0.013	2.541
Total	Median	4.004	0.015	0.021	-0.709
	Mean	6.074	0.022	0.023	0.000
	Std. Deviation	5.716	0.020	0.013	2.372

Source: Authors' calculations.



**Graph 1.** The index of unemployment and income deprivation in Covasna, Harghita and Mureş (authors' calculations)



## The Index of Housing Deprivation

The 2011 Census Data allows us to measure housing deprivation at the level of territorial administrative units along the following dimensions: sewage, connection to a distribution-system of potable water (tap water), private toilet ensuit (inside the house), electric power supply, private heating system or connection to a public heating system, kitchen inside the house. Given the high correlation between the existence of sewage and that of tap water, we decided to employ as an indicator of housing deprivation only the lack of sewage. Furthermore, given that the experience of previous field researches revealed that deprived families often report having kitchen despite the fact that they actually use the very same space as both a bedroom and a kitchen, we decided to exclude this indicator from the future index of housing deprivation. Consequently, we used four indicators in order to build a composite index: the lack of sewage, the lack of private toilet in the house, the lack of electric power supply and that of a private or public heating system.

In order to test the internal reliability of the index, we used first the standard Chronbach Alpha test ( $\text{Alpha}=0.850$ ,  $\text{Sig.}=0.000$ ), and then the principal component analysis that allowed us to establish the weights of each indicator in the composite index, based on their correlations with the underlying latent factor. The descriptive statistics (see Table 4) for the test show that the lack of electric power supply correlates relatively worse with the composite index than the other selected indicators. However, we decided to keep this variable as well, due to its societal relevance.

**Table 4.**

Descriptive statistics for the Chronbach's Alpha test applied  
for the indicators of housing deprivation

Indicators of housing deprivation (for 204 territorial administrative units)	Average	Standard deviation	Expected correlation with the additive index	The value of Alpha if item deleted
Households without sewage (%)	51.40%	18.86%	.929	.693
Households without toilet inside the house (%)	55.07%	17.80%	.957	.672
Households without electric power supply (%)	5.01%	4.82%	.177	.946
Households without private heating system or connection to a public system (%)	83.28%	13.77%	.806	.763

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

The principal component analysis led to an acceptable factorial model ( $\text{KMO}=0.623$ ), and the common variance of the four variables could be largely attributed to one latent factor (69.5%). Similarly to the Chronbach Alpha test,

the weakest correlation with the underlying factor was registered in the case of electric power supply (see Table 5).

**Table 5.**

The matrix of principal components: correlations between items and factor

	<b>Correlations between each item and the factor</b>
Households without toilet inside the house (%)	0.978
Households without sewage (%)	0.966
Households without private heating system or connection to a public system (%)	0.905
Households without electric power supply (%)	0.270

\*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

Based on the factor loadings (correlations between each item and the factor) and the standardized versions of each variable (z-scores) a composite **index of housing deprivation** has been computed with the formula:

$$\text{index\_housing deprivation} = 0.978 * \text{households\_without\_toilet (standardized)} + 0.966 * \text{households\_without\_sewage (standardized)} + 0.905 * \text{households\_without\_heating\_system (standardized)} + 0.270 * \text{households\_without\_electricity (standardized)}$$

The descriptive statistics for the indicators and the composite index are presented, separately for the three counties, in Table 6.

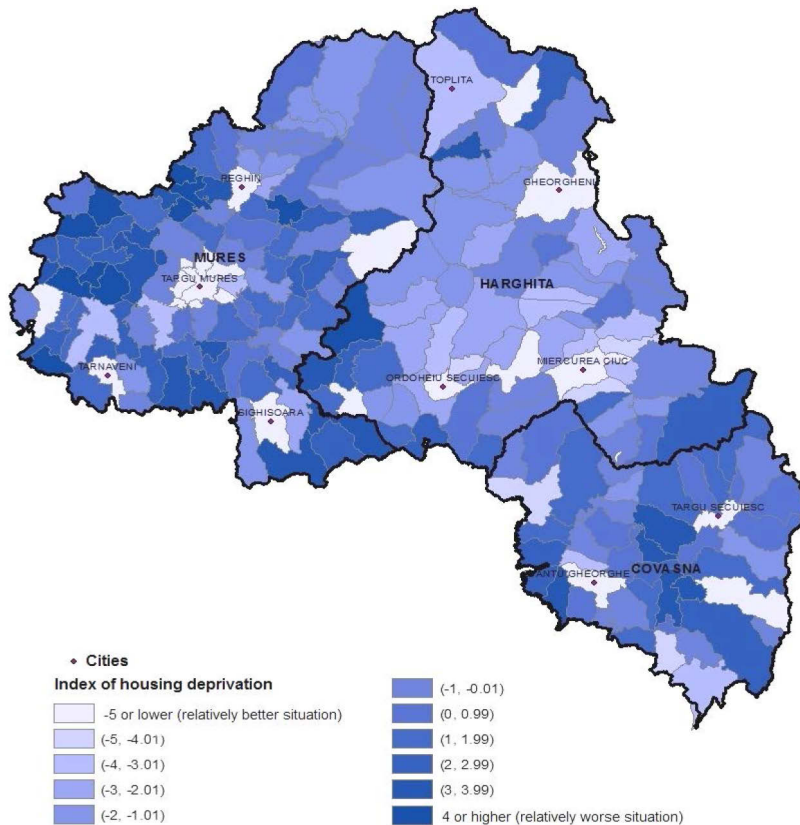
**Table 6.**

Medians, means and standard deviations of the indicators and the composite index of housing deprivation in Covasna, Harghita and Mures counties

<b>Indicators of housing deprivation (204 territorial administrative units)</b>		<b>Households without sewage (%)</b>	<b>Households without ensuite toilet (%)</b>	<b>Households without electric power supply (%)</b>	<b>Households without private heating system or connection to a public system (%)</b>	<b>Index of housing deprivation</b>
Covasna	Median	53.88	57.25	4.96	89.73	<b>0.40</b>
	Mean	51.92	55.51	6.24	87.26	<b>0.38</b>
	Std. Deviation	14.85	13.69	5.53	10.90	<b>2.30</b>
Harghita	Median	40.49	43.38	4.85	80.47	<b>-1.43</b>
	Mean	41.18	44.76	6.48	78.07	<b>-1.35</b>
	Std. Deviation	16.10	15.62	6.22	13.26	<b>2.54</b>
Mures	Median	60.64	63.09	2.75	89.19	<b>1.25</b>
	Mean	57.74	61.51	3.52	84.89	<b>0.70</b>
	Std. Deviation	19.35	17.76	2.50	14.34	<b>2.84</b>
<i>Total</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>51.00</i>	<i>54.57</i>	<i>3.70</i>	<i>87.75</i>	<i><b>0.07</b></i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>51.40</i>	<i>55.07</i>	<i>5.01</i>	<i>83.28</i>	<i><b>0.00</b></i>
	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>18.86</i>	<i>17.81</i>	<i>4.82</i>	<i>13.77</i>	<i><b>2.78</b></i>

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

As presented in Table 6, Mureș county registered the highest values of the housing deprivation indicators and the composite index. More than 50% of rural communes and small towns from Mureș county have values with 1.25 standard deprivations higher than the regional average of the index, as compared to Covasna, where the corresponding figure is only 0.40, while in Harghita the median value is negative (-1.43), i.e. the majority of localities registered lower values than the regional average.



**Graph 2.** The index of housing deprivation in Covasna, Harghita and Mureș (authors' calculations)

In Table A4 from the Appendix, the specific values of the indicators and the index for those localities that registered values above 4 (i.e. at least four standard deviations above the regional mean of the index). There were 11 such localities, 10 from Mureș county (Bala, Cozma, Fărăgău, Bichiș, Beica

de Jos, Papiu-Ilarian, Sânger, Miheșu de Câmpie, Iclăzel, and Sânpetru de Cîmpie) and one from Harghita (Atid). Four localities had less than 1,000 inhabitants. The regional mapping of the values of the index are illustrated by Graph 2.

### **Explaining the variance of the index of unemployment and income deprivation**

We have tried to explore the relations between the two indicators and existing measures of area-level poverty for 2002 (CASPIIS, 2004), the values of LHDI for 2011, and selected indicators of local-level resources made available by the National Statistical Institute such as the share of wage-earners in the total population (2013), agricultural land per inhabitant (2014), local budget from taxes, before county-level redistribution (2015) and the share of the population with secondary or tertiary education (2011).

First, we have undertaken simple linear regressions of the 2015 index of unemployment and income deprivation (IUID) on the 2002 poverty rate reported by CASPIIS. The variance of the poverty rate explains 40% of the variance of IUID, and an increase of 1% of the poverty rate in 2002 leads, on average, to an increase of 0.21 points of IUID (Adjusted R-Square=0.403, Sig.=0.000,  $b=0.215$ , Std.=0.020, Beta=0.638). Furthermore, we tested whether the effects of the 2002 poverty rates on IUID were similar in the cases of the three countries. As the graphs from Annex 3 reveal, the effects varied considerably: in Covasna, the variance of poverty rate in 2002 explained 56% of the variance of the index, in Harghita 50% (58%, in case that Corund, an outlier case<sup>14</sup>, is excluded), but only 38% in Mureș.

Second, in order to understand what explains the differential impact of the 2002 poverty rate on IUID, we introduced two potential explanatory variables in the linear regression, namely the LHDI for 2011 and the share of the Roma population (as assessed by the 2011 Census), also controlling for locality type (rural or small town). The model explained 53.7% of the variance in IUID (R-Square=0.537), and the strongest impact belonged to the poverty rate and the share of the Roma population, each increasing the risk of greater values of IUID.

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<sup>14</sup> The fact that Corund is an outlier case, with a high poverty rate of 43% in 2002 but a low value of the index income deprivation and unemployment, is partly explained by the fact that after 2003 (one year after the Census) around 15 extended families from the segregated and impoverished Roma settlement from Corund migrated to work informally as recyclable waste reclaimers at the Pata-Rat landfill near Cluj-Napoca (see UNDP and UBB, 2012). In January 2015, these families were still not registered for social benefits in Corund, the majority of them still working on the waste dump (personal communication with the families).

**Table 7.**

Model 1 of linear regression for explaining the variance of the index of unemployment and income deprivation

<b>Model 1</b> <b>R-Square=0.537</b> <b>N=195*</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
<i>(Constant)</i>	-1.708	1.862		-.918	.360
Dummy for locality type (rural = 0)	-1.240	1.008	-.067	-1.230	.220
<b>Poverty rate in 2002 (CASPIIS)</b>	<b>.113</b>	<b>.028</b>	<b>.332</b>	<b>4.076</b>	<b>.000</b>
Index of Local Human Development 2011	-.047	.020	-.163	-2.341	.020
<b>% of Roma population (2011 Census data)</b>	<b>.093</b>	<b>.016</b>	<b>.385</b>	<b>5.819</b>	<b>.000</b>

**\*Note:** Out of the 204 villages and small towns included in the analysis, only 195 had their LHDI indexes, as the index was not computed for localities with below 1,000 inhabitants.

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

**Table 8.**

Model 2 of linear regression for explaining the variance of the index of unemployment and income deprivation

<b>Model 2</b> <b>R-Square=0.564</b> <b>N=195*</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
<i>(Constant)</i>	2.456	3.809		.645	.520
Dummy for locality type (rural = 0)	-.929	1.007	-.050	-.923	.357
<b>Poverty rate in 2002 (CASPIIS)</b>	<b>.114</b>	<b>.033</b>	<b>.337</b>	<b>3.488</b>	<b>.001</b>
Local Human Development Index 2011	-.045	.026	-.155	-1.690	.093
<b>% of Roma population (2011 Census data)</b>	<b>.105</b>	<b>.018</b>	<b>.432</b>	<b>5.778</b>	<b>.000</b>
% Population aged 60 or older	-.032	.042	-.054	-.756	.451
% Population with low level of education**	-.033	.030	-.098	-1.112	.268
Local budget from taxes in 2015 (Ln)	-.659	.404	-.106	-1.630	.105
<b>Agricultural land/ 1,000 inhabitants</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.147</b>	<b>2.168</b>	<b>.032</b>
% of wage earners in the total population	.019	.042	.031	.458	.648

**\*Note:** Out of the 204 villages and small towns included in the analysis, only 195 had their LHDI indexes, as the index was not computed for localities with below 1,000 inhabitants.

\*\*Low educational level means primary education (4 classes) or less.

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

Third, we tried to improve the model, and also test its stability by adding further potential explanatory variables.

The goodness of fit of the second model is slightly better, and the effects of the 2002 poverty rate and that of the share of Roma population remain almost unchanged: other conditions being equal, localities with 1% higher percentage of the Roma have, an average, 0.1 points higher values of the IUID ( $b=0.105$ ), while a difference of 1% in the poverty rate corresponds, an average, to an increase of 0.11 points in the values of IUID ( $b=0.114$ ). The effects of LHDI are no longer significant at the 0.05 threshold ( $\text{sig.}=0.093$ ), yet this might be caused by the correlations between the index and two other explanatory variables, the percentage of the population aged 60 or older and the percentage of those with low level of education. At first sight somewhat surprisingly, the size of the agricultural land per inhabitants has a positive (albeit smaller) effects on the values of IUID. Actually, this might be caused by the fact that in localities with larger agricultural land there are more possibilities to engage in agricultural work at the local level, and therefore families do not leave for temporary work abroad and manage to maintain their GMI entitlement.

In both models, the poverty rate in 2002 and the share of the Roma in the total population hold the strongest effects on the variance of the index. In order to understand the meaning of these statistical effects, it is necessary to turn back to the three components of the index and test whether the regression models are similar in their cases as well. For the sake of simplicity, Table 9 indicates only Beta coefficients and statistical significance<sup>15</sup>.

The goodness of fit of the linear regression model is greater in the case of explaining the variance of the number of GMI beneficiary families per total population in January 2015, as 78% of the latter is explained by the variances of independent variables. As expected, the greatest effect is held by the indicator of registered unemployment, followed by the 2002 poverty rate. A relatively smaller, but still statistically significant is reported for the size of agricultural land per 1,000 inhabitants, already discussed earlier. The percentage of the Roma population has no significant effect on the variance of GMI receipt at the local level. This is an important conclusion, in accordance with both quantitative (UNDP/WB/EC, 2011) and qualitative studies on welfare receipt among Roma families living in segregated, impoverished settlements, which often highlight barriers of access to social rights or forms of adverse inclusion in their case (Vincze and Hossu, 2013; Rat, 2011; 2013).

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<sup>15</sup> The detailed regression statistics are available from request.

**Table 9.**

Linear regression models for the indicators of unemployment, GMI and support allowance for needy families with children

	Registered unemployed per population aged 20-63 in Jan.2015 (%)		Number of GMI beneficiary families per total population in Jan.2015		Number of family support allowance for children per total population in Jan.2015	
	R-Square=0.490		R-Square=0.782		R-Square=0.368	
	Standardized coeff. Beta	Sig.	Standardized coeff. Beta	Sig.	Standardized coeff. Beta	Sig.
<i>(Constant)</i>		.802		.311		.074
Dummy for locality type (rural = 0)	.000	.999	-.039	.301	-.109	.093
<b>Poverty rate in 2002 (CASPIIS)</b>	<b>.323</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>.204</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.078</b>	<b>.508</b>
Local Human Development Index 2011	-.137	.159	.023	.717	-.160	.125
<b>% of Roma population (2011 Census data)</b>	<b>.478</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.091</b>	<b>.111</b>	<b>.141</b>	<b>.160</b>
% Population aged 60 or older	-.003	.966	-.034	.497	-	-
% Population with low level of education**	-.122	.200	.029	.645	-.085	.432
Agricultural land/ 1,000 inhabitants	.075	.295	.100	.035	.068	.375
<b>Registered unemployed per population aged 20-63 in January 2015</b>	-	-	<b>.657</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.359</b>	<b>.000</b>
% Population younger than 15 years old	-	-	-	-	.044	.666

**Note:** The models were constructed for 195 cases, as the values of LHDI were only available for those. Alternatively, we also constructed regression models that also included the indicators of local budget per inhabitants in 2015 and the percentage of wage earners as % of the total population in 2013. The goodness of fit of the models increased slightly, but none of the previous statistical coefficients changed significantly and the two additionally introduced indicators did not have significant effects either. Consequently, we kept the simpler models.

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

For the number of registered unemployed per population aged 20-63, the set of variables explain almost 50% of its variance, with the greatest impact being held by the share of the Roma population, followed by the poverty rate in 2002. The other variables do not have significant effects, yet they serve as control variables that allow us to conclude that localities with similar levels of development, shares of persons with low educational levels, and agricultural land per inhabitants face higher risk of unemployment in case that they have larger Roma populations.

The variance of the number of families receiving the support allowance per children is not adequately explained by the set of variable, and the only statistically significant effect is held by the registered unemployment rate. As discussed in the previous sections, the conditionalities attached to this benefit prevent it to reach out to the most deprived families. This is reflected in the fact that neither the poverty rate in 2002, nor the LHDl influence significantly the variance of the index.

**Explaining the variance of the index of housing deprivation in relation with other statistical indicators**

Furthermore, we made a similar exploratory analysis of potential explicators of the variance of the housing deprivation index (IHD).

**Table 10.**

Model 1 of linear regression for explaining the variance of the index of housing deprivation

Model 1 R-Square=0.626 N=195*	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.601	1.556		2.957	.004
Dummy for locality type (rural = 0)	.421	.843	.024	.500	.618
<b>Poverty rate in 2002 (CASPI)</b>	<b>.102</b>	<b>.023</b>	<b>.324</b>	<b>4.414</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Index of Local Human Development 2011</b>	<b>-.136</b>	<b>.017</b>	<b>-.508</b>	<b>-8.114</b>	<b>.000</b>
% of Roma population (2011 Census data)	.020	.013	.089	1.490	.138

**\*Note:** Out of the 204 villages and small towns included in the analysis, only 195 had their LHDl indexes, as the index was not computed for localities with below 1,000 inhabitants.

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

The first model explains 62% of the variance of IHD, and the greatest statistical effect is held by LHDl in 2011, followed by the poverty rate in 2002, whereas the influences of the type of locality (villages versus small towns) and ethnic composition are not statistically significant (see Table 10).



**Table 11.**

Model 2 of linear regression for explaining the variance of the index of housing deprivation

Model 2 R-Square=0.734 N=195*	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-3.970	2.779		-1.428	.155
Dummy for locality type (rural = 0)	.554	.736	.032	.753	.453
<b>Poverty rate in 2002 (CASPI)</b>	<b>.139</b>	<b>.025</b>	<b>.442</b>	<b>5.628</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Local Human Development Index 2011</b>	<b>-.046</b>	<b>.019</b>	<b>-.171</b>	<b>-2.360</b>	<b>.020</b>
<b>% of Roma population (2011 Census data)</b>	<b>.030</b>	<b>.015</b>	<b>.132</b>	<b>2.043</b>	<b>.043</b>
Index of unemployment and income deprivation 2015	.017	.059	.019	.296	.767
<b>% Population aged 60 or older</b>	<b>.170</b>	<b>.031</b>	<b>.307</b>	<b>5.477</b>	<b>.000</b>
% Population with low level of education**	.025	.022	.079	1.144	.255
Local budget from taxes in 2015 (Ln)	-.449	.297	-.078	-1.510	.133
Agricultural land/ 1,000 inhabitants	.000	.000	.104	1.928	.056
<b>% of wage earners in the total population</b>	<b>-.075</b>	<b>.031</b>	<b>-.131</b>	<b>-2.441</b>	<b>.016</b>

\***Note:** Out of the 204 villages and small towns included in the analysis, only 195 had their LHD index, as the index was not computed for localities with below 1,000 inhabitants.

\*\*Low educational level means primary education (4 classes) or less.

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

The second model (see Table 11) explains 73.4% of the variance of IHD, and the effects of the 2002 poverty rate and LHD for 2011 remain significant, yet of different extent. A one standard deviance difference in the 2002 poverty rate corresponds, on average, to a 0.44 standard deviance difference in the values of the 2011 IHD. The second most important effect is held by the percentage of the elderly population, followed by the LHD for 2011, the percentage of the Roma population and the percentage of wage earners in the total population (2014). The latter two have almost equal influence: their one standard deviance difference corresponds, on average, to a decrease of the housing deprivation index with 0.13 standard deviances.

## Conclusions

Statistical data that are regularly collected and reported by public authorities, while sometimes raise suspicions about their validity, offer an affordable and policy-wise meaningful methodological approach to the evaluation of local deprivation and resources. Our indexes of economic deprivation (based on registered unemployment and the share of persons receiving means-tested social assistance benefits as of January 2015) and housing deprivation (based on the 2011 Census data on basic household utilities such as sewage, toilet inside the house, heating facilities and electric power supply) proved out to have good internal reliability and to correlate remarkably well with the 2002 poverty rate computed by CASPIS (2004), the latest available local-level indicator that follows the Eurostat methodology. The index of local human development (LHDI) designed by Sandu (2011) and later revised by the World Bank (2014) did not hold significant effects on the index of unemployment and income deprivation, and influenced only modestly the values of the housing deprivation index. Even after controlling for the above mentioned explanatory variables, and adding other relevant potential predictors (such as the share of the elderly population, the percentage of population with low level of education, agricultural land per inhabitants, percentage of wage earners, and local budget per inhabitants), the effects of percentage of the Roma population remain statistically significant, increasing the risks of deprivation. However, when exploring their effects separately for the three variables that compose the unemployment and income deprivation index, it becomes clear that higher shares of the Roma population correspond, on average, to greater registered unemployment, but not to higher shares of persons receiving welfare benefits at the local level. In other words, localities with similar social and economic profiles, as measured by our indicators, show on average higher registered unemployment and more pronounced housing deprivation in case that their shares of Roma population are relatively larger, but they do not grant more frequently social assistance benefits.

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## Appendix

**Table A1.**

Economic indicators for Covasna, Harghita and Mureș  
as compared to national and regional values

	GDP per capita in 2012 (thousand lei)	Cultivated agricultural land per inhabitants in 2014 (hectares)	Milk production per inhabitants in 2014 (hectolitre)	Meat production per inhabitants in 2012 (tonnes)
<b>Romania</b>	29.7	0.41	2.3	66.3
<b>Central Development Region (5 counties)</b>	28.4	0.24	3.4	83.8
<b>Covasna</b>	20.7	0.35	4.0	67.0
<b>Harghita</b>	20.8	0.18	4.7	36.5
<b>Mureș</b>	23.4	0.34	3.7	57.8

**Source:** Authors' computations based on INS Tempo on-line dataset and the 2013 Statistical Yearbook (latest available) (Accessed: 20.12.2015).

**Table A2.**

Labour force indicators for Covasna, Harghita and Mureș  
as compared to national and regional values

	Employees per active- age up to work population 2014 (%)	Registered unemploy- ment rate in 2014 (%)	Urban areas: temporary emigrants (left for 12 months or more) per inhabitants in 2013 (%)	Rural areas: temporary emigrants (left for 12 months or more) per inhabitants in 2013 (%)	Occupation rate in 2014 (%)
<b>Romania</b>	35.78	5.4	0.83	0.78	66.9
<b>Central Development Region (5 counties)</b>	38.89	5.5	0.82	0.81	64.6
<b>Covasna</b>	34.68	6.5	0.84	0.80	63.5
<b>Harghita</b>	30.52	6	0.82	0.82	66.7
<b>Mureș</b>	34.61	5.8	0.83	0.82	67

**Source:** Authors' computations based on INS Tempo on-line dataset and the 2013 Statistical Yearbook (latest available) (Accessed: 20.12.2015).

**Table A3.**

Unemployment and income deprivation in localities with the values of the index higher than 2

Name of the locality in Hungarian/ Romanian	County	Population in 2015	Registered unemployed per active age population in 2015	Number of families receiving GMI per inhabitants	Number of families receiving child support allowance in 2015	Index of unemployment and income deprivation	% of Roma population
Faragó/Fărăgău	Mureș	1723	34.39	0.11	0.08	<b>11.87</b>	38.09
Zágor/Zagăr	Mureș	1231	34.55	0.07	0.05	<b>8.37</b>	38.84
Románandrásfalva/Săcel	Harghita	1258	25.39	0.08	0.06	<b>8.05</b>	18.12
Előpatak/Vâlcele	Covasna	4577	23.35	0.07	0.03	<b>5.72</b>	48.54
Csatófalva/Viișoara	Mureș	1735	22.16	0.06	0.04	<b>5.47</b>	31.95
Vajdaszentivány/Voivodeni	Mureș	1731	16.08	0.07	0.05	<b>5.23</b>	9.05
Bonyha/Bahnea	Mureș	3813	14.15	0.07	0.05	<b>5.11</b>	34.50
Kommandó/Comandău	Covasna	958	15.46	0.04	0.06	<b>4.76</b>	0.60
Etéd/Atid	Harghita	2878	25.57	0.08	0.00	<b>4.70</b>	6.21
Szásznádas/Nadeș	Mureș	2722	14.67	0.05	0.05	<b>4.62</b>	18.40
Nagybacon/Bățani	Covasna	4513	18.59	0.06	0.04	<b>4.60</b>	12.24
Küküllőszéplak/Suplac	Mureș	2204	18.13	0.05	0.04	<b>4.50</b>	11.69
Bölon/Belin	Covasna	2877	16.12	0.06	0.04	<b>4.48</b>	45.68
Mezőgerebenes/Grebenișu de Câmpie	Mureș	1607	10.52	0.07	0.05	<b>4.48</b>	12.53
Székelyderzs/Dârjiu	Harghita	1066	14.66	0.06	0.04	<b>4.40</b>	5.69
Csíkkozmás/Cozmeni	Harghita	2166	7.06	0.08	0.04	<b>4.12</b>	2.88
Héjasfalva/Vânători	Mureș	4360	19.09	0.07	0.02	<b>4.08</b>	29.94

Name of the locality in Hungarian/ Romanian	County	Population in 2015	Registered unemployed per active age population in 2015	Number of families receiving GMI per inhabitants	Number of families receiving child support allowance in 2015	Index of unemployment and income deprivation	% of Roma population
Alsóbölkény/ Beica de Jos	Mureș	2203	8.95	0.07	0.04	<b>4.02</b>	29.93
Marosugra/Ogra	Mureș	2574	16.75	0.05	0.03	<b>3.88</b>	29.20
Szászkézsd/ Saschiz	Mureș	2112	14.70	0.04	0.05	<b>3.87</b>	8.96
Siménfalva/ Simonești	Harghita	3834	16.86	0.06	0.03	<b>3.81</b>	1.30
Mikefalva/ Mica	Mureș	4710	14.69	0.07	0.03	<b>3.80</b>	26.37
Szászbogács/ Băgaciu	Mureș	2662	13.06	0.05	0.04	<b>3.68</b>	31.16
Hídvég/ Haghig	Covasna	2205	15.22	0.05	0.04	<b>3.64</b>	30.32
Mezőszengyel/ Sânger	Mureș	2415	15.91	0.04	0.04	<b>3.61</b>	13.42
Szentábrahám/ Avrămești	Harghita	2615	13.60	0.05	0.04	<b>3.33</b>	11.28
Mezőtóhát/ Tăureni	Mureș	927	14.06	0.05	0.03	<b>3.28</b>	14.16
Mezőbánd/Band	Mureș	6446	7.97	0.05	0.05	<b>3.25</b>	25.67
Újszékely/Secuieni	Harghita	2786	14.47	0.05	0.03	<b>2.96</b>	21.29
Mezősályi/Șăulia	Mureș	2182	16.62	0.04	0.03	<b>2.71</b>	16.30
Magyarbükkkös/ Bichiș	Mureș	966	13.80	0.05	0.03	<b>2.59</b>	9.32
Bardóc/ Brăduț	Covasna	4943	11.67	0.04	0.03	<b>2.54</b>	13.52
Nagyborosnyó/ Boroșneu Mare	Covasna	3316	9.70	0.05	0.03	<b>2.06</b>	1.19

Source: Authors' calculations.

**Table A4.**

Housing deprivation in localities with the values of the index higher than 3

Name of the locality in Romanian/Hungarian	County	% without sewage	% without toilet inside	% without electric power supply	% without own heating system	Index of housing deprivation	% of Roma population
Băla/ Balla	Mureș	91.96	92.20	1.89	99.53	<b>5.01</b>	7.0
Cozma/Kozmatelke	Mureș	87.47	87.74	7.80	98.33	<b>4.79</b>	0.0
Fărăgău/ Faragó	Mureș	88.18	90.07	6.13	96.35	<b>4.73</b>	38.1
Bichiș/ Magyarbükkök	Mureș	86.49	86.49	6.05	97.38	<b>4.51</b>	9.3
Beica de jos/ Alsóbölkény	Mureș	85.38	85.91	9.75	94.81	<b>4.46</b>	29.9
Papiu-Ilarian/ Mezőbodon	Mureș	85.40	85.40	4.68	98.35	<b>4.38</b>	0.4
Sânger/ Mezőszengyel	Mureș	86.58	86.58	4.82	95.07	<b>4.30</b>	13.4
Miheșu de Câmpie/ Mezőméhes	Mureș	83.55	84.88	5.11	96.22	<b>4.14</b>	11.8
Îclâzel/ Kisinkland	Mureș	81.24	81.80	11.32	94.45	<b>4.08</b>	1.8
Atid/ Etéd	Harghita	74.02	76.20	19.38	97.10	<b>4.03</b>	6.2
Sânpetru de Câmpie/ Uzdiszentpéter	Mureș	84.57	86.84	2.19	94.31	<b>4.01</b>	12.8
Boroșneu Mare/ Nagyborosnyó	Covasna	76.23	76.99	13.03	97.46	<b>3.86</b>	1.2
Band/ Mezőbánd	Mureș	82.37	82.64	7.44	92.21	<b>3.82</b>	25.7
Crăiești/ Mezőkirályfalva	Mureș	76.17	82.71	11.68	92.52	<b>3.77</b>	0.0
Vișoara/Csatófalva	Mureș	78.38	79.81	6.20	97.46	<b>3.74</b>	31.9
Vânători/ Héjjasfalva	Mureș	79.95	81.69	1.73	97.44	<b>3.67</b>	29.9
Tăureni/Mezőtóhát	Mureș	82.56	84.28	2.70	91.89	<b>3.64</b>	14.2
Săcel/ Románandrásfalva	Harghita	79.11	80.59	3.56	96.74	<b>3.62</b>	18.1
Apold/ Apold	Mureș	77.02	80.44	3.80	98.01	<b>3.61</b>	21.9
Brateș/ Barátos	Covasna	73.69	74.08	15.58	95.68	<b>3.59</b>	0.0
Cernat/ Csernát	Covasna	66.65	67.67	29.84	92.97	<b>3.50</b>	0.2
Vâlcele/ Előpatak	Covasna	74.01	74.69	15.76	92.56	<b>3.45</b>	48.5
Mădăraș/ Mezőmadaras	Mureș	74.30	77.32	8.64	94.60	<b>3.34</b>	10.5
Coroisânmartin/ Kőródszentmárton	Mureș	79.37	80.47	1.10	94.33	<b>3.33</b>	15.3



Name of the locality in Romanian/Hungarian	County	% without sewage	% without toilet inside	% without electric power supply	% without own heating system	Index of housing deprivation	% of Roma population
Breaza/ Beresztelke	Mureș	80.17	80.17	3.49	91.29	<b>3.29</b>	10.6
Subcetate/ Gyergyóvárhegy	Harghita	73.15	75.23	13.54	92.25	<b>3.29</b>	3.5
Dalnic/ Dálnok	Covasna	74.94	75.88	2.81	97.42	<b>3.15</b>	0.7
Șincai/ Mezősámsond	Mureș	76.02	77.07	5.88	92.91	<b>3.15</b>	10.2
Bahnea/ Bonyha	Mureș	74.34	75.76	4.11	95.04	<b>3.03</b>	34.5

**Source:** Authors' calculations.

## ***Critical Reviews***

### ***Editorial Note:***

***This section provides reviews and critical reflections upon recent evolutions in social research, with focus on changing societies and current dilemmas.***



## BOOK REVIEW

***Sociologia istorică a lui Henri H. Stahl (The Historical Sociology of Henry H. Stahl)* by Ștefan Guga. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House, 2015, 387 pages.**

CĂLIN COTOI<sup>1</sup>

In the last few years, inside the institutional landscape of Romanian social sciences, the history of Romanian sociology has gained a paradoxical position. On one hand, it is present, through a substantial number of people and presentations at any local conference or workshop, and displays a coherence and persistence that seem to be lacking in all other recurrent themes of contemporary Romanian sociology. On the other hand, it is uninteresting for the vast majority of individuals claiming sociological credentials, from universities and research institutes to the more business-oriented parts of the profession.

The history of Romanian sociology mostly means, for the right or wrong reasons, the history of the sociology school from Bucharest, the so-called “Gusti School”. The concomitant visibility, and lack of importance of this kind of history for the mainstream Romanian sociology is rooted in the workings of a mechanism for symbolic legitimacy, and historical reconstruction linked to the interwar period. This hallowed period in the history of Romanian culture works as an important source of cultural relevance in today’s cultural fields and arenas. Present day intellectuals are able to create interwar ancestors, lines of continuity are still being built and carefully managed. The legitimizing link to Western culture is gained, safely, in an indirect way. As the interwar period is considered the highest point of cultural integration into European modernity, by constructing a reliable path to the interwar culture, modernity can be reaffirmed and the troubling Communist past can be easily set aside.

The problem with this legitimizing mechanism is that the interwar period tends to multiply and become politically complicated; the same thing happens to “Western culture”, and even the socialist *interregnum* is not as homogeneous as it used to be. The historiography of the Gusti School works like an alternative way to the interwar cultural resource, as a way of bypassing the Eliade-Noica-Cioran conglomerate or its versions that are far too complicated and dubious to be

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assumed politically and scientifically nowadays. This symbolic fight for the “good” interwar culture functions by distancing itself from the usual, mainstream Eliade-Noica-Cioran one, but also by trying to mimic its workings and by using its prestige. By doing this, it is able to put the history of Romanian sociology in a position of public visibility inside the spaces that nurture some parts of the local cultural production. Indirectly, it rebounds inside the disciplinary bounds of local sociology where it occupies a simultaneously important and marginal position. At the same time, as some kind of symbolic price to be paid for its convoluted relevance, the history of sociology is robbed of theoretical perspectives and instruments needed for the construction of coherent arguments outside the rather provincial game of interwar legitimacy.

Ștefan Guga, in his book, explicitly attempts to reclaim Henri H. Stahl, one of the most important Romanian interwar (and post-war) sociologists, as a Marxist sociologist, an integral part of local Marxist tradition and a participant in international Marxist debates. Both themes tend to (re)orient the history of Romanian sociology towards a theoretical and discursive horizon, as the author confronts head on the dominant ways of doing this kind of research. Which is a refreshing counterpoint and a good start for others writing and debating in this area, even if the two parts, the two major themes of the book, are not the same when it comes to clarity. The focus in my comment on this book is more on the first theme.

The close lecture of Stahl’s texts, in the context of larger international debates and contexts, is doubled by an attempt to deconstruct the way the Romanian sociologist was used and understood after 1989, inside sociology and history of sociology debates. Guga attempts to extract Stahl from the usual schemes that capture him as part of the Gusti School – as the “good”, “social reformist”, and quite “democratic” slice of interwar - and puts him on a Marxist theoretical trajectory. I tend to believe that, in Stahl’s case, this is an important and well-deserved salvage operation, or, at least, that it is necessary for the construction of a combined theoretical and historical argument about him and his work. The lack of clarity, especially in the first part of the book, has to do with the ways in which this recuperation of Stahl from the “Gusti School” has been actually done.

The problem is that, even if he rightly criticizes the mainstream historiography of the Gusti School, strangely enough, Guga tends to take at face value the descriptions of the Gusti School delivered by the same narrative. The fact that the Gusti School was a moment inside the field of interwar cultural, political, and scientific differentiations is a good Bourdieusian starting point, but it does not really show more than the fact that we should be wary not to reify or essentialize it – which is correct, but not very informative. The School, Guga tells

us, is not as many of its historiographers (and sociologists) presented it to be like: a *sui generis* organism, a clear historical and scientific organism, handy and usable in contemporary legitimacy games. Therefore, we should get Stahl out of this wrong frame of reference and dissociate him from this false image as a major member, second best after Dimitrie Gusti, and from the false existence of a coherent, cohesive “school”. His true professional and theoretical identity, namely the Marxist one, cannot be revealed inside this theoretically and politically distorting field: the Gusti School.

The argument is, I argue, only partially correct, as by getting Stahl out of this uncritical understanding of the School we have not really disentangled him from the School as such. Henri H. Stahl can hardly be recovered as a critical Marxist sociologist without reworking, reimagining, and reanalyzing the ways the School emerged, functioned and managed its inconsistencies and tensions. To put it in another way, I do not believe that Stahl can be understood (at least in its pre-WWII career) without a critical deconstruction of the interwar sociology as such, and especially of its relations with Marxism and socialism.

The complex relationships the School entertained, at different moments, with Marxism and, more generally, with various socialisms, are not part of Guga’s analysis. That is why Stahl’s Marxism seems to save him from the theoretical inconsistencies, constant militantism, mixtures of empirical science, social engineering and nationalism, and the constitutive connections with the nation building projects of the state elites, which provided the characteristic features of the School. Things are a bit more complicated. In 1919, and at the beginning of the 1920, Dimitrie Gusti, together with Virgil Madgearu, were coordinating some kind of a reformist *think tank* for the political and financial elites of the Old Kingdom of Romania, elites that were now facing the tremendously difficult task of organizing the new state that emerged after WWI. Journals such as *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* [*Archive for Social Science and Reform*] and, maybe less obviously, *Independența Economică* [*Economic Independence*] opened up their pages for debates over leftist oriented reforms. Texts and polemics having as their protagonists, among others, Lothar Rădăceanu, Șerban Voinea (Henri Stahl’s brother), Ștefan Zeletin, the anarchist-syndicalist Anastase Gusti (Dimitrie Gusti’s brother), Barbu Solacolu, and Virgil Madgearu were published. Persons close to the cooperative movement, *Sozialpolitik*, French social economy, peasantry and municipal socialism presented their analyses and proposals that came, largely, from some kind of vague socialism. Eugen Erlich, former rector of the University from Cernăuți and close to the Austro-Marxist movement, was published, posthumously, with a text about Marx and Marxism. Even Dimitrie Gusti, in 1920, wrote a text where he declared Marx a genius, only to quickly stress the drawbacks and incompleteness of Marxism. The Bolshevik experience from

Russia was debated, some texts about collectivization were published, and many books and articles by and about Lenin, Vandervelde, Bernstein, Marxism revisionism, Tugan-Baranowski and Russian cooperative movement, Henri de Man etc. were reviewed.

Once Gusti got convinced there was an important political potential in monographic sociology, in integrating an empirical sociology into a nation-building project, at the end of the 1920s, all this vague socialist discourse going on inside reformist scientific journals was, quickly enough, marginalized and instrumentalized by “Gustian sociology”. From this point of view, it is interesting to see how this kind of sociology looked for and found international interlocutors among sociologists and administration theoreticians like Gaston Richard, the author of a much-celebrated critique of Marxism coming from the positions of French solidarism.

Gustian sociology emerged, apart from intellectual and theoretical shifts, amidst an active process of submerging a leftwing reformist discourse inside the newly established Greater Romania. Henri H. Stahl was a part of this process. He was a member of the Gusti School with his Marxist theoretical orientation and not against it. In a way, Stahl’s career could provide one of the main keys in understanding the complex and complicated relationships between the School and socialism.

Stahl’s partial exit from the nation building *sociologia militans* happened quite late, at the beginning of the 1940s, and it can be read as a sign of his intellectual transformation and, also, of the School and Gusti’s theoretical and political failure. At the same time, starting from the 1930s, a new model of nation building, more ethnicized and sometimes even biologized was emerging as a major competitor but also as continuator, in a way, of some of the School’s projects.

Guga sees well the crisis and tensions apparent in the monography on Nerej (1939) which is “not just the only text that uses the Gustian conceptual scheme but also the only where Gherea’s problematic is predominant” (p. 143) that corresponds, I think, with this moment of crisis.

Interwar Romanian sociology, while theoretically and empirically sophisticated and creative, was, at the same time, built on the blind spot of an un-reflexive convergence between science (seen as a legitimate source of reforms), social engineering, and progress, and its main research object, the nation. The social that was analyzed (and created) inside the political and scientific projects and alliances that the School forged, was deemed to be transparent to the scientific gaze and, concomitantly, rooted in the continuous flux of national substance and history. It is probable that Stahl, especially in such a late publication as *Eseuri critice [Critical Essays]*, was the most distanced from this orientation. However, I would say that, as long as the School existed, and even after that, he was part of the project.

One of the major problems encountered by the history of the Bucharest School is ensconced in the annoying Gustian concept of “social will”. The notion is hardly defensible theoretically but still essential for how Gusti envisioned the role of sociology in smoothly building the nation with the help of the state. None of the main figures of the School was comfortable with this 19<sup>th</sup> century notion, but nobody meaningfully criticized it. Even Stahl, when he got to criticize this fundamental concept did it by stressing its genealogies in German 19<sup>th</sup> century sociology and social psychology but not its central importance and amazing resilience in the School.

The first phase in the relationship between Stahl and Marxism is presented as engendered by a double influence: one coming mainly from narodnicism, the other from Austro-Marxism. There is an interesting tension between these two sources. The influence coming from Russian narodnicism is complex and mediated through Ghera and local *poporanism*, while the Austro-Marxist one is more direct. However, there is a parallelism between Stahl’s theoretical problems and the ones present in narodnicism.

The main topics of Austro-Marxism, that were related to the state, nationalities, ethics and social science, Marxism and sociology, but, mainly to a theoretical and pragmatic reaction to the transformations that went on inside the Austrian working class, had to be drastically adapted to be relevant in a Romanian context. Guga’s attempt to elaborate on the connections between Stahl and Austro-Marxism is important and should be, probably, investigated further.

Stahl, Guga tells us, “saw in the rural world the resources of a critique of state-led modernity and expressed a firm belief in the institutions that made peasant self-government possible; on the other side, Stahl was critical towards the romanticism of *sămănătorism* and *poporanism*, as he considered that the idealization of the village cannot create the fundamentals of good state policies” (p.94). Another context for Stahl’s theoretical dilemmas, avowedly harder to retrace than the Austro-Marxist one, is the Narodnik one. Ssorin-Chaikov, for example, shows us how the Narodnik ethnographers, who were exiled in Siberia at the beginning of the 1900s, were more than willing to take into account the role the state played in the emergence of rural communities. Northern Russia was not seen anymore as a depositary of original communities, but as a direct product of colonial expansion, where peasant colonists, financed and supported by the state, dislodged weaker, Finnish-speaking communities. Nevertheless, the fracture between organic rural communities and real ones, that the Narodniks knew from “going to the people”, from the Siberian exile, from critical historical and ethnographic works, strengthened the populist-socialist ideal. By constructing an alternative way of temporally grasping “progress”, Russian Narodniks instituted the people as the only solution for closing the gap between modernity “as it is” and “as it should be”.



In the second part of the book, things look clearer as the shadow of the School fades from sight. Stahl emerges not only as influenced by the social history and historical sociology debates starting with Dobb-Sweeny and continuing with Robert Brenner, but also as an active part in Immanuel Wallerstein's and Perry Anderson's attempts to understand the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

The dynamic and history of Stahl's scientific productivity, as Guga presents it in this book, stretches from the interwar period to the 1980s and provides us with a Stahl that is very hard to use in the usual contemporary symbolic legitimacy games, but, maybe because of that, even more necessary for local sociology and history alike. Even if the Marxist salvage operation is not a total success, I would say that we have a slightly different Stahl to deal with after this book.

## BOOK REVIEW

***Sociologia istorică a lui Henri H. Stahl (The Historical Sociology of Henry H. Stahl)* by Ștefan Guga. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House, 2015, 387 pages.**

GABRIEL TROC<sup>1</sup>

Reading Ștefan Guga's book "The Historical Sociology of Henry H. Stahl" is first and foremost an exercise in iconoclasm. Don't get it wrong: the author deeply resonates with Stahl's perspectives, bringing out his main scientific endeavour and a much needed synthesis of the sociologist's works. Where the iconoclasm applies is in the revisiting of the post-1990 interpretations of Stahl's works by the Romanian sociological milieu. The unambiguous pattern found in most of the articles dedicated to Stahl by sociologists, was to see his Marxism either as a marginal and minor key, or as an understandable compromise made instrumentally by the thinker for his writings to pass the communist censorship. Guga claims that both perspectives are wrong, and, in order to prove that, he produced a book focused on the historical materialism embraced by the great sociologist in his entire work.

The book is built on two different alignments.

The first alignment unravels the "retro-utopical" orientation of the post-1990 Romanian sociologists who, aiming to resettle the local field of the discipline in connection with the interwar school of sociology (which was hyperbolised as the paramount standard to aspire to), were fighting to appropriate one of its main figures. Most of their articles were focusing on the role of Stahl within the well-known "Gusti School", singling him out as Gusti's right hand man, the good organiser of their field researches and "the great methodologist", a strategy that had the paradoxical consequence of ignoring the substantial works produced by the author in the Marxist paradigm, both before and after 1945. In the first chapter of the book, "Symbolical fights, appropriations and delimitations", Guga deconstructs the post-socialist image of Stahl as no more than a forefather of the sociological monography and a loyal follower of Gusti's theoretical system of "frames and expressions". Analysing comprehensively the literature dedicated by different authors to Stahl in books and journals (with a focus on Romanian Sociology), he proves that Stahl's cultural capital was consistently mitigated,

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shadowed or even misapprehended, while his symbolic capital was instrumented for personal or institutional accumulation of prestige. What have actually happened, according to Guga, is that Stahl's intellectual biography was so re-written - through a deliberate selection and emphasis on some "convenient" writings - as to match the standards of an imagined "post-communist honourability", specific to the new intellectual conformism, infused by an anti-communist ethos and by nostalgia for a romanticized pre-communist past. The result of this process was the transformation of Stahl from an "author", with his personal subjects and achievements, into a "reader", namely one of the interpreters and contributors, maybe the most profiled, of Gusti's research program. More important, and here is a main point of Guga's analysis, reducing Stahl to a "reader" figure has the consequences of disconsidering him as the creator of an original historical sociology, but also disconsidering him as a Marxist author, in fact one of the most important Romanian Marxist thinkers.

This reduction was not determined strictly by the above-mentioned post-communist ethos, but, as Guga argues, it was deeply embedded in the Romanian sociology from 1965 onward, which constantly drew lines of separation between sociology, seen as a "pure" domain, informed by "neutral" theoretical frames of, say, Durkheim, Weber or Parsons, and historical materialism or Marxism, seen as an impure and destabilising political doctrine that invaded "objective" research. Reduced to the dogma of the communist regimes, Marxism was slowly evacuated from sociologists' theoretical concerns, which made them unable to understand and value Stahl's ideas. Thus, the post-1990 process of appropriating Stahl's figure swung between equally unsuitable extremes: be that as a thinker who made a kind of synthesis of Durkheim and Weber, or (in the case of those who paid attention at least to his Marxist language) as an intellectual with certain "social-democratic"<sup>2</sup> political views, but definitely not as a thinker whose epistemology was deeply informed by Marxist debates. As a result, the cornerstone of Stahl's thinking, and his most important scientific contribution, the project of a historical sociology, was ignored, and therefore has not produced disciples and debates neither in the field of sociology, or history, nor in the larger Romanian cultural arena. When eventually addressed, at least for the reason that extensive works like "Contributions to the study of the collective ownership villages" could not be ignored, his historical perspective was reduced, in Guga's words, "to a harmless history of the Romanian village, especially fascinated by 'archaic' phenomena, and thus good to be admired in a museum" (p.54).

Setting aside Guga's book for a moment, Stahl's political leftist options, which did not adhere to any party line neither in the in the interwar period nor in

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<sup>2</sup> Wrongly understood in the present meanings, and not in the one specific to the pre-WWII era, which was clearly related to a socialist option.

the socialist times, as well as his consistent historical materialist focus, do not need much of an interpretation after 2000, when the publishing of the interviews taken to Stahl by Zoltán Rostás<sup>3</sup> made available Stahl's own words about these options, with all the needed nuances. Even so, a "will of not knowing", to use Foucault's phrasing, is still largely at work by interpreters and readers, who prefer to "read between the lines" and see in this text mostly "dissidence" (thus confirming the real need for a book like Guga's). To give a few examples, discussing critically the activities of Romanian rural Houses of Culture (*Case de cultură*) established during socialist times was not one of Stahl's instances of "dissidence", but an opportunity to discuss how things could have been done, taking as reference the proletarian cultural house organised in Vienna by the social-democrats in the 1920's (pp. 31-33). His genuine belief in the virtues of agricultural cooperatives was also not hidden. Still, there is an important nuance: their proper organisation should have been done, in his views, from below, by grafting, with incentives (but not control) from the state, new institutions on the old communal social and property structures, as a free option of the peasants. If the state *would really have been socialist*, mentioned Stahl, unambiguously criticising the really existing socialist state, this could have been done successfully (pp. 294-297). When it comes to his theoretical positioning, he clearly saw himself as a sociologist who aimed at synthesising history with present social facts, which was done only by him among all monographists precisely because, as he stated, "Marxism constrains oneself to make the synthesis between all particular social sciences" (p.256). More important, he mentioned that his Marxist views predetermined his encounter with Gusti, and while he found convenient Gusti's sociological model of "frames and expressions" for field-researches, his main scientific endeavour went ahead "against Gusti" (p.257).

Returning to Guga's book, we find out in the second chapter, "Marxist adventures", a different set of arguments and explanations for the disregard of Stahl's main contribution, but also about where, precisely, Stahl's actual dissidence should have been searched for. "Critical Essays", a book published in 1983 which unites texts produced from the interwar period onward, had a quasi-unanimously negative reception. Dealing with the issue of "national specificity", an issue that was intensely debated in the interwar period and which was reopened after Ceaușescu's nationalist turn, the book analyses critically different variants of this theory, with an accent on the works of Lucian Blaga and Mircea Eliade, authors who were at time recently rehabilitated after years of being officially banned or marginalised, and on their way to becoming "sacred" figures of Romanian high culture. The aim of the book was to reveal, within the "national specificity" debate focused on rural culture and folklore, Stahl's interpretation of the

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<sup>3</sup> Zoltán Rostás (2000). *Monografia ca utopie. Interviuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)*, București: Paideia.

peasants' culture, based on a scientific analysis. Stahl's main point was that Blaga and Eliade lacked the direct and detailed knowledge of rural life and, by promoting inadequate methods for the subject - the introspection or the hermeneutics of text - they built metaphysical, anti-empirical, non-historical and non-sociological theories of national specificity. For Stahl, these theories are reactionary and anti-modern. They promote a chauvinistic nationalism, obscurantism and they are opposed to a scientific research of the peasant world, which can be provided by the empirical research of sociology. What Guga made clear in this chapter is that with "Critical Essays", Stahl has retaken his criticism of these reactionary views that he had already addressed in the interwar period against the promoters of the nationalist philosophies and against the extreme-right movement of the Iron Guard. In doing so, Stahl aimed to strengthen the place of sociology in academia, especially against philosophy, which was keeping sociology under its tutelage, and to provide an alternative discourse to the dominant conservative discourses appropriated by the communists after 1968. Stahl provided here, in my view, the rare case (for Romania) of criticising from a leftist standpoint the official cultural alignment, a criticism that was matched maybe only by Pavel Câmpeanu's analysis of Stalinism. Guga's judgement in this respect is that if the criticism of official ideology hardliners was understandable, less so was the sociologists' criticism, who both before and after 1990 mistakenly read Stahl's position as a "positivist" one, once again interpreting Stahl's involvement in the national specificity debate through the lens of "Stahl, the methodologist", and thus identifying his opposition to the metaphysical ontologies as one against theory, tout court. Reducing Stahl's quest for a theory deeply informed by empirical investigation to mere positivism, and reducing Stahl's Marxism to irrelevance or compromise, they lost from sight Stahl's very early adherence to the views of the branch of Marxism which debated in detail the question of nationality from a historical materialist standpoint, namely the Austro-Marxism. Consequently, they ignored Stahl's sustained efforts to build a Romanian sociology as Marxism upon this early influence, coupled with influences from Dobrogeanu-Gherea and from the interwar socialist groups. Such sociology could have provided, among other results, a historically and ethnographically informed, and scientifically accurate, approach to the nationality issue.

If the first alignment of Guga's book was dedicated to revealing how Stahl was, on one side, used after 1990 as a totemic figure for different legitimising purposes, and, on the other side, ignored in respect with his most important scientific contribution, it was logical for the second alignment of the book to bring to light what was indeed ignored, being thus dedicated to a detailed overview of Stahl's theoretical system, and to its developments in time. This second half of the book, comprising of the following four chapters, and also being lengthier, pens a systematic analysis of Stahl's vast published work in order to grasp the relevant instances of his project of a historical sociology.

Noticing that Guga chose no shortcuts in reading Stahl, producing a much needed comprehensive and dense (if sometimes redundant) analysis of his texts, I have to restrain myself here to only bringing out the main lines of this inquiry.

Chapter three, "A project of a historical sociology", identifies the genesis of Stahl's project in his concrete concern with issues related to the rapid and malign social change of the Romanian rural life under modernising pressure. A case in point was the dispossession of the peasants from Vrancea's villages of their collective forest properties by capitalist interventions that were encouraged by a national legislation which disregarded the particular age-old social organisation of these villages. The solution to correct this would firstly be to understand - through minute in-depth researches - the local social arrangements, a task that could be achieved only through a perspective that would be at the same time historical and sociological. The advantage seen by Stahl in this combination was that a historical-cum-sociological perspective could be applied to both empirical researches, focused on micro-levels, and to larger social processes, like the specificity of the feudal relations in Eastern Europe. By practicing a "social archaeology" which could retrace the past of the villages' social life from the survivals of the old territorial structures (or to elaborate backwards on the history of the villages in the context of a lack of written documents), Stahl envisioned to give empirically-based answers to the specificity of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the modes of production, or the states' formation in the case of Romania and Eastern Europe. What Guga stated here is that by following this path, which was sprung up by his early adherence to Marxism as social science, Stahl contributed to the international debates on these issues - unlike different post-socialist scholars - as an autonomous thinker, neither imitating western intellectuals, nor searching for legitimacy by invoking them.

We are made aware in the following chapter, "From capitalism to feudalism", that Stahl's strategic lines of thought had been already crystallised before 1949, and was focused around the principle of social archaeology, similar to Marc Bloc's approach, but with an accent on social change as determined at least to the same extent by class conflict as well as by technology and culture, which Bloch favoured. The accent is decisive, having in mind that in his efforts to create a typology containing the diversity of the Romanian villages across time, Stahl considered the primitive collective ownership (*devălmaş*) village (whose survivals he traced in Vrancea's villages before WWII) as predating the formation of the medieval Romanian states and the formation of a politically organised nobility class. He argued that the latter class was formed by the old lineages' leaders who, by appropriating the system of tax collection imposed to the villages by the nomad conquerors, eventually brought out a centralised

government and gradually got involved in the villages' mode of production, challenging the peasants' collective ownership and, after the appropriation of their land, exploiting them as serfs. Still, not all the villages followed the same path; there was a specific dynamic of the primeval village itself, which produced different types of social organisations, that, in time, conduced to villages being in different positions within the class struggle and thus being differently positioned in regard to the capitalist penetration of the Romanian provinces. Considering the primitive collective ownership village as primordial and determinant for the Romanian social history, Stahl challenged the dominant theory in Romanian historiography of state formation of the "dismounting ruler", and, more important, he provided a more accurate representation than the dominant one (including Gherea's) on the capitalist penetration here, making visible a much earlier and longer process of capitalism primitive accumulation, which took place during the struggle of the boyars and the feudal state to break down the collective social organisations of the peasants, to dispossess them of their land, and to impose the legal frame of individual property. Shedding light on these specific relations and struggles between peasants and the nobility regarding land ownership, and the consequential revelation that Romanian feudalism was different from Western feudalism, provided Stahl with important arguments for entering the international debates (particularly those developed within Marxism, which Guga synthesised in great detail) on the subject of transition from feudalism to capitalism, and to bring a relevant contribution. If, as Guga revealed, Stahl entered tardy in the well-known Dobb-Sweezy debate regarding the causes of the transition to capitalism (with a synthesis of "The Collective Ownership Villages" published in 1969 in French), his elaboration on the "second serfdom" in the Romanian countries was the source for empirical and theoretical arguments that Wallerstein brought in later, in his dispute with Robert Brenner regarding the amplitude of the extension of capitalism beginning with the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In respect with this moment in Stahl's thinking, Guga observed that if Stahl were in agreement with Wallerstein's idea that when capitalism settled, it had already influenced a differently developed Eastern Europe, he would have remained ambiguous and hesitant (like Gherea in this case) in abandoning the nation as the main unit of analysis. In fact this is the main critical stance that Guga addressed to Stahl's overall project of a materialist historical sociology: if, as a result of the Marxists international debate, Stahl elaborated on a Romanian specific mode of production (the tributary system, to which Guga dedicates chapter five), Stahl still never took, like Eric Wolf or Samir Amin, the step towards a larger frame, that would have located the tributary mode of production within larger economic and political fields or "civilizations", and in relations with other regional or global modes of

production. However, a certain orientation in this direction had been made by Stahl during his last years of life.

In the last chapter of his book, "The Structuralist turn and the last critique", Guga discusses and speculates on Stahl's unfinished project of a comparative analysis of Central and Eastern European feudalism, most likely framed within the same structuralist perspective that informed the elaboration on the tributary mode of production, and which would have probably been conceived more like a typology of particular ("national") forms of feudalism that can be analytically separated on the basis of their similarities and differences. If this project could not be accomplished, because of Stahl's age and because of the scandal that followed the publication of "Critical Essays", he still succeeded to write a very acid book ("Confusing Problems in the Romanian Social History") in which he harshly criticises the (false) materialism of Romanian historiography. Guga once again made clear that this criticism was not an anti-Marxism stance, as the post-socialist interpreters would be ready to believe, but a commitment for researching the past through a scientific historical sociology, on which the Marxist debates brought a major contribution, against (the dominant) teleological history guided by the search of events, with a strict chronological orientation and concerned mostly by cultural and political facts.

In spite of its unassuming title, apparently dedicated to reviving the heritage of an important sociologist, Ștefan Guga's book is not a neutral and comfortable one. And it was certainly not conceived to be so. It is not comfortable for Romanian mainstream sociology, which, from the interwar period to the present day, rarely stood on its feet on the international arena, instead always being content with a subordinate position in respect to theory, and being prone to borrowing particularly the most conservative theories. It is also not comfortable for Romanian mainstream historiography, which made a great injustice to itself by ignoring a figure like Stahl's. It would also be totally misleading to see Guga's book as the book of an eccentric young intellectual, who writes from the margins of the system to unsettle the sociological "bourgeoisie" by revealing Stahl's Marxism in an era and a country where associating Marx and Marxism with the defunct communist regime is *de rigueur*. As I sketched above, by selecting a few fragments from Zoltán Rostás book, one doesn't need to write a 380 page book in order to demonstrate that Stahl was Marxist. Guga doesn't follow this easy path, because this was not the point to prove (and the first two chapters would have been sufficient in this respect, anyway). The point was to prove (which the author did through the dense analysis of the second half of the book) that an indigenous empirical and theoretical contribution to the international sociology was and still is possible, and that Marxism as sociology is not something that can simply be ignored, but rather the paradigm in which some of the most important sociological debates took place



in the last century, and still take place today. And finally, Guga made obvious that what is wrong with the post-socialist re-appropriation of Stahl through (only) the Gusti School is that this recuperation shadows the higher stakes of Stahl's work, which reached for aims beyond the School's program.

## BOOK REVIEW

***Sociologia istorică a lui Henri H. Stahl (The Historical Sociology of Henry H. Stahl)* by Ștefan Guga. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House, 2015, 387 pages.**

**RALUCA PERNEȘ<sup>1</sup>**

Henri H. Stahl is widely perceived as one of the most prominent Romanian sociologists. Yet, for all of the ostensible congruence in evaluating his oeuvre, there is plenty of space for a book such as Ștefan Guga's, which engages substantially Stahl's intellectual production throughout his long career. In fact, this analysis is necessary to understand the extent to which "Stahl - the great sociologist" is a label that covers a multitude of positions towards his work, many of them oversimplifying, driven by an agenda and at times plainly misled.

Over the last couple of decades, Stahl has been recovered by sociologists and social historians in Romania primarily as a crucial member of the Gusti School and one of the key social researchers in the interwar period. While this is not inaccurate, it is also far from a fair representation of Stahl's contribution to sociology, considering the span of his career, the width of his research interests, the originality of his theoretical insights, and the relevance of his analyses for the global debates in the social sciences in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Guga sets himself the task of overviewing the symbolic struggles around Stahl post-1989 before proceeding to a thorough investigation of his work and looking into its sources and its impact.

The book comprises six chapters, plus a preamble and a coda. It is at times cumbersome to navigate due to some less fortunate options in terms of organising the text: some sections are marked in a different font and it is not immediately obvious whether these are summaries of certain sections (they are not) or some sort of intermezzos. Large chunks of text are delegated to footnotes, many of them relevant, and sometimes essential to the argument.

Going by the title, the book promises an analysis of Stahl's historical sociology. The preamble and first part of the book, however, forcefully delve into the issue of Stahl's Marxism and the key stake of the book is introduced as making a case for Marxism as the cornerstone of Stahl's work, rather than a

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marginal or a utilitarian choice. I would venture that Guga ends up doing a lot more than extensively demonstrating how genuine and substantial Stahl's engagement with Marxism is. His book turns into a tour de force that on the one hand discusses a key chapter in the history of the social sciences in Romania and on the other hand articulates a comprehensive analysis of the controversies around the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe.

The first part of the book introduces Stahl as an object of the post-communist retro-utopia that aims to legitimate the project of contemporary sociology in Romania by forging tenuous connections with the interwar efforts of the Gusti School and conveniently skipping any links with the potentially morally tainted communist period. The first chapter, "Symbolic struggles, appropriations, and demarcations" shows how the biographical illusion is constructed in the case of Stahl, who comes to be viewed as the most competent disciple of Dimitrie Gusti or, at best, part of the collective voice of the Bucharest School of Sociology in the interwar period. As such, Guga notices in the conceptual frame of Bourdieu, Stahl comes to be deprived of the status of auctor and demoted to the position of Gusti's best lector. The result is that Stahl's work is read selectively, with his most original and theoretically meaningful work viewed as secondary to his methodological writings, which are instrumental to the popularization of the project of the Bucharest School of Sociology. Stahl's Marxist orientation becomes obliterated post-1989 firstly as a result of sociology being perceived as a domain that needs to be kept separated from ideology ever since the debates in the 60s, and secondly because Marxism comes to be rejected wholly due to its connections with the communist dogma.

The second chapter, "Marxist adventures", is dedicated to taking a closer look at Stahl's theoretical orientation towards Marxism. This is understood in the light of the lack of in-depth social theory in the Gusti School, theory that needed to be adequate to comprehend the empirical realities Stahl was interested in, such as the national question or the dramatic transformations of the rural world under capitalism. Guga shows Stahl has become a Marxist as a result of seeing (and practicing) sociology as a radically empirically oriented discipline – which is not to say lacking in theoretical depth. His view was informed and has developed in contact with some of the most prominent Marxist thinkers of the time and came to have close affinities with the Austromarxists. This part of Stahl's intellectual biography becomes crucial as Guga demonstrates the main features of his thought cannot be reduced to the interactions with the Gusti School, and stemmed from his engagement with Marxist thinking which predated his co-optation in Gusti's research team.

The second part of the book is devoted to a thorough analysis of Stahl's thinking, starting with the chapter on "A project of historical sociology", which delves into the project of researching Vrancea's villages in a period of rampant transformation as a result of the intrusion of reckless capitalism in the form of

forest exploitation companies. Stahl himself was a militant for the cause of the peasants and thought there was urgent need for intervention in the area. At the time of his research, villagers fell between the cracks as a result of the recklessness of timber exploitation companies and insufficient regulation by the state. Stahl's suggested solution was state intervention, meant to save the locals from the companies benefitting from fuzzy regulation. Theoretically, he attempted to understand the vulnerability of Vrancea's villages in the light of the dissolution of the collective ownership system (*devălmășie*) with the advance of capitalism. One of the main issues in understanding the transformation was that historical documents were lacking in Eastern Europe as compared to its Western part due to the late formation of nation states. Stahl's ambition was to attempt to know the historical reality through "social archaeology" – a method of reconstituting the history of the villages through analysing the remnants of the past forms of organisation of social life still surviving in the present. It was an exercise akin to that of Bloch's *Annales* School, the affinities with which Stahl duly acknowledged. The research themes Stahl eventually articulated departing from the puzzle that was the villages in Vrancea were the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the dissolution of the pre-capitalist forms of social life, state formation and state transformation. These were all in perfect alignment with the interests of the western social scientists in the same period. Guga sets himself the task to demonstrate that Stahl's discussion of historical sociology and historical materialism crystallizes in dialogue with the western intellectuals, and not by emulating them. As a result of these preoccupations and as an output of his collaboration with the other members of the Bucharest School of Sociology, Stahl finally produced the monograph of the village Nerej. However, a few years later he admitted his intellectual agenda was compromised by using Gusti's system of "frames and actions", which did not allow for the coherent articulation of his theoretical argument.

By the fourth and fifth chapters, "From capitalism to feudalism" and "The tributary system", Guga's analysis is fully geared toward integrating Stahl's work in the global discussions about the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Stahl looks at the process of class formation in this part of Europe, claiming that feudal relations in Eastern Europe were fundamentally different from those in Western Europe. Villages such as those in Vrancea were strategic sites that made visible the fact that rural collective property pre-existed medieval state formation, and therefore the formation of the nobility class. The second serfdom discussed by Western scholars was no more than a belated (first) serfdom in the case of the Romanian territories, where the boyars came to amass power later on. As such, the Romanian case is relevant for the larger debate about the transition from feudalism to capitalism, since it rewrites the assumptions about the primitive commune and property relations in Europe. Guga offers an overview of the Dobb-Sweezy debate before looking at how Stahl positioned himself and participated in this debate, by providing an abridged version of his work on the villages with

collective ownership systems. Later on, in the 70s, Stahl's arguments were used by the participants in the Brenner debate, and in particular by Brenner's Marxist critics, such as Wallerstein.

In the last chapter of the book, "The structuralist turn and the last critique", Guga turns to Stahl's unfinished project of a comparative research of Central and Eastern European feudalism. The study, which never came to fruition, was conceived in close dialogue with Marxist thinkers, and in particular with Althusser. Based on Stahl's thinking, Guga speculates as to the main lines of argument that he might have mobilized in this study and underlines his commitment for the project of historical sociology.

Guga's analysis is occasionally marred by possible overgeneralizations. Part of his critique hinges on the readers accepting his definition of the ideological lens through which Stahl is read by Romanian contemporaries. While he does illustrate this with the position of several authors (Bădina, Sandu, Larionescu, Momoc, Juravle etc.) and I agree there are many more, it is quite a leap to assume that this is the view Romanian sociologists generally take, since there is no estimate whatsoever of the proportion of sociologists who engage with Stahl's work substantially and refuse to put him into neat oversimplified or distortive boxes. What we know for certain is just that those who engage in explicitly writing about interwar Romanian sociology are likely to do it in the key described in the first couple of chapters. Guga also risks becoming quite the contrarian when criticizing the new generation of social scientists for borrowing and unjudiciously importing theories from the West. I am in full agreement with him that the autocolonization that transpires from many analyses in the last two decades or so is worrisome, but feel hesitant about throwing the baby with the bathwater. It is not the imports we need to tackle, especially if we are of the view that now, as in Stahl's time, there is no "inside" and "outside" when it comes to genuine theoretical debates relevant at a global scale, but rather them being not fit for the purpose or fetishized by virtue of their Western origin. After all, taking this argument to its ultimate conclusion in this context, Marxism itself is a Western import to the analysis of social realities in Eastern Europe. Finally, the image of the Romanian social sciences grappling for several decades in a "quagmire of autism and irrelevance" (p.17) is compelling, but excessive. In the end, it comes down to how we perceive the field of Romanian sociology at the moment, in a context in which the voices that can be heard, to take just an example, belong on the one hand to those oversimplifying and instrumentalizing Stahl and on the other hand to Ștefan Guga himself.

This is a book that, if all goes well, will leave in its wake scores of readers eager to (re)visit Stahl's writings and give him due credit in key matters of historical sociology. One can only look forward to Guga's continuation of his plan to critically understand the historical and sociological dynamic of the Romanian social sciences.

## BOOK REVIEW

***Dependență și dezvoltare. Economia politică a capitalismului românesc (Dependency and Development. The Political Economy of Romanian Capitalism)* by Cornel Ban. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House, 2014, 293 pages.**

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The book takes us through the past century and a half of Romanian history, analyzing in each of its seven chapters what Cornel Ban sees as distinct phases of the country's position in relation to the world economy: the early departure from a feudalistic organization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that marked the actual constitution of the Romanian nation state and its position of *classical* and then *semiperipheral* dependency (Chapter One), the five decades of state socialism (Chapter Two) followed by the various stages of post-socialist capitalism (Chapters Three to Seven). Coherent with the Polanyian framework it stems from, the analysis simultaneously follows the indicators of a gradual transformation of an agrarian economy into one of complex industry and services, and the ones related to the extent and depth of social rights (health, education and labour protection).

The first chapter entitled "Between liberalism and mercantilism" starts by briefly analyzing the beginnings of the integration of the Romanian economy into the wider fluxes of Western European capitalism, at a time when the power of the Ottoman Empire severely declined. It then describes the successive strategies of the local elites, starting with a rather *classical* version of economic *liberalism* that was proved untenable on the long run by the global crisis of 1877(8), replaced by a *neomercantilism* with nationalistic roots that lasted roughly until the late 1930s when *authoritative corporatism* took its place. The period of Romanian history analyzed in this chapter is central to the mainstream nationalistic historiography, encapsulating many of the mythological moments of national history. Therefore, if the imagined readership for this book goes beyond the small circle of critical social scientists as it definitely should, putting forth a narrative emphasizing the

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shifting centres of global economic dependency and showing the class interests of the national elites and their projects of development becomes a welcome reinterpretation. In this sense, the biggest blow is perhaps the way in which the inter-war period is not portrayed as the peak of Romanian integration in the “Western civilization”.

Chapter Two, “The rise and fall of national-stalinist developmentalism (1949-1989)” is devoted to depicting the social and economic mechanisms of the communist regime and it is intended by the author as a “sober” analysis, in contrast to the highly ideologized references to this period that are central to the anti-communist establishment. The (in)famous massive industrialization project, as well as the decision to pay off the international debt that the Romanian state had accumulated after the oil crisis are described and rendered intelligible as part of wider global processes, rather than as insulated peculiarities. Consequently, the increasingly severe deprivation of the population in the second part of the period is presented as part of the wider trend of accumulating effects of austerity measures following the crisis and the foreign debt solutions that were found to it. While the crucial role of Ceausescu’s personal ideology is not underestimated, the narrative provided in this chapter has a refreshing quality of not isolating socialist regimes and treating them as if they had a different nature than the rest of the world economy.

Preceding the analysis of the four distinct stages that Ban identifies in the post-1989 history of Romania, Chapter Three explicitly deals with the fact that the end of the communist regimes left the region and each of the states within it in a rather open situation, from which a multitude of trajectories could have been sought and brought into existence. It is well known that one of the most powerful tools of rendering critique and opposition futile is presenting the status-quo as the only possibility and a natural consequence of a given set of conditions. Therefore, the effort of this chapter goes into deconstructing this necessity and showing the alternatives both in terms of the empirically existent variety between countries in the region and in terms of the coexisting visions of alternative futures within the various factions of the local elites. The analysis adds to the growing body of literature that looks at the various local outcomes as answers to open-ended questions that were asked by the structural constraints, in which alternatives can be easily imagined, and were actually imagined by different factions of the elite. The following chapters look at the translations, mutations and hybridizations that have happened in the next two decades and their structural conditions of possibility.

Chapter Four, “The first steps of Romanian capitalism (1990-1992)” focuses on the struggles of the new local elite, which was poorly inserted in the Western networks, to come up with an understanding of development that

would make state-led development compatible with political liberalization and a market economy. “Neo-developmentalism” is the hybrid resulted from these efforts, visible in the first two years of post-socialism in its liberal variant. The turning point to a new stage in the paradigm of development that was implemented in Romania and the beginning of Chapter Five (“Populist neo-developmentalism (1992-1996)”) is president Ion Iliescu’s second mandate that started in 1992. This period is characterized as a new version of neo-developmentalism, which takes an explicit stand in favor of subsuming both communist elites’ and “foreign” interests to those of “the people”. The chapter looks both at the content of the imaginaries of development of the elites in this period and at the shifting alliances and fragmentations within it, presenting us with a convincing narrative of the conditions of possibility and success of the implementation of such visions.

The next two chapters start from what the author identifies as an analytical challenge: how come the relative hostility towards neoclassical economy that characterized the first stages of post-socialist capitalism has proved to be in the end a fertile soil for neoliberal thinking and acting? In Chapter Six, “Neoliberal revolution comes to Romania”, Ban builds a convincing argument within a policy translation framework, in which the international political actors have selected and empowered both financially and ideologically those factions that had visions (and interests) convergent with the neoliberal ones and divergent from neo-developmental ones. The coalition between international organizations, Western governments, universities, think tanks and local factions of elite is convincingly suggested and substantiated. What is left unaddressed both theoretically and empirically are the ways in which the neoliberal ideology has gained the support of other class positions, which were not the direct focus of the interest-alignment efforts of these agencies, and whose class interests were not convergent to the implications of the neoliberal vision.

Chapter Seven, “The great recalibration of world neoliberalism” deals with the period after the world crisis of 2008 and takes notice exactly of the lack of a substantive opposition to the package of measures that were visibly hindering both the interests of traditional working class and those of its new faction, represented by the “middle classes” employed in the service sector or in the foreign investment led industrial one. Ban interprets the post-2008 global situation in which not only Keynesian public policies were not introduced, but the neoliberal versions have intensified as an example of the ideology’s great adaptability and capacity to incorporate different realities. The question of the mechanisms of translation that result in adherence to this vision on the part of a variety of class positions arises even more acutely than in the case of the previous chapter.



Cornel Ban's "Dependency and development" is undoubtedly a major addition to social sciences' understanding of the complex social and economic transformations of a particular national context - Romania in this case. It is a lucid and coherent discussion of the shifting position of a national economy within global fluxes of capital and it addresses uncomfortable yet crucial questions of the possibilities open for a certain locality to improve its position. The Polanyian framework the analysis operates within provides the background for capturing and exploring the tensions between opposing tendencies and their dynamic. The Romanian case proves to be a strategic one for the author's agenda of understanding the heterogeneity of visions of development, their world-wide connections and traceable histories, translation from one context to the other and robustness in incorporating indeterminate realities.

Without sacrificing precision or theoretical sophistication, this book has a great potential of having an impact outside the narrow social scientific circles. Cornel Ban's book is a highly timely and welcome addition to the small yet growing body of literature that problematizes the ideological agenda behind anti-communism and pro-neoliberalism. In this sense, it touches upon some of the (still) great taboos of Romanian history and offers alternative readings that are convincing for the critical social scientists but also thought provoking for those who take neoliberal ideology and anti-communist dogma as a description of reality rather than an ideological construction of it. Therefore, the fact that the book is published in Romanian, about Romania and about both the recent and the distant past is in itself important. Placing together in a history of local capitalism the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the interwar period, state socialism and post-1989 experimentations represents for most of the potential readers of this book a highly non-conventional description of history and current events. The very inclusion of the communist period in a continuous history of the country both at an economic and political level, and not as an incomprehensible pause or detour is an atypical (while increasingly frequent) take on the subject. The Preface announces the personal biographical roots of this intellectual project and the analysis that follows does not fail to meet the goals of offering a framework for critique, for seeing alternatives where they are and have been, as well as for thinking out new ones.



## BOOK REVIEW

***Dependență și dezvoltare. Economia politică a capitalismului românesc (Dependency and Development. The Political Economy of Romanian Capitalism) by Cornel Ban. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House, 2014, 293 pages.***

NORBERT PETROVICI<sup>1</sup>

Cornel Ban's "Dependency and development. The political economy of Romanian capitalism" is a contribution both to the sociology of development and heterodox economics. Romanian modern economic history unfolds in eight chapters covering the period from the dawn of the local capitalist state, in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, to the contemporary state policies, in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Depression. The reader is invited to follow the institutional complementarities and contradictions that emerged in the region and in Romania in relation to policies regarding financing, investment, industrial development, international trade and the labour market. The decisions taken in these various economic spheres are shown to be connected, producing consistent policy regimes. The attention to history makes visible successive economic decisions, in a twofold way: as species of the various Central and Eastern European attempts to escape the peripheral status in the capitalist world system and as strategies that have continuities, effects and are subject to reinterpretation across historical epochs.

### Theoretical Stakes

Conceptually, the book rests and builds on the theoretical advancements regarding the developmentalist states (Amsden, 1992; Chibber, 2003; Evans, 1995; Kohli, 2004) in the varieties of capitalism framework (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012; Hall and Soskics, 2001; Hancké, Rhodes, and Thatcher, 2009; Nölke and Vliegenthart, 2009). The methodological strategy is consistently comparative, allowing meaningful parallels across time and space. The most important dislocation to emerge from this engagement is rendering comparable actually existing socialist policies with those of other developmental states. The stakes the approach are

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rooted in the effort to dismantle the current anti-communist orthodoxy of the Eastern European and Romanian intellectual milieu. Much of the cultural orthodoxy describes socialism as a criminal system pertaining to a pre-modern era that erupted as a strange Eastern European re-feudalization of society. Cornel Ban not only argues for understanding state socialist policies as a particular case of state developmentalism, comparable with similar projects in Latin America and South Asia, but he also shows how these hegemonic post-communist interpretations came about in the broader epistemic power fields. Aided by the sociology of translation of actor-network theory (Bockman, 2011; Bockman and Eyal, 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Latour, 1993, 2005; MacKenzie, Muniesa, and Siu, 2007; Muniesa, Millo, and Callon, 2007), Ban follows the minute details in which market fundamentalism fused with the local anti-communist ideology to legitimize a radical brand of neoliberalism in Romania. Cornel Ban names this particular fusion "cultural neoliberalism". The book is thus a critical engagement of the economic policies prescriptions of cultural neoliberalism as well as an analysis of its genealogy.

The major contention of the book is that institutions that shape the local possibility of capital accumulation in the transnational commodity chains are interconnected with the structure of the epistemic fields where policies options are formulated. The thesis is far from new. It spins off from the 1990s theories of the role of the elites in reshaping the Central and Eastern European states (Burawoy, 2001; Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley, 1998, 2001; Stark and Bruszt, 1998). In their turn, these theories are an analytical reworking of the role of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the cultural bourgeoisie with modernizing ethos in Central and Eastern Europe (Kocka, 1995). Nonetheless, Cornel Ban's argument broadens the scope of the *Bildungsbürgertum* thesis with an actor-network twist, along the lines opened by Bockman and Eyal (2002) and Bockman (2011). Far from being a characteristic of the East, the cultural bourgeoisie is placed on a greater scene: the academics and the experts are forming global criss-crossing networks of epistemic cooperation and competition. Moreover, the argument is focused on the crucial role played by a particular type of cultural bourgeoisie, the intellectuals capable of formulating economic epistemes, following the suggestion that the economy is a performatively instituted process (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; MacKenzie et al., 2007; Muniesa et al., 2007). Although the role of the economists is much emphasized, the argument is far from idealist. On the contrary, in the notorious ANT sway, scientists are showed to succeed in imposing an orthodoxy by political means, that is by mobilizing power resources from outside the epistemic field in order to create a bigger and a stronger network of enrolment and translation from point-to-point for their ideas. Therefore the role of the major western colonial institutions was fundamental in sustaining through resources the successive

epistemic alliances that favoured policies options in the periphery in the benefit of the capitalist centre. However, critical and alternative strategies did also emerge, either as counter-hegemonic alliances or part of the mistranslation and editing. The book reconstructs the global networks of policies translation and the local editing that sometimes produced new or even critical ideas.

### **Policy regimes**

The first chapter analyzes the economic policies from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century – the period of the formation of the first Romanian modern capitalist state – up until the end of the Second World War. Three successive policy formations are identified. First, there were the policies of the radical democratic network of intellectuals (*pașoptiștii*) in favour of an economy coordinated by a bureaucratic and rational state against the big landowners involved in the grain exports. However, their endeavor succumbed gradually in a self-orientalizing way that led towards an orthodox liberalism of free markets, the search for a competitive advantage interpreted as agrarian specialization, a publicly educated labour force, public investments in transport infrastructure, independent courts and a mercantilist state. The transnational alumni networks of intellectuals educated in Western universities constructed a hegemonic pro-occidental episteme where the European unrestricted markets were seen as a source of modernization. Second, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was an emerging set of liberal criticism against these policy options pleading for the need of a local bourgeoisie capable of fixing in the national space the benefits of capital accumulation (i.e. Ion C. Brătianu, Ștefan Zeletin). A new epistemic hegemony formed having as its core the Bismarckian protectionism and ethnicist policies. The new epistemic alliance was editing the transnational prescriptions by grafting itself on the pre-existing mercantilist understanding of the state. A neo-mercantilist state was put in place, one where the national bourgeoisie was the object of protection in an increasingly eugenic interpretation of the nation's body. Third, during the 1930s, the role of the national bourgeoisie was collapsed on the role of the state in a hyper-modernist move of entrusting the rational state, dominated by a single party-bureaucracy, to plan the accumulation of capital. For example, the economist Mihail Manoilescu pleaded for a neo-corporatist strategy of development, along, yet in opposition with the advanced economies. The advanced economies were no competitive match for the under-developed ones on an unrestricted and uncoordinated market. Therefore, he points to the importance of an autonomous industrial development and of the state capital, points which had a global career (Love, 1996). These ideas were in dialog with the pan-european discussions on comparative competitive advantage

and the very successful German national-socialism in securing a hegemonic role. Yet, much of the polemical steam of these theories was coming from the local debates with the socialists, narodnicists and conservative political forces.

In the second chapter Cornel Ban is keen in insisting, with convincing arguments, on the continuities between the presocialist policy options and the socialist developmentalist strife. In a very interesting hypothesis, he shows that many of Manoilescu's economic strategies were actually taken up as state strategies by the communists. His point is that even if some of the policy prescriptions are transnational in origin, the local actors are always contextualizing them in a process of editing the translated ideas. The Moscovit economic ideology makes no exception. Cornel Ban actually reinterprets the purportedly neo-Stalinist turn of the mid 1970s operated by Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, as a re-contextualization of neo-corporatist ideas: strong orientation towards industrial development, financing of this development through intersectorial transfers from agriculture toward industry, avoiding dependent development induced by the capitalist markets, an ethnicists understanding of the labour force, international relations based on national interest. The hard version of austerity conducted by the Ceaușescu regime in the 1980s to avoid the IMF and World Bank dictums and policies linked to the 1970s loans were exceptions in the region. Only by taking seriously the epistemic hybridization processes one can explain the radical versions of developmentalism played by the Romanian socialists. The chapter excels in making visible the socialist industrial and financial strategies by use of comparative data. Other developmentalist states performances are brought into discussion and played against the core western capitalist state aggregate economic indexes. The analytic strategy is very successful in making visible the specificities, accents and exaggerations that brought the demise of the Romanian communist state. Romanian heavy industry, reluctant towards costly technological imports, was in fact in need for external politically-friendly markets to acquire the needed petrodollar. The neo-corporatist elements deepened the regional crisis of the 1980s, making Romania very vulnerable, paradoxically, to external economic crisis.

The next four chapters follow the policy regimes that formed and competed against each other along the 1990s and 2000s, with the triumphant imposition of the last one of them, neoliberalism. First, between 1990 and 1992, a new form of developmentalism was formulated by a series of local economists with important positions in the economic research institutes of the 1980s. Working in the *Foreign Trade Research Institute and Industrial Relation Institute* of the *Romanian Academy* they were part of a technocratic generation of researchers, some involved in the planning process, part of the developmental communist economic machine. Their academic allegiances were still with the French dirigiste school and the Moscovit planning school, yet they had a strong critical stance

against the bureaucratic coordination of the economy. In a thorough set of policy recommendations solicited by the head of the state, Ion Iliescu, The *Postolache Report*, suggested markets liberalization, some privatizations and new forms of directing investments via a stock exchange. Nonetheless, the major investments were still a state prerogative, as well as the ideal of industrial autonomy and preservation. Major neo-corporatist ideas made their way in the report and in many state decisions, especially the hope of creating a local class of Romanian capitalists. Yet, the international institutions like IMF and the World Bank criticized the dirigist approach, pressuring against state crediting the public industrial sector and proposed creating an internal inflationary adjustment of the consumption in order to institute markets. This gave greater weight to the critics of the developmentalist state and pushed forward a set of economists that were better connected with the global neoliberal discourse. The effects were the retreat of the state from industrial crediting and state subventions of the staple food and basic products. A new, rather strange, liberal neo-developmental state emerged under the lead of the prime-minister Theodor Stolojan (an economist working in the 1970s in *Central Planning Department*, and in the 1980s in the *Department for Foreign Exchange and International Financial Relations*) with catastrophic consequences for the population and the economy.

Second, between 1992 and 1996, as a reaction to the massive unemployment produced by IMF policy suggestions, the neo-developmental with a corporatist orientation gained momentum, and won the power inside the governing alliance. Another economist, Nicolae Văcăroiu (working from the 1970s in the *Central Planning Department*) put in place a consistent developmentalist program, with a much more clear concern for social justice than his predecessors. Cornel Ban names this set of policies, accordingly: “popular neo-developmentalism”.

Third, between 1997 and 2008, a radical neoliberal alliance was able to foster energies from different parties and to install a hegemonic consensus over state policies. Cornel Ban formulates a very powerful puzzle. He traces the transnational policy networks (local university programs, IMF and World Bank educational programs, transnational research programs, post-docs in western universities) which successfully installed the neoliberal set policies as normalcy. However, he observes, that even if this economic ideas were translations from the core capitalist international institutions, IMF and the World Bank, the local idiom was more radical than its core counterpart. That is a minimalist state, minimum redistribution, autocratic firm management, flat taxation, high taxation of work and low taxation of capital, favouring of transnational capital. Concepts and hypothesis that were marginal in the western neoliberalism were presented by the local intelligentsia as great achievements of the economic sciences. Much of this radicalism, Cornel Ban argues, was legitimized using the anti-communist

ideology. Social justice, redistribution, protectionist policies or state credit to local firms were all indexed as communist policies halting the true development of interconnected self-regulated markets.

Forth, between 2009 and 2014, a new neoliberal alliance profited from the economic crisis and opened the internal labour markets to transnational capital, especially the Western European capital. Cornel Ban shows that Romania, as many other Central European economies, produced a series of policies which transformed the country in an assembly lines for the transnational chains of production. The radical neoliberal policies of the previous policy regime came to full fruition by a new set of regulation: for labour (market flexibilization), the consumers (an increase of VAT), for small business (new taxes), and the furious clients over banks abuses. And especially, to avoid any technological spill-over giving all control over innovations to the multinational. Moderate prosperity became possible for the employees of multinationals or for the employees of the local firms serving the multinationals. Cornel Ban names this configuration: "dependent neoliberalism". Cornel Ban shows that Romania once again excels in terms of radicalism of the "dependent market economy" (Nölke and Vliegthart, 2009).

### **A challenging contribution**

Besides its undeniable salience for social sciences in Romania, Cornel Ban's book is a challenging contribution to the greater global academic endeavour to understand the varieties of policy regimes and the way policy travels across spaces and time. The disclosure of continuities and discontinuities in the political economy and policy-regimes of the Romanian states starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century is agenda setting. The global scale and breath in which local options were forged come at the surface with great clarity and allow us to better grasp yet another case of how capitalist peripheralization works and how it is resisted.

Cornel Ban's contribution is part of the generational academic endeavour that pressure for a game change in the analysis of the way policy options are formed. More exactly, this is a contribution to understanding the global conversation between the capitalist centre and the semi and peripheral areas, the formation of epistemic hegemonies and local hybridizations. The book also has some daring theoretical promises and some bold theoretical purposes. In the rest of this extended review I engage some of the major points in the architecture of the book which, I argue, are not thoroughly addressed. Also, I argue that some of the theoretical promises are not fully realized.

The conceptual language of the book is, at times, heavily infused with unexplained macroeconomic parlance and neoinstitutionalist Polanyian jargon. Nonetheless, the book still remains reader friendly for diverse audiences because

it mobilizes professional vocabularies which tend to sustain each other. This shortcoming could have been avoided through the addition of a more consistent theoretical introduction where the basic theoretical resources could have been explained: the actor network theory (Bockman and Eyal, 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Latour, 1993, 2005; MacKenzie et al., 2007), varieties of capitalism (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012; Hall and Soskics, 2001; Hancké et al., 2009; Nölke and Vliegthart, 2009) and the developmentalist states agenda (Chibber, 2003; Evans, 1995; Williams, 2014; Woo-Cumings, 1999). And, more importantly, the links between them. There are some important analytical holes created by the lack of paradigmatic integration of the theoretical strands used in the book. More precisely I address three aspects: the link between popular and expert epistemes, the issue of homology between political fractions and economist fractions and, finally, interest and agency.

### **Popular and expert epistemes**

This lack of theoretical integration can be attributed, at least partially, to the greater framework in which he is working in: the elite approach. The elite framework blocks a real conversation between the developmentalist theories and the actor-network theories. Cornel Ban makes the very interesting observation that there was a short opening in the early 1990 when workers self-organized and took over the factories in a daring democratic experiment at the shop floor level. However, the developmentalist alliance did not takeover this experiment, on the contrary they were loyal to their epistemic certainties regarding the virtues of top-down planning. The effect was a re-imposition of autocratic managerial control. The same contradictory effect obtained through the MOEBO privatization process, of entrusting the factories to their workers, yet the management hierarchies were constantly reinforced by the same technocratic ruling elite. Given the elite framework, all these remain but observations about missed opportunities of the ruling developmental elites. A wider and more integrated framework would have recognized these opportunities as clear instances of class conflict with a direct effect in terms of the retreat of the working class support for the ruling elite. In addition, the frustration of the working class was captured by the contending neoliberal epistemic formation: the long-awaited democracy supposedly can be obtained only in a new meritocratic context, where both the hard working person is going to be awarded by the market and the striving company will be bought by the international investors to be put on its rightful track – among the best on the world market. Besides the support of transnational academic networks, the contending neoliberal technocratic elite (Christian Democratic Alliance – CDR) was able to forge a "popular neoliberalism" with



the direct help of the working class. The biggest support for CDR was rallied from Transylvania, from the most industrialized areas of the region and from Romania. In such an alternative reading of the same empirical material the forgers of the neoliberal episteme are not just the elites, but also the masses, and the masses react to various policies as part of a network of interest formed in the capitalist division of labour.

Focusing solely on epistemic and political elites the rest of the society fades away, making unclear the greater silencing dynamics involved in class struggles and the production of ideology. A class analysis posits that agency is present in both the dominant and the dominated poles. The possibility of a relationship cannot be grasped if the dominated are analytically transformed into an ineffective category, nothing more than silent victims of active elites. The elite explanation suggests that the only important transformations that are relevant in terms of explanatory power are the differentiations at the top of the social hierarchy. Cornel Ban is always keen to show the effects on the population in terms of inequalities and redistribution. However, this is not yet a dynamic model. Those who are left out of the redistributive game are in dire situation, yet this deprivation does not make them inconsequential. However, in Eastern Europe, the scholars that Ban is using as resources have argued that the working class has evaporated after the end of state socialism. Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi and Elenor Townsley, for example, claim that “the greatest question of the postcommunist transition is where the working-class-cum-collective-actor we are supposed to study is? At present, there is nothing but a demobilized, disorganized mass of workers!” (Eyal et al., 2001:1221).

In a recent paper, Cornel Ban analyzes the virtues of class analysis in the Romanian academic field (Ban, 2015). In the book itself there are numerous references to the effects of class struggles and fine observations on the social dynamics produced by the very policies the author engages. However, he places too much theoretical emphasis on the editing process done by the locally enrolled actors. Editing becomes the major mechanism of discursive hybridization and much of the radicalism of the ethnicist reading of the development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, independent developmentalism of the socialists, or dependent neoliberalism are explained as a positioning game of some intellectuals in the greater global networks. In this strategy the brunt of explanation falls on the relative autonomy of the intellectual elite in the global academic fields in making translations. Capitalism happens especially at a global scale. Nonetheless, capitalism also produced categories of people in the division of labour, with their epistemic outlook on the world that are captured by or subvert hegemonic formations. In order to make editing a relevant concept, epistemic formations have to be seen in their complex ontologies. Editing becomes the backdoor through which greater

contextual forces are attributed to economists. While the intellectual elites are purportedly the only active groups, all others are deprived of any agency. In this respect, reacting to the elite paradigm, Burawoy argues that it is possible “that the compromises struck between dominant and subordinate classes set the prior conditions for alliances among the dominant classes” (2001:1112). Thus, before any split at the top occurs, a compromise between the various social strata might be needed. If we were to continue Burawoy’s criticism, we could argue that whether the subordinate are relevant or not for the power games played at the top is primarily an empirical question. This matter cannot be settled *a priori* epistemologically, through an act of agency dispossession, leaving entire parts of the social field completely inert. Somehow the popular criticisms, hopes and visions have to make it analytically in explaining hegemonic formations.

### **Elite fractions**

The developmentalist state agenda focuses on the growth alliances between various classes or fractions that appear in a given national context against the core capitalist states (Amsden, 1992; Chibber, 2003; Evans, 1995; Kohli, 2004) or with the help of some fractions of the core capital (Anderson, 2013a, 2013b; Brenner, 2006). The effects are particular types of bureaucratic configurations of the state agencies that produce a dynamic tension between the autonomy of the technocratic strata, the capital fractions and workers claims. While Cornel Ban is heavily referencing Peter Evans’ (1995) embedded autonomy of the bureaucratic state elite, it is somehow unclear how these technocratic fractions are linked with the epistemic communities of the economic science. How is developmentalist critique actually linked with the ANT paradigm?

Given the existing literature on the subject (Cucu, 2014; Cucu and Culic, 2012; Culic, 2002, 2006; Pasti, 1997; Petrovici, 2006; Poenaru, 2011; Zamfir, 2004), it seems that the field of the economists somehow is very similar with the contending bureaucratic fractions of the end of the 1980s. State socialism, as an accumulation machine, produced different strands of bureaucratic fractions with very different interests. The firm level managerial fraction was in a direct struggle with the county and national planning technocracy. In the planning machine there was a very important struggle and competition between those who were coordinating and research the exports and those who were coordinating internal production (Pasti, 1997). We are left to as if there are some linkages between the three major fractions in the economic field (liberal developmentalists, populist developmentalist and neoliberals) and the fractions reported by the literature as being influential in the political games of the 1990s.

These kinds of insights are completely invisible in the book and makes unclear why in 1992 the planning branch of Nicolae Văcăroiu prevailed in defining the economic policies and Theodor Stolojan's group of neoliberals was defeated.

Take the example of *The Postolache Report*, which is mentioned as a very important resource for the populist neodevelopmentalism of the 1992-1996. Yet it is both unclear why these former economists enrolled in the socialist planning in the 1980s prevailed over the neoliberal fraction at the beginning of the 1990s and how they were unable to sustain their temporary epistemic consensus after their first electoral defeat in 1996. Cornel Ban suggests that there was a major split in the economic field of the 1990s. In that period, many of the economists were coming from the same *Foreign Affairs Institute* of the *Romanian Academy*. Some of them migrated to the *National Romanian Bank* becoming the most radical neoliberals. Some of them migrated in the economic academic field and retained a developmentalist outlook on the economy with some liberal elements. It is not clear why these economists from the *Foreign Affairs Institute* did not have an outright monetarist vision as their Hungarian and Polish counterparts did (Eyal et al., 1998). It is also completely unclear why their French and Moscovite education and professional networks did not influence the entire cohort giving them the same ideological outlook. Why did they split into a liberal developmentalist branch and a neoliberal one?

It is also left unexplained how come that the hegemonic economic neodevelopmentalist episteme of 1992 and 1996 died so suddenly. Cornel Ban notes only that despite their economic successes they lost the election to the radical neoliberals in 1996 and their epistemic agenda had no heiress. It is suggested that the transnational neoliberal alliance had resources provided by the IMF and World Bank, and their success is not an epistemic one, but a crowding out effect done through their political capacities. Nonetheless, this does not explain the 1996 neoliberals' electoral success, despite their economic failures in 1992. Also it does not explain the nature of power resources, coming outside of the epistemic fields, yielded by the neoliberals, because they were extremely successful in silencing alternative voices in just a single year, the election year of 1996. Cornel Ban shows that there were homologies between the epistemic fields, political fields, and the class decomposition and recomposition dynamics. Yet, the links are left unexplained, hanging to each other only through their theoretical juxtaposition and not a real dialogue. As reader we are left to infer that this outcome may be a result of the angry disenfranchised workers fared in mass in 1992 and the unheard worker's voices that would have liked to short-circuit the factory hierarchies in the period of 1992 and 1996 and could not do that against the neo-developmentalists loyal to managerial line of command.

However, this would mean that class formation, diffuse popular emotions and fuzzy political stands are consequential in terms of policy outcomes, a point I made above.

### **Interest and agency**

In an insightful empirical tour de force, in the last chapter of the book, Cornel Ban discusses the issue of financing of the economy between 2002 and 2014, arguing that the current conjunction can be attributed to decisions taken at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s. The privatization of the financial sector produced an economy highly dependent on a domestic credit market dominated by western capital (80% of the banking sector is owned by foreign banks), and where most of the financial resources came from the intra-firm lending between the multinational headquarters and their local divisions.

To account for this transformation, Cornel Ban proposes an unexpected entitization, construing "the Eastern Europeans" as a global actor (p.228). More precisely, the eastern Europeans decided to privatize their financial sectors to the western capital, because that move allowed for a rupture between state banks, state companies and toxic loans. Purportedly, this strategy had the potential to avoid the formation of oligarchies, as opposed to the Ukrainian and Russian cases, and restart the domestic credit markets. Obviously, Cornel Ban is using the "Eastern Europeans" in a metaphorical sense. We are far from being invited to imagine that there was a collective actor who had a meta-historical vision which permitted a detached reflexive decision. Nonetheless, he does deploy this burgeoning metaphor. I argue that this is not just a short hand, but an effect of an incomplete fusion between the actor-network agenda and the developmentalist agenda.

On the one hand, the ANT framework is used to trace the logic of translation and epistemic formation across space and local contextualization across time. The economists and the actors engaged in economic policy debates derive much of their identity from their epistemic engagements, while other allegiances fade into the background. On the other hand, the developmentalist state framework is used to follow the logic of interest in which various elite class fractions are shaping state policies against other states and transnational capital. There is an expectation of agents as stable and coherent entities, which exists prior to the field of power in which they are placed. The state is not really engaged as a state system with multiple actors with contenting interests both at the elite level and at the popular level.

These two approaches come very handy, because they explain a very puzzling empirical reality. Cornel Ban shows convincingly, that economists turned into politicians in a blink of an eye, during the whole analyzed period. In the

last twenty five years, we witnessed overnight the transformation of neoliberal economists or of their neo-developmental counter-parts into high ranking political figures. When the neo-developmental agenda is failing, magically, the neoliberal academics are summoned to fix the economy, and vice-versa. Therefore, the ANT framework comes very handy in explaining why key economists from the Central Bank or think tanks are becoming key politicians. The developmentalist state framework is very useful in explaining why economists dedicated to a more embedded economy are transformed, almost as if in a Polanyian counter-movement, into alternative politicians. Nonetheless, both of these frameworks are not very useful in explaining how these economists are switched off and send back to their academic position or to heading their non-governmental organizations<sup>2</sup>. The implicit invitation that the empirical reality makes is to superpose the state with the economist agency. However, this is untenable theoretically. A possible solution, respectful both to the empirical material described by Cornel Ban and his theoretical insights, is to revisit the way interest and intentionality emerges for different actors and groups.

In the elite framework laid down by Eyal et al. (1998) the socialist managers seized power over the state enterprises in the 1990s and negotiated their control positions in the factories by mediating an ownership transfer from state to multinational companies. The fact that foreign direct investments were between 40-70% from GDP, along the 2000s, in the whole Central and Eastern Europe, is a reality that was predicted by the elite theory. In this theory, the managers, a fraction of the cultural bourgeoisie, did not have this meta-historical vantage point from where to calculate such a strategy. On the contrary, they followed their own interests. Unfortunately, a shortcoming of this analytical strategy, as mention above, is that it misplaces agency within the “doer” and it conflates class with subjectivity. The cultural bourgeoisie is the only bearer of interests. They have their interest spelled down in a strategy with a clear outcome. In addition, in an alliance of the managers with the socialist technocratic elites they were able to forge a hegemonic ideology with strong monetarist elements. From this theoretical vantage point, for an agent or a class to be consequential it has to have clear interests, to be fully formed as a group in order to act, or to have a common ideological stand. In this paradigm only the elite can become an agentic social strata or a class, leaving no room for other classes, for example the working class, to be constituted through their very unknowing acts or through their relations to other classes.

In Cornel Ban analysis the foreign direct investments seem to derive from a generic epistemic calculation done by the economists, apparently completely unrelated to ownership positions or organizational control issues. In this way

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<sup>2</sup> I owe these observations to Florin Faje.

agency is relegated to a generic bourgeois subjectivity formed in the transnational networks of academic debates over right policies. Such an analytical move resonates very much with ANT's claims. Certainly, ANT insists on the role of the objects as agents and tries to dissolve agency in the networks of interests, translations and mediations (Latour, 1993, 2005). Nonetheless, subjectivity is in many ways a privilege of someone who inscribes some meaning on an object/subject that circulates in a flat ontology across space and time. No room is left to mute emotions, unuttered sadness, uncoordinated irritation, fuzzy opposition, or just blunt rejection. Latency, splits, fractionalism, contractions, criticism, phantasms find with their ontology with great unease in an ANT scheme.

However, most probably the actors interested in formulating economic policies are themselves part of a greater network of interest that steam from the division of labour and the fights between capitalist fractions for reproducing capital accumulation. Their epistemic engagements come also from their own biographies inscribed in the local fields of power. Probably, they may be bearers of some class interests. In this way, probably, a better understanding comes from grasping how they are activated and deactivated in the political field as experts. Contextual political alliances, formed at the level of state institution, have the potential to be seen as instances of class struggles.

### **Conclusions**

Cornel Ban's book is an agenda setting contribution. Empirically dense, theoretical provoking. The above mention analytical tension lines – the link between classes and elites, the relations between elite fractions and the issue of interest/agency – are great openings to further the inquiry. They all constitute points for an exciting new research agenda with new theoretical tools. Cornel Ban's book is a very illuminating analysis of the way the economy was performed by various agents and the manner in which they composed the state in coherent and contradictory ways in the European periphery. All the chapters of this book are translated from English, being previously published independently. Many of the chapters are already well cited and have influenced contemporary research. Being brought together in Romanian language made only more visible the fruitfulness of the proposed approached to investigate the way the capitalist centre/periphery has been constituted in the last two centuries. This is a mandatory lecture for all Romanian speaking sociologists and heterodox economists.

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