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2

***FIELDWORK IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA:  
THE UMASS ROMANIAN RESEARCH GROUP***

***Special Issue. Guest editors: Marian Viorel Anăstăsoaie,  
László Fosztó and Iuliu Rațiu***

**CONTENTS**

MARIAN VIOREL ANĂSTĂSOAIE, LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ, IULIU RAȚIU, <i>Guest Editors' Foreword: Fieldwork in Socialist Romania: The UMass Romanian Research Group</i> .....	7
STEVEN SAMPSON, <i>How I Became a 'Romania Expert'</i> .....	13
DAVID A. KIDECKEL, <i>'Did You Arrive by Train or by Ship?': Transportation as Politics and Metaphor in Fieldwork in Socialist Romania</i> .....	29
SAM BECK, <i>Reflections on Research in Romania</i> .....	49

STEVEN G. RANDALL, <i>Socialist Romania and the Futility of Cold War Analysis</i> .....	71
MARIAN VIOREL ANĂȘTĂSOAIE, <i>Translating John V. Murra's 'The Economic Organization of the Inca State' Into Romanian as 'Obra de Amor'</i> .....	93
LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ, <i>Was there a 'Gypsy Problem' in Socialist Romania? From Suppressing 'Nationalism' to Recognition of a National Minority</i> .....	117
<b>Romanian Sociology Today</b> .....	141
IONUȚ FÖLDES, VERONICA SAVU, <i>Family Practices Across Generations and National Borders</i> .....	143
<b>Critical Review</b> .....	171
<b>Book Review:</b> <i>Zona urbană. O economie politică a socialismului românesc (Urban Zone. A Political Economy of Romanian Socialism)</i> by Norbert Petrovici (CORNEL BAN) .....	173
<b>The Authors of this Issue</b> .....	177

*Special Issue*

***FIELDWORK IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA:  
THE UMASS ROMANIAN RESEARCH GROUP***

***Guest editors: Marian Viorel Anăstăsoaie,  
László Fosztó and Iuliu Rațiu***



## FIELDWORK IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA: THE UMASS ROMANIAN RESEARCH GROUP

*Guest Editors' Forward*

**MARIAN VIOREL ANĂSTĂSOAIE<sup>1</sup>, LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ<sup>2</sup>, and IULIU RAȚIU<sup>3</sup>**

This special issue of *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Sociologia* originates from the panel “Shaping the Field of Romanian Studies: American & Romanian Scholars at Work” chaired by Vintilă Mihăilescu and organized by Iuliu Rațiu at the Conference of the Society for Romanian Studies (SRS), Bucharest 26-29 June, 2018. In line with the general theme of the conference, “#Romania100: Looking Forward through the Past”, the participants, all of whom had done research in Romania, were invited to present their views on what shaped the field of Romanian Studies, with a focus on academic exchanges and the mutual influence between international and Romanian scholars. Three participants in this panel, László Fosztó, David Kideckel, and Steven Sampson have submitted their revised presentations for this issue. Another panel member, Sam Beck, was unable to attend. Viorel Anăstăsoaie attended the panel; finally, Steven Randall did not attend the panel but graciously accepted later to reflect back on his fieldwork experience.

In the transition from panel discussions to printed essays, it became apparent that the contribution of the University of Massachusetts Romanian Research Group to the field of Romanian Studies and, more specifically, to anthropology deserved more attention. The members of the Romanian Research Group and their major research interests are: Sam Beck—marginal peasant communities, regional political economy; John W. Cole—village socio-economic organization, domestic economy; David A. Kideckel—agricultural collectivization, peasant-workers; Marilyn McArthur—inter-ethnic relations; Steven Randall—domestic economy, mountain communities; and, Steven Sampson—urbanization, regional planning (Kideckel and Sampson, 1984).

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As John Cole points out, when he came to Romania together with his graduate students in the early 1970s, “American anthropology [was] not exactly parallel to any Romanian academic discipline,” so he used *anthropology* “to mean the work of American anthropologists who have conducted field research in Romania and *economics, sociology, ethnology* and *social science* to refer to the work of Romanian scholars” (Cole, 1984). The fact that today social anthropology is a distinct academic discipline in Romania is in part a testament to the work of the six members of the UMass Romanian Research Group and we are happy that four of them accepted to contribute essays to this issue.

Steven Sampson’s paper discusses the challenges of researchers studying insignificant places and underlines the moments when researchers’ specific knowledge pushes them to become generalists. As the first piece in the collection, Sampson’s contribution brings together the focus of the Society for Romanian Studies Conference panel (the role of international scholars in shaping the field of Romanian Studies) and the gist of this special issue (American anthropologists doing fieldwork in socialist Romania). Sampson reflects on the paradoxes of Western researchers living and talking to people during a time when it was officially illegal for Romanians to even speak to a foreigner without making a report to the police. He contextualizes the place of Romania within the field of East European/Balkan/Slavic Studies, where Romanian Studies was often the orphan inside Slavic academic departments, or lay in the shadow of Soviet or Communist Studies area. Most importantly, though, Sampson justifies why studying (in) a place like Romania was relevant to anthropology and credits the work of Romanian Studies anthropologists who successfully made other anthropologists read about Romania for truly anthropological reasons, not Romanian reasons.

As a case in point, David Kideckel’s essay considers how transportation and mobility model the character of Romanian-American interaction during fieldwork from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. He argues that transportation, seen as a vehicle for growth and development, both legitimated and delegitimated the socialist regime, in so far as it restricted, policed, and limited individuals’ ability to travel. Kideckel explains how sharing transportation with people, such as commuter buses, personal vehicles, or even bikes, either gave them cover for resistance or provoked their fear of political exposure. His ethnographic depictions ultimately enable reflection about a relatively new topic in the study of socialism, contribute to our understanding of that era, and show the manner international researchers engaged with socialist society.

Sam Beck’s contribution is a biographical essay analyzing the impact of his fieldwork in Romania on his subsequent anthropological practice in the United States. He explains how his practice is a product instigated in part by the research carried out by Dimitrie Gusti’s Bucharest School of Sociology and by

Nicolae Gheorghe's project to create an anti-hegemonic Roma strategy that could support a positive Roma identity to replace the stigmatized identity given them by the majority population in Romania and Europe. Beck's moral anthropological project is to actively engage in reformulating the reality in which we find ourselves in order to envision and create a different future than the self-destructive course our planetary leadership has chosen at this time.

Continuing Beck's vision of global engagement, Steven Randall's paper is a meditation on the collapse of Ceaușescu's regime. Randall suggests that Romania, like all states, socialist, social-democratic, and neoliberal, are confronted by the same world systemic capitalism and that all states use a mixture of policies—capitalist and socialist, democratic and authoritarian—in order to avoid the hazards and gain advantages of a global system dominated by capitalist accumulation. Randall argues that Cold War era analysis is not a useful way to evaluate winners or losers. He concludes that the failure of communism as a state system in Romania could not have been predicted purely by its authoritarian or its socialist policy features.

In addition to these four contributions by US scholars, this issue contains two papers written by anthropologists from Romania on issues pertaining to the late socialist period. Viorel Anăstăsoaie's case study of one of the few anthropological translations in socialist Romania brings to the fore the oeuvre of John Victor Murra, a US anthropologist of Jewish-Russian and Romanian origins. Murra's path-breaking PhD thesis on the economic and political organization of the Inka state, defended at the University of Chicago in 1956, was translated into Romanian by his sister Ata Iosifescu in the 1980s (Murra, 1987). Anăstăsoaie's paper reveals the contribution of anthropological translations to the circulation of ideas, theories, and ethnographic knowledge across linguistic, epistemological, and socio-political differences. It turns out that Murra was the fieldwork supervisor of Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz in Puerto Rico, while they did their PhD research as part of the comparative project coordinated by Julian Steward at Columbia University (Steward *et al.*, 1956). This collective project inspired John Cole, himself a student of Eric Wolf, to set-up the UMass Romanian Research Group's comparative project in Romania. Cole's theoretical interest in cultural ecology, originally based on his work in the Italian Alps (Cole and Wolf, 1974) and later in the Romanian Carpathians, parallels Murra's analysis of processes of ecological adaptation in the Andes (Murra, 1972).

László Fosztó's essay analyzes the interactions between international and local researchers with particular focus on issues related to the Romanian Roma. Fosztó tries to reconstruct the perspective of the Romanian authorities by offering a critical reading of recently published documents from the archive of the Romanian secret police. Fosztó argues that the authorities denied the existence of

‘the Gypsy problem’ (namely: the lack of cultural and political recognition of this minority group, the daily racism Roma were subject to, and the persistence of their socio-economic marginality). This denial of what was essentially a social problem led them to associate most of the Roma’s secular and religious activities with hostile attitudes to the regime, branding them as a particular form of anti-state ‘nationalism’. Using examples from Nicolae Gheorghe’s file, Fosztó shows how officers of the *Securitate* and their informants did not just monitor scholarly interactions. They actively intervened in order to rupture relations, suppress, and discourage exchanges between locals and foreigners.

These papers show that there is still much to be explored in the history of sociological and anthropological research in Romania, especially regarding the collaboration, reciprocal influences, and tensions between international and Romanian scholars. These interactions are not only shaped by theoretical or methodological differences, but also by an interplay of political, institutional, and cultural factors that have had a profound impact on the way research projects based on fieldwork were carried out. In fact, these aspects were also examined by Enikő Magyari-Vincze in *Întâlniri multiple. Antropologi occidentali în Europa de Est* (Multiple Encounters. Western Anthropologists in Eastern Europe), a collection of essays coedited with Colin Quigley and Gabriel Troc.<sup>4</sup> In the afterword, Magyari-Vincze points out that international scholars doing fieldwork in Eastern Europe “anthropologized” the region and helped build the formal and informal networks and institutions of anthropology in Romania (Magyari-Vincze, 2000).

With this special issue, *Studia Sociologia* continues a series of fieldwork “revisits” recently inaugurated with the awarding of Doctor Honoris Causa Title of the Babeș-Bolyai University to Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, two distinguished American anthropologists who also conducted research in Romania starting with the 1970s. In her acceptance speech, Gail Kligman talks about the impact of her research in Romania on her understanding of current US political events. Kligman also explains how for most Romanians she interacted with, she has remained a good example of the “social construction of identity” in that she helped bring forth this theoretical approach to fieldwork in Romania and that her immersion in the life of the people she studied and her interaction with Romanian scholars helped her become more attuned to her own professional development (Kligman, 2017).

Similarly, Katherine Verdery talks about how her life and research in Romania made clear “the overwhelming importance of the social relations that construct not only people’s lives—but also knowledge about it”; coming full

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<sup>4</sup> Four of the editors and contributors to this special issue also collaborated to the publication of *Întâlniri multiple*: David Kideckel and Steven Sampson contributed essays while Gabriel Troc and Viorel Anăstăsoaie did editing and translation work.

circle, like John Cole before, Verdery also reflects on the state of the field at the time of their arrival: "since American-style anthropology did not have a disciplinary partner in Romania, [her] project fell between two stools: too sociological for folklorists, and too folkloristic for sociologists." Paying homage to both academics and personal friends, Verdery concludes her acceptance speech by emphasizing the significance of mutual academic and personal exchanges. She stresses that: "the great honor awarded today should not be conferred on me alone, but *on our collaboration*" (Verdery, 2017).

Continuing the conversation about this type of collaboration, the papers collected here show the importance of personal fieldwork narratives, of archival research, and of new sources, such as state documents, private archives made public, and personal archives (fieldnotes, correspondence, interviews). Both the editors and the authors of this special issue consider that these resources should be thoroughly inventoried and widely shared so that interested scholars could conduct research projects meant to reconstruct Romania not only as a society, but as a field of study in the last decades of the socialist period.

It was long believed that international scholars had been driven by research agendas designed in their universities and careers, and that they were completely impervious to significant local research agendas and traditions (see Hofer 1968 for a similar claim regarding foreign anthropologists and local ethnographers). As the following papers prove, visiting scholars were indeed responding to relevant issues for local scholars, such as the impact of the administrative reorganization and of industrialization on rural communities. Their research projects, perhaps designed with a more comparative and competitive bend, were conducted without sacrificing the principles of academic integrity and freedom of expression which were not easily available to native scholars burdened by (self) censorship, political control, and internal competitions for symbol status or state resources.

Indeed, international scholars did calibrate their research agendas to connect with and integrate themes, methodologies, and relevant local scholarship into their work. For example, David Kideckel engaged with Traian Herseni and the research tradition of Dimitrie Gusti's School of Sociology. Sam Beck collaborated with Nicolae Gheorghe in the exploration of the politically sensitive research theme of the ethnic identity of Roma communities. In turn and on their own terms, local researchers benefited from these exchanges by obtaining relevant literature and by participating in international debates that were not easily accessible on this side of the Iron Curtain. In contrast, however, there was also the more pervasive tendency of Romanian authorities to use the work of visiting scholars for ideological purposes in an effort to legitimize the openness and independence of Ceaușescu's regime both at home and abroad or, more perversely, of the *Securitate* officers to claim the importance of their mission surveilling international scholars.

Last but not least, the guest editors wish to give thanks to their own collaborators: to the four members of the UMass Romanian Research Group for their continued interest in the field of Romanian Studies and to Gabriel Troc and Sorin Gog for generously providing the platform to make these contributions widely available.

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## HOW I BECAME A 'ROMANIA EXPERT'

STEVEN SAMPSON<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** This paper, a revised presentation at a panel on academic exchanges at the 2018 Conference of the Society for Romanian Studies, discusses the challenges of researchers studying small, insignificant places, and particularly when our specific knowledge pushes us to become generalists. Since every country has a '*La noi ca la nimeni*' ('Nobody has it the way we have it') discourse, how do we make Romania interesting?

**Keywords:** planning, urbanization, systematization, area studies, UMass Romanian Research Group, social anthropology

### Introduction: Romania and Me<sup>2</sup>

I first came to Romania in 1974, as part of a group of anthropology students from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, under the direction of Professor John W. Cole.<sup>3</sup> As part of the group, dispersed in several villages in the Braşov area, my original research plan was to carry out ethno-linguistic fieldwork in the village of Feldioara, near Braşov. However, I soon discovered that Feldioara had been selected to be developed into a small town. So like many anthropologists, I was forced by real life to change my topic, and I ended up researching the process

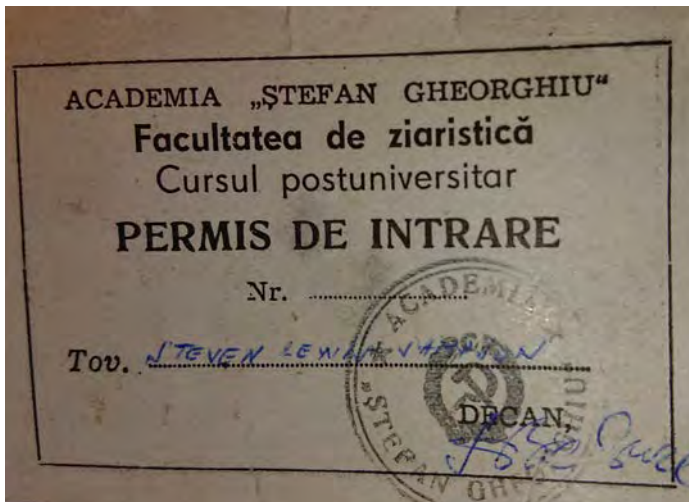
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<sup>2</sup> Revised presentation for a panel on the role of foreign exchange in Romanian Studies, Annual Conference of the Society for Romanian Studies, Bucharest, June 2018. As this panel brought together scholars from various disciplines, not only anthropologists, this paper was written for this mixed audience. I would like to thank Iuliu Raţiu for organizing this panel and for his work in having our contributions published.

<sup>3</sup> Besides John and myself, our Romanian Research Group consisted of David Kideckel, Sam Beck, Steven Randall and Marilyn McArthur. A set of early publications describing our work appeared in *Dialectical Anthropology* 1(4), 1976, and in the Romanian sociology journal *Viitorul Social* 6(1), 1977, pp. 155-166. (<http://bibliotecadesociologie.ro/download/cole-john-w-sampson-steven-kideckel-david-a-mcathur-marylin-randall-steven-g-1977-schimbare-si-integrare-sociala-in-zona-brasov-viitorul-social-vi1-155-166/>)

of urbanization and systematization.<sup>4</sup> Over a period of 18 months, I studied how socialist planning ideology interacted with bureaucratic improvisation. The plans for Feldioara's urban development did not work out, of course. They were exaggerated in ambition, poorly thought out, lacked sufficient resources, did not involve the locals, had competing agendas, and often stopped and re-started without any rationality except that is what *Ceașescu și partidul* (Ceașescu and the party) wanted. Following my Ph.D., in 1980-1981, with a research grant from the Danish Social Science Research Council (I was living in Denmark), I returned to Romania to study local party elites. I was based at the national party training school, Academia Ștefan Gheorghiu.



Entry pass to the graduate school of the communist party. *Source: Author's archive.*

I visited *județ* party schools and villages to study how local leaders performed their role as middlemen; like middle managers everywhere, they were pressed from the top down and from the bottom up. My research in Feldioara and with the local party leaders led to a series of studies on planning and improvisation, bureaucracy and corruption, the Romanian underground

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<sup>4</sup> For more details on this initial fieldwork, see my two articles on fieldwork in Romania written with David Kideckel (1984, 1988), and my 2019 paper 'Recalling Romania' to appear in a forthcoming collection on fieldwork in Eastern Europe edited by Raluca Mateoc. I received my Ph.D. from UMASS in 1980 and published my dissertation in revised form in Sampson (1984b); to ease access, I have scanned and uploaded all my early publications on my personal website [www.stevensampson.com](http://www.stevensampson.com).

economy, rumors and rumor spreading, the informal sector, and a general interest in how societies like Romania muddle through rather than exploding (Sampson, 1983-1989). I even did a short (unpublished) piece on the *Securitate*, entitled '*Fii atent*' ('Watch out!'), concluding that *Secu* was just like every other Romanian institution, incredibly inefficient, but also brutal (Sampson, 1983d). Some of these studies were academic, others were published in different form in the Danish press, or disseminated at conferences, or even broadcast through the BBC, Voice of America and Radio Europa Liberă. On my visits to Romania, I gave copies of these papers to friends and colleagues. These papers were passed on, copied, and even discovered among the belongings of other foreign researchers in Romania.

By 1984, I had now been in and out of Romania for 10 years. In July 1985, on a holiday visit to Romania with my wife and two young children, we were detained on entry at Otopeni Airport. I remember the look on the young border officer's face as he looked at me, then my passport, then me again, his computer screen flashing, and once again at me, at my passport, at the flashing screen, and raising a shaking finger, told me to go sit over there and wait. Perhaps he had never come face to face with a *dusmanul poporului* (enemy of the people) before. After waiting an hour in the transit hall, I was finally approached by a man in uniform, either border guard or *Securitate* officer. I was prepared for some kind of interrogation or discussion. I asked him, in Romanian, why I was being refused entry. 'Why?', I asked. 'You know why' ('*Știi de ce*'), he responded. And that was the end of my 'interrogation'. My family and I then remained overnight in the hot, stuffy Otopeni transit hall until the following afternoon, when the next plane flew back to Copenhagen. Back home I addressed the Romanian embassy and requested a new visa. I did this several times up until 1989, but I was unsuccessful. I discovered later on, in my *Securitate* file of about 500 pages, that I had been declared *interzis pentru intrarea în țară* (prohibited from entering the country), for a period of exactly five years, from December 1984 until 31 December 1989. During the period when I was forbidden to enter the country, I followed Romanian affairs from afar, writing articles for newspaper and occasionally on the radio and TV, both in Denmark and a few times with the BBC, VOA and Swedish Radio. In late December 1989, I appeared several times on Danish TV and radio as a Romania expert, much to the envy of Romanian exiles living in Denmark.

I returned to Romania in March 1990. After a long drive from Denmark, where I have lived since 1978, driving all the way through Eastern (oops! Central) Europe to the village Feldioara, my car had broken down. Incredibly, the local policeman, who in the Ceaușescu era would have been monitoring me suspiciously, offered to loan me his personal car! 'No problem, just take it,' he



said. I took his car to Bucharest for four days! A Romanian sociologist, Septimiu Chelchea, formerly at the party school, published an article in the newspaper *Adevărul* about my analysis of Romanian rumors. The article was entitled 'Robin Hood in Romania'. Apparently, I was Robin Hood.

What a change.

By 1992 and through the 1990s, I worked in Romania as a consultant doing 'The Transition'. As a 'Romania expert', I was part of a Danish consulting team on contract with the EU. Our mission was to set up the Romanian Ministry of Environment. After that, with the World Bank, I did a brief assessment of social problems in the Jiu Valley. I then worked with another international team, on the fourth floor of the Government building, in what was then the Department of Reform. Our mandate was 'public administration reform', and I was charged with issues related to civil society and public communication. Our EU team restructured the government's complaint department, and we remodeled the Government reception hall. We installed computer hardware, wrote instruction guides, held workshops and trained government officials in how to organize cabinet meetings, known as 'machinery of government'. After a couple years work in Romania, I began to work on projects in other countries of the Balkans, doing projects in NGOs, human rights, democracy, and anti-corruption (e.g. Sampson, 1996).

### **A Professional Stranger**

Let me backtrack a moment and recapitulate my own relationship to Romania during the 1990s. Perhaps the easiest way to look at this relationship is to use a classic article by the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1971 [1908]), called 'The Stranger'. 'Who is the stranger?' asks Simmel. The stranger embodies a combination of proximity and distance. The characteristic of the stranger is this combination of nearness and remoteness in the same person. The stranger, says Simmel, is not a wanderer, but nor is he a member of the community. The stranger is close by, but not one of us. If there is one way to describe anthropological fieldwork, then that's it (a well-known anthropology textbook by Michael Agar is in fact entitled *The Professional Stranger*). As an anthropologist in Romania, but as a foreigner/stranger, *un străin*, I became close to many people. I lived with them and was among them, but I was not of them. I was always someone else. We Western researchers conducted field research in Romania, living and talking to people, even when it was officially illegal for Romanians to even speak to a foreigner without making a report to the police.

A second characteristic of the stranger, says Simmel, is that the stranger is often a trader. The stranger invariably has resources from the outside which they trade with those on the inside. As foreign anthropologists in Romania, we

also certainly traded. Like all Westerners in Romania at the time, we had access to special goods from the dollar shops (cigarettes, whiskey, electronics); we had dollars; or we could bring in goods from abroad: birth control pills, Swiss army knives, auto parts, a Samsonite briefcase, blue jeans, children's clothes, powdered milk. I could trade these items or give them as gifts to Romanian friends and informants.

Third, Simmel observes that the stranger is 'objective', in that they are not tied to anyone locally, and for this reason, people can confide in the stranger in a way they would otherwise not tell even their closest local friends. Indeed, as researchers, we learned intimate details of people's lives precisely because we were strangers and could not be suspected of being *Securitate* informers. We were people from another world.

But the stranger's objectivity, their outsider status, also entails that they view the locals as a collective, as a 'them', just as the locals also see individual foreign strangers as *străini*. The stranger is for Simmel a sociological category. As a stranger, I also found myself judging Romanians not as individuals with their unique points of view, situations and solutions, but as Romanians. I searched for a theory of 'how Romanians are'. It is not just foreigners who attempt such a project. Romanian poets, dramatists, historians and ethnographers have all tried to formulate theories of 'how Romanians are': think of Caragiale, Boia, Rădulescu-Motru, etc. to explain 'how Romanians are'. I have tried it myself on occasion (Sampson, 1994).

Simmel looks at the stranger as a special category of person, neither one of us, but not an outsider either. I, too, was a special category of person: for some Romanians, I was simply off limits; these were people who took seriously the law about interacting with foreigners. For others, I was a target, an *obiectiv* about whom they should make a report to the *Securitate*. And for still others, I was an instrument, a means of obtaining some dollars or even a ticket out of the country via the coveted invitation abroad. For many villagers, I was '*Domnul Ștefan*' or '*Americanule!*'. For Romanian intellectuals, I was '*cercetatorul american din Feldioara*' (the American researcher from Feldioara). For the *Securitate* I was, 'Samy', my *numele conspirativ* (code name) in my file. In these files, I was some kind of CIA agent seeking to discover clues about the country. But I was also being viewed as someone whose mission was to denigrate Romania through my discussions with Romanians and my articles, many of which were summarized in their reports. Finally, for a few close Romanians, I was Steve, a simple friend (*prieten*), confidante, someone with whom we could discuss politics, exchange gossip, gossip and send family photos. Of course, many of these friends also ended up having contact with the *Securitate* organs, none of it pleasant.

To sum up, Simmel's remarks on the stranger are more than relevant to anyone doing research in Romania, both those foreign sponsorships and those without. Moreover, they also apply to expatriate Romanians who return from abroad. Being a stranger was not the only framework for my research relationship with Romania. I was, of course, part of several academic communities. I was part of the community of Western anthropologists, part of the East European/Soviet studies community, and one of the small group of Romanian Studies specialists, the Romanianists. As we at this conference are among such a forum of Romanian Studies specialists, I will concentrate on this latter community (in Bucharest in 2018 of the 450 participants in the SRS conference, 280 came from abroad, of which many were ethnic Romanian expatriates).

### **Studying Small Places**

Romanian Studies has always existed under two shadows: One was the shadow of area studies generally. Romania existed within the field of East European/Balkan/Slavic Studies. Romanian studies was the orphan inside Slavic departments. The second shadow was in the Soviet Studies or Communist Studies area. Romania was viewed as a type of regime: with Marxist ideology, political authoritarianism and command economy. Anyone who went to a Soviet Studies conference in the 1970s or 1980s found that most of the papers were about the USSR and Russia; Romania shared the fate of the other East European states: they were interesting when there was a social revolt or some kind of deviance from the Soviet model, but unlike the USSR and Russia, they were not strategically important. In academia, Romanian Studies existed within the Romance Language departments, alongside French, Spanish and Italian, often with a single courageous professor who covered Romanian philology, culture and history under their area. The Romanian scholars I know have had this combination of what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1953) called 'the hedgehog and the fox'.<sup>5</sup> I would say that many of us Romanianists were like Berlin's hedgehog: we were specialists in one particular aspect of Romanian life. However, events and practicality often compelled us to become foxes about Romania; we had to know a lot of different things. We had to become 'Romania experts'. This was certainly true of Romanian exile professors in Europe and the U.S. But it was also true of Western Romanianists as well. Probably the best example is (no pun intended) Dennis Deletant, certainly a leader in Romanian studies, with his incredibly broad range of interests in all things Romanian, from philology to the *Securitate*.

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<sup>5</sup> Berlin takes the slogan from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus. 'A fox knows many things, but a hedgehog one important thing'.

So we Romanianists are, in some ways hedgehogs. We know a lot about one aspect of Romanian life. But we are also foxes, trying to keep up with many other aspects of Romanian life in the context of changing interests or political crises. With this background, let me make four basic points here, at the risk of restating the obvious. The first point concerns the mission that we anthropology hedgehogs had in Romania.

### ***Our Successful and Failed Missions***

For anthropologists of Romania some decades ago, we had two missions. First, we had to justify why studying (in) a place like Romania was relevant to anthropology, when so many of our colleagues were doing fieldwork in the more classic anthropological sites (Highland New Guinea, East Africa, Amazon, Mexico) and were researching classic problematics of kinship, ritual or exchange. Making our work relevant to anthropology was Mission Number One. Thanks to diligent colleagues in our field, we Romanian studies anthropologists were successful in this mission. Especially Katherine Verdery, David Kideckel, and Gail Kligman made other anthropologists read about Romania for truly anthropological reasons, not Romanian reasons.

The second mission for we anthropologists of Romania was more difficult: we had to convince the *Securitate* why we were researchers and not spies. In this mission, we had help from courageous Romanian academics, who in their private conversations and reports with the organs tried to explain what it was we foreign anthropologists were doing and why it was not espionage. Unfortunately, in this second mission, we and our Romanian allies failed miserably. We were judged as spies, whether we knew it or not, whether we admitted it or not. We were spies, but it was not because we were working for the CIA (which we were not), not because we had grants from organizations close to the U.S. Government (which we did), and not because we had some kind of secret mission (which we did not). No, we were spies because we were finding out things about Romanian society and everyday life that the state considered strategic; things they did not want us to know, and things they did not want others to know. These 'things' were what we anthropologists might call 'way of life' or 'practice' or 'coping strategies', or 'local knowledge' or 'culture'. But for the *Securitate* it was strategic knowledge. As we moved about in ways which they could not decipher, interacting with different groups of people who were considered to have access to strategic secrets (engineers, for example, or people who had ration cards for eggs!), we were finding out what *Secu* considered to be 'secrets'. We were seen as spies because our knowledge, they assumed, could be used by those whom the *Securitate* thought were

enemies of the regime (at home or abroad, including Hungary). Three of the secrets which we obtained, for example, was the secret of how inefficient the communist system was, how oppressive it was, and how clever Romanians were in getting around it. The relationship between authoritarian oppression and informal coping strategies is a theme in much of the work on Eastern Europe (cf. Wedel, 1986), and in many anthropological studies of marginalized groups. For the *Securitate*, however, our social science insights comprised secret knowledge, and knowing such a secret, or diffusing it to others, made us dangerous to them. Of course, the *Securitate* knew this secret already. They knew what we knew, and we knew that they knew. The problem was that they did not want anyone else to know. Ceaușescu's Romania was a regime of hierarchical knowledge supported by intimidation, coercion, suspicion and violence. It was a regime which made some people desperate to survive, even to the point of betraying others (Verdery, 2018). Inside this web, we were a bunch of Western anthropologists out there in the countryside running around talking to people, living and partaking of daily life with Romanians in villages, having intimate dinners with intellectuals, observing political meetings and walking alongside people as they worked their gardens, slaughtered pigs or celebrated weddings. What remains surprising is not that we were suspect, but that we were allowed to do this for so long. If I were one of *them*, I would not have let *me* in for the ten years that I managed to visit Romania. The reason we could run around, of course, is that our presence in Romania was part of a larger strategic relationship between the U.S. and Romania, allowing Romanian researchers and specialists to come to the U.S. (discussed in Kideckel and Sampson, 1984 and Sampson and Kideckel, 1988).

### ***The Romanian Studies Community***

Romanian Studies, like other kinds of 'area studies' has been marked by the triangular nature of the area studies community. Members of the three groups in this triangle each have their respective biography and career trajectory. One group are the foreign (non-Romanian) scholars who learn the language, culture and history for whatever academic reasons, and who have experienced Romania as adult researchers. I am one of these. Second, there is the local Romanian scholar, who has indigenous knowledge and upbringing in a specific local milieu; some of these local scholars have developed close connections with foreign scholars, while others remain ensconced in local enclaves due to language, political persuasion or an antipathy toward foreign researchers (Romania had a major gap between those local scholars who had relations with foreigners and those who did not; this is not purely an artefact of

knowing English, nor is it a Romanian phenomenon; here in Denmark there is a word applied to these locally anchored scholars, who are called 'world famous in Denmark'). The third point in this triangle is the émigré scholar, the formerly local scholar now living and working abroad who interacts with us foreigners, initially as a resource of local knowledge and subsequently as an equal. When I attended conferences of the Society for Romanian Studies in the 1980s, the participants brought together only foreign and émigré scholars (groups 1 and 3). In contrast, our conference in Bucharest in 2018 brought together all three groups (plus a fourth group which I will not deal with here: returned émigrés who after prolonged study or residence abroad, decide to return home and pursue local careers; obviously, this group did not exist before 1989).

Needless to say, during the 1980s, the *Securitate* knew how to cultivate all three groups mentioned above. Each of them have their own epistemologies and ontologies; their life course was different, their relationship to Romania, and to the authorities, was profoundly different, the way in which they could utilize their expertise was different as well. If you survey various area studies milieus – Romania, Balkans, East Asia, Pacific Islands, Lusophone studies, you name it – you will find many of the same configurations, sometimes tripartite, other times including the fourth group of returning émigrés. Communist Romania's relationship to its own intellectuals, to foreigners and to its émigrés was marked by the nature of the Romanian political regime. Romanian émigré intellectuals had a different status before 1989 and after. In this sense, 1989 marked a truly revolutionary change in this configuration, especially as concerns the role of the returned émigré who had studied or worked in the West and returned to teach in university, modernize the administration, run an NGO or re-enter cultural life.

### ***The Advantage of Studying Small Places***

Studying small, insignificant places – and, let's face it, that's what Romania has been and still is – may lead one to feel isolated. But it also has a somehow liberating character which is at once both intensely personal but vibrant. For those who study small places, the scholarly milieus are intimate, the networks smaller and more intense, generating both long-term friendships and intense hostilities. (An example: In 1986, I was fortunate to have the sociologist Pavel Câmpeanu at my home in Copenhagen. He lived in Bucharest, and had published critical articles abroad under a pseudonym. Casals. Over dinner, we discussed his work, and I gave him some of my articles on Romanian bureaucracy and the informal sector that I thought he might find of interest. Some days later, Câmpeanu informed me that he found my articles of interest and precisely for that reason that I should absolutely not call or visit him in Bucharest, for fear that I would be followed. In the meantime, I published a review of Câmpeanu's book

in the journal *Telos* with a number of criticisms (Sampson, 1986). In the 1990s, living and working in Bucharest, I learned that Câmpeanu was extremely angry about my review, and on the few occasions we encountered each other, his hostility was unmistakable. Such is the trajectory of friendships in socialism and post-socialism).

The liberating aspect of area studies of Romania is that it constitutes more of a community than one might encounter among scholars interested in, say, French literature, Italian Renaissance Art or British colonial economy in India. In the Romanian Studies community, everybody knows everybody; or can easily get in touch with them. The community of scholars is much smaller, even if it includes the scholars residing abroad and the local milieu. A further advantage of this small community is that it provides a base of operations for those who inevitably leave it to pursue other interests for a time, and then return. In a typical pattern, one has researched or attended conferences on Romania for some years, but has then pursued other academic or even vocational interests. But Romania hangs with you. Some years later you return 'home', finding some of the familiar faces, and some new ones.

### ***Becoming an 'Expert'***

When small, insignificant places suddenly get into the news, usually due to a political crisis, mass violence or disaster, our hedgehog expertise about Country X or Area Y suddenly becomes a commodity. It can be packaged, marketed, and disseminated in an interview or an op-ed piece or a popular book. A knowledge of Romanian language or history may push you into being a 'Romania expert' on a current crisis, for better or for worse. If you are an anthropologist, for example, with a knowledge of village life or household economy, you might end up with a journalist who wants you to talk about the 2017 anti-corruption demonstrations (which happened to me); in the 1990s, I had appeared in radio and TV discussions on how to make democracy in Eastern Europe. But I had also written articles about Transylvania, the Hungarian minority, Roma/Gypsies, and yes, about 'the real Dracula'. In a kind of rhizome fashion, my trajectory of expertise proceeded from life in a village in southern Transylvania in the 1970s, to explaining stagnation of the Ceaușescu regime in the 1980s, to how to make democracy in Romania in the 1990s, to civil society in the Balkans, to anticorruption NGOs in the 2000s. In this sense, area studies is full of risks: our hedgehog knowledge becomes fox-like. Our expertise gets pushed to the envelope, with the risk that we speak as dilettantes, or simply uninformed. My article on Dracula in Romania and in Dracula films (which I grew up with as a kid in my native Philadelphia), was severely criticized—not by historians but by Dracula film experts.

Let me summarize these four features of my career in Romanian studies. One was the idea of concretizing our mission, both in our academic field of study and to the security organs; the second was being enmeshed in this triangular group of Romanian Studies scholars with quite different biographies and career trajectories; the third was the subtle liberating character of knowing about a small, relatively insignificant place, a kind of nerd-liberation; and the fourth was the exhilaration and hazards of being thrust into the expert role. I think that Romanian Studies has been marked by all these four aspects in a uniquely Romanian way. I say 'uniquely Romanian' because there are plenty of situations where academics from abroad study small, relatively insignificant places; this is especially true for anthropologists, who study marginal groups in far-away places.

### **Learning From Another Small Place**

So let me pursue these four points by making some contrasts between my own studies of Romania, some decades ago, and the current situation where I have been living: Denmark. I have lived and worked in Denmark for 40 years (for 20 years I have worked in Sweden, commuting daily by boat/train across the water). Denmark is a small country in Northern Europe, an EU and NATO member, notable for social welfare and political consensus. I happen to know Americans residing in the U.S., who, just like I was studying Romania, were studying Denmark. One of these Danish specialists was a professor at UMASS, where I myself studied. He was a specialist on Danish, and he called himself a 'Danist'. And back when I was thinking what I would do with a career as an anthropologist who studied Romania, he offered me some words of encouragement: 'My career', he said, 'has never gone wrong with me being a Danist'. He was a Danist. So if he could be a Danist, well, then I could be a Romanianist. A meeting of the Society of Romanian Studies is, after all, a meeting of Romanianists.

Since then, I have met a few other Danists. They are sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, International Relations scholars, welfare state theorists, historians, archaeologists, literary scholars and philosophers. If you are a Danist, you find yourself in this world of 'Scandinavian Studies'. I have attended Scandinavian Studies conferences, and they resemble Balkan Studies conferences. At Scandinavian Studies conferences, you meet specialists on topics such as Swedish film, Norwegian history, Viking archaeology, Danish philosophy, welfare state theory, Nordic media studies, etc. Like other kinds of area studies, Scandinavian and Danish studies has its collaboration and conflicts between three academic tribes: 1) the foreign scholars who have learned knowledge of a Scandinavian language and culture who come to Denmark, do their research and



then returned home to pursue careers; 2) local Danish scholars who invariably view the parachuting foreign researchers as a bit ill-informed, naïve or not sufficiently competent in the nuances of Danish language, culture and history ('they will never understand us'), but who nevertheless might provide them with resources, such as the invitation to hang out at Berkeley or Minnesota or Wisconsin; and, 3) the group of Danes and other Scandinavian émigrés living in the US and the UK who teach Scandinavian studies in British and American institutions (as voluntary exiles). Because of their language skills, academic reputation, organizational engagement and personal biographies, this third group of individuals has great influence in journal editing, publishing, organizing conferences and forming international collaboration arrangements. You might call them the Danish versions of professors Stephen Fischer-Galați, Vladimir Tismăneanu or Lavinia Stan (all prominent members of the Romanian Studies community, but who also have other specialties as well in their fields).

Scandinavian Studies and Romanian Studies thus share a number of structural similarities. I was one of these naïve foreign researchers who popped up in Romania 1974, settled in a village, learned the language and spent a lot of time with ordinary villagers learning about their lives, and then returned home. People like me have been the subject of much debate in anthropology. The Hungarian ethnologist Tamás Hofer (1968), several decades ago, made a very famous comparison of how we American anthropologists work, comparing us with home-grown European national ethnologists. He called us 'slash and burn' anthropologists, after the name for swidden cultures in New Guinea and elsewhere. We slash-and-burn anthropologists go into an area, cultivate it with the goal of making an important theoretical impact, and then we move on. Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict were Hofer's foils. (Mead worked in the Pacific, Benedict with North American Indians, but both later on did work on East Europe, and Benedict wrote a treatise on Romania). More recently, the Polish anthropologist Michal Buchowski (2004, 2012) has also made similar accusations of how East European scholarship has been overlooked by Western anthropologists. Within area studies generally, many foreigners are accused of being slash-and-burn scholars. Within our own communities, however, we are still more like hedgehogs, with our nerd-like interests in intimate details of far-away places which are not very strategically important. Most area scholars, including Romanianists, have experienced this combination of exhilaration in knowing a lot of things about a little place, and then the boredom or letdown when you find out that no one is really interested in Romania unless you can put a certain angle on it. The Danists have succeeded in putting this angle on Denmark. I therefore think Romanian studies might have something to learn from those who study the Scandinavian countries. Let me therefore take Denmark as an example.

Denmark is a small, insignificant, welfare state. It has the world's highest taxes. Its two major cultural figures are Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. It gave us archaeologists such as P.V. Glob, linguists such as Hjelmslev, the writer Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen) and scientists such as H.C. Ørsted and Niels Bohr. They are the Danish equivalent of, say, Ionescu, Brâncuși, Coandă and Noica. Unlike Romania, Denmark has no natural resources to speak of. Instead, Denmark creates famous design of furniture, porcelain, and silver. Once in a while, Denmark makes the news, either because it has great restaurants (the world's number 1 restaurant Noma, which among other things serves ants); or because it has good TV detective dramas (such as 'The Bridge' or 'The Killing'), or because it has a strict immigration policy (requiring asylum seekers to surrender their jewelry or banning burkas in public). In the presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton once said 'We are not Denmark', a statement which was front-page Danish news. Trump officials have also spoken of socialism in Denmark, which led the Danish government officials to issue a rebuttal statement. In one of Philip Roth's earlier novels, the satire *Our Gang*, President Tricky E. Dixon actually bombs Denmark. Recently, Denmark has become famous for its concept of cozy personal well-being known as 'hygge'.

Denmark is also interesting for academic reasons. In the International Relations literature, Denmark is discussed in terms of its international role far out of proportion to its small size. In history and economics, scholars analyze Denmark's peaceful social and agricultural revolution, which retained the small farmer in an advanced economy. In welfare studies, scholars discuss Denmark's 'flexicurity' system whereby firms can easily hire and fire workers, the lack of any minimum wage, generous welfare provisions and high unemployment benefits. Corruption researchers comment on Denmark being the world's least corrupt country, a consequence of its high level of social trust. Happiness researchers point to Denmark as among the world's happiest countries.

Danish intellectual entrepreneurs and Danists around the world have cultivated Danish uniqueness in these areas. Hence, with generous state contributions, Denmark has a Hans Christian Andersen Institute, a Kierkegaard Research Center, a Center for Welfare History, and a Center for Happiness Research. Civil society expert Robert Putnam has participated in projects researching the high level of social trust in Denmark. There are research projects on why Denmark is not corrupt, and Denmark proudly hosted the International Anti-Corruption Conference in 2018. And Francis Fukuyama's book, *Origins of Political Order* equates successful state building with an institution-building journey he calls 'Getting to Denmark'. Now these kinds of academic enterprises – H.C. Andersen, Kierkegaard, Welfare History, Happiness Research, Social Trust - do not exist in Romania. Nor do they exist anywhere else in this particular form;

they are specifically Danish. The reason is that Danish politicians, cultural personalities and academics are concerned with what the world says about Denmark. *So are the Danists*, for obvious reasons. The Danish elite is interested that the world sees Denmark as welfare-oriented, as uncorrupt, that people feel 'happy', that there is social cohesion, political consensus, and that it retains a national tasteful furniture design and has '*hygge*' (a book about *hygge* has been translated into Romanian). So Denmark thus has its own '*La noi ca la nimeni*' (Nobody has it the way we have it) discourse. The Danish '*La noi ca la nimeni*' is quite different from Romania's '*La noi ca la nimeni*' discussion. It is not a lament, a *doină*; it is not melancholic or cynical. Rather the Danish discourse of uniqueness is about what the world sees in Denmark, about what is valuable in Denmark, about what the world can learn from Denmark, and what Denmark can give back to the world. It is about Danish exceptionalism in a quite different way than, say Lucian Boia's view of Romanian '*altfelitate*' (exceptionalism). This image of Denmark did not come out of nowhere. It came because there were Danists who were pushing it, Danists who were pushing Denmark so that people like Robert Putnam or Francis Fukuyama would take a closer look. The Danists had a mission. And it is this mission I think we Romanianists can learn from.

### **Conclusions: Making Romania Interesting**

Let me conclude with a challenge. The challenge for we Romanianists (and for Romanian Studies) is to reflect upon how does the world see Romania? What can Romania give back to the world? Here Romanianists have a special task, not only as academic researchers, but as intellectual entrepreneurs. The task is not just to say good things about Romania in order to offset the bad things. It is to make Romania intellectually attractive. One example would be the work of the citizenship scholar Rogers Brubaker, collaborating with Romanian colleagues in his study of ethnicity and nationalism in Cluj (Brubaker et al., 2006).

Small places like Romania are always going to be used. They are going to be exploited by policymakers, stereotyped by journalists and slash-and-burned by careerist academics. There are always going to be fractures between the ambitious foreign researchers, the envious local scholars who feel overlooked, and the émigrés trying to achieve their career goals and recognition both at home and abroad. When Hillary Clinton, reacting to Bernie Sanders' praise of the Danish welfare system, declared 'We are not Denmark', the Danes were not offended. They felt relieved. Danes do not want Denmark to become America. They want to hear people like Putnam or Fukuyama talk about 'Getting to Denmark'.

No politician I know has uttered the phrase 'We are not Romania' (although with Romania's EU presidency taking place in 2019, this might change). And a slogan like 'Getting to Romania' would certainly have a different echo these days than 'Getting to Denmark'. In both cases, however, the role of the area studies scholars, the Danists and the Romanianists, remains crucial in influencing the kind of discourse about the country they study. Slogans like 'Getting to Denmark' are cheap talk, of course. But in the nature of academic fashion, such talk can lead to intellectual cooperation, institutional collaboration, and yes, grant money! 'Getting to Denmark' can be the magic bullet. The task of Romanian studies is to undertake this kind of project, to make the world see Romania, its lights and shadows, and to show what Romania can give back to the world. When you become a Romania expert – by design or by accident -you take on a mission. We hedgehogs need to become foxes. We need to make Romania interesting to others. *Hai să facem! Trăiască Romanian Studies!* (C'mon let's do it. Long Live Romanian Studies!)

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## **'DID YOU ARRIVE BY TRAIN OR BY SHIP?:' TRANSPORTATION AS POLITICS AND METAPHOR IN FIELDWORK IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA**

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**ABSTRACT.** This essay considers how transportation and mobility model the character of Romanian-American interaction during fieldwork from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Transportation in socialist Romania was a register of modernization and regime legitimation as well as an absolute threat to that legitimation. Official suspicions of movement and political concern about transportation translated into differentially restricting, policing, and limiting availability of transportation. In contrast anthropological fieldwork is predicated on movement while Western culture also claimed free mobility as a cultural good. These different teleologies provoked diverse disjunctures in my interactions with Romanians. While I engaged with Romanians naively, my travelling together with people either gave them cover for resistance or provoked their fear of political exposure. Sharing transportation resources with Romanians encouraged others' concerns about my alleged political bias or was used to affirm socialist superiority. In other words, transportation during socialism was never neutral, but freighted politically and culturally confrontational.

**Keywords:** transportation, fieldwork, Cold War, socialism, mobility, UMass Romanian Research Group

### **Introduction: The Universe from the Back Seat of a Dacia 1300**

This essay considers how transportation and mobility model the character of Romanian-American interaction during fieldwork from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. I never considered transportation as a critical diagnostic in its own right. However, a review of fieldnotes for this issue of *Studia Sociologia* suggested transportation was a cultural domain operating across a range of contexts which profoundly shaped my interactions with

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Romanian citizens and understanding of Romanian society. Though I did not have a specific “transportation” category in my fieldnotes,<sup>2</sup> related issues kept emerging from diverse field scenes. In fact, as I thought about it, it was clear that mobility connected intensively with both socialist life and anthropological fieldwork. For example, the socialist state mobilized and controlled its population partially by limiting and socializing transportation. In contrast, anthropological fieldwork depends on constant, individualized movement across field sites, in centers and peripheries, meeting with colleagues and informants in different localities, or even taking an occasional vacation break from the field. These contrasting teleologies thus created interaction contexts ripe for negotiation, challenge, subversion, and/or reaffirmation of systemic principles and individual beliefs.

Burrell and Hörschelmann (2014: 2-3) suggest that, as much as any other phenomenon of socialist life, mobility and transportation illustrate socialist state conditions as they “articulate(d) power, politics, and materiality with human agency, (thereby) shaping peoples’ understanding of the limits and possibilities for action within the regime.” Though transportation and mobility in socialist societies has been considered *sui generis* (Cirniala, 2014; Siegelbaum, 2013; Živković, 2014), I hope to broaden this perspective to consider meanings and tensions emerging from the interaction of socialist subjects with the Western cultural other. Discerning meaning from transportation interactions thus provides clues to powerful features of political economy, underlying cultural principles, as well as some of the fault lines between Western and socialist systems defined in individual interaction.

Looking back four decades, contestations related to transportation and mobility often emerged from prosaic occurrences. For example, early in my fieldwork older villagers universally sought information about my arrival in Hîrseni commune by asking me “Did you arrive by train or by ship?” (“*Ai venit cu trenul sau cu vaporul?*”). At the time, I assumed the question simply implied my informants’ naiveté and lack of geographical understanding. However, the question is actually a synecdoche. Though referring manifestly to my village arrival, the query was essentially a commentary on history and memory under Romanian socialism, implying relations of time, place, and identity, and questioning whether an outsider, such as myself, ought to be incorporated into or marginalized from local systems of meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> I did, however, develop categories that addressed among others, “commuting,” “horses,” “mechanization,” “migration,” “modernization,” “visiting,” and a few more general categories which spoke to the issues discussed here.

By way of explanation, train and ship travel had both long-standing significances in village culture and history as well as intense connectivity to more recent socialist conditions. An American putatively arriving by sea articulated with memories of those who left to the USA before the First World War (Kideckel, 2007). Thus, to some, a sea-borne arrival implied knowledge of those long-lost relatives, influencing many villagers to present me with envelope fragments, partial addresses, or blotted phone numbers while asking if I knew their family members or could find out more about them. Furthermore, my village nickname, "Americanul," duplicated that of some who returned from the USA, thus echoing the economic and political upheavals this return migration produced in village affairs. Meanwhile, train travel implicated me even more in problematic understanding of the recent village past. The railroads, after all, were a visible instrument of the state and a defining quality of socialist development (Turnock, 2005).<sup>3</sup> Village sons and daughters came and went on trains, but older villagers rarely did. Instead, their train-related experience had been travel by horse-drawn cart to deliver produce to rail sidings in the forced agricultural contract system in the years before collectivization. These bitter events remained clear in local memory, thereby potentially compromising my identity by placing me in league with the Romanian state, or tainted by collectivization.

Below I ethnographically discuss a few travel anecdotes that mainly bring together visiting anthropologist and host Romanians (and in one instance, visiting Romanians and host anthropologists). These define the cultural and political economic principles emerging from the idiosyncratic interaction of individuals during transportation events. I especially focus on how such situations illustrate fault lines between opposing cultural and political economic principles, and exposed Romanian citizens and this foreign anthropologist to socialist policy and fraught political and cultural sensitivities even while engaging in normal daily activities.

### **Transportation and Mobility in Socialist Society and Culture**

The political quality of transportation and mobility are not solely characteristic of the former socialist states. The modern politics of transportation is found in choices or placement in the organization of infrastructure (Yarrington, 2015), statuses, and values attached to different transport means (Lutz, 2014), or even differential movement shaped by income, political status, or displacement (Harms, 2013). The politics of transportation is also apparent in anthropological

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<sup>3</sup> Former Communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901-1965) had been a railway worker and the Grivița rail workers' strike (1933) was one of the formative events in Romanian socialist history.



fieldwork. Most simply put, anthropologists often have access to transportation resources largely unavailable to host populations. This inequality can translate into a tug-of-war over such resources, as did Paul Rabinow's use of an automobile in fieldwork in Morocco (1997). The car enabled his quick access to diverse field sites, better provisioning, and the chance to leave the field for elsewhere. However, his informants had other ideas and continually demanded Rabinow drive them to market and on other errands. As expected, he ditched the vehicle.

Transportation and physical mobility were especially imbued with power relations in socialist societies. Thus, simultaneously and contradictorily, population movement was both a register of modernization and regime legitimation as well as an absolute threat to that legitimation (Cirniala, 2014: 45). Movement was essential to the development project of socialist regimes, illustrated by improved roads, railroads, and other public transportation, the growth of private automobile ownership (Siegelbaum, 2013), encouragement of internal tourism, and even the occasional dispensation of passports for touring abroad (Stefan, 2014). At the same time, individual access to mobility and transportation implied the potential escape of individuals from the eyes of the police and eased entry of people into places where the Party's domination of corporate life was also largely absent. Official suspicions of movement and political concern about transportation thus translated into restricting emigration, internal restrictions on places to live, limited housing stock, continual "carding" of mobile individuals for their identity papers, closing certain cities to immigration, and limiting the availability of transportation means, among the more notable practices.

The power relations of transportation in East European socialist societies, such as Romania from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, were also visible in their variable application. That is, mobility was not restricted equally across the board, but differential mobility possibilities were part and parcel of the way by which socialist governments ranked their citizens and either coopted their complacency or coerced their compliance. Though limiting transportation was part of the practice of "etatization" (Verdery, 1996: 40), not all citizens experienced the same degrees of transport limitation. Paradoxically, the closer the fit between individual and state, the less the individual was dependent on the state for transportation. Greater political trust translated to greater mobility. Thus, for example, many officials and some scholars had an easier ability to purchase private cars, afford taxi transportation, or travel to foreign venues. Allowing trusted members of society to occasionally travel abroad, meanwhile, was used to visibly challenge Western critique of restricted mobility in socialism, even while enabling Romanian access to Western people and ideas and things. Meanwhile, those lower in the socio-economic scale, e.g. industrial workers, clerks, and other "just plain folks" (*oameni de rând*) were confronted daily with over-crowded busses and

trams, limited ability to purchase private transportation, and heavy restrictions on movement. Collectivized peasantries and other rural dwellers had to make due with rickety bicycles, horse- and water buffalo-drawn carts, and the occasional bus to bring rural workers to nearby or not-so-nearby factories.<sup>4</sup>

Contrasting prevailing dualistic socialist mobility beliefs, movement in Western society was an essential aspect of capitalist life and generally desirable. Unlike socialist political trustworthiness, differential mobility in capitalism is often a function of market access. Those at either end of the class hierarchy have greater degrees of mobility. Those at the top have volitional mobility, as in frequent vacations, while those at the bottom experience forced mobility, as in labor migration. Continual movement often characterized capitalist lives as the exchange of smaller for larger homes, the belief in “voting with one’s feet,” and commitment to notions of upward mobility. Only in America could Kerouac’s “On the Road” be thought to imagine an entire culture. Mobility was also critical in the anthropology of the middle 1970s, when the discipline still privileged fieldwork in non-Western societies. The anthropologist’s job was to make distant lands intelligible. Classic ethnographies, like Malinowski’s journey to the Trobriands or Evans-Pritchard landing among the Nuer, encompass travel stories defined by the heroic person of the anthropologist. In the visiting anthropologist, then, the individualism of Western mobility ran smack into the socialist transportation policy regime.

Thus, the presence of our group of five graduate students and their professor in mid-1970s Romania was both highly desired by Romanian officials but seriously suspect from the moment we arrived. As the Romanian dictator sought to maneuver outside the Soviet orbit post-Prague Spring, the diplomatic opening between Ceaușescu and the West was clearly in our favor. Contradictorily, our research topics,<sup>5</sup> and requests to reside in village communities and be allowed close daily contact with Romanian citizens were remarkably concerning for the security threats they represented and for our possibly contaminating citizens with foreign ideologies.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it took some time for us to gain permission to reside in the communities of our choice, and once we finally arrived, transportation issues were thrust front and center.

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<sup>4</sup> Workers commuted to the Făgăraș Chemical Combine (CCF), the main employer of Hîrseni workers in the 1970s, from as far away as 37 km (Zderciuc, 1972: 277).

<sup>5</sup> I studied agricultural collectivization; Beck focused on the socio-cultural and historical circumstances of frontier conditions; Cole considered worker-peasants in a suburban village; McArthur focused on Saxon-German history and social structure; Randall examined the life circumstances of private mountain peasants who generally tried to live outside the demands of the state; and, Sampson focused on urban planning and systematization of Romanian settlement.

<sup>6</sup> Concern for the contamination of Romania’s citizens by foreign influences contributed to passage of the Official Secrets Act in 1974, just at the moment that the UMass Romanian Research Group entered the field for our first stint of long-term field research.

Though we needed to travel to various research sites, movement out of our communities for which we had received permission was suspect. Furthermore, as anthropologists we dealt with those across the social and political hierarchy and thus were exposed to conditions, incidents, and issues of mobility and transportation of different sorts and with different people. The generally rooted circumstances of many in the villages and their broad suspicion and uncertainty about movement they expressed so poignantly in the train/ship question above complicated matters even further. These contrasting expectations were intensively manifested in the transportation experiences I had across the span of my fieldwork between 1973 and 1984.<sup>7</sup> Virtually any and all transportation modalities including planes, ships, trains, busses and trams, automobiles, bicycles, and even horse- and water buffalo-drawn carts, were sites of potential subversion of socialist policy, conflict between socialist policy and anthropological practice, and contradiction between Romanian and American cultural expectations.

Below, using the lens of various “transportation moments,” I evaluate the meaning of interactions during field research, alone and with colleagues, and with Romanians of diverse statuses. I suggest how anthropological research at socialist sites through all these interactions helped define aspects of then-socialist society and the challenges to socialist principles. The foreign researcher’s presence was never merely neutral, but often highlighted socialist principles in stark relief, either embellishing or disrupting them. Furthermore, no matter how mundane these transportation events, each was imbued with aspects of power and politics emanating from the systemic tensions of the Cold War and the contradictions of Western and Romanian attitudes and values related to mobility. These ethnographic depictions thus enable reflection about a topic generally obscure in the study of socialism and aid our understanding of this historical moment, and the manner socialist society was engaged by foreign analysts.

### **Transportation, Mobility, and Field Research in and about Cold War Romania**

The diverse transportation moments described below, and the values, processes, and contestations they illustrate, by no means encompass the totality of the cultural, emotional, and political states characterizing the relationship

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<sup>7</sup> After a very uncomfortable month in the commune in Summer 1984, where I was hounded by police and where friends and acquaintances were threatened for speaking with me, I stopped traveling to Romania until the regime was overthrown in late 1989. I returned to Romania soon after the Revolution, in April 1990, and was there for the celebration of Orthodox Easter, the first televised airing of Ceaușescu’s trial in its entirety, and the occupation of Piața Universității by members of the newly reconstituted and merged National Peasant and Christian Democratic parties (PNT-CD) in opposition to emerging president Ion Iliescu.

between the foreign anthropologist and Romanian hosts. Nor do they fully illustrate the range of transportation moments I experienced during fieldwork. I have selected them more for their expository than for their dramatic qualities. Though each is a unique event unto itself, together they portray a changing picture of my developing interactions with Romanian friends and colleagues conditioned by socialist realities and anthropological sensibilities.

### ***Before the Field: Naiveté and Obscurity***

The earliest moments of my field experience and relationship with Romanian realities and people is probably best characterized by the incredible naiveté we acted out toward each other. As a graduate student, I was not particularly swayed by an understanding of socialism as totalitarian. Quite the contrary, I went to Romania looking for ways that life betrayed the totalitarian image. At the same time, summer 1973 was probably the high point in the relaxation of political control of Romanians by their socialist masters, giving Romanians a sense that other things were possible. In fact, however, neither myself nor my Romanian interlocutors saw things too clearly. While “America,” and hence my presence, may have served as a symbol of this opening and American culture something to be celebrated, the “system” was still very much evident and structured to prevent dissent and contamination by outsiders.

I suppose my naiveté about East European life was first made clear to me in summer 1973 at the Austrian border town of Brück am der Leitha, when I was thrown off the Wiener Walzer Express train heading to Bucharest for lacking a Hungarian transit visa. This was my first trip to Europe, where my understanding of the right to unfettered border crossings, nurtured by years of travel between the US and Canada, clashed with the realities of Cold War Europe. Though I secured a Romanian tourist visa in advance of my trip, I neglected to prepare for the entire trip. Traveling on a very tight budget, I refused the inflated offer of the Austrian cab driver to haul me to the border where I could secure a visa, but instead returned to Vienna, hitching a ride with a German long-haul trucker, to retrieve a visa the following day (I slept over night in the main Vienna train station) at a Hungarian office that issued transit and other visas.

Both my naiveté about Eastern Europe and a degree of Romanian naiveté about visiting Americans, was repeated over and over that summer, especially emerging in diverse transportation venues. For example, that first summer Sam Beck and I traveled for a day with Romulus Vulcănescu (d. 1999), a highly regarded ethnologist and folklorist, in Vulcănescu's car across the Bărăgan, the southern Romanian plain, to the town of Curtea de Argeş. Vulcănescu was proud

to claim his independence and lack of fear of the Party in the privacy of his vehicle, and used this trip to highlight this and to introduce us to important qualities of Romanian culture and folklore, like the tale of *Mesterul Manole* or *țuica de Turț* and *bulz* at an out-of-the-way village inn. Vulcănescu spoke often of his political independence and respect for Americans, clearly aiming for possible collaboration. Comically, however, he also tried to impress us with his knowledge of American culture by, among other things, mimicking American driving habits. He periodically turned to face whomever of us was in the backseat (sometimes Sam, sometimes me), proclaiming “Mannix, Mannix” in a loud excited voice while careening down the road and jerking the steering wheel left and right.<sup>8</sup> To this day I remain impressed by both the absurdity of the situation and Vulcănescu’s courage, not as a driver, but as a scholar.

My naiveté was finally replaced with a sense of Cold War reality when, in that summer, I took a week’s trip to the Danube Delta, hitchhiking there and back. My trip to Tulcea was uneventful and I really remember nothing about it. However, that changed when I boarded the ferry heading out on the northernmost Chilia branch of the Danube, marking the border between Romania and the then-Soviet Union. My intent was to travel to the furthest point on the ferry’s route and then “see what happens.” The trip along the Chilia was eye-opening. Aside from the numerous passengers traveling with chickens and pigs, I was both impressed and mortified to see the gun emplacements along the Soviet border. The sensitivity of the border, only able to be experienced by my purposeful mobility, especially thrust itself on me when we landed at Periprava, the final port of debarkation.

During the multi-hour ferry journey I was befriended by a young *lipovean*<sup>9</sup> man. My Russian amounted to a phrase or two, my Romanian at the time was essentially non-existent, and his English also rudimentary, but we bonded over music, both of us declaring our love for Creedence Clearwater Revival! M’s quick thinking saved me from my own naiveté. As I left the ferry, a soldier at the end of the gangplank was examining debarking passengers’ papers. He was visibly chagrined when I gave him my American passport, and did a triple-take looking back and forth to me and my passport. For a moment he hesitated, as if he was going to call his superiors, when M saved the day. He grabbed my passport from the soldier’s hand, grabbed me by my shirtsleeve and hustled me away. I expected to hear gunfire over my head, as we walked briskly from the port.

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<sup>8</sup> “Mannix” was an American TV series about a rugged police detective popular then on Romanian television. He was often involved in very exciting car chases, which Vulcănescu was play-acting.

<sup>9</sup> *Lipovenii*, or Old Believers, had fled Russia during the time of Peter the Great, escaping his reforms of Orthodoxy. Many settled in the Danube Delta area and, until Ceaușescu’s regime attempts at forced collectivization, right around the time of my early-1970s visit there, lived much as they had since their Russian exile in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

After most of a week with him, his family, and friends, swatting mosquitos, eating fish soup, and playing football, I asked about returning to Tulcea, but he indicated I shouldn't worry. On the appointed day, instead of taking me to the Chilia branch, we walked on paths through dunes and reeds to a small lake where he motioned me to stay and then he left. Under an hour later a motorized canoe showed up with a grizzled fellow at the tiller. I got in and we left on a winding journey through Delta back channels. We stopped to pick up one peasant lady at a small riparian settlement, who tried to teach me Romanian while we floated past woods and fields. But the language lessons abruptly stopped as we neared a barge anchored in the channel on which stood rifle-toting guards supervising a gang of prisoners up to their waist in muck dredging the channel. Given our location in the northern part of the Delta, it was unlikely that the prisoners were working on the Danube-Black Sea Canal, condemned by UN resolution in the mid-1950s. However, the UN action also condemned Romania's ill-treatment of prisoners in the Danube project, and the sight in front of me clearly echoed that. The old man at the tiller motioned me to be silent as we glided past the barge. But prison ships and shotguns were not things I expected in reforming Romania. Clearly, I wasn't in Kansas any longer!

My Delta sojourn suggested that pockets of Cold War Romania largely resisted or maneuvered around state control and that youth will have its way. My presence even afforded that young *lipovean* man the opportunity to enact a small resistance. Floating past the barge I learned of a menacing state which, once my period of active fieldwork began, reappeared if only in the minds of my friends and informants who convinced me there was potential danger in the intimacy of private conveyance, whether automobile or water-buffalo drawn cart, beyond the watchful eyes of the *Securitate*.

### ***Traveling in Capitulation and Resistance***

After spending some months in the field I had become integrated into a network of village intellectuals who occupied positions of civic responsibility within village and commune. Though they were committed Party members (at least publicly), I thought our discussions open and honest. Still, despite our closeness, and small acts of resistance we practiced, like the regular Friday night poker game I hosted at my rooms with matchsticks as stakes, during which we joked about the local police listening at the widow, my friends' social positions allowed them little room to deviate from the Party line in their work. They were often caught between desires to express their friendship and trust in me and their need to affirm their political trustworthiness. This tension was particularly apparent in transportation contexts that, by definition, opened my friends to suspicion and peril.



Romanian identification card. *Source: Author's archive.*

An automobile trip to Brașov with one friend in autumn 1975 is a case in point. He needed to drive to the city to meet with county education officials. Hoping to visit the county statistical bureau, I asked if I could tag along. My friend was ok with my accompanying him until he remembered his automobile papers did not reflect his car's changed appearance. In order to personalize his Dacia 1300, he recently had half of the vehicle repainted.<sup>10</sup> Thinking about the prospects for the trip, he temporized while discussing the consequences lest we be stopped by authorities seeking our papers. He said that it would be bad to show the police his vehicle information without the new color having been registered. Furthermore, to be driving in an incorrectly registered vehicle in the company of an American, would look especially problematic since he was on "official business." In my Western mindset I thought it ludicrous that the car's color would matter to the police, so I pressed him to take me along. He ultimately agreed to my accompanying him, but spent a good part of the trip fretting about the police randomly demanding the papers of passing motorists.

In a contrasting case from spring 1976, a local worker asked me to drive him to the city in his car, claiming my American identity would protect him from police sanctions. I had never met this fellow until the morning at 4:00 a.m. when he showed up at my rooms, knocking loudly to wake me. He beseeched me to drive him to Brașov, so that he might register his new car and secure his driver's license. He received his car some weeks before and it sat in his courtyard as he had neither driver's license nor papers. He needed to get to Brașov to finish those formalities, but worried police might stop him on the way. As word was out that I had a valid driver's license, he sought my help as a solution. Though I

<sup>10</sup> He also personalized the vehicle, as was the style then, with a virtual menagerie of toy animals resting on the back shelf above the car's trunk, including the requisite dog whose head bobbed as the car moved.

resisted and suggested we could go another day, he informed me that this was the last day he could get these papers without much delay. His entreaties were so mournful, I relented and we had an uneventful trip there and back.

Compared to the sensitivity of travel in private automobiles, where my Party friends were cautious about American contacts, the public experience of bus travel was seemingly much less problematic. In fact, my introduction to Hîrseni commune came when Sam Beck and I met a few workers at the bus stop outside the Făgăraş Chemical Combine (FCC) gates and were invited back to Hîrseni village with them. They seemed completely unfazed about being seen with us on the bus. From that introduction to the village and commune in summer 1973 I continued to spend considerable time at town and village bus stops, and on the bus as well. As my research was concerned with the implications for the local collective farm (CAP) of villagers juggling twin responsibilities of factory and agricultural labor, I often went with workers into town and home again. However my commuting came to the attention of the local police head (*şef de post*) who asked why I regularly counted people going to and from the city and why I was a frequent bus passenger as well. It turned out that my commuting was actually not as sensitive as was my hanging around the CCF, a major manufacture of explosives for the Romanian military.

Generally speaking, commuting by bus entailed mainly complacency with a few small challenges to political expectations. For example, now and again while waiting at the bus stop, young men stood and played cards, using their upturned palms as a table. Riding the bus was a dour affair, especially in the morning, as people's hunched backs and occasional snoozing manifested a habitus of the downtrodden. Workers were tired from work in the village the night before and many had to take the 5:00 a.m. bus, for which they awoke between 3:00 and 4:00, to be in time for their 7:00 a.m. shift. The bus ride home was usually more animated. Having finished their shift, some workers stopped at the factory store to purchase household goods unavailable in the village. Others got a drink with their mates at one of the bars in town. Every now and then, heated but brief exchanges broke out between workers on the afternoon bus. At Christmas time the busses were often filled with *cete* of young men from different villages.<sup>11</sup> Dressed in special hats and sashes, they made a commotion by competitive caroling while shouting humorous insults back and forth. But whether coming or going, when I got on the bus, friends would always motion for me to sit with them. They seemed less self-conscious and worried about exposure than myself.

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<sup>11</sup> The *ceata* was a young man's association formed specifically to organize village events during the Christmas season. *Cete* (pl.) from different villages or different *cete* from the same village often competed with each other in Christmas caroling or other feats of bravado.





Playing cards waiting for bus. *Source: Author's archive.*

As the contrast between bus and automobile suggests, private travel was potentially more challenging to the system because it enabled exchanges away from official eyes. Though this could both encourage or frighten my friends, I always felt the possibility of silent conspiracy with private travelling companions who could use the moment to supplant party narratives. For example, one cold spring morning at the CAP barns I decided to help an older man, Dml P, load a cart with manure, and then work with him the rest of the day. After loading the manure, we headed in the water buffalo-drawn cart to the scales across the village to weigh his load for labor credit, and then continued east to spread manure on his CAP plot. On the trip to the east field, as we passed the communal cemetery, Dml P began a litany of complaint. Rebuking collectivization, he recounted each person or household that, before collectivization, had owned the plots of land we traversed. He groused about how long it took to cart manure using a water buffalo instead of a horse, and the convoluted route he had to take to get the manure, weigh it, travel to far fields, and spread it. He said he gave a horse to the collective, but it died a few years previous. He contrasted work with horse and plow with the disinterested tractorists of the Station for the Mechanization of Agriculture (SMA). He said the declining quality of commune land resulted from its mistreatment at CAP hands, especially the farm's failure to cover manure from the elements.

Travel with Dml P offered a lesson in collective farm history. Older villagers often prefaced remarks about collectivization by first declaring “When we were private farmers....” Hauling the manure, Dml P also created meaning by contrasting past and present-day (i.e. mid-1970s) circumstances. His narrative was especially sharp when he contrasted water buffalo and horse-drawn transportation. When the collective was formed in the mid-1960s village horses, ownership of which conferred local status, were expropriated by the CAP. Villagers could work with their former animals only with permission from a farm administrator, at the level of brigadier or higher, or from farm teamsters (*conductor*). Seeking permission to use one’s former horse was an indignity that called up memories of land ownership and independence in the days before socialism. Many horses expropriated by the CAP were ultimately worked to death. Villagers claimed this was purposeful, furthered by the state’s ideological commitment to mechanization and the poor conditions in which horses were kept. But villagers really never talked about this and I only gained knowledge of this history by travelling slowly across village lands.

These contrasting incidents illustrate transactional life under socialism, complicated by the variable of the foreign visitor. It was not simply that Romanians of every stripe were fearful about being observed in too close a relationship with me. Instead, people’s decisions were made, and my identity evaluated, based on immediate political and practical circumstances. I was symbolic capital on the bus, but automobile travel was more problematic. I felt privy to secret conspiracies carting manure with Dml P, but allowed individual needs to determine my responses to the two automotive situations. I scoffed when my close friend held me at arm’s length, though my driving with him potentially imperiled his political status. Still he ultimately agreed to travel together to either or both verify his friendship or challenge my perceptions of socialist Romania as police state. At the same time, I originally demurred at the young worker’s request. He was not politically involved and had more to lose if we were unable to get his paperwork straightened out on the day in question. He tried and failed to find other drivers, so roping me in was a win for him, authorities be damned. Though the police didn’t stop us on either occasion, concerns they might only reaffirmed self-censorship among a local elite and growing individualized commitment to consumption on the part of the working class, thus ultimately contributing to socialism’s fall a decade hence.

### ***Inequality and Instrumentality***

Extensive resource differentials between myself and friends and informants necessarily enabled my using transportation means to assist many during fieldwork. These exchanges were not so different as other anthropologists

experienced, though by virtue of the socialist context each exchange came with a degree of political or ideological meaning for both giver and receiver. The political significance of instrumental transportation exchanges was neither unidirectional, nor easy to calculate. Sometimes they placed me in a position of political uncertainty. At other times they called Romanian political sympathies into question. While at other times, both parties to the exchange were politically implicated. However, the political calculus involved in rendered neutral or even negative whatever positive value I likely could have achieved in these exchanges.

The new bicycle I purchased to assist my travel through village and commune was an object of conversation almost from the instant I purchased it. Aside from easing my travel between the four commune villages,<sup>12</sup> I regularly allowed friends and family to borrow the bike and also used it on errands for my family, like buying bread at the consumer cooperative bakery or taking food to an extended family member at the far end of the village. As innocent as these exchanges were, allowing others to borrow the bike occasionally exposed me to charges of political compromise, especially when borrowers were people in positions of power or authority. This two-wheel politics was a natural outgrowth of my fieldwork. Because of my interest in collecting various statistics or farm documents my work often took me to the village town hall (*primărie*) or the CAP offices. Consequently, when people at *primărie* or CAP headquarters asked to borrow my bike, I rarely refused. Others, however, couldn't help but notice the commune secretary or a CAP brigadier tooling through the village on my silver cycle. Tongues wagged as people's political sensitivities were made known in humorous ways.

The cooks in the CAP canteen where I ate with the SMA tractorists poked fun at me about being in the CAP administration, while my friends occasionally wondered (incorrectly) why I let the commune secretary borrow my bike, but never others. As for me, I was largely unconscious of the significance of my choices until the end of my stay. At that time a number of people asked what I intended to do with the bike, if I would sell it, and for how much. I was concerned about playing favorites nor did I want to profit from the bicycle. But even so, I suppose I confirmed people's fears about my being politically compromised when I gave the bike to a former CAP chief agronomist. He was an elderly fellow who was of great assistance to me during fieldwork and had a hard time getting around; hence my gift to him. However, years later friends still poked fun at me for my decision, though I still avoided the taint of capitalist profiteering.

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<sup>12</sup> I regularly visited all the commune's villages as I was interested in collective farm internal variation and the differential structure and operation of village agricultural and animal husbandry brigades within the same institution, a prime focus in my PhD dissertation (Kideckel, 1979).

My political identity also changed when I was pressed into service as the driver for the CAP president. The president's regular driver had taken ill. The president had recently broken his arm and couldn't drive. And the chief agronomist, who often accompanied the president on his rounds, didn't have a driver's license. As I was always hanging around CAP offices, and had a valid driver's license, it made sense for him to enlist me in his service. I jumped at the chance to take control of the four-wheel drive ARO, and job shadow the president over four days during spring 1976. Among trips to various fields and satellite villages, we investigated who or what was responsible for the untimely death of a water buffalo, traveled to the state Agricultural Bank in Făgăraș to secure a loan for the farm, and to a meeting of officials from the Inter-Cooperative Association in a nearby commune chaired by an important regional Communist Party cadre (Kideckel, 1993: 135-36). At the Inter-Coop meeting I was forced to wait outside with other drivers, which forcefully raised the issue of transport-based differentiation, domination, and subordination.



Drivers at the General Assembly of CAP meeting. *Source: Author's archive.*

Serving as the president's chauffeur completely inverted the power relationships in fieldwork transportation I had come to expect. From the moment I took the ARO's wheel, the president pointed out his American driver to others while declaring himself the "new Nixon" or "our Nixon."<sup>13</sup> His humor proclaimed how he was in power over Americans, and by virtue of my subordination, the superiority and power of socialist collectivism.

This status inversion was illustrated again and again throughout my time as his driver. But transporting the president also outlined dominance and subordination in Romanian ranks as well. For example, as our trip to the Inter-Coop meeting was delayed by the dead water buffalo, the president demanded I speed and run stop signs to get to the meeting on time. He and the agronomist feared showing disrespect to the Party cadre if they were late. However, the following day returning from the bank in Făgăraș, we were over an hour late for the General Assembly meeting of the CAP. When we arrived at the Culture Hall where the assembly was held, the president slowly sauntered up the aisle, greeting people left and right, while others, mostly older men and housewives, fidgeted in their seats from the delay.

### ***Confrontation and Compromise***

As my situation as the president's driver suggests, interactions with friends, colleagues, and informants was always more than an individualized experience. Instead, I was always deemed to represent "the system" from which I originated and which was a counter to Romanian socialism. Some, like old Dml P above, used me as sounding board to critique socialist practice. But others felt obligated to defend their system in my presence, forcing a transformation or even compromise of my Western academic identity, turning me either into a booster of American society or socialist fellow traveler. These pressures of compromise especially asserted themselves when I traveled with Party representatives to different venues and for different reasons, where the proximity of these cadres made these experiences distinctly uncomfortable both for me and my companion(s).

These qualities manifested in full when I accidentally shared a train compartment with one of the "comrades" who I knew from his regular appearance in the commune as a supervisor of local farm activities, delegated by the county organization of cooperative farms (UJCAP). We both got on the train in Bucharest. He was traveling back to Brașov, while I would continue on

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<sup>13</sup> Nixon had resigned some two years earlier, but still was the only US politician many Romanians recognized.

to Făgăraș, and then proceed to the commune. Comrade G was always an affable fellow in our occasional interactions. In our conversations he liked to speak with me about Romanian history. In any case, stuck together in our cabin for a three-hour plus trip from Bucharest to Brașov, without others present, our conversation ended up as constant debate and disagreement about Romanian development, with the passing scenery as context for our arguments.

Comrade G lauded the train service, the many automobiles on the road, and various economic enterprises in the towns we passed. But one particularly telling exchange occurred near the rail side town of Comarnic, famous for a cement factory whose effluence colored the town a dingy grey, including rooftops, streets, walkways, trees, grass, and bushes. Finally, with a chance to challenge his narrative, I asked if he could imagine what the lungs of the locals probably looked like. But G didn't miss a beat. He disparaged my view that, he said, could only be that of an American living in a place of comfort and removed from Europe's history of warfare and destruction. To him the cement dust meant jobs and food and money for education and even better health for the people, and was a noble rejoinder to capitalist self-congratulation. There was little I could say in response and after Comarnic G was decidedly stand-offish, I felt upbraided, and our conversation flagged.

Traveling with G, I became an American defender. But my identity was inversed as driver for General Ilie Ceaușescu, Nicolae Ceaușescu's younger brother, when I shepherded him from a conference in Amherst, at the University of Massachusetts, to another at Columbia University in New York City. The General was part of a delegation of Romanian academics and dignitaries visiting American universities on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanian war of independence of 1877-1878. The other delegation members were stuffed onto a bus to the city, but the General escaped that experience to be chauffeured to the NYC event in my seven-year old Volkswagen! Thinking back on the trip, it seems the General was somewhat disgusted by the proletarian transport in which he traveled and the lowly social level of his driver. Consequently, we did not talk much over the two-plus hours. Furthermore, I had the distinct feeling that he would be uncomfortable speaking with me no matter how much out of earshot he was of his delegation.

Driving General Ceaușescu made me indelibly part of the Romanian delegation that showed up to the Columbia seminar. But this was no collegial academic moment. At the university, we were greeted by a loud group of student and community protestors, many with posters of Nicolae Ceaușescu portrayed with bloody vampire fangs. The protest was against the Romanian regime's actions in Transylvania directed against the Magyar minority. Along with repression and imprisonment of dissidents, other policies included renaming the

city of Cluj/Kolozsvár to Cluj-Napoca to emphasize a Dacian connection, and population policies flooding Transylvanian cities with Romanians from the countryside to diminish Magyar influence. Walking with the General into the seminar room I tried to shield him from some of the invective. Also, at that time the Romanian Research Group had recently written a collective article in defense of Romanian policies and as a response to an op-ed by Hungarian professor, Michael Sozan. Our sympathies had been publically declared and my time as the General's driver and host made me feel them more acutely. This was not, in fact, our finest hour.

### **Conclusions: The Joys of “On the Road” Versus the Travails of Motion Sickness**

As these anecdotes suggest, by virtue of its occasional relative privacy and the contradictory meaning of mobility in West and East, travel and movement were politically weighted and culturally significant in even the simplest of exchanges. Though people's hair didn't actually catch fire by hosting me in or on their vehicles, my presence did provoke behavior that can be wholly blamed on the contradictions of mobility in the two then-opposing systems. Thus, travel with Romanians provoked intensity and a need to speak to, if not evaluate, my presence in every case, whether via Dml P's guileless critique of collectivization, the strenuous defense of socialist policy by Comrade G, or even the crazed mimicking of Mannix-at-the-wheel by Prof. Vulcănescu. Furthermore, my relatively and surprisingly free travel also allowed me access to areas of Romania deemed sensitive by political authority and initially encouraged my anodyne view of the world I was researching. However, though I felt liberated by my travel, it also made me a greater systemic threat than I would have been without that movement, such as my Danube Delta excursion and the steamship to Periprava.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, on an individual level, my travel and mobility contradictorily provoked either greater danger and threat for friends and informants or even greater possibility to Romanians who used their time with me as a means to self-censorship or to provide cover for potential police interventions, as did the two times I drove with village acquaintances to Braşov.

During my years of fieldwork, when I came home to visit, people would ask what it was like “living under Communism.” As I told them, I couldn't answer that question accurately since I never really had “lived under Communism;” my

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<sup>14</sup> This echoes Katherine Verdery's (2018) experience on her Mobra motor scooter, where she inadvertently wandered onto a militarily sensitive area while looking to define a fieldsite for further research.

life in Romania was ultimately shaped and limited by the knowledge that I was always able to leave. I never had to face the consequences of all my actions and practices, as did my friends and informants who remained in the country. Though my mobility afforded me constant possibility of escape, the fact of my mobility also demanded a degree of awareness and distance of my friends toward me, no matter how close we actually seemed. These two separate realities, mine and theirs, sometimes manifest and sometimes not, always hung over interactions in the field. Fieldwork to the anthropologist, except in rare cases of “going native,” still essentially remains an excursion to distant places in an attempt to bring them near intellectually. To one’s friends and informants, however, and especially in the socialist states of the 1970s and 1980s, our individualized travel “on the road” to cultural knowledge instead exposed them to potentially serious repercussions of a viral motion sickness brought on by a punitive politics.

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## REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH IN ROMANIA

SAM BECK<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This is a biographical account of my work in Romania and the influence it had on my research that followed. I focus on the impact that my almost five years in Romania had on the framework and orientation of my anthropological practice that I employed in the United States. I suggest that anthropologists have a moral imperative we must carry out when we choose to conduct research among the most vulnerable in society. In doing so, we must also come to understand the conditions that have made them vulnerable in the first place (Nader 1969). I assert here that as anthropologists of the twenty-first century we no longer may stay on the sidelines, but we must engage our work as allies with the vulnerable, supporting them in their self-identified struggles for dignity, liberation, and sustainability as part of a unified global effort. This entails the transformation of participant observation into a participatory research approach.

**Keywords:** biography, critical anthropology, participatory action research, UMass Romanian Research Group

*“What if we use theory and method to benefit the people we study by partnering with them to move towards a just world, one where inequities are reduced where there is greater access to knowledge gained from anthropological research? To reach this goal anthropologists must play a more intentional and responsible role in working with people, communities and movements – the stakeholders with whom research is carried out. [ ... ] We must participate in generating and bringing about change. We must engage in protecting the most vulnerable from oppression and exploitation and support the empowerment of communities to improve people’s lives. This is a role not comfortably taken by tradition-bound anthropologists; however, an engaged stance moves the application of anthropological theory, methods and practice further along towards action and activism. At the same time, engagement moves anthropologists away from traditional forms of participant observation towards a participatory role by becoming increasingly a part of those communities or social groupings that we normally study” (Maida and Beck, 2013).*

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## The Beginning<sup>2</sup>

From faded memory and without the benefit of field notes<sup>3</sup>, the following is an account of my work in Romania and the impact it had on my research that followed. I appreciate having been asked to address the work I carried out in Romania, initially as part of the University of Massachusetts Romanian Research Group and then on my own. I take this opportunity to focus on the impact that my almost five years in Romania had on the framework and orientation of my anthropological practice that I employed in the United States. I also take this opportunity to suggest that anthropologists have a moral imperative we must carry out when we choose to conduct research among the most vulnerable in society. In doing so, we must also come to understand the conditions that have made them vulnerable in the first place (Nader, 1969). I assert here that as anthropologists of the twenty-first century we no longer may stay on the sidelines, but we must engage our work as allies with the vulnerable, supporting them in their self-identified struggles for dignity, liberation, and sustainability as part of a unified global effort. This entails the transformation of participant observation into a participatory research approach.

In August of 1973, after two months of pre-dissertation research in Rosenheim, Bavaria investigating Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* (funded by the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), I joined John W. Cole and David Kideckel in Braşov to explore Judeţul Braşov for sites where we and Steven Randall, Steven Sampson, and Marilyn McArthur would eventually settle to carry out our respective doctoral fieldwork.

I was thoroughly frustrated and perhaps even repulsed by what was a very unhappy field experience in my attempt to track Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* social relations and movements. It was not the Yugoslav workers that bothered me, but the conditions under which they worked and lived to improve their lives and those of their loved ones back home in Yugoslavia, a relatively short train ride away. To increase their savings, which was remitted home, they lived sparse lives, housing themselves dormitory style and rarely eating hot meals in restaurants. It was not the kind of fieldwork I had hoped for.

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<sup>2</sup> I dedicate this account to two people: John W. Cole, my graduate school mentor, provided me with the foundations for my form of critical anthropology in teaching, scholarship, and activism while Nicolae Gheorghe modeled for me an activist and participatory approach to fieldwork and knowledge production. Steve Sampson offered some critical remarks that brought me to clarify my thoughts. Alas, I did not follow all his suggestions for this article, but I still am grateful for his careful reading of the text and his thoughtfulness. I also want to thank Carl Maida for his persistent support and encouragement. Marianne Cocchini is the bedrock of any of my accomplishments: my thanks and love to her. Any failings in this text are my own.

<sup>3</sup> My research notes and much of my Romanian materials were lost due to a series of basement floods, leaving me with my memory of events experienced decades ago.

Our research model in Transylvania was based on the cultural ecology study of Puerto Rico carried out by Julian H. Steward (1956) and his team in which participants were situated in different locales and different parts of the main island. John Cole's work with Eric Wolf of the Italian Alps (1974) also served as the conceptual context of how the Romanian Research Group imagined the unfolding of our work informed by cultural ecology, political economy, and world systems theory. I would be remiss in not also mentioning the impact Dell Hymes (1972) and Fredrik Barth (1961, 1969) had on me.

I read furiously in the literatures focused on modes of production, such as Barry Hinds and Paul Hirst, Perry Anderson, Lawrence Krader, and Harold Wolpe; I delved into the works that focused on development and underdevelopment especially Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Immanuel Wallerstein, Daniel Chirot and Fernand Braudel, among others. Of course, Keith Hitchins' book on Transylvania was important. I read Christopher Hill, Rodney Hilton, and Eric Hobsbawm and feminist works by Sheila Robotham, Michelle Rosaldo, Louise Lamphere, and Rayna Rapp.

While each of us situated ourselves in a community study, our interests focused on the processes, forces, and conditions the State had on these communities. Our research strategy sought out the impact of actually existing socialism on local level village life and the impact of villagers on actually existing socialist policies as these were practiced. Yet, as anthropologists well know, research directions take on a life of their own when experiences in the field convey what is deemed important or interesting, redirecting and focusing our work.

Starting in 1974, the Romanian Research Group spread out on the inner western flank of the Carpathian Mountains within the Transylvanian arch in Județul Brașov. We purposefully stayed away from settlements with Hungarian speaking populations that would signal to Romanian authorities an attempt to investigate or inflame inter-ethno-national hostilities. Romanian leaders had a heightened awareness of Transylvania's complex ethnic mix linked with not unfounded geopolitical aspirations of neighboring nation-states and a fervor to maintain the integrity of Romania's borders.

Steve Sampson and Marilyn McArthur settled into multicultural Feldiora. Steve focused on Romanians and Marilyn, as a German speaker, on Saxon Germans. The "repatriation" of *Volks Deutsche*, the Saxons, to West Germany made Transylvanian Saxons no threat. They were abandoning their *Siebenburgen* homeland significantly thinning out their centuries-old settlements, their churches and fortified villages and towns. David Kideckel chose to work in Hîrseni not far from John Cole, who chose Mândra, settlements organized into agricultural collectives that are part of Țara Făgărașului and its culture area. Steven Randall and I settled into Poiana Mărului, an upland area situated between

two culture areas, Țara Făgărașului and Țara Bârsei. Randall decided to live in the sparsely settled part of this dispersed mountain community, oriented toward Țara Făgărașului. He lived in an upland farmstead. I decided to live in the village center some distance away from him, oriented more toward Țara Bârsei that sustained community life, where the mayor's office, the school, the church, a café-bar, a medical clinic, a dentist's office, a general store and the village smithy were located. Just about everyone in the village center had land they farmed, a steep walk away. Most held rights to multiple properties, dispersed across the hilly upland terrain due to inheritance prescriptions over the generations dividing property among descendants.

It was John Cole's idea to develop the project in Romania. With funding from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Department of Anthropology, a Ford Foundation Soviet Union and Eastern European Research Grant, and International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) grants that each of us received, all of us started our projects in Romania. It was John Cole, as the Director of the Romanian Research Group, who involved himself in the negotiations with the authorities.

Speaking for myself, I maintained as little contact with authorities as possible and reported in when asked to do so. The exchanges that took place in Bucharest, as I remember them now, were relatively brief and perfunctory. At the time, it seemed to me that the person to whom I reported was actually not particularly interested in what I was doing and I was not particularly interested in relaying information. I spent weeks in Poiana Mărului periodically meeting with John and group members in Brașov, when we were all in Romania together. On those occasions, we treated ourselves to hotel living and restaurants with large menus that would not have most items listed and when a waiter was asked about a menu item, he inevitably responded with, *nu avem!* Still, we ate well. I remember the feeling of taking a bath, a luxury I did not have in the village. I do not recall visiting colleagues in their respective villages. From time to time, Steve Randall came to visit me and to buy a loaf of bread.

When I first arrived, the local authorities were at a loss as to what to do with me. I spoke virtually no Romanian and no one in the community spoke passable English. After most of the day spent in the *primărie* (the village administrative center) as night approached, I was directed to the local *cârciumar* (barkeep), Ionică Clopoțel, who put me up in a spare room used for storage with a window that faced the asphalted road. Concerned that no one would want to put up with an American who could not speak Romanian, I was glad to have been assigned a home, even though it was a cold room used for storage with a bed. Over the course of months, the asphalted road, this sparsely travelled thoroughfare for which I had a view from my window was my companion as the asphalt sang when trucks drove by in the evenings as I typed up my notes at night.

The arrangement that was made for me that day settled me into Clopoșel's three-room household on one side of the creek that ran through the village and on the other side I crossed on a little bridge to have lunch and dinner with the Ioan Meleacha family where doamna Meleacha was well known for her cooking skills. Each household was paid a stipend, the value about which I was never informed, nor did I ask. This arrangement gave me access to two very different households who, among other work activities, maintained privately owned, dispersed plots of farmland and animals. Each had their houses in the village center, most of which were three-room structures with an enclosed courtyard dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century. The Clopoșels had no children, but adopted and raised a girl, a young woman at the time who spoke little, did much of the household chores and worked the farmland with Măruța Clopoșel's father, Barbu. Ionică and Măruța Clopoșel left the girl the sole inheritor of their substantial properties. Barbu lived some distance away at the top of an incline that left me breathless when I sought to visit him. He lived in a structure split in two; one-room housed him. The other room was the barn. The Meleachas had two daughters, the oldest of which was married and lived in Brașov, and a son, Mihai. It was Mihai, in his early twenties, who formed a close relationship with me. He worked in the Zărnești bicycle factory (I heard that armaments were being manufactured there) and, when home, he reluctantly worked the fields, some distance away in the uplands, with his father and older unmarried sister in her late twenties. In his leisure time, Mihai occupied himself with consuming copious amounts of alcohol to dull his senses because, as he told me, he hated his life. The Clopoșels worked hard, like everyone with whom I had contact, working the café-bar and farming their holdings. They raised two pigs every year in the back of the house, memorable to me because two of them, whom I named Fanny and Zooey, before their demise would grunt and rub their backs on the post that helped support the outhouse, where I used to relieve myself, shaking the entire structure.

One central overarching theme that our team shared was the relationship of our respective villages with the socialist state. As I prepared for research in the Balkans back in Amherst, my interests focused on transhumance sheep and goat herding, an interest that derived from a two-year research project among pastoral nomads of Iran (1969-1972) and my undergraduate year abroad in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Once in Poiana Mărului, I quickly learned that this form of herding no longer existed in the village and as a result, over time, I reoriented my focus of research to the social history of these ethnic Romanian inhabitants' adaptation to their mountain environment and their relationship to the surrounding areas.



Romanian identification card. Source: Author's archive.

## Romanticism

In 1973, when I got to Romania, getting off the train in Braşov and then touring the countryside with John and David, my sense of “this is what doing fieldwork is about” came rushing in. As we drove into Poiana Mărului from Zărneşti toward Şinca Nouă and Țara Făgăraşului, the contrast with my Rosenheim experience was stark. In my mind’s eye, the *Poienari* fit the classic peasants living in what at first sight seemed like a relatively isolated settlement with most of its inhabitants spread out on bucolic hills dotted with dispersed households. It was astonishingly breathtaking on that warm, sunny summer’s day we visited the village center. I was smitten.

When I settled in months later, in 1974, and became more fluent in Romanian, I spent much of my time in the *cârciuma* (café-bar), operated by Ionică and Măruţa, chain drinking *ţuica* and coffee and smoking *Carpaţi* cigarettes throughout the day, eating lunch with the Meleacha family, visiting Dr. Barac in the doctor’s office, chatting with him or with his nurse and nurse’s assistant and drinking ever more Turkish coffee, and then having dinner with the Meleachas, discussing the day’s events and watching TV with them until it was time to sleep. Ionică and Măruţa were well placed in the village, privy to all the gossip, even from the more distant households because just about all the men who either lived in the village center or came there from their upland homes came to the *cârciuma* to have a drink and a cigarette.

I spent quite a bit of time with the village priest, *părintele Gigi*, whose father was priest in the village before him. He lived in the largest house in the village near the church with his wife and mother. He invited me to accompany him to funerals that took place in every part of Poiana, sometimes walking many

miles to get to one of the more distant households where funerals took place. I was always invited to virtually all lifecycle events, baptisms and marriages included, held in the village and among scattered homesteads in walking distance from the village center. In this way I got to know about the various families and their kinship ties and often found out about the properties over which each household claimed ownership. In the evenings, Ionică and Măruța would clarify these relationships for me, often treating me with *bulz* (*mămăliga cu brânză*) or a fried pork chop.

I attended weddings that lasted three days of eating, dancing, drinking, lots of drinking, held in the village hall available for such events. I spent time in the *primărie* (the village administrative center) looking over the Austrian land cadaster map, a complex matrix of plots that over time got smaller and larger as each household sought to bring their properties as close to each other as possible and as inheritance redistributed land to the next generation in smaller parcels.



At a wedding. Source: Author's archive.



I went to church each Sunday and always was given a place in the front, close to *părintele* Gigi who would hand me the incense burner to hold. I delighted him the first time he handed it to me because I held it too close to my body allowing the incense smoke to rise to my face. I remember him waiting for this moment and smiling as I paled, grew nauseous, and raced out of the church. Later he instructed me to hold the object away from the body.

Over the course of my Poiana Mărului fieldwork, I knowingly had little contact with what I would call the authorities in the village. There was the *primar* (mayor) who was from Șinca Nouă, part of the Poiana Mărului administrative unit, and the *activist de partid* (party member), one notably short young man who had one leg shorter than the other and walked with a limp. He taught in the village school. I rarely saw them. This is not to say, people with whom I had contact were not informing on me. I suspected officials such as the doctor and his staff, the priest, and then of course my hosts. However, I decided that whatever I was doing during fieldwork was not something that should be of concern and would not need any precautions. Besides, what did I gain from spending my time being paranoid. Years later I received part of my Securitate file that listed dozens of names of individuals who apparently informed on me.

### **Ethno-nationalism**

As weeks turned into months, I became increasingly aware of how Romanian socialism portrayed itself in the face of its neighboring nation-states and the critical importance of Transylvania (Romanian: *Ardeal*) as Romanian and certainly not Magyar (Hungarian), nor German (German: *Siebenburger Sachsen*; Romanian: *Sași*). Who occupied Transylvania first Romanians or Hungarians loomed large in the controversy of the Hungarian and Romanian states. After all, it was only after the 1918 Treaty of Trianon that Transylvania became part of the Romanian Kingdom, removed from Hungary. Things could always shift back.

Geza II of Hungary had settled Germans to protect the southeastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to defend Transylvania from incursions by marauding Asiatic groups. A Hungarian Border Guard made up of Magyar speakers, the Szekely, were positioned in the southeast, as were the Teutonic Knights of Țara Bârsei who built a number of castles and cities, including Brasov. I became fascinated by this history and the complexity it represented as I tried to grasp the lives of the Poiana Mărului ethnic Romanians under conditions of socialism. As I continued my study in the writing of my dissertation I was struck by the importance Romania gave to the first occupation of these lands by Romanians and how this contributed to the construction of a Romanian identity and the sense of continuity so important to the state.

In some ways, not collectivizing a mountainous settlement like Poiana Mărului was not only about the fact that mechanizing agricultural land on steep slopes was next to impossible with the technology the *Poienari* had available. There was an ideological value to having Romanians in the uplands and uncollectivized. They pointed to continuity, a history of ethnic Romanians occupying the uplands seasonally as they tended their animals there and reproduced their “traditional” way of life over the centuries. Hungarians could claim that when they entered Transylvania the land was “empty,” unoccupied. Romanians could claim that they occupied the uplands grazing sheep in the summer and the lowlands in the winter.

Yet, clearly, the socialist economy had an impact on these upland dwelling peasants. Their agricultural production had to serve the interests of the state, each household producing pigs, cattle and milk based on a quota system. The other significant impact on them was the expectation, if not the rule, that each household would contribute individuals to industrial labor. I wrote *The Emergence of the Peasant-Worker in a Transylvanian Mountain Community* (1976) to address what I was observing. The men and some women left their homes early in the morning when the sky was still dark to participate in industrial work and returned when it was dark. There was a night shift as well. They worked their land, tended to their animals and held factory jobs.

My doctoral work, *Transylvania: The Political Economy of a Frontier* (1979), resulted from more than two years of living and being in this village with which I fell in love and two years of historical research afterwards. This work was an attempt at coming to terms with Poiana Mărului’s social history the construction of which was based on much excellent Romanian scholarship produced during the inter-war period. I discovered the richness of the research carried out by Dimitrie Gusti’s students and colleagues who formed the Bucharest School of Sociology. In referring to Gusti and his many students about whom much should be known outside of Romania, I can only indicate here that their social scientific achievements in a real way preceded what we now identify as interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary team research that incorporates those researched into their projects in a participatory action research (PAR) manner. The teams carried out fieldwork much like anthropologists today making first-hand observations and interviewing local people about their lives and customs. Moreover, they carried out their work not only to document a way of life, but they were also intentional about improving the lives of the people with whom they worked, what today we call *engaged* anthropology. Of course, the focus on traditional forms of Romanian culture and life before the Second World War was about the formation of a united Romanian national identity and nation-state building and Gusti’s work contributed to this effort.

Some fascinating, mostly older, ethnic Romanian scholars were advising us in this early period and during my second fieldwork. When I visited Bucharest, mostly to gain respite from being in the field and to acquire advice, I was intellectually inspired by the wisdom of scholars like Romulus Vulcănescu, Traian Herseni, Mihai Pop and Henri Stahl. I also had the opportunity to interact directly or through correspondence with a number of still surviving scholars of Gusti's students. Often enough, these senior scholars fed me at their table. Mihai Pop always plied me and my colleagues, when we visited him together, with *palinca* from Maramureş, of which he seemed to have an endless supply. Rarely did I leave his wonderful home with a clear head and without stumbling out the door!

Upon completion of my doctoral dissertation, I returned to Transylvania to investigate economic specialization in Țara Făgăraşului. I decided to settle in Şercaia (German: *Schirkanyen*), located on a major thoroughfare connecting Braşov with Făgăraş and Sibiu. At the time, it was a mixed village of Romanians, a decreasing number of Saxon Germans, and an increasing number of Roma<sup>4</sup>. It was slated by planners to grow into a town with an increasing population and an expanded economic base. My thoughts at the time about choosing Şercaia were that I would easily visit all the villages located within Țara Făgăraşului from this central spot. I chose to live with a Saxon extended family because I spoke German and I could gain an understanding of ethnic Romanians through different lenses. I came to live with Karli and his extended family. I could also gauge the changes of territorial de-Germanization, as Saxons, like this family, were in a holding pattern waiting to migrate to West Germany while Romanians and Roma took ownership of the properties left behind by them.

### **Nicolae Gheorghe and the Roma**

I lived in a room with a bed and a leaky potbellied stove, a small structure separated from the main house within the Saxon *Hof*. This gave me a degree of privacy, although the family always invited me into the main house for meals and drinks. Most evenings ended with alcohol consumption and the singing of songs, many of which resonated with the past when Saxons held high status before and during the Second World War and the hardships they experienced after the war as forced laborers in the Soviet Union. They sang songs of the years in Soviet labor camps, mostly to the Ukrainian SSR, to which

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term “ţigani” as a colloquial term, as Romanians would use it, and how many Roma I spoke with identified themselves. In popular language “ţigani” is a slanderous term that unless I indicate popular usage, I replace it with “Roma”, a politicized term that the Roma intelligentsia is using to create unity.

they were deported (*der Verschleppung*). As planned, I used my housing as a base from which I started my travels to investigate Olt valley villages. As I moved about, I could not ignore that all the villages I visited had Roma living on the outskirts in abject poverty.

This had also been the case in Poiana Mărului where four or five hovels were located along a tributary that fed the village creek. When the weather was warm, a middle-aged woman sat in the doorway of one of these making baskets. I bought a small basket from her, in my possession to this day. Her husband, an industrial worker, would trudge off daily to Zărnești returning home in the evening. When I passed by near the embankment where they lived, I saw children playing near these hovels, covered in dirt and dressed in rags. At the time, I noticed them but paid little attention to their plight. The *Poienari* Romanians looked upon them with disdain and called them *țigani*. The *Poienari* referred to one particular family that lived in the village center who I assumed was ethnic Romanian as *țigani* as well. This puzzled me for some time. Much later as I came to research Roma, I understood the use of the term much better. *Țigani* could be used as an ethnic label, but more often it referred to their low-caste status and the slovenly way in which they lived. I perceived the term's use similar to the "N word" used in the United States.

When visiting Bucharest sometime in my second year in Romania, I ran into Nicolae Gheorghe with jet-black hair and dark skinned. We decided to meet over coffee and share our respective interests. He indicated that he frequently travelled through Brașov. I invited him to come and stay with me whenever he was in the area. This invitation began an unexpected relationship with him as I turned my attention to surveying the Roma with him and participated in Gheorghe's effort to organize Romania's Roma into a recognizable ethnic group out of disparate and disjointed members of socialist Romania's most impoverished, deprecated, and racialized class.

In my travels through the Olt valley and beyond, I was struck by Roma who inevitably located their homes, small shacks, at the edge of ethnic Romanian villages, referred to by Romanians as a *mahala*. Nicolae invited me to join him in his own fieldwork and activism. During visits and our travels together we engaged each other about the Roma and economic specialization and he said the best way to discuss this is to see them for myself. This was the start of a friendship and my developing interest in Roma. As my attention to Roma expanded, Nicolae provided me with Romanian published sources about the Roma. He often went to a great deal of trouble to photocopy material for me, something that the authorities would find suspicious and an activity that put him into jeopardy.

The more I observed and the more I read of the history of Roma, slavery and indentured servitude, the racialization of their identity, Romanian racism and xenophobic attitudes, Roma immiseration, forced sedentarization of migratory groups, their various levels of assimilation and enculturation, the more interesting they became for me. I sensed that our intense discussions as well as those he had with others he drew into his circle influenced how he conceptualized his own work.

As I engaged Roma, I found them to have a sense of integrity and openness I did not expect. Most all I encountered, especially those who had been sedentary for hundreds of years, sought out a living however they could. In rural settings, even the poorest of them carried themselves with dignity. Others, often those who until the socialist era, had been migratory with specific trades, such as metal workers of all types, had a different status altogether. The extraordinary diversity among the Roma was astounding to me.

For Nicolae, the Roma were a personal mission, not only an object of study. I speculated that his understanding of the peril the authorities posed, stepping in to curtail his activities with the Roma, but also with me, only made him eager to pursue his interests. He was seeking to organize the Roma into a political force. He was community organizing across a highly diverse and segmented population identified as *țigani* into a cohesive group as “Roma.” In doing so, he wanted the State to recognize the Roma as a coinhabiting nationality and with this legitimacy and recognition would be gained in a country where ethnic Romanians perceived them as unwelcome outsiders. Their centuries-long period of slavery (Beck, 1989) in Romania and their contributions to the land was ignored.

Nicolae’s work also entailed a discovery of himself. He spoke openly about having been raised isolated from the Roma. He did not speak Romani and knew little about them before he started his research. In our intense discussions, he consistently reflected on how his own identity was shifting and changing as he carried out his work and as he learned more about the diverse populations referred to as *țigani* (Beck, 1993). I was reminded of W. E. B. Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness (1994), a condition in which oppressed people look at themselves through the eyes and conceptual framework of the oppressor and internalizing the contempt associated with it. Franz Fanon (1986) addressed double consciousness as well. In Fanon’s view, blacks are positioned by whites to accept their stereotyped notions of who they are and accepting this position by behaving in the expected manner. The stereotype becomes reality. Gramsci (2000; Adamson, 2014) identified something similar. He saw the power of bourgeois society in which culture, ideas and beliefs, is shaped and reproduced by media, universities and religion to produce consent and legitimacy, leaving little or no room for dissent or counter-hegemony. Revolution would emerge from the working class as they created an alternative vision of themselves and society.

Nicolae struggled with his sense of himself as a Romanian, an identity that his phenotype belied and how ethnic Romanians treated him as a result, no matter his intellectual brilliance. This kind of struggle was familiar to me because of the racial history in the United States that targeted groups of people by what they looked like as outsiders and not belonging as the “strangers” in our midst. The irrational racialized animus toward *țigani* was no different, in my eyes, as the racialized animus toward people of color in the United States.

We had endless discussions about what discoveries we made, how to understand the dismal conditions in which the vast majority lived and what to do about it. How similar are the experiences of Roma to the descendants of African slaves, or that of indigenous people. How do we change how many Roma saw themselves and identified themselves as *țigani*. Nicolae was particularly puzzled about how to bring about a Roma identity among those groups who clearly were of Roma descent but did not identify as such and often enough rejected this idea.

### **Dimitrie Gusti**

This was also a time when I fixed my interests on Romanian scholarship, especially the work of Dimitrie Gusti’s Romanian Social Institute, reading the monographs produced by Dimitrie Gusti’s students. The work on Drăguș was particularly important to me. I met Henri Stahl, a preeminent Romanian sociologist with an international reputation and one of Gusti’s students and started to read his work. I also spent time with Traian Herseni, another of Gusti’s students who proved to be helpful. Meeting them and learning about who they were during the inter-war period gave me a unique insight into the complexities of the political environment of that time, Stahl being on the socialist Left side of the political spectrum and Herseni on the Right side, an Iron Guardist before Romania became part of the Sovietized frontier. In my estimation, Gusti’s and his student’s intense research of Romanian peasant life has not been equaled. It is an extraordinary body of work, appreciated and carried forward by Michael Cernea with great difficulty while in Romania and with much success and recognized by applied anthropologists as he worked for the World Bank (1970, 1985).

I found Nicolae following the Gusti tradition of active engagement with communities, seeking to document in the traditional ethnographic manner while simultaneously bringing about change. He was studying “them” and self-reflecting on his identity creating a tension that personalized his research. He lived that tension because he could not distance himself enough to objectify in the manner of more traditional ethnographic research. In present day anthropology we would refer to this as engaged anthropology (public, advocate, activist, or participatory action anthropology). This kind of research method is clearly not

value free, nor should it be. It is one important anthropological approach that places the anthropologist into the position of change agent in the service of vulnerable populations and using this position in knowledge production.

### **From *Persona Non Grata* to Rebellion in the Streets**

Once I was able to stabilize my career in the United States by accepting a position at Cornell University, I was able to visit Romania a number of times. Once, right before the fall of the communist regime, while at a conference in Belgrade, I took a train to Bucharest. I crossed into Romania without an incident, but when the border control took my passport for clearance, they did not return it until we came to the first stop into Romania. I was guided off the train, placed into a holding cell overnight and told, "you are a *persona non grata*." I returned to Belgrade in the morning (Beck, 1992b).

That was the end of my Romanian research until the fall of the Ceaușescu regime. I visited Romania as rebellions took place in Bucharest. I was present at several critical moments, witnessing the mob-takeover of the television station in Bucharest. I was present as large lorries filled with coal miners drove through the city waving their truncheons, threatening people and violently thrashing them, at especially young demonstrating men. I was present in University Square where people gathered, some camped out, and numerous recovering from severe beatings.

I beheld with astonishment and anguish the many young people bandaged, bleeding, and crippled camped out and milling about in University Square adjacent to the Intercontinental Hotel. I found myself in the square and in the streets seeking to grasp what was happening as thousands of people milled about, moving in one direction and then suddenly moving into another in mob behavior all day long and into the night and early morning (1991a, 1991b, 1991c).

### **Cape Verdeans**

When I returned to the United States in 1981 from my post-doctoral Romanian research, I accepted a post-doctoral position in alcohol studies with Dwight Heath of Brown University's Anthropology Department. Part of my assigned work included local fieldwork in Providence, Rhode Island. I chose to carry out research in a bar that locals identified as a "black bar" in the Brown neighborhood called Fox Point where Cape Verdeans made their home for over 100 years. This is an area close to the campuses of Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design with some of the oldest houses in Providence dating to the eighteenth century.

Providence city planners targeted Fox Point for urban renewal to remove areas of “blight” and the construction of a modern highway. A historic preservation movement emerged to preserve these valued properties representing Providence’s early history, preventing them from being demolished. A dramatic rise in the cost of real estate followed as did the displacement of the low-income Cape Verdeans who lived there and who experienced this process, in their words, as “nigger removal.” These were people from the former Portuguese Islands off the coast of West Africa. Their way of life was shattered by displacement as their neighborhood was being gentrified because they no longer could afford rising rents.

Here is where I met my second wife, who was a community organizer working with the Cape Verdean community. I came to participate in the activism involved in resisting gentrification by slowing down and limiting gentrification. I consciously followed an engaged ethnographic agenda, deciding to do what Nicolae Gheorghe did, by becoming an ally with the Cape Verdean struggle for their neighborhood and use my activism to generate the data for my book, *Manny Almeida’s Ringside Lounge: The Cape Verdean Struggle for their Neighborhood* (1992a). I came to personalize the struggle in which Cape Verdeans were involved, their struggle in fighting the injustice of gentrification was also my struggle.

I participated with Cape Verdeans in acts of peaceful resistance, creating public programs to inform the general public about the displacement impact gentrification was having and who or what was involved in creating these conditions. My book was written for the Cape Verdean community to legitimize their claim to the neighborhood, lest the gentrifying newcomers forget who preserved the coveted housing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, housing that now was valued with increasing prices representing early America history and society.

My experiences with and about the Roma directly played into my Cape Verdean research, advocacy, and activism. Almost all of my graduate student work was focused on Europe and the Balkans as was my personal history, as a child of intergenerational refugees from anti-Semitism and war, Russia, China, and Austria. I took the racism and classism experienced by Roma and Cape Verdeans personally, as an assault on my own humanity.

### **Critical Consciousness**

I explored a critical and activist anthropological method not only because it was a novel approach to anthropological research but as a moral commitment to participate in social change. I came to realize that anthropological research



methods have a colonial aspect to them in the sense that participant observation is an approach for harvesting information without making meaningful contributions to the people being researched. Whatever the intentions of any one anthropologist using standard ethnographic research methods, they are exploitative in their very nature (Smith, 1999).

Customary research is *about* people, objectifying them, their culture and behaviors, and the challenges of life they face. What Nicolae Gheorghe modeled in his work, and what the Gusti School of Sociology demonstrated was an epistemological approach that I sought to emulate and apply to current conditions. Clearly, of the volume of research anthropologists carry out, most of it is about the most vulnerable in society. Moreover, the publications we have produced, with some exceptions, have little relevance to the people we study; it is for internal consumption and oriented to further our discipline and of course our individual careers.

A movement emerged in the social sciences influenced by feminist theory and the notion that the “personal is political,” critical anthropology with its attention to reflexive critique of the discipline and political economy<sup>5</sup>. I came to use these orientations to focus my personal struggle and that involved a search for my identity in the research process and my involvement in the struggle with others for dignity and emancipation.

By the time I came to know Nicolae Gheorghe, he saw himself as an assimilated Romanian with no ties to Roma, linguistically or culturally, to others he was a *țigan* because of what he looked like. He knew it was something from which he could not escape even if he wanted to. Notwithstanding the fact that any Romanian who saw him could identify him as *țigan*, he viewed, at least at the start, the Roma with whom he was involved as the “Other.” It was only as his experiences with Roma moved him from perceiving Roma as “them” to “us” that who he was as seen by others took on a different dimension.

What Gheorghe was experiencing was what W. B. Du Bois called *double consciousness* (1994) and the process by which he made his discovery, is what Paulo Freire referred to as *critical consciousness* (*conscientizacao*). According to Freire, “The term *conscientizacao* refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1968: 19). In a book he published a year later, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1969), Freire expanded on this idea as an ontological project. Here he elaborated on critical consciousness as the means for liberation. Through a process that Donald Schoen (1983) much later identified as *reflective practice*, Freire, already in 1969 used his term, *critical consciousness*, to identify

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<sup>5</sup> There are individual predecessors to this approach, such as Sol Tax (1958).

a process of continuous learning by which the oppressed identify the impositions of power by the elite and the State as cultural norms. Furthermore, cultural norms reproduce a status quo (Gramsci, 2000), based on racism, xenophobia, and classism, which Nicolae Gheorghe was attempting to change. He was creating an anti-hegemonic Roma strategy that provided a positive Roma identity replacing the deleterious identity given them by the majority population in Romania and Europe.

### **North Brooklyn**

It was this kind of project in which I involved myself with the Cape Verdean struggle to sustain their community and the web of social relations that shaped their identity. The political will of the city combined with the interests of privileged institutions of higher education too close in proximity to low income people of color and the fear that it aroused among affluent students and their parents. This combined with efforts of historical preservationists to focus on the built environment instead of the people who lived in the valued housing over the generations overpowered the Cape Verdean struggle. However, that people united in common cause created the conditions for empowerment, at least for the period in which Cape Verdean still had a presence in the neighborhood. People learned to organize and experienced self-empowerment.

When I moved to New York City, I continued this kind of work as I sought to support those who suffered the consequences of oppressive conditions over which they had little control and through dialogic means gain critical consciousness and empowerment. I sought to work with vulnerable populations in their efforts to gain justice, a voice and a place at the table to make decisions for themselves that impact their lives. This was not only a political stance, although it was that too, but one of a changing anthropological methodology.

In the process of working with students who involved themselves in internships, a form of apprenticeship or practicum learning in the USA, and community-service learning, for students to experience leadership, volunteerism, and citizenship development (2000, 2002, 2005, 2006), I established a close working relationship with a number of community-based organizations (CBOs) in North Brooklyn and became an Executive Board member in four of them (Beck, 2018). Much of North Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Bushwick, and parts of Bedford Stuyvesant had a population of people of Hispanic descent (Latinos). Their situation in their neighborhoods, much like that of Cape Verdeans, was in peril because capital poured into the area for the development of high-end luxury housing and producing dramatically large increases in rents. Low-income people, who could not afford these increases, were displaced as fast-paced gentrification

rushed through the area like a tsunami. Over the course of a decade, Williamsburg alone lost over ten thousand Latinos, as much as two-thirds of its Latino population. From a human rights perspective, this was nothing short of a localized campaign of ethnic cleansing, legitimized by neoliberal market force principles.

Since the sixties and seventies, Latino-based community organizations created a web of services that sustained low-income people of color in their neighborhood populated after WW II and into the present. Over a period of two decades, my own participation with them produced a body of work that only in small part is academic in the sense that it led to publications (Beck 2006, 2015b, 2018). The other part is what I term *invisible public anthropology*. Invisible because part of what public anthropologists do is participate in discussions with people and share anthropological insights with organizations, involve themselves in their processes, as we participate in making decisions and organizational policies that direct change. Our contributions cannot be measured in any academically viable manner, hence invisible. Our contributions are invisible to the people we work with as well because as allies we are co-participants in activities sharing our expertise as much as every other participant. These interests and work led to my collaboration with Carl A. Maida (UCLA) who was involved in similar efforts in Los Angeles. Our association led to the publication of a series of edited volumes, *Toward Engaged Anthropology* (2014), *Public Anthropology in a Borderless World* (2015a), and *Global Sustainability and Communities of Practice* (2018). I am now working on a manuscript that focuses on inter-group relations among Hipsters, Hispanics, and Hasidim (ultra-Orthodox Jews), gentrification, and the displacement of Latinos from a social history and activist anthropology point of view. This project emerged as a consequence of taking my students to North Brooklyn and integrating them within community-based organizations, with which I was personally associated, to carry out community service and to learn from their experiences with low-income people of color.

### Some Conclusions

Nicolae Gheorghe died August 8, 2013. In 2014 I participated in a conference in Bucharest commemorating Nicolae Gheorghe's contributions to Romani Studies and the Romani human and civil rights movement.<sup>6</sup> On this occasion, I met Nicoleta Bițu, Nicolae's wife and partner, a political scientist and

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<sup>6</sup> Roma Policies in Romania: Between Ethnicity and Social Vulnerability: The Perspectives of Nicolae Gheorghe. August 5–7, 2014. Bucharest, Romania, Roma Cultural Museum.

leader in the Roma movement in her own right as president of the Democratic Federation of Roma from Romania and a founding board member of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) located in Berlin. I was given a tour of the emerging Roma Cultural Museum in Bucharest and was reminded of the conversations I had with Nicolae about honoring Roma artistic and craft traditions in this manner and raising into prominence the contributions Roma made to Romanian society, starting with their time under conditions of slavery.

This was also the occasion when I met Roma anthropologist and activist Ciprian Necula, Nicolae's student, whom he mentored to carry on his work. At this conference I gave voice to the impact Nicolae had on me and how he influenced my career. Bernard Rorke neatly summed up Gheorghe's contributions (2015): "As an engaged cosmopolitan public intellectual, an activist and a diplomat, a humanist and an indefatigable defender of fundamental rights, Nicolae's contributions inspired and informed all who encountered him." These words certainly ring true to me as the next generation of Roma continues in his footsteps, hopefully recognizing the debt they owe him.

I met Ana Ivasiuc at this meeting and we agreed to publish a book on Romani activism to honor Nicolae Gheorghe's legacy and point it into the future. After some debate, we decided to call it, *Roma Activism: Reimagining Power and Knowledge* (2018). Predictably, in this book issues of race, racism, xenophobia, displacement, and violence appear and less predictably gender. Here a mix of Roma and non-Roma scholars represent their work. We intentionally sought out scholarship by Roma in part to reject the view by some in Romani Studies that Roma identifying scholars could not and were not qualified to and should not carry out research among their own people. This is an old and flawed argument dismissed by anthropologists long ago. Moreover, the issue of female Roma scholars also was brought into view as they are challenged by racism and misogyny within some quarters of the academy where they are employed.

The academy, as much as the whole society, must be able to transcend the present conjuncture so dominated by capitalist neoliberal economic ideology and practice in which racism and xenophobia are embedded in nationalist fervor further victimizing the most vulnerable. A capitalist mode of production that seeks to commoditize everything to produce profits for corporations and those already affluent has penetrated universities. Education is now a commodity in an economy where knowledge is a product bought and sold to benefit industry, business, the competitive capacities of the State and the few "stars" in the academia. The research university is a business increasingly tied to, intersecting with, and beholden to government, foundation, and corporate funding.

This reality cannot and should not hold. Anthropology and other disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences are shrinking departments. To survive, research universities are assigning these disciplines to support STEM fields, science, technology, engineering and math. If this process holds, while this may be a necessary short-run adaptive response to the neoliberal mode of production, anthropology is demonstrating its resilience by surviving along the edges of other more profitable disciplines, for example medicine, business, marketing and advertising, design, journalism, the military, and so on.

In the long run, the anthropology I have been talking about in this text also must be practiced outside the academy by serving the most vulnerable we as anthropologists choose as objects of study, participating with them to improve their lives. It is not unusual for anthropologists to be found in community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, and a variety of foundations and government agencies. The approach I favor with my position in a university is a product instigated by my experiences in Romania, reinforced by my action and activist research and the influences of action, activist, public and engaged anthropologist predecessors.

In the process of carrying out our academic roles to ensure our own subsistence and continuity, those of us who choose to carry out this kind of work, whether in the academy or outside of it, must simultaneously engage local knowledge producing communities, those most vulnerable in society, within public spheres and civil society. This is done by promoting the conditions for collaboration and mutuality to address the specific problems impacting them and their communities through acts of self-organization, the production of alternative and anti-hegemonic discourses, and the co-production of liberating knowledge and practices.

This would be a commitment to a non-hierarchical, non-knowledge-harvesting approach. Instead, we use a participatory web-like, social-networking method for knowledge production that is congenial and non-competitive with the purpose of intersecting engaged research and experience-based learning with direct action to improve the human condition. This synergistic social process and culture would generate renewable foundations for radical democratic praxis pushing back against individualization, the hyper-competitiveness that has produced wars and the unhinged grab for domination. This approach is anchored in teaching and learning as a reciprocating dialogic process, in-context and in-process within a knowledge producing commons. Our roles as teachers, researchers and activists must not be defined only by giving voice to the voiceless or explaining why and how things happen, or resistance to oppression, infringements on human and civil rights and hegemonic regimes. We must be actively engaged in reformulating the reality in which we find ourselves and engage students and the public to envision and create a different future than the self-destructive course our planetary leadership has chosen at this time.

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## SOCIALIST ROMANIA AND THE FUTILITY OF COLD WAR ANALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT.** This discussion looks back at socialist Romania and the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime. It suggests that Romania, like all states, socialist, social-democratic and neoliberal are confronted by the same world systemic capitalism and that all states use a mixture of policies involving both capitalist and socialist, democratic and authoritarian features in the attempt to avoid the hazards and to gain the advantages of a global system dominated by capitalist accumulation. Using a diversity of assets and hampered by limitations inherited historically, some will fail and some will succeed as state projects. Cold War era analysis will not be useful as a way to evaluate or predict winners or losers. Likewise, the failure of Communist Romania as a state system could not have been predicted either by its authoritarian or by its socialist policy features.

**Keywords:** communism, socialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, world-system, Cold War, democracy and authoritarianism, UMass Romanian Research Group

*“The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newly-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”*

(Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*)

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## I.

This well-known quote, nearly Biblical in its poetic language, foretells of a time near the fullest expanse of bourgeois capital—a time when everything that describes the work of anthropologists in the here and now, that is every cultural, social, religious, racial, ethnic, sexual, environmental, national, political and economic variation found and documented among the diversity of people during the modern era, will “melt away” and become irrelevant—used, abused, and abandoned. Every human on earth will then be “compelled to face with sober senses” the fundamental maternal interdependencies between and among themselves.

How real could such expectations, in fact, be? It is possible even to describe what such a time (when all fundamental relations are revealed) would look like? Well, we must emphasize here, that ethnographic anthropologists, in point of fact, have only done fieldwork among people existing during the modern era—not among “old modes of production in unaltered form.” We have observed some “fast-frozen relations” with “venerable prejudices” in the modern era—but we emphatically work, and have always worked, only among the modern, the “newly-formed ones,” that, perhaps, are destined to “become antiquated before they can ossify,” as many have already.

However, if we have done work in any modern place where “the bourgeoisie cannot exist,” it would be where capitalists cannot themselves revolutionize production and relations of production, because that, according to what Marx and all modern entrepreneurs say, is a necessary condition of bourgeois existence. Such a place, without capitalists, was the major claim of the communist party of Romania. Or, to put it another way, how transformative and “revolutionary” was socialist Romania? How real was that claim, and even more, what difference would be being revolutionary make anyway?

Did not Romania need to earn hard US dollars and did it not have a national currency with some kind of exchange value? Did it not have to secure international loans from capitalist banks in good faith and profit margins so that loans could be paid back with interest? Did it not organize a nation-state and issue passports and visas? Was it not dependent on a balance of trade and a realist foreign policy requiring military hardware, industrial technology and resource inputs from other states, both capitalist and non-capitalist—just about like any other participant in the modern world’s system of nations?

I would first like to portray my thoughts about Romania, and to make at last a feeble attempt to give substance to the near millennial vision of Marx—the one where there are no capitalists able to revolutionize technology and, thereby, social relations. I defined his *Manifesto* outline of capitalist globalism

by comparing socialist Romania to both liberal and socialist states. I think that Marx has described this globalism in terms that are more Darwinian than dialectical. States of whatever genus and species are in a struggle for existence in an environment defined by capital. The latter determines who is adapted and who is not—but 99% will finally become extinct, liberal or socialist, authoritarian or democratic, free market or planned. Only after the geological era made by capital collapses under the weight of its own dialectical contradictions will there be a chance for the real relations between people to be perceived. I will argue further that the time is short, and the hour late for human civilization.

I have had a long time to mull this over—several decades since our group of UMass anthropologists did their fieldwork under the leadership and direction of Prof. John Cole. (None of these contemplations, by the way, have been very much solicited by the academic world where I sought to make living so here are my general impressions of the mountain village of Fundata, where I conducted research). In the 1970s this beautiful Carpathian community, one of the Bran Castle villages, had all the features that demonstrate in a most dramatic way, the mutualism, reciprocity, and social solidarity that anthropologists have found in peasant communities throughout the world. This mutualism has served the villagers well. Villagers participated in an international solidarity with their place of origins. Many people would show me old photos of their early 20th century ancestors who had migrated for work in the industrial cities of Detroit, Michigan and Erie, Pennsylvania—both cities in the USA. Often, such migrant workers would return to the Bran area to reestablish their lives as farmers, bringing their savings from such industrial work. Others ran successful small business in the United States. I cannot forget the image of *Domnul* and *Doamna* Gavenia, dressed in business suit and gown typical of the 1920s USA. They were painted as a fresco on the back wall of the “new” church they had contributed the money to the villagers to construct. Holding in their joint hands, the couple present a small image of the church as a gift. The “old” church was not far from the larger “new” church. The former, being smaller, was used in the winter. The latter, being larger, was used in the summer. In the 1970s, the older ladies of Fundata still sported the hand spun and woven multi-colored costumes of Bran women. Made of wool from the very sheep they still raised, their crafts were also proudly displayed on the walls of their houses as tapestries, blankets, and decorative textiles. Such crafts, for personal consumption and not for tourists, symbolized the solidarity and common identity that joined families across the many different political regimes collectively confronted through time and over geographic space.



Fundata, Braşov County. *Source: Author's archive.*

I would like to start with some remarks about the limitations of ethnography in socialist Romania. I think there is reason to acknowledge some serious *naïveté*, which is well captured by the ambitious purpose and aim of our original project, “The Socialist Transformation in Romania.” We had set about to study the emergence of something new, and indeed, socialist Romania was a solid, newly-formed place, which had also, alas, “melted way,” (and long before it could “ossify”) while, by contrast, the bourgeoisie was then and is now doing quite fine, if not better than ever by modern measures of class inequality, capital accumulation, and technical change.

So, did our work anticipate that Romanian socialism would be yet another “profaned” and “antiquated” set of relationships—and are we thereby “compelled” now, after its demise, to face the real conditions of life and our relations to each other in Romania and elsewhere? What did we imagine that ethnography would let us know about the “real conditions of life,” and all human relations?

Many questions remain: Will more newly formed relations arise and melt before ossification? In the field, what should we have looked for, and what needs to be done now, and how much time is left to do it in? Must we anticipate yet another liberal democracy in Romania, a new member of the global market system, along with increasing class inequality and polarized ethnic diversity? Are these bourgeois social relations the only real material relations possible?

Secondly, I would like to contemplate a thesis put forth by Katherine Verdery as she recounts her surveillance files collected by the Romanian state security apparatuses during the Ceaușescu regime—namely that:

...doing fieldwork in a communist country inserted the researcher directly into a global context, giving things a significance they might not have had elsewhere. An anthropologist in the field “behind the Iron Curtain” was a point at which global political forces intersected; anything she did could be interpreted in that light. (Verdery, 2018)

I agree with Dr. Verdery that ethnographic fieldworkers who have been educated at institutions on the noncommunist side of the “Iron Curtain” discover that their intentions are fraught with special “Cold War” suspicions when doing work on the communist side of the curtain. The monitoring, the intrusions into private moments, and personal relationships, and the propaganda like injections into her intellectual analysis, which she describes in minute detail, are objectionable. She was cast by national governments into politically charged situations, not surprisingly characterized as an epic clash of capitalism vs. socialism.

However, I will take issue with Verdery in one major respect. For her, the authoritarianism and near megalomania of Ceaușescu, the constant surveillance, the endless suspicions that she was spying on military facilities, while being a provocateur and Hungarian revanchist arise out of the very nature of socialism. Authoritarians are the special fault of communist state systems much more than within the Western world and neoliberal capitalism:

In the United States, the concept of transparency has a fundamental place in ideas about personal behavior, as well as in notions of democratic practice (though not, unfortunately, in the practice itself). This made living in a forest of secrets especially fraught for someone like me, at the time an unreflective believer in “telling it like it is.” Secrecy was the essential medium of Securitate practices. It was also pervasive in all spheres of 1980s Romania, under the “wise guidance” of the Communist Party led by Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose rule had by then become an ugly dictatorship. (Verdery, 2018)

In contrast, I will suggest that every state is liable to become more or less authoritarian at some point during its life cycle. One dictatorship is much like another and all are the product of the same global system we have been living in for some few centuries during the modern era—one long cycle of fast frozen relationships, melting one after the other, all attempting either to capture some benefits through, or to escape in some way from, the logic of the same world capitalist system, as per Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems analysis—a single system all are subjected to (Wallerstein, 2018).

Certainly, as Verdery implies, Western capitalist societies do “not always consistently” adhere to the core values of “personal transparency” and “democratic practice,” but still, somehow they try harder than do the communist states. I suggest, on the contrary, that the “liberal democracies” protest too much, even as the obvious must be granted: that “iron curtain” states during the Cold War did not display more than superficial resistance to authoritarian rule. There is evidence enough, however, that the nations are not only unequal in their variant capacity to engage in a global game of monopoly, but also unpredictably duplicitous and/or waffling (all of them in the world) in their commitments to political democracy, transparency, ethnic equality and social welfare.

## II.

To begin, then, with our ethnographic naïveté in communist Romania: When we set out to do fieldwork there, none of us had any qualms or doubts that we were observing “socialist transformation” and that this research was going to reveal something about the politics, methods and goals of communism—that is the essential character of a communist state. Items such as the use of planning in organizing production, the industrial development of the country, the outlawing or marginalization of markets, profits, and private property, (in preference to collective property, as with the collective farm), the one party embodiment of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and policies designed to end class, ethnic, gender, racial and religious distinctions would reveal themselves as successes or failures. We would emerge after fieldwork with some knowledge about what could lead policy in a socialist direction and what could not.

This list of “essential communism” is not meant to be complete, nor is it strictly accurate, since many states identifying with socialism or communism during the 1970s did not completely institute or fully subscribe to everything on the list. Lists often differ practically and theoretically. Sometimes this has to do with differing methods and stratagems for building socialism and communism, and sometimes it represents differing compromises and capabilities relative to the realities of socialist transition in a world still largely dominated by global capitalism, neoliberalism, and powerful military opponents bent on opposing any communist/socialist alternatives. (I cite as examples along these lines the large non-collectivized farming of communist Poland, the worker self-management of the former communist Yugoslavia, the international isolation of communist Cuba and North Korea, China’s embrace of a “free market” stock market, and Romania’s independent economic and foreign policy relative to the Warsaw Pact.)

No socialist state has ever been able to proceed in an unrestricted manner. As a broad policy choice, it is not an easy thing to create a place where capitalists, money, and markets are out of the picture. However, beyond the

variations and disputes regarding the way toward post capitalism, I would like to suggest something more. Neither are the states claiming the legacy of liberal capitalism able to make the world wholly as they would as well. They too must suffer the difficulties of the bourgeoisie even as they embrace them—and the more they embrace them, the more constrained they are.

All states, most importantly, are constrained by the dead weight of history and by what has gone before, still ongoing and still dominant in the here and now—rendering everyone of them witnesses to the reproduction of bourgeois accumulation:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service. (Marx, 1994)

In this case, the “circumstances existing already” describes the capitalist world-system—the very system constantly revolutionizing bourgeois production, “and thereby the relations of production.” If Marx’s poetic description of the situation is correct, then both liberal and socialist states are, in some very similar way, “not able to make the world as they please.”

What might result, therefore, if we relaxed the distinctions, not only between one communist state and another, but also between the “liberal” West and the “socialist” East? I don’t intend to argue that there is no substance to the distinction between “free market” capitalism and socialism. I do intend to suggest that no single nation state, of whatever formal type, is in a position to remake themselves any way they please. There has been much exaggeration, a product of the Cold War perhaps, regarding the powers of even the most powerful of such states as, for example, the United States.

Should this be the case, and I argue that it is, many of the differences between them cannot be essential, by which I mean, uniquely a feature of socialism or liberal capitalism. Both will have recourse to authoritarians, both will employ a smaller or larger percentage of options from the same grab bag of policies that include, planning, markets, private property, socialized property, social welfare, wage labor, monetary manipulation, managed trade, free trade and international trade, to name a few.

There will be at least some capitalism within any socialist state and at least some socialism in every capitalist state. Both will “anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service”—in the form of broadly similar institutions, as in the following examples of settlement, agriculture, and money.



### *Settlement Planning*

It is possible to discover everywhere on the “free market” side of the former Iron Curtain public/private partnerships imposing urban planning schemes upon an unwilling population in a manner not unlike Communist Romania’s centrally planned urbanization, known as systematization. *Sistematizarea* called for the doubling of urban centers and the elimination of remote villages with populations under 1000. This planned settlement policy, however, went well beyond the upgrading of small towns into true urban centers. It also sought to transform villages and redesign their role in regional economies.

For example, in the village of Fundata, the plan called for the creation of a *sat turistic*, that is, a tourist village. This would require the dispersed settlement pattern of Fundata to be transformed into an increasingly centralized community, in contrast to the needs of peasant mixed farming and sheep transhumance. In place of the traditionally dispersed settlement pattern, the village would eventually become more visually commodious and more responsive to the needs of seasonal tourists—who, presumably, did not wish to hike over kilometers between traditionally isolated farmsteads, where they might find “bed and breakfast” like accommodation. The new urban working classes would be drawn to the striking Carpathian vistas but, in theory, they did not want too much exercise.

Moreover, investment in infrastructure, such as electric lines, sewage systems, and indoor plumbing would be facilitated by a more dense concentration of the village. According to *Sistematizarea*, as the villagers themselves transitioned out of unmechanized mountain agriculture, they could concentrate on local tourism and/or commuter employment opportunities, facilitated already by the major highway that runs through the Bran pass.

It was difficult for me to measure how rapidly, in actuality, this settlement transformation was taking place. The better housing, cantina, and commune office were along the highway in a center. These buildings were electrified but there was not then, in the 70s, indoor plumbing. Most of the village seems barely to have concentrated at all.

Most of the villagers were dispersed over a large area, practicing traditional transhumance, complete with shepherds in classic woolen capes, (who managed the consolidated flocks of sheep). In addition there was small-scale household horticulture, along with cattle and dairy farming, sustained by hay harvests from the many traditional pastures. Each household would contract to deliver cattle, wool and sheep in numbers consistent with the targets of government planners. There were penalties for failure to meet plan targets and incentives for fulfilling them. How these deliveries were to be met was wholly desegregated by landholder and managed by each household, according to their individual contracts with the state. The village as a whole, however, would reap the consequences of plan fulfillment or failure.



The cantina. *Source: Author's archive.*

Keeping up production with traditional labor-intensive methods, centuries old, conflicted with the *Sistematizarea* plan to transform the village into a tourist facility. I could not detect much evidence for centralization, even as each plan year formally called for slowly constricting the circle outside of which new farmstead buildings were to be prohibited. While the better looking and newer homes did seem to be concentrated along the highway, this seems largely to have been determined by the circumstances and personal choice of each household.

The comparison I wish to make here concerns how nearly identical settlement planning seems to be in any industrial state. Labor forces of appropriate kinds in all cases must be relocated—the wrong kind moved out and the right one moved in. Locations and infrastructures are historically inherited, and so settlement planners must accommodate changing industrial and postindustrial technologies.

Whatever the distress of displaced Romanian villagers, their unhappiness are not unlike those discontents, for example, caused by the rapid gentrification of Oakland—planned by Apple, Facebook, Cisco, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, Yahoo, Alphabet, and Google in California's greater Silicon Valley. Both systems



of urban and rural planning, neoliberal and socialist, tend to be grandiose and bureaucratic. Both neoliberal and socialist states have been accused of ethnic and class bias. (See “Mapping Dispossession, Mapping Affect” by Manissa Maharawal and Erin McElroy, *Anthropology News*, November/December 2018, pp. 17-21).

### ***Industrialized Agriculture***

The gigantic industrial farming and land consolidations of American agroindustrial farming is hardly less ambitious, resource irrational, and stressful than the imposed level of collectivized agriculture in socialist Romania. A review of the literature (Kideckel, 1983; Kligman and Verdery, 2011; Iordachi and Bauerkämper, 2014; McIntyre, 1993; Tauger, 2004; Xu, 2013, 2018) on collective farming, under socialism in Romania and in other socialist states, does not produce, at least to my mind, a clear consensus on the superiority of American, Brazilian, or Canadian big farming over Soviet style or Chinese style big farming. The industrial production of beef in Britain or the USA is destructive of land and resources, and can hardly be seen as an improvement over conditions in Romania. (See “Industrial-scale Beef Production is a Sign of Crisis in Britain’s Farming,” *Guardian* 2018.) Moreover, large scale and small-scale farmers throughout the world experience very similar levels of economic instability and emotional distress. In Japan, in Africa, in Brazil, in Peru, in India and in the USA (to name just a few) farmers demonstrate and require state intervention. This situation is summed up well in “Why are America’s Farmers Killing Themselves in Record Numbers?” (*Guardian* 2018):

The US farmer suicide crisis echoes a much larger farmer suicide crisis happening globally: an Australian farmer dies by suicide every four days; in the UK, one farmer a week takes his or her own life; in France, one farmer dies by suicide every two days; in India, more than 270,000 farmers have died by suicide since 1995.

Both capitalist and socialist systems of agriculture are constrained by the same fossil fuel technology, by the same economies of scale, by the same environmental externalities that make available the same mass of surplus value that can be invested in other priorities outside the welfare of farm labor. The world system is a capitalist system and within it, states have only begun to investigate what a sustainable farming technology would look like. Few have a clear picture of what the role of farm labor would be in such a system, or what role nations states would play in food security.

Industrialized agriculture globally, relies, nevertheless, on diverse forms of sweated labor. An example, in the Romanian case, would be “patriotic work” (*munca patriotică*), mobilized particularly at harvest time during the Ceaușescu era. It was directed by local governments and was less than voluntary. Urban dwellers and other non-agricultural citizens would not be compensated for fieldwork they were often ill suited for, nor were the working conditions ideal. I don’t have a good hold on how necessary such state solicited labor mobilizations were, nor how effective. They are often of short durations.

In the mountain village of Fundata, where I did my research, agricultural work was not collectivized. At peak periods in the agricultural calendar, such as when the haying must be done with traditional scythes, household labor was supplemented by extended household members who were absent from the village most of the time—employed elsewhere in logging or industry. Such individuals were quite well equipped to do this intensive work, having been raised in peasant households. A regime of generalized household reciprocity seemed to me then to have been mutually beneficial for all concerned.

The point I wish to make here, however, is that sweated labor is a necessary component of industrialized agriculture, whether by big private land owners in, say California, or by big mechanized collective farms in Romania. Massachusetts, the US state where I now reside, is not known for its agriculture. Nevertheless, masses of seasonal migrants from Jamaica arrive to harvest cucumbers and apples. Even large dairy farms in Vermont require temporary labor to handle mechanized milking machines. The conditions for such workers are also much less than just. The workers must travel seasonably over long distances.

In some sense, this is similar to the family members who show up in Fundata during peak demands for labor. Most of the time, on a day-to-day basis, work in Fundata was feminized and supplemented by older family members. Whole classes of male labor and younger people, absent most of the time, would show up on weekends or seasonably. These mostly absent individuals were employed as wage earners far from village.

Anthropologists have long noted that traditional, labor-intensive agriculturalists (even in ancient times) could produce significant surpluses beyond their personal needs. These surpluses supported ancient elites and could still be used in socialist Romania to supplement the industrialized agricultural sector with a mountain version of sweated labor—used both in urban wage work and rural surpluses from traditional peasant style farming.

It seems that the more global industrial, commercial and large-scale agriculture becomes, the more marginalized agricultural workers and work become.



Villagers at a well. *Source: Author's archive.*

Collective, traditional small scale mechanized family farming and migrant-labor dependent agricultural production have served, in places like socialist Romania, China and Poland (and really everywhere) as vast unenclosed spaces where surplus labor can find employment. Enclosures and privatization throughout history have resulted in displaced and urbanized new worker classes.

### ***Money***

The role of money is political, and incidentally economic, to say the least—both Western style banking and socialist Romania's constraints on the private ownership of "hard currencies," particular the US dollar, appear to proceed from the same underlying suppositions, however they differ in specific details—reflecting more the relative bargaining position of rich creditor nations versus credit dependent nations. Though some socialist states have claimed otherwise, clearly few if any socialist states have ever measured work and compensation in accordance with Marx labor theory of value. This is because they cannot secure loans, pay off debts, export or import products, gain licenses to patients or pay for embassy personnel without following the rules of capitalist banking in some fundamentally capitalist way. This fact has significant consequences for all states, socialist and liberal.

In Fundata, people pressured me, an American, to buy things for them in the “dollar shops,” where the best consumer items were to be found. Romanians were not legally allowed to own hard currencies and were not able to enter such shops without someone legally in possession of US dollars. This fact is well known. There was a popular refrain during the 1970s to the effect that “if it’s good, it’s for export.” These times, when I was doing fieldwork in Fundata, were, moreover, the good times for post-war Romanians—it must be noted. Conditions would get much worse.

The Romanian *leu* was not then a fully convertible currency. It was used by the locals but not greatly by international bankers. Inevitably some Romanian *lei* would escape into the Western banking system where one could exchange dollars for much more *lei* (illegally by Romanian law) than the rate allowed within the country. National policy then was directed toward earning US dollars and other hard currencies—in an effort to pay off loans, fund imports, and construct an atmosphere of trust suitable to the priorities of their Western trading partners. Such jousting between soft and hard currencies, we should recall, is not something “hard” to find examples of in other non-socialist nation states as well. The IMF and World Bank institutions were and are busy telling other “subordinate” states how to secure credit, pay off their international obligations, and restrain social welfare in favor of debt repayment.

During the 1970s, cavorting with the global institutions of liberal banking and finance had major consequences for Romanians, both politically and economically—becoming devastating during the 1980s. At the same time, one must emphatically acknowledge the impact of Ceaușescu’s harsh currency measures and the devastating austerity he thought to be a necessary requirement of debt repayment. This austerity seems to be a major factor in the fall of the regime in 1989. We cannot justify the measures that Ceaușescu had imposed, nor the authoritarian powers which enabled him, but we should recall the austerity policies were favored by the dominant Western institutions also.

There appears to be a general consensus regarding Ceaușescu and Romanian communist history, which divides into two periods: the time between 1965 and 1971, and the time between 1971 and 1989. In the first period, there was a more open policy towards Western Europe and the United States. This allowed the regime to maneuver with flexibility and to move away tangentially from the Warsaw Pact signed during the Cold War. In the West, Ceaușescu became the “flexible” communist leader and favorite persona of US Republican presidents.

This better period is characterized, also, by the greater Communist Party stress on improving people’s personal comfort. Investments were allocated towards building flats so that citizens could own a private residence in one of the many communist era high-rise buildings. Of course, primary and higher education, employment and healthcare were public welfare measures available to all in need—both urban and rural.

I can describe my limited observations of rural health care. When my wife and I lived in the mountain village of Fundata, we spent occasional evenings with the family of the local GP and dentist, a married couple, and their young son. From them we came to understand some fragments of the local health care system. Both the GP and the dentist had received their education free, but also in exchange for a commitment to spend a certain number of years serving in a small rural setting such as Fundata. As part of his job description, the GP was also required to do rounds out to the more remote households on a regular schedule—transportation provided by horse drawn vehicle. In short, professional people could not congregate solely in the urban centers where amenities were more available.

In addition, during this more commodious period, there seems to have been a measure of cultural flexibility and economic stability. In schools, Romanian and world literature substituted Soviet literature. Certain cultural figures were rehabilitated—for example, the right-wing historian Nicolae Iorga and Eugen Lovinescu, a modernist literary historian and novelist. Furthermore, however one may judge the functionality of communist Romania's full employment provisions, every citizen did have the legal right to a job (though, at times, was punished for unemployment without cause). Full employment is something that most liberal nations have not been able to sustain. The United States, for example, has not been able to provide for it, even after two very popular legislative attempts were made, first in 1945 and again in 1974. The failure of these initiatives was due largely to opposition from the Republican Party and conservative business interests (Goldberg, 2018). Yet, what is most interesting, in this context, is how both liberal and socialist states turn toward very similar social guarantees: full employment, in all cases, must depend on state led initiatives.

The relative flexibility of the early period began to unravel after Ceaușescu visited other communist states in 1971—such as People's Republic of China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia. The total loyalty to the leaders of these countries, personality cults they were called, deeply impressed him and Ceaușescu began to imagine an expansive transformation of the nation—the creation of a new socialist human being.

Extreme nationalism, the deterioration of foreign relations with Western Europe and the Soviet Union and Ceaușescu's slide into something like megalomania highlight the stresses of the second period—culminating in the fall of the regime in 1989. This period would see power at the top increasingly concentrated into the hands of Ceaușescu's personal family members, including his wife Elena.

Construction of massive buildings such as the House of the People, and poorly planned initiatives such as the Danube–Black Sea Waterway, joined other heavy industrial, but overly ambitious projects. These projects showcased Ceaușescu’s vision of the “multilateral developed person” (*omul multilateral dezvoltat*). They also drained resources—moving the country into an international debt crisis of tragic proportions.

The regime decided to pay off the accumulated debt in one massive initiative, beginning in late 1980. The range of items selected for export (in exchange for hard currency needed to service debt) was truly draconian. Food shortages were commonplace and in October of 1981, a decree declared that those who purchased food exceeding one month of household requirements would risk imprisonment for one to five years. It is doubtful that this extreme austerity and debt service did much to help the Romanian economy. It was a great help to Western bankers, however. Without going into all the tragic details, extreme damage was done to the civilian population, to the social services and welfare provisions of the country, and to the stability of the regime. It would end, as we know, with the death by firing squad of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu.

Will states of any stripe in the world system abide by Economics 101 rules should their monetary system and trading structures face domestic or international disadvantage? Certainly the history of the United States and socialist China does not seem to suggest that they do. In a most amazing flip, it is currently the USA that seeks protectionism, while communist China becomes the most vocal defender of “free trade.” What is even more interesting to me, in any case, is the apparently loose relationship between factors: Authoritarian figures, the ideological commitment to capitalism or socialism, the focus on market versus plan, strong or weak democratic institutions, systems of banking and credit—no single item on this list, alone or in combination, is a very strong predictor of the economic and political success of a given nation. Consider the contrasts between Cuba, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Greece, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan to name just a few. Each of these states has a unique combination of capitalism and socialism, while at the same time, some of the most authoritarian have experienced “success” while some of more democratic have experienced “failure.” What can we say about Romania?

### III.

As a final note, we must regret, as Verdery so effectively does, the loss of “transparency” in socialist Romania. But we must also admit that the spying and the *Securitate* bureaucracy of Romania has been surpassed in every way by the security apparatuses of USA, (MacAskill and Hern, 2018) and most Western



nations, and also by the prying social media with their detailed data sets documenting aspects of our private lives down to our separate preferences for everything from underwear to reading material—which it privatizes and sells to political and commercial manipulators, as notoriously demonstrated by the Cambridge Analytica case (Solon, 2018).

These days, the common constraints and advantages of global capitalism are recognized widely, especially within the wealthy liberal states, but also by socialist states such as Cuba, North Korea, and Venezuela and emerging states in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. Jobs migrate to China, desperate columns of ethnic migrants stream across Western borders (while over-accumulated money bags of capital stream across Eastern borders or hide on lawless offshore islands). Labor arbitrage pits the living wage against global sweatshops, corporations require lower taxes, free from environmental regulation, even as property concentrates wealth more than at any time in history.

Needless to say, there has been a plethora of assessments and reassessments of centralized, market, and bureaucratic socialist systems, focused on the structural failure of socialism as an idea and program. Western capitalist intellectuals have been producing formal critiques of planning, egalitarian goals, grassroots democracy, and class as the basis of revolutionary transformations since the very origins of the Red scares and the Russian Revolution—if not before. The Cold War has a long history. Socialism is characterized, in these models, as inherently infeasible for any complex industrializing society and its collapse as a program in any state is therefore understood to be inevitable and unavoidable. Authoritarians in Romania, East Germany, the Soviet Union, Cuba and beyond must exist because irrational socialism cannot exist. There have been many confrontations between heavy weight intellectuals along these lines. We mention only one example, the famous debate between Paul Sweezy (on the socialist side) and Joseph Alois Schumpeter during the winter semester of 1946-47 in Harvard's Littauer Auditorium before a packed audience. Here was a clash between the ideas of Sweezy's *The Theory of Capitalist Development* and Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*—both recently published in 1942 (Foster and Sweezy, 2011). Today, given the context of environmental and climate destruction, Schumpeter's notion of "creative destruction," the principle virtue of capitalist entrepreneurs, must sound cruelly sardonic.

In and about the mid-1970s and later, works on the irrationality and infeasibility of socialism took quantum leaps. Appearing about this time there were also innovative works by native East European intellectuals that added new analytical models framing the failures of socialism. They seemed to favor the successes of the market and private property—adding newly minted support to the standard liberal claims on democracy and freedom. This flurry of activity

happened just as the Keynesian New Deal floundered in the West, Soviet and East European socialism began its painful collapse, and a new level of neoliberal globalism sought after the cheapest labor sources, the most open financial markets, and the fewest environmental regulations.

With some hesitation, I mention two Hungarian intellectuals who exemplify this latter trend: sociologist Iván Szelényi and economist János Kornai. Szelényi first came to my attention as our Romanian Studies Group discussed his book *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, published in English in 1979. In this work, socialist Hungary is presented as an example germane to socialist projects generally. Far from overcoming the class conflicts of capitalism (owners and workers) socialist states have merely transferred the powers of capitalist owners to a new class of intellectuals (professionals trained at institutions of higher education) who are privileged to direct the means of production (often to their own advantage) while workers remain disempowered. Kornai first came to my attention during a visit to Hungary with other American academics in 1989. He embraced the main context of capitalism versus socialism in relation to the notion of “budget constraints” and his ideas are conveniently introduced in his article “‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Budget Constraints’ (Kornai, 1980). Hard constraints are thought to keep enterprises in the capitalist West within bounds. They cannot command more of a country’s resources than their business success allows them. Beyond that, they simply go out of business. Socialist enterprises, on the other hand, being controlled by intellectuals, are unbound by soft constraints. These socialist enterprises are led by ideology and know nothing of bounds. Should they monopolize the resources of a country beyond viability, the state simply provides more resources by diverting them from other national resources—to the deficit of working people.

It is clear that some kind of relationship exists between Szelényi and Kornai’s ideals that focuses on the “new class” basis of the planned economies. I only wish to point out here that if intellectuals and soft budget constraints are, and haven been, a problem for socialist nation states, they are and have been also problems for capitalist nation states. We do not have the space here, but readers will be familiar with the many powerful “think tanks” in the United States directed at providing “new class” direction to state policy. Business school versions of Samuelson’s Economics 101 remain as the ticket to a middle class career in both government and business. These intellectuals are elements bound together into a “military industrial complex”—as firmly as organic chemistry can achieve. If, moreover, socialist states have “soft budget constraints,” they are hardly more fungible than in the industrial West, where the big bank and auto industry bailouts of the United States and Europe have saved neoliberalism from



itself. In the United States, there is a long history here—going back, at least, to the 19th century robber barons who required state support for infrastructure such as the railroads (Perlman, 2006).

If the similarities between states, socialist and capitalist are, should we say, “too comparable,” then I question how much mileage can be had by treating them, in a sense, as unique brands with generic irrationalities. There seems to be no reliable way by which socialist versus capitalist state types can be utilized to predict which of the two will fail as a project. China’s socialist aspirations are paired with an emerging elite depend on private property, personal wealth accumulation, and a stark market. It is interesting to note, in this context, that China’s GDP growth, despite the “Great Leap Forward” and the “Cultural Revolution,” was, over all, higher than in the USA and just about as high as it is today. Indeed, in an important sense the basis for the current market-oriented expansion in China was determined by the previous Maoist expansion (Long and Herrera, 2018). At the same time, both Cuba and China have been rather authoritarian with personality cults of their own, but their economic and social achievements, in some areas, put several Western liberal states to shame.

Does not the United States have a personality cult in President Donald Trump? Does he not trust in his family members in much the same way that Ceaușescu did? What about democracy? John Bellamy Foster’s discussion of Trump’s neo-fascist tendencies describe a severe crisis of neoliberalism not socialism: “Everywhere, neoliberalism has come to stand for policies of austerity, financial speculation, globalization, income polarization, and corporate cronyism” (Foster, 2017).

It is time to put aside much of the literature which has identified socialism and communism as irrational ways to promote industrialism and a classless society based on planning and/or so called “market socialism.” Romania is simply another example of an attempt to live in a world confronted with the common threat of capitalist accumulation on a global scale: a world system, which has now reached a feverish pitch by creating an unprecedented environmental disaster, the Anthropocene, thereby suggesting the very end of human life itself (Ellis, 2018).

U.S. President Trump and his European admirers on either side of the former Iron Curtain are manipulating the once self-righteous whereabouts of democracy. He would fain “Make America great again” but for the elimination of criminal Latin Americans, terrorist Middle Easterners and “liberal mobs.” A growing proto-fascism is crated daily in the USA by the inflating influence of the extreme right in other nations—each with their own version of nationalist chauvinism (see “What to Say to White People,” by Steve Phillips, *The Nation*, 11/27/2018). In a review essay, very regretful of unrequited liberal democracy, Sheri Berman discusses the failures of so-called democratic liberalism:

Liberal democracy has faltered in Eastern Europe, is threatened by populists in Western Europe and the United States, and is being challenged by resurgent authoritarianism in Russia, China, and elsewhere. Reflecting these trends, scholarship and commentary has become consumed by debates about “illiberal democracy,” “global authoritarianism,” and democratic “deconsolidation.” Summing up what has become a widespread view, Victor Orbán, Hungary’s current prime minister, recently proclaimed: “The era of liberal democracy is over.” (Berman, 2018)

What of now in Romania? This is another discussion we must have, but note that neither Mihai Verga in *Worker Protests in Post-Communist Romania and Ukraine: Striking with Tied Hands* (2014) nor Alexander Clapp in his remarkable piece in *New Left Review*, “Romania Redivivus,” finds much of the transparency that we all crave for in these post-communist states. In regard to ethnic tensions in post-communist Romania, there remains much that must be resolved, particularly between Romanians and Hungarians (Sigheti, 2013). Gypsies in post-communist Romania have not been treated impartially according to most reports, while the movement of Romanian Roma toward Paris and London have reviled ethnic prejudice there as well (Taylor, 2013). The Romanian nation state and all these social relations, as Marx would describe them, are either “ancient and venerable prejudices” or newly minted “fast-frozen relations”—simply useful instruments or inconveniences promoting or inhibiting the accumulation of capital—none of them fundamental to the “real conditions of life,” as Marx would have it.

At this point in history, we are not yet “compelled to face with sober senses”, as Marx has phrased it, our “real conditions of life” and our “relations with” our “kind.” This is a sad thing given that the IPCC has given us only some 12 years to do so in the face of grave climate catastrophe and the possible termination of modern civilization. The hour is late and the consequences of capitalism’s limitless accumulation, resource depletion, global domination, and environmental destruction are nearing game over. The problems confronting nations on either side of the “iron curtain” are the same for all, as are the solutions.

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## TRANSLATING JOHN V. MURRA'S 'THE ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE INCA STATE' INTO ROMANIAN AS 'OBRA DE AMOR'

MARIAN VIOREL ANĂȘTĂSOAIE<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This paper addresses one of the first translations of a US anthropological monograph into Romanian. Its author, John V. Murra (1916–2006), born into a Russian-Jewish family in Odessa, grew up in Romania, where he studied and became involved in the Communist movement before his departure for Chicago in 1934. His 1956 PhD thesis in anthropology at University of Chicago on the Inka state was a first step towards turning Murra into an influential figure in the field of Andean anthropology. His sister Ata Iosifescu lived in Romania and translated his PhD thesis into Romanian, published in 1987 as *Civilizație inca: organizarea economică a statului incaș* (Inka Civilization: the Economic Organization of the Inka State). Based on their correspondence kept at the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC), I propose to reconstruct this translation's story: the context, the constraints and the process of translation itself. I am also addressing the question of the book's reception in Romania.

**Keywords:** translation, John Victor Murra, Inka civilization, Andean anthropology, anthropological texts in Romanian

### Introduction: The importance of translation in anthropology<sup>2</sup>

The reader opening the book *Civilizație Inca* by John Victor Murra (1987) could hardly guess the identity of the translator and the story behind this translation.<sup>3</sup> The invisibility of the translation work decried by Lawrence Venuti

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<sup>3</sup> Both 'Inca' and 'Inka' are accepted forms in modern English. The second form uses the orthography of Quechua, the language of the Inka. Murra used the first form in his PhD dissertation, but later on adopted the second form. In this paper I use 'Inka', but keep 'Inca' for the title of the dissertation.

(2008) is here even more remarkable since the author and translator are siblings – a fact which is not obvious to the reader, as there is no name coincidence and there is no mention of it in the book. Ata Iosifescu was the younger sister of John Murra or Isaak Lipschitz, his birth name. They were both born in Odessa, in a Russian-speaking Jewish family who later moved to Bucharest in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Their life trajectories were marked by the major events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, WWII and the Cold War, making even more extraordinary this case of a physicist from socialist Romania translating the book of one of the most accomplished US anthropologists working on the Andean cultures. Based on the rich correspondence kept at the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC) between John Murra and Ata Iosifescu, this article reconstructs the process of this translation: the context, logistics, the constraints and the process of translation itself (finding Romanian equivalents for technical terms, explaining native terms, clarifying inconsistencies and errors in the text and providing visual illustrations).<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the importance of translation practices for the discipline of anthropology, the translation of anthropological texts has rarely been addressed in the history of the discipline. However, translation is a crucial process in the larger circulation of anthropological ideas, theories, and ethnographies across national research traditions and between sites of research and teaching. Moreover, the labor of translating anthropological texts is essential for training students and for popularizing anthropology beyond the confines of the academia or specialist circles. Translation, at least that of literature, functions in a regime of fluency, whereby a translated text should be read fluently, ‘insuring easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning’ (Venuti, 2008: 1). This requirement of fluency leads to a certain invisibility of the translator – in fact, the less the translator’s work is felt by the reader, the better the illusion of the transparency of the text and its closeness to the original. This invisibility has been questioned recently in translation studies, especially after the work of Lawrence Venuti (2008). A related discussion in translation studies has dealt with the relation between the original and the translation: is the translation derivative, secondary to the original, as it is commonly thought, or is the translation the continuation, the ‘after-life’ of the

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<sup>4</sup> John V. Murra’s personal papers are part of the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. They include manuscripts, personal documents, diaries, and correspondence. In the correspondence section, there is a folder titled ‘Economic Organization of the Inca State, Romanian Translation – Ata’ containing 103 items, mainly letters from Ata Iosifescu to John V. Murra. Murra kept only copies of some of his letters he sent to his sister. I thank the NAA staff, especially its reference archivist Adam Minakowski, for their amazing support during my research visit in June and July 2014.

source text, as Jacques Derrida (1985a), on the footsteps of Walter Benjamin (2000[1923]), argues? In anthropology, too, there have been critical discussions on the place of translation practices within the discipline, in fieldwork and in writing (Rubel and Rosman, 2003; Leavitt, 2014), and their importance for the epistemology of the discipline (Hanks and Severi, 2014). However, little attention has been given to the after-life of anthropological texts in translation. This article is an attempt to fill this gap, by providing a detailed description of a translation of a US anthropological text into Romanian in the late socialist period.

### **The author: John Murra (Isaak Lipschitz), 1916–2006**

John Victor Murra was born Isaak Lipschitz on August 24, 1916 in Odessa, into a Jewish family. His only sibling was Beatrice (Ata), born in 1920. Their parents decided to move to Bucharest in 1921 to avoid the hardships of the Civil War in Russia. Murra studied at the Lutheran School in Bucharest and at the prestigious Gheorghe Lazăr high-school, from which he was expelled in 1932 because of his left-leaning political sympathies. He did, nevertheless, obtain his baccalaureate in 1933 as a privately educated pupil. According to his testimonies, he was briefly imprisoned on political grounds after he got in contact with the Communist underground movement through the mediation of his older friend Petru Năvodaru (Peter Fisher), a very influential figure for Murra. In a context of growing anti-Semitism and persecution of the Communists, Murra's parents sent him at the end of 1934 to Chicago, where one of his paternal uncles worked as a professional musician.

In Chicago, Murra enrolled at the University of Chicago, where he obtained a BA in sociology in 1936. He also remained involved in political activism and took part in several anti-segregation rallies. At the beginning of 1937, he volunteered for the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, returning to the US in 1939. He used John Victor Murra as his *nom de guerre* in the Spanish Civil War, a name he later adopted as his civil name. He was wounded in the Ebro offensive in 1938. Participation in the Spanish Civil War was a maturing experience for him, boosting his self-confidence, but also causing a disenchantment with politics. As a translator assigned to the headquarters of the International Brigades he witnessed how decisions were taken by the political commissars under the control of the Comintern, and the propaganda and bureaucratic red tape under the Soviet influence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning the importance of language proficiency in Murra's professional life. Besides being a translator and interpreter during the Spanish Civil War, he also translated French historical documents on Native Americans to make ends meet as a student in Chicago. Later on, he co-translated from Russian a series of articles from the Soviet press on N. Y. Marr's linguistic theories, including Stalin's criticism of the latter's interpretations of Marxism (Murra, 1951).



When he returned to Chicago in 1939, Murra enrolled in the MA program in anthropology at the University of Chicago, with renewed energy after giving up political activism. Trained in the four-field approach of the US anthropology (cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, archaeology and linguistics), in 1941–42 he worked as assistant researcher for an archeological team of the Field Museum in Ecuador. This first fieldwork experience in the Andes was decisive for Murra's lifelong interest in the study of Andean cultures. After successfully defending his MA thesis, he obtained a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council to pursue PhD fieldwork in Ecuador. However, he could not travel to Ecuador because of difficulties in obtaining the US citizenship, which he eventually obtained after long years of legal battles, as the authorities denied his naturalization because of his involvement in the Spanish Civil War and previous political activism.

Unable to travel for fieldwork to South America, Murra turned to a library-based dissertation on the economic organization of the Inka state, plodding through 16<sup>th</sup> century historical accounts of Spanish missionaries and soldiers. He found theoretical inspiration in the British anthropological works on African states and their political organization (E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Max Gluckman, Hilda Kuper, Siegfried Nadel) and in the 1953–1954 intellectual exchanges of the Karl Polanyi's group at Columbia University on pre-capitalist economic forms. He defended his thesis in 1956 under the title *The Economic Organization of the Inca State*. Until its publication in Spanish in 1978 and in English in 1980, his thesis circulated in microfilm among a limited circle of specialists. It acquired the status of a classical contribution to the elucidation of the nature and functioning of the Inka statecraft. For centuries, the nature of the Inka state (*Tahuantinsuyu* in Quechua, meaning 'Realm of the Four Parts') has fascinated the Europeans due to its technological and material achievements and its degree of organization. Labels such as 'totalitarian' or 'socialist' were employed to explain the centralized administration through which the Inka sovereign controlled a huge territory, built an advanced infrastructure and distributed surplus products to its subjects. Murra dispelled such ideological labels: even though at first he entertained the idea of an Inka 'feudal' state, he discarded it in his thesis after assimilating the literature on pre-colonial African states.

The importance of published sources of first contacts between Native Amerindians and the Spaniards for Murra's doctoral work made him a life-long practitioner of archival work and an advocate of the importance of editing administrative reports, legal documents, census, and chronicles buried in the rich archives pertaining to the Spanish colonial period in Cuzco and Seville. He edited a series of important documents from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, enriching the sources of ethno-historical research in the Andes.

Building on insights from his PhD thesis, subsequent fieldwork research and archival materials, Murra elaborated the model of the vertical archipelago or ecological complementarity of the Central Andes in order to explain how such a grand civilization as the Inkas could emerge in the difficult physical and climatic conditions of the Andes, where large populations were living at 4,000 meters and above (Murra, 1972). Andean communities created a system of management of environmental resources and productive agro-pastoral practices in diverse and contrasting ecological zones, from the coast of the Pacific Ocean and from tropical forests to the high-altitude cold and partially arid climatic conditions. Spatially, these communities functioned as 'vertical archipelagos', with settlements in distinct ecological zones exchanging products and raw materials through reciprocal links in a complementary way.

John V. Murra had a long commitment in building up and strengthening institutions of anthropological research in Latin American countries. He advocated for collaborative projects of US academic institutions with scholars and universities from Mexico, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Bolivia. He helped students from these countries secure financial support in order to study in US universities. He taught and wrote in Spanish, relishing contacts with Latin American intellectuals and students, building transnational networks and research projects. His genuine commitment to fostering the field of Andean studies gained him public recognition and lasting friendships in Andean countries on a scale rarely experienced by an anthropologist. It was in Latin America where his first authored book appeared (Murra, 1975), followed by the translation of his thesis (Murra, 1978).

### **The translator: Beatrice (Ata) Iosifescu (1920–2007)<sup>6</sup>**

Ata Iosifescu, born Beatrice Lipschitz, remained in Romania with their parents (Murra's father died in 1935). During the war, she went with her mother through a difficult period, as a consequence of the anti-Semitic laws adopted by the Goga-Cuza government in 1938 and the persecution of Jews during WWII. Even though they were not deported, Ata and her mother were evicted from their house, which was confiscated. During the war, she became involved in underground activities carried out by the Communist Party and met, through common friends, her future husband Silvian Iosifescu (1917–2006), later a literary critic and professor of literary theory at the University of

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the paper I will use Ata and Murra when I will talk about the two siblings and their exchanges in the translation process. Both were nicknames used in the family and with friends. In Murra's case, he adopted his childhood name as a civil name when he applied for the US citizenship.

Bucharest. She studied German, French and English in school, in addition to Russian, which she knew from home.<sup>7</sup> After the war, she trained as a physicist and worked as a researcher at the Institute of Nuclear Physics. In 1975 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was cured after surgery and radiotherapy. She started to learn Spanish once she retired in 1975, in order to be able to read Murra's work published in that language, as well as Latin American writers whom she highly admired, such as Gabriel García Márquez or José María Arguedas.<sup>8</sup> She enrolled in a three-year course of Spanish at the Open University (*Universitatea Populară*) in Bucharest. Already in her second year of Spanish classes, she wrote letters in Spanish to her brother as well as to some of his friends and former students. It is in these years of studying Spanish that she began contemplating the idea of translating Murra's *Formaciones* into Romanian, a project which elicited the encouragements of her brother. Ata nourished a deep love and admiration for her brother since childhood. Her admiration for his work grew as she was able to read his books and articles. In April 1976, after reading one of the chapters from *Formaciones* she wrote to him that he shared with poets the ability to see the profound meanings beyond the everyday and banal appearances of things.<sup>9</sup> In May 1982, she wrote to Murra, referring to his retirement from teaching, that 'at least your consciousness is clear, since in all these years you have spread not only knowledge, but you also have ignited in lots of people the desire to know and search further. This is a big achievement.'<sup>10</sup> For Ata, translating his book into Romanian was *una obra de amor* (a work of love), as Ana María Lorandi, a friend

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<sup>7</sup> Ata didn't speak Yiddish, but knew and employed many words and expressions in this language (interview with Maria Iosifescu, Ata Iosifescu's youngest daughter, June 2014), something which comes out here and there in her letters. In 1985, she wrote to Murra that she started to read books written in Yiddish (in Hebrew script), and that she also started to learn Bulgarian words in order to be able to watch Bulgarian TV, which provided better entertainment than the austere and highly ideologized Romanian TV in the 1980s. After her eldest daughter immigrated to Israel in 1984, Ata started to learn Hebrew.

<sup>8</sup> José María Arguedas (1911–1969), Peruvian novelist, poet and anthropologist, explored in his novels the conflicts between indigenous populations and the dominant groups in the Andes. He and Murra were very good friends and had a fruitful intellectual and personal exchange, as their correspondence shows (Murra and López-Baralt, 1996). Ata Iosifescu knew about Arguedas from Murra and first read one of his works in a German translation, before reading the original in Spanish, together with other of his works she received from Murra and Ana María Lorandi (see footnote 10).

<sup>9</sup> It was the chapter on maize, potatoes, and agrarian rituals of the Inkas (Murra, 1975: 46–57).

<sup>10</sup> My translation from Romanian. Letter of Ata Iosifescu (AI) to John V. Murra (JVM), May 5, 1982, National Anthropological Archives (NAA), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, John V. Murra (JVM) Papers, Folder '[Economic Organization of the Inca State, Romanian Translation]–Ata'. All letters between the two mentioned in this paper are from the same folder.

of Murra, put it in a letter to her.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that she was not a historian by training, Ata became familiar with Inka history through her readings of Murra's work, through her discussions with him and other Andean specialists, and through letters exchanged with some of his former students working on Andean issues. She applied her energy and dedication to her translation, carried out in a very professional way. Before examining the translation process, it is informative to look at the publishing context of the 1980s Romania.



Murra and Ata in New York, 1968 or 1969. *Photography courtesy of Irina Zahan.*

### **The institutional and political context of publishing in late socialist Romania**

In order to understand the process of this translation it is useful to have a glimpse at the institutional context of publishing in Romania during the late 1970s and 1980s. We still lack a comprehensive study of the field of translations in socialist Romania, in spite of earlier attempts to map out this field (Ionescu,

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<sup>11</sup> Ana María Lorandi (1936–2017) was an Argentinian archaeologist and ethno-historian.

1981). The post-1989 histories of publishing during socialism have focused almost exclusively on the complex issue of censorship (Corobca, 2014; Vianu, 1998), but they are insufficient for the understanding of the overall institutional framework for publishing and the everyday life of working with and within publishing houses during the socialist period. Ioana Macrea-Toma's (2009) historical reconstruction of the literary field in socialist Romania (1947–1989) is the most ambitious endeavor so far, but the issue of translations is not comprehensively treated in her work, since this wasn't its main focus. Moreover, the domain of non-literary translations, especially in social sciences, is completely ignored.

After the death of Romanian Communist Party's First Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in March 1965, Nicolae Ceaușescu was elected as the new General Secretary of the Party. A period of liberalization followed as a strategy of gaining legitimacy, especially among intellectuals and technocratic elites. The moment that epitomized this period was Ceaușescu's opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Many intellectuals, including some who had been critical of the regime, joined the Communist Party at that time. These years were characterized by a more tolerant censorship, a selective rehabilitation of historical figures who had until then been seen as suspect, and renewed contacts with the West. Intellectuals who were forbidden to publish or who had been convicted during the 1950s repressive campaigns were allowed to enter cultural and academic institutions. This period of liberalization ended in 1971, when Ceaușescu issued new 'theses' or principles for the political-ideological activity, signaling a return to a tighter ideological control in the cultural sphere. Another significant development was the restructuring of censorship in 1977 by abolishing the Committee for the Press and Printing (*Comitetul pentru Presă și Tipărituri*), the organization in charge with censorship. This didn't mean the end of censorship in Romania. On the contrary, it meant that censorship was now the direct responsibility of publishing houses, newspapers and cultural magazines. Editors had to verify manuscripts, before asking for the official approval for publishing from the Council of Culture and Socialist Education (*Consiliul Culturii și Educației Socialiste*). In fact, by decentralizing some of the control mechanisms in publishing, the decision to abolish censorship created more bureaucratic hurdles for potential or even well-known authors (Macrea-Toma, 2009: 212–228). Adding to these bureaucratic difficulties, a principle of economic efficiency was introduced into the publishing sector, following administrative measures for decentralizing the publishing sector in 1969 and 1973 (Macrea-Toma, 2009: 169–172). The publishing houses had to partially cover financial losses with publishing translations and even expect authors to financially contribute to the publishing of their books. In the 1980s, subsidies for the publishing sector were

reduced, while the pressure from above was to publish saleable titles in order to avoid producing on stocks. This requirement for economic efficiency within cultural institutions translated into the issue of self-financing (*auto-finanțare*) in the 1980s, when cultural institutions were required to partially cover their expenses through income-generating activities. For example, scientific journals included pages of advertising for state firms, and cultural magazines published reportage articles on factories and collective farms as forms of advertising.<sup>12</sup>

Katherine Verdery's (1991) classic analysis of the intellectual life under Ceaușescu offers astute observations on the role of translations as part of larger intellectual strategies of forming 'a *cognizant public*, that is, building an audience (or maintaining one already in existence) that recognizes and supports the definitions of value upon which the cultural status of a given group of intellectuals rests' (Verdery, 1991: 294). Translations were, therefore, 'part of creating a larger public for culture, a sort of raising of the spiritual standard of living, parallel to the state's claims to raise the material standard of living.' (Verdery, 1991: 295). Moreover, by making available fundamental classical texts or more recent ones, translation projects could be 'a form of political action', in Verdery's formulation (1991: 295), in the hand of intellectuals in their struggles with the official culture and/or symbolic competition with other intellectual groups. Much of these struggles were infra-political (Scott, 1990), that is, acts, gestures and thoughts of undisclosed, undeclared resistance against the dominant group. In a context where open contestation or dissidence was risky, the acts of resistance took mundane forms such as poaching, stealing, gossip, character assassination and others under the cover of kin/friendship networks. In the domain of publishing and academic life, such infra-political acts could include setting up and maintaining circles of discussions and intellectual production proposing alternative values to the official ones, circulating samizdat or manuscripts, publishing texts that contained veiled criticism of the political and economic situation, or even publishing articles and books, including translations, outmaneuvering the vigilance of the censor.

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<sup>12</sup> Advertisement as such barely existed in Romania, since it had no market economy – which would have contravened to socialist principles – and the only competition imaginable among producers was who would be the first to reach (and go beyond) the production requirements set for the annual/5-year plan. As a result, when they existed at all, the ads had often an absurd ring to them. Sometimes the way different cultural institutions addressed the issue of self-financing achieved absurd-comical proportions comparable to the literature of Ilf and Petrov. In the late 1980s, the Opera House in Bucharest had an arrangement with the Vulcan Power Plant Factory whereby they offered ballet classes to workers of the factory. No worker enrolled in these classes, but the Opera received payment for such classes from the factory (personal communication, Alexandru Danga). It was a win-win situation in terms of complying with official ideology: the Opera House showed their self-financing effort, while the factory could report the cultural services they offered their workers.

The paucity of anthropological translations reflected the marginality of the discipline within the field of social sciences in socialist Romania. Both folklore studies and sociology had a longer local history and could claim their strategic importance in relation to the project of nation-building and consolidation of the nation-state (Gheorghiu, 1991). Until its emergence as an academic discipline in Romania in the 1960s, cultural anthropology could not claim a body of scholarship based on field research outside Romania. Actually, its main proponent, Vasile Caramelea had been a student of Dimitrie Gusti, the founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest. All research done under the label of cultural or social anthropology during socialist times had an exclusive focus on Romanian topics. No fieldwork was carried out outside Romania. This self-centeredness translated into little interest in translating anthropological works dealing with other areas of the world.<sup>13</sup>

A proposal for a translation had to be accepted by a book editor, in which case it was included in the publishing plan of the publishing house. The first mention of a contact with a publishing house appears in Ata's letter to Murra on November 2, 1978. She wrote to him that she had a conversation with the editor-in-chief of *Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică* (Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House), who was open to the idea of a translation of Murra's book to be eventually published in their *Popoare, culturi, civilizații* (People, Cultures, Civilizations) book series.<sup>14</sup> She asked Murra to send her another copy of the published Spanish translation of his thesis and of the English original. The editor preferred to have the English original, because it was easier to find reviewers for the English rather than the Spanish version of

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<sup>13</sup> Until 1989, the very few translations of anthropological works comprised authors such as Julius Lips, Ralph Linton and Claude Lévi-Strauss. After 1989, the situation of anthropological translations slowly improved, but still with a huge deficit of translations of classics, as well as of recent contributions in anthropology.

<sup>14</sup> Using the online catalogue of the Central University Library in Bucharest, I found 23 titles published in this series between 1966 and 1987, 10 translations and 13 works by Romanian scholars. The translations are from authors such as Jacques Le Goff, Harald Zimmermann, Margarete Riemschneider, Henri Hubert, Robert Étienne, Peter H. Buck, André Bonnard and Raymond Bloch. The Romanian authors included Vasile Pârvan, Petru P. Panaitescu, and Andrei Oțetea. This publishing house was set up after the decentralization of the publishing system in 1969 and was specialized in publishing dictionaries, encyclopedias, scientific books, but also titles in social sciences, history, and philosophy. The director of the publishing house was Mircea Măciu, a former copy editor and editor-in-chief of *Editura Politică* (Political Publishing Press), sociologist by training and author of several books on the history of sociology in Romania. He was director of the publishing house until 1987, when he was apparently forced to resign his position as his daughter applied to leave the country (Verdery 1991: 336; also letter of AI to JVM, January 18, 1988).

the book. The letter was sent to Seville, Spain, where Murra was spending his sabbatical year doing research in the General Archive of the Indies. On December 23, 1978 Iosifescu made a formal written proposal to the publishing house for the translation of Murra's thesis. She used the title of the Spanish edition as it was the only published version of the thesis at the time, while mentioning that there were three other publishing projects of the thesis: the English original in the US, the French translation (under negotiations with Payot or Maspero), and advanced discussions for the Italian translation. In her proposal, Ata mentioned that Murra kept 'friendly relations' (*relații cordiale*) with Romanian scholars, as he had already visited Romania in 1976, when he delivered a lecture at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore on the Vertical Archipelago hypothesis concerning the pre-Columbian Andean societies. She also stated the intention of the author to write a new preface for the Romanian edition, and to add necessary footnotes for a public less familiarized with the Andean cultures. She mentioned that the translation will be made after the English original. A letter dated January 31, 1979 contains more details on the first contact with the publishing house. The discussions with the friendly editor made it clear that they were overloaded with other projects and that processing the translation proposal will take a while. Before approaching the publishing house, Ata consulted with Professor Dionisie M. Pippidi, historian and archaeologist, concerning the choice of a publishing house. The waiting period ended in June 1979, when the editorial board approved the publication of the translation. In September 1979, Ata contacted Mihai Pop<sup>15</sup> with the agreement of the publishing house, asking him to be the official reviewer (*referent*) of the book. In his report, Pop wrote approvingly on its translation and recommended it both for specialists and the larger public. Ata found Pop's report of little substance and stylistically undistinguished, and expressed her doubts that a preface written by Pop would be more interesting than a new preface written by Murra. The first official letter from the publishing house dates from March 1, 1980, when the director of the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House wrote to Murra asking for his permission to proceed with the translation – planned to be printed in 1,000 copies at the end of 1981.

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<sup>15</sup> Mihai Pop (1907–2000) was a Romanian ethnologist, with a background in literature and philosophy and with a PhD in Slavonic Studies from the University of Bratislava. He was professor of folklore at Bucharest University and director of the Institute of Folklore (1965–1974).



The book editor for the translation was Corina Bușe.<sup>16</sup> Ata developed a good rapport with her, according to her letters to Murra.<sup>17</sup> In a letter to Murra dated August 10, 1981, she wrote that she had succeeded at last in signing the contract with the publishing house, and that the book editor had been quite helpful, preparing the contract without having read the original in English nor the Spanish translation, doing this only 'based on trust and on the report of [Mihai] Pop because she (the editor) has no English or Spanish'. The editor had not yet seen the Romanian translation, because at the moment of signing the contract Ata was just starting the revision of her translation. Two years later, in March 1983, the book was still not published, and there was no firm commitment from the publishing house concerning its publication. All editorial projects were frozen. Ata wrote to Murra from Rome, where she was together with her husband and her daughter Măriuca, that she had had a meeting with the editor-in-chief of the publishing house. During the meeting, the latter invoked the fact that the allocated paper quota for the publishing house was insufficient, that new rules of 'profitability' were introduced, which meant that only those books that could produce profit could be published. In the same letter, Ata advised Murra to give up on the idea of searching for alternative funding for the publication of the translation as this would appear 'strange', even 'dubious' to the publishing house, besides the fact that the costs were very high. She proposed to wait for a more favorable moment, knowing that the signed contract between her and the publishing house bound them to publish the book by 1985.<sup>18</sup> In fall of 1983, Murra came briefly to Bucharest (most probably from Athens, where he attended a history conference) and he visited the headquarters of the publishing house. 'You made an excellent impression,' his sister wrote to him after a discussion with the book editor, but this visit was not sufficient to speed up the process of publication. The translation appeared only in mid-1987.

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<sup>16</sup> After finishing her BA in History at the University of Bucharest in 1962, Corina Bușe worked as a book editor at the Meridiane Publishing House, specialized in the history and theory of art. She came to the Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House as a history book editor in the early 1980s (interview with Corina Bușe, November 27, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> This was confirmed by Corina Bușe.

<sup>18</sup> In the letter sent from Rome, Ata was more outspoken about the situation back home, complaining about the new measure forcing those who want to leave the country to pay in hard currency the costs of their education in Romania. She felt personally concerned by this new regulation as her eldest daughter, Irina, and her husband recently made an official request to emigrate. Ata writes that for the government those who want to emigrate are 'traitors'. She ends the letter asking Murra to be cautious in what he writes in his letters to her address back home about the situation of her daughter and the publishing house (letter of AI to JVM, March 16, 1983).

## The process of translation

I reconstructed the process of translation from Murra's correspondence deposited at the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution. The correspondence between John V. Murra and Ata Iosifescu about the translation covers nine years, from 1978 to 1987, and it documents the translation process and its various operations, such as exchanges between author and translator, editing, corrections, clarifications in a pre-Word processor mode of operation, hard to grasp in our digital world.<sup>19</sup> It was also a period with significant events and changes in the siblings' lives. Since the mid-1970s, Murra benefitted from a number of invited professorships, fellowships, and research assignments at Princeton, in Paris, Lima, Boston and La Paz. In 1978–79 he spent eight months working in the Archivo General de las Indias, Seville, during his sabbatical leave from Cornell University and he became an emeritus professor in 1982. In 1983–84 he was a Guggenheim Fellow, spending that year in Spain for archival work, where he returned in 1985–86 for seven months. In spring 1987 he was visiting professor at the London School of Economics. In 1980 Asna Bialik, their mother, died in New York and, prior and after that unfortunate event, Ata travelled several times to the States to visit her mother and her daughter, Măriuca, a student at NYU since 1977. Her eldest daughter immigrated to Israel together with her husband in 1984.

The reference text for the translation was the English edition of the thesis, published in 1980 in the Research in Economic Anthropology Series, edited by George Dalton (Murra, 1980a). The latter wrote to John Murra in October 1977 with the proposal to publish the 1956 thesis in the Series as a supplement volume. In his reply letter to Dalton, Murra was pleased with the invitation to contribute a revised version of the thesis to the series – a change in his reluctance to publish his thesis throughout all previous years. In his letter, Murra explained to Dalton that the imminent publication of the Spanish translation of the thesis and the planned Italian translation softened his reluctance to have his revised thesis published in English. Murra offered to write a new introduction and to revise the manuscript, especially the footnotes, and to update the bibliography.

However, as I mentioned earlier, Ata had learnt Spanish in order to be able to read Murra's publications in that language. She read *Formaciones* in the late 1970s, before approaching the publishing house for the translation, and she

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<sup>19</sup> The letters are mostly handwritten, several are typed. Murra had a large, leased Xerox machine in his dining room at home since the early 1970s (Adorno, 2010), and he used it for photocopying documents, letters, and newspaper clips.

started the translation in December 1979 from English. Her working method was to confront the Spanish translation with the English original, while translating it into Romanian. She found a number of discrepancies between the English original and the Spanish translation and asked Murra for clarifications. She found out that the translation into Romanian worked better when she had both versions of the text, in Spanish and in English. She decided to translate two chapters of the thesis by using their improved versions published in Spanish in *Formaciones*, the one on herds and herders (chapter 3) and on cloth in the Inka Empire (chapter 4). Whenever she felt that the text was not easy to follow, she asked for clarifications and made suggestions accepted by Murra. One example is the question of land rights in the Inka Empire (chapter 2): in the thesis the distinctions between the land owned by the state ('crown') and the land owned by kings and their relatives as personal property were not clear enough. She proposed to Murra to include a diagram and some explanatory notes about the land tenure in the Inka Empire, using an article he had published in 1980 (Murra, 1980b). Murra's anthropological style is clear and jargon-free, so there weren't many difficulties in translation, with the exception of a few concepts (*mana*, cultural hero, and moieties) that had to be explained in the Romanian translation in footnotes. However, Murra employed numerous native Quechua terms in his dissertation, such as *ayllu*, *curaca*, *mita*, *pachaca*, *quipu* and others, which were defined in a glossary. Ata included a glossary too, and explained some of the terms in footnotes when they first occurred in the text.

Several times, Ata expressed the pleasure she derived from translating. On October 17, 1983 she mentioned in a letter to Murra some paragraphs from a letter she had written to Heather Lechman, in English, about her experience:

I am always surrounded by a lot of dictionaries and I have fun looking up words. I discover that even in Romanian I had only an approximate knowledge of the exact meaning of many words, and so much the more [so] in English or Spanish. I like to compare them, to look for roots and [I] am wondering what a marvelous instrument words are. I think it comes from learning a foreign language as an adult. Before that, I took words for granted and ever wondered why people were bothering about 'linguistics' – a luxury occupation, I considered, and tedious as well [...] I am slowly changing my mind. I cannot say I like learning grammar now, but I recognize [it], at least, as I look at it as a piece of natural, spontaneous rationality which looks beautiful as compared to the crazy, crazy world we are living in.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Letter of Ata Iosifescu to John Murra, October 17, 1983, NAA, JVM Papers.

On March 2, 1984, she reported that she finished the first draft, minus the historical note she hadn't yet started to write. She also informed Murra that she had asked Petru Năvodaru to revise her translation, which he (and his sister) did, with a lot of useful observations.<sup>21</sup> It was a moving gesture, and another sign of Ata's ability to bring people together through her actions, that she involved Murra's political mentor in the translation project. Murra dedicated his first ever published book (*Formaciones*) to this friend and role model from his adolescence who had initiated him into the Communist movement, a friend he kept visiting whenever he came to Romania.

Ata Iosifescu submitted the translation to the publishing house in March 1984 and received a very positive report from the reviewer who confronted the original with the translation by the end of 1984. In 1985, the translation was also checked by a researcher from the Institute of anthropology (at the recommendation of Mihai Pop, but the researcher's name is not mentioned in the correspondence). Once it received positive reviews, linguistically and scientifically, the translation entered the next stage of preparing the visual illustrations (pictures and maps), of which I write in the following section. The book appeared in the printing plan of the publishing house for 1986, but it only came out in May 1987.

### **Paratexts: prefaces, dedication, visual illustrations**

The French structuralist scholar Gerard Genette coined the term paratext to refer to 'what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to its public' (Genette, 1997). These are devices and discourses that mediate between the main body of the book and the reader, such as the title, dedication, acknowledgments, prefaces, introductions, illustrations, footnotes, glossary, the author's biography, the presentation on the back cover. They are liminal categories, not really within the main text of the book, nor outside of it. Most paratextual elements of a book, besides their informational content, have a pragmatic quality: they aim to appeal to the readers and persuade them to read the book. Prefaces, in particular, are such texts, but also jacket blurbs. Most of the time, these paratexts are produced by other persons than the author, which makes of the book the product of a joint

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<sup>21</sup> Petru Năvodaru (1913–1988), born Peter Fischer, an economist by training, was a Romanian-Jewish member of the Romanian Communist Party since the beginning of the 1930s. After 1947, he became part of the socialist bureaucracy in charge with economic planning. In the last decade of his life, he fell into political disgrace and was under Securitate surveillance, as his daughter was married to the dissident-writer Paul Goma. He also translated from English and German into Romanian works by Carl von Clausewitz, Thomas Mann, and Marshall McLuhan, among others.

effort. Translation itself – mentioned by Genette as a paratextual device, but not analyzed as such by him – is crucial in enlarging the readership of a book beyond its initial audience, by making it available to different linguistic communities. Paratexts are ‘the most socialized side of the practice of literature (the way its relations with the public are organized)’ (Genette, 1997: 14), being defined by the particular moment and place of its publications and its intended public.

The Romanian translation of Murra’s thesis contains several paratexts, which are worth analyzing. After the title and the copyright pages, there are acknowledgements of the persons who helped with the visual illustrations of the book. After the acknowledgments, there is one page of endorsements of Murra’s work by Heather Lechtman, Ruggiero Romano, and Sidney Mintz. Further on, there is a six-page historical outline, written by Ata Iosifescu. During the process of translation, she asked Murra to briefly sketch the history of the Inka Empire, especially of the members of the Inka dynasty, mostly unknown to the general public. Murra put off writing the outline so Ata wrote the note herself using publications she received from Murra and his former students, and encyclopedias from the American Library in Bucharest. Initially conceived as an appendix, the editor decided to put the outline up front to serve as an introduction written by a Romanian scholar, usually required for volumes published in this series.

The Romanian edition has, in fact, three introductions: the original introduction of the thesis, the 1980 introduction to the English edition (partially translated), and the introduction written for the Romanian edition.<sup>22</sup> The 1980 introduction was not completely translated: it is the longest introduction in the English edition and it contains important information on Murra’s biography, his becoming an anthropologist, the context of the thesis’ elaboration, and his subsequent research in the Andes. Ata left out a third of that text in the translation. She left out the passages containing biographical information on Murra’s early involvement in the Communist movement in Romania, his participation in the Spanish Civil War, and his difficult years of fighting to obtain the US citizenship.<sup>23</sup> Murra’s introduction to the Romanian

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<sup>22</sup> In the English edition, the new introduction appears as ‘Introduction to the 1979 edition’ and the title is kept as such in the Romanian edition, even though the English edition was published in 1980 (Murra, 1980a). And the new introduction to the 1980 English edition is the same introduction (with minor changes) Murra wrote for the Spanish translation of the thesis (Murra, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> It is not clear why Ata chose not to translate fully the second introduction. One contentious issue, possibly raising problems with the censorship, was the fact he mentioned in the introduction he lost his Romanian citizenship in 1938. It was a consequence of the Anti-Semitic Laws adopted by the Goga-Cuza government. His attempt at enlisting as a candidate for recruitment during WWII by the Office of Strategic Agency (later the Central Intelligence Agency) to return to Spain for undercover missions against Franco’s regime could have also

edition is a clear, well-written statement about the Andean civilization: its technological achievements, the ecological complementarity and its social and political organization.

The Romanian edition is richly illustrated in contrast to the English and Spanish editions, which contain no illustrations at all. There are twelve pages of black and white illustrations (including 25 reproductions of drawings by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala<sup>24</sup>) and eight pages of color illustrations. Ata repeatedly asked Murra to send black and white photos and color slides in order to create a rich visual illustration for the book, with the argument that the Romanian public didn't know much about the Inka civilization and Andean cultures. She managed to gather photographs from several Andean specialists and friends of Murra's, such as John Hyslop, Craig Morris, Heather Lechtman, Marcia Ascher, and Robert Ascher. Moreover, in one of her trips to New York, she bought three photographs from the American Museum of Natural History,<sup>25</sup> which hosts an important collection of artefacts belonging to the pre-Hispanic cultures. She requested permission to use them for the Romanian edition without paying royalties. Permission was granted by the museum and the photographs became part of the book illustrations: a photo of a silver *llama* figure, one of a *poncho* and another one of a *quipu*.<sup>26</sup> By arguing for the importance of visual illustrations, Ata showed both her enthusiasm for the Andean cultures and her determination to reach out to the Romanian public who, she argued, would better receive the text if accompanied by visual materials showing the progress of the Inka civilization.

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been controversial for Romanian officials. Another section left out contains Murra's self-criticism about the thesis: the fact that he had missed important primary sources like the inspections made by Spanish administrators during the early decades of colonization and the inability to fully understand and conceptualize the ecological complementarity operating in the Andes. He could only grasp the latter aspect after his return to the Andes in the 1960s.

<sup>24</sup> Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1535–1616) was a Quechua nobleman who authored the illustrated chronicle *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, a 1,188-page-long manuscript with 398 pen-and-ink illustrations. It was addressed to King Philip III of Spain and was a denunciation of the Spanish colonial rule. The manuscript was discovered in 1908 in the Royal Danish Library and published in 1936. John Murra and Rolena Adorno published a new edition of the chronicle in 1980 (Guamán Poma de Ayala, 1980[1615]).

<sup>25</sup> Besides visiting museums in New York, Ata cultivated her interest in Inka history by watching various documentaries on Romanian TV and by reading articles in *National Geographic*, which she received in Bucharest. Murra paid for the subscriptions to US magazines such as *National Geographic*, *New York Review of Books*, or the *American Scientist* as a gift for her family. In the 1970s and 1980s receiving such magazines in Romania was exceptional, and they were read and circulated among networks of friends. In fact, foreign magazines were often stolen from mailboxes, at times even by employees of the Romanian post office.

<sup>26</sup> *Quipu* (or *kipu*) were recording devices made of knotted cotton or camelid fiber strings used in pre-Hispanic Andean cultures.

## The question of reception

Although it is difficult to assess in retrospect how the translation was received by the general and academic public, one can still have an idea of the scale of the book's success: the publishing house printed the same year an extra 7,000 copies besides the initial run of 20,000 copies. For a specialized, anthropological book this was considerable, knowing as we do that the initial plan of the publishing house was to print only 1,000.<sup>27</sup> Murra was impressed by the number of copies printed – even though he knew that this was not extraordinary in a socialist country, where culture was heavily subsidized. But even by the standards of the publishing world of 1980s Romania, the number of printed copies of a specialized text (originally a doctoral thesis) was almost twice the average of printing copies per title.<sup>28</sup> Part of the popular success could be attributed to the collection to which it belonged, a collection dedicated to foreign cultures and civilizations, with works of solid scholarship and published in hardcover with quality visual material, and thus quite more attractive in its visual aspect than the majority of paperback books printed in Romania. Another factor contributing to the popular success of the book was the strong appeal of the subject: the Incas, with their amazing mountainous cities and their struggle against the Spaniards led by Fernando Pizzaro.<sup>29</sup>

In order to grasp the 'horizon of expectations' (Jauss, 1982) of the book within the intellectual sphere and the academic world, it is necessary to provide some context concerning the public discussions at the time in Romania.<sup>30</sup> The last years of the socialist regime in Romania were characterized by an autarchic economic orientation and a virulent nationalism. Ceaușescu's personality cult was a defining feature of public life (Verdery, 1991; Cioroianu, 2004). The printed press, cultural magazines, and even academic journals had to allot many pages to

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<sup>27</sup> In a couple of letters sent in June and September 1987, Ata wrote to Murra about her difficulty to buy additional copies of the book for him and for those who helped her with the translation. The book was already hard to find in September, a few months after its publication.

<sup>28</sup> The average printing of copies per titles published in Romania was 14,400 in 1988 for literature (Macrea-Toma, 2009: 146).

<sup>29</sup> In 1970, Romulus Vulcănescu, ethnologist, published a popularizing book on the Inkas, using second literature, some of it outdated at the time. The book was published in a mass, popularizing series about various civilizations. There is no reference to John Murra's work in the book, even though by the end of the 1960s he had achieved a reputation among Andean specialists. This omission is likely to be the result of the hazardous access to foreign publications by Romanian scholars at the time.

<sup>30</sup> The concept of 'horizon of expectations', coined by the German literary scholar Hans Robert Jauss, refers to the set of cultural norms, presuppositions, and conventions of readers of a certain literary, and implicitly, non-literary text.

paying homage to the presidential couple. Celebrating and commemorating national historical figures and events also occupied a consistent proportion of the printing space of the cultural magazines. Besides these, there were the ideological campaigns initiated by the Party that had to be present in the pages of the cultural press and academic journals. In 1987, for example, the year of Murra's book printing, a Party-orchestrated campaign produced numerous articles against the three-volume *History of Transylvania* published the previous year under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that was seen as a revisionist historical endeavor by the Romanian Communist Party. This campaign led to a 'near-hysterical atmosphere' (Verdery, 1991: 220), which left little printing space for other subjects than national history, such as more specialized topics like the economic structure of the Inka state. The other dominant genre of articles in cultural magazines was literary criticism, with little taste for and/or knowledge of social sciences, including anthropology. This explains the near-absence of reviews or comments on Murra's book in the cultural magazines in Romania in the years 1987–1989.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the translation was mentioned in the two periodicals with some of the largest circulation at the time: *Magazin istoric* and *Viața Studentească*.<sup>32</sup>

The reception of the book in the academic journals was not much better than in the cultural magazines. As mentioned before, when he visited Romania in 1976 Murra delivered a talk on his vertical archipelago model in the Andes at the Institute for Ethnography and Folklore. The director of the institute, Mihai Pop, wrote the report for the publishing house recommending the translation of the book. Researchers at the institute knew about him and his work. However, Murra's book was not reviewed in the journal edited by the institute (*Revista de Etnografie și Folclor*), or in the only anthropological journal edited in Romania at the time (*Annuaire roumain d'anthropologie*). In fact, hardly any anthropological book not dealing directly with Romania was reviewed in those journals at the time. Ata Iosifescu's choice not to have an introduction written by a Romanian scholar could have played against the

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<sup>31</sup> I consulted the collections for 1987–1989 of the following periodicals: *Amfiteatru*, *Astra*, *Contemporanul*, *Tribuna*, *Cronica*, *Viața Studentească*, *Magazin istoric*, *România Literară* and academic journals: *Annuaire Roumain d'Anthropologie*, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A.D. Xenopol*, *Revista de Etnografie și Folclor*, *Viitorul Social*, *Revue roumaine d'histoire*.

<sup>32</sup> *Magazin istoric*. *Revistă de cultură istorică* (founded in 1967) was a monthly history magazine mostly dedicated to Romanian history, but also with sections dealing with international history. It didn't have a section of book reviews, but had a section of 'received books' where they signalled recent publications. Murra's book is mentioned in the May 1988 issue. *Viața Studentească* was the weekly information magazine of the Communist Students' Association. Published between 1956 and 1989 it included sections on books, arts, politics, and sports. Murra's book is mentioned in the August 26, 1987 issue with a short notice in the books section.



visibility of the book among Romanian intellectuals, as it did not benefit from the symbolic capital of a local scholar.<sup>33</sup>

I found one book review of the translation, published in *Viitorul Social* (*The Social Future*), the only sociology journal in Romania published by the Romanian Academy during these years.<sup>34</sup> It is an extensive and laudatory presentation of the book in over two pages by sociologist Carmen Furtună (1987). The reviewer highlights the concept of redistributive state as the central concept of the theoretical argument and ends the review by endorsing the book as important for the future of the Andean population.

If published earlier, Murra's book might have contributed to discussions among Romanian scholars about the Asiatic mode of production (hereafter referred to as 'AMP') and its place in a Marxist interpretation of history.<sup>35</sup> In particular, this work could have interested Henri H. Stahl, who tried to develop a Marxist interpretation of the emergence of feudal states in Romania, by resorting to Marxist discussions from the 1960s around the concept of the AMP. In a series of articles published in *Viitorul Social* between 1975 and 1978, Stahl proposed the concept of 'tributary formation', a form of AMP distinct from a feudal social order.<sup>36</sup> Even though he never employed the concept of the AMP in his work, Murra's thesis was used by anthropologist Maurice Godelier in his contribution to the debates on the AMP in the French journal *La Pensée*.<sup>37</sup> Murra

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<sup>33</sup> Mihai Pop was the scientific reviewer of the book, once the proposal for translation was submitted to the publishing house. Ata wrote to Murra that Pop acted as if he would have expected to be asked to write a preface or an introduction for the translation. She didn't, as she felt that Murra's three introductions were sufficient.

<sup>34</sup> The journal was being published under the patronage of the Academy of the Social and Political Sciences and of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy – the university for the Party's cadres.

<sup>35</sup> Three figures are important in Romania concerning this reconsideration of the Asian mode of production in the 1960s and 1970s: sociologists Miron Constantinescu and Henri H. Stahl, and the philosopher Ion Banu (1913–2000). The latter published in the French journal *La Pensée* an article contributing to the debates around the AMP in France at the time. He was in contact with John Murra, and, although the circumstances of their meeting are not yet clear, the letters between them kept in Murra's archive suggest a good rapport between the two. Murra informed Banu in a letter in 1970 that a translation of the latter's article on the AMP published in *La Pensée* appeared in Mexico in a collection on the AMP edited by Roger Bartra (1969), alongside a translation of a paper by Murra on the Inka political system. Both were printed without the permission of their authors. For an extensive discussion of the Romanian contribution to the international debates on the AMP see Guga (2015: 229–313).

<sup>36</sup> These articles were collected into a book (Stahl, 1980).

<sup>37</sup> Godelier (1971) coined the concept of 'economic and social formation' (*formation économique et sociale*) to refer to the articulation of various modes of production characterizing a particular society. He gives the examples of the Inka Empire using Murra's PhD thesis, which he read in a microfilm form. In turn, Murra titled his first published book *Formaciones Económicas y Políticas del Mundo Andino* (1975), in acknowledgement of Godelier's discussion, without

also had a profound intellectual exchange with his friend anthropologist Ángel Palerm, one of the most active proponents of the concept of AMP in trying to understand the emergence of pre-Columbian native states in America.<sup>38</sup> Murra's own involvement with Marxism changed over time from his early political activism to more detached and critical views of the Marxist debates in the 1960s (Anăstăsoaie, 2015: 34–37). He remained attached to historical materialism in his scholarly interest in land rights, macroeconomic mechanisms, and the relation between state and ethnic groups (Murra, 1984), but he never subscribed to a Marxist (linear) interpretation of history. He was more interested in cultural variability than in universalist, abstract social theories. His attachment to careful historical reconstruction through detailed description and holistic understanding of Andean cultures integrating historical, linguistic, and ecological aspects could have appealed to Henri H. Stahl's conception of historical sociology. An encounter of the two, which probably never took place, could have potentially been a fruitful intellectual exchange.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusions

In the political economy of intellectual work, translation is arguably among the lowest tasks in term of prestige and financial compensation. However, we could hardly conceive how intellectual life and the international exchange of ideas could function without it. In my essay I have attempted to make visible the translator's work by analyzing the case of an anthropological translation in the 1980s Romania. Ata Iosifescu's translation of her brother's PhD thesis stands out as one of the few anthropological translations in socialist Romania. This is no small achievement in a period when anthropology was a very marginal discipline, and when public culture was dominated by nationalism. Moreover, this case study makes a contribution to a larger theoretical discussion in translation studies about the relationship between the original and the translation. Contrary to the widely shared view that translation is

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employing the Marxist theoretical apparatus of the latter. See also Godelier (2012) on the exchange of ideas between the two.

<sup>38</sup> Ángel Palerm (1917–1980), born in Ibiza, Spain, fought in the Spanish Civil War and went into exile to Mexico in 1939. He trained as an anthropologist at the National School of Anthropology and History in Mexico City and became an influential professor and researcher. His Marxist orientation was heterodox – he was a proponent of the AMP as a heuristic model for the understanding of the emergence of the Aztec empire.

<sup>39</sup> In a letter to Murra, Maurice Godelier writes that he recently read *Les anciennes communautés villageoises roumaines* by Stahl and finds it 'remarkable' (Letter of Maurice Godelier to JVM, September 17, 1977, NAA, JVM Papers). He asks Murra if he knows Stahl. Unfortunately there isn't any copy of a letter of Murra containing the answer to this question.

derivative or secondary to the original, Jacques Derrida argues, following Walter Benjamin, that translation is essential to the original, in the sense that it is the original that demands the translation and is indebted to the coming translation for its survival (Derrida, 1985b: 152). In the case of Murra's PhD thesis, unpublished for many years, it was the Spanish translation which preceded the publication of the English version 24 years after its defense. Moreover, the circulation of the Spanish translation of his work and its seminal importance for the Andean studies generated the demand for further translations into French, Italian, and Romanian. The latter translation, analyzed in this paper, created an original document thanks to the dedication and work of Ata Iosifescu. The translation was not a simple rendition into Romanian of the PhD dissertation, but an original result of the translator's effort to give the best version of Murra's path-breaking work into Romanian. This was acknowledged by Murra himself when he wrote to his sister that 'this book is yours' and 'your edition will be better than the original'.<sup>40</sup> The Romanian translation could have benefited from a better reception in a different period – less nationalistic in orientation and more open to heterodox thinking in Marxism and in multilineal models of social evolution. Even after the fall of Communism, anthropology in Romania has still remained exclusively oriented towards studying Romanian topics, with little interest in other cultures or civilizations. Nonetheless, a new edition of *Civilizație Inca* could bring new readers to the work of John V. Murra in Romania.

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<sup>40</sup> Letter of JVM to AI, March 17, 1984, NAA, JVM Papers.

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## WAS THERE A 'GYPSY PROBLEM' IN SOCIALIST ROMANIA? FROM SUPPRESSING 'NATIONALISM' TO RECOGNITION OF A NATIONAL MINORITY<sup>1</sup>

LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ <sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** After the fall of the socialist bloc some authors celebrated the advent of Romani nationalism, emphasising its Eastern European roots and its potential force to foster emancipation among an ethnic minority oppressed for so long. There is another perspective on the community organisation among the Roma from actors who had much less sympathy towards collective claims on behalf of the 'Gypsies'. Recently published documents from the archive of the secret police testify that *Gypsy nationalism* ("naționalism țigănesc") was systematically denounced in Romania. Roma leaders suspected of being its proponents were persecuted during the late period of the Ceaușescu era. This article is an attempt to interpret a contested category in the context of late socialist Romania.

**Keywords:** Securitate, minorities, nationalism, Nicolae Gheorghe, Romani movement

### Introduction

On 12 March 1980 an informative note was filed in an office of Securitate, the infamous domestic secret service of Romania. It contained a list of accusations against Nicolae Gheorghe, a young scientific researcher of the Centre for Sociological Research, Bucharest.<sup>3</sup> The note was authored by

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Beck and Steven Sampson read and generously commented on draft versions of the article. They suggested important corrections. Conversations with Stefânia Toma, Marian-Viorel Anăstăsoaie, and Gergő Pulay pushed me to clarify the argument. Iuliu Rațiu, convener of the SRS panel and co-editor of this thematic issue, as well as Gabriel Troc, the editor of the journal, helped improving the text. I am grateful to all of them. The remaining shortcomings are my responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, e-mail: laszlo.foszto@gmail.com.

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Gheorghe (1946–2013) was a Romanian Romani sociologist and activist. He is one of the founders and promoters of the international Romani movement fighting against discrimination and advocating for the political and cultural recognition of the Roma.

Cristian, a code-name apparently hiding a colleague of the targeted person. He claimed that the research done by Gheorghe during the last 6-7 years since he had been employed by the centre was not in line with the institutes' activity plan, as he used the daily allowance offered by the state for personal purposes: he was studying the 'problems of the Gypsies' (*problemele țiganilor*) being a Gypsy himself.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the conclusions of his research were 'effectively damaging' to the regime, as Gheorghe advocated for recognizing Gypsies as 'cohabiting nationality' in Romania. To sustain these claims, Cristian collected and reported a long list of alleged misdeeds committed by Gheorghe.

These actions included: questioning the validity of the official statistical data regarding the number of the Gypsies and preferring fieldwork at the county and local levels to official data or to an officially-sanctioned research project. Also, during his fieldwork Gheorghe focused on successful cases, such as Gypsies in leadership positions, rather than exposing what were classified as 'parasitic' life-styles. He developed a survey among the Gypsies and involved foreign researchers in this work. In Bucharest he had private relationships with employees of the American Embassy; he attended the American library, kept contacts with foreign doctoral students coming from capitalist states, and even joined them on their field research. With the opportunity of a Romanian-American joint colloquium held in Cluj-Napoca in August 1979, Gheorghe reportedly 'took advantage of his contact with Samuel Beck from the USA' making a provocative presentation entitled: *Is there a Gypsy Problem in Romania? (Există o problemă țigănească în România?)*.<sup>5</sup> "While the title does not give the answer the content of the paper wanted to show that there is such a problem." – concluded the note.<sup>6</sup>

This denunciatory note conveys the depressing socio-political atmosphere of the period. It shows the staged outrage of the author because of the 'abuse' of a colleague, who apparently accessed resources and information illegitimately, and carried out a self-interested inquiry rather than following the institute's plan and pursuing the 'common good'. The reported practices are undermining the official image of the country as promoted by the state apparatus to which the research centre should be subordinated. In this way, the author of the note

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<sup>4</sup> In this text I translate the term 'țigan' as Gypsy, even if I am aware that there are important differences in their use in Romanian and respectively in English. Where necessary, I will use the original terms in order to reproduce their nuances as much as possible. Generally, I use the term Roma as ethnonym for the population referred.

<sup>5</sup> We do not have the original text of their presentation. Subsequent publications contain elements of the arguments (Beck, 1984; 1985).

<sup>6</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 40–41 f-v, 42, (published in Marin, 2017a, vol. 2: 149–151).

is not only blaming Gheorghe for his actions, which we would consider as part of a normal scientific practice today, but also throwing a bad light on the leadership of the research centre for allowing and supporting such activities within a socialist institution.

It is not difficult to identify that the main motivation behind the note is personal envy and political opportunism of the colleague. Still there is one additional element which can be detected – the utter rejection of the research topic pursued by Gheorghe and the hostility towards the participants in his research: 'the Gypsies' and 'their problem'. The author of the note speculated that since the authorities asserted that no such problem existed or even could exist, Gheorghe's preoccupation with the Gypsy issue can only be based on the researcher's hostility towards the regime rather than any scientific evidence. Doing research on Roma in socialist Romania was seen as a self-interested practice, therefore useless in the best case, or worse, he was suspected of pursuing foreign interests and hostility towards the general social well-being of the citizenry. By using the term 'problem' Gheorghe challenged a taboo, since defining 'problems' in relation to any subject was a privilege of power-holders during that period. Lower ranked researchers were only allowed to discuss 'aspects' of some phenomena. Doing this in a joint presentation with a foreigner was also risky.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, with his work among the Roma and his ties with foreign researchers, Nicolae Gheorghe assembled a potentially dangerous alliance with enemies of the regime, both domestic and from abroad.

In this paper, I seek to describe and interpret how the authorities of the late socialist Romania tried to prevent such alliances from succeeding. I will look into how the secret police tried to control and suppress activities which were aimed at elucidating and improving the conditions of a large (more than one million) and rather marginalized population, the Romanian Roma. My argument is that the official denial of the existence of 'the Gypsy problem' (namely: the lack of cultural and political recognition, the everyday racism to which Roma were subjected, and the persistence of their socio-economic marginality) led authorities to associate the existent activities among and on behalf of the Roma with activism against the state or even 'Gypsy nationalism', which they then tried to suppress.

In order to render the issues affecting the Roma as non-existent, the Securitate discovered a substitute problem, that of the 'nationalists among the Gypsies', a group whom they then immediately started to isolate and control. By doing this, they ended up with a fuzzy category, including intellectuals and

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<sup>7</sup> Sam Beck recalls that he feared for Gheorghe at that time because he was exposing himself working with an American (personal communication).



artists with Romani roots, some of whom advocated the recognition of the Romani culture. Others in this 'nationalist' group were religious leaders and social activists only intended to preach or sing in the mother tongue of the Roma, or simply focused their activities on the hardships Roma faced day by day. Any pre-occupation with the Roma was therefore assumed to be 'nationalist' and therefore threatening.

The archival sources presented in this paper were collected, edited, and published in two hefty volumes by Manuela Marian (2017a). She also wrote an introduction to the collection highlighting the sources' main topics (including the documents focused on the 'nationalists') and the context in which they appeared, interpreting the actions described as elements of *everyday resistance* (Marin, 2017b: 39). My approach is somewhat different. My focus is on the role of the state and its secret service as actors in identifying and suppressing Roma-related activities. I interpret these attempts as a form of perverse recognition of an ethnic minority. To frame this study theoretically I revisited my previous work on Romani nationalism (Fosztó, 2003) and the religious activism among the Roma after the fall of the socialist regime (Fosztó, 2009). I start by reviewing the available literature and then turn to interpreting some of the newly published sources.

### **State policies toward Roma**

There is a growing number of studies analysing state policies towards Roma in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union during the socialist period (Lemon, 2000; Stewart, 2001; Donert, 2017; O'Keeffe, 2013), and collections of archival documents (Nagy, 2015; Nagy, 2017) that complement the scarcity of ethnographic approaches available from that period (for important exceptions see: Kaminski, 1980; Stewart, 1997). Socialist Romania's policy toward its Romani citizens is a lesser explored terrain. There are few studies reflecting on the years 1945-1989, even if compared to other periods. We know more details about the enslavement or the deportations during World War II than we know about the more recent period. Based on important studies by Viorel Achim (2004: ch 6; 2018) and Petre Matei (2016a; 2016b), we came to understand that the Romanian authorities chose a rather different but certainly no less-repressive line in dealing with the Romani communities if compared to other socialist states. From the beginning, communist governments denied any requests for the recognition of the Roma nationality (Achim, 2018). Still, as Petre Matei suggested (2016b: 700), even in the absence of legal recognition and formal organisational structure, there are signs of emerging Romani activism during the 1970-1980s due to the raising educational level of an increasing segment of Romani population.

There is a recent initiative to write an oral history of the Roma in Romania.<sup>8</sup> The first results of this project started to be published, such as a thematic volume (Stan, 2015), a detailed case study (Marin, 2016), and an edited collection of archival documents (Marin, 2017a) which offers a glimpse into the perspective of the authorities. Reading these documents, one obtains a sense of the priorities of the policies in different periods of the Romanian socialism. For example, during the 1950s, settling 'the nomads' and registering them was the priority of the authorities in order to enrol them as regular citizens. This was not always an easy task, since many nomadic Roma still had vivid memories of the deportations during the Antonescu regime and tried to evade state control in ingenious ways. Later, the concerns of the authorities shifted towards eradicating illiteracy and including the Roma into the workforce. These processes could involve in some cases breaking the resistance of school headmasters, who did not want Roma children in their school. By the mid-1970s the demographic growth of the Roma population became an issue for the socialist authorities, and only during the 1980s did issues of Roma being targeted by the 'propaganda of the sects' and the appearance of 'nationalism' among Roma leaders become perceived as problematic.

When members of the UMass Romanian Research Group started their fieldwork in Romania it was a relatively relaxed period regarding the presence of foreign scholars in the country but the regime turned increasingly repressive and xenophobic by the early-to-mid 1980s. The initial approach was inspired by their teacher John Cole, who proposed a distinct form of 'Anglophone anthropology of Europe' (Cole, 1977). He viewed the rise of nationalism in South-eastern Europe as part of a global process connected to the demise of empires, state building, and integration into larger structures of the world system. He noted that ethnic antagonism inherited from the imperial period hindered the construction of socialism in the region (Cole, 1981: 132). Others, like the Hungarian-American Michael Sozan<sup>9</sup>, having close ethnic allegiance, have seen the mere existence of these communities threatened by the 'ethnocide' committed by Romanian authorities in the name of socialism (Sozan, 1977). This contrast in views about ethnicity and socialism took the form of a polemical exchange of commentaries in the pages of *Current Anthropology* (The Romanian Research Group 1979; Sozan, 1979). In this debate, the members of the Romanian Research Group wrote a joint essay; however, looking at the work of the team there were considerable differences between how each member approached socialism and in particular the role of nationalism within it. This essay had not touched upon issues related to Roma.

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<sup>8</sup> For details about the project "The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma People in Romania" visit: <http://istrom.granturi.ubbcluj.ro/en>.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Sozan immigrated to the USA from his native Hungary after the Revolution in 1956.

Under the conditions of the Romanian version of the existing socialism, which aimed to downplay the significance of cultural diversity within the state, it is hardly surprising that there were virtually no scholarly studies published about any aspect of the Romani life.<sup>10</sup> A few studies were published abroad, most of these stemming from this anthropological fieldwork and in particular under the influence of the collaboration with Nicolae Gheorghe (Beck, 1984; Beck, 1985; Gheorghe, 1983; Gheorghe, 1985).<sup>11</sup> In his later work, published after the fall of the regime, Sam Beck reconstructed the experience of his collaboration in dialogical form (Beck, 1993). Their joint work started in 1979, and due to the focus on such sensitive topic, they came under the scrutiny of the police and secret police almost instantaneously (Beck, 1993: 169). Remembering to their joint work, Sam Beck emphasised that starting from their joint presentation in Cluj their intent was not only to liberate Roma from racial oppression, but to also liberate the majority Romanians from their racism. It was never aimed as an attack on the Romanian state.<sup>12</sup>

Five years later, in 1984, Beck was denied entrance to the country and no official explanation was given. A few years later, reflecting on this episode, he meditated:

I thought to myself, the role of the scholar is precarious in carrying out research in a country like Romania. I could have carried out neutral research. I had asked for trouble looking at Gypsies. I could have lied about my work and secured an extended possibility of carrying out research in Romania. However, such a priority prevents scholars from voicing their opposition to human rights violations or just plain disregard for people and their lives. (Beck 1992: 127)

The practice of anthropological fieldwork and publishing results about Romania was an increasingly difficult endeavour under the burden of these ethical and theoretical concerns. Bringing human rights and 'the people and their lives' into central focus signals a shift, or an enhancement, of the political-economic analysis of ethnicity, promoting a more humanistic approach. Gheorghe and Beck made the historical development of racism a key part of their analysis of the enslavement of the Roma (Beck, 1989; Gheorghe, 1983). This analysis later fed into their discussion of more recent process of racialisation (Beck, 1993). The emphasis on problems of racism and the

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<sup>10</sup> The domain of oral and musical folklore collection can be seen as a partial exception since there were folklorists who collected materials and published them as part of Romanian and/or Hungarian folk culture. These phenomena deserve a separate discussion, which cannot be part of this article.

<sup>11</sup> See Sam Beck's contribution to this thematic issue.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication by Sam Beck.

violations of human rights became a central part of the vocabulary of the post-socialist period, and has continued well into the present under the conditions of the enlarged EU (for critical review see Pulay, 2018).

There is also a body of literature which emerged in the same period focusing on the concept of nationalism as a source for solidarity and a tool for gaining recognition (Hancock, 1988; Hancock, 1991). This approach stands in opposition to the colloquial understanding of nationalism as generally exclusionary and retrograde. Here nationalism is described in terms of its positive aspects and its emancipatory potential (Hancock, 1981; Hancock, 1988; Hancock, 1991). Ian Hancock's contributions provoked an exchange of letters in the pages of the journal *Nationalism Studies* in 1993. The main issue discussed was the status of the Romani nationalism, which Hancock claimed has its roots in Eastern Europe (Fosztó, 2000).

In the context of the Cold War Eastern Europe and the USA were on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain. In some cases anthropologists were involved in intelligence activities (Price, 2016). However in the Romanian context these accusations remained unsubstantiated (Verdery, 2018). Still the Securitate viewed anthropological work as akin to spying in particular if some anthropologist ventured to study populations (such as minorities) or persons (ex. intellectuals) who were suspected of 'disloyalty' to the regime. Being declared a *persona non grata* was far from a comforting perspective for a foreign anthropologist doing fieldwork in Romania. Moreover it was not simply unpleasant but damaging for an academic career based on fieldwork abroad. Their local collaborators could not hope for a much better treatment from the socialist authorities, and in many cases harassment of local acquaintances continued. In the next part of this article, I analyse some examples of 'home grown enemies' of the regime.

### **Who could be counted as a loyal citizen?**

From the reports which became available about the actions of the Securitate regarding some of the American anthropologists and their local collaborators we cannot reconstruct the events in full details (Marin, 2017a).<sup>13</sup> However as recent works by Katherine Verdery (2014; 2018) demonstrate, the task to look through these reports is not hopeless. Keeping in mind that they represent a partial and undoubtedly biased version of the reality, these reports can still reveal fragments about lives and ways of operation of the authorities

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<sup>13</sup> Manuela Marin transcribed, edited and published a selection from these documents. In this analysis I rely on her work. I included reference to the original fond of the ACNSAS (Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității) adding a citation to the published form.

which aimed to influence these lives. We can reconstruct a provisional narrative which is subject to change, as new documents or oral accounts will undoubtedly surface in the future.

In 1982, more than two years after the note briefly presented at the beginning of this article, an operative order was issued by the Securitate to conduct systematic surveillance on Nicolae Gheorghe under the code-named 'Ganea'. According to documents from this file, his regular surveillance started on 26 June 1982. There are reports prepared before that date signifying that he had already attracted the attention of the authorities and their informants.<sup>14</sup> However, opening this individual file of surveillance (*dosar de urmărire informativă - DUI*) signified a new level of attention and, accordingly, dedicated resources.

The surveillance methods employed were: a network of informants (*rețeaua informativă*), opening the personal correspondence (*sursa 'S'*), intercepting his phone and his conversations at home (*mijloace tehnică operativă - T.O.*), and occasionally also his conversations in public places (*filaj*). In spite of all the efforts, surveillance reportedly had severe limitations because Gheorghe used coded forms of communication with his key contacts and spoke foreign languages during conversations.

The decision tightening surveillance at this point was not unrelated to a protest letter pseudonymously signed by Alexandru Danciu (having Gheorghe as author). This letter was sent to a French journalist and was also read on the Romanian language broadcast of Radio Free Europe in early 1982. There are several variants of this letter. Manuela Marin published a longer and a shorter Romanian version (Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 19-24 and 25-28) and an English version was kept by Sam Beck.<sup>15</sup> The following paragraphs are taken from this English version (mistakes in the original):

The Gypsy population represents one of Romania's largest ethnic minorities, the official census reports 230.000 and unofficial estimates range as high as one million. But in spite of this figures and of Romania's proclaimed tolerance and respect of all "cohabiting nationalities", the very existence of this ethnic groups is rarely mentioned. Reference to Romania's Gypsy population is made only in criminal incidents or as "social parasites". Such rumors are tolerated and stimulated by state officials who try to divert the attention of the population from the increasing difficulties of an authoritarian economy and state.

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<sup>14</sup> There is a report already about the American-Romanian conference in Cluj attended by Gheorghe and Beck in 1979. This report ended up mixed with documents on Steven Sampson due a strange coincidence: one of Sampson's code name in his Securitate files is 'Samy', which led to confusion with the activities of Sam Beck (personal communication by Steven Sampson).

<sup>15</sup> Beck donated this letter together with other documents and his field photographs to the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities in April 2016. The documents are stored in the institute's archive.

This prejudice also attempts to justify illegal and discriminatory practices toward the Gypsies. In 1976-1977 the police received “dezlegare” (or permits) which allow to beat Gypsies as a “civilizing” technique against their “deviant behaviour”. Local Gypsies population [*sic*] in different regions are regularly assaulted by armed policemen assisted by dogs. Early in the morning police often violate Gypsy homes, beat the children and the women and take the young and adult men to police headquarters where they are forced to confess the crimes they do not commit. Every summer these so called “parasites” are gathered together under the pretext of “military exercises” and sent to agricultural camps or construction sites, such as the canal Dunăre-Marea Neagră, to work as free labor. In many cities Gypsies are forbidden to enter the better restaurants, especially when accompanied by their women sporting [*sic*] vividly coloured dresses.

To many officials, and even common citizens, the limitation of these practices to Gypsies is acceptable. However, such a “dezlegare”, encouraging violent and abusive practices toward a minority population is difficult to control. This ethnically nurtured suspicion toward a “deviant” minority is only a small part of a rather generalized suspicion toward differences from the “official line”. It is so that anyone who expresses criticism of the regime is suspects of not being a “good Romanian” and subject to the treatment and abuse commonly practiced against the Gypsies.

It is the duty of those in the free world and of the free press to challenge these repressive measures used in Romania and to speak out against prejudicial treatment of this minority population.  
(Alexandru Danciu, 1 March 1982)

The author self identified as a member of the Romani community, and the tone of the letter was clearly critical towards the state authorities, in special the police forces and other officials who found acceptable scapegoating members of an ethnic population in order to disguise the growing problems on the Romanian society.

The concerns which motivated the surveillance were confirmed during the first review of the file (June-September 1982).<sup>16</sup> Gheorghe kept ‘non-official’ relations with foreigners, some of them having suspicious preoccupations, being monitored by the Securitate. Another member of the UMass Romanian Research Group, Steven Sampson, was also suspected of ‘intentions of collecting and tendentiously exploiting data about the Gypsies in Romania’ and, like Sam Beck, was deemed persona non grata in 1984.<sup>17</sup> According to the reports, the list of

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<sup>16</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff.113 f-v, 114 v. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 159-161).

<sup>17</sup> He was suspected of being a CIA cadre, as was John W. Cole (personal communication by Steven Sampson), and his name also appears in the file misspelled as ‘Steve Sampsolo’. Sampson was officially declared undesirable in December 1984 ‘for a period of five years’ (personal communication).

unwelcomed foreigners interested in collecting ‘materials with hostile content’ (*date cu conținut ostil*) was long, and included not only fellow anthropologists such as David Kideckel, but also researchers like Mozes Heinsink and Rüdiger Vossen, and several prominent Roma leaders from Europe.<sup>18</sup> Gheorghe’s continuous engagements with issues related to Roma were confirmed. In particular his involvement with foreigners associated in the International Romani Union were noticed and his attempts to join efforts with domestic Roma leaders, particularly with Ion Cioabă in order to advocate for the recognition of Roma as a nationality in Romania. So, on the one hand Gheorghe developed close links with foreign scholars along professional lines, on the other hand he created and reinforced alliances with local groups of Roma and their leaders. This dual strategy attracted the disapproval of the authorities, who were rather preoccupied with the problem of not allowing ‘hostile data’ to be sent out of the country or disseminated.

At his workplace, Gheorghe enjoyed the support of the directors who approved his interest regarding the Roma. Between 1975 and 1980 he was even encouraged by important scholar-politicians outside the Centre for Sociological Research to pursue his research topic.<sup>19</sup> However some of his colleagues nurtured more hostile attitude towards him. One of these colleagues commented on his personal changes:

From the point of view of his behaviour, it is notable that one or two years ago, Nicolae Gheorghe had not maintained publicly that he is a Gypsy, nor that he has ties to the Gypsy problems. After 1982, he let his moustache grow, he often speaks the Gypsy language on the phone, and sometimes states that he is unsatisfied how the Gypsies are treated (they are not encouraged to education, to culture, leadership positions etc.).<sup>20</sup>

A recurrent issue of the reports is Gheorghe’s attempts to obtain approval to travel abroad. He was invited to different international events in Europe and America, or even to India. He regularly petitioned the authorities to get permission to leave the country but with very little success. In relation to his request to attend an UNESCO seminar organised in Oslo in 1983 among the documents of his file there is even a positive recommendation:

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<sup>18</sup> I will not discuss details of Gheorghe’s involvement in the international Romani movement and the involvement of the Securitate (Marin, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> The director of the centre was I. Drăgan at the time the report was filed (1983). Ioan Matei, the previous director, is also listed as supportive, as well as Ștefan Costea, from the Academy of Social and Political Sciences. Henri H. Stahl, the doyen of Romanian sociology at that time, considered Gheorghe a talented sociologist (Rostás, 2000: 187).

<sup>20</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 98 f-v. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 157–158).

Personally I believe that his presentation – on the content of which I will consult with him, and I assume responsibility for a positive talk –, would be in the benefit of presenting the situation of the Romanian Gypsies favourably. Contrarily, if there will be appointed someone else to speak about the situation of the Gypsies in Eastern Europe there is a risk of a distorted presentation (in special since problems related to 'cultural ethnocide' will be discussed and very likely there will be invited a Gypsy from Hungary). I believe it is my duty to warn about this.<sup>21</sup>

This unnamed benefactor of Gheorghe tried to play the nationalistic game of the authorities, probably also in consultation with Gheorghe, promising to ensure a loyal and friendly talk as opposed to the presumably fierce accusations of ethnocide which one can expect from a 'Hungarian Gypsy' who will not have any sympathy toward Romania. There is no indication in the file that the trick would have worked.

There are numerous rather clear cases of refusals to allow him travelling. For example, in 1983 Gheorghe wanted to take up a Fulbright grant in the USA. His rather neutrally entitled research programme: 'National reality and the types of social research' was awarded the grant as part of an academic exchange program and he would study urban development in Kentucky and the development of Bucharest within a comparative frame. Additionally, he could follow up some of his studies regarding Roma and have exchanges with two American researchers whom he knew from their stay in Romania.<sup>22</sup> The review by the Securitate concluded: 'The checks resulted that he is not presenting any guarantees of loyal activity during his trip to the USA. His travel request received a negative visa.'<sup>23</sup>

The repeated refusals to allow trips abroad had two justifications. On the one hand the authorities surmised that Gheorghe would not follow the official line when being abroad. They suspected that his portrayal of the situation of the Roma in Romania would not be 'loyal'. Of this they were certainly correct. On the other hand, they also wanted to 'teach him a lesson' in order to change his 'general attitude' forcing a behavioural change on him. This intention is clear from their evaluation of the effectiveness of the actions: "After a period of apathy (due probably to the refusals to grant travel permissions to Sweden and India) comrade Gheorghe displays a moral recovery."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the officer noted that this is a sign that the applied measures have the expected impact and resulted in positive attitude changes.

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<sup>21</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 144 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 165–166).

<sup>22</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 148–150. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 167–170).

<sup>23</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 174–175 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 171–173).

<sup>24</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 242–244. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 183–184).



But most likely this was a temporary change or might have been included in the report just in order to please some of the higher ranked officers. In other places, Gheorghe was described as a rather difficult target for surveillance:

[T]he objective became more suspicious lately, he is manifested as an element of ability, keeps permanent checks whether he takes the public transport or visit the homes of his relations. Similarly, when using the post he avoids writing his name on the letters he sends abroad in order to evade of being intercepted or he is giving the letters to his relationships who travel abroad. When speaking on the phone, he uses a coded language or speaks the dialect of the Căldărar Gypsies.<sup>25</sup>

For periods he joined efforts with his Căldărar connections in Sibiu and rather than keeping a low profile, they ‘intensified their Gypsy activities’ (*activitatea țigănească*). Gheorghe and Ion Cioabă, the leader of the Căldărar Roma, had an intricate relationship: Gheorghe acted as a personal secretary for Cioabă, drafting documents for him, but at the same time he also tested some of his theoretical ideas in practice during their joint initiatives. The relationship was complicated by the fact revealed recently that Cioabă was an under-cover collaborator of the Securitate (Marin, 2016) which tried to use him in order to moderate Gheorghe or discourage him from pursuing his interest in research and activism among the Roma.<sup>26</sup>

Through the interception of their domestic conversations between Gheorghe and his wife, the Securitate identified that Gheorghe had written and sent abroad documents which testified to his disloyal attitude to the regime. The surveillance became stricter and as a consequence: “the ‘Ganea’ couple are very disturbed by the measures which were taken towards them. They seek different ways to mislead our officers about the reality of the deeds they committed.”<sup>27</sup> The continuous presence of the officers provoked both Gheorghe and his wife to manifest an ‘improper attitude’ (*poziție necorespunzătoare*) towards the Securitate agents. So the Securitate made more efforts to employ collaborators from their personal environment.

<sup>25</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 135–136 f-v, 137. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 164–184).

<sup>26</sup> Gheorghe never ceased keeping relations with Ion Cioabă. We need to consider the limitations and bias of the archival sources in describing the personal relationships. According to the memories of Sam Beck, Cioabă remained a loyal friend. In any case, even after the fall of the socialist regime, Gheorghe and members of the Cioabă family continued their friendly relations.

<sup>27</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 230 f-v, 231. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 180–182).

By the second half of the 1980s, the surveillance became more personalized since the Securitate managed to find the informants they needed to control Gheorghe more closely. From the reports, there are two main informants who substantially contributed: 'Florescu' (code name for Ion Cioabă) and 'Ionescu', a trusted relative or close friend of Gheorghe who was best man at his wedding.

According to available reports, Ionescu was particularly active in talking to Gheorghe in order to convince him that his ideas about the 'Gypsy problem' were misguided and that all his good intentions were being wasted on a non-existent issue, or even worse, that he was only damaging possibilities of the social inclusion of the Roma. Another recurrent aspect of the reports is Ionescu's concern about the tensions between Gheorghe and his wife, the informant reportedly trying to help Gheorghe rebuild his domestic life.<sup>28</sup> The reports are rather articulate and conceptually elaborated, and it is difficult to judge how much of the content has been discussed between Gheorghe and Ionescu in confidence.

Their exchanges were most intense in the period of 1986-87, and it is rather unlikely that Ionescu could have kept his collaboration with the Securitate hidden from his friend. In any case, the reports wanted to show that Gheorghe gave in to the persuasion, and he is portrayed by Ionescu in a 'favourable light' emphasising the 'positive' development of his attitudes.

After he practically wasted his material sources, energy, time, intellectual capacity, and destroyed his family by his repeated absences from home and his disinterest in the practical challenges of family life, it seems he realised that the only possible way was to integrate the Gypsies in the society, not to separate them even more from it.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, Gheorghe also gave up on his own ethnic association with 'the Gypsies': "from what Gheorghe said, it became clear that the problems of the Gypsies do not interest him anymore, he even stated that he might not be Gypsy but having Turkish origins."<sup>30</sup>

The denial of the association with the Roma probably was the ultimate result the Securitate expected. Undoubtedly Gheorghe made such a statement tactically to escape further persecution. It is also possible that Ionescu included this 'confession' in order to show how successful his work as a collaborator for

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<sup>28</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 262. / f. 263 f-v. / f. 275 f-v. / ff. 279 f-v, 280. / ff. 286 f-v-287. / f. 292 f-v. / ff. 293 f-v-294. / f. 295 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 185-205).

<sup>29</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 275 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 194-195).

<sup>30</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 262. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 187-188).

the Securitate was. The officers have not taken at face value such a change in ethnic autoidentification. The reports continued to refer to Gheorghe as a 'Romanian citizen of Gypsy nationality' (*cetățean român de naționalitate țigan*).

The last report of the 'Ganea' surveillance file is dated April 1989.<sup>31</sup> This report contains the proposal of closing the surveillance file, since the main objectives were achieved. A list of the 'positive' and 'preventive' interventions was given: his requests for travelling abroad were rejected (*avizare negativă*), people who were his professional relations were informed about his activities in order to moderate and discourage his actions (*temperare și descurajare*), he was warned not to keep non-official relations with foreigners. The report noted that as a consequence of these measures, Gheorghe's attitude became more 'realist'. He gave up totally with his 'preoccupations with the problem of the Gypsies'. His relationships with foreign citizens also changed in line with the expectations: he limited his correspondence abroad and started to avoid contacts with foreigners. The crisis of his personal life reached a point when he and his wife separated, and began the process of divorce.

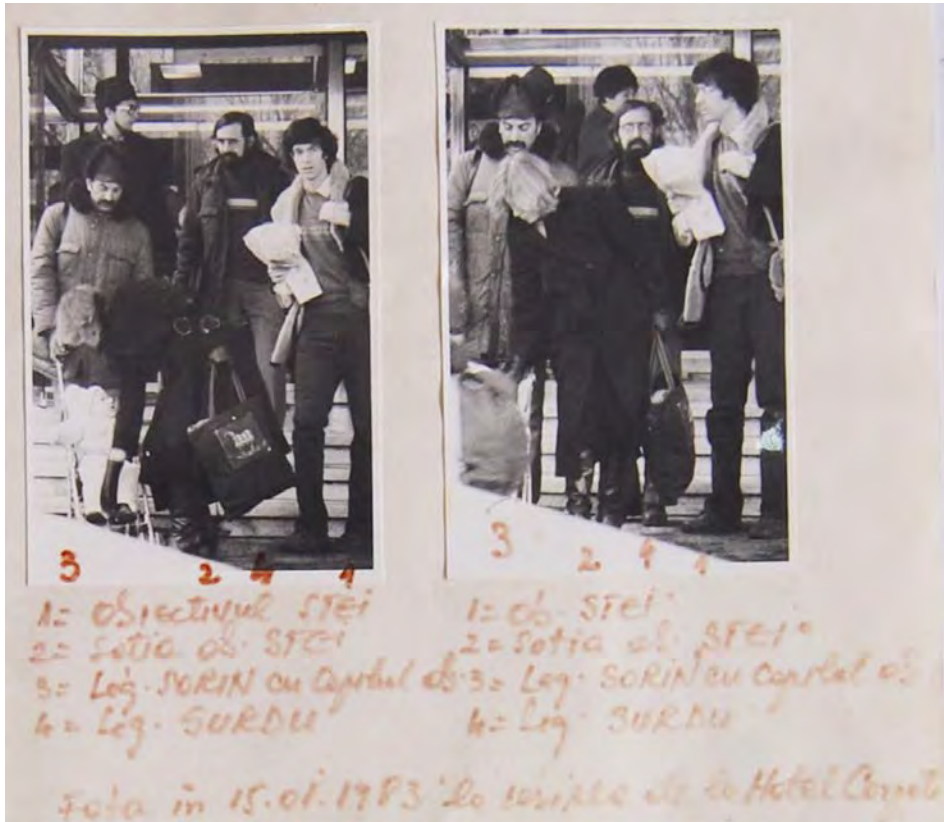
Finally, the case officer considered that having these changes achieved, the Securitate could initiate a dialogue with Gheorghe in order to attract him into a 'future collaboration' with the services. For lack of evidence, we can only assume that this collaboration has not materialised (Marin, 2017b: 53). There are indications that Gheorghe was under pressure to report about his collaborative pursuits with foreigners and Roma leaders from Romania or abroad. For example, one report indicates 'Ganea' as its source. It is dated from the same period when his surveillance file was closed (April 1989). It was filed separately among a set of reports targeting Romani leaders and organisational structures. It reads as a fragment of a research material or policy paper describing principles of support for Romani organisations in European states (the Federal Republic of Germany, Yugoslavia, and Hungary) in the context of international organisations such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations. The report concludes:

The resolutions of the international organisations, it is known, have indicative character, being 'recommendations' without having mandatory character for the national states. The commissions, assemblies etc. which adopt such resolutions follow up the way the recommendations are put in practice in the different countries. In this context the social and cultural policies adopted towards the Gypsies in one or another country can be presented as experiments or "examples" of compliance with the resolutions of the international organizations acquiring propagandistic value for more complex interests (*dobândind astfel valoare propagandistică pentru interese mai complexe*).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 320 f-v-321. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 209–211).

<sup>32</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 13, ff. 28–35. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 293–301).

This form of reporting seems to rephrase earlier petitions or letters sent to national authorities or to the 'free world'. It is uncertain to whom Gheorghe intended to submit this material originally, but the argumentation suggest that he hoped to convince some authorities to subscribe to more positive policies towards the Roma population within Romania.<sup>33</sup>



Nicolae Gheorghe, Vintilă Mihăilescu, Steven Sampson (Poiana Braşov, 1983).  
Sampson was on a private visit to Romania with his wife and baby daughter.  
*Source: Steven Sampson's Securitate file, personal archive.*

<sup>33</sup> In this context the case of Imre Mikó, a prominent Romanian Hungarian intellectual, is worth mentioning: Stefano Bottoni explored in details how Mikó tried 'talking to the system' (Bottoni, 2017). In spite of major differences (Imre Mikó was clearly a collaborator of the Securitate) the political intentions and intellectual efforts to influence the oppressive regime 'from within' show some striking parallels.

## What makes a nationalist?

During the time these events unfolded, I was a teenager growing up in a Hungarian (Szekler) community in an Eastern Transylvanian town. I remember vividly how my parents, particularly my mother, trained me to avoid any actions which might be interpreted that I was a nationalist in school or any other public place. She also worried about my father, that he might be seen a nationalist while attending the pub and starting to sing some 'banned songs'. A crucial part of my childhood socialization in this domain was to recognise the dangers of the social environment and act accordingly, to conform and dissimulate when needed, and maintain a dual vision of the world, which part is 'ours' and which is controlled by 'them'.

The division has not followed clearly the ethnic lines, since there were numerous Hungarians with whom one had to be careful. One could be fully honest only when trusted Romanians or Roma were present. But the very idea that one will be seen as a nationalist if allowing himself/herself the luxury to speak openly, tell a joke (and there were many jokes to tell), or refer to a historical event made me acutely aware that we live in a world infused by nationalism. Still we thought it was 'their nationalism', the official view on our world, which caused us the blame; we learned the Romanian authorities were nationalists and that was why they saw us, Magyars, as nationalist. Reading the reports coming from the archive of the Securitate made me wonder how this worked in the case of other ethnic communities during the same period.

There are reports in which reveal that Roma were accused, not directly because of their own 'nationalism' but rather because they enabled ostensibly nationalist and irredentist actions of others. As an example: In the summer of 1978, a 'Magyarised Gypsy' (*tigan maghiarizat*), the lead violinist of a band from the village of Sic/Szék in Cluj county, was denounced because during a village celebration, he performed songs considered 'nationalist-irredentist and fascist'. Some of the songs were even recorded on tape by a member of the revelling crowd. The musician ended up being summoned to the local police station and in the presence of the local mayor, he received official admonition. After admitting his error, he promised to 'adopt a correct attitude' in the future.<sup>34</sup>

Singing and playing nationalistic songs were rather regular activities during that period, and similar events might take place today, maybe with a different repertoire of songs. We cannot reconstruct which songs were played by the violinist, but they were certainly performed in order to entertain the local Hungarians. So his only fault could have been that he did his job as a professional

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<sup>34</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 18306 vol. 10, f. 69 f. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 53–54).

musician performing at the request of his clients. This was certainly recognised by the authorities, which may explain why he only received a warning. The peasants involved in the musical incident 'remained in the attention' of the Securitate. They were identified as the true enemies of the state. It made sense to blame the Hungarian villagers who were notorious about their noisy disloyalty to the regime.

In another case, reported in the files about 'nationalists', a 'Hungarian Gypsy' called László Máthé from Covasna county, came to the attention of the Securitate in 1976 because he was unsatisfied at not being employed as a singer by the 'Vadrózsák' (Wild Roses) dance ensemble, which functioned as part of the local House of Culture. After being rejected repeatedly, he decided to flee to Hungary, where he thought he could valorise his musical talent better than in Romania. He was caught attempting to cross the border without documents, warned of the illegality of such acts, and sent back to his place of origin. After returning home, he started submitting long letters in Hungarian to the authorities advocating for the emancipation of the Roma during the early 1980s.<sup>35</sup> Many of his ideas (the education of children, ensuring full employment, etc.) were well in line with the official policies. However, his case was included among the files of the 'nationalists', indicating that his discourse was not seen as legitimate. The authorities did not trust him and isolated him, because of his history of 'disloyalty' in trying to escape from the country.

### **Unexpected nationalists**

While officers of the Securitate routinely interpreted the behaviour of Hungarians as inspired by nationalism or irredentism, they seemed to be less prepared to see Roma turning 'nationalist'. In a report targeting Gheorghé's relationship with other Roma leaders an officer scribbled:

The ties between "Ganea" and the others can turn dangerous. I don't like how the action is unfolding. We have a slow pace and we lose important operative moments. We should be careful with our relationship with Burtea. He might play double. We have been misled by the Gypsies twice. They are more nationalists than we think.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 12, ff. 340–344 f-v. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 266–276).

<sup>36</sup> ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 257–258 f-v. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 523–525).

In this subsection I will turn briefly to another category of social actors who became suspected of nationalism during this period: the Romani Pentecostal religious leaders. There is a consistent part of reporting on the issues related to small churches or so called 'sects', most notably of Pentecostal denomination.

In Romania and Central Europe historical churches are most commonly associated with national identity or nationalism. Small evangelical churches, however, are most often seen as cosmopolitan or trans-ethnic denominations. There are clear historical reasons behind this, since in Romania following 1918, the nation state-formation was characterized by government attempts to reinforce the hegemony of the Orthodox Christian and Greek Catholic Churches, as *national churches*, while offering a legal framework for other '*minority denominations*', such as Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, and Unitarians, as well as to the Jewish population, Muslims Turks and Tatars. Smaller denominations, many connected to foreign missionaries, were suppressed as '*sects*', because they were seen as subverting the national culture.

Pentecostal assemblies emerged in the western part of Romania before World War II along with other small denominations, and they suffered increased persecution by the state which culminated during the fascist regime of Ion Antonescu (1940-44). Antonescu planned to deport believers who refused to convert to Orthodoxy to Transnistria (Achim, 2013). They ultimately escaped deportation, but some of the religious leaders suffered imprisonment and forced labour (Andreiescu, 2012a; Andreiescu, 2012b; Bălăban, 2016). Their persecution continued during the socialist years (Vlase, 2002) but none of the historians of this denomination mentioned that ethnic Romanian Pentecostals would have been persecuted *because they were considered nationalists*.

The case of the Romani Pentecostals was rather different. Religious activities, in particular preaching or singing in Romani language, was categorised as a sign of 'Gypsy nationalism'. Attempts to get permission for initiating Roma only religious assemblies or building prayer houses for a Roma religious community were discouraged. Moreover, there were religious leaders who were actively seeking to get equal treatment not only as members of a religious denomination but also as a 'cohabiting nationality'. Their petitions and protest letters kept the Securitate on guard (Marin, 2017b: 58-63).

An example of such leader was Iancu Gabor (b. 1929) the traditional leader (*bulibaşa*) of the Gabor Roma in Bihor county. In 1987 he succeeded to agree with the authorities:

[T]o create a cooperative for craftsmen (*cooperativă meșteșugărească*) in order to work with his family and prepare tin objects. He is also preoccupied to obtain from the local authorities permission to open a prayer house for the Pentecostal

Gypsies. He motivated his plan for separation that some of the Gypsies are careless with their clothing and bodily hygiene therefore are not properly received by the 'Romanian believers'.<sup>37</sup>

While the cooperative for his craftsmen could be opened a separate church for Roma was not allowed. The 'nationalist' character of such organisation was evident in spite of Iancu's attempt to disguise it under the stereotypical perception of 'the dirty Gypsies'.

The Securitate suspected him because in 1986 he received the visit of a missionary, named John Rarusca, an immigrant living in the USA, originally from Oradea. On his return visit, Rarusca 'urged all the Gypsies to join the Pentecostal Church, he praised the Western life-style, instigated Gypsies to emigrate, and promised his support for them.'<sup>38</sup> Additionally Iancu was not only head of his family and the Gabor Roma in Bihor, a successful craftsman, and religious leader. He was also part of a network of 'nationalists' who plotted to set up a country-wide committee to represent Roma domestically and abroad. His surveillance file was opened with the code name 'Graur' due to his intention to attend the congress of International Romani Union where he planned to discuss the issues of 'Gypsies joining the Pentecostal church', their recognition as 'national minority in the state' (*minoritate națională în stat*) and to have representatives in the state apparatus.<sup>39</sup> While these pursuits remained unfulfilled until the end of the socialist regime, the Gabor Roma in Bihor - having their self-controlled economic activities (within and outside the cooperative) as well as practicing their own religious rituals (even in the absence of their own prayer house) - contributed to the maintenance and even development of the Romani identity.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusions: the unintended recognition

In her introductory study to the collection of documents about the Roma, Manuela Marin frames the actions of 'Gypsy nationalists' as expressions

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<sup>37</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 13, ff. 227-228 f-v. (Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 81-83).

<sup>38</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 223 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 1: 410-411).

<sup>39</sup> ACNSAS, fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 13, f. 215 f-v. (Published in Marin 2017a, vol 2: 72-73).

<sup>40</sup> It is significant that Gheorghe himself was experimenting with creating or joining alternative / voluntary associations which would enable the maintenance of social groups and identities autonomously from 'national' or the state structures. One of the reports describes a failed attempt to register a Roma association (22.01.1986), but Gheorghe proceeded with posting his membership fee to 'the treasurer' of a Roma 'neighbourhood association' (*vecinătate*). The '*vecinătate*' or '*Nachbarschaft*' is a non-formal cooperation characteristic for some Transylvanian villages. (ACNSAS, fond Informativ, dosar 234356, ff. 252 f-v. / Published in Marin, 2017a, vol 2: 185-186).



of *everyday resistance* (Marin, 2017b: 39). This interpretation accords well with many of the actions reported by the Securitate. Some of them are similar to what the original concept coined by James C. Scott (1985) would suggest, i.e., using strategies of hidden and underground resistance, avoidance of being noticed, or other strategies of the powerless. Yet in other cases, the reports reveal that the actors were not hiding at all, but actively seeking recognition. This observation stands at the basis of an alternative interpretation, suggested by Petre Matei (Matei, 2016b: 700), that a Romani movement could emerge in Romania even without Roma being legally recognised or allowed to organize into formal associations during the 1970-1980s. Concluding this article, my emphasis is on a third aspect: I argue that the intensified surveillance and suppression by the repressive organs (Securitate and Miliția) played an important role during this period. The Securitate contributed in a paradoxical way to the recognition of the Roma as a national minority long before they could achieve this recognition legally themselves, after the fall of the socialist regime.

This *de facto recognition* could happen because the authorities themselves employed an 'ethnic model of repression'. It was based on categories that made many aspects of Romani cultural practice – language use, rituals, religious practices, singing, etc. – visible only as 'Gypsy nationalism', comparable to the 'nationalism' or ethnic expression of other, officially recognized, national minority groups.

There were clear limitations to this unintentional recognition. Firstly, it was not a positive identification of cultural difference but an intended act of erasure and denial. It was an attempt to suppress any possibility of a public Romani identity. So those Roma who became visible through their ethnic characteristics and/or activism were seen as threats to the regime, therefore they were expected to change their behaviour in order to disappear from sight again. Secondly, the social circle of identified Roma was rather restricted in spite of being very heterogeneous. The categories created by the authorities do not include the large numbers of Roma who kept their cultural differences out of the official public scenes. They continued to be seen as a social group which would eventually assimilate into the majority society. Anthropological fieldwork among this 'unseen' Roma population was potentially disruptive to the attempts of the Securitate to isolate and silence 'Gypsy nationalism'. Therefore, identifying and rupturing relationships between Roma and foreigners, among them American anthropologists doing fieldwork in Romania, became a part of this ethnic repression process.

After socialism had collapsed in 1989, a new, post-socialist, chapter started in the Roma and pro-Roma activism in this country. Nicolae Gheorghe, the main character of this study, continued to be a central figure in this new chapter.

Escaping from the suffocating surveillance of an oppressive state, he could freely develop his ideas and activism on European scale.<sup>41</sup> His thinking during the post-socialist years about the dynamic relationship between the institutional forms and the development of collective identities was continuous with his earlier ideas. His last publication is a testimony of his rich intellectual and practical involvement in doing research and activism among the Roma. He remained self-reflective and open to rethinking his own identity. Retrospectively, he admitted that his younger self was a believer in the capacity of communism to create equality and emancipate the disadvantaged, including the Roma. Recalling the 1970s, the years of his intellectual formation, he voiced his old commitment: "I also embraced the internationalism – or cosmopolitanism – and anti-nationalism of those times" (Gheorghe and Pulay, 2013: 50).

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<sup>41</sup> Gheorghe died at the age of 66 in August 2013. The journal *Roma Rights* dedicated an issue entitled 'In Search of a Contemporary Roma Identity' to his memory (Bițu, 2015) and the first volume of the Romani Studies book series initiated by Sam Beck was dedicated to him (Beck and Ivasiuc, 2018).

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# ***Romanian Sociology Today***

## ***Editorial Note:***

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



## FAMILY PRACTICES ACROSS GENERATIONS AND NATIONAL BORDERS

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**ABSTRACT.** Part of the mobility and migration process, family relationships and mutual support are subject of various transformations. Spatial separation between family members creates a specific setting for analysis which leads to the necessity of understanding how family practices are arranged and developed across time and distance. The present study focuses on the dyad emigrated adult children and non-migrated elderly parents living in Romania and on the types of intergenerational family practices that occur between these dyads across national borders. Our analysis of family practices relies on tracing certain set of actions taken by family members in order to maintain, consolidate, and ultimately to display family solidarity. We consider here various forms of practices, namely technological mediated contacts, visits, time-consuming practical support and financial assistance. Analyses are based on the national survey entitled *Intergenerational solidarity in the context of work migration abroad. The situation of elderly left at home*, which provides empirical data about the relationships from a distance between elderly parents living in Romania and their migrant adult children. Descriptive statistics are provided in order to assess the flow directions, the frequency and the intensity of each type of intergenerational support. Our empirical evidence highlights that transnational support is asymmetrical and multidirectional. Results also support that intergenerational support and family relationships can no longer be theoretically approached in terms of a simple dichotomy.

**Keywords:** family practices, circulation of care, intergenerational relationships, transnational families, migration

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### Introduction<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenon of increased mobility and international migration has become a common feature of the contemporary Romanian social context and it also captured the attention of numerous researchers. Romanian citizens represent the largest ethnical minority in Spain, Italy and Hungary, while in the case of other European countries, such as Germany, France or UK, Romania is among the most important sending countries. According to Eurostat (2018), around 20% of the working age (20-64) Romanian population lives in another European Union member state. Worldwide, Romania is the 16<sup>th</sup> country with the largest diaspora population (UN, 2017). Research has been carried out in order to assess the motivations for migration or the intentions of returning, to investigate migration trajectories, migration networks, migration typologies or migration regimes and to evaluate the economic impact of remittances. Regarding the family, early studies focused on the underage children left in Romania or on family reunification abroad. However, our research investigates the relationship between families and international migration from a different analytical angle, expanding the focus from the nuclear family towards the extended families and intergenerational linkages. By relying on nation-wide survey data, we can capture a broader picture of the phenomena while highlighting both the positive as well as the less encouraging outcomes of Romanian transnational family life. The study's final goal is to conceptualise our empirical findings within the international literature on transnational families.

In the present paper we focus on a very particular type of family relationships, namely between emigrant adult children and their ageing parents living in Romania. Without relying on the use of any normative prescribed roles, our contribution aims to address the importance of family relationships in adult life. For this purpose, our approach enlarges the concept of family and goes beyond the nuclear family unit and across distance. The usage of the word *family* is not intended to define what family means, but rather to try and understand family as a form of action – *doing family* (Morgan, 2011). Therefore, we translate *family relationships* as a specific social process which includes a set of interactions holding different meanings and taking place in a setting which, to some degree, is subject to variation. The specificity of this type of relationships comes from a complex set of cultural, economic and historical factors which shape the values, expectations, behaviours and more importantly, the

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readjustments towards and within the family. Morgan's (1996, 2011) concept of *family practices* captures very well our stand point for this study. The author alleges that family practices are 'reflective practices; in being enacted they simultaneously construct, reproduce family boundaries, family relationships and possibly more discursive notions of the family in general' (Morgan, 2011: 163).

From a relational family arrangements perspective, our contribution aims to assess the intensity and variety of family practices across generations and national borders. By doing so, we address a critique of Parsons' functionalist perspectives (Parsons, 1951) and of the recent individualization perspectives (see for example Giddens, 1992, 1994). Due to the nature of our empirical data, we have the possibility to provide a much broader image of family practices in a transnational setting, including both positive and less positive outcomes. Therefore, our analytical inquiry is guided by several questions. Can we locate family and family-like intergenerational relations in a wider spatial setting than the household and national borders? Does the individualization process erode family ties and suppress the collectivistic nature of family relationships? Does the broken vs. solid dichotomy properly explain intergenerational family relationships? Can we discuss about a general high dependency ratio between generations at the family level? Starting with these questions, in the next section we try to highlight how family practices are subject to variations while addressing the issue of geographical separation and living across national borders. Later, we will discuss our data source and methodological approach. Following that, a vast quarter of this paper will focus on displaying our empirical evidences and discussing the theoretical gains of the results. As it will be made clear in the following sections, our results have a great descriptive quality. The intention here was not to address any causal statistical relationships but rather to provide a straightforward and insightful image of family practices across generations and national borders.

### **Confronting distance and separation**

New studies on transnationalism and families living separated by national borders point out the fact that support exchanges within kinship networks are not restricted to geographical proximity. Early evidence suggests that across all forms of scour, spatial distance reduces the frequency of social interactions and implicitly the flows of support between generations (see for example Rossi and Rossi, 1990: 416-422). However, recent understandings concerning *transnationalism* as a concept - taken from the everyday practices of individuals - show that "migrants establish social fields that cross geographic,

cultural and political borders” (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992: ix). *Transnationalism from below* emphasises the subjective meanings and the practices developed by migrants in relation to and towards what they have left in the country of origin. We can mention here aspects like the symbolic notion of home (see Olwig, 2002), the transnational domestic sphere (Gardner and Grillo, 2002), and transnational families (see Baldassar et al., 2007). This perspective concerns not only individuals who emigrate, but also considers the significant others that live in the homeland and long-distance connections:

[...] those family members who *stay behind* or *stay put* (as it were) in their place of birth or ancestral homeland also become part of social relationships stretched across time and place, even though they might never actually relocate or move at all. (Baldassar and Merla, 2014: 6)

Current family studies tackling the issue of increased geographic distance between family members provide empirical evidence stressing out that mobility is a common feature among contemporary kinship groups and that “members of families retain their sense of collectivity and kinship in spite of being spread across multiple nations” (Baldasar et al., 2007: 13). Multi-national kin groups or family members living separated by increased geographic distance (i.e. transnational families) are defined as “families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely *familyhood*, even across national borders” (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002: 3). Transnational families display similarities with families whose members live in geographic proximity, at least on two grounds including diversity and types of support. On the one hand “a wide variety of socioeconomic, educational, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and with extremely different levels of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), in both their home and host societies” (Baldassar and Merla, 2014: 9) is observed. On the other hand, transnational families acquire similar social interactions and support practices as families living in geographical proximity (Baldassar et al., 2007; Wilding, 2006).

## **Doing family across national borders**

### ***Typologies of transnational visits***

Based on theoretical frameworks concerning transnational families, we bring into discussion two essential concepts, namely transnational caregiving and care circulation. The term *transnational caregiving* is used with reference to the

exchange of care and support across distance and national borders (Baldassar et al., 2007). Care circulation is defined as “the reciprocal, multidirectional and asymmetrical exchange of care that fluctuates over the life course within transnational family networks subject to the political, economic, cultural and social contexts of both sending and receiving societies” (Baldassar and Merla, 2014: 25).

Transnational care is a complex process that also encompasses visiting, both migrant visits (made by migrants to homeland) and parental visits (made by parents to their migrant adult children). In this respect, Baldassar et al. (2007), described five types of visits in their understanding of the importance of visits in the transnational caregiving process. The first type of the visits explained is *routine visits*. This kind of visit is most prevalent for people who can visit periodically in order to manage employment, professional or investment duties. Most often, migrants who can afford to engage in routine visits use these opportunities to also reach out to the family. There is no specific motivation associated to routine visits other than visiting and being with the family.

*Crisis visits* are more specific than routine visits and they have special motivations. They involve the need to care for the distant kin, usually through the provision of hands on care, or they are related to an urgent matter such as serious illness, difficulty after birth, divorce. Attending key celebrations and anniversaries, and participating in rites of passage (births, deaths, and marriages) are *duty and ritual visits*. This type of visit is expected and anticipated and is most often perceived as an obligation to attend, sometimes implying ambivalence. Of course, some visitors may be very keen to attend life-cycle events, including weddings and special anniversaries, and do not feel constrained to participate. *Special visits or purpose visits* have precise purposes, particularly the first birth, transition times when elderly parents change their living arrangements, or the final stages of a terminal illness. An important reason behind special visits is to relive the migrant’s homesickness or to alleviate the anguish of being away from parents/children and grandchildren. Finally, there are tourist visits characterized by short visits to kin focused on travelling and visiting tourist sites. Tourist visits have their importance and can result in an expanding of the transnational networks of caregiving, involving a consolidation of relationships between migrants and kin (Baldassar et al., 2007).

### ***Dealing with emotions and feeling the presence of the longed ones***

Due to the geographical distance and timespan, transnational families are experiencing emotional situations such as the absence of loved ones and longing to be together. In order to strengthen their relationships of reciprocity and caregiving, migrants and their parents make use of varied types and

degrees of co-presence. According to Baldassar (2008) there are four main ways of co-presence: virtual co-presence, co-presence by proxy, physical co-presence and imagined co-presence. Additionally, Madianou (2016) discusses about a new form of information and communications technology (ICT) mediated contact, namely ambient co-presence.

The co-presence topic can be discussed extensively if we consider the substantial ethnographic work of Baldassar et al. (2007), Madianou and Miller (2012), Madianou (2016) and others. However, for this research we limit our inquiry in providing some information, mainly describing how these various types of co-presence are used in transnational families. Considering the reduced cost of communication technologies in the last years and the considerable advances in the field, *virtual co-presence* is prevailing. Virtual forms of co-presence are represented most often through the sense of hearing, either directly in verbal exchanges via landline, mobile phone or Voice over Internet Protocol, or indirectly in written communication forms, such as emails, SMS or other services for instant messaging (Baldassar, 2008; Madianou and Miller, 2012). Being the most extensive form of transnational communication, virtual co-presence is usually described as *keeping in touch* and *staying in contact* (Baldassar, 2008). Another important aspect of transnational contact is related to the access to stable, affordable and appropriate technologies, and as well having the capacity in terms of health, skills and knowledge to handle various communication technologies. For example, the usage of technologies is limited among parents suffering from mental illnesses such as dementia which is strongly associated with ageing (Baldassar, 2008).

*Co-presence by proxy* is represented by special *transnational objects* such as photos, cards, gifts, which hold a very strong emotional dimension. A more valued type of co-presence among transnational families, but not as easily achieved as virtual co-presence, is the form of physical co-presence. Baldassar (2008) describes *physical co-presence* as a need felt by migrants and parents to *see with their own eyes* and to confirm *for themselves* that they are healthy and in good physical and mental shape. Baldassar et al. (2007), confirm in their studies that access to new communication technologies increases the obligation and need for virtual co-presence along with advances in travel technologies which provide transnational families with opportunities to be more physically co-present and to develop new forms of co-presence.

### ***Typologies of care and early empirical evidences***

In terms of care, early studies distinguish between various intergenerational forms of support: economic support, accommodation, personal care, practical

support, child care, and emotional or moral support (Finch, 1989). When spatial proximity becomes an issue, Litwak and Kulis's (1987: 659) schema for measuring the strength of kin differentiates between three indicators: (a) telephone contacts frequency, (b) frequency of services that do not require face-to-face contact (e.g., advice and emotional succour), and (c) frequency of services that require only limited face-to-face contact (e.g., help during acute illness, death of spouse, birth, and marriage). Based on Baldassar et al.'s (2007) multi-dimensional classification of proximate and virtual caring practices, Kilkey and Merla (2014) develop a new schema of the four types of care provision. The authors differentiate between direct provision with physical co-presence, direct provision at a distance, coordination of support, and delegation of support (Kilkey and Merla, 2014: 213).

Results emphasized by the ethnographic research of Baldassar et al. (2007) show that the quantity and the regularity of visits from parents to migrant children are important for the so-called staying *in-touch* and for co-presence care. In their group sample, on average, parents visit the migrant children once every three to four years. Also, migrant adult children tend to visit more than their parents. This aspect may indicate that, after all, the obligation to maintain the connections and ties with those left at home is felt more by those leaving the homeland. This pressure to visit (as it may be perceived) becomes even more present with the increased advances in travel technologies. Moreover, the fact that aging parents become unavailable to travel long distances strengthen the previous idea. Nevertheless, visits can have an important role in maintaining and challenging transnational family relations, including the acceptance of changes and the fulfilling of *familyhood* (Baldassar et al., 2007).

As transnationality considers not only the migrants but also the significant others in the homeland, a recent study about Romanian transnational families highlight that elderly parents are also active participants in maintaining family bonds across large geographic distances (Hărăguș et al., 2018). Even though the practical support offered by parents to their children has mostly lost its daily character in the transnational setting, various forms of succour continue to be present both in physical co-presence during parents' visits and from a distance in the home country (Hărăguș et al., 2018). Other recent research using survey data identifies several clusters of family relationships types between aging parents and migrant adult children. A first typology of transnational solidarity distinguishes three sub-groups of family practices, namely harmonious, detached and obligatory (Karpinska and Dykstra, 2018).

The first classification highlights high likelihood for two-way intergenerational emotional assistance and upward material support, the third relies more on increased contact, while the detached type implies low support and contact probabilities and a high likelihood of weak filial obligations (Karpinska and Dykstra, 2018). Another typology of family relationship among non-co-resident children and their parents identifies four different solidarity clusters: full solidarity, advice-oriented solidarity, material-oriented solidarity and autonomy (Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema, 2018). Against the authors' hypothesis, full and material-oriented solidarity are considered present forms of solidarity among transnational dyads (Baykara-Krumme and Fokkema, 2018).

### **Research hypotheses**

We build our hypothesis following Morgan's (2011) concepts of doing family and family practices while addressing the issue of transnational relationships across generations. Increased opportunities for traveling long distances and contact via technology has significantly changed the interactions between transnational family members (Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar, 2008; Madianou and Miller, 2012; Madianou, 2016). In line with our cited literature, we assume that migrant adult children are more mobile regarding transnational visits as compared to their elderly parents (1). Considering ICT contact, most parents are regularly in touch with the emigrated offspring, and technology represents a great means for emotional assistance (2). As described earlier in this section, financial support and practical care are also part of transnational family life. Subject of variations in terms of the types of hand-on support, we expect both elderly parents and adult children to be providers and beneficiary of various kinds of intergenerational assistance (3). In line with Finch's (1989) results, we expect that upward material support (namely remittances in cash or in kind towards senior parents living in homeland) to be more frequent than material support from parents towards emigrated adult children (4). The felling of co-presence with the longed one, both physical and virtual, has a great importance for keeping alive and strengthening family relationships across distance (Baldassar, 2008). Therefore, we assume that the presence of contact between parents and their adult children living abroad is linked with other forms of intergenerational exchanges (5). The last hypothesis aims to capture the link between all these forms of support and social interactions. Regarding the overall picture of the forms of intergenerational relationships across distance, we expect to find several clusters of family-like practices (6).

## Data and methodology

Our data is the result of a nation-wide survey among ageing parents (60 years of age and over) living in Romania and who have at least one adult child living abroad. The survey is part of the research project entitled *Intergenerational solidarity in the context of work migration abroad. The situation of the elderly left at home* (SolFam). For sampling and data gathering we used a stratified sampling technique. In the selection procedure we started with Romania's eight development regions. From each development region two counties (administrative areas) were randomly selected. The subsequent stratification criterion was the settlement type, namely large urban areas (over 50,000 inhabitants), small urban areas (under 50,000 inhabitants) and rural settlements. Within each stratum mentioned above we have randomly selected towns and villages. The respondents' distribution in these three community types reflects, at the level of each region, the national distribution of persons aged 60 and over. Respondents were identified by research operators through screening, by means of local informers: public and private institutions that maintain contact with potential respondents (for example: city halls, social service departments, day-care centres for elderly people, organisations that provide care services etc.) or by using the snowball technique, through recommendations received from already-interviewed individuals. The data was collected between April and December 2016. The final sample composition is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
**Descriptive statistics of the sample composition**

Number of households and interviews		1506	-
Number of emigrated adult children	Long-term emigrants	2072	98%
	Seasonal emigrants	37	2%
	Total	2109	100%
Number of emigrated adult children without any information about their relationships with the parent		79	4%
Total		2188	100%

**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' calculation



Face-to-face interviews were conducted during the field research and the data was collected using the pen and paper technique. A large part of the questionnaire focuses on the parent-migrant adult children relationship and their migration arrangements. The questions were addressed separately for each adult child living abroad. This section comprises information about the destination country, the year of emigration, the child's living arrangements and parent's thoughts about returning migration intentions. Also, we used a wide set of measures for the associative solidarity, emotional solidarity and functional solidarity. Namely we considered the frequency of technologically mediated contacts (ordinal scale), the type (nominal scale) and frequency of visits (numeric scale) both in the destination country and homeland, and of upward intergenerational support (receiving support from the children), as well of the downward intergenerational support (providing support to children). The questions asked were related to the provision and benefiting of practical support in the household, personal care (only received), help in taking care of grandchildren (only provided), practical support from the distance (only provided), financial help and material help in kind. Because practical support, both provided and received, is dependent upon the provider's and the beneficiary's simultaneous physical presence in one of the two households, it linked with the visiting time. Practical support provided from distance, which is possible without the reciprocal physical presence of the dyads, offers information about the situation in which parents help their adult children with various administrative tasks (regarding the household in Romania, the construction site for a new house or building, a business endeavour in Romania or paying taxes for the child living abroad). All these items are yes or no variables. Also, parents were asked if they take care of the underage grandchildren who remained in Romania (ordinal scale). Financial help refers to regular or occasional money transfers, gifts or loans. With regards to the material support we distinguished between groceries or household items and properties or goods of a substantial value, such as houses, land parcels, cars, etc. Because the act of migrating was considered a turning point, we wanted to identify potential differences between the period prior to and after the departure (the last 12 months if the child emigrated for more than one year or since he or she left, if less than one year), therefore for each type of support we addressed up to date and retrospective questions.

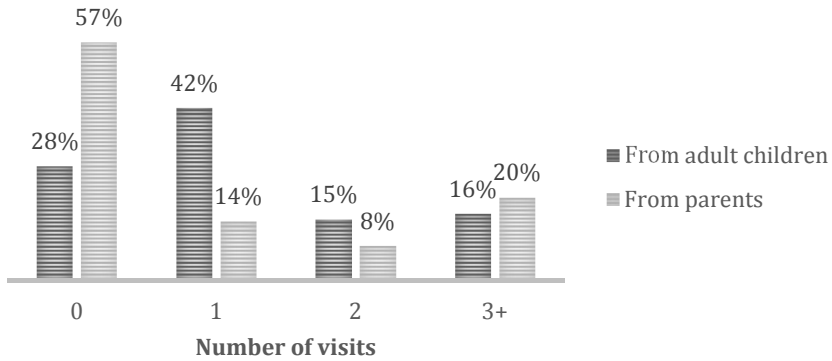
Our analytical approach consists of two steps. In the first part we will present descriptive results concerning various types of family practices across generations and national borders. Data was collected from all children-parent dyads, excluding the cases where there was no information about emigrated adult child. The second step provides the result of Latent Class analyses of

intergenerational family practices in transnational context. LC analysis is a non-linear model specific for categorical data which assumes the probabilistic relationships between latent constructs and the measures used in each statistical model (see Agresti, 2002; Magidson and Vermunt, 2001, 2004; Lazarsfeld and Henry, 1968). Therefore, our aim is to identify heterogeneous subgroups that classify various intergenerational family dyad relationships into homogenous subcategories or latent classes. For this purpose, we used the *poLCA* function in R (Linzer and Lewis, 2011, 2013). Model testing was preceded by two methodological steps considering the independence condition of the variables and the uniformity of measurement scales. Firstly, in order to achieve the independence condition, we randomly selected one emigrated adult child from each household (one child of each parent we interviewed). Secondly, due to the diversity of the measurement scales of the variables mentioned above, we recoded them into dichotomous variables (No=1, Yes =2). For the visits' frequency, '0' stands for no visits and '1' for at list one visit. Considering the frequency of ICT contact, '1' equals weekly and more frequent discussions and '0' means less than weekly ICT contact. We ran two different models which will be presented later. To achieve more accurate results, each model was run 10 times in order to locate the parameter values that globally maximize the log-likelihood function (McLachlan and Krishnan, 1997). The first model includes ICT contact, emotional assistance, remittances in kind, remittances in cash, money support from parents, support in kind from parents, downward succour from a distance and visits. For the other model we replaced the variables measuring visits with practical support during visits.

## Results

### *Visits, virtual contact and emotional support*

Non-migrant kin visiting the homeland and parents' visiting the country of destination are common practices among Romanian transnational families. In the past years, traveling expenses have been reduced and the transportation services between countries have become more and more diverse and accessible. Results presented in Figure 1.1 show that more than 70% of emigrated adult children visited their elderly parents at least once in the past 12 months or so from the interview date. On the other hand, ageing parents are less mobile, but still there is a significant share of elderlies traveling abroad.

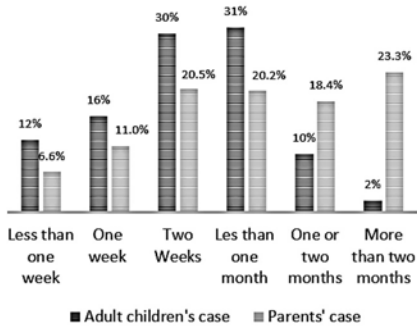


**Figure 1.1. Number of visits across borders**  
**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

This is in line with our first hypothesis, namely that the younger generation is more frequently engaging in long distance travels in order to visit their parents back home (H1). These return visits have a major role in maintaining kinship bonds across time and distance (Baldassar, 2001). Apart from the urgency of the visits and its major role for keeping the emotional closeness with the parent, migrant visits are more frequent due to the increased access to travel information and financial resources to pay for the travel expenses.

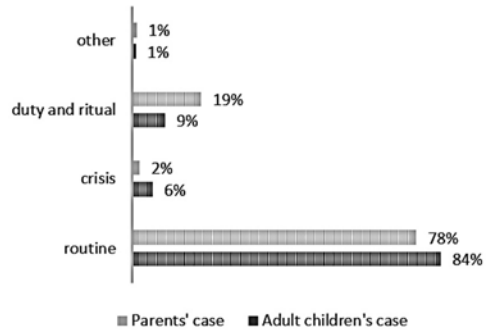
Nevertheless, some of these transnational parents are also significantly involved in such family practices. The data shows that they spend more time in the receiving country than adult children during their return visits in the homeland (Figure 1.2). This can be an indicator of the visiting motivations and the types of support provided in physical co-presence. Based on an adaptation of Baldassar et al.'s (2007) typology of transnational visits, the most common category of visits in our data sample are routine visits (Figure 1.3). Besides this, parents usually travel in order to fulfil their perceived parental roles and grandparent responsibilities. Adult children also return for short periods in order to attend family reunions or family rituals such as weddings, funerals and other. Another reason for travelling is related to times of crisis, mostly among emigrants. Crisis situations are usually related to medical problems of the parent or to the death of a close family member.

FAMILY PRACTICES ACROSS GENERATIONS AND NATIONAL BORDERS



**Figure 1.2. Visit duration**

Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design



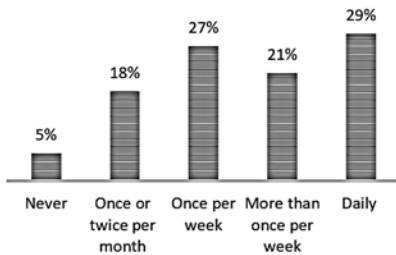
**Figure 1.3. Visit types**

Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

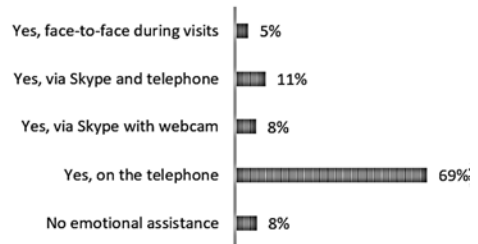
Other means used by transnational family members in order to stay in touch with each other are information and communication technology. ICT contact became the most widespread method of communication across distance and due to new technological advances, it also decreases the costs of maintaining regular contact between family members. Figure 2 highlights the importance of having access to communication technologies. Most of the parents are in contact with their emigrated children at least once per week. A significant share of transnational family members uses these means of contact daily. Half of our respondents declared that they spend between 10- and 30-minutes having conversations with their child living abroad. The access to a Polymedia environment (Madianou and Miller, 2012) increases the opportunities to be in touch among separated family members. Such virtual interactions create the feeling of co-presence which decreases the longing for the missing child (Baldassar, 2008). The regularity of such interactions is in line with early studies showing that ICT-mediated contact is a form of practices that “possesses a sense of the everyday, a sense of the regular and a sense of fluidity” (Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016: 205).

Virtual contact is also perceived as having a powerful sense of emotional support. Figure 3 shows increased occurrence of intergenerational emotional assistance among transnational family members. One possible reason for such a widespread family practice is linked to the limits imposed by living at a distance. Confirming our second hypothesis, results show that there is an increasing need for emotional support among transnational family members and technology is the most important mediator. We can assume that emotional assistance while engaging in virtual contact is the most accessible form of

intergenerational support in terms of means. Also, this polymedia environment enables people to control what they are virtually displaying while using communication technologies (Madianou and Miller, 2012). Our results show that conversation via landline technology is the most preferred sensitive topics. By doing so, both parents and adult children avoid displaying their corporal or physical manifestations of their negative emotions. Early qualitative research on Romanian transnational family members, stress that financial reasons and skills are the main factors of choosing the right means for communication across distance (Ducu, 2016).



**Figure 2. Technological mediated contact**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design



**Figure 3. Emotional assistance**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

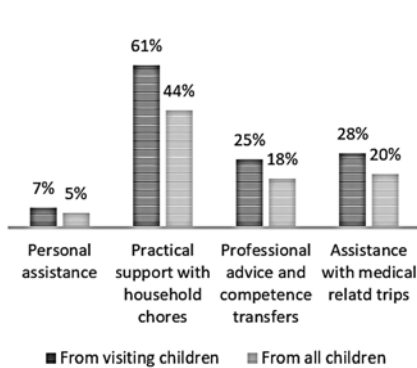
### ***Practical support during visits***

Providing or receiving familial support may occur in both physical co-presence and from a distance (Baldassar et al., 2007; Litwak and Kulis, 1987; Kilkey and Merla, 2014). Practical or time-consuming assistance in co-presence is directly related to the type and duration of the visits. Figure 4 shows that among the dyads, namely adult children and ageing parents, the most common type of upward practical help involves household chores. During visits, an increased share of adult children also provides other types of support, such as giving professional advice or offering medical related assistance. Compared to these forms of intergenerational succour, only a small number of emigrated children are engaged in personal care for their elderly parents. Of course, offering and receiving personal assistance is subject to an increased physical dependence of the parent and a precondition of constant proximity between the beneficiary and the provider. Consequently, our descriptive statistics are also influenced by the share of parents who are not able to meet their daily needs independently.

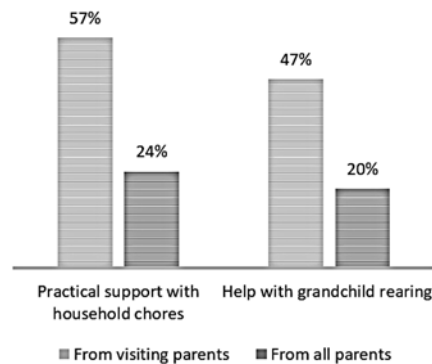
Only a reduced number of respondents in our sample declared that they need regular personal assistance (data available upon request). Among other motives, the parents' medical urgent problems are generally a trigger for return visits (Baldassar et al., 2007). Therefore, the relatively reduced frequency of crisis visits from emigrated offspring is also an indicator for the lack of upward personal assistance.

Regarding the help from elderly parents during their visit abroad, doing household chores and grandchildren rearing are the two forms of downward support that we measured (Figure 5). As the literature highlights, these types of intergenerational succour are also very common among transnational mobile grandparents (Treas and Mazumdar, 2004). Our results reinforce the increased commitment among older generation members - also known as the *Zero Generation* (Nedelcu, 2007, 2009) - to provide intergenerational support even if this involves traveling long distances. When grandchildren are born and if the elderly are healthy, the grandparents' visits are mostly triggered by their willingness and/or by the need of the adult children to receive support.

Considering both directions flows of intergenerational practical support, our empirical evidence suggests that hands-on care continues to be a part of the family life even if it involves traveling long distances. Arguably, this is a very good example of how *keeping the family together* is not limited to spatial proximity. Finally, we also confirm our hypothesis regarding the multidirectional feature of practical support among transnational families (H3).



**Figure 4. Provision of upward support with physical co-presence**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

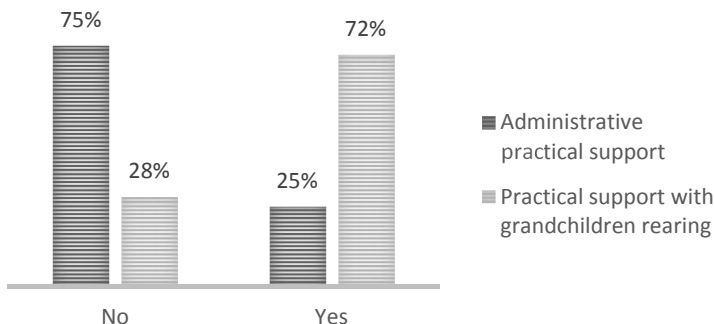


**Figure 5. Provision of downward support with physical co-presence**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

### ***Practical and material support from a distance***

Considering intergenerational practical support from a distance, our data gives information only about time-consuming activities in which aging parents are engaged. We distinguish here between administrative practical support and grandchild care. For administrative support we considered the provision of at least one of the following types of help: keeping the child's own house in Romania in good condition, supervision of the construction site of a new house or building, business endeavours in Romania on behalf of the adult child or paying taxes for the child living abroad. Among parents who are left in charge with various responsibilities by their mobile offspring, Figure 6 highlights that more than 70% of the emigrated adult children who left their underage children in Romania receive childcare support from their parents. One quarter of the transnational ageing parents are also engaged in various management duties on behalf of their emigrated offspring. Unfortunately, we do not have precise data in order to distinguish between adult children who require administrative practical support and those who do not.

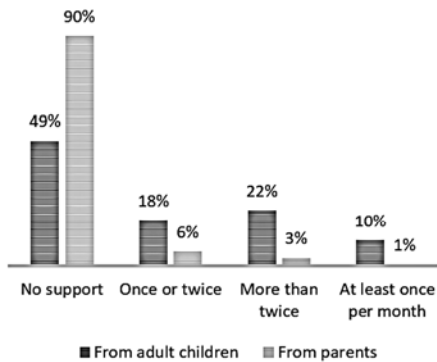
We can argue that caring from a distance is a family practice that holds the intergenerational family together across distance. It can be also a form of family display (Finch 2007) showing that this is *a family that works* (Morgan, 2011: 86). Moreover, we can suggest that the engagement in such types of family-like activities has the potential for non-migrant parents to experience a sentiment of co-presence by proxy (Baldassar, 2008). Providing intergenerational support from a distance by caring for grandchildren or managing the construction/renovation of the house building can trigger both bodily feelings and emotions for the longed ones.



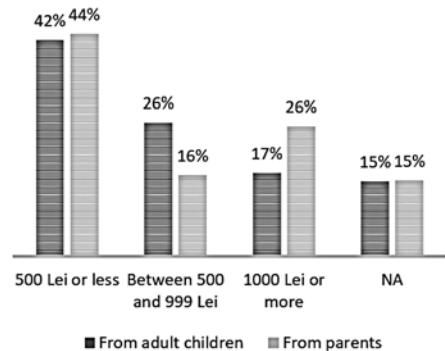
**Figure 6. Provision of downward practical support from a distance**

**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

Material support can consist both in money transfers and in the provision of goods or commodities. Such familial support does not necessarily imply spatial proximity; money can be sent for example via online banking and goods can be transported by a third party. Figure 7.1 stresses out the dissimilarities between generations when it comes to transnational money transfer. As expected, it is more common among emigrants to send remittances in cash to their parents, rather than receiving financial support from the homeland (see also Finch and Mason, 1993; Hărăguș and Telegdi-Csetri, 2018). The empirical findings confirm our research hypothesis (H4). Regarding remittances towards elderly parents, our data shows that half of the emigrated adult children provided upward financial support while the other half were not. Arguably, the lack of transfers of remittances does not imply broken family bonds or disrupted connections. Some of the children provide financial support only to their own nuclear family, while the commitment towards parents is expressed by other means. Also, financial assistance like other types of familial support is conditioned by the structures of needs and opportunities of both parents and adult children (Szydlik, 2016). Emigrated children may not have the proper opportunities to provide remittances. Likewise, parents who are financially well-off will not require intergenerational support in cash from their offspring.



**Figure 7.1. Provision of support in cash**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design



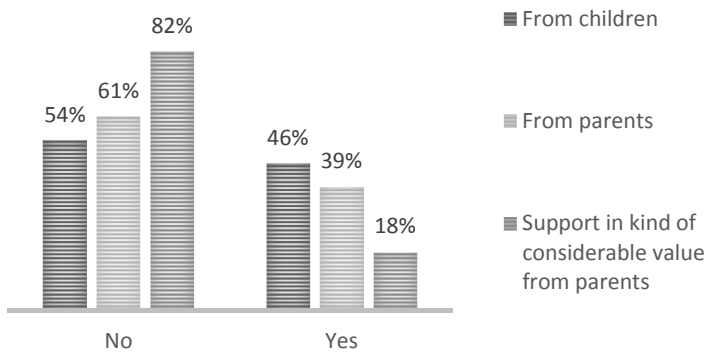
**Figure 7.2. Amount of money transfers**  
Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

The frequency of intergenerational remittances in cash is subject to variations between those emigrants who are engaged in upward money transfers. Figure 7.1 shows that it is more common among our sample of ageing parents to receive money from abroad several times in a year, but not every



month. Figure 7.2 shows relatively small amounts of remittances in cash that the parent declared to have received from the emigrated adult child. However, we must pay more attention to this result. On the one hand, the total amount of remittances for each household can increase when more children are working abroad. Also, other adult children, not necessarily those who emigrated, can be a source of financial help. On the other hand, most elderly people are beneficiary of public pensions and remittances are a supplement in order to make the basic ends meet.

As mentioned before, exchanging goods or commodities is not limited to physical co-presence. We also addressed the fact that means of transportation become increasingly varied and accessible. Figure 8 highlights a slight increase in the share of parents' beneficiary of remittances in kind compared to the number of parents who provide downward support in kind.



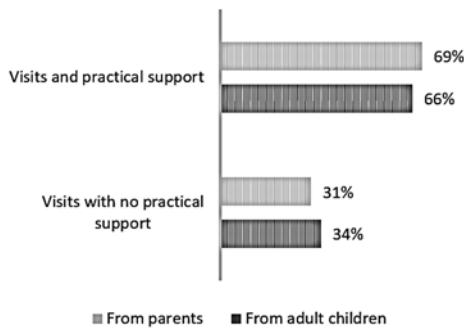
**Figure 8. Provision of support in kind**  
**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

However, the difference between the two generations regarding the provision of support in kind is not big enough to agree with our expectations (H4). It was made clear that emigrated children are the most frequent providers of support in cash. We cannot say the same thing about support in kind. A potential explanation for relatively increased lack of support in kind among transnational families is also the globalized consumption market specific for Romania. In line with early empirical findings (see for example Baldassar et al., 2007; Baldassar, 2008), we can assume that support in kind is rather a practice

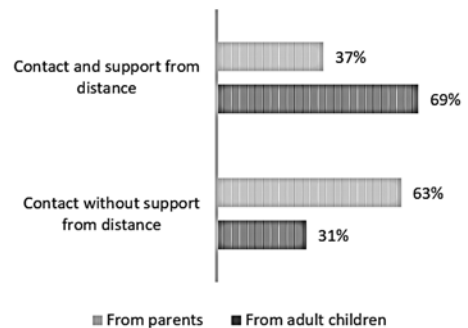
of exchanging gifts on special occasions such as transnational visits, family rituals attendance and other family-like events. If support in kind can be translated in gift exchange practices, this family practice has a great potential for triggering the feeling of co-presence (Baldassar, 2008). Different transnational objects or gifts are proxies for creating and recreating memories about the children who live across the world.

***Links between intergenerational family practices***

As we stated earlier, when considering traveling and visiting across borders, ageing parents are significantly less mobile than their emigrated adult children. However, during visits, parents and adult children are enabled to provide direct practical support. Figure 9.1 shows the relationship between visits and practical support in physical co-presence. Both dyads usually provide time-consuming help during visits, but there are situations when visits do not necessary imply hands-on support. We can assume that in this case, the lack of practical support during visits is related to the structures of needs and opportunities of the kin members involved. Likewise, we can discuss about a change in cultural values. Emigrants can reshape their own life style accordingly to the ‘new’ culture of the receiving community. Therefore, practical help from their elderly parents may no longer be needed.



**Figure 9.1. Visits and practical support in physical co-presence**  
 Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design



**Figure 9.2. ICT Contact and support from distance**  
 Data source: SolFam, 2017. Authors' design

Similar results among emigrated children are observed in Figure 9.2 on the link between ICT contact and practical support from a distance. Remit practices are highly related with being in touch transnationally. On the other

hand, the percentage of parents who maintain contact with their mobile children without provision of practical or material support is higher than those who would also provide help from a distance. These results stress the fact that staying in touch across distance is essential in order to exchange other forms of intergenerational support. Visits and telephone calls are not just simple family practices. Due to the increased geographical distance the emotional and affective meaning of such interactions is even more intense. Therefore, some transnational families are ‘holding together’ based on the feeling of co-presence without being involved in other forms of actual support. Based on these results we can only partially agree with our hypothesis about the link between transnational contact and transfers of support (H5).

The final part of this section deals with the construction of homogenous parent-child dyad subgroups based on various intergenerational family practices in transnational settings. Our aim is to further explore the link between all the family care practices analysed so far. We considered the optimal number of clusters based on the lowest values of BIC and AIC. These information criteria are functions of the number of parameters, sample size, and log likelihood and are the most widely applied criteria for model selection (Magidson and Vermunt, 2004). Because practical support in physical co-presence requires visiting, these two variables are dependent on each other. For this reason, we modelled two separate sets of LC analyses. The first LC model includes ICT contact, visits, emotional assistance, remittances in kind, remittances in cash, money support from parents, support in kind from parents, downward succour from a distance. Based on the model fit information, the optimal number of clusters is equal to 4. The second CL model includes the same variables, excepting visits measures that were replaced with ascendant and downward practical support during visits. In this case the optimal model involves three different subgroups.

Table 2 shows the class membership probabilities of each of the items measuring family practices with regards to ICT contact, face-to-face contact and emotional, material or practical support. Highest probabilities for each category of the items are marked with bold in order to highlight cluster membership. These sub-groups have different population shares which suggests another essential insight regarding family relationships across generations in a transnational context. The less common is Cluster 1 showing the lack of involvement or no strong ties. Considering the classification of Karpinska and Dykstra (2018), these subgroups could be labelled as *detached solidarity*. The second cluster exhibits increased ICT contact, emotional support, high involvement of adult children and downward reciprocity from a distance. Here, emigrants have larger probabilities to be more mobile than their parents and are a great source of remittances. As a

form of reciprocity from parents, we observed weekly contact with their offspring living abroad and providing time consuming help in the homeland, therefore we could consider this subgroup as *harmonious solidarity* relationships. Family practices concerning emotional support emerge another distinct cluster which stresses out the *intense affectivity* among transnational families. This group of family practices has the highest population share followed immediately by harmonious family practices. The not so widespread subgroups show the highest probabilities for visits and material support from parents. We can assume the increased dependency among emigrants for their parents help and the *increased parental involvement* in transnational setting.

**Table 2.**  
**Results of LC analysis with variables measuring transnational visits. Conditional item probabilities by variable response and class**

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3		Cluster 4	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
ICT Contact	0.011	<b>0.990</b>	<b>0.638</b>	0.363	0.529	0.471	0.626	0.374
Visits from children	0.372	<b>0.629</b>	<b>0.902</b>	0.098	0.693	0.307	0.789	0.211
Visits from parents	0.117	<b>0.883</b>	0.429	0.571	0.391	0.609	<b>0.666</b>	0.334
Emotional assistance	0.566	<b>0.434</b>	<b>0.991</b>	0.009	<b>0.970</b>	0.030	<b>0.936</b>	0.064
Remittances in cash from children	0.066	<b>0.934</b>	<b>0.925</b>	0.075	0.459	0.541	0.156	0.844
Remittances in kind from children	0.149	<b>0.851</b>	<b>0.907</b>	0.093	0.163	0.837	0.663	0.337
Support in cash from parents	0.065	0.935	0.029	<b>0.971</b>	0.073	0.927	<b>0.284</b>	0.716
Support in kind from parents	0.023	<b>0.977</b>	0.535	0.465	0.128	0.873	<b>0.806</b>	0.194
Downward support from distance	0.189	<b>0.811</b>	<b>0.447</b>	0.553	0.224	0.776	0.342	0.658
Estimated class population shares	12%		30%		41%		17%	

**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' calculation

Instead of visits, the second LC model includes intergenerational hands-on practical support offered during visits in homeland or abroad. The three clusters' composition and item probabilities are presented in Table 3. The first latent dimension comprises rather the lack of transnational family practices.

However, this time the composition of the cluster is not as straightforward as the one from Table 2. The second cluster relates to material support provided by parents while the third, which is the most common, emphasizes the occurrence of all the other family practices. Cluster 2 in Table 3 has a similar manifest composition with the fourth cluster in Table 2, that is increased parental involvement. Moreover, it shows high probabilities of no remittances and lack of practical support in co-presence from emigrated children. This is in accordance with other empirical findings which highlight that material support, usually consisting in money is not transferred from both generations at the same moments in time. Cluster 3 in Table 3 highlights the strong link between ICT and physical contacts, emotional support and remittances from the emigrant adult child towards her or his elderly parent. These two typologies of transnational care presented in Table 2 and Table 3 give enough evidence to confirm our research hypothesis (H6). It was showed that we cannot talk in terms of a dichotomy, transnational families that work and transnational families that do not work. The web of transnational care practices and intergenerational relationships across distance is more complex, showing diversity and fluidity in terms of actions and meanings.

**Table 3.**  
**Results of LA analysis with variables measuring practical support during visits.**  
**Conditional item probabilities by variable response and class**

	Cluster1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
ICT Contact	0.483	<b>0.517</b>	0.613	0.387	<b>0.720</b>	0.280
Emotional assistance	0.937	0.063	0.936	<b>0.064</b>	<b>0.982</b>	0.018
Remittances in cash from children	0.400	0.600	0.080	<b>0.920</b>	<b>0.889</b>	0.111
Remittances in kind from children	0.236	<b>0.764</b>	0.672	0.328	<b>0.804</b>	0.196
Support in cash from parents	0.158	0.842	<b>0.290</b>	0.710	0.014	<b>0.986</b>
Support in kind from parents	0.064	<b>0.936</b>	<b>1.000</b>	0.000	0.555	0.445
Downward practical support from distance	0.199	<b>0.801</b>	0.394	0.606	<b>0.398</b>	0.602
Upward practical support during children's visits	0.431	0.569	0.372	<b>0.628</b>	<b>0.871</b>	0.129
Downward practical support during parent's visits	0.583	<b>0.417</b>	0.677	0.323	<b>0.749</b>	0.252
Estimated class population shares	35%		20%		45%	

**Data source:** SolFam, 2017. Authors' calculation

## Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to provide a broad descriptive image of intergenerational family relationships across distance and national borders. Based on a nation-wide data sample, our statistical analyses provided information about the frequency of various forms of transnational care (Baldassar et al., 2007). We found that different types of care are exchanged regularly or not at all. Building on Morgan's (2011) concepts of *family practices* and *doing family*, we studied transnational families from an interactionist perspective. In accordance with this perspective, family relationships and family-like actions are considered to give the meaning of a *family that works*. Long distance, separation and national frontiers are not obstacles for maintaining and developing intergenerational family relationships. However, we also argue that family practices are not to be taken for granted even in a context of a strong family-oriented system.

Considering the transnational connections that our respondents establish with their emigrated adult children, we also advanced our empirical findings in the framework of *transnational care* (Baldasar et al., 2007) and *care circulation* (Baldassar and Merla, 2014). We found that transnational family relationships between non-migrant elderly parents and emigrant adult children are multidirectional and asymmetrical. The family commitment of the younger generation is not just a simple response to the parents' needs and normative obligations, but it is rather fluid and subject to variations. Ageing parents are not to be regarded as frail human beings, dependent on the family help or forgotten family members, but active agents in sustaining and developing family unity even across borders. We also argued that transnational care is subject to variations according to some contextual factors. Needs and opportunities have a great influence for engaging in intergenerational support while the family is spread in different nation-states. Moreover, different meanings can be attached to each type of family interactions and support. Virtual and physical contact is a trigger for emotional assistance but also for other forms of hands-on practical support. Caring from a distance or exchanging gifts has a potential for experiencing a feeling of co-presence (Baldassar, 2008).

Even though some parent-child relationships may lack physical co-presence for very long periods of time, the commitments of the individual towards family members are not necessarily lost. We identified numerous arrangements that aim to secure the family well-being and ultimately the family unity even across distance. Separation does not stop the occurrence of actual intergenerational support, but rather it is an evidence of how family arrangements are negotiated. Analysing each type of care separately shows that

not all individuals are engaged in doing some sorts of family-like actions. We argued that the lack of involvement in one specific form of care does not necessarily indicate the loss of family commitment or broken family bonds. The former analysis was compelling in this sense. Likewise, in a trans-local setting, intergenerational relationships in the context of migration can vary in terms of intensity of the connections or forms of engaged commitments. Also, during a specific period, such family-like actions may not happen at all.

Our research, however, managed to encompass only a small portion of the complex web of transnational family relations. Further studies are needed in order to evidence the broader family network in the context of transnational relationships. Time is also an important factor that offers insights about family backgrounds, individual histories and previous family arrangements (Morgan, 2011). Despite all these limits, we have the confidence that with this study we managed to provide insightful theoretical understandings and to open new research prospects regarding transnational families in the Romanian field of study.

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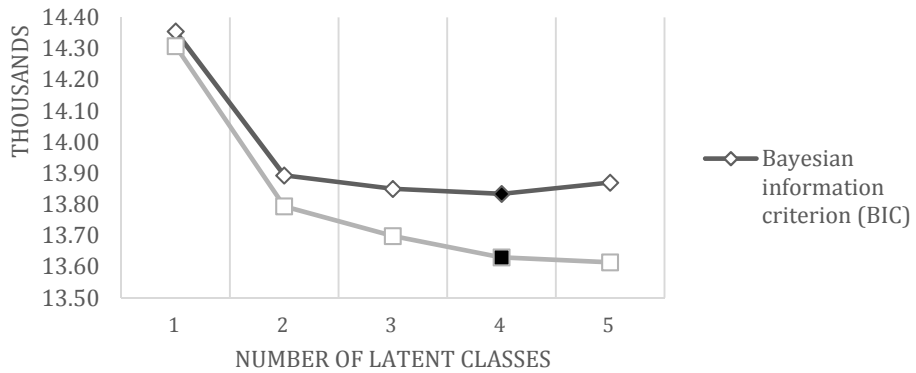
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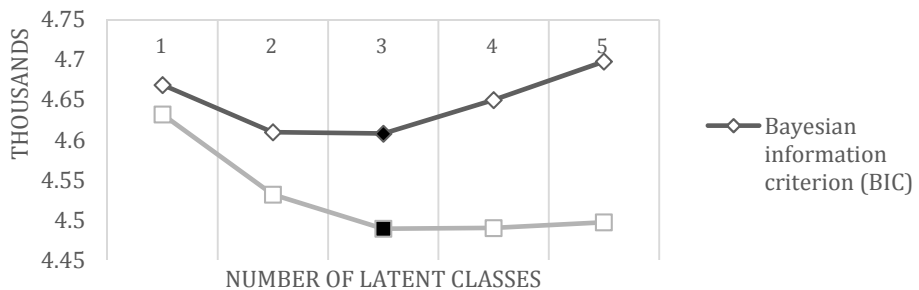
## Appendix

**Figure 10.**  
**LC analysis models fit information criterion comparison (visits)**



**Data source:** authors design

**Figure 11.**  
**LC analysis models fit information criterion comparison (practical support during visits)**



**Data source:** authors design



## ***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

***Zona urbană. O economie politică a socialismului românesc (Urban Zone. A Political Economy of Romanian Socialism)* by Norbert Petrovici.  
Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing House and Presa Universitară Clujeană,  
2017, 331 pages.**

**CORNEL BAN<sup>1</sup>**

With *Zona urbană*, Norbert Petrovici wrote a necessary, informative and theoretically dense book about the political economy of industrialization and urbanization during Romania's experience of state socialism. Indeed, this is the first scholarly attempt to unpack the regional (rather than the conventional firm) dynamics of the centrally planned economy in Romania as the ambitions of its political-administrative apparatus experienced a number of domestic limitations (productivity crises; innovation lags etc.) as well as unexpected international shocks (the oil price hikes of the 1970s, the debt crisis of the 1980s) and opportunities (the exceptionalism of the Romanian rapprochement with Washington and key West European States).

One would hope that *Zona urbană* would initiate a new literature on the regional dynamics of socialist political economy in Romania. The book cuts in more directions than one may expect but to me its claim to fame is this: by bringing the analysis down at the regional and municipal level (with the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Kolozsvár at the centre of the analysis), the analysis uncovers the specific dilemmas of developmental elites as they struggle to mobilize investment and labour into economic development templates that are more bespoke than conventionally assumed. Indeed, to my mind the most original part of the book is the one showing how the socialist developmental alliance of company managers and bureaucrats attracted and disciplined a booming industrial working-class population by providing it with vast housing estates and attending service facilities while effectively keeping workers' quarters separated from the centrally located boroughs of the elite, intelligentsia and, most interestingly, the

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predominantly Hungarian background population that had dominated Cluj before the war. I wish that this part of the book been bolstered and provided with more empirical detail as it captures some of the most intriguing internal developments of socialism at a manageable level of analysis.

The ways in which international economic crises, domestic regime type, class and ethnic politics mix in often puzzling ways are captured with a fresh eye. However, in capturing some of these paradoxical outcomes, Petrovici is careful to de-exoticize them and in fact seems keen to run strafing rounds on scholarship that had pushed rather too hard for conceptual iron walls separating the socialist and capitalist city. Having spent some time studying the macro-level dynamics of Romanian socialism, I read many of the pages of this (mostly) city-level analysis with great curiosity and pleasure, as they put a more detailed, if not necessarily grassroots set of lenses of what was actually going on at a more human scale.

There are several areas where one may feel the urge to quibble with the book. First, like all path breaking interdisciplinary books, *Zona urbană* often falls into the trap of using its findings to challenge too many established schools of thought, from underurbanization theory to performativity of knowledge discourses while responding too easily to the temptation to generalize from the regional to the national level of analysis. This can be distracting and sends the reader not only into several theoretical rabbit holes but also into a space where it is hard to assess how convincing the rebuttals are for theories developed in very different fields. A clearer sense of theoretical priorities, better circumscribed findings and more generous interdisciplinary glue would have been handy. Second, while I find commendable the desire to provide a detailed literature review and conceptual translation of the political economy of socialist industrialization and urbanization in the language of a country in which political economy does not really exist as a subfield, this endeavour takes rather too much space (almost 40 percent of the book is taken up by this) and leaves the entire excursus skewed towards the theory side. Sure, the conceptual repertoire of Romanian language sources discussing these issues in ways that are intelligible to international scholars is quite poor and Petrovici's book is a welcome jolt into the right direction. Yet one often gets the sense that many of the terms are explained but not really given enough empirical flesh. Third, as a political economist of macroprocesses I found some of the book's macro findings to be quite unsurprising. For example, it should sound familiar to many in my tribe that infrastructure, industrial equipment and housing were leveraged as the fundamentals of a complex economy via various demand multiplier effects. It is truly useful to see how this mechanism functioned and then broke down by the 1970s, but it is truly not new music in the conventional literature.

Similarly, a whole raft of literature already demonstrated the reasons behind the increasing emphasis on exports after the 1970s in places like Poland, Hungary or Yugoslavia. The fact that this also happened in Romania during the same period is already discussed in the literature and we certainly need more work on the internal dynamics and external implications of the shift, but this book does not really advance the state of knowledge much on this front. Finally, a quick note on methodology: it would have helped to have an appendix providing more detail on the use of archival evidence, the administration of the interviews and the ways in which interview transcripts were used etc. Also, while I found many of the quotes well-chosen, I was left wondering why interview evidence was not used more frequently (e.g. via short paraphrases and quotes shorter than a full paragraph), leaving the impression that some claims were not sufficiently substantiated empirically.

If there is any credibility to the claim that the legacies of central planning weigh heavily on the political economy of today's capitalist development, then Norbert Petrovici opened a new window to assessing its implications.





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### CONTENTS

MARIAN VIOREL ANĂSTĂSOAIE, LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ, IULIU RAȚIU, <i>Guest Editors' Foreword: Fieldwork in Socialist Romania: The UMass Romanian Research Group</i> .....	7
STEVEN SAMPSON, <i>How I Became a 'Romania Expert'</i> .....	13
DAVID A. KIDECKEL, <i>'Did You Arrive by Train or by Ship?': Transportation as Politics and Metaphor in Fieldwork in Socialist Romania</i> .....	29
SAM BECK, <i>Reflections on Research in Romania</i> .....	49
STEVEN G. RANDALL, <i>Socialist Romania and the Futility of Cold War Analysis</i> .....	71
MARIAN VIOREL ANĂSTĂSOAIE, <i>Translating John V. Murra's 'The Economic Organization of the Inca State' Into Romanian as 'Obra de Amor'</i> .....	93
LÁSZLÓ FOSZTÓ, <i>Was there a 'Gypsy Problem' in Socialist Romania? From Suppressing 'Nationalism' to Recognition of a National Minority</i> ....	117
<b>Romanian Sociology Today</b> .....	141
IONUȚ FÖLDES, VERONICA SAVU, <i>Family Practices Across Generations and National Borders</i> .....	143
<b>Critical Review</b> .....	171
<b>Book Review: Zona urbană. O economie politică a socialismului românesc (Urban Zone. A Political Economy of Romanian Socialism)</b> by Norbert Petrovici (CORNEL BAN) .....	173
<b>The Authors of this Issue</b> .....	177



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