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DEMOGRAPHY AND POPULATION GROWTH IN 1970's ROMANIA: AN OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES PUBLISHED IN 'VIITORUL SOCIAL' JOURNAL

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ABSTRACT. This paper looks at how demographic knowledge was articulated in the 1970s in Romania in a context shaped by both a restrictive natalist agenda and the reestablishment of institutional affiliations with western academia. An account is given of the specific institutional affiliations that coordinated and made knowledge transfers possible between French and Romanian agencies. The text then focuses on the specific vocabulary and reasoning mechanisms employed in a series of texts published throughout the 1970s in the sociological journal *Viitorul Social*, a monthly magazine of socialist doctrine, culture and politics. The aim is to start a discussion about the possibility that the re-establishment of institutional connections with French demographic trends in the early '70s lent Romanian demographers a type of conservative scientific reasoning and vocabulary that was attuned to the natalist politics of the time. In turn, this authorised a highly politicised portrayal of working-class women as culpable for the diminishing birth-rates in Romania. The text ends by suggesting other research paths that might help situate demographic knowledge production and its ties with reproduction politics.

Key words: demography; knowledge production in state socialism; French demography; politics of reproduction; population planning;

Introduction

This paper attempts to give an account of the emergence of Demography as a discipline in the context of the restrictive natalist policies articulated by the Romanian Government during the 1960s and 70s. I look at series of texts

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published throughout the 1970's in the sociological journal *Viitorul Social*, a monthly magazine of socialist doctrine, culture and politics. The texts are scientific attempts at understanding and articulating ways in which to transform national demographic trends. My aim is to start a discussion about some of the implications that this type of normative knowledge might have had on the formulation of increasingly repressive policies aimed at controlling working class women during the 1970s. I bring into discussion the possibility that the re-establishment of institutional connections with French demographic trends in the early '70s lent Romanian demographers a type of conservative scientific reasoning and vocabulary that was attuned to the natalist politics of the time. This authorised both a highly politicised portrayal of working-class women as culpable for the diminishing birth-rates in Romania (Mesaros, 1973), and the articulation of a "solution" to this in terms of a de-politicised, technocratic jargon of "optimisation between the social and demographic functions of women" (Trebici, 1974) (where "social function" means participation in the labour force, while "demographic" refers to the biological reproduction of the working class).

In the end I propose that further research might analyse this type of discursive production in the context fostered by Romania hosting the 1974 UN World Population Conference (which aimed at discussing strategies for global population control), and in terms of Romania's intensified industrial development as a response to the 1970s oil crisis (in which the need for women as labour force to drive industrial expansion and the lack of investment in publicly subsidized social services clashed with the regime's imperative for population growth).

Notes on addressing different regimes of knowledge production

Viitorul Social (The Social Future) was a journal edited by the Academy of Social and Political Sciences of the Romanian Socialist Republic between 1972 and 1989. It was an instrument for publishing research conducted in the social sciences. The Academy of Social and Political Sciences was responsible for organizing, planning, and directing the activity of research centres and laboratories, social science departments in higher education institutions, museums and other subordinated units in the field. There is a keynote text in the first published volume of *Viitorul Social* which introduces socialist sociology as an epistemological project that is fundamentally different from the social constructivist agenda set by its anglo-saxon counterpart after the Second World War. While US social science emphasises the existence of a social realm that is the passive object of study for social scientists (who should strive to neutrally understand the world), Marxist sociology proposes an epistemology of knowledge

rooted in transformative drives, where, instead of acting as observers, sociologists are actively engaged in social transformation. Titled "Not therapy, but the structuring and restructuring of reality", the article reads as a mission statement: the social sciences have a transformative function in the socialist world-making project. The word „therapy” or „therapeutic” is used to mock western sociology as a type of intervention or practice that limits itself to observation and amelioration:

"This message of "social therapy" is made visible through a gallery of well-known attitudes: (...) from the decline of the capacities of sociology (dressed in the toga of "enlightened scepticism") to intervene in order to radically transform the system under investigation, to the repeated enunciation of attempts to elaborate "macro-social models" through which the whole of social development could be contained and... ("possibly") controlled." (Dumitru, 1972)

To make things more complicated, it doesn't just boil down to a question of different epistemologies (different premises about what constitutes scientific knowledge and about what methods can be used to obtain it) but in a sense it's also about different premises as to what constitutes social reality. It is startling (or just weird) for anyone with even vague liberal sensibilities to find that there are scarcely any references to "individuals" in these texts, that the only element endowed with a faint sense of agency is the heteronormative nuclear family (via its "behaviour" in relation to reproduction), that there is no vocabulary or attempt to describe a non-reproductive sexuality (in the entire Viitorul Social digital library, there is one article titled "Some considerations upon the sociology of sexuality and demographic behaviour"; it renders sexuality unmoored from reproduction as deviant), or that a specific category of women make up the "the biological contingent of the nation". Given that I am not adequately trained in the language of this discipline, and because I am biased towards a constructivist perspective as an anthropologist, I approached the reading of these texts with some caution. I also imagined it would be useful to trace the life of some concepts that operated inside the discipline of demography in different epistemological realms.

A point in case is the difference in how "demographic behaviour" is defined. Theories of demographic behaviour are used internationally in demographic studies. In the US, since the 1960s, under the influence of neoclassical economics, demographic choices were viewed as resulting from rational, individual assessments of costs and benefits (Burch, 2001). In the Romanian "Small Encyclopedia of Demography" ("Mică Enciclopedie de Demografie") edited in 1975, demographic behaviour is defined as *"a married couple's attitude towards reproduction, towards the desired dimension of their families. It can be natural or primitive and conscious or Malthusian."* It is interesting that in a 1988 edition of "What is Demography?" ("Ce este demografia?") - a guide for making the main

themes of demography available to the general public- Trebici notes that “reproductive or procreative behaviour” is improperly termed “demographic behaviour” (Trebici, 1982:80).

“Natural” or “primitive” demographic behaviour is conceptualised as “the reproduction of the population exclusively according to its biological capacity” (Mesaros, 1972). This entails the belief that some societies exist in a “state of nature”, where it is “biology” and not “will” or “conscious decision” that drives reproduction. “Malthusian”, on the other hand, is used in reference to the “family planning” approach that developed in the U.S. during the 1960s as a response to an emerging panic at the prospects of global overpopulation and resource depletion. A different entry in the Encyclopedia classifies couples in themselves as “malthusian” (planners) or “nonmalthusians” (non-planners). One important semantic implication of this taxonomy is that the only plausible reason for not having children is the conscious awareness of a disastrous future.

320. Perechi malthusiene (engl. *planners*, fr. *couples malthusiens*, rus. *suprujeskie pari reguliruiuscie detorojdenie*, span. *parejas neomalthusianas*, germ. *geburtenregelende Paare*, ital. *coppie che regolano* sau *coppie malthusiane*, interl. *copulas planante*), cupluri care determină în mod conștient propria reproducție, folosind mijloacele de planificare a familiei.

321. Perechi nemalthusiene (engl. *non-planners*, fr. *couples non-malthusiens*, rus. *suprujeskie pari ne reguliruiuscie detorojdenie*, span. *parejas no neomalthusianas*, germ. *fortpflanzungsnatürliche Paare*, ital. *coppie che non regolano* și *coppie non malthusiane*, interl. *copulas non-planante*), cupluri a căror reproducție este determinată în exclusivitate de fertilitatea naturală; cupluri care nu folosesc mijloacele planificării familiei.

Data source: Mică Enciclopedie de Demografie, ed. Vladimir Trebici

Viitorul Social and French Demography

Between 1972 and 1980, in lieu of a journal dedicated exclusively to demography, Viitorul Social published more than 30 demographic studies (Trebici, 1981). The centrality of the production of demographic knowledge throughout this period is also linked with Romania hosting the UN World Population Conference in 1974, and with the establishment in Bucharest, in 1974, of the United Nations Center for Demography (CEDOR). In an article published in the French journal “Population” in 1995, Vladimir Trebici, a prominent voice in the field and a recurrent author in Viitorul Social, offers a short overview of French-Romanian collaboration in the field of Demography.

He characterizes Romanian Demography as having so far experienced three "captivities": the French and English captivities in the interwar period, which he renders as "advantageous for the development of demography", whereas the latest soviet captivity is described as unequivocally detrimental. During the 1960s, however, this latter period of "capture" seems to have accommodated a set of international institutional collaborations, among which the links forged with French institutions are accounted for in the rest of the text. In 1966, following "a relative liberalization of the situation in Romania", the first visit of Romanian statisticians to the French Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) took place. For the first time since the war, academic exchanges were enabled between the two countries. Following their training in France, some Romanian statisticians became UN experts in French-speaking former colonies.

According to Trebici, having been founded in 1972, *Viitorul Social* played an important role in popularising notes, interviews, chronicles and reports on French demography. The French journal "Population" was recurrently referenced in *Viitorul Social*, and French volumes were often commented upon for Romanian readership. In 1974, the Romanian edition of Roland Pressat's "L'analyse démographique. Concepts, méthodes, résultats" ("Demographic analysis. Concepts, methods, results") was translated into Romanian by Vladimir Trebici and Vasile Ghețău. The book was the second edition of a teaching manual commissioned by the French INED (Institute for Demographic Studies), widely translated and used in the training of generations of demographers world-wide. Along with other French publications, it was used in the Population Statistics department of the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. Trebici authored the "Multilingual Demographic Dictionary", which was published by the Journal of Statistics (*Revista de Statistică*) between 1971 and 1973. The dictionary presented Romanian demographic terminology with its French and English equivalents. In 1975, Trebici published the "Small Encyclopedia of Demography", in which fundamental demographic concepts were presented in eight different languages.

In another retrospective essay published in 1999, Trebici reflects on the links between demography and the demographic policies implemented in Romania until 1989. Decrees 770/1966 (restricting access to abortion) and 779/1966 (restricting the possibility of divorce) were the first and most conspicuous legal measures that launched Romania's restrictive natalist politics. While an immediate spike in birth-rates was visible in the first two years after the decree, by 1968 fertility rates started to drop. In 1974 the Romanian government revised the instructions for implementing Decree 770/1966, which spurred the emergence of an expanding web of bureaucratic and legal surveillance structures that slowly took control over the entire medical body during the following decade. The peak of the repressive force of this apparatus was felt during the 1980s, when the Ministry of Health was placed in subordination to a

structure called the Superior Sanitary Commission. This structure was powerful enough to implement the notoriously violent forms of control over employed women's bodies via a network of medical units operating at factory level in order to monitor pregnancies and criminally prosecute illegal abortions. (Kligman, 2000)

Trebici comments that the measures introduced in 1966 had not been backed by demographic or other population studies. Under these circumstances, the National Demographic Commission (Comisia Națională de Demografie) was established in 1971, which Trebici argues was intended purely as an instrument for implementing party directives:

Before the Commission was set up, a number of people were consulted on the role and tasks of the future establishment. I was also asked. My opinion was that such an institution was necessary, that it should be scientific. It was proposed that it should operate alongside the Central Statistical Directorate – similar to the experience of other socialist countries - or alongside the Centre for Sociological Research. The Party thought otherwise and decided accordingly: the Commission was set up as a political body par excellence. Its 100 members - ministers, heads of departments, representatives of trade unions and other public organisations - included some demographic specialists. The Commission, which functioned until December 1989, proved totally ineffective. There was also a small secretariat of expert-demographers, most of whom were mere party officials, impostors. (Trebici, 1999)

Trebici also interestingly comments on how the pro-natalist political agenda was present not only in political discourse and official propaganda, but that it had thoroughly permeated demographic education at the university level. He contends that some of the theses and theories that were advanced by demographers in line with the population growth agenda were “sometimes even sincerely” met with support from the scientific community:

“Slogans such as ‘the golden future’, ‘the youth - the golden generation’, ‘the patriotic duty to bring a large number of children into the world’, ‘the family - the basic nucleus of society’ were even appropriated by scientists. That is why estimates were made for the “optimal population”, the “optimal population growth rate”, and normative population projections were attempted. And as state child allowances, family allowances, maternity leave and other incentives were increasingly discussed, and articles were being published proposing various ways of dividing up this budgetary expenditure, the effectiveness of these measures seemed to be guaranteed. The family with 3-4 children was not only being glorified, it was also being proven to be possible.” (Trebici, 1999)

Demography and natalist imperatives

„If the desired demographic results were to follow automatically from economic and social development, there would be no need for state coordination or intervention in this area. It is therefore easy to understand why the second approach, or concept, whereby population policy involves specific, conscious measures or actions, with specific demographic goals, is more in line with the requirements of reality.” (Mesaros, 1974)

In a text published in *Viitorul Social* in 1972, “The social-economic base of demographic behaviour and family planning”, Emil Mesaros argues that different types of demographic behaviour correspond to different stages of economic and social development of a society. According to this view, the population dynamics in Romania currently fit the model of “transition or negative demographics”: a phase characterised by the “voluntary limitation by the family of the number of offspring, which occurs simultaneously with increased standards of living and educational levels” (Mesaros, 1972).

Table 1.

The repartition of women aged 15 and above according to their number of children and level of education/professional qualification

Repartizarea femeilor în vîrstă de 15 ani și peste după numărul copiilor născuți vii și nivelul de instruire
— în % —

Nivelul de instruire	Total femei	Copii născuți vii				4 și mai mulți copii
		Fără copii	1 copil	2 copii	3 copii	
Superior	100,0	49,6	34,0	13,8	1,8	0,8
Mediu	100,0	48,2	30,3	15,6	3,6	2,3
Elementar și alte situații	100,0	25,1	19,8	19,9	11,3	23,9

Sursa: Calculat după *Recensămîntul populației și locuințelor din 15 martie 1966. Rezultate generale*, vol. I, *Populație*, București, Direcția Centrală de Statistică, 1968, p. 53.

Data source: *Viitorul Social*, no. 4, 1972

The main argument of the text is built around the possibility of overcoming this transitory phase, leading to a stage characterised by “optimal demographic behaviour”:

To this end, we start from the premise that in order to transform negative demographic behaviour into another type of behaviour, i.e. in order to achieve this transition, it is not sufficient at a given moment to reach a certain general level of education or living standards of the population. For this to happen, it is necessary for one or more generations to have lived in the relevant conditions of well-being. (Mesaros, 1972)

The text invokes studies of current population dynamics in western industrialised states (notably France, the German Federal Republic, and the UK) to show that advanced stages of industrial development give rise to new population dynamics characterised by high birth-rates among skilled labourers:

„...we believe that the data we have on the demographic behaviour of certain population groups in the US can serve our purpose (similar data on France and the RFG lead to the same conclusions*). We have in mind some research which shows that the inverse relationship mentioned above is no longer valid and that, on the contrary, **the higher the income and education level, the higher the number of children in the family is, as a rule.** The available data do not allow us to see the length of the transition phase and precisely when this change in behaviour occurred, which is why we limit ourselves to commenting only on these results, which refer to the period of the last 10-12 years (see Table 2):”

Table 2.

The average no. of children born to a woman between 35-44 years old, according to annual income and professional category in the USA in 1959

Numărul mediu de copii născuți de o femeie în vîrstă de 35-44 ani
în funcție de venitul anual și de categoria profesională...
(S.U.A., 1959)

Categorია profesională	Venitul anual în dolari S.U.A.	
	7 000-9 999	2 000-3 999
<i>Specialiști</i>	—	—
Fără studii medii		
Cu studii medii	2,23	1,63
Cu studii superioare	2,24	1,92
<i>Cadre de conducere</i>		
Fără studii medii	2,07	2,12
Cu studii medii	2,23	1,73
Cu studii superioare	2,27	1,96
<i>Mesteșugari</i>		
Fără studii medii	2,22	2,06
Cu studii medii	2,32	1,84
Cu studii superioare	2,30	1,84
<i>Muncitori</i>		
Fără studii medii	2,55	2,31
Cu studii medii	2,42	2,00
Cu studii superioare	—	—

Sursa : Julian L. Simon, *The Effect of Income on Fertility*,
în : „Population Studies”, vol. XXIII, nr. 3, nov.
1969, p. 337.

Data source: Viitorul Social, no. 4, 1972

Although seemingly aware of the limits of what can be inferred from this data, Mesaros elaborates further on. Having proposed this model, and given the industrial makeup of the Romanian economy, it follows that Romania too was bound to, at some point, witness shifts in the demographic behaviour of its skilled industrial population. Because these changes don't seem to happen "naturally", the conclusion follows that state intervention is necessary to „optimise" demographic behaviour for it to fit the actual stage of economic development:

„What is particularly important, and what this data attests to, is that the phenomenon of under-reproduction does not exist in any of the high-income occupational categories surveyed. This suggests that such a transition could become generalised in other countries in the future, a process which could be encouraged by demographic policy measures appropriate to the conditions and stages of development in question. (Mesaros, 1972)

(...)

Knowing the recent evolution and the current trends of the main demographic phenomena in Romania, one could consider that the priority objective of the demographic policy on the way to optimization is to maintain the net reproduction index at the supra-unit level and after that to stabilize it around 1.10 - 1.17. This would ensure not only a larger reproduction rate but also a rational natural increase in the population." (Mesaros 1972)

In a different article in 1973 ("Demographic policy - Concepts - Content - Objectives") Mesaros restates this argument.

"...it should be noted that in Romania the development of the economy in recent decades has provided a solid material basis for the reproduction of the population (...). If we add to this the forecast that in 1990 the national income per inhabitant will reach about 3 000 dollars, compared to 600 in 1970, the conditions or climate in which the demographic behaviour of the population will be formed are fully outlined. **There are therefore objective conditions for taking political measures to influence demographic behaviour on this sound economic basis. Among these, the most specific are those aimed at ensuring that all social and professional categories participate in the reproduction of the population.**" (Mesaros, 1973)

An abstract version of the economy ("a solid material basis") serves as grounds to justify interventions aimed at population growth. The quip about ensuring that "all social and professional categories participate in reproduction"

plays up the concern that birth-rates were lowest among women in skilled professions. Later in the article, the eugenic undertones of these arguments are expressed in the specific desire for the reproduction of “women with higher education”:

„We stress once again that we are not addressing here the question of the appropriateness, or effectiveness, of various population policy measures. We are merely listing the main measures in this category that have been known and practised in the demographic policy of our country, and of other countries, both in the past and at present (...) Of course, each of these measures influences demographic behaviour to some extent, with both positive and negative aspects. **For example: banning abortion may lead to a sharp increase in the birth rate, but it does not fully solve the problem of women with higher education participating in reproduction**” (Mesaros, 1973)

It is difficult, in hindsight, not to imagine links between these explicit concerns about the low birth-rates among working women and the repressive methods later designed as a solution to this perceived problem (the expansion of a network of medicalised control units implemented at factory level during the '80s). The only plausible reason why there don't seem to be any attempts at researching the underlying causes for these demographic trends is that these causes are already known: industrial investments at the expense of social investments are bound to hinder a pro-natalist agenda. Instead of pointing out to these contradictions, demographers insist that the economic base in Romania can accommodate population growth, so that the only thing left to do is to compel women „of all social and professional categories” into childbearing.

At one point in the 1973 article, while contemplating educational measures aimed at the formation of a positive demographic behaviour, Mesaros proposes that “the question of perpetuation and reproduction of the nation should be put on the same level as the necessity of production of material goods for survival”. Childlessness is then framed as “an evasion of a patriotic obligation”, which “leads to an increase in social inequality, since another family will have to have more children (to compensate for the evasion)”.

These themes reappear in a paper written by Trebici and published in *Viitorul Social* in 1974. In “Fertility and the social status of women”, the inverse correlation between birth-rates and the status of women (where status is indicated by access to education and wage-labour) is posed as an international concern:

„More and more international comparative studies are being carried out on this topic, allowing important theoretical conclusions to be drawn. In this respect, we mention the comprehensive study by the Working

Group on „Legislation Directly or Indirectly Affecting Fertility in European Countries”, organised by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) and the Vienna Centre for Coordination and Documentation in the Social Sciences in which a chapter is devoted to the status of women in society.” (Trebici, 1974)

The paper opens with the acknowledgement that the decline of birth rates could simply be understood as a distinct phase of demographic transition. However, this time Trebici poses the decline of birth-rates among women with higher levels of formal education or who are skilled labourers as THE central problem to the project of demographic planning:

This creates a particular situation which must be taken into account when formulating social and population policy, namely that modern society cannot deny the affirmation of women's full economic, social and political equality with men and, on the other hand, cannot fail to be aware of the negative impact that changes in women's social status have on women's function as wives and mothers. It is therefore noted that a number of measures taken to achieve the social, economic and political status of women may conflict with demographic policy measures if they are pro-natalist in nature, in the sense that they diminish their effect.”

...

„How can women's two functions be harmonised: as a wife and mother and as a participant in social, economic and political life, on equal terms with men... in a way, the problem is to "optimise" the relationship between the demographic role -to use a more plastic term- and the social role of women.” (Terica, 1974)

Conclusions and further questions

This text set out to explore how demography operated as a mode of knowledge production in the context of Romania's intensified natalist agenda. The intensification of repressive pro-natalist policies in Romania is anticipated in texts published in *Viitorul Social* throughout the 1970s. In part, these texts reveal a worldview in which the achievement of economic conditions to sustain population growth were held as a fact, so that the only variable left in an equation that had population growth as its outcome was the “demographic behaviour” of families. Instead of socialising domestic labour and abolishing patriarchal relations, the socialist development project wrenched women in between the requirement to continue to fully participate in industrial labour with little or no access to socialised domestic work and a demographic politics in which

population growth was discursively constructed as the main responsibility of working women. What followed was the intensification of a coercive and lethal politics of reproduction that extracted both industrial and reproductive labour from women.

To further this research, I believe it would be equally important to situate the politics for population growth in Romania in relation to the government's continuous drive for industrial expansion. Throughout the 1960s, while most other EE socialist regimes began experimenting with economic reforms and decentralisation, Romania reinforced its model of centrally planned industrialization. The decision to protect and expand the industrial program led to a mix of import substitution policies and export-oriented production (Ban, 2014:55). These labour-intensive strategies would lead to tensions between politics aimed at integrating women into the labour force and those that placed birth-rate growth at the centre of population policies (Jinga, 2015; Kligman, 2000). This tension -unacknowledged as such- is at the core of many of the papers in *Viitorul Social*. It is also at the core of what Kligman famously dubbed a "politics of duplicity": the celebration of industrial employment of women as emancipatory, while later using the same industrial infrastructure for the purpose of actively policing women's bodies.

Demographers did point out that, as part of the socialist project, women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression was to be achieved through their economic independence via direct participation in productive work. In this respect, given its recent history of rapid industrialisation, Romania did register a growing percentage of women joining the labour-force. While texts such as Tamara Dobrin's article in *Viitorul Social* "Some features of the integration of women in contemporary social-economic life" synthesize some emancipatory aspects of this integration, not much is discussed in terms of its shortcomings. Some authors do acknowledge that the large-scale employment of women would only be possible if accompanied by state-led socialisation of child-rearing and domestic work (Spornic, 1975). Although state socialist systems were more egalitarian and accommodated a larger volume of reproductive needs in comparison with non-socialist semi-peripheries (Gagy 2021:138), the real amount of investment needed to cover the social costs of industrialisation was never met. Despite a lack of investment in infrastructure for socialising domestic labour, after 1966 nurseries started to be touted as the appropriate substitute for extended maternity leave. Until then, policies had facilitated women's exit from production during the early stages of children's lives. For example, up until then mothers had had the legal right to work half-time shifts until their children were 6 years old, without losing a number of rights and benefits linked to continuity of employment (Spornic, 1975; Doboş et al, 2011).

Further research could also try to connect the internal dynamics of Romanian demographic politics with the international debates surrounding population growth at the time. Between 1962 and 1972, based on a US agenda that pushed for “family planning” as a strategy for addressing the perceived threat of overpopulation, some national governments began implementing policies aimed at controlling birth-rates. This culminated in the 1972 resolution of the Economic and Social Council of the UN that formulated a draft “World Population Plan of Action” which urged member states to “cooperate in exploring the possibility of setting targets for reducing population growth rates in countries that considered their rates too high” (Finkle, Crane, 1975; Stanciu, 2014). The consolidation of this draft plan and its implementation strategies was supposed to set the theme for discussions at the Third World Population Conference, held in Bucharest in 1974. However, a strong push to amend the Draft Plan came from several Non-Aligned nations, who brought the demand for a new economic order at the centre of the discussions. General support was gained for amending the Plan and de-emphasizing its population control objectives. Romania was among the socialist countries that supported the Non-Aligned governments’ proposal of a New International Economic Order and stressed the importance of respecting state-sovereignty in terms of internal demographic policies. This position is anticipated in a text V. Trebici published in *Viitorul Social* in 1973 as an overview of academic and institutional proceedings for the 1974 World Population Conference. Titled “Demography and International Cooperation”, the article frames the UN population control agenda as a collection of ideas that may be appropriate in some contexts. The conclusions of the article reinstate that demographic politics are state politics and therefore should not be subject to external political interventions.

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BALANCING EFFICIENCY AND PERSONAL TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS AFTER TELECOMMUTING

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ABSTRACT. The exploitation of work and household responsibilities among women and men remains a pressing issue with significant impacts on employee productivity and satisfaction. This study sheds light on the patterns of exploitation and their consequences, with a specific focus on the experiences of HR professionals. The research emphasizes the prevalence of the “flexibility stigma” in society, which views flexible work arrangements, including teleworking, as less committed, motivated, and productive compared to traditional 9-5 work hours. The study also highlights the tendency for workers to extend their work hours when boundaries between work and personal life become blurred. In particular, the study highlights the increased likelihood of working overtime as a result of teleworking, which can further contribute to the exploitation of work and household responsibilities. For HR professionals, it is essential to understand these challenges and develop strategies that support employees’ work-life balance and well-being. The study concludes by calling for a comprehensive approach that considers the institutional and cultural contexts in which employees operate and that prioritizes their well-being and productivity.

Keywords: human resources, telecommuting, “flexibility stigma”, work-life balance, productivity

Introduction

The global outbreak of the SARS-COV-2 virus transformed flexible work into a widespread and recurrent practice. The experience of preventing transmission with the mentioned virus, through the implementation of social

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distancing measures, has provided us with some evidence in this regard. This global phenomenon has accelerated the widespread introduction of work from home and produced paradigm shifts not only in perceptions and practices regarding the conceptualization of work, but also in the results of flexible work in relation to the employees' personal lives.

The concentration of new meanings and ideological values generally accepted around the terms of flexibilization, and digitalization of work is based on a vision that no longer fits into the classic framework of the workplace with strong, regulated temporal and spatial dimensions (Reuschke & Ekinsmyth, 2021). Instead, they favour continuous adaptation, in which the type of organizational control changes from direct to indirect (Watson, 2012).

A clear delimitation between the concept of flexible work and teleworking is essential given the work activity that employees have experienced during the telework obligation period. This work does not aim to present the organizational statuses during the COVID-19 pandemic, but these remain a main reference subject, being a trigger factor of the phenomenon. Therefore, clearly speaking, telework is just a form of flexible work and not a synonym for it.

In this context, the sociological lens of analysis on this phenomenon must consider the organizational, social, economic, and political characteristics in its context of implementation. As Chung (2022) also argues, telework cannot be analysed in a vacuum, it is reshaped according to already existing human and organizational practices. Amplification of the factors of change in established work organization practices have been destabilized within organizations in the context of a global health crisis; especially, the human component, on the one hand related to the physical condition, and on the other hand, to the connectivity and relationship of the employees.

As mediators between the organization and its workforce, Human Resources specialists experience a significant overhaul of their professional duties. They go from having daily, constant contact with employees, constantly contributing to the organizational development process, to a significant decrease in human contact facilitated through video conferencing platforms. The compensation for the lack of interaction in telecommuting. has become a responsibility for these specialists. The central point of the question is focused on identifying the ways, resources, and means by which this compensation takes place. The division of Human Resources practices is fully branching and can represent a predominantly administrative work, but at the same time, it can also be emotionally demanding work that highlights the need for good internal collaboration between processes and employees.

Given these elements, the question I aim to answer through this work is centred on the significance of flexibility in a profession built around constant

contact with employees and how the Human Resources professional is considered in terms of the type of industry in which they work after telecommuting is implemented as an alternative way to perform their work.

Literature review

In the section dedicated to presenting the theoretical perspectives that underpin this research, I position myself firstly to outline in a concise manner the major debates surrounding the legitimacy of the human resources specialist profession, followed by the presentation of the differences between flexible work and remote work.

The work presented positions the human resources specialist as a key player in the organizational building and development process of a company. To contextualize the entire ideological spectrum of providing or not providing professional legitimacy for this type of specialist, it is necessary to mention the most important debates in the field of organizational sociology and the sociology of professions that address this topic.

Global narratives constructed around the legitimacy of the human resources management occupation are presented through two strongly polarized perspectives. While Losey (1999) credits institutional legitimacy to human resources specialists, Hammonds (2005) takes the opposing position and states that the human resources function is a low-prepared, reactive, low-autonomous, cost-reducing administrative function, designed as a tool for management control to encourage productivity and to minimize investments in employees. The normative discursive arguments revolve around a complex set of responsibilities aimed at increasing professional legitimacy and credibility. Ulrich & Brockbank (2005) counterbalance their perspectives on the need to create strategic value within the organization, emphasizing the role of the human resources specialist as a consultant, while authors such as Khochan (2004) or Legge (2005) highlight the role of this profession as a mediator in the internal social environment, balancing the pluralistic and sometimes competing interests of the parties involved in the employment relationship. This examines how human resources professionals (non-traditional occupations if they are incorporated into organizations) seek greater professional legitimacy and how the stakeholders approach these challenges.

Pursuing with this theme of adaptability concerning the constant changes in the job market, in the following paragraphs I will attempt to highlight the intersection and differentiation of the terminology of work flexibility. Kelly et al. (2011) argue that flexible work involves the control exercised by employees over the time or place of work. Building on this idea, according to Chung et al. (2020),

the flexible program allows control over work hours. The employee has the ability to change the timing of their work activities, including the alternating of break hours, start and end of the workday, as well as the number of hours performed in a week. If the employee exceeds the standard work hours allotted for a day, the additional hours can be converted into days off at the employee's request.

The largest difference between flexible work hours and autonomous ones is that in the former there are still some constraints regarding the adherence to basic hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM) and/or the number of hours that employees can work in a day or week (40 hours per week), as opposed to autonomous work hours, where such restrictions may not frequently exist.

In addition, flexible work can also imply that employees have control over the number of hours they work, referring to the reduction of work hours (temporarily) to meet family demands. In this idea, to identify the problematic aspect of this work structure, Chung et al. (2020) also argue that the "freedom" to control when and where to work leads workers to work increased time in the current culture of balancing professional and private life, where additional work beyond contracted hours embodies the "ideal productive worker".

On the other hand, the central element of this research is the diversity in conceptualizing flexible work, with telecommuting becoming a strongly used alternative to express flexibility. According to Eurofund (2020), telecommuting includes all activities carried out by workers who use information and communication technologies (ICT) outside of the employer's premises.

This practice may indeed be presented in a flexible work manner where the employee can arrange their schedule according to their own needs. However, in the opposing sphere, telecommuting does not automatically guarantee flexibility. In professions and roles where contact with people is constant, such as support and assistance roles (call center) or administrative roles (which also include HR specialists according to legislation), a fixed schedule is necessary for people to be able to reach specialists. As I presented in the introductory section, one of the main challenges related to the flexibilization of work and digitalization of the process is the way in which the workspace is conceptualized (Reuschke & Ekinsmyth, 2021). This allows us to deduce that one element may have a versatile characteristic like the location where work is performed and the stronger regulated element of time which remains unchanged for some roles. Alternating professional tasks with family responsibilities is a practice accepted by employers, but not encouraged by the flexibility of working hours or the adoption of professional-personal life balance policies. Companies accept tacitly an overcompensation from employees (often manifested through overtime) as a response to the possibility of fulfilling their household and/or parental responsibilities.

Methodology

In the presentation of the research methodology, I attempted to argue the relevance of studying this type of dual role employee in the company by seeking to expand the sociological lens into different work domains that are present in the city of Cluj-Napoca: technology industry and the service sector. The lines of analysis in this work were traced with the help of qualitative research. Regarding data gathering, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR specialists in Cluj-Napoca during February to March 17, 2022, through videoconference platforms that facilitated a deep dive into the details and events proposed for analysis.

The interview guide outlines a comprehensive manner the relevant perspective on the subject of interest and especially access to the opinion of a category of respondents who do not express their opinion publicly or officially. The research questions were structured based on the works of Olson (1983, 1989) and Chung et al. (2020); Chung (2022) in four diverse categories: attitudes towards work, performance, and job surveillance, and the role of information technology in the work process. The dimensions structured in the guide focus on: (1) surveying the impact of working from home on individual performance and organizational monitoring methods, with productivity levels generated by work throughout the day, being the determining factors, which require an amount of concentration, attention, and fluidity in the context of environmental distractions (children, domestic emergencies); (2) the elements that restructure the attitude towards the work process, the dimension drawing a point of analysis on the confirmation or denial of the causal effect of the change in attitude related to one's own profession in the context of a change in work mode (office - home); (3) organizational commitment as an indicator of involvement, dedication, and loyalty to the reference company analysed using absenteeism rates that can draw negative implications for the cohesiveness of a group in a long-term telework system; (4) the role conflict of the individual who duplicates in the teleworking context needs to manage both work processes and domestic ones.

The research field was selected based on the rapidly increasing percentage of the relocation of knowledge-intensive services in the city of Cluj-Napoca, particularly in information technology and business model processing in Central and Eastern Europe (Hoyler & Harrison, 2017). This research assumes that Human Resources specialists serve as the bridge facilitating the previously mentioned service relocation process through their role in identifying and managing potential employees that can contribute to the desired actions of companies. Human

Resources specialists have experienced and continue to experience changes generated by the introduction of remote work through fluctuations in the required number of employees (a drastic decrease in the first stage of the pandemic period of March to May 2021 and a qualitative and quantitative acceleration of the need for personnel starting in June 2021).

The subject sampling was designed to cover a wide range of functions and activities incorporated in the Human Resources departments such as technical and non-technical recruitment specialists, organizational development program specialists and Human Resources department managers, with the addition of the type of industry these specialists are active in. The research incorporates specialists in the manufacturing and technological industries as well as in the service sector to thoroughly identify similarities and differences in the profession of a Human Resources specialist in reference to different organizational contexts and functions.

The target group's segmentation elements were focused on (a) position and (b) quantitative experience (seniority level) in the labour market of the interviewee. Thus, the interviews targeted Human Resources specialists with a professional classification regulated by the Romanian Occupation Code (COR) through COR codes (242314) - Human Resources Specialist and COR (121207) - Human Resources Manager, with a minimum university level of education, with a bachelor's degree, who hold a middle or higher decision-making position in the organization of human resources in a company that carries out an activity segment in Cluj-Napoca or its metropolitan area for at least 5 years. The temporal delimitation of specific work experience is justified by the need to provide a prior perspective on teleworking processes (2019) and subsequent ones (2022).

I. Defining the work expectations of specialists shaped by their field of activity

The diversity of specialists' fields of activity represents the element that offers the possibility of a multi-perspective analysis. Through an inductive approach, following the analysis carried out, unanimously, specialists appreciate the adaptation to telework, but support the hybrid work model as the option that most effectively potentiates their personal development needs and the qualitative aspect of the work performed. Otherwise, I will illustrate the firm positioning of the interviewees who work in the production field, on the work schedule, but at the same time I will also add the vision of employees who mainly serve externalized services functions:

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“Somewhat, I saw that many people came in this period, in this market with HR, there is a lot of writing, and many are coming to me, and all put full remote in the ad, and then it’s over. Somewhat... I couldn’t do it, no, I wouldn’t feel comfortable, I wouldn’t feel good, and if it’s full remote, no, I don’t know, I wouldn’t like it. I would like it, maybe, to be a hybrid where I go 3 days, 4, and one I stay at home. But not one to go and the rest to stay at home because I’m not that kind of person. That’s what I would need first, to be active, to be able to go.” (R.R., Recruitment Specialist)

“[...] if I wanted to work remotely, I could work, I had this option, we had this option since the pandemic, no. We are a production factory, in production factories it is quite complicated to work remotely, because production works and you can’t solve an online problem that arises on the production line from home. And then, not even during the pandemic... there were those 3 or 4 months when we were in lockdown, we didn’t close the factory, our factory was never completely closed for a second.” (I.R., Human Resources Manager)

The nature and practices of the field in which professionals carry out their work shape their perspectives on working methods. The functions for which the Human Resources sector is responsible in the production field are primarily administrative in nature, with the greatest concentration of positions being found in the recruitment department and those related to salary administration. Specialists’ preferences are unconsciously shaped by the needs of employees. The worker profile in the factory, as presented by Bratton et al. (2012), is that of a person who performs manual work using the skills learned in elementary education. The innovative factor in the concrete situation analysed is introduced by the technology and automation-based process that nuances the paradigm on manual, physical work, but cannot manage the unexpected demands or elements that arise within and outside of work processes.

In the opposing sphere, that of the service sector, especially the Technology and Communication infrastructure, specialists’ needs are shaped according to the trend promoted inside the company and the generally accepted work practices within the sector. While there is a clear shift among specialists who work with blue-collar employees to return to the office almost entirely, recruiters in the technological sphere emphasize the effectiveness of teleworking. Furthermore, they position it as a decisive factor in choosing a company in professional reference systems.

“To be honest, I don’t know if I could physically go back to the office. If I had the option to stay like this, I would stay like this forever. If I didn’t have the option, to stay in this hybrid work mode, I would probably look for companies that offer that.” (C. O., Senior IT Recruitment Partner)

“[...] I did not want to move to Bucharest. The agreement is that when we return to the office, I will go once every three months, a few days, maybe 2-3, maximum a week, which is quite little, I cannot call it hybrid. If I were employed in Cluj, at any other company, I think I would go for hybrid. But not necessarily 3 days at home, 2 days at the office... rather like before, because before in the work-from-home area, 5 days a month.” (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

II. The viability of telecommuting from the specialist’s perspective over the long-term

At this stage of the restructuring of professional standards, a clear delimitation of transformed preferences in relation to work is seen, professionals are outlining an emerging path that positions itself between Hammonds (2005) theory of concretizing purely reactive functions. At the same time, they are starting to acknowledge and explicitly express their role as mediators and consultants that balance interpersonal relationships as presented by Legge (2005) in his work. Similarly, there is a consensus on the hybrid model and this identical positioning is seen when questioning the feasibility of adapting Human Resource processes entirely in the online environment.

“From my point of view, as long as you do what you do well, you can do it online. And you adapt very well, absolutely everything is: speech, including light and whatever else you need for video, you can maintain them online, but you need to compensate very much and then it takes more effort. I am aware of that in myself [...] I heard a very cool phrase last week that stayed in my mind... <<In online meetings, everything is heard louder, and gestures are heard louder and voice and tone, everything is on a larger scale>>. So, I think HR can remain online, but it requires much more effort. At the same time, HR must be such that it becomes a partner. HR is still seen as a support function that only needs to calculate some salaries and make some analyses, do some magic to give some budget to people, but HR is much more than that.” (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

The action that disrupts the favourable perspective of telecommuting is social interaction. Presented as one of the most disadvantageous aspects of working from home, specialists comprehensively outline the deficiencies generated by the nature of the job. They accept the possibility of work practices in the online environment but question the fragility or even the inability to maintain a human connection within organizational structures.

“I believe that everything can happen very well online, but at the same time I believe that physical interaction helps. Seeing a person face-to-face helps. [...] At the office you are somehow closer to the person, you see their emotions differently, the candidate is in front of you. There are emotions, you can be a bit more natural... you see from the chest up and that’s it.” (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

“Yes, it can, it can be 100% remote. It can, the pandemic has proven it. We had, for example, colleagues who were in the office, but there were only one or two of them and nothing happened because no one was there, that is, everything can be done online. [...] I think the ideal would be to still have a workplace, a physical entity and from our perception point of view. That’s where I go if I want to complain, for example, if I think of HR, [...] of course you can do that in a form, but maybe you want to... I noticed this too when I went to the office, for example, sometimes with colleagues who wanted to talk to someone, to explain a little, to incorporate a story. Of course, you could also participate through a Zoom call... if you were to ask me, person C., I would say that it would be ideal to have a physical entity, at least an HR office. Recruitment, on the other hand, is 100% online and I don’t think it will change much.” (C. D., Human Resources Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

III. Changes in organizational commitment structure in the context of telecommuting implementation experienced by specialists

The responsibilities of the Human Resources department also focus on measuring the performance level of employees, whether there is a clear delimitation of key performance indicators, or an evaluation based on quality and service delivery time. Professionals in this sector can accurately position themselves on this indicator, as they have access to data that records performance fluctuations. At the same time, they can observe the quality of work processes empirically. Another paradoxical element that emerges in this regard is the tendency for performance to increase in the face of a decrease in organizational commitment.

“You should know that the performance level hasn’t decreased because we’ve seen it in results, on the contrary, it was very high last year, but everyone felt much more tired at the end of last year. So, performance increased at the beginning of the pandemic and stayed just as high, but you can really see... everyone knew about the fatigue. In December, at least, everyone was... that’s why the company produced intense recommendations this year for people to take time off, to schedule their time off in such a way that in two or three months you have a 5-day break to recharge because... you don’t realize when you’re there, when you are the frog in the pot where the water is boiling and boiling you too. I interact with quite a few departments in the bank and yeah, that was generally it, the energy level dropped quite a bit, but people did their best to keep performance from declining.” (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

The focus of employees to perform extra work builds its foundation around the instability generated by pre- and post-pandemic conditions, chronic fatigue becomes a symptom encountered within the general population, and specialists choose to position themselves based on the advantages and disadvantages of telecommuting.

“Undoubtedly, performance has increased, I can say that, because you no longer waste so much time doing other things, you are much more focused on doing what you have to do. There are not as many distractions. You no longer waste time coming and leaving work, going somewhere in the city during lunch breaks, going to coffee with different colleagues and then all that time materializes into working hours. Performance, in short, and for me personally, has been seen and felt, but also for our colleagues. We have had moments when, perhaps, we have had performance downtimes, but personally, when I feel that I need to go to the office for a few days to recharge with energy. And then things return to normal.” (C.D., HR Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

Structured as advantages: saving time spent in traffic, financial savings because lunch is served at home and formal attire is not necessary, it promotes focused work processes. The preceding question to this aspect materializes regarding the allocation of this savings in terms of temporal dimension.

“Honestly, I think that when I entered the online environment, I became more productive and I acknowledge that I often worked much more because, at least at home, I didn’t realize how quickly time was passing and I often saw that it was getting dark outside or I would look at my

watch and see that it was 7:00 p.m., for example... and from the feedback I have received from my colleagues, everyone did that, so the myth that those who work from home, in fact, do not work does not exist, in my opinion, you are much, much more productive at home than on the days when you go to the office.” (C.O., Senior IT Recruitment Partner)

The productivity increase is thus a result of an unobservable allocation of personal time to work activities. Actions that are initially presented as being beneficial, turn into a continuous culture of work (Williams et al. 2013) in which overtime and the performance generated by it become a stable predictor in contexts of instability for salary promotions (Pannenberg, 2005).

IV. Defining the boundary between “Office” and “Home” work

Based on the confirmed hypotheses by Olson (1989) and Chung et al. (2020) regarding women’s explicit responsibility for household chores, the analysis further highlights the trend of increasing “workaholism” and the difficulties in clearly separating professional and personal activities in terms of both space and time.

“[...] you worked more, in the sense that, I would still wake up at 6:00, 6:30 and by 7:00 I was already with the laptop turned on now at least half an hour or an hour you lose on the way to say, you know, in the evening until my wife came home, I was still with the laptop turned on, so somehow I was working in one way or another more. That does not necessarily mean more efficient, but just that in terms of the time we spend at work or in front of the laptop, yes, it was indeed longer. Now, for example, I didn’t arrive at 7:30, I closed my laptop at 16:30 and left. Before, I would say, I opened my laptop at 7:00, I was already with the coffee made, what to do, I sit and check emails and until my wife came home, I would leave the laptop open in case something urgent appeared or something to resolve not to leave for the next day.” (C.H., Senior HR Consultant)

Given the qualitative presentation of the subjective perceptions of professionals in the Human Resources sector assumed at the beginning of the work, the materialization and concrete demonstration of the tendencies to remain over time is facilitated in this case by the illustrative examples in which organizational practices become timeless, with the result being the achievement of key performance indicators or deadline.

“Yes, at least declaratively, I work harder and as proof I received an email today at 6:30 in the morning. The hardest part is when I don’t get up from my desk, it becomes 18:00, it becomes 19:00 and I still remain. At that point I admit that I don’t like it and I realize... when I look at the clock even though the laptop is here and can stay until tomorrow morning, I shouldn’t be in front of it anymore, there are also other people who need me [...]” (I.A., Human Resources Development Expert)

The “flexibility trap,” as Olson (1989) calls it, structures an unconscious extension of the work schedule. The paradoxical element that changes the exploitation paradigm theorized by Marx and Engels (1967) is the desire of employees to work overtime. The organizational culture of companies does not explicitly encourage overtime work but positions it in a grey area through which the employee individually takes responsibility and consciously sacrifices their free time, a phenomenon accentuated by the permanent presence and connection in the online environment.

“I worked an entire ski vacation, almost continuously, but not because someone imposed it on me, but because I wanted it very much, for myself personally, to win this project and I did win it. Later, of course, I made up for some of the lost hours and I let it go a bit easier to recover and to regain my strength. But within the company, there was never an imposition to work more, to work overtime.” (L.N., Head of Recruitment)

“But still, I am always logged in and I have my phones with me everywhere so that nobody calls me, and I am not there.” (M.O., Employer Branding Specialist)

V. Overtime work practices

The “autonomy paradox” referred to by Putnam et al. (2014) and continued in Chung’s (2020; 2021; 2022) research outlines the situation of employees who benefit from a higher degree of autonomy but structure their work schedule in a maladaptive and detrimental way for themselves overall. Tacitly accepted overtime contributes to the inability to distinguish personal from professional life. Overtime can be seen as a standalone, complex phenomenon, but the assumption from which the analysis starts confirms the presence of the phenomenon of working overtime, both in the pre-pandemic period and the aim of the objective is to research the new values generated by home working.

BALANCING EFFICIENCY AND PERSONAL TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS AFTER TELECOMMUTING

“The thing is, with telecommuting, it seems to me that in general, and in my case, people tend to be much more involved in work, and this guilt kind of arises... if I have a day and I feel like I didn’t do enough, this guilt arises, at first, I felt like I had all the time in the world, being at home and it seems like it’s not enough what I did in a day. Which is a disadvantage, for us, because everyone should be aware that if you did as much in one day, it’s enough, I mean, as much as I could, tomorrow may be better and the day after tomorrow may be worse. I felt like I was quite involved and committed, sometimes I even stayed 1 hour, 1 and a half hours after work hours just to be at peace that I did everything that was mine to do.” (I.R., Recruitment Specialist)

The general discourse aims of the interviewed persons centred around two terms: (1) the intensity and exponential growth of work and (2) the practice of overtime as a solution to the guilt and professional duty feeling. At an exploratory level, subjective perceptions are analysed. Definitive conclusions about a significant increase in the level of work cannot be drawn. However, the respondents’ reports are supported by the first lack of fluidity and connections within a team. This can result in inadequate communication and an emphasis on individual responsibility. Otherwise, the perception acts directly on the activities that the professional must perform alone to complete an assignment, using formalized bureaucratic norms and techniques that require a waiting time and appropriate behaviour and not the informal ones with which was familiar, in which the time invested in completing the task is visibly diminished.

“From this perspective, the activity was more intense, as our company continued to function normally during the pandemic, and all the usual processes were maintained, while some additional processes related strictly to the pandemic situation and the imposed rigorous measures were added. And then yes, the activities were more intense at home because it was hard to manage, and we worked more from home than at the office, not as much in terms of time, because I can also stay at the office after hours to work, I usually do things that require concentration and I do them after hours or at the beginning of the day when my colleagues are not here. But in terms of the intensity of the volume of work, it was more intense at home. That’s how I felt it or maybe I was stressing more because I was there and had to manage more things on my own, when here at the office I delegated more, I asked a colleague, or a colleague took care of it, and we worked as a team. So, at home you work as a team, of course, because all activities were still carried out as a team, but in a dispersed team and not as if you were next to each other, I have 3 tasks to do, but I can’t go to take this document to be signed, you go.” (I.R., Human Resources Manager)

In addition to the aspect of isolation in the online environment, the integration of extra hours becomes a practice that replaces the alternating work schedule with family obligations. A positive attribute stated in an early stage, but which, when engaged in routine systems, implies chronic deficiencies. The rapid and constant flow of actions does not favour an autonomous schedule, and paradoxically, the hypothesis of Kelliher & Anderson (2010) and Chung (2022) that flexible work is more intense is confirmed.

“Yes, yes, the overtime has increased, certainly the overtime has increased. Now we take C. and as a mother, to be honest and take my whole personal life into account. If you ask me, my availability for my daughters has increased. Because now I can take them to school, pick them up from school, take them to swim, pick them up from swim. That means in my personal life I am practically available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., which means online and, on the phone, often. Responding to emails or entering chats, but somehow, I am working more hours, but incorporating into my life... I’m not clear where is personal and where is work, that’s what I feel has changed. Sometimes it is overwhelming and when it is overwhelming, I try to normalize, to say okay, as an HR person or any person you are, you can only do so much in a day. But as a volume of work, yes, yes. ...being at home and available, you feel like you want to work because the volume of work does not subside. So, this feeling is that you can always do one more report, read some HDR studies, I have a reading to-do list of 10 books. Somehow it is clear that I feel bad if I close at 6:00 p.m. How can you close at 6:00 p.m. when you know how much you can still do until 8:00 p.m.? Yes, yes. I have thought, I have thought, and I am thinking. Because I am aware that this work pace cannot be sustained indefinitely, I mean I now feel that I am in a sprint.”
(C.D., HR Director; Head of Talent Acquisition)

Discussion

This section of the work provides an overview of the significance of the social phenomena analysed in the interaction with the interviewed subjects. The highlighted trends regarding the nature and form of paid work are situated within the bounds of representativeness and generalization, as evidenced by the qualitative analysis of the phenomenon. The diversity of the domains of activity in which Human Resources professionals are active offers the possibility to present the telework phenomenon in a most comprehensive manner. The analysis notes and confirms significant differences between the service and industry sectors. At the same time, this analysis sets the expectations for actors

involved in the paid work phenomenon. These actors are individuals who have completed a university education cycle and engage in non-manual, strategically oriented work. The goal is to balance the interests of both management and employees.

This research approach highlights four major implications introduced by the adoption of telework in the specified organizational structures. In outlining the exemplification, I will present the results in relation to the objectives structured within this work. Thus, the first objective constructed around the identification of sustainability perspectives in the telework regime, precedes the paradigm shift to a new way of working adopting a hybrid work schedule. The second objective was structured to descriptively present certain attitudinal cutouts found in the new forms of interaction primarily mediated through technological systems. Its outcome highlights a latent encouragement of an individualistic culture in which collaborative processes face difficulties generated by the non-uniformity of actions performed during working hours. The third objective identifies the restructuring of professionals' expectations regarding the modes and working conditions promoted by the reference company, as well as the demands presented in the professional advancement process. The analysis shows an increase in the perceived level of personal productivity and efficiency in the context of flexible working hours, but besides this aspect, it also brings up the deficiencies built around the perspective on the term of flexibility. The last point of analysis intervenes in the context of relocating organizational space within personal space and identifies the ways in which professionals divide their resources between the two spheres. The results of the latest objective bring to the forefront the unpaid work of women displayed through the alternation of mother/wife/partner and employee roles. The interchangeability of the two duties takes place continuously throughout the day and erodes the 8-hour workday standard. By allowing for the management of household activities, women are extending their professional activity even during the designated rest hours.

Before outlining the study's conclusions regarding the medium and long-term adaptation of telecommuting in multinational companies, I acknowledge that a panoramic perspective of the feasibility of this work model requires an analysis of the organizational perspectives of the companies and the decision-makers who manage the high administrative structures. In addition, access to financial statistical data also aids in the process of making a comparative analysis of the financial profitability that telecommuting brings, such as: reducing maintenance costs for office spaces and their functioning elements. These aspects have not been structured in the research objectives, but the element of restructuring professional standards can also be highlighted from

the qualitative approach I have chosen to use. Thus, flexible work, especially the hybrid model in which employees can alternate between office work and home-based work, remains an alternative and encouraged practice for professionals in the Human Resources sector in Cluj-Napoca. The dynamic use of this mode of work can represent a new challenge for professionals or, as I have highlighted in the presentation of the results, even a criterion that cannot be negotiated during the hiring interview. This aspect is emphasized by the unanimously affirmative response given by the respondents regarding the feasibility and adaptability of supporting and managing human resources in the online environment. The year of 2020 (and 2021) represented an important vector in the focus of a complex restructuring of the paradigm of non-manual work, the home-based space, and especially the processes for which a digital or automated vision was not materialized in the pre-pandemic period. Hybrid work thus becomes a sustainable program to be implemented in the medium and long term in the work sector analysed in this research.

The second aspect relevant to this work is represented by the context of a significant increase in productivity level (analysed for non-manual work). In the presence of subjective reports, a behavioural structure adopted in different forms by professionals can be identified. The rising level of productivity directly implies a proportional increase in the number of extra hours worked. The substantial reduction or even elimination of human physical contact implements an organizational culture of individualism in which the employee does not seek help from other colleagues and tries to solve the obstacle independently. This aspect, in an applied manner, prolongs the time allocated to complete a task. Collaborative practices, by their nature, impose a continuous flow of calibration with other functions or people close to the employee, but this feature is not recorded in the personal space of the home, thus, a general trend of extending working hours beyond standard hours is established. Key performance indicators are completed by the statement made by respondents to the home environment that eliminates specific distractions of the corporate environment. The strong paradoxical element highlighted in the interaction with specialists was generated by the ambivalent character of autonomy and flexibility that, in a latent manner, favours exhausting work, and an increase in overtime, compared to the pre-pandemic period, and moreover a constant difficulty in drawing a delimitation between leisure practices and organizational practices. Nevertheless, at a superficial level, it all factors in an undeniable increase in productivity. The third element built around the level of productivity is characterized by the timelessness that employees experience in the context of working outside the organizational office. The temporal delimitation barriers of the work schedule are continuously fading away, where household activities interfere with

professional activities and the differentiation line between personal and professional time is eroded by the professional's permanent connectivity to the work environment through the phone or laptop. This element, which, in the first phase of adopting telework, represented a major advantage that facilitated the care of seniors or children, has now become a medium to long-term adapted practice that chronically exhausts the individual who agrees to branching out their responsibilities. The research has shown that the accommodation process, with the highest degree of difficulty, was in the case of women who managed their personal resources together with the professional ones.

Conclusion

The research confirms the upward trend of flexible work trends and highlights the change both in the legislative and organizational and societal aspects of how work is organized in Cluj-Napoca. Before the pre-pandemic period, the possibility to work from home was primarily concentrated in the IT sector, but after the experience of 2020, 2021, and 2022, this option or even work mode stipulated in the employment contract has been extended to all roles that can be performed through a digital device and do not necessarily require personal interaction. Based on this analysis, the research continued to question whether this possibility of working from home is feasible for all roles that meet the conditions or only for certain professional segments.

Human Resources specialists who have direct contact with blue-collar employees, by default, through the employment contract, may choose to work from home, but the organizational context favours the opposite. Blue-collar employees prefer to request a certain document or to clarify any questions in a face-to-face conversation, and in this way, given the mediator and consultant role of the Human Resources specialist, they are no longer able to personalize their work schedule and must adapt to the company's requirements. This phenomenon also occurs for specialists working with white-collar colleagues. As presented in the analysis, this type of employee prefers rapid communication mediated by technology, which the Human Resources specialist must integrate into their daily personal tasks along with their specific post-related duties and projects.

Another aspect in line with the research presented by Chung (2020, 2020a, 2021, 2022) is to discover the paradigm under which the flexibility trend is constructed. Is it shaped in a logic that favours the employee's orientation towards their personal life or in a logic that accentuates performance? Thus, companies integrate the concept of flexibility into their productivity growth schemes,

allowing employees to organize their time according to their personal schedule, but they also demand results and set more ambitious objectives based on the results recorded during the 2021 teleworking obligation period. The presence of a device facilitating communication with the company within the household (laptop and/or phone) indirectly contributes to extending the working hours. Performing routine tasks, checking email, or responding to certain topics considered as urgent, fall into a dimension of timelessness, with the employee in the role of a HR specialist resolving requests whether they are in or outside of work hours.

The professionally trained employee, as the subject of this research, is expected to efficiently manage the human work resource. They must integrate both theoretical perspectives and contribute to supporting and streamlining the administrative processes required by other company employees. Additionally, they should outline the department and company's vision for sustainable development of work processes and ensure ongoing professional training for employees through lifelong learning. All these tasks often framed within a single position and assigned to a single individual who must manage their time arbitrarily and at the same time contribute to household and/or parental activities form a context where overtime becomes a mandatory element.

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THE ELUSIVE RELATIONSHIP OF STATE POWER AND SOCIETAL PEACE: REFLECTIONS ON THE CASE OF KOSOVO

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ABSTRACT. Twenty years ago, NATO's intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), taking place without the approval of the UN Security Council (UNSC), challenged the sovereignty and non-interference norms the UN had perceived as international peace and order, until that moment. While the military action served to question existing principles, it simultaneously examined the effectiveness of non-authorization. Moreover, the Kosovo case stimulated one of the most important UN reforms that transformed the concept of sovereignty from right to responsibility. Conceptually, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has largely advanced since then. The transformation shifted the attention from political to sociological peace making society, gender and victims of conflict at the focus of peacebuilding and peace sustaining processes. The juxtaposition of state and societal peace continues in post-conflict Kosovo with both approaches being intermingled: the security debate covers attempts for a peace-building agenda, whereas the formation of a national army is pursued.

Keywords: Kosovo, UN, Responsibility to Protect, sovereignty, women, human rights

Introduction

United Nations (UN) peace operations have gone through multiple changes and have constantly faced challenges as well as scholarly criticism for not being able to produce a well-developed theory on peacekeeping. Many

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factors have affected the transformation of these operations, starting from the impact of emerging powers to a widening space for individual initiatives. Yet, from a critical theory perspective, these initiatives and reforms are only a way to treat the dysfunctions of the global politics but that don't change the overall framework and order (Pugh, 2007). Incapable of testing the relationship of UN reforms and its reflections to all member states, we first made two decisions. First, we focused on the primary principle of UN which is peace and how it is developed within the UN structure. Second, we picked Kosovo as one of the most influential and disputable cases in the elusive relationship of UN with peace.

The analysis is guided by the question of how the concept of peace within the UN is reflected in the case of Kosovo, by also considering the interplay between theory and practical applications. This paper incorporates UN evolution of peace and power relationship in the case of Kosovo while looking into three different stages: the process of peacemaking; peacekeeping and peacebuilding. By so doing, it displays that the case of Kosovo has embraced two perspectives: 1) a combination of the liberal and somehow critical *approaches* as reliant on international norms (i.e., resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security), with the individual being in focus, and 2) the *national power approach* based on the so-called hard power with the state at the center. Concretely, the case of Kosovo reflects the conceptualization of power as an element generating global outcomes, while being constrained and determined by the state's fate.

The three main phases of peace are adapted to the case of Kosovo as a reaction to the conflict before the intervention, during the intervention, and the institutional response in the post-conflict peace-building phase. The combination of the theoretical lenses with the practice of UN peacekeeping missions has two dimensions: first, it presents insights on how these theoretical lenses can be practically applied to better understand UN peacekeeping, and second, it provides practical examples of how theories can be applied to a specific policy issue (Oksamytna and Karlsrud, 2020). These practices are best mirrored in two opposing directions, the veto power system, and the human rights dimension.

The choice of Kosovo as a case study is multiple. Firstly, it challenged the previously established norms and practices in the UN. Also, it caused a debate on the intervention and triggered many changes within the organization itself. In fact, before the intervention, the UNSC's resolutions restated the sovereignty of the FRY and with this, non-intervention was considered a norm to be respected by all members. To be said otherwise, before the military action, the UNSC was the responsible organ for peace maintenance. Yet, with the aggravation of the situation and following the refugee crisis in the FRY's former province, this principle was questioned. Overall, the military intervention in Kosovo represents

a precedent: it was legitimate although non-authorized due to humanitarian causes (Teson, 2009). Furthermore, the Kosovo case impacted peace at three levels: the regional, the European, and the global one (Cottey, 2009). To start with the regional level, it ended *de facto* a nationalist war in the Balkans. At the European level, it impacted NATO's and the EU's enlargement eastwards with Romania and Bulgaria joining the Union. As for the global level, it affirmed the western power, the liberal values, and the humanitarian cause for intervening in the first place. Concretely, with a look at the latter aspect, the case of Kosovo questioned the principles adopted previously by the UN. Otherwise said, it reflected the way sovereignty was perceived and challenged the effectiveness of non-intervention. In other words, the respect for the sovereignty of a state was to be reevaluated and transformed into R2P. In short, sovereignty had its costs, thus meaning that if the state failed to fulfill its responsibilities towards its citizens, it lost its significance.

Additionally, the Kosovo case can best explain the embodiment of realist, liberal and critical approaches to peacekeeping. On the one hand, Kosovo has been shaping an agenda pursuant to the UNSCR 1325 mandate to promote women and security, while addressing different needs. On the other hand, it established a national army 18 years after the end of the conflict, by emphasizing national interests.

Conceptualizing Peace within UN: From Political to Sociological Perspectives

The formulation of the idea of peace within the UN, before the Kosovo crisis, relied on two main existing frameworks: the UN Charter and the Agenda for Peace. The essential reason for the foundation of the UN, after the Second World War and the failure of the League of Nations was to maintain peace and save generations from war and conflicts. Therefore, it was viewed as crucial "to practice tolerance and live together in peace" and "unite [...] strength[s] to maintain international peace and security" (United Nations, 1945). The understanding of maintaining peace was based on fighting peace-threatening issues, using peaceful methods to resolve conflicts, and applying international norms (Article 1, 1). According to the UN Charter, peace relied on the following principles: order at the international level, self-determination, non-intervention, sovereignty, and respect for international law and security. The UN was founded on a *state-centric approach* reflecting realism (Falode, 2009). The Charter openly specifies that all member states should respect the sovereignty of other members (Article 2, 1), refrain from intervention, and be determined

to maintain peace and security, to promote and respect human rights and dignity, to support justice, social and economic progress for all peoples. Somehow, the state and the respect for its sovereignty gained importance. In this way, nations are invited to build amicable relations with each other and respect the self-determination of their people. All states are equally sovereign (Article 2, 1) and they have responsibilities of membership (Article 2, 2). In achieving peace, peaceful methods should be used (Article 2, 3) such as investigation, mediation, negotiation, etc. (Chapter VI, Article 33, 1).

Power and force should not be pursued, and states have to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other (Article 2, 4). Article 2, 5 gives all the authority to the UN as the responsible entity in taking any action, with all the member states in need of assisting the organization. All other countries, which are not UN members, are also requested to respect all the international norms to achieve peace (Article 4, 1). Article 2, 7 prevents the interference of the UN in the internal affairs of the states. According to Chapter VI, in case peace is threatened, the Security Council evaluates, makes suggestions, and decides on the actions to be taken. Among some measures, blockage and demonstrations or operations by land, sea, and air are envisaged (Chapter VII, Article 42). Furthermore, Chapter XI, Article 73 states that the members of the UN having under their administrative responsibility the people with no self-governing body, have the duty to respect their interests and protect them.

While until now the discussion of security and peace has centered on the state level, the UN Charter refers to human rights in some cases. First of all, its preamble reaffirms trust in human rights and the self-esteem of the individual. States are requested to cooperate and respect human rights without distinction of color, race, gender, or religion (Article 1, 3). The General Assembly should engage in researches for the promotion and implementation of human rights (Article 13). UN shall promote respect for human rights despite differences of race, gender, ethnicity, or religion (Article 55/3), which at the same time leads to stability and well-being. In Article 62, the Economic and Social Council can start an investigation or make a recommendation to promote human rights. In addition, the well-being of those people who have not yet achieved self-government is to be respected, their protection together with social, economic, and educational rights are to be ensured (Article 73). This is an understanding in line with the outlook over peace and security of the Charter. Likewise, Article 76 refers to the inhabitants of trust territories, their economic, educational, social, and political rights, and promotion of their human rights in general. Nevertheless, for a long period of time, human rights remained outside the span of the Security Council (Security Council 2016).

Yet, UN peace and security understanding is not derived only from the UN structure and principles. UN reflects also how its member states view what constitutes a threat and what maintains international order. Thus, the discourse between security and human rights was a result of the growing conviction that in order for states to be at peace with their neighbours, they must be at peace with themselves (Barnett, 1995). The maintenance of peace through non-intervention and respect for sovereignty was more a form of restoration of peace after it had been violated, rather than a process of building peace.

At the state level, Galtung (1996) defines positive peace as a different state from negative peace .i.e. being the absence of war/ conflict. Positive peace relates well-being, dialogue at the individual level and acceptance of peace at a cultural level. Furthermore, peace is not the opposite state of war. The process of constructing positive peace requires different structures and reforms from the process of ending a war (Boulding, 1978).

The sociological approach to peace covers the personal world of the person, together with the social, historical and political structure he is part of. Peace itself is social because of social interactions in social situations (Souto, 1986). Civilizations have their own way of constructing peace as the westerns are more externally oriented and the eastern world is more internally oriented in their understanding of peace (Galtung, 1981). Nevertheless, peace processes, understood from a sociological perspective reflect three tracks: the substantive, the conceptual and analytical (Brewer 2013). The substantive track considers processes of peace that lead to peace agreements and focuses on society, gender, religion, citizens, emotions, victimhood. The conceptual tends to expand the understanding of processes of peace while focusing on the political and social processes of peace. On the other hand, the analytical deals with disciplinary perspectives of processes of peace like conquest, military involvement, map making or changes of map, compromise and giving up the cause of conflict.

Looking at closer lenses at the conceptual track, it is easy to identify that it covers both the political and the social processes of peace. The political process refers to democratic institutions, reforms, laws, improvement in the voting system etc. Presence of justice, law, and order promotes social peace (Medina, 2020). The social side of peace rests in the improvement of relations, sharing duties and responsibilities as part of the same community. Adding to this trust, forgiving, and making empathy with members of the community, the sociological peace processes approach peace by emphasizing the relations between members of the community after conflict. In practice it refers to strategies such as compromise while interacting and engaging in common public spaces, building trust and forgiveness through religion, and education (J. D. Brewer, 2018). In a few words, it refers to any post-conflict process that channels the society

towards peace. All things considered, reconciliation involves both the political combined with the social peace process. The political process opens the way to social healing and they complement each-other. This social healing deals with social transformation which translates into positive peace. It is similarly as important that politics consults with studies on mixed societies like multiethnicity, or migration (Bade and Anderson 1994) at such a phase.

Social peacemaking can be both a form of negative and positive peace. The negative sees civil society as the main actor, or mediator in occurrences of violence and conflict. The positive version of peace considers civil society in the perspective of social transformation, healing before and after peace agreement. Social peace prepares the grounds for political agreement and vice versa. Political agreements enhance grassroot social transformation. However, it is apparent that formal peace processes still focus more on security issues and less on social peace (Lee, Mac Ginty and Joshi 2016).

Johansen (1991) uses the term '*democratic security*' to emphasize that security must serve the people and not to maintain patterns of state behavior that serve the international order. This approach contrasts the old concept of security based on 'balance of power' as natural arrangement or the 'default setting' that nation states must operate inside to handle their disputes (Johansen, 1991).

Yet, the existence of the veto power in the UN demonstrates that realism still dominates, and the national interest of the state prevails in the relations among peers (Hanhimaki 2015). The balance of power is regarded as being both a manner of maintaining peace, but also one that causes many wars (Waltz 1979). As the familiar philosophy of international relations would state "If you want peace, prepare for war" (Johansen, 1991).

On the contrary, for liberals, nations' interests do not consist of military and security issues only but involve the economic, environmental, social, and cultural interests of the state as well (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008). The growth in the number of liberal democratic institutions should in itself reinforce peace. Democratic states do not expect, prepare for, and wage wars at least against other democratic states (Russett et al., 1995). Liberals consider that not only states, but organizations are important actors too. Thus, the UN itself - as an international organization - is seen as a crucial institution in solving matters between states and maintaining their cooperation.

In short, while realists regard force and security issues as central, liberals point that human rights, economic and social development are of great importance (Akoko, 2013). Since its foundation in 1945 the UN has tried to maintain a balance in the international order, despite conflicts emerging from time to time like the Korean War, the Suez Crisis, the Cold War, and the post-cold war conflicts. Yet, one thing is certain: the permanent members in the UNSC have

used their veto power, by pursuing their national interests. This *modus operandi* has blocked the UN's ability to act unanimously in solving core international issues.

The key issue in looking at peace evolution within the UN is how it positions itself in relation to order and principles of sovereignty and non-interference. Thus, the debate within this article does not cover all UN references of peace solely, but those that impact the interplay between state-centric and international norms approaches. In this regard, the second framework, within the UN, referring to the notion of peace is *The Agenda for Peace*, a document addressing peace in a changing world since the formation of the UN. Decolonization paved the way for the creation of new states. Calls for nationalism and new regional and continental alliances have led to discrimination, racism, and exclusion⁴. Other sources like famine, poverty, and disease have been recognized as factors destabilizing peace⁵. *The Agenda for Peace* attributes to the state its sovereignty. Yet, it does not recognize it as an **absolute** one, because it considers that sovereignty and self-determination should be balanced. Besides that, respect for human rights and the rights of minorities are among the core conditions for the solution of problems related to peace.

Also, *the Agenda for Peace* addresses three main phases of peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding (United Nations, 1992). Another important concept in the realm of achieving peace in the international order is *preventive diplomacy*, which aims to countermove disagreements among parties before the eruption of violence. Otherwise said, it also opens the way to UN institutions to react and address the source of the conflict before it escalates. Concretely, building confidence among parties through the exchange of information, and/or experience in military missions, and the collection of information by a special mission representing the organization are key areas of preventive diplomacy next to humanitarian aid. This also includes the development of a system of identification of early warnings, being a threat to peace, as the movement of refugees, famine, etc. Throughout this phase, *the Agenda for Peace* emphasizes that humanitarian aid should be given independently from any circumstance, differences in race, ethnicity, gender, or even geographical location.

⁴ Note: The declaration is in accordance with the principle of non-interference as it addresses those countries which are recognized as independent states and have territorial integrity and are sovereign. Nevertheless, the section is ambiguous in the point where these governments really represent all their *people*, which may have racial belonging and religious beliefs.

⁵ Note: The Human Security approach that targets famine, poverty and disease as factors destabilizing peace have been firstly introduced in the 1994 global Human Development report by UNDP which then led the GA to adopt a common definition of this concept in 2012. The 1994 HDR became prominent of its two major components of human security: 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. (UNDP, 2018)

Peacemaking aims to resolve conflicts through mediation or the negotiation process with the parties reaching an agreement. The Security Council has the prime responsibility for maintaining peace and security. Mechanisms like arbitration or reliance on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are also used in the peacemaking process. Additionally, assistance is offered to the displaced, economic sanctions can be used, and even military force recurs when peaceful ways of resolving the conflict fail.

The OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) was established by the Permanent Council in October 1998 and closed in June 1999. It aimed to ensure that Serbian and Yugoslav forces were abiding with the UN October Agreement, which called for the end of crimes in Kosovo, the withdrawal of military forces from Kosovo, and the observance of a ceasefire. Although KVM was mostly focused on peacekeeping, its mission also included some peacemaking components, i.e. when agreements were established between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Yugoslav army and police to separate the parties in a place like Malisevo (Duncan, 2001).

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), one of the UN's smallest and modest missions, was established by the Security Council (1244, 1999) despite a political impasse. The primary purpose of UNMIK was to keep peace after the war but it transformed with an agenda of how to consolidate peace. That raises the important question of how can a peacekeeping mission prevent return of the conflict? For that, the next sections aims to present in more detail the role of UNMIK and note how it advanced into a unit working for political solutions to conflicts and producing integrated strategies that influence both national and regional levels (Sharma, 2020).

Responsibility to Protect

Events occurring during the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st fuelled a vivid debate in the UN on how to effectively respond to mass atrocities. UN peacekeeping missions prioritized the need to avoid the relapse of war, i.e. negative peace, but were unprepared to treat the deep sources of conflicts and ultimately recognize them from a multiparty approach. The genocide in Rwanda, the one in Srebrenica, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo displayed the fragility of the international community to defend civilians as well as questioned the political will and the authorities to be responsible for taking such action (Bellamy, 2013). These events led to a change of the idea of security based on the nature of threats to this security.

A more secure world: our shared responsibility Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (United Nations Secretary-General 2004), presents a new perspective on security and the range of security threats. The report recognizes as security threats many factors and the solution to these threats is to prevent them from evolving. These threats include both old and new emerging ones; they are interconnected to each other and cannot be faced as isolated cases. This means that security can be endangered by social and economic problems, conflicts between states and within the state, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and organized crime. The understanding of collective security presented in this document encompasses three key elements. Firstly, threats that come to security cannot be limited to state borders. Secondly, these threats are related to one another and finally, they need to be targeted at both national and regional levels (United Nations Secretary-General 2004, 15). In a way, development, human rights, and security are linked to each other. For instance, the report emphasizes that poverty, famine, illness create suitable grounds for civil wars and in this way indirectly they are a threat to security. Recognizing these as threats, the conceptualization of security and peace becomes a more comprehensive one.

Security is understood both at the state and human levels. This said, the threats to this security come from both state and non-state actors. One of the main conclusions of the report is the idea that states are still recognized as the main actors in the response given to threats. Being so, states should be supported to improve and build capacities. The document voices the possibility to prevent a state from executing its citizens. The non-intervention principle should not be tolerated when there are cases of genocide, violation of humanitarian laws, ethnic cleansing, and mass executions. The report shifts the discourse from intervention to a responsibility of the state to protect (United Nations Secretary General 2004, 56). Nevertheless, response to threats using military force have to be applied under certain conditions after considering the gravity of the situation, exact aim, last resort, equitable means, and consequences.

The second important report that paved the way to R2P is *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, which reaffirmed the importance of human rights as one of the three main objectives of the UN next to development and security (UN Secretary-General, 2005). For this, the main responsibility for the protection of human rights rests on national states. It is also addressed as part of the commitment gap by states. In this regard, empowerment is envisioned as two-fold: empowerment of citizens and empowerment as a responsibility of states to protect human rights (Article 36, 37).

These discussions resulted in the notion of the R2P, which varies in its aim, preconditions, and instruments of responsibility (Kunadt, 2011). The 2005 World Summit's report served to address the concept of the responsibility to

protect, which was conceptualized as the responsibility of a state to defend and protect its citizens (UN General Assembly, 2005). R2P encapsulates a strategy with 3 main lines: **protection** of citizens, **assistance** to states to fulfill their responsibilities and capacity-building, and **collective actions** to be taken in case the state is incapable to fulfill its obligations (UN General Assembly, 2013). These are the main pillars that support the notion of *responsibility to protect* and have equal importance. Thus understood, responsibility falls both to the individual states to protect their civilians and to the international community when these individual states are either unable or unwilling to protect them (Breakey, et al. 2012).

First and foremost, states are the main responsible authorities for the protection of their population from genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The international community encourages states to implement such responsibilities, and when a country fails to protect its citizens, the international community can interfere via diplomatic means, or by initiating other forms of assistance for the civilians in need. Assistance to states can be given with the consent of the involved state and these states can decide on different agreements. However, measures that are related to R2P can surpass the consent of the concerned state in cases when the United Nations Security Council acts based on Chapter VII of the Charter (Nambiar, 2016). Pillar three refers to an array of tools that can be used collectively by the international community: peaceful means, intimidating measures, and cooperation with other regional actors.

At this point, the notion of sovereignty takes another dimension. Concretely, it is here understood as *the responsibility* of the states to fulfill their obligations and duties towards their citizens. This responsibility takes three forms: "to prevent", "to react", and "to rebuild" (Gagro, 2014). The first form of responsibility seeks to find solutions to the roots of the problems threatening the civilians while the second stresses the fact that responses can be in the form of help and support; can serve to build capacities and ensure protection (UN General Assembly, 2014). Effective prevention measures cover economic, legal, political, and military aspects. It means that different preventive measures can be applied, from diplomatic measures like mediation to economic sanctions and deployment of troops. In addition to this, prevention is seen from two perspectives: minimalist as direct and short-term action, and maximalist as structural, planned and organized attempts that aim at the source of conflict (Williams, 2011).

Reaction can be from economic encouragement to sanction, mediation to diplomatic cut of relations, arbitration to cases referred to International Courts (Evans, 2008). Assistance can be offered legally by setting certain standards, enforcing national capabilities, and offering expertise. A variety of actors are important in this stage. The UN assists The Human Rights Council, The Security

Council, The Peacebuilding Commission and through a variety of programs, funds, and instruments. Different international actors, networks, and civil society are brought together. Thirdly, reconstruction is a phase where the responsibility weighs upon rebuilding. These three pillars have been elaborated as six main concerns: indication of assurance to defend civilians, prevention as the main feature, a wide range of responses, accepting the possibility of recurrence, regional cooperation, and the international dimension of R2P (UN General Assembly, 2015).

Another important dimension of R2P deals with the increase of the accountability of states to prevent violations of human rights (UN General Assembly, 2017). This accountability ensures a point of contact between what has been formally stated on R2P, and what effectively challenges the civilians. In this understanding of accountability, states are regarded as legally, morally, and politically responsible. Also, the empowerment of women and the equality of genders are prioritized. Overall, the R2P tried to overcome the obstacles caused by state sovereignty in the cases when civilians were endangered, but it still is dependent on the states' political will (Lea-Henry, 2018).

Overall, RtoP enlarged the perspective on how humanitarian intervention is conceptualized and eased the tension between respect for the sovereignty of a state of non-interference and respect for human rights (Francioni and Bakker, 2013). Sovereignty understood as responsibility has become a norm. In this context, sovereignty does not favor the state over the citizen but brings accountability to the state. With RtoP the question is not only whether to intervene or not but to decide how to intervene and who should be in charge of all this. Read differently, R2P promotes prevention and not intervention (Hamann and Muggah, 2013). Nevertheless, cases like that of Libya have fuelled even more debates on the principle. The third pillar of R2P, which gives permission to military operations over the aggressor, even though used as a last resort means, was perceived as an attempt for neo-colonial ambitions (Brosig, 2013). Taken together, such principles are dependant on the intentions and will of the actors that use them.

Cycles of Peace in Kosovo: State and Society as Actors

From 1999 until 2008, the international community focused on building peace and stability in Kosovo. This period was characterized by numerous disputes about Kosovo's status and legitimate governance between local Kosovo Albanian actors, as well as between Serbian and Kosovar groups (Deda, 2010). The case of Kosovo displays all the 3 cycles of peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building.

Period 1- UN Peacekeeping process/ Reaction to the Conflict

UNSC resolution 1160

The first UNSC resolution (1160), adopted on 31 March 1998, called the parties concerned to enter into dialogue while imposing an arms embargo. A committee of the Security Council would report on the measures taken. The deployment of humanitarian organizations followed, and all states, especially the neighbouring ones, were requested to cooperate. Failure to do so would have implied the adoption of additional ones (UNSC, 1998). Under this resolution, there is a continuous request for a political solution, and no responsibility is attributed to the FRY.⁶ The grave humanitarian situation is condemned, and support for the rights of the Albanian community in Kosovo is provided. (Ibid, Point 5).

UNSC resolution 1199

The second resolution (1199) was adopted in September 1998, because of the great concern regarding casualties and the flow of refugees in neighbouring countries. Alarmed by the grave humanitarian situation, the following measures were undertaken: a dialogue between the parties involved, the safe return of the refugees, and the solution of existing problems by political means. Should these measures have not been implemented, further ones were to be explored to bring stability to the region (UNSC, 1998). Repeatedly, a great concern is shown for the situation of the displaced. Yet, no responsibility is attributed to the Serbian authorities for the massacres. Nevertheless, it was requested that no repressive action was to be undertaken towards any community in Kosovo. In the meanwhile, a greater degree of autonomy for Kosovo is asked for as a possibility to move towards a political solution to the case.

UNSC resolution 1203

UNSC resolution 1203, adopted in October 1998, after recalling the previous resolutions on the case, reaffirmed the cruciality of the Security Council as responsible for international peace; emphasized the importance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); committed itself to acknowledge the sovereignty of the FRY; requested the cooperation of the parties with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and with NATO's verification missions while urging upon the members to provide humanitarian assistance (UNSC, 1998). Through this resolution, the UN restated

⁶ FRY- by this time referring to the republics of Serbia and Montenegro

its role as a primary agent in maintaining peace and stability, by stressing that the respect for the sovereignty of FRY was to be considered. Interestingly enough, the FRY (point 8) is called to be responsible for the security of the foreign personnel and welcomed for its dedication to this commitment (point 9). Yet, no such enforcement is expressed for the protection of Albanians or other communities in Kosovo.

The first three resolutions mentioned above refer to the *UN Charter* when they call for the respect of the sovereignty of FRY, and to the *Agenda for Peace* when they request for political dialogue and the imposition of an arms embargo. Furthermore, these resolutions display, on the one hand, the dominance of the realistic approach, by emphasizing the respect for state sovereignty. On the other hand, they showcase a liberal attitude, when referring to the cooperation of OSCE and NATO's verification missions. What characterizes this approach as liberal is that it still does not question the primary role of state, but calls for states to cooperate with international institutions as a way to further enhance peace at all levels. In other terms, whether the concepts of order and sovereignty, as part of the peace conceptualization, have not changed, non-intervention has developed from the idea of political dialogue and arms embargo (UNSC, 1994) to international and institutional cooperation (UNSC, 1998). Also, the self-determination of Kosovo has evolved from an understanding of self-administration to greater autonomy.

Period 2- UN Peacemaking Process/Means of Intervention

After the adoption of the first three UNSC resolutions above, many attempts have been undertaken to reconcile actors through an international agreement. Under these circumstances, Kosovo's leadership and the Serbian authorities participated in the Rambouillet talks. The main aim of the agreement was to: declare a ceasefire between the parties, establish peace and democratic self-government in Kosovo, and reassure the respect for human rights (UNSC, 1999). Additionally, the parties were required to cooperate, as requested by the UNSC resolution 872 (1993) with the International Criminal Tribunal for investigations. However, mediation failed as the then-president Milosevic did not accept Rambouillet's proposals, and consequently, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was bombed by NATO's forces on the 24th of March 1999.

The consecutive resolution (1239), adopted after the initiation of NATO's airstrike, recalled the previous resolutions on Kosovo and stressed the importance of coordination under the authority of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC) to provide assistance and relief for the displaced (UNSC,

1999). Resolution 1244, adopted in June 1999, authorized *de facto* the international presence in Kosovo. Concretely, it reaffirmed that the Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace. Also, it expressed its commitment to the sovereignty of the FRY. Similarly, like previous resolutions, it recalled the self-administration of Kosovo. Moreover, it requested the withdrawal of the Serb military and police forces and decided about the deployment of the international presence to establish a secure environment (UNSC, 1999). Overall, the core of this resolution was the deployment of the military forces with a substantial NATO's participation and guided by the principle of a unified command. This resolution was put on stage after NATO's bombing stopped, and it served to restate that the UN was the central authority in stabilizing the region. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), pursuant to UNSC resolution 1244 (ibid), enabled for a safe return of refugees, the withdrawal of the military, and the deployment of the international community. It focused on resolving the situation in a post-conflict phase, by filling the *vacuum* of power created with the withdrawal of the Serbian forces. It reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the safeguard of the FRY's sovereignty. At the same time, it re-stated the idea of self-administration for Kosovo. Additionally, it authorized the international presence to be responsible for the security of the whole territory.

All the resolutions mentioned above share some commonalities: the call for a peaceful solution to the conflict, the restatement of the UNSC as the main responsible authority for the maintenance of peace, the emphasis on the sovereignty of the FRY, as well as the protection of civilians and the safe return of refugees. They were adopted with either Russia's or China's abstention, excluding the last one (1367), which ended the arms embargo with unanimity.

During the period 1992-1999, there were continuous warnings on the FRY, which might be seen as the result of the international community's *liberal approach* on the matter (Skrpec, 2003). They aimed at finding a solution all parties involved could benefit from. Concretely, the way out saw international organizations acting as conflict managers and recognizing the preeminence of cooperative norms and rules.

Period 3-Post-Conflict-UN Peace Building

Pursuant to the *Agenda for Peace* (1992), once the objectives of the peacekeeping and peacemaking phases would have been accomplished, the peace-building stage would have followed, while addressing social, economic, and humanitarian issues. Concretely, peace-building aims at preventing the recurrence

of the war, by targeting its roots. Otherwise said, peace is here supposed to be built on durable foundations. Galtung (1976) is credited with coining the word “peacebuilding” in his book “Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding”, Galtung maintained that apart from peacekeeping and peacemaking structures must be established that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where conflicts may occur. This can be perceived as the basis for today’s understanding of peacebuilding as an effort to create a stable (or sometimes lasting) state of peace, primarily defined by Kenneth Boulding in 1978 as “a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved.”

In the case of Kosovo, peacebuilding was based on the process of state-building and the phase of the final status. Before the proclamation of independence on the 17th February 2008, UNMIK was the highest executive structure, NATO KFOR was in charge of the security, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) was supposed to *monitor, mentor, and advice* the competent Kosovo institutions on all areas related to the rule of law (including a customs service), while retaining certain executive responsibilities (OSCE, 2008); the OSCE was responsible for the reconstruction of state institutions, and the EU for the economic reconstruction (Gërxi, 2017). After the declaration of independence, despite other challenges, Kosovo started its long path towards gaining its recognition, integration in the UN, and membership in regional and international organizations (Brovina, 2017).

After Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008, the international community shifted its focus toward the functionality of the new state’s institutions and the rule of law. The EU increased its presence in the country, taking over a series of structural issues which required a strong focus to be resolved (Deda, 2010). The status of Kosovo remained disputable between Kosovo and Serbia as well as within the EU and international community. Due to the lack of consensus about the status of Kosovo as well as the widespread corruption within the public sector, the state-building process was significantly hindered. EULEX faced enormous challenges in addressing organized crime and corruption in Kosovo due to their coordination problems and interactions with national political elites in the country (Martin & Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2019). On the other hand, the EU-facilitated dialogue aimed at normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia and contained a strategy toward its achievement. Although both Kosovo and Serbia’s governments were not initially compelled to join the dialogue and repeatedly emphasized their unwillingness to change their stance on Kosovo’s status, the EU found the necessary means to persuade both parties to join the dialogue (ibid).

Initially, neither the international community nor the government in Kosovo did not place emphasis on a more inclusive approach to the peace-building processes. The EU did not completely grasp the local context, and a more inclusive approach would have enabled it to conduct a more rigorous and dynamic review of the community, identify pertinent stakeholders, and match them with its goals across several policy domains (ibid). On the other hand, UN Women in 1999 started advocating for women's involvement in decision-making, conflict resolution, and access to justice with governments and the general public in Kosovo. In Kosovo, UN Women continues to work together with the government, civil society, and women's organizations to support initiatives and programs that promote humanitarian action, peace, and security. The gender dimension put forward by the UNSC Resolution 1325 is brought into action as a key factor for building peace. Adopted in 2000, this resolution prioritizes issues related to women, by focusing on prevention, protection, relief, and recovery. It is based on the principle of respect for women's rights, by emphasizing the importance of a *gender-based approach* and stressing the significance of a gender perspective in peace-oriented programs.

The resolution addresses the concept of security from a civilian perspective. Given that most of the victims in conflicts are/were civilians, threats to peace do not come solely under a military form. Peace is also threatened when human rights are denied, when violence takes place and when there is poverty. Security is not only economic, political, and environmental, but personal and community-related as well. Resolution 1325 portrays human security as a crucial dimension of peace and stability. Overall, human security and a gender-focused approach enable and open the way to a variety of initiatives. As conflicts can affect genders differently, the protection needs are not the same (Article 41). Displacement brings women to face different challenges, forms of violence included. Conflicts sharpen their social and economic problems (Article 46).

Non-solely does the resolution recognize the difficulties women face, but at the same time, it emphasizes the potential they have. The solution envisaged by this document consists of a long-term strategy that would serve to improve women's *status quo* and empower them (Article 52). It seeks to be applied on three levels: to answer the needs; to stop the roots of discrimination towards women, and to acknowledge their potential (Article 53). In times of conflict, women are highly defenceless, and their needs are under-estimated. On such occasions, discrimination and violence towards women is only a reflection and reproduction of the violence they endure in times of peace. This means that the position of women in society is insecure, even when there is peace. Most of the civilians that are affected during conflicts are women and children. Res. 1325 focuses on two main points: (1) the inferior status and position that women

have in society and at the same time (2) the fact that women participate as warriors in these conflicts (Article 64, 65). At this point, the resolution proposes that the position of women in society should be reconsidered, and they should be given legally the same rights as men. To implement it, the resolution foresees a *3p* approach, namely: “protection, participation and prevention” (Article 73). It deals with protection from conflicts, participation of women, and inhibition of discrimination. The UNSC calls states for action plans at a national level to implement this resolution. Protection is understood in legal, social, and economic terms (Article 252). Participation is conceptualized mainly in politics, the economy, and the decision-making sphere (Article 299). Women can take part in various projects of development, peace programs, governance, etc. Equal rights at a legislative level would ensure protection from discrimination (Article 272) and politically, women’s participation would be achieved through the development of a culture of peace. Practically, some significant changes have led to the inclusion of more women in the Kosovo Police, however, traditional approaches to gender roles have left women in Kosovo underrepresented in decision-making at all levels, including the security sector.

In post-independent Kosovo, peace, and security needed to be reconsidered, as the decision to form a national army has caused a debate on whether to respect international norms or to pursue the state’s interest. External efforts of the UN with UNSC Resolution 1325 to build a sustainable peace were confronted with more realistic internal attempts to see peace and security at risk, by forming the national army. Its creation was contested though, with the Albanians looking at it as their right, and the Serbs as a threat (DW, 2018). Though, evidence shows that peace processes that are more inclusive have a better chance of success (Dumasy, 2018). In the Kosovo case, the engagement of different local stakeholders at various levels in the peacebuilding processes, including the dialogue, might have led to greater support for the reached agreements and a more sustainable outcome of the process.

Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Kosovo

a) Gender-based equal participation in policy-making

Women’s participation in decision-making is an important factor in democratic societies as it contributes to positive changes in laws, policies, services, institutions and social norms that affect women and others. However, women’s participation in policy and decision-making, including leadership positions in governments, local councils, conventions and other institutions,

still did not reach the satisfactory level in the country. In 2014, the Government of Kosovo with the support of UN Women – one of the key actors in implementing UNSCR 1325 – has adopted *the National Action Plan* for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS (Agency of Gender Equality, 2014). The plan was launched by the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) and it foresees three outcomes: increasing women’s participation in decision-making and peacebuilding processes; introducing a gender perspective in the security sector and increasing the number of women in security structures; and providing access to justice to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Both governmental and non-governmental institutions are responsible for the implementation of the resolution. However, the execution of standards for gender and security is not successful in the practice.

Gender-equal participation in policy-making is still a big obstacle for the institutions of Kosovo. Subject to a substantially advanced *Law on Gender Equality* (LGE)⁷, the Kosovo institutions have repeatedly failed to reach the legal benchmarks. The LGE 2014 lays down a range of steps aimed at achieving gender balance at the legislative and political levels. At the political level, for all legislative, executive, and public institutions, the law determines a fifty (50) percent gender quota (LGE, Article 6.8). At the policy level, it establishes a systematic mechanism for gender mainstreaming throughout various stages of policy-making. However, public institutions have consistently neglected to incorporate gender experiences into their policy formulation and to implement substantive policy changes based on gender-disaggregated results (Farnsworth, et al. 2018).

b) Gender participation in the security forces

Traditional perspectives on gender roles in Kosovo have underestimated women at all levels, including the security sector. The participation of women is essential for effective and sustainable peace. Women have led the peace movement and promoted the reconstruction of post-conflict communities, but they are almost completely overlooked in peace and reconstruction negotiations. This alienation limits access to recovery opportunities, human rights abuses justice, reformed laws and the establishment of public institutions.

In addition, UNSCR 1325 emphasizes “the importance of women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”. The introduction of gender balance in the national armed and security forces began earlier in Kosovo, with the country concentrating on enhancing gender equality capabilities. While steps have been taken to achieve gender mainstreaming in the police forces of Kosovo, questions arise in the

⁷ Law No. 05/L-020 on Gender Equality

assessment of the degree of this participation. Even though the security sector tends to be viewed as a male domain, there has been progressing by introducing the concept of gender equality (Stickings, 2015). One of the first organizations to endorse the principles of UNSCR 1325 was the Kosovo Police (KP), which sought to consciously harmonise its policies by implementing the WPS into its framework. Another positive result is the recruitment of women as skilled soldiers and police officers, through the development of gender equality promotion institutions. Both legal procedures, such as the Police and Anti-Discrimination Legislation, and internal standards governing gender equality and banning any form of discrimination have been adopted by the KP (Odanovic and Gajic, 2013). In addition, to institutionalize gender equality policies, the KP has defined administrative guidelines through three distinct and relevant units: the Gender Equality Unit, the Domestic Violence Unit, and the Anti-Trafficking (Unit Stickings, 2015).

c) Domestic Violence against Women: Still a Concern in Kosovo

Domestic violence continues to be one of the predominant practices against women, as well as against children, in Kosovo. The level of domestic violence is likely to be much higher than the number of incidents effectively reported to the police, considering the stigma associated with sexual violence and the lack of awareness thereupon (Farnsworth, et al. 2018). Yet, addressing domestic violence as a way of gender-based violence is an important and invaluable challenge for every society's success and advancement, since it influences all its citizens: women, men, and children. Kosovo has been very effective in strengthening the structures to support and protect victims of domestic abuse. At the central level, some effort has been made in licensing the capacities of social workers and easing the procedures of social service provision. Nonetheless, municipalities continuously fail to allocate sufficient funds for social housing and capacity building (OHCHR 2019). There is a legitimate concern that key organizations are still struggling to maintain a shared understanding of their roles and obligations within the current legal structure in the battle against domestic violence. In addition, there are worries about the lack of infrastructure needed to protect and help victims of domestic abuse (OSCE 2019).

Kosovo's peace-building process: a male-led decision-making process

The gender dimension in Kosovo has not solely been neglected at the local level. Rather, the international commitment has shown signs of weakness in this regard too, leaving women completely left out from the peacebuilding

process. Kosovo's peace-building process under UNMIK, and pursuant to UNSC Res. 1244 (1999), has been largely a male-led decision-making process, with no exception in the judicial and education sectors.

EULEX, deploying on the 9th of December 2008 and effectively operational from the beginning of 2009, did not make a difference in this respect. It is the biggest and most costly operation of the European Union (EU) Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and the first to be endowed with extensive executive powers. Except for Alexandra Papadopoulou, all its Head of Missions (HoMs) were male (2016-19) (Picciano, 2020).

Despite some progress, Kosovo continues to face challenges regarding gender equality in terms of political participation, leadership, economy, peace, and security and it still struggles to end violence against women. Traditional gender stereotypes and cultural norms make up the most essential factor leaving women out of the decision-making process. There is still a huge gap between the theory and the practice toward gender equality and the inclusiveness of women in leadership roles. Although Kosovo has the most favourable Gender Equality Law in the region, its implementation remains very low. All these anti-gender discrimination laws and laws aimed at increasing women's representation in local and central government, are formulated to inspire women's representation in politics, these remain mostly on paper. When laws are written but not implemented, they do not have the intended social impact which can then be noticed in the small numbers of women participating in the Kosovo political area, but even more in the number of in leadership position at local level.

Concluding Remarks

At the time Kosovo's war erupted, state sovereignty and non-intervention were considered as the key pillars of international norms. In this context, UNSC Res. 1244 reaffirmed the sovereignty of the FRY while condemning at the same time the violence against civilians. In the meanwhile, Kosovo's war occurred before the emergence of the so-called R2P asserting that sovereignty is primarily a responsibility of the state for protecting its civilians. This said the FRY would have been fully responsible for the atrocities committed at that time.

The case of Kosovo enabled the space for reflection on the existing rules on sovereignty and the state's responsibility to protect its civilians. Otherwise said, there has been a shift from state sovereignty to human rights defence. Also, addressing the impact that armed conflicts can have on women, and looking at

the way they might be significantly empowered in post-conflict processes, are two aspects that may help build sustainable peace. Additionally, the case of Kosovo serves to display the interaction between the realist and the liberal theories and the space for critical theories. The period preceding the conflict is dominated by realism with the exercise of the veto power in the UNSC, and the preservation of state sovereignty at all costs. Whereas liberalism is enshrined in the *Agenda for Peace* later on, and its attempts for mediation and cooperation. In the end, the UNSC has always been somehow trapped between the two principles (realism versus liberalism) (Bures, 2007). And the juxtaposition of these two theories and their application to NATO's intervention has generated a vivid debate. This has been maintained in the post-conflict period with both theories being intermingled: the security debate covers attempts for a peace-building agenda, whereas the formation of a national army is pursued.

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WAR AND SANCTIONS. SOME ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM MATERIALIST ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. The political field seems to prefer the intellectual resources offered by Political Sciences and Economic Sciences because they fit well into the habits created by the daily practice of power. Assuming that it is not just about self-censorship, the current perspective offered by these scientific fields has some blind spots, and risks legitimizing an unfounded optimism regarding the effectiveness of the means used in the crisis generated by the Russian-Ukrainian war. That is why I consider the perspective offered by materialist anthropology to be very useful for describing the complexity of the power relations, and for a fine-tuning of what-is-at-stake. This perspective, which looks at long-term trends, can highlight the differences between imagined power (given by habits, abstractions and the assumption of continuities) and real power (given by the technologies and resources that matter, real scarcity and international competition). I concluded that the imagined power relations of today are a *survival* of the real power relations from the near past (when the GDP in the Western world was correlated with powerful local manufacturing and a complete dominance in high-tech research). Our mindset, habits and biases created a blind-spot that made difficult to grasp the complexity of the situation and to react accordingly.

Keywords: materialist analysis, clean and dirty energy, sanctions, Russia, EU

Introduction

The article is written during the Russo-Ukrainian war and is intended for readers which are familiar with the context. It aims to show that the mainstream solutions are technically impossible and politically shortsighted, and to highlight

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the biases and blind-spots of European political actors involved in the conflict, using materialist analysis and structural analysis.

The materialist analysis carries more weight in the economy of this work. Following a neo-evolutionary approach, I anchored my analysis on official statistics and scholarly studies related to the relationship between economy and energy. I used this type of analysis because long-term trends could create a good framework for a fresh perspective, in order to better see the limitations of short-term orientation, with unclear developments, chaotic and incompletely formulated stakes. From this perspective, the article clarifies the cost of the risks taken and sheds light on what may be lost in the long run if the approach remains unchanged – I did not take into account an escalation of the situation.

The discourse analysis is based on the daily monitoring of YouTube channels from DW, BBC, France 24 and CNN, mirrored with Russian or pro-Russian sources, expelled by censorship on Telegram, Odyssey or Rumble. I didn't cite the source of the terms I mentioned, and I didn't do a quantitative analysis of the most common expressions, because I thought that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the folklore of the current war. I have only shown what the mainstream discourse does not say or what it shadows, and the consequences that should follow from this. Further analysis might be needed for historical purposes, highlighting the scale of enthusiasm in western media, or the most vocal political actors, and pin-pointing each singular discourse in the general series.

Energy. Who will survive after peak prosperity?

Following in the footsteps of the neo-evolutionary anthropologist Leslie White, I believe that any analysis of economic-technological progress must put in foreground the question of energy: What quantity of energy can any socio-cultural system extract from the natural environment in order to use it for satisfying needs? In this way we could better understand how each society is structured and organized, as well as how power is distributed – both real and imagined (beginning with the errors of perception resulting from *survivals* from a previous system).

Recapitulating White's narrative (1949, 371-374), we can find that the first two stages of evolution were based on modes of production that depended almost entirely on human energy, based on the consumption of plants and animals, and punctually augmented by what it could be extracted from fire, wind, water, etc. The only significant difference between the two stages is given by the more conscious control of these resources (agriculture, animal husbandry, etc.); but this difference, apparently minor, most often had dramatic consequences in the way society was structured, by the fact that it allowed differentiated accumulation.

With the third stage, which is based on *fossil fuels*, the evolution accelerates; that's why almost all graphs representing techno-economic progress look the same: exponential curve. At this stage, the logic of value structures *the relations between objects* through price (starting from the abstract labor crystallized in their production and from the rarity of the resources used), and *the relations between people* through income and property rights; blurring the boundary between social and material relations.

In the same third stage of evolution, the limits of economic reality seem to be quite clear: (1) the amount of work that can be extracted from the population; (2) the amount of resources at hand; (3) the amount of available energy; (3) the ability to recycle or to dispose the waste. The amount of work and recycling can be gradually improved by investments in research, development and automation. However, the situation of resources and energy is the most important puzzle to solve because they remain the mainstays and the weak-points of any sustainable development. Energy consumption is closely correlated with economic growth and decline, because it is involved in production, reproduction of workforce and consumption; and the use of mineral resources is a good indicator of the share that a state can occupy in the global GWP in the near future.

The acceleration and fragility of this mode of production is best reflected in the consumption of resources. Coal, which puts the Industrial Revolution into orbit, was mined for 800 years (Hubbert 1956, 8), but only in 1880 coal passed traditional biomass (Way et al. 2022, 1). After that, acceleration became visible for the naked eye. In 31 years (1925-1956) we consumed as much coal as in the previous 800 years. The story of oil and gas is similar, only it is more compressed, and the combined known reserves are three times smaller than in the case of coal, including shale and other costly and difficult to extract oil (Hubbert 1956, 26). As resources were more accurately estimated, energy began to look more and more like the Achilles' heel of Western civilization. The first alarm signal about peak-prosperity was raised by Marion King Hubbert, a researcher employed at the time by Shell Oil Company. This perspective occurs most often when hard sciences researchers begin to lean on economics. E.g:

“Civilization inflation-adjusted wealth is sustained by global energy consumption and grows only as fast. (...) The GWP grows when energy consumption grows super-exponentially (at an accelerating rate), or when global energy reserve discovery exceeds depletion. If growth rates of wealth approach zero, civilization becomes fragile with respect to externally forced decay. This appears to be particularly true if prior growth was super-exponential.” (Garrett 2014, 149).

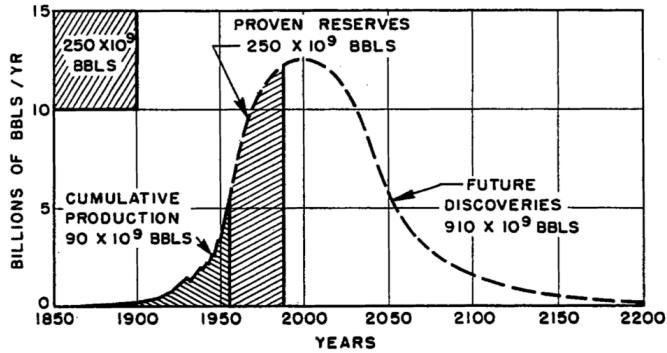


Fig. 1: World crude-oil production based upon initial reserves of 1250 B. barrels (Hubbert 1956, 23)

This slightly apocalyptic picture is often nuanced by financier economists. The most used concept of reassurance is “energy intensity”, which explains that, due to the efficiency of production, distribution, urban infrastructure, living conditions and products intended for consumption (and also, probably due to the outsourcing of energy-intensive production to developing countries), in Western economies the GDP growth is increasingly decoupled from energy consumption; except for agriculture, which is 4-5 times more energy intensive than manufacturing (WB 2022, 84):

“The oil intensity of GDP has fallen considerably since the 1970s. Similarly, prior to the price shock, consumer spending on energy as a share of total spending is also lower, especially in advanced economies, which means that consumers may respond less to energy price changes, at least in the short term, than in the 1970s.” (WB 2022, 82)

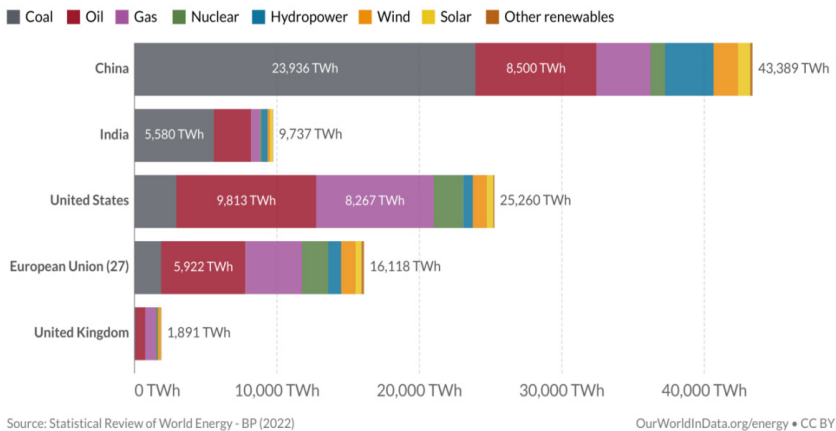


Fig. 2: Primary energy consumption by source (Ritchie 2021)

Technological optimism seems to be even more effective in the appeasement process. Researchers from the Institute for New Economic Thinking found that most of the earlier projections for green energies “have systematically underestimated deployment and overestimated costs” (Way et al. 2022, 7). In such scenario, the future, if correctly described and correctly managed by politicians, could reveal opportunities rather than dangers:

“The combination of exponentially decreasing costs and rapid exponentially increasing deployment is different from anything observed in any other energy technologies in the past, and positions these key green technologies to challenge the dominance of fossil fuels within a decade.” (Way et al. 2022, 2)

“Rapid replacement of fossil fuel technologies by low-cost key green technologies—in power and transport in particular—causes the expected annual energy system cost in 2050 for the *Fast Transition scenario* to be \$514 billion cheaper than that for the *No Transition scenario*.” (Way et al. 2022, 13)

In the same optimistic logic, we can see the weaknesses of new technologies as strengths. It is known that, compared to fossil fuel use, power generation from wind and solar is characterized by a high degree of intermittency (Tashie-Lewisa & Nnabuife 2021, 1). This intermittency can make the electrolysis process needed to turn water into hydrogen economically viable: we have free energy from the sun or wind which, sometimes, it can't be sold anywhere:

“For instance, it is reported that in a particular wind farm in north-western Spain, a sizable section of the farm has to be disconnected regularly from the power grid to maintain stability during the off-peak hours. According to the operators, this off-operation wastes a total of 13 GWh of electrical energy per year. This energy could conveniently be used to generate enough hydrogen to fuel a fleet of 728,000 cars for a year if each vehicle needs 2.5 kg of hydrogen of refueling per week.” (Tashie-Lewisa & Nnabuife 2021, 3)

How could we reconcile the fears of geologists with the optimism of financiers and futurists? A first step would be to go back to White's model and see if things become clearer, by updating it and, in this way, we can see that everyone is both right and wrong. As I said in a previous paper (Butaru 2017, 87-95), there are quite clear signs that we are in a period of transition towards an evolutionary stage qualitatively different from the third stage described by evolutionists. Electricity and electronic products, which have initially been integrated without problems in the previous mode of production, managed to integrate the entire system in them, being embedded in almost any means of production or product.

The new type of automation enabled by these technologies has accelerated and generalized the old one, and it has the tendency to replace labor in most easily quantifiable activities. As a result, the price of many products and services is becoming increasingly detached from the amount of labor crystallized in that product or service. Also, in many fields, for copyright reasons or sometimes even for technical reasons, reverse-engineering cannot be done. This means that an overrated product cannot be brought down to earth by the competition, based on the resources which were consumed and the equivalent abstract work required to reproduce it. As a result, the price is mostly psychological, just as economics is becoming more and more psychology and statistics, and economy is becoming more and more casino. That would explain quite satisfactorily why we see a decoupling of GDP growth from a similar increase in energy consumption: beyond efficiency, we are dealing with inflation produced by artificially set and psychologically accepted prices.

And as far as techno-futuristic optimism is concerned, things are the same. Yes, the future is here, and electricity costs will continue to decrease. Their optimism may be more grounded than the optimism of the pessimist Marion King Hubbert, who saw atomic energy as the salvation. The only impediment is that the means of capturing green energies are built with current fossil energy; and the speed of transition depends on the price of dirty energies, which have passed peak-discovery in the 70s and peak-production in the 2000s (Martenson 2022). If we look at the evolution of the energy mix, we see that today's fragile balance is supported by dirty energy, and green energy cannot even support current processes, let alone an acceleration of the production of solar panels, wind turbines, dams, storage systems etc.:

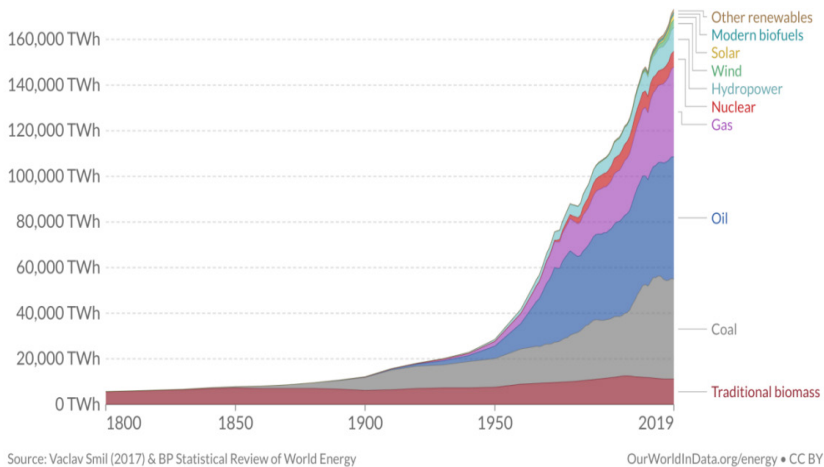


Fig. 3: Global primary energy consumption by source (Ritchie 2021)

The second step would be to clarify the stakes of the discussion. Oil and gas will be around for a long time, and coal even longer – long before running out of oil will trouble us, running out of cheap oil will mess us up. The new economic system will, in one way or another, feed back to the actual conditions of production to reflect the actual international consumption of resources, because real power cannot be grounded only in psychology – the only worry is whether it will be produced peacefully. And the transition to green energy requires more than political will – it requires the recognition and acceptance of limits. Beyond apocalyptic or optimistic visions, the real stake is how smooth the transition will be: will it be well thought out and consistently implemented, or will we get shock therapy?

Geopolitics. Who needs who?

The mainstream European discourse states that “Russia clearly depends more on the EU than vice versa” (Wagnsson 2008, 129). The story rings true if we look at GDP, the share of bilateral trade in each side’s total trade, or other numbers-mediated realities. Some politicians even refer to the discrepancy between foreign direct investments in the EU-Russia relationship – 75% vs 1.9% (Siegfried Mureşan *apud* Grădinaru 2022). But if we pass this thin layer of abstraction, we see that this perspective is, at best, superficial; because not all products are equal, even if the price makes us think they are. While the lack of finished products only affects the convenience of consumers, accustomed by the advertising industry to prefer a certain brand, the lack of reasonably priced raw materials affects the competitiveness of the entire economy. That’s why wars are fought for raw materials rather than branded products. In other words, some products are more strategic than others, dictating dependency relationships:

“Strategic industries are defined by scarcity and their importance to socioeconomic development, which makes them pivotal to ensure autonomy and create dependencies by others. Natural resources can be considered strategic industries due to the imperative of reliable supply. Innovative and advanced technologies are also strategic industries as tools for an efficient economy and the limited ability to diversify.” (Diesen 2021,13)

And of all strategic products, energy is the most important, because it dictates the pace of growth or decline. Given the fact that energy resources will eventually correlate with consumption, and the supply at reasonable prices is often below the level of demand, sanctions imposed on such products only

lengthen supply chains and inflate prices, at best. In this sector, the global economy works according to the principle of communicating vessels: what you don't sell in one part, you sell in another, filling the gap created by the reorientation of the old customer:

“The outlook for world oil supply has been revised upward, with more limited declines in Russian supply than previously forecast. While Russia's exports of crude and oil products to Europe, the US, Japan and Korea have fallen by nearly 2.2 mb/d since the start of the war, the rerouting of flows to India, China, Turkey and others, along with seasonally higher Russian domestic demand has mitigated upstream losses. By July, Russian oil production was only 310 kb/d below pre-war levels while total oil exports were down just 580 kb/d.” (IEA 2022).

However, there is a risk that the sanctions will limit the global supply because refineries around the globe are quite tuned for specific grades of oil, and because gas pipelines and LNG terminals are adapted to trading habits, redundancy being quite uneconomical; therefore shutting down wells that run out of bluffing customers has long-term effects given the fact that the reopening process takes longer than the time when strategic reserves can make up for the void (Martenson 2022).

Another aspect, which has not been taken into account, although it has been quite obvious for several decades, is the fact that BRICS countries are starting to become the main market for their own producers, becoming less and less dependent on advanced economies. The role of the United States and Europe as final markets for emerging economies has steadily declined, the share of emerging markets' trade with advanced economies shrank from 83% to 50% (Beausang 2012, 56).

From this perspective, the sanctions imposed on Russia are more like magical thinking than strategic decisions. Russia wants, but doesn't need Europe. The reverse is true for Europe. However, Russia has its share of blame for maintaining the illusion that it is dependent on Europe, as it invested little in pipelines to Asia, being reluctant to feed the rising dragon, and courted Europe in every possible way, because it was as worried as the rest of the world about the meteoric rise of China, “even though Russia never names China directly as one of the reasons for its pursuit of Greater Europe” (Menkiszak 2013, 36).

Unfortunately, the EU, following the example of the USA, often confuses internal politics with foreign relations, consolidating over time an identity of 'normative power' (Wagnsson 2008, 128), which increasingly irritated Russia, as the statements were doubled by actions, which did not always seem to be consistent. Already in 2004, after the EU supported the Orange Revolution in

Ukraine, Putin began to have an aversion to European's export of norms, principles and good practices (Wagnsson 2008, 142), which reminded him of the disaster suffered by the USSR following the reforms dictated by the Westerners:

"The relationship between the European Union and Russia has reached a level of misunderstanding not seen since the end of the Cold War and is in danger of going "badly wrong" (Peter Mandelson *apud* Wagnsson 2008, 142).

Relations deteriorated further after the bloodless annexation of Crimea in 2014; and, after the bloody invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the rift became irreparable. However, Russia did not directly abuse the energy dependence relation with Europe, but acted gradually: Russia complied with long-term contracts, but, in contrast to normal practice, Gazprom delivered no additional volumes via their Electronic Sales Platform (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 8). In a way, Putin was using Canadian sanctions against Europe's interest when some gas turbines needed repair, and encouraged Europeans to tighten the noose around their own necks for symbolic stakes, such as paying for gas in rubles; and governments have done it with dignity, to save face, despite warnings from the business community:

"Many German manufacturers are warning that they will have to close down production completely if energy inputs dry up. Petr Cingr, the chief executive of Germany's largest ammonia producing company, and a key supplier of fertilizers and exhaust fluids for diesel engines, warned of the devastating consequences of the ending of Russian gas supplies. "We have to stop [production] immediately", he said, "from 100 to zero." According to UBS analysts, no gas for the winter will result in a "deep recession" with GDP contracting 6 percent by the end of next year. Germany's Bundesbank has warned that the effects on global supply chains of any Russian cut-off would increase the original shock effect by two and a half times. Thyssen Krupp, Germany's largest steelmaker, has said that without natural gas to run its furnaces "shutdowns and technical damage to our facilities cannot be ruled out." (Roberts 2022)

The Western response was unexpectedly simple and sharp for such a complex and delicate situation.

First of all, the roots of the conflict were left out of the discussion, and the various ways of solving the situation were not weighed. And, although the economic impact could be calculated, the various official or scholarly studies were left in the shadow, fragmented and hidden in technical jargon under the Internet's avalanche of information.

Second, the discourse of European leaders, amplified by the mass media, operated with a very limited selection of terms. The most used terms were: freedom, independence, European values, solidarity, sacrifice, etc.; and Putin's Russia was described with their opposite, reviving the cold war dichotomies and some older russophobic clichés. Also, the censorship, marginalization and disciplining of dissenting voices exceeded the limits we were used to in previous conflicts (Noam Chomsky *apud* Brand 2022). The most hilarious form of censorship occurred in the area of describing the military operations, as if how the actions were performed depended in any way on how they were described.

The terms our leaders choose for playing the game forced them to ignore the possible economic and electoral cost (Baerbock 2022). Captive of their discourse logic, which is more appropriate for a crusade than for a geopolitical game, European politicians were going deeper and deeper into the fantasy land, creating the impression that if the Ukrainians defeat the Russians, gas will become cheaper again and the looming stagflation will vanish.

Politicians and mass-media created the illusion that European citizens have the power to neutralize Putin's energy weapon by reducing the home temperature by few degrees in the winter, and by taking fewer, shorter and, why not, group showers. But, in absolute terms, European households consume just about 29 bcm of gas – of which just 63.6 % is used for heating our homes (Eurostat 2020, 23); meanwhile industry sector consumes 34,7 bcm – and we could add 11,9 bcm by the trade and commerce sector (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 5-6). Besides its use for providing electricity and heating to industrial facilities, natural gas is one of the most important source of energy in the European manufacturing sector, especially in Germany: producers of chemicals, basic metals, non-metallic minerals (glass, cement, ceramics, etc.), food etc. (ECB 2022).

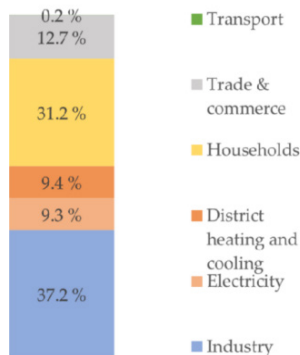
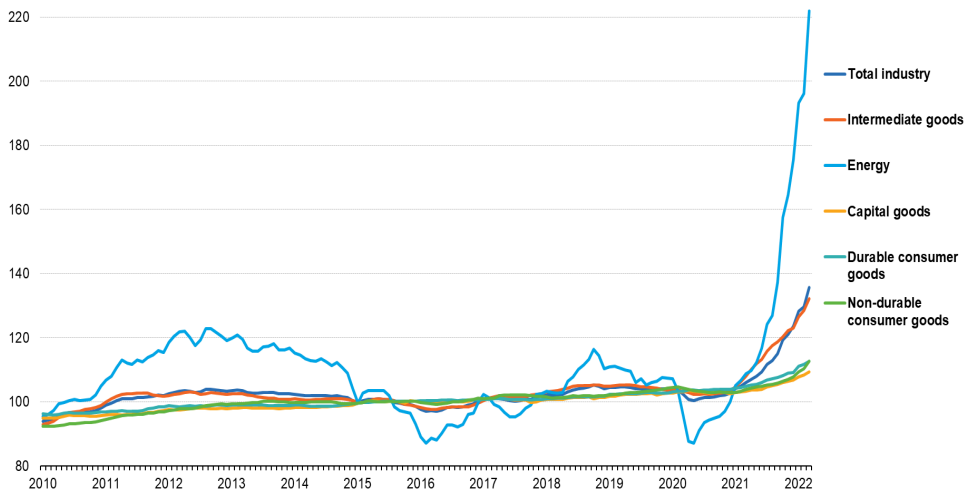


Fig. 4: Supply sources of natural gas consumption in Germany in 2021 (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 6)

Regarding the estimates on the impact of the sanctions, we can say that it is impossible to completely replace Russian gas in Europe, no matter how cold it would be in our homes:

“Even for optimistic estimates, however, our findings indicate a natural gas import gap of about 9 bcm in the coming year. A more conservative assessment of the import gap is 22 bcm” (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 20).

And if the electoral cost will be seen a little later, the economic cost can already be seen on the horizon. Long before the energy crisis, European producers had difficulties in competing on international markets because of the high cost of the workforce. Beside prestige, only the cheap energy made our manufacturing competitive, keeping the last producers in Europe, mainly in Germany and its dependencies. Now, industrial producer prices are raising alarmingly high. As an economic indicator it may foreshadow subsequent price changes for businesses and consumers (Eurostat 2022).



Source: Eurostat (online data code: sts_inpp_m)

eurostat

Fig. 5: EU Industrial Producer Prices 2010-2022 (Eurostat 2022)

Moreover, the global disruption created by the lengthening of distribution chains risks producing a global collapse, similar or worse to the Great Recession. International organizations like WB and IMF have a rather optimistic estimate in this regard, but optimism fades away as the time goes by and “storm clouds gather” (IMF 2022, xiii):

“On net, model simulations suggest that the upward revisions to energy prices, including to oil, natural gas and coal, could reduce global output growth by 0.9 percentage point in 2022 and 1.1 percentage points in 2023, resulting in a 2 percent reduction in global output by 2023” (WB 2022, 86-87).

„Global economic activity is experiencing a broad-based and sharper-than-expected slowdown, with inflation higher than seen in several decades. The cost-of-living crisis, tightening financial conditions in most regions, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic all weigh heavily on the outlook. Global growth is forecast to slow from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2023. This is the weakest growth profile since 2001 except for the global financial crisis and the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.” (IMF 2022, abstract)

Also, if we think about the future, what we cannot gain on long term is more important than what we will certainly lose next year. Russia is more than just a gas station with atomic bombs: it has vast surface, mineral resources, water resources, arable land and highly educated population – and it is pretty fascinated by European symbols. In many ways, Russia is the only asset that Europe would have in its relations with China and other rapid-developing countries. More important, Russia could provide to Europe a very safe buffer for the possible shocks of the future, caused by climate change or other foreseeable crisis. Siberia is our best assurance policy for agriculture and population in case that climate change will have the outcomes that scientists predict. And, as I said before, the transition to green energy cannot be done at an acceptable pace without the contribution of cheap traditional fuels.

It is also very likely that the intermittency of solar and wind energy cannot be sufficiently compensated by batteries, hydrogen and upstream dams. A good solution to this problem would be the intercontinental connection of electricity transmission lines. The most practical way to overcome the barriers given by the number of limited hours in which the sun provides us energy is the interconnection of solar energy producers along the time zone: from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The solution seems technically feasible, the current can be transmitted (in the DC version, which is a match made in heaven for solar panel) over distances of up to 20,000 Km (Nexans 2022), but requires massive investment and high consumption of conductive metals. For a smooth transition we need to accelerate mining of copper and other mineral resources needed for the future increased demand for electricity.

Of course, that would increase interdependence and require even more skills on the part of politicians; plus an abandonment of current dominance stakes in favor of very long-term common stakes. In the long run, we can also do away with tyrants or inconvenient rulers, because no one can cheat death, for now. And if we don't maintain a belligerent atmosphere, there's a good chance they won't reproduce, like an antidote to a toxic relationship.

Conclusions

Assuming that the European politicians are neither more misinformed than us, nor more informed (having a hidden agenda, well tracked, based on data inaccessible to the public), the only conclusion that can be drawn is that we are dealing with a socially constructed blind-spot.

On the one hand, we are dealing with a trap created by *the terms with which they operate* in international politics, starting from the habit of exporting norms, created by frequent humanitarian interventions and the continuous redefinition of the limits of sovereignty in relation to the sphere of interventionism, promoted in the name of common values. When you start a symbolic battle in moral terms it is much harder to back down, because image costs can end political careers. Also, if a critical mass of speakers using this type of speech is reached, the pressure to conform is almost impossible to stop. Censorship and sanctions initially applied to dissonant speakers helped, to some extent, in creating conformity. Afterwards, things went by themselves. Also, as Gonzalo Lira² observed, the European political and technocratic field is dominated by a meritocracy which is accustomed with impression management, by acquiring the correct set of dispositions (Georgakakis 2017, 77-91), rather than problem management.

This habitus of the European chancelleries is based on recruitment and promotion practices that favor conformity and not taking risks which can affect one's career (Lira 2022). The political field has become so autonomous in recent decades – through professionalization and exclusion of 'irresponsible' populist interests (Bourdieu 2012, 82-98) – that we see enough examples of politicians staying in the field even if they lose popularity, provided they have not disturbed their colleagues; and, conversely, we have enough examples of popular politicians who had to abandon the fight or to start from scratch after opposing the mainstream. Usually, the rejection from the political field is followed by another

² Gonzalo Lira Lopez is a pro-Russian Chilean writer living in Ukraine.

one from the mainstream media, leaving them outside the sanitized political space, in some sort of political pornographic territory.

On the other hand, we are dealing with a trap created by *the economic practices*. Europeans have become accustomed to the natural decoupling of the salaries and the price of a product from the effort and resources consumed by its production. Subsidies, cheap money (on credit) or free money (on projects), jobs that seem important although it is impossible to calculate their contribution to the overall economic activities, the arbitrariness of the rise or fall of shares on the stock exchange and, more recently, the absolute arbitrariness of the value of cryptocurrencies have created the impression that anything is possible if you can make others believe it. Hence the attention to the dissonances in the mainstream discourse. Although their intuition is good (economics has always had a strong psychological component and many illusionists have had their merits and contribution in the field), the habit of such expectations can be harmful. Bullshit jobs might lead to bullshit politics, because widely shared illusions cannot cut through situations where we are dealing with real scarcity.

The final and the most insidious trap is created by *a specific mindset*, which cannot be revealed unless we use the evolutionist concept of *survivals*. The imagined power relations of today are a survival of the real power relations from the near past. When we think in terms of power, most of us are trapped in the mindset of the last century; when the GDP in the Western world was correlated with advanced and auto-sufficient agriculture, powerful local manufacturing and a complete dominance in high-tech research; when coal, hydro and atom could cover a significant part of the energy requirement for an economy and a population which were significantly smaller than today; and when the climate change and soil depletion appeared only in the footnotes of scientific literature.

These *survivals* still produce real effects because non-westerners are sharing the same mindset, because the transition and the shift of real power was slow, and the interdependence is still high. Although this mindset is a soft form of symbolic violence, it is still an effective one. We can go on like this for a long time, in the same way the British monarchy has kept its prestige, but we cannot act like absolute monarchs anymore – only soft power is left for us. Unfortunately, our mindset, habits and biases created a blind-spot that made difficult to grasp the complexity of the situation. Therefore, it might be difficult to get over the small stakes of passing leaders (with temporary mono-manias resulting from the logic of positioning), and even more difficult to conceive that Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok is the same as vice-versa. Sometimes it is easier to burn the world, than to adapt to the new realities, or, at least, to have a shift in perspective.

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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 REVIEWS¹

***Locuințe pentru muncitori și funcționari. Casa Construcțiilor și parcelarea Vatra Luminoasă (1930-1949).* Andrei Răzvan Voinea, Irina Calota, Editura Asociația Zona, București 2021**

***Idealul locuirii bucureștene: familia cu casă și grădină. Parcelările Societății Comunale pentru Locuințe ieftine - București (1908-1948),* Andrei Răzvan Voinea, Editura Asociația Zona, București 2018**

SORIN GOG²

'A suitable model for the Romanian lifestyle: the family with a house and garden' (2018) by Andrei Răzvan Voinea is a remarkable study that documents the activity of the 'Municipal Company for Low-cost Housing' over four decades and focuses on the attempts of local authorities to solve the housing crisis that emerged in Bucharest at the beginning of the XXth century. At that time the city underwent a growing industrialization process and generated a vast influx of population from the rural hinterlands that were integrated into the industrial economy of the city. We know for example from a study - 'Pulmonary tuberculosis among the working class in our country', written in 1907 by Ecaterina Arbore, an important socialist activist and healthcare specialist, that the living conditions of the people employed in the capitalist industries were extremely poor and that the workers were exposed to dangerous hazards both inside and outside the factories.

This book documents the poor health condition of workers in Bucharest at the beginning of the century and the relationship existing between the high morbidity rate and their impoverished houses. The author shows through the analysis of various medical reports, news-papers, books written in that period, etc. how gradually a social and medical expertise emerged that was increasingly advocating for the construction of affordable housing as a tool to address these complex social problems. The 'Municipal Company for Low-cost Housing'

¹ This review has been written within the framework of the research project 'Class formation and re-urbanization through real estate development at an Eastern periphery of global capitalism' and is funded by UEFISCDI's "Exploratory research projects", code PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-1730.

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appeared as result of this growing concern for the health-care and housing of poor workers. It managed to build over 4.000 homes spread in 25 housing estates and it initiated a vast scale process of urban-planning in Bucharest. The managers of this company were connected to similar projects in Europe and were taking part in various international congresses where new architectural concepts were discussed - among them the idea of a city-garden for workers that could both provide for affordable homes and a healthy environment. The study analyses in a very meticulous way the main actors involved in the articulation of these social policies - workers, medics, engineers, architects and politicians - and the role each played in actually implementing the project. The wonderful research behind this study gives the reader a great insight into the problematic social world of the interwar period and the way authorities and specialists dealt with the issue of housing and class-formation.

After a careful examination of more than 2000 wedding records of people living in these lotissements and several interviews with the current inhabitants, the author is able to show in a very clear manner that the 'Municipal Company for Low-cost Housing' failed in achieving the goals of their founding charter and did not manage to generate housing for poor workers, neither did they improved substantially the lives of the people living in slums, whose dramatic health conditions triggered this project in the first place. An impressive number of houses were in fact allocated to the middle class. Office-clerks, professors, officers in the army, middle managers, etc. were among the beneficiaries of these subsidized houses. This argument is important because it reveals that even the very weak forms of welfare-policies that existed during the inter-war period were in fact diverted towards the middle-class. The author shows how this issue was publicly debated and the criticism it generated on behalf of the socialist press that was deeply concerned with how the capitalist state reproduced its privileges and exploited the working-class.

Also, it is very interesting to follow the debate around the political implications of the 'city-garden' and the way the planners sought to avoid through this type of architecture the formation of vast agglomeration of workers. This is mainly why the solution of appartement buildings seemed a bit dangerous: it created the pre-condition for a communist ideology to spread much swifter among workers, according to city-planners. The author alludes to Foucault's bio-political studies and urban health policies and interrogates the usefulness of these housing projects: were they a strategy for the governmentalization of a growing and 'dangerous' urban population or did these policies truly sought to alleviate the dramatic social conditions of many workers? The author makes a strong case that during the inter-war period we need to connect the housing policies with specific interests of the governing structures. An important research

avenue that could be further explored (the author hints at this in the beginning of the book) is how the specific architecture, room arrangements, flows of space were designed in order to discipline a distinct type of citizenship. It encouraged the transition from an extended 'traditional' family to a 'modern' one and rationalized family activities in a certain manner that were suitable for the new urban life. It would be very interesting to go further with this analysis and analyse how the new architectural designs and policy of space structured new forms of social practices.

The architectural analysis of the lotissements planned and executed by the 'Municipal Company for Low-cost Housing' is compelling, but what makes this research very relevant is the wonderful reconstruction of the social history of these urban areas and the insight it provides into all the debates existing within the local administration regarding these projects. The book has appeared in a very good graphic form with many vintage and contemporary photographs, illustrations, architectural plans and original posters which enable the reader to understand better how this housing project was actually developed. In addition to being a very rigorous researcher, the author has also the ability to narrate the architectural transformation of these spaces and show how valuable these projects are in terms of patrimonial heritage.

*

'Housing for workers and civil servants. The Construction Company and the Vatra Luminoasă lotissement' (2021) is the second book published by Studio Zona and is authored by Andrei Razvan Voinea and Irina Calota. The book focuses on another social housing project, called 'Vatra Luminoasă', implemented during the interwar period in Bucharest by a state company (Casa Construcțiilor) which was established in 1930. This study is important because it focuses on a housing project that emerged as a result of the pressure exerted by the growing number of workers and socialist activists who lived in very poor conditions in the capital of Romania. Similar to the previous housing company analysed by Andrei Răzvan Voinea, this one was as well designed to generate affordable houses, but it failed to do so. In this case it is interesting to follow the various ideological narratives that drove the implementation of this project, from a right-wing eugenic emphasis on enabling a clean and sanitary environment for building a nation to a left-wing emphasis on the social rights of the working-class.

This case-study is also relevant because it sheds new light on an important debate that existed among inter-war Romanian leftist movements, which persists up to this day, that between moderate Austro-Hungarian socialists that wanted a gradual transition from capitalism to socialism and radical Bolshevik socialists that aimed not at transforming the system from within, but at revolutionary action. The authors show how this housing project emerged as a means to pacify socialist movements through building affordable houses for both manual workers and office-clerks, but also through co-opting socialist leaders in working in the state company that was in charge with the implementation of this housing project. The moderate socialist faction has seen this as an opportunity for the socialist leadership to gain institutional expertise regarding how the system was working, which could become instrumental for future socialist governments. But this involved collaborating with nationalist and pro-capitalist parties and so generated a lot of criticism on behalf of the other more radical socialist factions. With historical hindsight, we have now a better perspective on the limited impact the Austro-Hungarian socialists had on improving the worker's housing conditions in their collaboration with the political and economic establishment.

The book written by Andrei Răzvan Voinea and Irina Calota provides a very well documented insight into the administrative difficulties this housing project encountered and the different levels of political decisions to which each phase of the project had to be submitted. This brings an important critical contribution to the study of the Romanian administrative system during the interwar period, and it allows us to have glimpse into an area that was little researched in the Romanian social history, namely that of bureaucratic formations of the inter-war State and the way in which welfare institutions did actually function. Also, the research focuses on the architectural debates (neo-Romanian or Modernist) regarding how to design and build this neighbourhood and discusses the genealogies of this housing project and its roots in similar projects from Austria, where the socialist movement managed to generate an impressive amount of housing projects.

The last chapter of the book focuses on the people that received houses in this neighbourhood and the various leftist leaders that benefited from these generous social policies. This has a double function in the overall argument of the book. The first one is to show that socialist leaders were also by-passing legal procedures and waiting-lists and that there existed an informal mechanism of distributing the resources of the state to those close to the power-structures. This is important because it gives one possible explanation for why both housing-projects presented in these books failed to be allocated mostly to workers, as these projects were originally indented, and how was it possible for them to be

appropriated by the middle class. The second one is to present a small segment of the social history of this neighbourhood and the role it played in various events that were important for socialist parties: starting with the formation of coalition of parties that opposed the incumbent fascist party, continuing with the arrest of the head of the government and Nazi-ally, Ion Antonescu, and finishing with inauguration of a building of apartments for the workers of former Malaxa factory which inaugurates a new strategy of social housing which will be developed by the Workers' Party / Communist Party in the coming decades. All these events took place in the 'Vatra Luminoasă' neighbourhood and are meant to show that this area played an important role for the socialist movement. This argument of the book could have benefited from a more in-depth approach, as it stands the evidence relies mainly on outstanding events and nominal mentioning of some of the socialists that lived there. To what extent did the housing project from 'Vatra Luminoasă' played an important role in the debates, plans and strategies of housing policies drafted within the socialist movement? Was this seen as something that could be replicated by a possible socialist government? Was the expertise accumulated here in anyway used in the housing projects that the communist regime later implemented?

The authors rely in their work on diaries, memories, photo-archives, city-council minutes and a vast quantity of archival documents and try to reconstruct the social conditions and significant events that took place in the 'Vatra Luminoasă' neighbourhood. One interesting case-study is that of Ioan Hudiță, who was a university professor and had an important position in the National Peasant Party and was among the people that received very easily through his connection a house in this beautiful neighbourhood. The authors reconstruct from his diaries not only the special arrangements that were made for him by his friends working in the ministry, but also his thoughts, emotions and memories related to moving to this new neighbourhood and the way this new social space was experienced by the middle class. This adds to the complexity of this insightful social history.

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Both of these studies are important because they enable us to analyse in a longer time-framework the issue of social housing and compare the capitalist regime of welfare policies with the socialist one and the impact this had on the working-class. From 1918 to 1945 we have three decades of capitalist development in greater Romania that aimed to enhance the living conditions of a very precarious working-class. This period was followed by four

decades of socialist state planning which had a tremendous impact on housing; the various communist governments had as one of their main priorities building as many apartments for the working-class as possible. The post-socialist period inaugurated a new stage in terms of housing policies: the emergent capitalist state gradually ceased to be involved in this sector and it gradually left the construction and distribution of housing to the market. This created the premises for housing to be transformed from a social right to a profitable commodity on which real estate entrepreneurs could cash in. The Romanian real-estate and construction sector became in the last decade also an important destination for foreign direct investments because of the high revenues these business sectors generated for trans-national capital.

The studies produced by Studio Zona are very relevant because they allow us to put in a wider perspective the issue of affordable housing and welfare policies. The period analysed by these two books reveal how in spite the good efforts of local and national state representatives during the interwar capitalist period, had a limited impact on solving the housing crisis that emerged during the industrialization of Romanian cities. Also, the studies show very well that most of these housing projects were diverted from their original purpose and were allocated to the middle-class, much as it happens today with the few state housing projects (ANL) that are developed.

In spite the fact that the socialist period is often ridiculed and criticized for its tedious and uniform architecture, we can see, in comparison with the period covered by these studies, how emancipatory they were in many regards. During four and half decades the socialist state built a great number of affordable apartments and distributed them to the working class. It generated also an economy that enabled decent wages and decent living standards for many poor workers. The socialist state-planning strived also for an integrative concept of living: kindergartens, schools, small recreational parks, playgrounds, gardens, shopping centres, etc. were a prerequisite for many of the neighbourhoods built during this period. These stands in stark contrast to the anarchic way of building during the post-socialist period in which no regards have been given to the social utilities and public spaces of the new neighbourhoods. During the early post-socialist period capitalist investors sought to maximize the revenues for each built square-meter and absorb the available space to build as much as private-use as possible, while leaving the public infrastructure to the decaying and bankrupt local state. The capitalist planning of the space becomes this way and extractive way of planning: the aim is to maximize the profit by selling private units to private users while externalizing the cost to public spending. The two books under review show that during the interwar period there was an effort to develop similar public facilities and institutions within the neighbourhoods. In the

case of 'Vatra Luminoasă' this was to a certain degree achieved, but in the case of the lotissements built by 'Construction Company' the social infrastructure became a constant problem. The biggest achievement of this period is the implementation of the garden-house concept which enabled each family to have a small garden which could be used either for recreational activities or, most of the time, as a resource for vegetables. In spite the anti-communist narrative that are informing some other studies on urban-planning, the socialist period tried to de-privatize and generalize these types of spaces and make them available for a wide public use, especially in its early stages of development. These commons are today under threat by an ever-growing capitalist real-estate sector and the private accumulation of space.

The books written by Andrei Răzvan Voinea and Irina Calota bring an important contribution to the history of planning and architecture in Romania. But even more than this, both books are an important contribution to social history of affordable housing and are very useful to sociologists and anthropologist that are researching present-day housing projects and the dynamics of real-estate capitalism.

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