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## **DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL INEQUALITY OF VOICE: ROMANIAN AND POLISH WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION SINCE 1945**

**JOSHUA KJERULF DUBROW<sup>1</sup>**

**ABSTRACT<sup>2</sup>.** Across Eastern Europe, despite radical changes to the political environment – including the postwar period, the revolutions of 1989, the post-Communist era and the rise in power of the European Union in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century – in comparison with men, women always have had far fewer representatives in national legislatures. How can this be? In this article I compare Romania and Poland from the postwar period to now to critically examine the causes and dynamics of women's unequal political representation. While gender inequality in various forms has been a constant feature, the characteristics of its relationship to political inequality – its form, duration and magnitude – changed over successive eras. I argue that much more research needs to be done to properly understand dynamics of, and links between, the history and the present of women's political inequality in Eastern Europe; as such I also criticize the extant literature and suggest directions for future social science inquiry.

**Keywords:** political inequality, women's political representation, gender, Eastern Europe

### **Introduction**

In Eastern Europe, the historical record from 1945 to the present contains a puzzling phenomenon: Despite radical changes to the political environment – including the postwar period, the revolutions of 1989, the post-Communist era and the rise in power of the European Union in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century – in

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<sup>2</sup> A previous version of this article was presented with Nicolina Dumitras, titled, "Romanian Women's Enduring Political Inequality in Comparative Perspective," at the "Remaking the Social: New Risks and Solidarities," First International Conference of the Romanian Sociological Society, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, December 2 – 4, 2010. I thank the participants of that session and the students of the class, "Women in Politics in Comparative Perspective," that I taught at the Graduate School for Social Research in Warsaw, Poland in Fall 2010, in which I first presented some of this content. Data for the Romanian interviews were made possible by the Coca-Cola Critical Difference for Women grant and a Phyllis Krumm Memorial International Scholarship, both obtained at The Ohio State University. Of course, I alone am responsible for the content of this article.

comparison with men, women always have had far fewer representatives in national legislatures. How can this be? In this article I critically examine the causes and dynamics of women's unequal political representation in Eastern Europe from the postwar period to now.

Exploring dynamism in social structure begs the question: If social stratification refers to enduring inequalities, how are stratification structures simultaneously enduring and dynamic? To address this question in the context of this study, I regard stratification structures as comprised of multiple, overlapping inequalities. These inequalities interact within dynamic social and political environments, such that the stratification structure in one era can be quite different in another. In this study, I am concerned with the overlap between gender and political inequalities. I use empirical evidence to demonstrate that the outcome of the interaction between gender and political inequality has been the under-representation of women in national legislatures. While gender inequality has been a constant feature, the characteristics of its relationship to political inequality – its form, duration and magnitude – changed over time.

The current boom in the women in politics literature remains surprisingly scant on Eastern Europe, and this scholarship situation has negative consequences for understanding dynamics of women in politics in Eastern Europe. Much of what we know about women's inequality of representation since 1945 is non-comparative and Western in outlook. With few notable exceptions of cross-national research into women's representation (e.g. Paxton et al., 2007; Caul Kittilson, 2006; Krook, 2009), the gender and politics literature consists mainly of single country studies, most of which focus on either the United States (e.g. Carroll and Fox, 2006) or Western Europe (e.g. Krook, 2009). The few social science books dedicated to gender politics in Eastern Europe are edited volumes comprised of single country case studies and have been very useful; like most of their kind, however, they are not explicitly comparative (Wolchik and Meyer, 1985; Rueschemeyer, 1998; Matland and Montgomery, 2003; Rueschemeyer and Wolchik, 2009). Even more problematic, current research is relentlessly focused on recent developments of the post-Communist era and beyond<sup>3</sup>. Most discussions of the present do not often contain detailed connections to the past, an approach which obscures the enduring quality of Eastern European women's political inequality. Too little attention to the Communist past is too little context to appreciate the dynamics of political inequality, and how political inequality could be perpetuated<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This can be explained, in part, by the timing of the "women in politics" literature boom: it occurred during the late 1980s/early 1990s, rising fast as the Communist era fell. In a form of social science journalism, scholars rushed to apply theories, concepts and methods of social and political inquiry, telling the world what was happening as it was happening. The flow of literature featuring Eastern Europe has slowed considerably in recent years.

<sup>4</sup> A note on terminology: I follow Brown (2009) when I make reference to the state socialist era 1945 – 1989/91: I use Communism with a capital C to signify that the era was dominated by the Communist Party, and small c when referring to the ideology in general. Post-Communism follows the same logic.

In this article, the main question is: *How is Eastern European women's political inequality of voice perpetuated across time?* This article is designed to be part of the beginning of the answer. I argue that much more research needs to be done to properly understand dynamics of, and links between, the history and the present of women's political inequality in Eastern Europe. Along the way I find it necessary to criticize the social science literature on this topic on which I base this study.

While the past can be linked to the present, questions of comparability across countries and eras – in essence, the problem of functional equivalence of measurement and concepts (Przeworski and Teune, 1970; Slomczynski, 1998) -- present many challenges. How can we compare postwar countries that, after the revolutions of 1989, disappeared from the world map? How can we compare eras as diverse as post-World War Two Eastern Europe with 21<sup>st</sup> Century European Union? These challenges are complex and thus I proceed simply, and with caution. I begin by defining political inequality broadly as structured differences between social groups in influence over government decisions. Noting that political inequality comes in many forms, I examine a subset of political inequality, that of political voice measured by representation in political institutions (Dubrow, 2010). I examine political voice in terms of (a) presence of representatives in legislative bodies at the national level and (b) legal rights to equal political participation. I draw on the literature on descriptive representation (Mansbridge, 1999; see also Manin et al., 1999) to define women's under-representation as a situation in which the gender composition of the national legislature is substantially disproportionate in comparison to that in the population; in this case, well below fifty percent. To address comparability of countries, I compare two countries, Poland and Romania. Since the former Soviet Union played such a large role in postwar politics in Eastern Europe, secondarily some of the comparisons include it and its successor state, the Russian Federation. I try to make best use of the differences between eras: The comparison of Poland and Romania demonstrate how dissimilar contexts lead to substantial political under-representation of women, though of different magnitudes.

### **Gender and Political Inequalities in Four Eras**

I examine ways in which Eastern European women have remained politically unequal to men across four eras: the postwar period of the Communist past (1945 to 1989), the transition and its aftermath (1989 – 1991), the post-Communist era (1989 – 2000s), and the rise of the European Union (2000s and onward). The following is a brief overview of these different political eras; in the rest of this article, I focus on details of how gender and political inequalities mixed and changed.

During the postwar Communist-era, officials thought that one of the most important principles of Communist ideology was to empower groups that had been historically disadvantaged. Women were among the disadvantaged groups that the regime sought to liberate. This meant an increasing participation of women in all spheres of public life, from university education and occupational attainment to parliamentary membership. As such, Communist ideology – in which the Party played the “leading role” - idealized descriptive political representation, which can be defined as the extent to which the composition of the political elite resembles the demographics and experiences of the citizenry. In the Soviet Union, Poland, and Romania, the Communist Party both praised women and actively sought to maintain traditional gender relations (Buckley, 1989; Nicolaescu, 1994; Einhorn, 1993; Siemienska, 1985; Fuszara, 2005, 2010). Throughout the Communist era, as political equality was extolled, gender traditionalism remained the norm of the land.

During the transition (1989 – 1991), Poland and Romania focused on democratization and economic reform, and gender and descriptive representation was not prominent on the agenda (Matland and Montgomery, 2003; Rueschemeyer and Wolchik, 2009). The immediate post-1989 drop in Polish and Romanian women’s parliamentary representation was a result of the political resurgence of pre-existing gender traditionalist attitudes and the new priorities of the young governments that struggled with the transformation and consciously relegated the inclusion of women and women’s interests to some unspecified future date (Einhorn, 1993; Kunovich, 2003)<sup>5</sup>. As the post-Communist era got underway, the gender-politics relationship that emphasized equality of the Communist-era was viewed by many of the political elite and the public as artificially and forcefully imposed by illegitimate rulers, and thus viewed with resentment (Siemieńska, 2003). For some, the new democratization meant that political recruitment would be blind to demographics and against policies of positive gender discrimination. As Poland and Romania prepared for entry into the European Union, their public stance was to align their gender policies with EU gender policies, e.g. gender mainstreaming, and has been influenced by the international women’s movement.

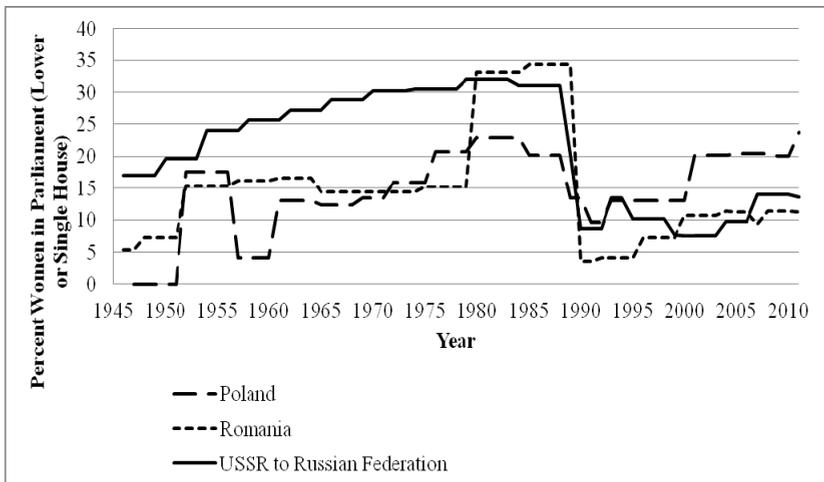
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<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on legislative priorities is illustrated well by a quote from Olga Krzyżanowska, MP during the years 1989-2001, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and then Senator: “First, it was too early for women’s rights, and then it was too late. Immediately after 1989, many MPs were of the opinion that the economy and politics were more important. I thought so too, in spite of being a woman. Because the problems of the transformation concerned everybody, regardless of sex.”

See p. 40 [http://www.boell.pl/downloads/Gender\\_Issues\\_2009\\_WWW.pdf](http://www.boell.pl/downloads/Gender_Issues_2009_WWW.pdf) (May 1, 2012).

## Dynamics of Representation Inequality

Examination of trends in women's representation in the national parliaments of the USSR/Russian Federation, Poland and Romania from 1947 to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century reveals that women's representation has always lagged far behind that of men, and never reached close to 50 percent (Figure 1). For most of the Communist era, USSR, Poland and Romania managed to keep the percent of women in parliament below 35 percent. Romania rose quickly to 35 percent in 1985. The high was short-lived as the transition of 1989 brought a radical decline in women's already low political representation. In the outcome of the partly open National Assembly elections of 1989, Polish women took only 13.5 percent of seats in the Sejm and 6 percent seats in the Senat. Romania represented the worst-case scenario, dropping to below five percent in the first democratically free election. In the 2000s, Poland and Romania have seen a slight increase in women's representation, with Poland reaching over 20 percent and Romania reaching about 10 percent by 2011.



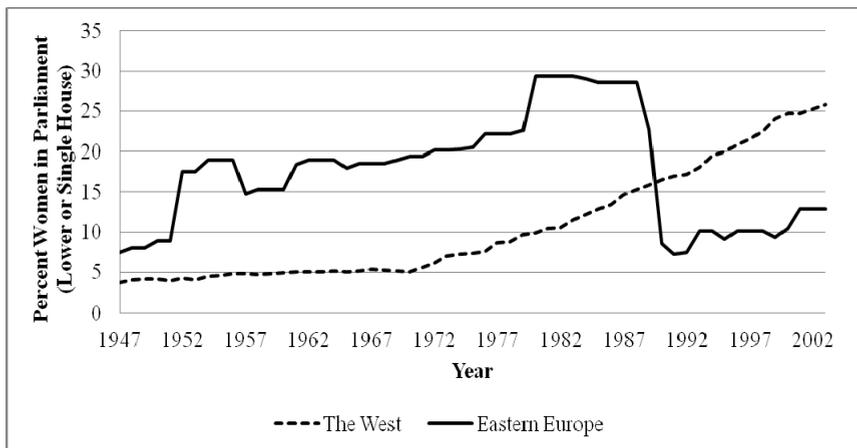
**Figure 1.** Percent Women in Parliament (Lower or Single House) in Poland, Romania and USSR/Russian Federation, 1947 - 2011<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the parliamentary representation of women remained low. Trend-wise, Poland and Romania are best characterized as slow rising with frequent plateaus. Between 1991 and 2007, women's parliamentary representation in Poland started at 9 percent of the Sejm, reached a plateau at 13 percent for two elections, and rose to a little over 20 percent in 2001, where it also remained after the elections of 2005 and 2007; in the elections of 2011, after the introduction of an electoral gender quota,

<sup>6</sup> Author's calculations based on data from Paxton Paxton, Melanie Hughes, and Jennifer Green. 2009. *Women in Parliament Dataset, 1893-2003*, ICPSR data repository, and Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) Women in Politics Database, 2004 - 2011.

the percentage rose to 24. Romania slowly climbed its way from below five percent to below fifteen percent, and since the 2000s has remained steady at about 12 percent. The Russian Federation vacillates between low and really low: they reached 13 percent in 1993, fell to 7.5 percent in the early 2000s, and reached above 13 percent again by the late 2000s.

Comparable data<sup>7</sup> on the national level reveals that, on average, throughout the Communist era, women’s representation in parliament in Eastern Europe was higher than the West<sup>8</sup> (Figure 2). Immediately after the late 1940s, when there was no substantial difference between East and West, the average percent of women in Eastern Europe (measured here by Poland, Romania and the USSR) rose dramatically. This gap remained wide, and got even wider during the 1980s. Meanwhile in the West, after the 1960s, when the feminist movement in the West gained considerable strength, the West inched steadily upwards. The spectacular shift occurred in 1989, when the East fell sharply and the West continued its slow rise. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the gap was reversed.



**Figure 2.** Percent Women in Parliament (Lower or Single House) in Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania and USSR/Russian Federation) and the West, 1947 - 2003<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It is worthwhile to point out a problem in the women in politics literature on this point. When discussing Eastern Europe, the implication is that during the Communist era, not just national, but also local governments featured a much higher percentage of women officials (elected and unelected) than local governments of the West. To my knowledge, however, there is no study that suggests that data on the local level in Eastern Europe under Communism are comparable to that of the West during that time. Such a study would be immensely useful.

<sup>8</sup> I define the West as: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

<sup>9</sup> Author’s calculations based on data from Paxton Paxton, Melanie Hughes, and Jennifer Green (2009). *Women in Parliament Dataset, 1893-2003*, ICPSR data repository.

In studying Eastern Europe, it is important to make the distinction between descriptive and substantive representation (see also Celis, 2008). Substantive representation refers to advocacy and policy that reflects the diverse interests of the citizenry; such representation of interests comes from having one's voice heard in the legislature and translated into action (Mansbridge 1999). Women had lesser representation because (a) the parliament of which they were a part had very limited effective control over the legislative and policy process and (b) few women were members of the Communist party central committee, which was the main decision-making body under Communism. Data suggests that, in Poland and Romania, women's political representation followed Putnam's Law of Increasing Disproportion: "as the importance of the office increases, the proportion of women declines" (Wolchik, 1981: 458; for Poland, see Fuszara 2005: 293 and Chapter 4). From 1948 to 1976, women's representation in the Central Committee of Romania ranged from a low of 4,6 in 1965 to a high of 9,1; in Poland, the analogous numbers are 3,9 and 8,0. In Romania after 1976, the numbers jumped dramatically, but only because they had more room up than down: in 1979, women's representation climbed to 25 percent, and in 1984, to 28 percent (Wolchik, 1981; see also Olteanu et al., 2003). As a consequence, women still faced policy manifestations of gender traditionalism, such as pro-natal policies, restrictions on abortion, fewer positions in management and over-representation in low-skilled work (Buckley, 1997; Siemienska, 2003, 2009; Olteanu 2003). Thus, during the Communist era, a form of women's political inequality was under-representation not only in the relatively ineffectual Parliament, but also in key decision-making bodies whose decisions directly impacted women.

### **Dynamics of Legal Political Equality of Women and Men**

To explain dynamics of representational inequality, we must make the distinction between formal rights, and the fulfilment of those rights (Dahl, 2006). A story from the Soviet era, as first told by Field (1968), begins to illustrate this point. On the eve of an election in March 1958, Khrushchev, General Secretary of the USSR Communist Party, gave a speech to prospective voters. In this speech he remarked on foreign visitors' amazement at seeing women engaged in snow and ice removal on the streets of Moscow.

"On this basis they maintain that our women are not honoured... It is hardly necessary to prove that Soviet women are held in great esteem, that they have not merely in words but also in fact equal rights with men in all areas of social and political life, as well as in production" (Field, 1968: 7, quoting from Pravda).

Khrushchev was likely paraphrasing Article 122 the USSR Constitution from 1936: "Women in the USSR are accorded all equal rights on an equal footing with men in all spheres of economic, government, political and other

social and cultural activity” (Field, 1968: 11). Khrushchev displayed either wishful or delusional thinking, for at the time (or any time after), women were not politically equal. True, by 1946, almost all countries of Eastern Europe had granted suffrage to women. However, legal political equality is far different from the actions taken to fulfil the promise of those rights.

In the Communist and post-Communist eras, legal political equality was enshrined in the constitution (Table 1). Due to Soviet domination of the region, the Romanian and Polish constitutions reflected the Soviet constitution, especially in the early versions. In all, at some point during the Communist era, women were guaranteed equal political rights, where the word “political” was specifically mentioned.

**Table 1.**

**Constitutional Mentions of Women’s Political Equality in Romania and Poland, from Communist and Post-Communist Era**

Country	Communist Era (1945 - 1989)	Post-Communist Era and Beyond (1991 - present)
Romania	<p>“Women have equal rights with men in all areas of the state, economic, social, cultural, political and private.” (Art 18, 1948; similar to Art 83, 1952)</p> <p>Changed to:</p> <p>“Citizens of the Socialist Republic of Romania, without distinction of nationality, race, gender or religion, are equal in rights in all economic, political, legal, social and cultural areas.” (Art 17, 1965)</p>	<p>“Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens without distinction of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political affiliation, wealth or social origin.” (Art 4, 1991)</p> <p>“Public office or dignity, civil or military, may be filled by people who have only Romanian citizenship and domicile in the country.” (Art 16, 1991)</p> <p>Changed to:</p> <p>“Public office or dignity, civil or military, may be occupied, according to law, persons who have Romanian citizenship and residence in the country. The Romanian State guarantees the equality of chances between men and women to occupy such positions and dignities.” (Art 16, 2003)</p>
Poland	<p>“Women in the Polish People’s Republic have equal rights with men in all spheres of public, political, economic, social and cultural life.” (Art 66, 1952)</p>	<p>“All persons shall be equal before the law. All persons shall have the right to equal treatment by public authorities. No one shall be discriminated against in political, social or economic life for any reason whatsoever.” (Art 32, 1997)</p>

I argue that the post-Communist era was ruled by neoliberalism ideology that heavily influenced the relationship between gender and political inequality. Neo-liberalism is difficult to define, although many scholars have tried (e.g. Steger and Roy, 2010; Harvey, 2005). I use the term neo-liberalism in two ways: (1) as a belief that all social relationships occur in a market, in which we speak of “economic markets” and even “political markets;” (2) as a policy that these markets are most efficient and effective when they are self-regulating and mostly free from government intervention. In the first, the political market can be defined as an institution that governs the distribution of representation and other political goods (Dubrow, 2006a). In a political market, voters demand and parties supply demographic types of candidates under varying social structural constraints. This framework provides a spectrum of political market types, ranging from government interventions at one end to laissez-faire market solutions at the other. Government interventions include electoral quotas laws, reservations and other parity-inducing means; laissez-faire is the opposite of intervention. As a policy, neoliberal political market ideology entails a shift of emphasis from equality of outcome to equality of opportunities. Governments may formalize equality, but should be “anti-discriminatory,” defined broadly as not doing anything that would favour one demographic group over another for any reason whatsoever.

In the post-Communist versions of the Polish and Romanian constitutions, equal rights are maintained, but the “political” aspect has a different connotation: the focus is now on “anti-discrimination” in the context of a neoliberal ideology. The difference is meaningful. One could argue that in the constitutions of both the Communist and post-Communist eras, the focus is on equality of political opportunities, not equality of political outcomes. To understand these constitutions, we must place them within the context of the ideology of the era. In the Communist era the equality of rights guaranteed in the constitution was in the context of an ideology that, as socialist society progressed into communism, women would be equal in fact, i.e. outcomes, in all political aspects with men. In the post-Communist era, equal rights co-exist with neoliberal ideology, in which every group is left on their own to use the same formal rules afforded to them by law without any promises as to whether following these rules would eventually lead to equality. In the post-Communist era the right to stand for office is guaranteed – in Romania, in the 2003 version it is called, “the equality of chances” – but whether it would lead to women represented in parliament in proportion to their numbers in the population is not promised.

Under Communism, one prominent way to “fulfil” the promise of political equality of women – the so-called “women question” -- was through political groups formally run by women. The Women’s Department of the Russian Communist Party (Zhenotdel), established in 1919, was designed to amplify

women's voice in politics and make good on the promise of political equality; it was dissolved by Stalin in 1930, "declaring the 'women question' officially 'solved'" (Sundstrom, 2010: 233). Browning (1987) and Buckley (1997) emphasizes the gender division within the power structure of the USSR's Communist Party and gives a detailed description of the "Soviet Women's Committee" (SWC), or "zhensovety." Comprised of women, the SWC's main role was to raise political consciousness and promote political participation at home and abroad. Olteanu (2003) reports on a similar group in Romania: She argues that "the strategic position of women in the party depended on their relation with the leader [Ceausescu], institutionalized through CNF (National Council of Women) and formalized base on kinship relations which those women had with the important members of the communist elite" (Olteanu 2003: 26). In Poland, this organization was called the National Council of Polish Women (Siemienska, 1985: 337), and it functioned in much the same way as in the USSR and Romania. While providing space for women to politically organize, the end result did not radically change women's descriptive or substantive representation.

Formal rights were occasionally matched by formal rhetoric, though the form and content changed over time. Buckley's (1989) landmark study of changes of gender ideology in the Soviet Union remains unsurpassed, and clearly shows that we should view Communist ideology as dynamic. Buckley argues that the extent to which the "woman question" was emphasized depended on the economic and political environment (for a summary, see pp. 12 - 16, and Chapter 7). According to Buckley, the political inequality of women was emphasized and discussed more openly in the 1920s (when women were needed to provide support for the revolution) and the 1950s (during another massive political upheaval following the death of Stalin in 1953), than in the 1930s and 1970s, when economic matters took precedence (rapid industrialization in the 30s, and the severe economic crisis in the 70s). In the 1980s, Gorbechev's reforms questioned everything, and naturally discussions of gender and political inequalities re-emerged.

To understand dynamics of the relationship between gender and political inequalities in Communist era Romania, Vese (2001) argues that there were two main eras: "the first lasted through 1945-1965, when the leader of the Romanian Communist Party was Gheorghiu-Dej and the second between 1965-1989 when the Party was led by the "ruling family", the Ceausescu" (268-9). There is surprisingly little in the English language literature about the political roles of women during the Gheorghiu-Dej era and most scholarship begin with Ceausescu era (Fischer, 1985, 1998; Kligman, 1992), perhaps because women's representation began its rise then.

Olteanu (2003) argues the first time Ceausescu starts to pay special attention to the role of women was in 1966, which included a landmark speech during the National Conference of National Council for Women. The National Council for Women was, according to Olteanu (2003), an institution used for propaganda of women role in the society that eventually promoted the “cult of Elena Ceausescu” (see also Fischer, 1985). A June 1973 speech given by Ceausescu<sup>10</sup>, in the same month when Elena Ceausescu was named to the Communist Central Committee, was entirely dedicated to the role and importance of women in the socialist society in three main fields: economic, political and social. The speech started by emphasizing the fact that few women are in the ruling bodies of the Romanian Communist party. Ceausescu continues by saying that the fault lies in both the Party and the women themselves, criticizing what he thought was low activism and participation.

I have something to admonish to women. They have to be more active and not to allow to be treated only as representatives in different committees, but to be more active in participation in social life... (Nicolae Ceausescu, 1973: 142).

Ceausescu argued that the key role women play in Romanian Communist society is in educating future generations and contributing to the general development of the socialist society, rhetoric that he had also applied to pronatalist policy.

Another big problem is that of the important role that woman has in the society, in giving birth, raising and educating children, the young generation, in ensuring the youthfulness of our entire socialist nation (Nicolae Ceausescu, 1973: 145).

According to Olteanu (2003: 29), “Nicolae Ceausescu understood the role of women exclusively from the perspectives of her reproductive functions and maternal capabilities” (see also Fischer, 1985, Kligman, 1992 and Keil and Andreescu, 1999).

Poland’s dynamics provide an interesting contrast with Romania and Russia. In Poland, women’s political participation began to build in the aftermath of World War One, and the reappearance of Poland on world maps (Zarnowska, 2004). Fuszara (2011) argues that periods of “thaw” in Communism, or the loosening of Party grip on politics and society, correspond with lower rates of women’s representation in the political elite:

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<sup>10</sup> Cuvintarea tovarasului Nicolae Ceausescu in plenara C.C al P.C.R. din 18-19 iunie 1973 cu privire la rolul femeii in viata politica, economica si sociala a tarii. (1973). In *Documente ale Partidului Communist Roman. Culegere sintetica. Rolul femeii in viata economica, politica si sociala a Romaniei socialiste*. Bucuresti: Editura politica. (pp.141-148). [Nicolae Ceausescu’s speech for the Plenary of C.C. of C.P.R. from 18-19 June 1973 regarding the role of women in the political, economic and social life of the country. (1973). In *Documents of the Romanian Communist Party. Synthetic Collection. Role of women in economic, political and social life of the socialist Romania*. Bucuresti: Editura politica. (pp.141-148)].

It is noticeable that the number of women in the Sejm decreased rapidly in the years of political 'thaw', that is, when the communist regime was slightly less oppressive. In 1956, the percentage of female MPs in the Sejm reached the exceptionally low level of 4 per cent. The percentage of women fell from 20 per cent to 13 per cent after the first free (in fact partly free) elections in 1989: this happened in all post-communist countries. One factor that seems to be important here should be mentioned: the percentage of women decreases when the Parliament wields real power. When the Parliament seemed to gain real power granted under the constitution (in 1956) or when it actually gained this power (in 1989), the percentage of female MPs fell sharply. (extract from the documents of the European Parliament, 2011).<sup>11</sup>

As Fuszara (2011) intended, the hypothesis that, as parliamentary power rises, percentage of women MPs falls, applies to the Communist and post-Communist eras. What of the EU era? At the dawn of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Polish women's representation outpaced that of Russia and Romania, and in February 2011, the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, signed into law Act of 5 January 2011 amending the Law - Elections to municipal councils, county councils and regional councils, the Law - Elections to the Polish Sejm and the Senate of the Polish Republic, and the Law - Elections to the European Parliament<sup>12</sup>. This gender quota law amends existing electoral law by stipulating that, for all political parties seeking office locally, nationally, or in the European Parliament, in each district 35% of their candidate lists must be comprised of women. The electoral law is largely silent about women's placement on the list, perhaps the major factor that drives quota effectiveness. Hence, the immediate impact has been small, as the next election saw a modest step-up to 24 percent. Meanwhile, Romania and Russia never fully recovered from the transition and has yet to build a coalition strong enough to introduce government intervention via gender quotas.

### **Dynamics of Political Elite Attitudes toward Gender and Political Inequalities**

Scholars note that Eastern European parliamentarians and other members of the political elite resented Communism not only for the extreme political inequality between the Party and the masses, but that they felt the Party illegitimately forced equality (Fuszara, 2010). According to Vese:

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201111/20111107ATT30766/20111107ATT30766EN.pdf> (May 1, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> *Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. o zmianie ustawy - Ordynacja wyborcza do rad gmin, rad powiatów i sejmików województw, ustawy - Ordynacja wyborcza do Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i do Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej oraz ustawy - Ordynacja wyborcza do Parlamentu Europejskiego.*

Gender equality proclaimed by the regime as well as special measures such as free day-care for children and maternity leaves were used to assist women in their double gender roles, rather than to reorganize gender responsibilities between men and women. This is why many Eastern Europeans women refer to previous state policies as 'false equality' and 'forced emancipation' (Vese, 2001: 269).

This image of the Communist past left an impression on the political elite as they tried to build democracy.

However, there are major questions about the Communist era and its impact on subsequent eras that need to be addressed. First, to what extent does the Communist legacy still influence today's political elite? While it is clear that Communism favoured rhetoric of political equality, it is also clear that political equality was never achieved. Next, if the collective memory of the political elite is faulty, and they do not know that women in the political elite never came close to parity with men, what has been the main object of their resentment? As argued below, much of their resentment has been based on an imagined Communist legacy and directed toward "gender quotas" (see also Gaber, 2011), but how, exactly, gender quotas influenced the political ascension of women during Communism is not well documented.

### ***Communist Legacies***

Some recent interviews with Romanian and Polish parliamentarians from both countries suggest differences in influence of the Communist era on the European Union era. In 2005, nine Romanian parliamentarians were interviewed -- seven men and two women, including at least one from each of the ruling parties -- on their attitudes toward implementing quotas and other strategies for instituting descriptive representation. While a small sample, their pre-EU accession attitudes are illuminating on whether they believe women's full political inclusion is necessary for building democracy.

While there was support for descriptive representation of women in principle, (a) it was not then a major concern for most parliamentarians and (b) most parliamentarians interviewed did not have a coherent idea as to how to increase the percentage of women in the Romanian parliament. When asked about the most pressing concerns facing Romania, most mentioned economic matters, such as reforming the pension system developing business enterprises. Based on the answers to the question, "what is the important problem or objective for your political party at the moment?", all nine listed many types of problems, however none thought that an increase in women representatives in the Parliament was a policy priority for their party. Note that the interviews were conducted before Romania entered the EU, and some of the interviewees underlined that the implementation of the EU legislation in Romania is important, including gender mainstreaming.

All but one of the interviewees had to be asked to comment specifically on the issue of women's representation in Parliament. None of the interviewees rejected the idea that women should be present in politics, though not all agreed it was necessary. Interviewees were asked: "Is it necessary to increase the percentage of women in parliament? How important is this idea to your party?" The following two quotes represent opposite stances on the importance of the democratic inclusion of women.

One said:

I don't have strong research on this... I just have life experience... Our pattern was that the woman was in back of the man, but it was hypocrisy. The woman is not in back of the man, she is on his side or in front of him.... But due to destiny, [men and women] are built for something... I am strong, but...I can't have children, for example... In a woman's life, you must put 2, 4, 6 years for child and child care. For this reason, I cannot say it is necessary. I think it's natural. The direct proportion 51% [women in society] to 51% [women in parliament], I do not know if it is natural.

Another:

If we want to be compared with the European and American democracies... to be normal, there has to be equality. But, differences build the democracy. In our political class, now, there are only 11 percent female [in parliament]. We want to destroy the old mentality, the barriers for a woman to become a decision-maker. Parliament is the highest political level of society. If in the parliament there are more women, the specific problems of the women will be better solved. In that moment, in our society, based on a partnership between men and women, we build a strong democracy.

The majority of the interviewees emphasized the negative impact of the legacy of the Communist past on the political situation at that moment. When asked about descriptive representation of women, all said that the "culture" of Romania is gender traditionalist, a situation that makes it difficult for the Romanian public to accept women in places of political power. Interviewees tended to say that there was a need to "change the mentality" or that the "the old mentality", or the "mentality of the past" was an impediment. Thus, while building a political class capable of continuing the new democracy into the 21st century was a concern, some Romanian parliamentarians did not think that an increase in women's parliamentary representation is a necessary part of that process.

Notably, the two women interviewed – one from a leftist party, the other a rightist - believed that increased representation is a foundation for building democracy in Romania. The leftist woman was active in support for quotas and was well-versed on a quota law for increasing the representation of women. When told that some parliamentarians interviewed in this study

(without naming who) say that a quota is already in place in the form of an electoral law, she said, with noticeable irritation, that this is not true. Thus, there was confusion among Romanian parliamentarians as to what has been done to increase women's representation, even to the point of being misinformed about existing law.

Interviews of Polish parliamentarians from the 1990s to the 2000s reveal certain similarities with the Romanian case, though with what seems to be a declining emphasis on the Communist past, at least in rhetoric. I draw on interview data contained in Kurczewski (1999), as well as survey data of Polish parliamentarians described in Dubrow and Woroniecka (2010) and Pawlowski and Dubrow (2011). Interviews of parliamentarians active in the 1990s illustrate the struggle between equality-generating legislation and imagined legacies of the Communist past Kurczewski (1999). Out of 155 interviewed, four were for gender quotas (Fuszara, 2005: 296). However, the Communist past was mentioned: "Particular communities should be represented by a person having roots in a given community, but this should not be legally compartmentalized – we had such things [at the time of] PRL [People's Republic of Poland]." Another said, "I do not consider a quota-democracy to be appropriate, either; this is how we had it under communism; well, except for national minorities...."

Under a different set of questions and a different survey format, these thoughts were echoed in 2005 (see Pawlowski and Dubrow 2011 and Dubrow et al., 2012) in a question as to whether gender quotas should be used<sup>13</sup>:

The Parliament is a legislative body whose aim is to create laws for all citizens, not for the special interests of any social, ethnic, religious, etc group. The state stands for all equally, whether they are red-headed or blond. If we accept the idea that the make-up of Parliament is to mirror that of society it would mean that we are returning to the time of socialist realism, where a 32-year old teacher with 3 children from a small town could become a representative. This is nonsense.

In 2005, I only found only the one explicit reference to the Communist era above, and in a 2009 survey (Dubrow et al., 2012), there was no explicit reference<sup>14</sup>. Perhaps the timings of the surveys are the reason why. They were

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<sup>13</sup> Attitude toward gender equality was measured with the following item: "How important is it that the composition of the *Sejm* reflects the composition of society according to proportions of men and women?" Respondents were given fixed-choice four category response set ranged from "very important" to "very unimportant;" after this was an item that asked them to explain their answer as an open-ended response. Attitude toward party gender quotas was measured by their response to the following question: "Some parties and other social groupings have established a specific threshold (bottom limit) for the proportion of women who, on their behalf, should seek *Sejm* membership. Is this initiative good or bad?" Respondents had a choice of two answers, "good" or "bad"; after this was an item that said, "Why?", and allowed an open ended response.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that in 2009 emerged the first explicit reference to EU standards: "European standards urge to do so" (Dubrow et al., forthcoming).

conducted after Poland's ascension to the European Union and years after the 2001 parliament focused on the economic and political aspects of rejoining Europe. Perhaps the refusal to refer to the socialist past is a product of this increasingly relentless focus on the future. When asked about gender quotas in 2009, direct references to the Communist past were rare, and veiled. A single parliamentarian said, such a quota "can be used in regimes" [Może być stosowana w reżimach], with "reżimach" slyly referring to Communist era Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza.

### ***Knowns and Unknowns about Gender Quotas in Eastern Europe***

The issue of gender quotas looms large in the literature of women in politics and since the 1990s the knowledge of how it works is very advanced (Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009). While rapidly accumulating research strongly suggests that quotas have great potential to reduce gender political inequality of voice, the relationship between quotas and this outcome depends on the form of electoral rules, the type of quota adopted, and the level of enforcement of the quota (Caul Kittilson, 2006; Krook, 2009; Matland and Montgomery, 2003b). There is strong evidence that, in the post-Communist and European Union eras, gender and party ideology within national and European contexts influences whether Eastern European parliamentarians support gender quotas (Dubrow, 2011; Dubrow and Woroniecka, 2010).

Yet, there is no work in English that details exactly women's political ascension to political bodies during the Communist era; how quotas or quota-like systems enhanced their representation, or what legislation or policy stipulated women's inclusion. Scholarship of women in politics frequently cites some version of the statement that "there were quotas" or that "there was a selection mechanism" but do not define what they mean by "quota" in that context or identify the selection mechanism<sup>15</sup>. For example, Siemienska (1985) writes that "... the electoral ticket in Poland is very carefully balanced, with specified numbers of places set aside for representatives of particular political and social organizations, age groups, the sexes, denominations, and so on" (335); similarly, Einhorn (1993) writes that, "Much has been made of the 'milkmaid' quota system designed to ensure representation across the social spectrum" (Einhorn, 1993: 151); but how these quotas worked in practice is not clear, or elaborated upon.

The definition of "quota" and how it applies to the political ascension of Eastern European women during Communism is difficult to establish because this definition fluctuates across scholars, countries and time. Although the word

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Gaber (2011) writes about Slovenia: "Different kinds of quota were used in socialist times as a means of equalising the position of women, peasants and young people in the spheres of decision making" (82).

“quota” is often used, it may not refer to official law or policy. It may be that the absence of official documents indicates informal policy. Unfortunately, if the quotas were “informal,” by their very nature there can never be a definitive answer to the question of how the political ascension of women worked. Informal rules are akin to any kind of unofficial discrimination; you see it after it happens, not while it happens, and rarely do discriminators leave a paper-trail. There is a feeling that maybe, somewhere, these documents exist: an internal memo, or a diary entry, or something tangible that may lead to further, possibly fruitless searches. The absence of Communist era documents – i.e. “smoking gun” empirical evidence -- complicates our efforts of identifying quota mechanisms.

We are left with fundamental questions about the political ascension of women during Communism: What, exactly, were the mechanisms of Eastern European women’s political accession during the Communist era? Was there quota codification, or was it all unwritten policy? In the end, all we can say is that (a) the rules within any given country may have been informal and (b) due to lack of systematic analysis of the existing evidence, we cannot make a generalization across the region.

### **Gender and Political Inequality in the European Union Era**

The new EU era is too new to discern clear dynamics, but understanding it is a foundation for further study. With regard to the relationship between gender and formal political equality, the EU policy of gender mainstreaming is illustrative of both ideological continuities with the previous era and the West’s influence on politics in the region. Defined as “integration of gender equality considerations ‘in all activities and policies at all levels’” (Bretherton, 2001: 60), gender mainstreaming seeks to fundamentally alter gender relations. Institutionalizing gender mainstreaming is “a demanding strategy” whose achievements are few because it operates in a context of deeply entrenched gender inequality (Bretherton, 2001: 61). According to article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, “[e]ach Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work” (Treaty of Rome, 1957, Article 119 as cited in Macrae, 2006, p. 531). Regulska (2001) argues that EU policies are mainly focused on “economic and work dimension of women's life”; that the EU focuses too much on “equality and equal opportunities” (Regulska, 2001, p. 86). In many European social and political circles gender mainstreaming is widely discussed and, purely in terms of EU rhetoric, staunchly supported. Yet, gender mainstreaming has been particularly slow to catch on in Central and Eastern Europe; such a fundamental change is difficult to accomplish in a region undergoing many simultaneous and consequential fundamental changes (Bretherton, 2001; Chiva, 2009; for a critique of EU’s gender mainstreaming from Romania’s point-of-view, see Miroiu, 2010).

Female parliamentarians across Eastern Europe argue that greater exposure to European pressures, especially that of gender mainstreaming, has encouraged pro-gender equality attitudes and legitimates quotas in their home countries (Rueschmeyer and Wolchik, 2009b: 259). Former Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Group, Senator Dorota Kempka, said that Polish ascension to the EU pressured Polish parliamentarians to seriously consider gender equality initiatives:

I think that the European Union has played an enormous role in raising many issues and the preparation of many solutions in Poland. The European Union knows that women have the right to make decisions concerning their lives. . . . I think it's great that the period of preparation to join the European Union was parallel to activity of the Parliamentary Group of Women, which won more support thanks to this fact (Kempka and Majcher 2009: 220).

Nongovernmental pressure in the form of gender interest groups, social movement organizations, and NGOs keeps gender issues in public debate and can influence dynamics of the relationship between gender and political inequality (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes, 2007). Empirical studies have shown that women's social movements increase the percentage of women in parliaments around the world (Paxton, Hughes, and Green, 2006). Women's political mobilization and the emergence of civil society after 1989 started slowly but have gained momentum (Einhorn and Sever, 2003). Meanwhile, women's international NGOs (WINGOs) have applied pressure to European governments to commit to gender mainstreaming (True and Mintrom, 2001). Many of these groups advocate for gender quotas.

## Conclusion

The main argument of this article is straightforward: Despite changes to the political environment, Polish and Romanian women's political inequality of voice represents an unbroken chain extending from the Communist era to today. During the Communist era, official Party discourse consistently emphasized women's involvement in politics. With legal political equality enshrined in law, women advanced in the political sphere, but entrenched gender traditionalism severely limited their achievements as was evident by their low representation in decision-making bodies (Wolchik and Meyer, 1985). During the transition of 1989 and the post-Communist era, a new doctrine based in neo-liberalism, in which the disadvantaged are offered no substantial protection from unequal competition within a *laissez-faire* political market, dropped the level of women's representation (Dubrow, 2006a; 2007). Only recently has the political environment offered protection - gender quotas, mainly - from prevailing social and political norms that work against women's political equality (Chiva, 2005, 2009). Substantial differences in the magnitude of inequality are cross-nationally evident.

In this article I examined the causes and dynamics of women's unequal political representation in Eastern Europe from the postwar period to now. A major cause is, and has been, gender traditionalism. The ideas that women are not equal to men in ability or have different interests and skills that make them unsuited to politics are deeply rooted in Eastern Europe -- as elsewhere -- and have had enduring, stratifying effects. Gender inequality has a strong relationship to political inequality, and while the form, duration and magnitude of gendered political inequality of voice have changed over time, under-representation has been the outcome.

The ideology of the eras had a large impact on the form, duration and magnitude of women's political inequality. During the Communist era, women were promised political equality. That promise was broken and rendered moot after the revolutions of 1989. After this transition, this era of broken promises gave way to the era of no promises, in which equality of opportunities is lauded and outcomes is scorned.

Arguably, there has been progress in the modern era. In each of the countries of this study, women's parliamentary representation is rising. Poland introduced a quota law. The international women's movement continues to be influential. Yet, the perception of progress differs mightily from one's position on the political ladder.

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## PERCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS ON THE VULNERABILITY IN ACCESSING THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

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**ABSTRACT.** Out of the social determinants of health, access to health care services is one of the most important. Seen in terms of the opportunity to reach and request such services, the access also covers the request of primary care and its use. The major dimensions of influencing the access are those coming from the medical system and health care policies, along with societal and individual determinants. This paper is based on qualitative data collected through two case studies conducted in two large cities from Romania, one from the North-West Development Region and the second from the North-East Development Region, using the method of in-depth personal interview. Major themes have sought to identify the perceptions of healthcare, public and private providers, access to primary health services and its problems, in particular the identification of vulnerable categories and the causes of vulnerability in the public health care system. The responses were interpreted through the lenses of social constructivism. They revealed that “vulnerability” does not have a uniform meaning and the cooperation between specialists in the medical, social, and socio-medical fields in public and private institutions is rather poor. The current health-insurance system hinders access even to primary health care services, increasing vulnerability to the worsening of health condition and epidemics. The recent medical reforms in Romania, praised for some of the changes, caused nevertheless also confusion and procedural inconsistencies, inequities between citizens and even providers of medical and medical-social care from the public and private sectors.

**Keywords:** vulnerability, risk, access, primary medical care services, communities at risk, social determinants

### Introduction

The study of perceptions of some populations, groups, and people has been the object of several studies in Romania during the last years. The investigation of the perception of population "on the new problems the Romanian society faces" was studied by a group of researchers of the Romanian Academy, the Institute

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for the Research of Life Quality (Voicu, 2001, *Introducere*) against the legitimacy of policies adopted to address these problems in areas such as housing, education, taxation, local government, planning and urban planning. Other studies of the same institution (Precupețu, 2006; Mărginean, Precupețu 2011) highlight the evolution of Romanian society on multiple dimensions of life quality. The perceptions are also the subject for administrative options (IRES, 2012) and other social fields.

Perceptions and social representation of vulnerability in accessing health care services reflect the practices, experiences, lessons learned from personal and professional situations, ways of relating to changes in the social protection system and public health system. The arguments for their identification consist in correlating the interventions at the social and public health policies with those of the citizen. The continuing education and training of the citizen will be a requirement for ensuring the meeting of the top – bottom intervention points the bottom – top ones.

### **Vulnerability in the access to health care services: conceptualizations and explanatory frameworks**

The access to health care services represent the opportunity and accessibility, on the one hand, and the use and turn to health care services on the other hand, (Lombrail and Pascal, 2005: 34). The behavioral model developed by Ronald Andersen (apud. Gruber, Kiesel, 2010:351-365) describes the use of health care services as a causal interaction between three factors: societal determinants (medical technology and social standards that configure and guide public health care system), health care system (responsible for the formation of the organizational framework and resource allocation to health care providers) and individual determinants. According to the authors mentioned, the societal determinants and those of the health care system are controlling the effects of individual determinants in accessing health services (we consider demographics, individual social structure, income, the person's health insurance, the community to which the individual belongs and last, but not least, the personal need to use health care services).

The experience with the health care reform in Romania has revealed that since the transition to the funding based on insurance, a part of the population was not included, due to the insufficient correlation between health insurance legislation and social welfare (Rebeleanu, 2008). One of the effective strategy in reducing health inequalities, recently promoted by WHO, reiterates the need to correlate health care legislation with that of social protection, with universalism in health (WHO, 2010).

If universal access seems rather dependent on available financial resources, the correlation between social protection - medical care is desirable and realistic, especially since the social welfare legislation is changing (the law 292 of 2011 was

adopted and published, which will be adjusted on various levels), and in the public health system, the reform is still taking place, supporting unfamiliar changes for citizens. Reducing the types of social benefits, the worsening of the criteria for granting them, besides the introduction of co-payment in public health system, the change of the limit for pharmaceuticals are just some of the challenges for which the Romanian citizens seek solutions. Identifying these challenges, those who are vulnerable to them, then the typology of solutions and solving ways are culturally based. (Precupețu, 2006: 381-386).

At conceptual level, there are authors that make a distinction between vulnerability and being vulnerable (Nichiata, 2008). If we were to start from the geo-climatic meaning, vulnerability may define "the extent to which a certain population is exposed to the susceptibility or risk of damages caused by natural disasters". However, a segment of the population is said to be "vulnerable" if it would suffer the most as a result of natural disasters, such segments including children, pregnant women or women with small children, the elderly, the homeless, all those who are more prone to disease and malnutrition. Following another meaning, Nichiata and others define a group as "vulnerable" when "(their) possibility of making choices is severely limited as a result of a coercion being exercised in decision making". The latter perspective underlines the absence of decision-making autonomy.

From a conceptual perspective, risk appears to be a social construct, similar to vulnerability. Besides, in the medical studies analysed by Nichiata et al. (2008), the term "vulnerability" is used as a synonym for "risk". Where there are differences, risk is associated with traditional epidemiology studies, having a predominantly analytical character, while vulnerability is viewed synthetically, as an emergent concept (Ayres et al., 2006).

From a psychological and social perspective, the situation in which an individual is in a defenceless emotional situation would constitute, according to Feltham and Dryden (1993, p. 206) "an opening towards vulnerability". Vulnerability will thus be considered either a sign of healthy adaptation, or as useless risk-taking behaviour. The situations of vulnerability in which individuals are exposed to risk or to harm without the feeling that they could handle such dangers are associated to potentially harmful inter-personal relations. Likewise, children and young people may be considered legally vulnerable or "at risk" if they have an abusive parent and/or live in precarious conditions, inappropriate for their age.

Vulnerability occurs, thus, as a state of difficulty generated by the individuals' inability to look after them, to protect themselves against a form of exploitation or against serious danger. From the perspective of social determinants (WHO, 2008), an individual is not intrinsically vulnerable, but instead made so by additional factors such as: poverty, inadequate housing, poor quality services,

unfavourable legal regulations, manifestations of power and inequality at family or society level – including institutions, structures, hierarchies, policies, measures. Vulnerability may result in dependence, and, from the part of the others, in stigmatisation, marginalisation and social exclusion. Some authors (Miftode, 2004) discuss concepts such as "self-vulnerabilisation" and "social self-exclusion". The diversity of terms used in literature in order to designate a state of vulnerability or a risk situation sometimes causes confusion (Șoitu, Rebeleanu, 2010). Vulnerable groups are defined as those groups that are "disadvantaged by dimensions of poverty, ethnicity, age, gender, mental health issues and so on" (Rogers, 2004).

In the Law concerning social assistance (Law no. 292/2011) the terms vulnerable/vulnerability appear explicitly in 13 contexts, and other times associated with terms such as "disadvantaged", "marginalised", "risking social exclusion", or "in difficulty". Article 6 defines vulnerable groups, and a possible meaning of the phrase "vulnerable individual" can be derived from article 5, where the principle of social solidarity is enounced: "the entire community takes part in supporting the vulnerable individual requiring support and measures of social protection in order to overcome or mitigate the effects of difficult situations, in order to ensure the social inclusion of these categories of population" [article 5, letter a]. In fact, a vulnerable individual would be a person that is temporarily in need, whose social inclusion would be facilitated through a certain kind of support. The abovementioned article includes 20 other values and general principles the national social work system is founded on. If we were to analyse principles such as partnership, user participation, transparency, non-discrimination and focus, we could say that the aim of social protection/welfare is "to ensure decent and dignified living standards for vulnerable individuals". These living standards are supported by welfare benefits and social services, however only for "the most vulnerable categories of individuals", depending on their income and property.

Defining the "vulnerable group" expands the meaning of vulnerability beyond income and property, this term designating "individuals or families that are at risk of losing the ability to meet their daily living needs due to circumstances of illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol dependence or to other situations that result in economic and social vulnerability" (Law 292/2011, article 6, letter p). This is a possible starting point in correlating conceptual frameworks – social and healthcare –, the situations listed above referring to a greater extent to illness, disability and dependence. In fact, vulnerability is explained through situations of risk or of difficulty.

To what extent is the vulnerable individual taken into consideration in healthcare policies? In the current form of Law no. 95/2006, the word "vulnerable" is not used (article 135 was repealed). The wording "disadvantaged" / "at a disadvantage" is not used. Semantically close, the word "un-favoured" is used,

but only in one context, when wording the requirement that physicians over the retirement age working in less-favoured areas remain employed until a replacement is found. Another article (17) provides that the county public health authorities must intervene in solving public health problems occurring among populations belonging to less-favoured groups. The social determinants of health are mentioned in two generic situations: a) as a fundamental principle in public health (art. 7), being oriented towards the concern for the determinants of health: social, environmental, behavioural and healthcare services, together with the society's responsibility for public health, with focus on population groups and with primary prevention; b) as a (analytical, our highlight) domain of intervention for public health (art. 6, letter b), concerning the monitoring of health determinants and, amongst others, the assessment of population needs in terms of public health services.

The term "risk" appeared in Law no. 95/2006 in 43 contexts. Many of these contexts were later altered however. Article 4 talks about: the evaluation of health risks – assessing the degree to which exposure to risk factors in the natural, work and living environment and to those resulting from individual and community lifestyles influence population health status. The contexts the term may be used in are wider: disease risk, epidemiological risk, environmental risk, behaviour risk factors, risks and benefits of transplant procedures, individual risks covered by voluntary insurance, life-risking medical diagnoses that are covered based on a health card, the risk potential of some prevention, diagnosis and treatment methods, risks connected to the use of certain medication (for the health of the patient or for public health, in terms of medication quality, safety or effectiveness; risk of undesirable effects on environment; risk/benefit ratio in assessing positive therapeutic effects of certain medication).

From a social point of view, risk situations or vulnerability may be foreseen, prevented or, when this is not possible, they can be mitigated or overcome, and those particular individuals can be assisted in their social reintegration through the activation of their own resources, through the identification of the optimum ways of coping with problems and through the application of solutions for reducing the duration of the risk situation. Intervention actions belong partly to the system of social insurance, and partly to social assistance.

Arguments for an exploratory study on the perceptions and representations of difficulties in accessing health care services may be found in the necessary knowledge of socio-geographical particularities of the access to health care services, in identifying goals and motivations associated with turning to health care services, in the possibility of interpreting the problems investigated.

The article analyzes and interprets the responses from health care, social and socio-medical *providers* relating to the *people and groups vulnerable to accessing* primary health services. Their perceptions are a good starting point in assessing the accessibility of the Romanian health care system.

The research question we wanted to answer concerns the *perceptions of health care, social and socio-medical providers on people and groups vulnerable to accessing primary health care services*. The main themes followed in data collection and processing focused on a) categories of persons, groups of persons perceived as vulnerable in relation to accessing primary health care services (PHS) or who have difficulties in accessing PHS) perceptions related to the difficulties of accessing PHS; causes and factors.

### **Methodology**

This exploratory case study was carried out in two large cities from Romania, one from the North-West Development Region and the second from the North-East Development Region, in June – August 2011. The data were collected through 15 individual interviews with health care, social and medical-social providers selected from the official lists of Counties Health Insurance Houses and from official lists from Agencies of Social Benefits and Payments. Our respondents agreed to share their experiences and problems in assisting and providing social, health and mixed social-health services for vulnerable persons and groups. More than half of them declared that this is the first time they are invited to share perceptions on such experiences. Two thirds of our interview respondents are working in private organizations and one third in public institutions. We have collected perceptions from one county's health decision maker and from other 14 specialists who are directly interacting with people (four family doctors, two psychologists, four social workers, two therapists on kinetics and two nurses). The analysis is thematic, from a constructivist perspective.

The major themes have sought to identify the perceptions of health care, medical-social and social providers: the existence of vulnerability in accessing primary health care services; perceptions about the difficulties in accessing primary health care services and the reasons supporting the persistence of this vulnerability.

This paradigm emphasizes the social construction of reality, the ultimate goal being a better, more nuanced and authentic understanding of the psychological-social phenomena (Jacob, 1989). In the study of perceptions, constructivism is concerned with perceptual and cognitive ways of seeing reality, trying to discover individual mental processes in building things (Parker, 2005).

We have tried to identify versions of social reality regarding the accessing of primary health care services, as related to turning to these services and using them. The perceptions of the providers managing social, medical-social and health care services on the types of persons, respectively vulnerable groups in accessing health care services, reflect the instrumental and practical size of the significance of access, regarded as a social construction.

We have also sought perceptions about the "vulnerable persons" or "the people who have difficulty in accessing primary health care services" in order to identify the social construction of these concepts, to identify social values and moral categories associated with equality / inequality in accessing primary health care services. The interviews allowed us to identify functional features of the language used by professionals - doctors, psychologists, social workers - and the associated features of their discursive practices, which "not only reflect reality, but also create it, through the process of communication of meanings" (Baban, 2010, p.11).

### **Results, analysis and interpretations**

As promoted by the participants in the pilot study, "any person who finds it difficult or impossible to go to a physician when required is vulnerable", but we are talking about "communities or population at risk in terms accessibility to medical services" (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

Communities "are vulnerable because of geographical isolation (in an inaccessible area and a long distance to health care providers), due to poverty, exposure to risk of disease, in a corrupted environment, which favors the occurrence of diseases" (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

The critical point at this moment is the shift in responsibility towards the public local authorities, as of January 1, 2009, for the provision of social services and community healthcare. There are difficulties chiefly in providing medical care and social assistance for the population living in disadvantaged communities and areas. Then, in the application norms (Government Decree no. 56/2009), the community nurse becomes the main professional in charge, together with the healthcare mediator, of the public health status of a community. In terms of decision making, the representatives of the public local authorities manage two domains – social and healthcare – for which they may not be trained. Professionally speaking, family practice itself needs coherent improvements in the initial and continued training of specialists and in exercising this profession. A positive thing in terms of policies is the integrated vision in the provision of social and medical services in a community: community healthcare services, integrated with social services, are provided to the community by the public service of social assistance within the public local administration, or, in other cases, by a specially designated department in the Mayor's staff (Government Decree 56/2009, art. 3, paragraph 1). However, the legal framework for the application of this integrative policy does not exist yet, and the difficulties are increased by the recent national policies concerning the labour market. An expansion, enhancement and support of individual responsibility, both in social policies and in healthcare policies are beneficial principles, however it is necessary to add specifications concerning the optimal correlation with the levels of responsibility of the community and of the public authorities.

Community healthcare services and activities (art. 8) are provided by the following categories of professionals: the community nurse and the health mediator. According to this law, the community nurse has several competences, being able to "carry out activities in the following domains: home care, psychiatry, social and similar areas" (paragraph 2); "deal with the identification of domestic violence cases, of abuse cases, of disabled individuals, of chronic patients in vulnerable families" (art. 7 letter t). The abovementioned professional categories – the community nurse and the health mediator – should be / are active within the public social assistance services organised by public local authorities, or, in other cases, on the mayor's specialised staff. However, the financial difficulties faced by the local authorities have decreased very much the options for hiring community nurses or keeping them employed.

The interviewed health care providers use alternative phrases such as vulnerable population groups, exposed or at risk, choosing the last one: "We use the expression: at risk; population at risk" (family doctor, F, 50, N-E Region).

The category of insured, but vulnerable persons, include those with low incomes: both the insured and the (co)-insured. The main reason for mentioning these categories, along with any other poor person, is given by the need to pay for the medicines received and for the services provided under co-payment.

The insured in other counties may be in vulnerable situations until the full operation of the unique computer aided system.

Related to this aspect, the decision makers show a certain lack of confidence in the data provided by family doctors, because they are not verified.

Family doctors report data that no one checks. Then, of course, we cannot rely on these data. The statistical data on morbidity and the data on the treated morbidity are very different. This means that we treat more patients than we have! Why? Because, we repeat, the quality of the data is not verified. This is the first major dead end: the lack of a system for the validation of the quality of the data collected. The second dead end is that the information flows do not go to a single center that collects and interprets them correctly. Then, the data on which the decisions in the system are based on are not real. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

The weakness, fragility of the "too sick" people or the dependent at home, of the persons with disabilities or difficulties of travel, of the persons requiring medical care at home are other situations of vulnerable persons. A special category that cumulate helplessness, poverty, social isolation or space, is represented by the elderly.

A statement reflecting the perceptions of vulnerable groups in accessing primary health care services means: "Any community / collectivity / population exposed or at risk of disease / illness." Thus, the poorest families – especially those who do not qualify for social benefits / social aid integration, then, some

single-parent families are groups mentioned by the persons interviewed in our research as being vulnerable. When the residence is in the rural area, the vulnerability of resident families and persons here are more visible. The persons who practice subsistence agriculture are also listed among the vulnerable.

The general objectives of community healthcare services (article 5) take into consideration the involvement of the community in identifying its medical and social problems, in defining and detailing the medico-social problems of the community, in developing community healthcare intervention programmes adapted to the needs of the community, in the monitoring and evaluation of community healthcare activities, in ensuring the effectiveness of actions and the efficiency of resources. The activities listed in the above-mentioned regulation (article 6) for the domain of community healthcare are both ambitious and very general: a) health education in the community; b) promoting reproductive health and family planning; c) promoting attitudes and behaviours that encourage healthy lifestyles; d) education and actions directed at ensuring a healthy living environment; e) primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities; f) curative medical activities, at home, complementing primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare; g) medical and social counselling; h) developing home healthcare services for pregnant women, newborns and mothers, for chronic patients, mental patients and the elderly; i) medical recovery activities.

Similar to primary healthcare, social services are organised and provided at community level (Law 292/2011, article 40). Their role is to prevent, counteract and solve situations of difficulty, using intervention plans based on the identification and assessment of individual, family or group needs. In the text of Law 292/2011, a situation of difficulty (the phrase appears six times in the text) is the situation of a person whose social integration capacity is lost or limited at some point of his/her life cycle due to socio-economic reasons, health-based and/or resulting from a disadvantaged social living environment; this situation may also concern families, groups of individuals, communities, if the majority of their members is affected (article 6, letter jj). Actions that aim to support groups and communities are organised at community level, through programmes for the prevention of social marginalisation and exclusion. The decisions concerning these programmes are made in a decentralised fashion, through decisions of county and/or local councils.

In addition, there are the groups made vulnerable by the system: those insured in other counties (in terms of decentralization, the transfer of money to pay for medical services is not made - the participants were referring, here, more to specialized medical care), those who are not always recognized by the health computer aided systems used as insured or co-insured (e.g. children, pensioners), individuals and families resident in rural areas / far from all primary health care services; persons and families insured, but who have low income, who do not qualify for social benefits / social aid integration, having access difficulties caused by the co-payment system.

In the category of uninsured persons, who are vulnerable in accessing health care services, the responses of our interviews mention: the persons without identity documents, those who cannot afford / do not want to be insured, some people who migrate for work and are not insured either in Romania or in the country where they work; the persons who think that they will not need health care services, and when the situation will require, they will pay anyway; the persons for whom the employers do not pay their insurance; persons who are aware that they do not work legally; day-laborers; persons who were left without support and are unable to be insured; partners of the insured; house widows (whose husbands were not insured / not co-insured).

The difficulties in accessing primary health care services are expressed, on the one hand, by the inability to reach and turn to primary health care services (failure to be insured, distance), and on the other hand, the absence to turn to primary medical care and the lack of effective use of this medical care (lack of intent, refuse, previous unfavorable experiences, lack of financial coverage of the investigations and medication).

A decision maker interviewed identifies two categories of persons who have difficulties in accessing health care services:

Those who have nowhere to turn to and the patient who does not know what to choose; it is the lack of confidence - and then they turn to a neighbor, an acquaintance, informal network that leads them to one side or another. This is the consequence of the lack of a system for the assessment of quality that allows public information on the quality level and the level of expertise of each health care provider. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

Together, the sources of difficulties perceived in accessing PHS include ethnicity, religious affiliation, social-economic status at a disadvantage and low educational level.

The causes that make the people vulnerable and that make it difficult to access primary health care services, as shown in the pilot study, may be organized around four categories of factors: individual, societal, factors related to the system or coming from health policies.

The individual factors reflect expectations, interests, perceptions, level of autonomy, responsibility assumed.

The societal factors gather answers on *the legacy of the paternalistic state*, mechanisms of solidarity and social representations of ethnicity, religion, age, socio-professional status. The corruption in the system is added to all these: that "you must know someone" (social services provider, F, 35, N-W region; supplier of social-medical services, 42, F, N-E Region), to make informal payments. These strongly hinder access to services and undermine the very „public” nature of health care services.

As related to health policies, the providers participating in the pilot study consider that they support a "misunderstood solidarity, through differentiated contributions, but equal services" (social - medical service provider, F, 35, N-W region).

The state budget made several errors. Motivated... of course we have macroeconomic factors, and there is a budget deficit remained, and so on. The first budgetary imbalance was created because the health insurance fund, as a matter of fact the contribution, to this fund, was based on a smaller package of services that excluded services with a high social impact, where you no longer ask the patient whether he is or not insured. We offer the services directly. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region, referring to emergency health care services).

Then, the health insurance system causes inequities because there are too few participants and too many exceptions that benefit from services.

As created here, it is an egalitarian system, because we have a large component of insured without insurance payment. The state seeks to protect a particular population group in terms of disease risk. Very good! Then, the State pays from the state budget! However, it protects the money of others. (provider of social and social-medical services, M, 45, N-W Region).

The way to use human resources, material and financial resources in relation to the services required is one that limits access, on the expense of the sick, and of the insured who consider to be healthy.

At the same time, the population, whatever their level of education, (the population) does not understand the importance of insurance. It is a matter of education of the population as related to insurance, as for making an appointment and for all. The situation of the health system is much better if we think that insurance is compulsory. Many are insured and do not know and many are uninsured and do not know. They do not know why they have to be insured, only those who needed medical services know why. Insurance culture in our population is quite low. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

"Decentralization is necessary, but if it is done correctly". Seen as an aim of public health policies, at the expense of its use as an instrument, according to the interviewees, it leads to a situation of enhancing the difficulties of access, by increasing the distance to medical services and the reduction of the number of specialized services.

These are conflicting objectives: on the one hand, we aim to increase accessibility of the population, which means a fair distribution of service providers in the area; on the other hand, we dissolve a service provider and replace him with something that has nothing to do with the job. We replace it with a retirement home, not granting medical services. That was a decision error. If we refer to rationalize hospitals in terms of cost-effectiveness ratio, the measure is correct.

However, we must keep in mind that, that hospital offered medical services. The people there needed medical services, because otherwise people did not go to hospital. No one obliged them to go to the hospital; ... that they were not at the level of a hospital is something else. They should have replaced these hospitals at least with those medical services that the hospitals provided until then. It could have been multifunctional centers. First, they had to establish the multifunctional center and then to close down the hospital, not the other way around (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

At the same time, turning to primary medical care is reduced: people in need either give up, or postpone to turn to primary health care; this behavior is deemed to be as such because of the access costs and the payment of treatment / medication.

You will see that the aim of the health policies is increasing the accessibility to health services, because the accessibility is limited by many factors: the rough form of uneven distribution of resources (providers of medical, medical-social, human, financial, professional services, etc.) to conditions of accessibility due to health education, disease status, many .... (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

The factors of the medical system distinguish the inconsistency of the health care reform during the last years. On the one hand, there is an overlapping of competent authorities in the field (Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Agency), due to the "bureaucratization of the health system" (social and social-medical services providers):

One of the achievements of health system reform in recent years is the introduction of insurance system that tried to separate the duties of the Ministry of Health - which is concerned with providing medical services - from those of the National Health Insurance Agency. Unfortunately, this restriction was more on paper because the Ministry of Health did not understand how to make health policy without financial intervention and Insurance Agency did not understand how to be a payer without involvement in health policy, and then they started to handle each others affairs. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

On the other hand, a perverse effect of the ongoing reform of the public health system in recent years and of the under-funding supports the migration of specialists in other countries.

Financial imbalances have been created as a result of bad policy. In 2003 it was decided that pensioners would not pay. In fact, the state budget did not pay! As you can imagine what impact this decision had: the expenses on outpatient drugs were 9000 billion in 2003, and the contribution of the pensioners / paid by the state for the pensioners for health state was 13 billion!!! Do you understand what that meant for the next year? Another thing that happened thereafter was that the contribution to the health system started to decrease.

By 0.5%, 0.5% from 14% we have reached 10.75 now. We do not know if you have heard any citizen being happy that he paid 0.5% less on health! Then imagine what 0.5% means for the insurance funds, overnight!' (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region)

Another cause of difficulties in accessing services comes from how to practice and exercise the profession:

The role of the family doctor was not defined from the beginning... We have to implement the idea that the family doctor practices the medicine of the healthy human! But here, primary care is focused on the sick, not healthy people. The family doctor should have the population map on risk groups. Prophylaxis means healthy human medicine. The family doctor practices this medicine. But the family doctors, in addition to immunizations, are not involved in any health programs... Here, prophylaxis really means to pay for therapy and a secondary and tertiary prophylaxis. Concept (of prophylaxis) is not well implemented. (decision maker, M, 55, N-E Region).

Then, all family doctors have the task of educating "captive" population to which they address, forming it, in time.

The solutions for solving cases related to unfair distribution of the resources in the territory are related to the organization of the system, but they depend on the person:

They depend on the person and also on the organization of the system because the system does not do enough to inform the people on the accessibility to medical services. (medical services provider, M, 46, N-E Region; supplier of social services, F, 43, N-W Region).

## **Conclusions**

Vulnerability does not have uniform meanings among the three categories of health care, social and social-health care service providers. The participants in this study associate vulnerability with the difficulty in accessing medical services, but the reporting is made to the population or communities at risk in terms of accessibility of health care services (in need, potential risk, disadvantaged).

Our conclusions highlight the strong connexion between societal determinants, health system determinants and individual determinants in accessing health care services. Any intervention on one of these factors has a level of control on the effects of the other ones. The answers we have reached at in our study indicate that the health insurance system was not prepared enough neither on the decision maker's level, nor on the level of doctors and other medical services providers, nor for the suppliers of pharmaceuticals or local authorities, nor for individual citizens. The vulnerability is, then, caused

by all three categories of determinants: it is coming from the health system and its policies, but also from the society and individual dimensions.

The biggest complaint is that "money do not follow the insured" - who has no contract signed and no decision power. We intend to develop this argument in following papers.

Our respondents believe that the decision-making echelons need to review the legal documents that regulate social and healthcare policies. The decentralisation process requires investments in the education of the population, professionals, as well as of decision-makers in the social protection and public health systems. Citizens' involvement, transparency of information, collaborations and participatory decision-making processes represent some major principles that may guide the development and application of integrative social and health care policies, with beneficial effects for a dignified and healthy life. During these case studies, we have also identified that it is necessary to study thoroughly the ideological significance of our findings and to outline a possible multidisciplinary approach to the issue of „vulnerability”, common for various specialists working with vulnerable groups and persons.

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## THE “REAL” MOLDOVA? DIRTY WATER, GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTALISM AND RURAL SANITATION PROJECTS

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**ABSTRACT.** In the Republic of Moldova, access to potable water and adequate sewage disposal is a serious concern, especially in small towns and rural communities. Groundwater is often contaminated with nitrates and other agricultural pollutants, and many residents do not have access to alternative water sources or sewage systems. During ethnographic fieldwork in 2009 and 2010, I encountered various individuals and organizations responding to these issues by seeking international environmental funding to carry out rural sanitation projects. In this paper, I consider how Moldovan environmental advocates utilize certain narratives in an attempt to make these often invisible rural sanitation problems visible. Particular attention is paid to the binary categories they use – including urban/rural, clean/dirty, and global/local – to make sense of problems and to develop potential solutions. These binaries do not necessarily organize practice, and they often lead to contradictory claims. However, these claims play an important role in bringing attention to problems, attracting financial support, and justifying the involvement of some groups while excluding others.

**Keywords:** environmentalism, rural sanitation, Republic of Moldova

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

Water quality and sanitation are serious concerns in rural Moldova. Roughly two million people, over half of the population, reside in rural areas or small towns with insufficient access to potable water, as their groundwater has been contaminated with agricultural chemicals and other pollutants (Hugosson and Larnholt, 2010). Most rural residents do not have access to a centralized water distribution network but instead retrieve their water from shallow wells. About 70 percent of Moldovans use groundwater and the remaining 30 percent of the population uses surface water, both of which are generally polluted and often fail to meet health standards (ibid.). Drinking water can be contaminated by “high concentrations of nitrates, sulphates, chlorine, fluorides, iron, minerals, color and hardness” (World Bank, 2008: 20). In addition,

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16 percent of drinking water in rural areas has coliform bacteria and seven percent has fecal coliforms (ibid.). Many rural residents are not connected to a sewage system. Trash collection is another problem; without this service, trash piles up on riverbanks or in various areas in the villages.

The CIA Factbook lists “extensive soil erosion from poor farming methods” and “heavy use of agricultural chemicals” as the two leading environmental problems in Moldova. The overuse of chemicals, including banned pesticides like DDT, has contaminated the soil and groundwater in many locations. Chemical usage dropped at the end of the Soviet period, but as chemical pesticides and fertilizers have again become available, especially since the late 1990s, usage has again risen. When it rains, pesticides and fertilizers wash off fields into small streams, eventually infiltrating groundwater. During the post-Soviet decollectivization, farmers received land not in consolidated areas but in narrow strips, often on hillsides, leading to serious erosion problems and increasing run-off. Nitrates from fertilizers are especially harmful to human health, as consumption lowers the blood’s oxygen capacity and can cause cancer and impede children’s development when ingested in large amounts (Hugosson and Larnholt, 2010). Many wells have unsafe levels of nitrates according to EU standards. In addition, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) can be found in many old pesticides. These can cause chronic health problems, including cancer and neurological problems, not only among those who have worked directly with the pesticides, but also among area residents because of the ability of POPs to enter into the food system and the environment (ibid.). Widespread poverty in rural Moldova is exacerbated by these water and sanitation issues.

Sanitation is not a typical concern of Western environmentalists, as it is generally considered a public health issue.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, due to the failure of the Moldovan state to improve the situation, some Moldovan environmental advocates have devoted their efforts to addressing it. During twelve months of fieldwork in 2009 and 2010 in which I researched the environmental community in Moldova, I focused in part on projects targeting sanitation issues in rural areas. Most of these were carried out by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Chişinău or were strongly connected to organizations there, and many involved international funding and/or expertise. Here I focus mainly on three projects. One involves a small NGO based in Chişinău addressing the lack of sewage systems by installing Ecosan toilets in several Moldovan villages. Aliona, the young woman who founded the NGO, was born in one of the villages but lives in Chişinău. A second project involves two of my friends in Chişinău, Doina and Natalia, who organized a thirty-day online fundraising and awareness raising campaign in order to help two villages in northern Moldova find a solution

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<sup>3</sup> Sanitation issues did, however, play a role in the creation of the modern environmental movement (Preston and Corey, 2005).

for their lack of access to potable water. They hoped to attract the support of an American organization that would agree to create a partnership with the villages. The third project involves a small NGO run by a middle-aged man named Mr. Anatole and headquartered in an administrative center in northern Moldova. Mr. Anatole’s NGO received 5,000 USD through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Moldova, which manages a small grants project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), in order to test the nitrate levels of well water in several villages surrounding the administrative center. I learned more about each of these projects through interviews, informal conversations and site visits.

Drawing from these case studies, this paper examines the ways that Moldovan environmental advocates try to bring attention to rural sanitation issues, focusing on the ways they frame problems and solutions. Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed that many of the things people said about rural Moldova, including certain narratives used by those involved in environmental projects, contained contradictions. These contradictions often result from the use of binary categories that organize discourse but which do not necessarily reflect practice. Anthropologists have long recognized the “cross-cultural practice of dualistic forms of thought and organization” (Borneman, 1992: 3-4). Claude Lévi-Strauss in particular advanced this argument with his discussion of dual organization, or the “universal tendency to use binary oppositions in classification” (Borneman, 1992: 4).<sup>4</sup> In the case of rural sanitation projects in Moldova, at least three sets of (often overlapping) binary categories lead to contradictions, namely urban/rural, clean/dirty, and global/local. Although these binaries are simplifications, my research contacts often used them as a basis for narratives that helped them to pursue project goals. The paper thus aims to illustrate the disconnection between discourse and practice and the frequent tension between these in the context of environmental projects.

### **Urban/rural**

Mr. Dorin, a Moldovan ecologist, told me early in my fieldwork that I must travel to the countryside to experience the “real” Moldova, insisting that “Chişinău is not Moldova.” Sonja, an Austrian working for UNDP in Moldova, similarly told me that Chişinău does not represent the country, and that leaving the capital to visit a village gives a visitor a new perspective. These opinions illustrate that Moldovans and visitors alike may hold in their minds a dichotomy between urban and rural. Researchers have often used this divide as well. For instance, anthropologist Barbara Cellarius (2004: 217) argues that “the interpretation of what constitutes sustainable development or even an environmental issue can depend upon one’s

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<sup>4</sup> See Lévi-Strauss (1963), in particular chapters VII and VIII, in which he discusses the importance of binary oppositions as a form of social organization using case studies from the Americas, Indonesia, and Melanesia.

perspective,” and “an important variable affecting perspective is urban versus rural location.” Certainly typical environmental projects in Chişinău differ from those outside the capital; nevertheless, urban and rural are not so easily separated. To be sure, many connections exist between urban and rural space; many Chişinău residents have familial ties outside the capital and travel regularly between these places. Moreover, in the context of sanitation, some problems typically considered “rural” can also be found in towns and cities in Moldova. As we drove through one town during a site visit, for example, Catea, the local project manager for the UNDP small grants project, pointed out a nine-story apartment building with sewerage but no running water. Residents must carry their own water up the stairs, as the building has no elevator, and some older people must pay boys to fetch water for them.

The maintenance of the urban/rural dichotomy in the face of questions about what counts as rural, as well as the many practical connections between the two spaces, requires Moldovans to construct mental boundaries between these categories. Daphne Berdahl (1999) describes how former East and West Germans continually remade their identities in relationship to one another as their former countries went through political and economic reintegration. In this way, “the wall in our heads” remained, continuing to separate *Ossies* and *Wessies* after the actual wall came down (Berdahl, 1999: 166). Based on fieldwork before and after 1989, John Borneman (1992: 3) similarly examines coherence building in Berlin, examining how the east/west dichotomy persisted even as these two categories underwent “shifting significations.” In much the same way, Moldovans maintain a mental division between urban and rural, even in the face of many changes in what “rural” Moldova looks like. These changes include an increasing number of connections to urban centers abroad, where many villagers have moved for work due to a lack of opportunities at home.

Despite evidence of the interconnectedness between urban and rural, I found that many Moldovans tend to separate the two categories, often associating the urban with “modern” and the rural with “backwardness.” One contact told me during a drive through the countryside the villages farthest from the road tend to be very poor and often still display statues of Lenin. People in the villages are cut off from information, she said, creating a large gap between the country and the city. For example, she has heard of groups of shepherds who still think the president of Moldova is Mircea Snegur, the first man to take office after Moldova gained independence.<sup>5</sup> Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard many people blame the “mentality of the people” for Moldova’s shortcomings. This explanation was often, though not exclusively, applied to rural dwellers. Catea

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<sup>5</sup> She has also heard a story about one village that has two thousand people but only three surnames, so that people have to refer to each other not just by surname but by where they live. I heard similar stories from other Chişinău dwellers, both those born in villages and those not.

told me that although Moldova once had drinkable water and vast forests, the people did not understand that these were non-renewable. Villagers cut down the trees and polluted the water, and even today they think the river and the forest belong to them, even though it is public land regulated by the government. Mr. Dorin told me that farmers think only of the short term and thus use improper irrigation techniques that damage the environment. A contact in Chişinău who works with retired American farmers who visit to give advice to Moldovan farmers told me that her organization must choose its hosts carefully, as many Moldovan farmers are “not open to new ideas.” Those who do want advice, however, tend to be open to the American farmers’ ideas, because they feel that these visitors really understand the Moldovan farmers’ position. If someone from Chişinău were to come to the Moldovan countryside to tell farmers what to do, the farmers would not listen, my contact told me. This indicates that rural Moldovans also at times maintain a mental divide between city and country; in this case the Moldovan farmers identify more strongly with a rural American than with an urban Moldovan.<sup>6</sup>

Aliona from the Ecosan toilet project also told me that I must visit the rural areas to understand the contrast between Chişinău and the villages. However, she also acknowledged that there tends to be discrimination against villagers in Moldova rather than help for them. Due to the perception that villagers are “simple,” urbanites often treat them badly. These attitudes stem in part from the Soviet period. Igor Munteanu (2002: 207) explains that “a rigid social hierarchy existed in the USSR in which the collective farm worker was at the bottom of the social ladder”; this propaganda was supported by an income scale that created “significant socioeconomic disparities between the rural and urban populations.” Moreover, certain Soviet policies resulted in structural disadvantages for the rural population (*ibid.*). For example, rural residents could no longer move to Moldovan cities without a residency permit, and even those who managed to acquire a permit had difficulty finding housing, as newcomers from elsewhere in the USSR were given priority.<sup>7</sup> Structural inequalities persist today as a result of these policies, perpetuating the idea of the urban/rural dichotomy.

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<sup>6</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the complex issue of national identity in Moldova. See Jennifer Cash (2004, 2007), and Deema Kaneff and Monica Heintz (2006) for discussions of the relative importance of village identity over Moldovan identity.

<sup>7</sup> Again beyond the scope of this paper, urban/rural discrimination also contains an ethnic component. This is due in part to the influx of Russian speakers to urban centers in Moldova during Soviet times, even as Moldovan elites fled or were driven out of the country. Romanian-speaking Moldovans thus became a minority in major urban areas while continuing to make up most of the rural population. According to Munteanu (2002) these disparities have led to structural inequalities between ethnic groups that persist even today. See also Alla Skvortsova (2002) for an account of ethnic conflict in Moldova, and Charles King (2000) for a discussion of Moldovan identity.

In the context of Moldovan environmental projects focusing on rural sanitation, maintaining a division between urban and rural, despite their overlap and continual redefinition in practice, allows urban-based project managers to maintain and justify their control over projects. Portraying rural residents as ignorant about problems and even helpless creates the need for educated urban-based actors to control funding and project implementation.<sup>8</sup> Virtually all of the Moldovans I met working on environmental projects had, or were in the process of working toward, a university degree or a more advanced degree, and most had experience working on various different projects. Although this arrangement theoretically allows for knowledge transfer from urban to rural (and often West to East), in practice it can disempower local groups.

Doina and Natalia's attempt to use their expertise and connections to raise funds for two northern villages with contaminated drinking water failed to achieve its desired result. After our trip to the villages to collect information, described in more detail below, Natalia and I both posted stories and photos on a website. Unfortunately Doina and Natalia later learned that donations could not be made through the website after all. Nevertheless, Doina and Natalia still hoped to find an American organization to help tackle the water problems in these villages. An American woman they knew through previous projects was looking for investment opportunities for her company. She visited Moldova and traveled with Doina and Natalia to the two villages. When I talked to Doina almost a year later, however, no investment had been made. She expressed regret that she and Natalia had not been able to make the difference they had wanted to make. While multiple factors contributed to the failure of the project - such as the fact that Doina and Natalia had other full-time jobs and could only devote their spare time, and that governmental uncertainty and corruption made attracting a funder more difficult - one important variable relates to the urban/rural dichotomy. The assumption that these villages needed the help of educated professionals from the city, not to mention foreign funding and expertise, shaped the project in certain ways. This was illustrated when the group attended a meeting in the first town to present themselves to various people from the community. As Doina, Natalia, and the mayor entered a large conference room, they were given a round of applause, and a local official gave a speech thanking them for coming from Chişinău to help their village. That the project never lived up to its expectations suggests that this approach ultimately disempowered local residents, who were given the impression that they must wait for urban assistance rather than to seek solutions themselves.

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<sup>8</sup> Funding for environmental projects is skewed so far in favor of powerful urban groups that UNDP declared Chişinău-based NGOs ineligible to apply for the small grants program starting with the second round of funding in order to give smaller rural groups a chance. According to Cellarius (2004), this is a common scenario in the region.

The Ecosan toilet project, which has been more successful in meeting its goals, illustrates the complex relationship between urban and rural. As mentioned above, Aliona is a young woman from a Moldovan village living in Chişinău who started an NGO to address rural sanitation issues, mainly through the installation of Ecosan toilets. The NGO has only two members, but has formed a partnership with two other environmental NGOs.<sup>9</sup> When she was just sixteen, Aliona started a program in her village to empower young people, monitor water quality and clean up the village. She later moved to Chişinău to pursue a degree in sociology, and in 2003 she attended an annual international conference on water problems in Europe. In 2007 they held the conference in Moldova, and by conducting questionnaires, participants found that rural residents were aware of the water quality problem but had no strategy or method to improve the situation. Concerned with sanitation in her village, Aliona started her NGO in 2007 with support from the international organization sponsoring the water conferences. Influenced by the projects she had seen at conferences, her first priority was to deal with the lack of infrastructure for flush toilets, including the lack of access to a central water supply. Working with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), they looked into installing Ecosan toilets.<sup>10</sup> By early 2010, they had installed over a hundred Ecosan toilets in her village, in nine schools and many households, altogether benefitting five hundred residents.

Aliona’s university education and international experience, combined with her rural roots and commitment to remaining in touch with villagers’ concerns, shaped her approach to her work. Because the toilets were different from the village’s existing outhouses, Aliona planned educational activities, including non-formal methods like flash mobs and hand-washing days, as well as brochures, lesson plans, and other materials to help teachers explain the process to students. The brochures used pictures to illustrate the problem to people, “so they would remember,” she told me. They made sure to involve local people to “put the responsibility on their shoulders” instead of having to return again and again to teach people. She especially wanted young people to become aware of the problems so that they could be inspired to teach others, particularly older residents. Aliona stressed the importance of monitoring the project and making sure the local authorities were doing their jobs, such as providing paper towels for drying hands. This processes of transferring knowledge and monitoring behavior reflects Aliona’s international training and her position as the “expert.”

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<sup>9</sup> Small NGOs are not uncommon in the region, especially in small communities (Cellarius 2004). However, it does mean that as the NGO’s key member, Aliona’s involvement is “critical to organization stability and sustainability” (Cellarius, 2004: 220).

<sup>10</sup> Aliona traveled to Ukraine to see how the toilets work. She pulled out illustrated educational pamphlets to explain the toilets to me. They are squat toilets, which are common in Moldova, with separate compartments for urine and feces, and they use a dry process to neutralize the waste. When working properly, the toilets have no odor.

In addition to stressing the knowledge she had acquired since moving to Chişinău, Aliona remained aware that rural knowledge was also essential to project success. Throughout our conversations, Aliona stressed the idea of participation of local people in the implementation of projects, and of listening to their concerns and their ideas. However, due to funders' requirements, she has sometimes found her ideals difficult to uphold.<sup>11</sup> The SDC supported the NGO's first water and sanitation project, but this funding had ended the previous year. However, the SDC had delegated a new funder to take over the Ecosan project. This change proved problematic, as the new funder was a for-profit organization that at first treated Aliona's organization as a service provider and tried to impose certain criteria on the projects. A year went by without the project moving forward as Aliona fought to preserve her group's focus on social projects and capacity building. Aliona felt that her persistence paid off, as her relationship with the funder had improved.

Aliona's rural ties and urban education combined to make for a more complex approach to rural sanitation problems, illustrating the importance of problematizing the urban/rural dichotomy. As someone with a strong attachment to her natal village, and a respect and appreciation for the difficult life many villagers live, Aliona had many personal reasons for trying to realize successful projects. "We are a team that has rural spirit," she wrote in a progress report for a funder, "as we were born in the village and we feel this reality in our veins." Urban discrimination towards villagers, who are especially vulnerable in the bad economy, concerns her, and she told me that when she works in the village, she feels that the people there need her. This could be read as an assumption of helplessness on the part of the villagers. However, while she described villagers as "simple," she also called them "clever," and said she finds that it is most effective to be open and honest with them, rather than diplomatic or condescending like a politician. Unlike the first example, where the strict reading of urban expertise versus rural helplessness contributed to a disappointing outcome and perhaps the disempowerment of local groups, the Ecosan toilet project reflects a better understanding of the relationship between urban and rural. This allowed for a more effective push and pull between "expert" knowledge and rural understandings.

These examples show that while the urban/rural dichotomy plays a strong role in shaping the way that Moldovans view society, a strict division does not exist in practice. Nevertheless, the dichotomy has been reinforced through Soviet policies, economic inequality, and stereotypes about rural residents

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<sup>11</sup> They have very little funding, she told me. In addition to SDC, they received money from the Ministry of Environment's National Ecological Fund, UNDP's small grants program, and the Regional Environmental Center (REC) in Moldova, although REC's funding had decreased in recent years.

that can lead to discrimination. By basing their approach on this perceived division, Doina and Natalia were able to gain authority and maintain control over the project, but it also prevented them from fully involving rural actors in seeking solutions. By contrast, Aliona instead took advantage of the many overlaps between urban and rural, using her education and international connections to develop strategies and her rural ties to better understand the situation and put projects into practice.

### **Clean/dirty**

Chişinău residents often gave me their impressions of rural Moldova in the course of normal conversations. Many characterized villages as peaceful places where they could enjoy the fresh air and healthy, homegrown food. Romanian speakers in particular often have familial ties to villages, and several of my friends living and working in the city occasionally “escaped” to their parents’ homes in the countryside for a restful and relaxing weekend. Often my visits to the homes of Chişinău dwellers included pickled vegetables, fresh baked *plăcinte* (pastries), or homemade wine prepared by parents or grandparents living in villages. They presented these as clean, healthy products, especially as compared to packaged foods available in urban supermarkets. Several people asked for my confirmation that Moldova’s homegrown produce tasted much better than that available in the United States. They often attributed this to the rich, healthy *pământ* (soil) found in Moldova.

At the same time, many people who knew about my research on the environment told me that the lack of clean drinking water and adequate sewage systems created serious problems for village residents. Those working on rural sanitation projects often talked to me about the health consequences of contaminated water and produce; for instance, Aliona described the lack of clean water as *periculos*, or dangerous. Catea told me personal stories about the negative health effects of contaminated water and other pollutants. Certain contaminants have caused dental problems; for example, her brother-in-law must get his teeth cleaned every six months to remove calcium build-up. Catea, who is twenty-eight, has a five-year-old daughter. She told me about complications during her pregnancy “from this Chernobyl thing.” She believes that exposure to radiation in the soil and in fresh produce during the summers she spent as a child with her grandparents in Ukraine caused these complications. During one UNDP site visit, local health experts told Catea and me about the negative health effects of their town’s dirty air and soil, contaminated by POPs. For example, toxic chemicals had been found in local women’s breast milk. Without testing, this problem remains invisible, illustrated by one doctor with a proverb, which asks rhetorically, “What healthy person goes to the doctor?” The health experts’ solution involved educating the public about the toxic dangers in their environment. This narrative

of danger was reinforced for us with a tour of an old pesticide storage building, abandoned in 1990. Old chemical residue covered the dirt floor, and as we stepped around iridescent puddles, one of the experts commented that the situation was “*foarte serios* (*serezno*),” very serious.

Occasionally the accuracy of the clean produce narrative is directly challenged. NGO director Mr. Eugen described the lack of *apă potabilă* (drinking water) as *foarte serios* (very serious), telling me during a drive to a town in southern Moldova for a seminar on organic agriculture that “*situația nu este bună*” (the situation is not good). At the seminar, he explained to local farmers that while many vendors at *Piața Centrală*, the central market in Chișinău, claim that their produce is *ecologic*, or organic, this is inaccurate because of the overuse of nitrogen and other chemicals in their production. In this way, he countered the dominant discourse about healthy produce by explaining that products portrayed as “clean” are in fact often “dirty.” This also illustrates the invisibility of the problem, as shoppers at the *pieța* have no way to know whether the produce they are buying is really organic.

The general persistence of narratives focusing on the clean village and its healthy products makes it difficult for environmental advocates to bring attention to the often invisible problem of polluted water, air and soil, despite competing narratives about the dangers of this contamination.<sup>12</sup> Melissa Caldwell (2010) finds similar persistent narratives about “ecologically clean” foods in post-Soviet Russia. Several factors support Russians’ belief that foods grown at family *dachas* are healthy and “natural.” For one, homegrown foods embody a “spirit of sociality” or connectedness between economic and social activities, an important idea from the socialist period (Caldwell, 2010: 87). This belief also reflects a geographic nationalism purporting that food grown in Russian soil is cleaner and healthier than that grown elsewhere, as well as the idea that foods gathered and processed within a social network are more trustworthy than those produced by impersonal commercial enterprises. Caldwell (2010: 88) points out that “what is especially revealing of this symbolic ideology about the healthful properties of ecologically clean foods, however, is the insistence that Russian soil is clean and pure even when there are clear indications that the soil is contaminated.” Similar deep-seated ideas in Moldova make it difficult to counter the belief in the cleanliness and richness of the soil and the healthiness of the foods it produces in order to increase awareness of pollution and attract the support needed for its mitigation.

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<sup>12</sup> By contrast, trash is a much more visible problem, and it receives more attention. In 2011 and 2012, a group of activists organized countrywide trash cleanup days in which hundreds of volunteers picked up and disposed of garbage in parks, riverbeds, and other locations. Similar projects also take place on a smaller scale.

I sometimes observed both discourses within the same research project, attesting to the difficulty of overcoming this contradiction. This was especially clear during my trip to two northern Moldovan towns with Doina and Natalia. On the morning of our trip, the three of us piled into a van along with the mayor of the first village we would be visiting, Doina’s eight-year-old son, and a driver. Shortly before we arrived in the town, we stopped on a bluff overlooking a picturesque river valley, with sheep grazing below us, an Orthodox church in the distance, and grasses and wildflowers growing all around us. The mayor spoke with pride about the beauty of the countryside surrounding his village and the potential for tourism here. He expressed his frustration at his own inability to procure the resources necessary to clean up his town’s water supply. We stopped again a bit closer to the village, lower in the valley, and our driver walked to a spot near the river where water was bubbling up from a pipe spouting from the ground. The driver invited us to taste the water, and Doina’s son volunteered. He took a small sip and immediately spit it onto the ground, complaining that it tasted very salty. The driver and the mayor explained that nearly all of the wells in or near the village were either too salty to drink due to salinization from improper irrigation, or contained high levels of nitrates due to agricultural runoff. The village holds a special day each year to bless the wells that provide water to the community. Attesting to the ambiguity between clean and dirty, however, only one well now had clean water, and even this had been questioned because the well’s water had not been thoroughly tested.

After talking to a local medical assistant about a hepatitis A outbreak from contaminated well water, as well as several students who had been affected by this illness, we returned to the van and drove to the nearby second village. Doina interviewed the mayor on a hill behind the town hall overlooking another idyllic river valley as the sun began to set. Against this beautiful backdrop, the mayor told us about a nearby Soviet military training facility from which leaked jet fuel had seeped into the ground water. The town’s water contained so much kerosene that local residents used it to start fires in their stoves. The school and the kindergarten had no potable water, as the authorities tested their well and advised them not to use it anymore. After the mayor spoke we walked down the road to a well, and several people gathered around. A woman drew water from the well with bucket, poured some on the ground in front of her, and lit it with a match. The water burned away as we looked on. Natalia stood with her hands open in disbelief. The contrast was striking between the beautiful scenery and the contaminated water, finally made visible in the case of the burning water. Even more striking, perhaps, was the continued use of the natural food discourse. After watching the well water burn, we sat down for a *masă* (meal) with local officials featuring “healthy” homegrown produce. Our hosts were especially proud of the locally produced wine; perhaps they had grown accustomed to its faint taste of kerosene.

As in the wine, “clean” and “dirty” coexist in the Moldovan countryside, creating challenges for those trying to draw attention to water contamination. Talking about the health dangers of polluted water, soil, and air represents an attempt by environmental advocates to make these issues visible, but countering the strongly ingrained discourses about clean produce and the healthy countryside remains a significant obstacle. Many Moldovans I met expressed pride in the superior taste and quality of Moldovan fruits and vegetables over those produced industrially in the West. Thus the suggestion that these items could be contaminated is, not surprisingly, difficult to accept.

### **Global/local**

I also observed tension between the global environmental discourse used by many of my research contacts and the basic, local sanitation problems on which they focused. In concentrating on the basic needs of villagers, Moldovan environmental projects diverge from the global environmentalist discourse, which stresses issues such as climate change, protection of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems, and industrial pollution. Nevertheless, the environmental advocates that I worked with had sometimes internalized such narratives. For example, when I visited the UNDP headquarters in Chişinău to interview Sonja, the Austrian leader of the small grants program, and Catea, the local project manager, these two young women talked about a climate change adaptation strategy for agriculture as well as the importance of protecting biodiversity in order to protect rural livelihoods. They recognized these ideas as internationally conceived but also considered them globally applicable. Catea told me, “as people are traveling more to conferences abroad, they see other countries’ experiences, and they become more globalized and more aware of all kind[s] of environmental issues.” During a drive to a site visit, Catea told me about her increasing interest in and concern for the environment. There had recently been three catastrophes in the news: a drought in Russia, floods in Poland, and the B.P. oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, she had recently attended a conference at the Ministry of the Environment and heard a professor talk about the northern migration of killer bees and malaria-carrying mosquitoes. After learning about these disasters and dangers, she told me, she wondered what else climate change would lead to.

As mentioned above, sanitation projects do not often top Western environmentalists’ list of concerns; indeed sanitation is generally seen as a public health problem in Western contexts. However, when a state is weak and unable to provide basic sanitation services, as in Moldova, local actors must find alternative strategies to deal with this problem. One solution has been to treat sanitation as an environmental problem, although this approach comes with its own challenges. Sylvia Tesh and Eduardo Paes-Machado (2004) argue that sanitation fits awkwardly with environmentalism’s principles, and

that categorizing sanitation as an environmental issue requires reframing some of the basic ideas of global environmentalism. The modern environmental movement is largely based on a narrative of “humans recently interfering with a fragile and intricate ecological network, destroying a once-unblemished natural order, and doing so out of greed, carelessness, or stupidity” (Paes-Machado, 2004: 66). To solve these problems, dominant approaches have included trying to force or convince industries to stop harming the environment, and to educate people to appreciate nature and reduce their impact upon the earth. These approaches do not apply to sanitation problems, which often result from the failure of municipal governments to adequately deal with the waste produced by local residents. Although environmentalists do sometimes target governments,<sup>13</sup> the authors argue that this “just does not carry the moral outrage of railing against an industry for creating pollution,” while “railing against the residents risks blaming the victim” (Paes-Machado, 2004: 67).

In the case of Moldova, insufficient funding to improve rural water and sanitation and the perception of widespread corruption has led to a lack of confidence in the state to solve these problems.<sup>14</sup> Local actors feel that even if the state introduced a sanitation policy, implementation would be unlikely;<sup>15</sup> thus they consider lobbying the government a waste of time and have pursued different tactics. Sanitation’s awkward fit within environmentalism creates a challenge for Moldovans trying to address the problem using this approach. Due to the lack of domestic funding, Moldovan environmental NGOs depend largely on international funding. International funding organizations often expect projects to address problems such as climate change and biodiversity protection, making it difficult to obtain funding for sanitation projects unless a connection is made with these global ideas. Zsuzsa Gille and Sean Ó Riain (2002) point out that local actors must use global narratives in order to be visible. They argue that “references to global ideas and actors today provide an entrance ticket to participating in public discourse, and those unwilling or unable to formulate their claims in global terms often find themselves invisible” (Gille and Ó Riain, 2002: 283).

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<sup>13</sup> This was the case toward the end of communism in several Eastern European countries, for example. See Edward Snajdr (2008) on the role of environmental activists in the downfall of the communist regime in Slovakia, Krista Harper (2006) on the origins of the Hungarian environmental movement which formed in opposition to a state dam project in the 1980s, and Jane Dawson (1996) on the importance of anti-nuclear activism in various Soviet states during perestroika for channeling resentment and ultimately challenging the authority of the Soviet Union.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Moldova is listed 66th on the 2011 Failed States Index, falling into the second-worst category, “in danger” (Foreign Policy, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> One contact told me the story of an official who had announced that he had used government funds to open a new water treatment plant. A photograph of the plant circulated, but in reality no plant had been built. The photograph had been altered, and the money had disappeared.

The UNDP-funded water testing project in and around one administrative center, mentioned above, illustrates this situation. International organizations often target the area around this town for environmental projects because of the biodiversity in the Cubolta River that runs nearby. The recipient of this particular UNDP small grant was an NGO that wanted to test the water quality in the surrounding villages so that an improvement plan could be developed. Unfortunately, water quality and sanitation projects had technically been excluded from the UNDP small grants program because the Rio Convention required the main funder, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to focus on other problems. Catea told me later that the UN Millennium Development Goals and the GEF are “going in different directions.” While one of the Millennium Development Goals is to provide drinkable water to everyone, funding from GEF does not cover potable water projects. In fact, the only reason UNDP Moldova received a GEF grant at all, she said, is because the Cubolta River flows into international waters. However, they had granted money to this project because the NGO focused on the effects of their problems on the Cubolta in their grant application. While the NGO had to focus on an issue of international interest, protecting biodiversity in the river, they found a way to redirect some of the money to address a more pressing local need, water quality.

These examples suggest that at times my contacts internalized global discourses and found them relevant to their work, while other times they used these discourses strategically despite their perceived irrelevance to the particular local project. In the latter case especially, the “categorical views of the global and the local in their minds” shaped their perceptions, despite the fact that these categories are not actually separate and in fact are closely interwoven (Gille 2000). Indeed, connections between global and local account for many of the problems (e.g. the presence of imported agricultural chemicals that cause water contamination) as well as the solutions (e.g. access to international funding). In Moldova, the relative absence of the state has destabilized “existing hierarchies of spatial scales,” making the connection between local and global even more direct (Gille and Ó Riain, 2002: 278).<sup>16</sup> Gille (2000: 261) finds a similar situation in the context of a debate surrounding a waste incinerator in Hungary, where “the national government has not only ceased to be the most important economic and political agent, but has practically dropped out of the picture altogether.” Many of my contacts complained that the state has no money for environmental projects, forcing NGOs to search internationally for funding.

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<sup>16</sup> See also James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002), who lay out a framework to help explain changes in the spatial relationships between global, state, and local actors. They argue that states and non-state organizations, including both international and local organizations, have often become “horizontal contemporaries,” so that they must be treated “within a common frame,” rather than assuming a hierarchical relationship among them (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002: 994).

In doing so, they have discovered that “global forces...are less constraining and more enabling than they once were,” and that “local actors can use their imaginations to put those global forces to work on their behalf” (Gille, 2000: 261).

I observed this global-local connection frequently in my research with environmental advocates, many of whom are highly mobile, as they searched for specific global narratives while maintaining the capability to understand local issues. In 2009 my friends Dragoş and Ianka, who started the first environmental consulting firm in Moldova, traveled to Copenhagen for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); that same year, they also traveled to numerous Moldovan villages to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for sanitation projects. During one conversation I had with the couple, Ianka complained of their inability to find a way for Moldova to participate in the global carbon market. Moldova has a negative carbon footprint and thus no obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, and their low carbon output makes it difficult to attract foreign buyers of carbon credits. While the state could choose to enforce carbon emissions standards anyway, Ianka argued that the government is too bureaucratic and corrupt to take such steps. Dragoş, an incorrigible optimist, suggested that instead of relying on the state, their company could promote local projects and perhaps convince enough companies to reduce their emissions so that together they would have enough carbon credits to sell. In this way, they could use their own position and capabilities to make a direct link between global and local.

Global and local are often seen as binary, despite ample evidence of the overlap between them. In the case of Moldovan environmental projects, this evidence includes the effect of global forces on local communities, local access to global resources, and individuals’ understanding of both global discourses and local problems. Despite these interconnections, global environmental discourses do not always fit the local situation. In such cases, Moldovan environmental advocates use the perceived divide between global and local to separate the practice of using global discourses like biodiversity protection to secure international funding from the practice of implementing local projects to address problems faced by disadvantaged villagers. Paradoxically, the very interconnection between global and local embodied in these actors allows for such shifts. They can make local problems visible within a global environmental framework, and then use their insight into the local context to use funds creatively and solve problems effectively.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed the important roles played by the dichotomies of urban/rural, clean/dirty, and global/local in rural environmental projects in Moldova. Although these dichotomies simplify reality, environmental advocates use them strategically to try to make invisible rural sanitation problems visible.

Many accept the strong dichotomy between urban and rural in Moldova to justify urban control over rural projects. They use narratives about dirty water to try to increase local awareness of the serious problem of water contamination in Moldovan villages. Finally, they utilize global environmental discourses in order to acquire international funding, even when these discourses do not fit the local situation, and channel the money into sanitation projects.

However, the examples given here have also illustrated the ambiguity of these categories in practice. Narratives of the clean, beautiful countryside coexist with warnings about the health dangers of contaminated water, air, and soil. The interconnections between global and local mean that problems as well as solutions necessarily span spatial scales. Similarly, the many overlaps between urban and rural make a strict knowledge transfer from the former to the latter impossible. The disconnection between discourse and practice means that although these binaries can help to create strategic boundaries and open up new opportunities, they can also lead to unintended consequences, such as a misreading of problems or the disempowerment of local people. At times, however, those that accept the overlaps and ambiguity of these categories can find ways to effectively navigate them.

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## EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION FOR FIVE GENERATIONS IN ROMANIA: A SEQUENTIAL ANALYSIS OF COHORT STATUS CONSISTENCY\*

DAN JECAN<sup>1</sup> AND CRISTIAN POP<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** Education is regarded as an important vehicle of social mobility and status attainment, yet it has different effects on individuals' occupational trajectories. The historical variation of these effects follows the social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. Using the empirical data provided by the STRATSOC 2010 research<sup>3</sup>, we analyze, in a longitudinal perspective, the changes in the correspondence between the respondents' education and their occupations in Romania, for five generations born between 1920-1985. Our study focuses on the variation in time of two variables: respondent's occupation and education. The first part of the paper consists of a descriptive analysis of the evolution in time of the maximum level of educational attainment and of the first occupational status held by individuals. In the second part, we perform a multivariate analysis in order to examine, in a historical, generational perspective, the changes in the correspondence between education and occupational status in Romania.

**Keywords:** education, occupation, status attainment

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<sup>3</sup> The STRATSOC 2010 dataset was collected within the research project “Class Structure and Social Stratification in Contemporary Romania”, conducted by the University of Bucharest (director: prof. dr. Lazar Vlasceanu) in partnership with the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, the University of Oradea and the Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS), with the financial support of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, Grant PN-II No. 92131/Oct. 2008. The sample design was multistage stratified-random sampling, and the final dataset included 4,508 respondents above 25 years old. The field research took place in November-December 2010, and it used face-to-face interviewing at the respondents' residence in order to fill in the questionnaires. The authors of this paper participated at the research project under the academic supervision of prof. dr. Traian Rotariu, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca.

## Introduction

The Romanian class structure and social mobility processes follow some well-known patterns from Eastern and Central Europe, marked by growing economic inequality, the restructuring of the working class and the emergence of a new urban middle class (Breen, 2004; Kohn and Slomczynski, 2006; Slomczynski and Marquart-Pyatt, 2007). A specific feature for Romania, similarly to Poland, is the important rural component of the population, which makes farmers a large, and constant occupational category. Using a relational understanding of the social classes, which follows the approach of Kohn and Slomczynski (2006) we investigate the ways in which the effects of education on social mobility and status attainment (measured as occupational status) vary in time from one generation to another, between 1920-1985. Using the empirical data provided by the STRATSOC 2010 research, we analyze, in a historical perspective, the changes in the correspondence between the respondents' education and their occupations in Romania, for five generations. Our study focuses on the variation in time of two variables: respondent's occupation and education.

The theoretical framing of our study acknowledges the analytic distinction between continuous and discrete visions on the structuring of social inequalities and mobility processes. Slomczynski and Marquart-Pyatt (2007) conceptualized these measures as relational and distributional, explaining that an analysis of social structure in terms of social relations, particularly relations of control and subordination of certain social groups to others, can be identified as belonging to *the class approach*. *The stratification approach*, on the other way, concentrates on the analysis of distribution of commonly desired goods and commodities. For the latter, the central question is who gets what, through what channels, and with what consequences. Dessens, et. al. (2003) highlight the results of the first generation social mobility researchers (Lipset and Zetteberg, 1959; Miller, 1960) which used inherently discrete methods in analyzing inflows and outflows of occupational categories as captured in social mobility tables. They used the non-manual - manual - farm trichotomy to achieve comparability between measures. While analyzing their tables, mobility researchers of the first generation found that some characteristics of their mobility tables were difficult to reconcile with a one-dimensional representation of statistical distributions, such as a correlation coefficient or some other measure of association. At best, such measures would average the pattern of association in a mobility table, but they could not grasp it fully. Talking about the second generation mobility research, Dessens, et. al. (2003) show that one of the most important contributions of Blau and Duncan's (1967) status attainment model, was the use of path analysis models for the associations between more than two variables. Indirect effect calculations made it possible to quantify the role of education in social

mobility and to disclose its twofold influence on mobility and social reproduction. This was achieved at the cost of assuming that all variables in the model are continuous. The immense advantage of this idea was that all relationships could be expressed in a few easily interpreted model parameters. However, a major disadvantage of the second-generation models<sup>4</sup> was that, by concentrating on only a few parameters to model the patterns of association, these estimated effects were highly sensitive to contextual influences.

The third generation social mobility researchers (Hauser, 1978; Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980), returned to tabular analysis, but this time using log-linear models as a tool of statistical investigation. The third-generation models have conclusively established the discrete and multidimensional nature of patterns of social mobility. An important problem of log-linear analyses is that they yield so many parameters that they make conclusions hard to digest and interpret. Another related criticism is that models which consume so many degrees of freedom lack statistical power, which in turn may explain why so few comparative conclusions have been established. Fourth-generation models of social mobility should improve on earlier generations by combining the best of all worlds: they should be multivariate, allowing for conclusions to be drawn on both indirect effects and discrete categories, while using a limited number of degrees of freedom to be sensitive to contextual conditions (Dessens *et al.*, 2003).

Education is regarded as one of the most important factors in the status-attainment process. The relation between education and occupational status is supported by empirical data from a variety of social contexts, including societies that are in different stages of economic development, societies with different historic, cultural, religious and governance experiences and characteristics. Furthermore, the access to different jobs is conditioned by having educational credentials, even if we are talking about a low prestige occupation. Therefore, as a starting assumption, we expect education to determine occupational status, because in modern societies formal education is the mechanism by which individuals obtain occupation specific skills and credentials, especially when we talk about high status occupations. In addition, it is probable that parents with high status occupations can offer competitive advantages on the labor market to their offspring, by sharing competences that are not learned in school, such as social and interpersonal skills, and by insuring labour market opportunities at the end of their educational process. We may thus presume that the relation between father's occupation and child's education is determined also by the

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<sup>4</sup> The overall explanatory power of these models is based on the  $r$  (correlation coefficient). Culic (2006) explains that for the recursive path models, the model estimated correlations values will always match the empirical observed correlations. If the model is not entirely recursive, the difference between the estimated and observed correlations will express the model's validity: the lower the difference between the two sets of values, the more valid the model will be.

fact that those from high status families have the economic means to pay for education and their children receive at home cultural capital that enables better educational results. In Romania public education is free of charge at every level, but in order to enhance the probability of good educational performance, parents who afford it, pay additional private learning hours for their children. Similarly, the important universities are located only in a few cities of Romania, and if their offspring are accepted, parents need to pay for accommodation and other necessary living expenses.

The patterns of association between education and occupation vary historically, marked by specific social, economic and political processes. In the last five generations, the structure of the education and occupations changed, more and more people entering the tertiary education system, and also the number of high prestige jobs increased. It is worth saying that they didn't grow at the same ratio. Different theoretical approaches tried to explain the link between education and occupation. Therefore, the proponents of the modernization theory (Kreidl et. al., 2004; Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2007) think that the role of education in predicting one's occupation will increase as generations succeed, while the proponents of the overeducation theory (Borghans and de Grip, 2000) argue the contrary, explaining that individuals and society invest too much in education. For Romania, we do not have yet any information about the way in which each level of education relevant in the status attainment process (through jobs) has changed at different points (marked in our study by different generations) in time. However, we assume that the benefits associated with education are observable in time. In the first phase we try to find out whether there is a discrepancy between the last graduated school and the first and the current job. Also, we expect that this difference will decrease as individuals move from their first to their current jobs.

In the first part of this study, we present the theoretical frame employed in order to build our working hypotheses. The second part contains a discussion about the data and methods we used, followed by the presentation and explanation of our results. The text ends with a section of discussions and conclusions.

## **Theories and hypotheses**

### ***Modernization theory***

The modernization theory predicts a transformation of basic stratification principles. The role of the education in determining one's occupation will grow as societies modernize and industrialize (Kreidl et. al., 2004). This theory holds that ascription decreases and achievement increases according to the level of development in the local context, where context refers to a particular country

at a particular point in time (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2007). In other words, we can observe a restructuring of the labour force, which evolves in time, along the historical changes in different societies.

In the first phase, the development of industrial technology led to an increased demand for skilled workers and, as an effect, the need for labor force in the agricultural sector was decreasing, but it was increasing in the industrial sector. Later, the need for manual work in industry decreased and the proportion of the non-manual sector (management and the transmission of information) increased. Moreover, even if many occupations were based on learning (preparing) at the work place, the skills acquisition, prior to entering the labor market, became more and more important, therefore many skills that were learned before at the work place, were afterwards learned in school. Now we are facing an almost universal expansion of education, which started before the beginning of the 20th century in the most developed countries. The expansion of education is driven not only by the demand for trained labor but also by the demand of parents for increased opportunities for their children, because parents perceive that education is the most important and most certain route to upward mobility. Thus, in nearly all societies over the past 100 years, successive cohorts stayed in school longer and longer (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2007). Kreidl et. al. (2004) observe that the increasing role of education in determining occupational status is accompanied by a decreasing tendency in the direct effect of family background on the achievement of the offspring, and thus indirectly raising the relative importance of education in the stratification process. Romania is not an exception from this. As modernization progresses and the proportion of professional, technical, clerical and administrative jobs in the workforce grows, formal education gains importance for learning occupationally relevant skills (Brown, 2001; Treiman, 1970 apud Kreidl, et. al. 2004).

According to the modernization theory, when the demand for skilled work is bigger than the offer, there should be an increase in the level of association between education and occupation, and the contrary should happen, when the offer is larger than the demand. Ganzeboom and Treiman (2007) explain that the greater the variation in education, the greater will be the effect of education on occupation. Moreover, the authors argue that geographic mobility should serve to free people from their social origins and thus reduce the effect of ascription on occupational attainment. They continue with another argument, namely that the modernization of technology creates economic growth, making it possible to create products at lower prices and with less effort. This leads to the expectation that social origins have weaker effects on occupational status attainment in more developed nations, and in particular that the direct effect of father's occupational status on son's occupational status will be smaller in more developed nations. Finally, modernization theorist have argued that

selection by ascribed characteristics, such as ethnicity and gender, has increasingly come to be regarded not only as inefficient but also unjust; talent, effort and effectiveness may lead to societal rewards, but only when individually achieved or proven (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 2007).

Another stream inside the modernization theory, the theory of educational upgrading, asserts that the relation between education and status attainment (through matching jobs) will decrease over time. In addition, Kreidl et. al. (2004) expose the educational upgrading argument showing that besides the increasing demand for skills, the hiring criteria have been modified because present occupations require more skills than before; therefore an increased demand for higher education emerges. Using the modernization theory we intend to test, for Romania, two hypotheses about the historical evolution of the strength of the association between education and occupation, in cohorts born between 1920 -1989:

H1. The occupational returns to tertiary education grow over time, across generations.

H2. The occupational returns to primary education declines over time, across generations.

### ***Overeducation theory***

The overeducation theory is another theory which aims to explain the relationship between the education level of the individuals and their occupational status. The main argument used by this theory is that the individuals themselves and the society all together, invest too much in education. Mills (1953) and Dresch (1975) (apud. Kreidl et. al., 2004) predicted that the number of higher education graduates in the United States, would be, or had been already, higher than the demand of qualified work force in economy. Kreidl, et. al. (2004) observed that, although these predictions were not confirmed afterwards, some research works indicated that more and more employees have higher studies than the requested level for their positions and more employees occupy positions which in the past were taken by workers with lower educational qualifications. It seems that the students graduate having fewer chances to obtain an occupational status according to their level of education. Overeducation theory suggests that their skills and the knowledge are underused at their work-places, therefore the private and public resources invested in education fail to bring the expected returns, at the individual and also the social level. Individual strategies meant to access specific resources, like occupational status, which seem rational from the individuals' stand-points, might produce collective irrationalities. The same authors observed that researches on this subject, mostly related to economics, yield smaller gains, however positive for over-schooling, like the fact that a significant number of individuals active on

the labor market were over-educated. Also, it seems that over-education is a permanent phenomenon in many Western societies, not just a short term alternative for avoiding unemployment or a temporary mismatch between educational level and occupational status, a fact that suggests the existence of some structural factors.

Over-education seems to be a problem specific for strongly industrialized societies and science people, and also numerous international organizations continue to recommend to the developing economies countries raising public investments in education, like an important part of their development policies, which will enhance productivity and the economical growth (Borghans and de Grip, 2000). However, there are arguments for a broader version of the overeducation theory, which is applicable to the emerging economies (Kreidl et. al., 2004). National governments are under the same pressure from the population, be it in a developed society or an emerging economy. Treiman (1970) stated that, because people perceive the advantages of education, there is a pressure on governments to expand the educational systems much quicker than the demand for educated labour force could possibly increase.

Kreidl et. al., (2004) assess that over-education implies wasting human and financial resources, but has also other unwanted consequences, on the individual and social level. With regards to overeducated individuals, over-education decreases job satisfaction and creates situations that affect in a negative way the less educated people. When individuals with higher education accept jobs below their competences, they are competing with those that are less educated. As a consequence, the latter are pushed even lower on the occupational hierarchy, or they completely lose their jobs regardless of their real or potential productivity abilities – phenomenon known as „crowding-out” or „bumping-down” (Borghans and de Grip, 2000). They continue offering a possible explanation for the appearance of over-education in the fact that the number of individuals that reached higher levels of study increased faster than the occupational structure. This structural transformation might give birth to a tendency that better educated individuals will generally find themselves on jobs associated with a lower social-economical status, lower prestige and lower wages.

Moreover, Kreidl et. al. (2004) expose a series of theories that predict changes in the direct (net) association between educational qualifications and occupational ends. First, Berg (1970) suggested that employers willingly raise employment criteria, in response to the larger numbers of individuals with higher education available on the market. Due to some reasons that were not necessarily linked to the workers’ productivity, employers request higher qualifications than actually needed for meeting job requirements. Solga (2002) states that the educational expansion changes the perception of the employers

regarding the less educated individuals, even if their effective productivity remains unchanged. She suggests that the signaling value of education is actually a social construct, which depends on the global distribution of accreditations among the labour force. All in all, overeducation theory suggests the fact that the average occupational status associated to each educational level should decrease over time. However, contrary to the theory of education development, this theory argues that the workers with less education will suffer the biggest decrease in regards to the average occupational status, due to their limited marketable skills and their lower productivity, combined with social stigmatization. On the other hand, more educated individuals will suffer just a slight decrease in their occupational prospects. Thus, in the case of Romania, we will test the following hypothesis:

H3. The decrease over generations of the average occupational status corresponding to certain educational levels is weaker for the higher educational levels, and stronger for lower educational levels.

### **Data, variables and methods**

We used data from the STRATSOC 2010 research project, which aimed to understand different aspects of the social stratification process, in contemporary Romania. In order to test the hypotheses presented in the previous parts of the article, we used a few variables that were of great importance, especially those related to occupation (the first and the present/last occupation of the individual), and level of education both of the respondent and of his/her father. We use occupational positions because, as Domanski et. al. (2009) observe, it is one of the most important vehicles of the social stratification system, especially in on the capitalist market. In order to understand the dynamics of the correspondence between individuals' level of education and their occupational statuses, we built four logistic regression models. We investigated if, and in what way, the chances of the higher education graduates to attain higher-status service-class occupations versus, lower-status manual and routine non-manual occupations have changed over time for five cohorts experiencing school-workplace transitions in different historical contexts, characterized by different economic, political and social configurations. We included in the higher-status service-class category higher-ranking managers, entrepreneurs, professionals and intellectuals. In the lower-ranking category we included skilled and unskilled manual workers, machines and installations operators, agricultural workers and farmers. The middle-ranking occupations, such as clerks, technicians or foremen, non-manual workers in service and trade were not separately analyzed.

We performed logistic regressions for each case for respondent's occupational status as the dependent variable, as follows:

- First model: respondent's first occupation - high occupations (1- higher-ranking occupations; 0 - other occupations);
- Second model: respondent's occupation at the moment of the survey (2010) - high occupations (1- higher-ranking occupations; 0 - other occupations);
- Third model: respondent's first occupation - lower occupations (1 - lower-ranking occupations; 0 - other occupations);
- Fourth model: respondent's occupation at the moment of the survey (2010) - lower occupations (1 - lower-ranking occupations; 0 - other occupations).

The independent variables used in each model are:

- Respondent's last educational level (0 - no education or primary/basic level; 1 - vocational school or high school; 2 - college; 3 - undergraduate and graduate);
- Respondent's father occupation (1 - higher-ranking occupations; 0 - other occupations);
- Respondent's last graduated school major (1 – technical or exact sciences; 2 – social sciences, arts and humanities);
- Respondent's cohort (1 - "till 1939"; 2 - "1940-1954"; 3 - "1955-1966"; 4 - "1967-1976"; 5 - "1977-1985");
- Gender (0 - male; 1 - female);
- Birth place (0 - city; 1 - village).

In order to observe the changes in the educational and occupational structure, we divided our population in five cohorts of individuals born in different historical periods, which could influence their life trajectories. The first cohort is made of the generation born until 1939, the oldest individual being born in 1917. Here we have the cohort born at the time of the First World War and immediately after. The next cohort is composed from the persons born between 1940 and 1954, in the time of the Second World War. The period 1955-1966 refers to the generation born at the time of the post-Stalinist urbanization politics. The fourth cohort, 1967-1976, is born at the time of the coercive pro-birth policies introduced by the communist regime. The last generation used in our analysis consists of the individuals born in the socialism's economic crisis period, 1977-1985, a time when socialism began to decline and, afterwards, was replaced. All these cohorts are used to detect tendencies regarding status consistency and status attainment using the education-occupation relation.

As a limitation of our research, it is likely that the sample containing individuals born before 1939, to be biased (this cohort to be over-represented) as we expect that life expectancy correlates with education and occupational category. However, for Romania there is no available data that could help us test this hypothesis.

## Findings

For a number of (first) occupations, we can identify ascending or descending tendencies (Table 1). Relevant, for this matter, are the intellectual occupations or managers and entrepreneurs who have a growing share of the labor market. Their percentage in the occupational structure is increasing steadily from 7% for the generation born before the First World War to 21.9% for the cohort born in the late 1970s and 1980. Some of the latter entered the labour market only after the regime change, thus having the option of self-employment and entrepreneurial activities. The data show a similar tendency for those working in services and trading. At the other end of the scale we have an occupational category which has a significant decrease over the years: the farmers. In the generation born till 1939, 30.9% of the individuals are farmers<sup>5</sup>. This percentage falls to less than 6.5% in the 1955-1966 cohort, and then we observe a slight increase up to 7.3% in the last cohort (1977-1989). If we compare this data with census data from Romania (Table 2), we observe that in the principal occupational categories the trends remain the same, even though we can find important differences between percentages in some cases. An important source for the differences can be the regrouping of two categories in one, as in the case of craftsman and skilled workers with machines and installations operators, in order to make the survey and available census data comparable.

**Table 1.**

**First occupation by cohort**

	<b>Till 1939 (N=640)</b>	<b>1940- 1954 (N=1074)</b>	<b>1955- 1966 (N=894)</b>	<b>1967- 1976 (N=842)</b>	<b>1977- 1985 (N=686)</b>
<b>Managers, entrepreneurs, professionals and other intellectual occupations</b>	7.0%	9.8%	10.2%	14.1%	21.9%
<b>Technicians or foremen</b>	11.4%	11.7%	10.2%	10.1%	8.6%
<b>Clerks, civil servants</b>	5.0%	4.0%	4.1%	4.9%	7.4%
<b>Service and trade workers</b>	5.5%	6.4%	8.9%	14.8%	23.0%
<b>Skilled or in own household farmers</b>	30.9%	15.9%	6.4%	7.2%	7.3%
<b>Craftsman and skilled workers</b>	26.3%	37.3%	47.8%	34.7%	19.4%
<b>Machines and installations operators</b>	5.3%	9.0%	5.9%	6.4%	5.7%
<b>Unskilled workers</b>	8.6%	5.8%	6.5%	7.7%	6.7%

<sup>5</sup> The difference in the percentage of farmers, as an occupational category, between those born until 1939 and the last generation is significant at the level .000 (in 99% of the cases).

Consistent with the data from Table 1, in Table 3 we can see an important upward trend for university graduates including those who obtained a master's degree or a PhD degree, from a grand total of 9.2% in the first generation, to a grand total of 42.7% in the last generation. The first observation is reinforced by the data from people that last graduated high school. They have an important increase from 13.6% in the cohort born before 1939, up to 45.6% in the generation born between 1967-1976 at the time of the coercive pro-birth politics established by the communist regime. As university studies become more and more important, those that have graduated only a high school decrease to 28.1% among those born between 1977-1985. The individuals from this cohort were educated after the regime change, when tertiary education gained a mass character, along with the changes in the admission requirements and, also with the growing number of private universities. The results, so far, tend to support the modernization theory.

**Table 2.**

**The dynamic of the occupied population in Romania from 1977 till 2010**

	1977*	2002*	2010**
<b>Managers, entrepreneurs, professionals and other intellectual occupations</b>	6.1%	13.4%	12.3%
<b>Technicians or foremen</b>	8.6%	10.5%	10.5%
<b>Clerks, civil servants</b>	3.6%	5.0%	4.9%
<b>Service and trade workers</b>	4.1%	8.8%	11.3%
<b>Skilled or in own household farmers</b>	32.6%	25.1%	13.0%
<b>Craftsman, skilled workers, machines and installations operators</b>	35.7%	29.4%	41.1%
<b>Unskilled workers and other categories</b>	9.3%	7.8%	6.9%

\*Source: National Institute of Statistics, census data;

\*\*Source: STRATSOC, 2010

**Table 3.**

**Last graduated school by cohort**

	Till 1939 (N=706)	1940-1954 (N=1136)	1955-1966 (N=946)	1967-1976 (N=900)	1977-1985 (N=818)
<b>Without graduated school</b>	3.0%	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%	1.1%
<b>Primary (1-4 classes)</b>	25.5%	9.2%	1.3%	0.4%	1.7%
<b>Basic (5-8 classes)</b>	28.2%	25.8%	11.9%	6.6%	11.1%
<b>Vocational school</b>	12.9%	24.5%	22.0%	16.4%	11.0%
<b>High School</b>	13.6%	17.2%	39.0%	45.6%	28.1%
<b>College or technical post-secondary</b>	7.6%	10.8%	9.6%	7.0%	4.3%
<b>Tertiary education: Undergraduate</b>	8.8%	11.3%	13.5%	18.2%	31.8%
<b>Tertiary education: Postgraduate</b>	0.4%	0.8%	1.9%	5.3%	10.9%

**Table 4.**

**The division between the highest (lowest) level of education  
and occupations with higher (lower) status**

	<b>Till1939 (N=640)</b>	<b>1940- 1954 (N=1074)</b>	<b>1955- 1966 (N=894)</b>	<b>1967- 1976 (N=842)</b>	<b>1977- 1985 (N=686)</b>
<b>Percentage of respondents with higher education/Percentage of respondents with higher status occupations</b>	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.9
<b>Percentage of respondents with lower education/Percentage of respondents with lower status occupations</b>	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6

**Table 5.**

**First and last occupation by education (statistics)**

	<b>Till 1939</b>	<b>1940-1954</b>	<b>1955-1966</b>	<b>1967-1976</b>	<b>1977-1985</b>
<b>First occupation by education*</b>	-0.232	-0.315	-0.389	-0.456	-0.485
<b>Last occupation by education*</b>	-0.316	-0.342	-0.395	-0.483	-0.522

\*Statistics: Kendall's tau-b, Approx. Sig. .000

**Table 6.**

**Percent of individuals with the same first and current occupations  
(association between first and current occupation)**

<b>First and current occupations</b>	<b>Till1939 (N=624)</b>	<b>1940- 1954 (N=1060)</b>	<b>1955- 1966 (N=877)</b>	<b>1967- 1976 (N=833)</b>	<b>1977- 1985 (N=675)</b>
<b>Managers, entrepreneurs, professionals and other intellectual occupations</b>	91.2%	84.8%	81.1%	84.0%	91.3%
<b>Technicians or foremen</b>	67.1%	72.8%	63.3%	72.9%	70.7%
<b>Civil servants</b>	61.3%	57.1%	69.4%	56.4%	64.6%
<b>Service and trade workers</b>	66.7%	65.7%	62.3%	61.0%	71.0%
<b>Skilled or in own household farmers</b>	79.0%	82.0%	73.7%	78.7%	85.7%
<b>Craftsman and skilled workers</b>	71.8%	76.0%	58.9%	59.0%	72.7%
<b>Machines and installations operators</b>	81.3%	85.4%	60.4%	60.4%	56.4%
<b>Unskilled workers</b>	59.6%	50.0%	55.4%	60.0%	43.2%

In the fourth Table we have the relation between higher education, understood as the total number of long and short-term university graduates and also who have a masters or PhD degree (undergraduates and postgraduates), and respondent's higher status occupations, more precisely, managers, company

owners and persons with intellectual occupations. The ratio between higher education and higher status occupations is growing from the first to the last analyzed generation, with a slight decrease in the generation born in the Second World War. Analyzing the data we observe that in the cohort born before 1939, as a percentage, the highly educated persons are 1.3 times more than persons with managerial and intellectuals jobs. This value grows to 1.9 for those in the 1977-1989 cohort, so we have almost two times more individuals with higher education than available higher status occupations. The second row of the table is the mirror image of the first; it shows the relation between the lowest levels of education and the occupations with a lower status. In the generation born until 1939 this ratio was equal to 1, in other words, those who had a lower level of education had also a lower status job. The ratio falls to 0.4 in the 1967-1976 cohort, so only 0.4 (that is less than a half) of the people who had a lower education had an lower-ranking workplace, and the rest of 0.6 (more than a half) lower status jobs were occupied by persons with a higher education than that necessary for those jobs. This mismatch between education and occupation can be understood as a structural effect of the massification of tertiary education.

Moreover, the negative values for all Kendall's tau-b (Table 5) express a growing discrepancy between education and occupation. In other words, as we pass from one generation to another, the number of individuals with higher education has grown faster than that of individuals with higher (as status and prestige) occupations, and we find an increasing number of persons with higher qualifications in rather low-ranking jobs. Table 6 could be understood as a measure, from one generation to another of the status stability over time, because it shows the association between the first and the current occupation. In other words, 91.2% of the persons who were as a first occupation managers, entrepreneurs or intellectuals have the same kind of current job. The highest status stability it's observable for managers, entrepreneurs and intellectuals, so for jobs with high occupational prestige. Another important status stability appears in the case of the farmers, an occupational category with lower prestige. An important decrease of status stability could be observed for unskilled workers who have the overall lowest percentage of first-current occupation association, and this percentage falls from 59.6 (in the generation born before 1939) to 43.2% in the last generation. This result can be explained through the development and the extension of non-manual work and skilled manual work at the expense of the unskilled work. In addition, this fall could be even sharper, because the individuals born between 1977-1985 are still young (25-33 years old, at the time of the survey in 2010) and most likely with very dynamic life trajectory. Therefore, the overeducation theory could be a good explanatory framework for these findings, as it seems like the results from the educational

investment are not the expected ones for a large number of university graduates, all this demonstrating that the bumping down phenomenon exists in Romania as well.

Tables 7 and 8 present the effect of each one of the seven independent variables from the regression models<sup>6</sup> on the dependent variables: the first occupation of the respondent (high-ranking) and the last occupation of the respondent (high-ranking). We can observe, in Table 7, that for each one of the cohorts that we studied, the variable *father's occupation* (high-ranking) has the strongest influence on the probability of getting a high status job. More precisely, the independent direct effect of the father's occupation is significant, because the regression model estimates that the individuals whose fathers have (or had) an occupation of an higher status, have three times (3.36) more chances of getting themselves such an occupation, as their first job.

In the case of education, we observe that none of the educational levels offer more chances of having a higher status occupation than the reference one (no education or primary/basic). The only cohort whose individuals have significantly less chances than the reference cohort of getting as a first occupation a high status one is the young one (1977-1985). All other variables have no influence on having a high status occupation as the first workplace.

However, the situation changes in the case of the regression model having as the dependent variable the last occupation of the respondent (high-ranking). Unlike the previous regression model, where the father's occupation had the strongest influence, in the case of the present model there are also other variables with significant influences. More precisely, regardless of the cohort, those with higher educational levels have considerably more chances to obtain a higher occupational status, compared with the chances of those who have no studies or have just primary or basic education (result obtained after controlling the gender, place of residence at birth, the father's occupation and the type of specialization for the last education level graduated by the respondent - see Table 8). Those who have completed vocational school or high school are significantly more likely to acquire a higher occupational status compared with the same group, and the same is true for those with post-high school or college. Thus, we can conclude that the educational level influences the achieved occupational status regardless of the cohort, even after controlling for father's occupation and gender, but this influence happens over time and might not be detectable for the first occupation. In other words, the benefits, in terms of employment status, of the investment in higher education, are not visible with the first job, but they occur over the life course. It is possible that

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<sup>6</sup> The general quality of the logistic regression models can be evaluated on the basis of the Nagelkerke R Square statistics. In the case of the present logistic regression models, they suggest that all the models explain significant proportions of the variability of the dependent variables.

in the case of the first job there is a mismatch (viewed as over-qualification) between the educational diploma and the first job, but this is corrected over time, so that the two match. As for the other variables, we see that the father's occupation (high-ranking) still exerts an influence on this variable, but smaller.

**Table 7.**

**Regression analysis - dependent variable „first occupation - high”**

<b>Dependent variable: respondent's first occupation (high)</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Father's occupation - higher-ranking (reference: other occupations)	.000	<b>3.367</b>
Educational level (reference: no school or primary/basic)	.000	
Vocational school or High-school	.995	5.043
College	.995	8.817
Graduate and postgraduate studies	.994	2.404
Specialization - Technical sciences (reference: social sciences, arts and humanities)	.414	1.124
Cohort (reference: until 1939)	.007	
Cohort - 1940-1954	.734	1.104
Cohort - 1955-1966	.298	.737
Cohort - 1967-1976	.119	.637
Cohort - 1977-1989	.021	<b>.518</b>
Sex - women (reference: men)	.151	1.229
Birthplace - rural (reference: urban)	.819	1.036
Constant	.994	.000

Nagelkerke R Square = 0.540

**Tabelul 8.**

**Regression analysis - dependent variable „the last occupation - high”**

<b>Dependent variable: respondent's last occupation (high)</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Father's occupation - higher-ranking (reference: other occupations)	.001	<b>1.898</b>
Educational level (reference: no school or primary/basic)	.000	
Vocational school or High-school	.013	<b>12.459</b>
College	.007	<b>16.140</b>
Graduate and postgraduate studies	.000	<b>315.328</b>
Specialization - Technical sciences (reference: social sciences, arts and humanities)	.120	1.215
Cohort (reference: until 1939)	.003	
Cohort - 1940-1954	.258	.752
Cohort - 1955-1966	.047	<b>.744</b>
Cohort - 1967-1976	.016	<b>.554</b>
Cohort - 1977-1989	.000	<b>.458</b>
Sex - women (reference: men)	.634	.940
Birthplace - rural (reference: urban)	.664	.942
Constant	.000	<b>.009</b>

Nagelkerke R Square = 0.494

The cohorts whose effects are statistically significant are *cohort 1955-1966*, *cohort 1967-1976* and *cohort 1978-1985* who can access higher status occupations to a lesser extent, compared to the cohort of those born until 1939. Thus, the regression model suggests that the chances of individuals in the cohorts previously mentioned, who have completed higher education, to access higher-status occupations decreased significantly compared to the cohort born until 1939. In other words, the value of the higher education diploma and the benefits in terms of occupational status achievement that is used to guarantee in the past, decreased significantly for the individuals born at the end of the last century, compared to the situation of those born in the first half of the century. Finally, we notice that the variables gender and area of residence at birth had no significant effects.

Tables 9 and 10 present the results of two regression models similar to those presented above, the only difference being that in these cases we refer to lower status occupations (unskilled manual workers, machine and installation operators, agricultural workers and farmers), both for respondent's and father's first and last occupation. Thus, in Table 9, where the dependent variable is the respondent's first occupation (lower-ranking), we observe that father's occupation has a significant influence. Individuals whose fathers have lower status jobs have 1.6 times more chances of having themselves such an occupation for their first job. On the other side, any educational level, beside the reference one (no school or primary/gymnasium) protects the individuals from having as a first job a lower status occupation.

Regarding the cohorts, we observe that in the case of the 1940-1954, 1955-1966 and 1967-1976 cohorts, the chances of the individuals to have their first job a lower status occupation increase slightly from one generation to the other. For the individuals of the youngest cohort (1977-1985) the chances of having as a first job a lower-status one are not different than from the reference cohort. In the case of this model, sex and the birthplace in rural/urban areas have significant influences, women and city dwellers having less chances of having for their first job lower status occupations. However, the gender difference might be determined by the fact that we constructed the category of "lower-ranking occupations" by including only manual jobs held mostly in industry and agriculture, whereas women with lower educational levels are more likely to be found in non-manual, routine jobs in service and trade. A similar effect of artificial better-positioning of women, due to their non-manual yet routine labour, was detected by Tomescu-Dubrow (2006).

In the regression model from Table 10, the influences of the independent variables on the dependent variable (respondent's last occupation - low) are very similar to those of the previous model. We notice here also that the father's occupation has a significant influence; individuals with fathers with

lower occupations have 1.8 times more chances that they also have, at their turn, such an occupation as the last job. Also, any level of education, besides the reference one (no school or no primary / basic school), protects individuals from the possibility to have as last job a lower occupation.

**Table 9.**

**Regression analysis – dependent variable „the first occupation - low”**

<b>Dependent variable: respondent's first occupation (low)</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Father's occupation – lower-ranking (reference: other occupations)	.000	<b>1.628</b>
Educational level (reference: no school or primary/basic)	.000	
Vocational school or high school	.000	<b>.190</b>
College	.000	<b>.065</b>
Graduate and postgraduate studies	.000	<b>.016</b>
Specialization - Technical sciences (reference: social sciences, arts and humanities)	.414	0.890
Cohort (reference: until 1939)	.000	
Cohort – 1940-1954	.038	<b>1.347</b>
Cohort – 1955-1966	.000	<b>2.361</b>
Cohort – 1967-1976	.012	<b>1.582</b>
Cohort – 1977-1985	.744	.935
Sex - women (reference: men)	.000	<b>.233</b>
Birthplace – rural (reference: urban)	.042	<b>1.240</b>
Constant	.000	<b>14.224</b>

Nagelkerke R Square = 0.492

**Table 10.**

**Regression analysis – dependent variable „the last occupation - low”**

<b>Dependent variable: respondent's last occupation (low)</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Father's occupation – lower-ranking (reference: other occupations)	.000	<b>1.711</b>
Educational level (reference: no school or primary/basic)	.000	
Vocational school or High-school	.000	<b>.224</b>
College	.000	<b>.064</b>
Graduate and postgraduate studies	.000	<b>.017</b>
Specialization - Technical sciences (reference: social sciences, arts and humanities)	.120	0.823
Cohort (reference: until 1939)	.016	
Cohort – 1940-1954	.001	1.825
Cohort – 1955-1966	.132	1.320
Cohort – 1967-1976	.107	1.363
Cohort – 1977-1985	.091	1.420
Sex - women (reference: men)	.000	<b>.286</b>
Birthplace – rural (reference: urban)	.048	<b>1.278</b>
Constant	.000	<b>6.647</b>

Nagelkerke R Square = 0.457

In what the cohorts are concerned, we notice that in the case of 1940-1954 cohort, there is more likely that the individuals occupy as last employment a lower-ranking occupation. For all the other cohorts the effect is not significant anymore. Finally, in the case of this model, the gender and the area of residence at birth have an influence significant, women having fewer chances than men to have as last job a lower occupation (here also taking into account the way in which the "lower-ranking occupations" category was constructed), applicable also to those born in the city.

### **Conclusions**

The changes in the educational and occupational structures from Romania are most visible when comparing the last two cohorts from our study. We can observe a major change, first among the individuals with higher education, whose proportion increased significantly in the last cohort. These individuals (significantly more than those from the 1967-1976 cohort) graduated from tertiary education after the fall of the communism. This significant increase was possible because of the liberalization of higher education, which eventually led to the massification of this type of education. The liberalization was caused by several factors, among which the most important were: the increasing number of state sponsored university places, the introduction of positions with tuition fees (which could be equal or even more than the state-sponsored ones), the emergence of private universities and the changes in the university admission criteria, which became more permissive. On the other hand, the newly emerging capitalist economy, although it offered new possibilities for the development of new economic enterprises, did not suffer corresponding changes which would justify the ones of the educational structure. In this context, the educational credentials switched from being primarily a sign of ability and knowledge in a certain field of expertise, to having mostly a symbolic power, used as a tool for excluding individuals who do not possess it from the labor market.

Our analysis shows that the increase in the number of individuals with higher education has risen much faster during the last decades than that of the number of individuals with higher-status occupations. Due to this structural situation, where the number of graduates with a certain educational level becomes rapidly bigger than the number of job offers/occupations that match their educational level, some of the individuals who have graduated from higher education institutions are forced to accept jobs which are below their professional training. The surplus of graduates with a higher level of educational qualification than the available workplaces that require these qualifications, known as the phenomenon of "over-education" (or over-qualification"), leads to an increase and tightening of education related hiring criteria, even for occupations which

do not necessarily need higher educational credentials. This excludes from some occupations individuals with lower educational levels, for which they were considered to be appropriately prepared in the past, but as we move from one generation to another and the number of individuals with higher educational degrees increased, they are considered unfit. Thus, they are forced to accept also jobs below their educational qualifications. Thus, even if the chances of the individuals of accessing the occupations corresponding to their educational level decrease for all categories, this decrease is stronger for the ones with lower education levels (the bumping-down effect), you may not even qualify for vocational training or other courses of qualification (in Romania, if one wants to work in a mall's cleaning service, he/she needs to present his/her educational credentials). These results support the third hypothesis, according to which the decrease in the average occupational status associated to the educational levels is weaker for the higher educational levels, and stronger for lower educational levels.

At the individual level, this inconsistency may be only temporary, as he/she advances in his/her career and eventually obtains an occupational position according to his/her studies. This is because some of the benefits of graduating from a higher educational institution are not visible right away, but they appear in time. However, at the societal level the inconsistency (over-education) represents a long-term situation, experienced by several subsequent cohorts, caused by structural factors (political and economic decisions, etc.). But even if a person is overqualified for a certain occupational position, a higher educational level reduces significantly the probability of ending up in a lower status occupation. Another important result is the fact that usually, for the first job (both for lower and higher status occupations), father's occupation is a very strong indicator. We can add that there are some occupational categories that have a more important status consistency (measured as association between the first and the current occupation) than others, these are managers, entrepreneurs and intellectuals, at the one end of the scale and farmers, closer to the other end of the scale of social prestige.

The first hypothesis, assuming that the occupational returns to tertiary education grows over time, across generations, can't be confirmed by our data. Along with the technological modernization, not only the needed level of education from different occupations had changed, but also the hiring criteria. This new criteria impose an additional pressure on the future employees who are forced to acquire more and more skills for a job, skills that weren't required in the past. As a result, the educational development (especially for higher levels) is one step ahead of its fitted occupational development. In other words, in (post-socialist) Romania the expansion of educational institutions, especially post-secondary and tertiary education, occurred before

the corresponding expansion of the economic sectors providing jobs suitable for higher educational qualification. Also, the second hypothesis asserting that the occupational returns fitted to primary education declines over time, across generations can't be confirmed by the data. The relative decline in occupational returns to lower levels of education could be explained not by using the modernization theory, but by taking into consideration the pressure imposed by individuals with a higher education (than that needed for the job) searching for a job, and being forced to accept jobs below their level of education.

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## DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG EASTERN EUROPEAN CHILDREN\*

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**ABSTRACT.** Drawing on the literature of digital inclusion, this article aims to show how differences in digital engagement among children from Romania and Bulgaria persist even if they incorporate the use of the Internet in their everyday lives. In order to identify variations in digital skills, self-efficacy and, therefore, in digital engagement of Romanian and Bulgarian 9-16 years old, a path analysis was conducted using AMOS. Demographic variables like age, gender, parental educational level (as a proxy for socioeconomic status) and parents' age were introduced in the model. Additionally, since factors like autonomy of use and the receipt of social support are likely to influence children's digital outcomes, the relations between these variables and those of skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement are also examined. Findings reveal that older children from higher educational backgrounds exhibit more digital skills and self-efficacy and a stronger digital engagement. Moreover, a more autonomous use and a higher amount of social support help children to be involved in more online activities. This analysis also reports differences of intergenerational digital transfer, with younger parents more supportive for their children's Internet usage, which is expected since in Romania and Bulgaria there are still significant intergenerational digital gaps.

**Key words:** Internet, digital divide, digital inclusion, skills, intergenerational digital transfer, children and adolescents

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

Along with the unprecedented raise of the Internet, many scholars turned their attention to the effects of this medium on different aspects of society. In spite of the initial enthusiasm, which highlighted the Internet's capacity to

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facilitate an easier access to information and therefore to expand access to education, good jobs, and better health, it was not long the issue of digital divide, meaning differences in Internet access between and within countries has gained importance in the research and policy agendas (DiMaggio, 2001; van Dijk, 1999, 2005). Individual characteristics like socioeconomic status (SES), gender, race, and ethnicity generated gaps between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. Despite the fact that some scholars predicted a decline of these gaps together with the increase of Internet penetration levels (Howard, Rain and Jones, 2001; Norris, 2001), an earlier approach to digital inequalities showed that differences in access and usage reinforce inequalities in opportunities for economic improvement, social participation and social mobility (DiMaggio et al., 2004).

Therefore, a simple binary distinction between people based upon their access to the internet, in terms of haves and have-nots is not satisfactory (DiMaggio, 2001; DiMaggio et al., 2004; Hargittai and Zillien, 2009). Access is about the location from where the Internet is used, the time spent online and about the amount of online opportunities taken up, and assuming that access alone does automatically guarantee an equally informed and knowledgeable public is an error (Katz and Rice, 2002, DiMaggio et al., 2004; van Dijk 1999, 2005). Unfortunately, more often than not, many studies take for granted that once people have Internet access will automatically benefit equally from the richness of the online information and will communicate more and better, which eventually will contribute to social inclusion and coherence (Howard, Rainie, and Jones, 2001). Findings suggest the opposite: systematic differences persist in how people incorporate digital media into their lives, education level being one of the most important predictors (Wellman and Chen, 2005; Witte and Mannon, 2009; Hargittai and Zillien, 2009).

Most of the literature regarding differences in Internet access and usage focused on adults from countries where the level of Internet access exceeds 70% (Witte and Mannon, 2009; Hargittai and Zillien, 2009; van Dijk, 2005). Little academic attention has addressed the digital divide among children and young people (Livingstone et al., 2005; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007) and even fewer that among children and young people from countries with lower levels of internet access, where the process of digital diffusion started later and never caught up with western European countries or USA. This paper is based on the data collected by the EU Kids Online II project (2009-2011), funded by the European Commission, coordinated by Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, LSE. Findings based on this data confirms that within the 25 European countries, children differ in their level of digital skills, regardless of whether it is measured by the range of online activities, self-efficacy or the beliefs in their Internet abilities, which points towards a second-level digital divide (Hasebrink et al, 2011: 30). Depending on the level of children's internet use and their abilities

to fight online threats, all 25 countries were grouped in five clusters: “lower use, lower risk”, “lower use, some risk”, “higher use, some risk” and “higher use, higher risk”. The last group is most controversial because it includes both wealthy Nordic countries, measured by GDP (Norway, Denmark, Sweden), and Eastern European countries (Romania and Bulgaria), with low GDP and recent introduction of broadband. This apparent similarity between these countries can be explained if we take a look at the particularities of the usage of the internet between the children from wealthy Nordic countries and those from Eastern European countries.

Children that come from wealthy countries and use the internet for a longer time are more experienced and skillful and, because of that, they can face in a safer manner different online threats. Also, these countries are well placed to provide more accessible and user-friendly safety resources for children and parents. However, Eastern European children are not experienced users, and not very competent to face various online risks even if they use the internet as much as their counterparts. In order to emphasize these differences, Romania and Bulgaria were both labeled “New use, new risk” countries, characterized by a great heterogeneity in terms of use and access and very low range of online activities and digital skills (Lobe et al., 2011), which might be an indicator of digital inequalities.

In what follows, the focus of this paper will be on children’s Internet usage from Romania and Bulgaria, countries where access is available, usage is high, but the differences in opportunities taken online, digital skills and, consequently, benefits are still widespread (Barbovski and Fizesan, 2012). In order to account for difference, we looked at the individual level, since country level indicators like GDP per capita and broadband penetration had no influence on children’s internet use (Lobe et al., 2011).

### **Theoretical approaches and the scope of this research**

Two dominant perspectives have emerged in the attempt to understand children’s online behavior. Some scholars consider young generation as ‘digital natives’ or ‘digital savvy’, names that assume that they are universally savvy with information and communication technologies simply because they have had exposure to digital media throughout their lives (Hargittai, 2010; Livingstone, Bober, and Helsper, 2005; Helsper and Enyon, 2011). Therefore, differences in digital technologies among the young generations should not be a concern given their widespread exposure and expert knowledge of digital media (Hargittai, 2010). Such assumptions are rarely grounded in empirical evidence. Findings suggest that, like in the adults’ case, there are significant differences in how children access and use the Internet when considering variables like socioeconomic status, age, gender and others (Hargittai, 2010; Helsper and Enyon, 2009; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007; Livingstone and Helsper, 2010). SES remains an important predictor

for children online usage even after controlling for variables like access and experience. Moreover, these differences persist even in the context of children who access the Internet at home. Adolescents who come from a higher SES background experience greater educational gains for using the Internet than do young adults from lower SES backgrounds (Hargittai, 2010).

If the traditional approach of digital inequalities has concentrated on demographic factors like age, gender, SES, and others (Witte and Mannon, 2009; Katz and Rice, 2002), recently, scholars turned their attention to other factors which can increase 'silent inequalities' within Internet users (DiMaggio et al., 2004, Hargittai, 2010). Digital literacy has received a lot of attention lately in relation to opportunities that children and adults take up online, making Internet skills a possible contributor to social inequalities (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007, 2010; Van Deursen, 2010; Helsper and Enyon, 2009). Witte and Mannon (2009) consider digital literacy in their analysis as a particular 'skill set' and 'knowledge base' that might be used to maintain class advantage and the lack of it may translate into class disadvantage. Numerous studies on children and young adults' Internet usage have shown, indeed, that those who are more skilled undertake a broader range of activities and are able to participate to a greater extent in digital practices. EU Kids Online II findings have revealed that the number of online activities young people undertake high correlate with their level of digital skills and their confidence in own use. According to the last, children 'climb on a ladder of opportunities', beginning with information seeking, progressing through games and communication, taking on more interactive forms of communication and culminating in creative and civic activities. Only a quarter of European children reach the last, most advanced and creative step according to the model proposed by Hasebrink et al, 2011. Considering all above it is a good reason to question the popular assumption that children and young people are 'digital savvy' (Livingstone and Helsper, 2010; Helsper and Enyon, 2009).

DiMaggio et al. (2004) and Hargittai (2010) also argued that universal Internet penetration will not eliminate inequality but rather will fuel new types of inequalities among Internet users. So we have to consider other factors, besides demographics ones, in order to understand differences in range of online opportunities taken up. In addition to digital literacy, they propose to look at variations in the quality of equipment, in autonomy of use, at inequality in the social support on which Internet users can draw and in the purposes for which people use the technology. According to the last, each of these types of inequality are likely to shape significantly the experience that people have online and the benefits from it.

Another original approach on the digital inequalities issue concerning youth Internet access and usage is brought to our attention by Livingstone and Helsper (2007). In order to measure digital inclusion of 9-19 years old in UK, they used the number and types of online activities taken up. This allowed them to

map a continuum in the breadth of Internet use. Like EU Kids online findings suggested, going online is a 'staged process', with systematic differences between those who take up more and those who take up fewer opportunities (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007). Moreover, according to the same study it seems that if a child does four things on the Internet, for sure these will include information seeking, games and email. Only those who undertake all other activities will most likely engage in website creation and chatting. A controversial issue is how to measure the level of digital inclusion. According to Helsper (2008), there are two main approaches to measuring digital engagement: it can be measured through a 'qualitative lens', focusing on the nature or content of engagement, or it can be approached quantitatively through an evaluation of the number of things that people do using the technology.

Despite the interconnectedness of digital literacy and digital inclusion, few researches were preoccupied to study them together. Thus, in the literature of digital inclusion there is a lack of knowledge about the relation between the amount of digital skills and levels of digital inclusion (Helsper and Enyon, 2009).

This article aims to explore and statistically analyze predictor of children's digital engagement in Romania and Bulgaria, employing the approaches of digital literacy and digital inclusion. According to Eurostat 2011, Romania and Bulgaria exhibit the lowest levels of Internet use within EU. This remains the same when it comes to Internet inclusion. Only 34% of Romanians and 42% of Bulgarians use the Internet at least once a week, with a European average of 66%. Moreover, Romanian and Bulgarian children report the highest levels of Internet use and very low range of online activities and digital skills, these countries being labeled as 'high use, high risk' countries, as reported in Lobe et al. (2011).

Therefore, the present paper will focus only on the Romanian and Bulgarian datasets and will discuss two research questions inspired by the ideas advanced by Livingstone and Helsper (2007) and Helsper and Enyon (2009):

1. Are there digital differences among children and young people? If so, what role do age, gender, socioeconomic status and parent age play in access and use of the Internet?
2. Are there variations in children's digital engagement? If so, how these can be explained?

### **Methodological design and hypothesis**

This study uses data provided by EU Kids online survey, which was conducted in 25 EU countries, on a random stratified sampling of 25 000 children (9-16 years old) who use the Internet. The survey was administrated at home, face to face, with a self-completion section for sensitive questions. Match questions were administrated to the parent most involved in the child's Internet use.

In order to seek for differences in access and usage we consider the demographic variables of age, gender, parental education level (as a proxy for socioeconomic status) and parents' age. Additionally, since variables like autonomy of use and social support are likely to influence children's digital engagement, the relations between these factors and those of skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement are also examined. Numerous studies of children and adult Internet use have identified systematic relations among demographic variables – age, SES, gender – that influence access, use and online skills (Livingstone and Helsper 2007; 2010). Older children, boys coming from more privileged backgrounds exhibit more digital skills. Other studies identified correlations with autonomy of use as well, suggesting that those who are already more privileged tend to have more Internet use autonomy and resources, more online experiences, higher levels of skills and report engaging in more diverse types of uses than the under privileged (Hargittai and Hinnant, 2008, 2010). Social support is seen as a factor for users' motivation to use the technology which will help them develop their own digital competence. Parents' socio-demographic characteristics also influence children's skills and confidence in use. More confident in their own use, parents will generate more support for their children who will exhibit higher levels of competencies (Barbovschi and Fizesan, 2012).

Because most of the previous studies include only few of these variables in the same model, it is hard to imagine an overall pattern of interrelationships and, nevertheless, it is hard to identify direct and indirect effects within them. Therefore, based on previous findings, a theoretical model is proposed and be tested in the following sections (see Figure 1). The model contains direct relationships between demographic variables and children's digital outcomes (skills, self-efficacy and engagement) and also, indirect effects on digital outcomes through the depth of use and social support.

Based on this theoretical model five hypotheses were developed:

*H1.* Older children with higher levels of education will exhibit higher levels of digital skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement.

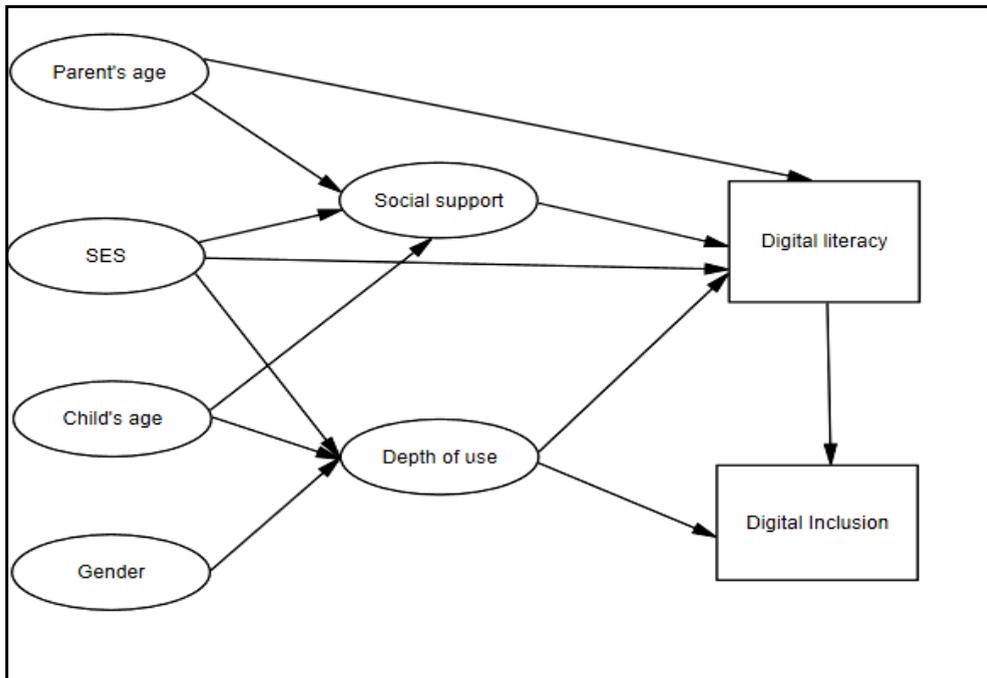
*H3.* Children whose parents are younger will exhibit higher levels of digital skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement.

*H4.* Children who have social support when using the Internet will exhibit higher levels of digital skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement.

*H5.* Gender does not hold direct effects on children's digital skills, self-efficacy or digital engagement.

The limitations of the present analysis rely, first of all, on the measures of digital skills and digital engagement. Both of them were measured using a questionnaire, despite the fact that some studies emphasize the importance of measuring them through observations and experiments of online children behavior in real time. So for a deeper understanding of these relations, an observational approach would be desired. Another important limitation is given by the complexity of the concept 'digital literacy'. Defining and measuring it can become a difficult

exercise considering the amount of studies that suggest different ways to approach this concept. Finally, the statistical method chosen (path analysis) involves *a priori* decisions based on theoretical assumptions and, therefore, possible important factors that can also explain variations in digital engagement may be excluded from analysis.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model for children's digital skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement in Bulgaria and Romania.

### ***Measures***

In order to identify differences in digital engagement, in the present analysis only responses from Romanian and Bulgarian 9-16 years old that incorporate the Internet in their everyday life (use the Internet every day) are taken into account. The sample consists of 1609 children out of which 56 percent are boys and 44 percent are girls, with an average age of 13 ( $SD=2.2$ ). Highest education level of household (eight-point scale, 1= not completed primary education, 8= second stage of tertiary) was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status. The age of the parent most involved in child's online behavior was measured on a five-point scale (1= 18-24 years old and 5= older than 55 years). Other measures employed in the analysis were as follows:

*Experience*: measured through *Years online*: number of online years, scale;  
*Autonomy of use*: DiMaggio et al. (2004) define autonomy of use as the freedom to use technologies when, where and how one wishes. In many cases home access is considered the most autonomous. However, in our sample only 29 out of 1609 children did not have home access therefore we will measure autonomy of use in two ways: access locations (total out of 8) and number of devices used to access the Internet (total out of 8). Looking at the access locations of Americans, Witte and Mannon (2009) found that people who have more locations at which they can access the Internet tend to engage in activities from which they may benefit more than those with fewer access points. We consider that children who have Internet access from more locations and more devices can benefit from a more autonomous use.

*Social support*: measured as *Family support* (as reported by child) range 0 to 11, calculated from responses 'yes' to the questions 'Which of the following things, if any, do your parent sometimes do with you?' (see Table 4); *peers support* (as reported by child) range 0 to 5, calculated from the response yes to questions 'Have your friends ever done any of these things?' (see Table 5).

*Digital skills* (as self-reported by child) range 0 to 8, calculated from the response 'yes' to the question 'Which of these things do you know how to do on the Internet?' (see Table 2).

*Self-efficacy* (as self-reported by child) range 0-4, calculated from responses 'true' at questions 'How true are these of you?' (see Table 3).

*Digital engagement*: In this analysis we measure digital engagement as the number of online activities undertaken by children using a scale variable, the number out of 17 possible activities (see Table 1).

## Findings

Statistically significant correlations among all variables entered in the theoretical model confirm previous research findings regarding differentiate use of the Internet given by demographic variables (Livingstone and Helsper 2007, 2010). Older children are receiving more support from their friends, less from their families, have more experience and they are more digitally engaged. Boys are more experienced than girls, they use the Internet from various locations and more skillfully. Moreover, children from privileged backgrounds are receiving more support from their families, have greater experience and autonomy of use and possess more skills. And nevertheless, children whose parents are younger are receiving more support from them, are more experienced and skilled and are engaging in more various activities than children whose parents are older.

**Table 6.****Correlations matrix for key variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
<b>Parent age</b>	1											
<b>Education level</b>	.05	1										
<b>Age</b>	.25 **	.00	1									
<b>Gender</b>	.00	.01	.03	1								
<b>Parental support</b>	-.15 **	.24 **	-.22 **	.04	1							
<b>Peer support</b>	.12 **	.04	.15 **	.02	.29 **	1						
<b>Years online</b>	.12 **	.20 **	.39 **	.04 *	.06 **	.14 **	1					
<b>Number of devices</b>	.03	.08 **	.11 **	.01	.11 **	.07 **	.15 **	1				
<b>Number of locations</b>	.07 *	.04	.23 **	.10 **	.00	.14 **	.22 **	.26 **	1			
<b>Digital skills</b>	.12 **	.12 **	.34 **	.05 *	.08 **	.16 **	.28 **	.18 **	.24 **	1		
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	.07 **	.07 **	.23 **	.02	.03	.10 **	.19 **	.17 **	.18 **	.26 **	1	
<b>Digital engagement</b>	.17 **	.12 **	.48 **	.08 **	.02	.21 **	.38 **	.20 **	.38 **	.58 **	.28 **	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

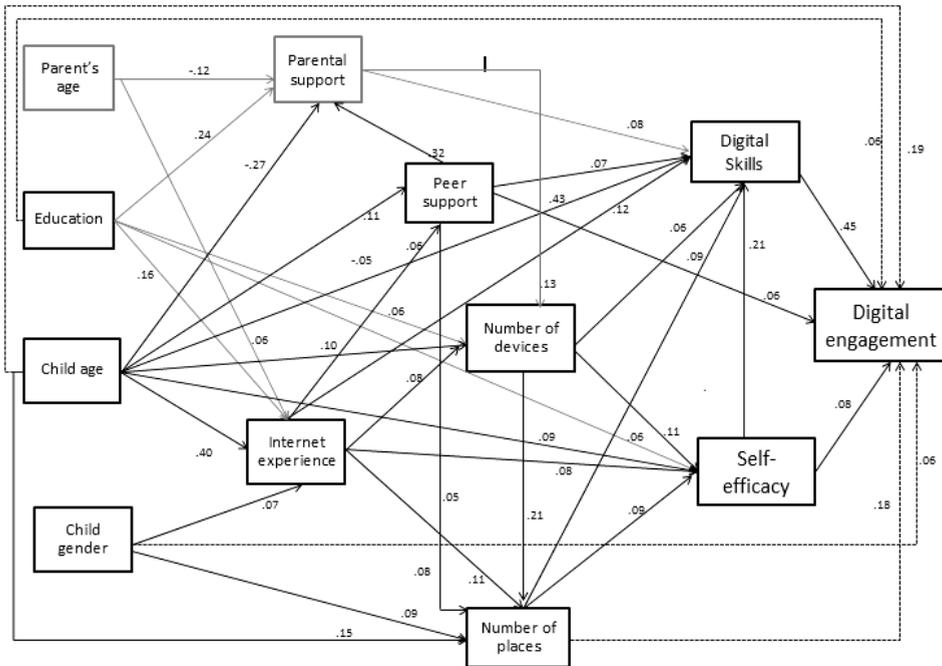
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

However, in order to understand both direct and indirect effects between predictors and dependent variables a path analysis was conducted using AMOS. Following the previous studies and based on the significant correlations, relations between parent related variables, child's Internet access and usage and digital engagement were expected.

In spite of the fact that this analysis considers only children who are using the Internet every day, the final path model, shown in Figure and Table 2, emphasizes significant digital differences among children when it comes to access, usage and taking up online opportunities. All non-significant paths were fixed to zero. The model fit was considered acceptable based on the following indicators for complex models: RMSEA=.04 ( $p>.819$ ) and a CFI value= .956 (Kline, 2005).

Age holds both direct and indirect effects on intermediate and outcome variables. Older children are receiving less support from their families and more support from their peers. Furthermore, they use the Internet for longer and experience more autonomy of use, which makes them skilled, confident in

their actions, and, therefore, are engaging in more activities. Opposite to our hypothesis, boys are more experienced than girls and are involved in more online activities.



**Figure 2.** Path model for children’s digital skills, self-efficacy and digital engagement in Bulgaria and Romania

Socioeconomic status, measured through highest level of education in the household, has both direct and indirect influence on dependent variables. Irrespective of other factors, children who are using the Internet every day and come from a privileged background are more skilled and exhibit more self-efficacy.

Differences in online experience between children from various socioeconomic backgrounds are also increasing through other intermediate variables. Thereby, children from higher educational background are also more experienced, are receiving more support from their families and friends and have more autonomy of use. All lead to higher levels of skills and self-efficacy and deeper digital engagement.

Parent’s age has also indirect effects on children’s online outcomes. Teenagers with younger parents are online at an earlier age and receive more support from them. According to Eurostat 2011, in Romania and Bulgaria digital

gaps given by age, income, education, size of locality are still significant. Therefore, older parents don't provide support for their children as frequently as younger parents.

According to this path analysis, beside demographics, variations of other variables introduced in the model can explain differences in how children incorporate Internet in their everyday life.

As expected, social support for Internet use can affect how children make use of their daily Internet use. More experienced, teenagers or adolescents have less parental support (which is to be expected since they acquire more skills and need less parental guidance) and seek support from their friends. With these resources and experiencing more autonomous use they undertake more online activities. Younger children seek less support from their friends, but receive more from their families, which makes them more competent and more digitally involved, and also more heterogeneous based on their family background.

Engaging more technologies in their everyday usage and accessing the Internet from various locations also helps children to gain more digital skills and self-efficacy. Using the Internet in an autonomous way through more devices and more places, children cultivate more skills and confidence in their own use.

Some differences were observed between Romanian and Bulgarian children's online experiences. When it comes to Romanian children (N=737), gender does not hold any significant effects on children's online outcomes. Also, the numbers of places or devices used to access the internet are not as important factors in explaining the differences in digital engagement as they are for the overall model. This evidence can be explained since more than three quarters of Romanian children access the Internet from three places (out of 7 possible) and 90% use no more than three devices (out of 8 possible) to get to the Internet.

As for Bulgarian children (N=872), boys use the internet for longer time than girls, and, therefore, are more experienced and digitally engaged. Number of places used to access the internet is an important predictor for Bulgarian adolescents, while number of devices holds no significance.

These results obtained from conducting a path analysis reinforces other findings that reject the simple notion of 'digital native' and highlight the complexity of adolescents' Internet experience. There is a significant variation in the ways in which young people integrate the new technology in their every day lives, suggesting that rather than being a homogenous generation, there is diversity of interests, motivations and needs (Bennett and Maton, 2010). In order to understand this diversity, there are some studies that go beyond the number of online activities when trying to explain how children are digitally engaged. However, the level that young adults have to reach in order to be called engaged is still subject of controversies. Lobe et al. (2011) propose five different stages of 'engagement', where the first one is reached by all children

that are using the Internet and is composed of most common activities like use of Internet for schoolwork and playing games on your own against the computer. The last stage consists of the most difficult activities that require experience and skills, like visiting chat rooms, using file-sharing sites, creating characters, spending time in a virtual world or writing a blog or a diary. This stage is regularly reached by those who use 13 or more online activities, meaning less than a quarter of European children (Lobe et. al, 2011).

So, what are the characteristics of children that reach the fifth level and come from “high use, high risks” countries like Romania and Bulgaria? As it can be seen in the next table, the most digital engaged children represent only 12 percent of total, are older, spend more time online every day and are better skilled, compared with the overall sample.

**Table 8.**

**The profile of the digital engaged child**

	<b>More than 13 activities</b>			
	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Age	9	16	13.9	1.83
Estimated minutes online each day	36	270	162.3	61
Number of skills (8)	1	8	6.4	1.78
Number of online activities (17)	13	17	14.01	1.17
<b>N (listwise)</b>	<b>196</b>			
	<b>Total</b>			
	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Age	9	16	12.6	2.22
Estimated minutes online each day	15	270	132.4	61
Number of skills (8)	0	8	4,5	2,556
Number of online activities (17)	0	17	8.3	3.40
<b>N (listwise)</b>	<b>1609</b>			

**Discussion and conclusions**

Drawing on the digital inclusion literature, this article aimed to emphasize how the differences in Internet usage of Romanian and Bulgarian children persists even if they incorporate the Internet in their every day life.

Demographics remain very important predictors for children’s online experience and for the opportunities taken up from it. Older children are still more experienced, have Internet access from various locations and devices and exhibit higher levels of digital skills and self-efficacy resulting in a deep digital inclusion. As expected, children from better educated families use the Internet for a longer time, in various locations, develop more digital skills and self-efficacy and engage in more diverse activities.

This analysis also reports differences of intergenerational digital transfer, with younger parents more supportive for their children's Internet usage, not surprising since in Romania and Bulgaria there are still significant intergenerational digital gaps. As long as these gaps will not diminish parents will always be one step behind their children and their support will not maximize the opportunities that children can take up online. Older children seek less support from their parents and more from their friends, who are likely to be as skilled as they are.

Our findings emphasize the importance of the relations between digital skills and digital engagement, resulting in possible answers to the provocative question regarding the existence of digital divides among children. As shown by Hasebrink et al. (2011), Eastern European children report highest levels of Internet usage, but in the same time, a low range of digital skills. Developing children's and parents' online competences can be seen as a solution for diminishing digital differences between eastern European children and those who come from wealthy countries. This measure could lead in the same time to reducing the intergenerational digital gaps.

This analysis offers a substantial understanding on the differences of digital engagement among children in Eastern European countries. Much more remains to be explored and updated due to the changing nature of the digital medium.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1.

## Activities online

Activities online	%		%
Used the internet for school work	85	Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	37
Played internet games on your own or against the computer	85	Used a webcam	52
Watched video clips	85	Put (or posted) a message on a website	36
Visited a social networking profile	62	Visited a chatroom	24
Used instant messaging	92	Used file sharing sites	17
Sent/received email	65	Created a character, pet or avatar	21
Read/watched the news on the internet	38	Spent time in a virtual world	12
Played games with other people on the internet	61	Written a blog or online diary	12
Downloaded music or films	70		
Alpha=83		Mean=8.38 SD=3.3	

Table 2.

## Digital Skills

Digital Skills	%		%
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	58	Delete the record of which sites you have visited	58
Change filter preferences	34	Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	53
Bookmark a website	53	Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from	68
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	47	Find information on how to use the internet safely	69
Alpha=85		Mean=4.24 SD=2.6	

Table 3.

## Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy (A bit true and Very true)	%		%
I am confident that I can deal with unexpected problems	85	If I am in trouble I can usually think of something to do	91
It's easy for me to stick to my aims and achieve my goals	89	I can generally work out how to handle new situations	87
Alpha=74		Mean=2.8 SD=46	

**Table 4.**

**Family support**

<b>Family support</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Talk to you about what you do on the internet</b>	80	Explained why some websites are good or bad	66
<b>Stay nearby when you use the internet</b>	62	Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	51
<b>Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own</b>	60	Suggested ways to use the internet safely	55
<b>Sit with you while you use the internet</b>	45	Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	65
<b>Do shared activities together with you on the internet</b>	39	Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	56
		Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	46
<b>Alpha=78</b>		<b>Mean=6,2 SD=3,1</b>	

**Table 5.**

**Peer support**

<b>Peer support</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>
<b>Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet</b>	76	Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	46
<b>Suggested ways to use the internet safely</b>	52	Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	42
<b>Explained why some websites are good or bad</b>	55		
<b>Alpha=76</b>		<b>Mean=2.5 SD=1,8</b>	

**Table 7.**

**Standardized Regression Weights**

Predictor var.		Predicted var.		Predictor var.		Predicted var.	
Parent's age	→	Family support	-.12	Family support	→	Years online	.12
Parent's age	→	Years online	.06	Peers support	→	Number of places	.07
Education	→	Family support	.20	Peers support	→	Digital skills	.07
Education	→	Years online	.16	Peers support	→	Digital engagement	.05
Education	→	Digital engagement	.06	Peers support	→	Family support	.22
Child's age	→	Family support	.28	Years online	→	Number of devices	.08
Child's age	→	Years online	.39	Years online	→	Number of places	.10
Child's age	→	Peers support	.11	Years online	→	Digital skills	.12
Child's age	→	Number of devices	.09	Years online	→	Self-efficacy	.07

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Predictor var.		Predicted var.		Predictor var.		Predicted var.	
Child's age	→	Number of places	.15	Years online	→	Peers support	.09
Child's age	→	Digital skills	.43	Number of devices	→	Number of places	.21
Child's age	→	Self-efficacy	.09	Number of devices	→	Digital skills	.06
Child's age	→	Digital engagement	.19	Number of devices	→	Self-efficacy	.08
Gender	→	Years online	.06	Number of places	→	Digital skills	.09
Gender	→	Number of places	.09	Number of places	→	Digital engagement	.19
Gender	→	Digital engagement	.03	Digital skills	→	Self-efficacy	.21
Family support	→	Number of devices	.13	Digital skills	→	Digital engagement	.42
Family support	→	Digital skills	.05	Self-efficacy	→	Digital engagement	.08
*All beta paths were significant at $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$							



## THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY IN RURAL TRANSYLVANIA

ZSOMBOR CSATA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The paper offers a multi-perspective analysis of the entrepreneurial activity in rural Transylvania. Aggregated statistical data is used in order to create the “enterprise map” of the region and a cluster of top villages are identified based on their entrepreneurial density. I attempt to explain the identified regional differences using economic, geographic and socio-demographic factors. The modest explanatory power of the regression models and the significant disparity of entrepreneurial activity led us to the conclusion that in Transylvania the locality plays a major role in creating the social conditions for entrepreneurial development. For future research, I propose the elaboration of case studies on either village or micro-regional level, putting the emphasis on the analysis of the local social resources: configuration of social relations, models of economic cooperation, and local entrepreneurial culture.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial activity, regional differences, post-socialist transition, Transylvania

### Introduction

The spread of small and medium sized enterprises in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe is one of the main topics of analyses carried out in the field of economic sociology, a continuous subject of interest in the last twenty years. The topic is interesting not only because of its economic implications, even if it undoubtedly represents an important indicator in the evaluation of an economy’s viability. In the structural-functionalist sociological tradition, and even more so in the cultural anthropology, entrepreneurship is considered one of the products of economic cooperation that is developed in the course of social co-existence. Compared to the instrumentalist approach of the neoclassical economics, in this case, entrepreneurship is not considered an institutionalised system of economic actions optimised for profit maximization, but a system of social actions exercised in the context of interaction between man and the environment, embedded in a larger system of rules, that of social co-existence.

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Consequently, in this perspective, sociological research emphasizes the social conditions of the establishment and development of enterprises. Built on the substantivist premise of Polányi (1994) – according to which the social determinants of the functioning of economic institutions (their „social embeddedness”) manifest themselves more conspicuously in traditional, premodern social structures – this research tradition is even more evident in the analysis of entrepreneurial activity in rural areas. Although this perspective should be nuanced, especially from the side of the economic sociology<sup>2</sup>, under the light of previous empirical observations related to rural entrepreneurship, we find it adequate to start from this premise (Csata, 2007a; 2007b; 2009). Consequently, we presume that the expansion of entrepreneurship and, in general, the level of economic development in Transylvanian villages are determined by the particularities of the local social relations and of the local culture – which sometimes are not based on economic reasoning – and that in general we can talk about a deeper social embeddedness of economic processes (Granovetter, 1995; Portes, 2005; Szántó, 1994).

This is especially valid for the period immediately following the change of communist regime in Romania, when after the unsuccessful attempts to modernise the socialist economy, so-called “re-feudalisation” processes started in the majority of villages, which recurred to the pre-1945 solutions of economic orientation, regarding both the technology and work organisation. From an evolutionary sociological perspective, this can be considered as a partial rebirth of social organisation patterns characteristic for the traditional agrarian economy. At the same time we presume that this process took place in various ways, depending on the availability of natural, economic, cultural and institutional resources. Differences have thus occurred in the utilisation of traditional or modern practices even in villages from the same ethnographic-historic area. In this context, the establishment of privately held companies after the change of regime proves to be a creative social innovation (Sandu, 1999a; Csata, 2003; Kuczi, 2000). – After 1989 the owners of small and medium enterprises in Romania had to overcome similar types of obstacles as in Central Europe in general, yet much harsher. The most important obstacles were undoubtedly the *lack of capital* and the *instable legal environment* of the entrepreneurial activity.

In the period immediately following the change of regime there were extremely few alternatives to compensate for the *lack of capital*. The participation of owners of small and medium sized enterprises in the process of privatisation

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Mark Granovetter considers that the level of social embeddedness is more reduced in pre-capitalist societies and it is stronger in market economies than Polányi suggests. In his view, the level of the social embeddedness of the economy has not changed fundamentally with the development of capitalism (Szántó, 1994).

was modest (Czakó et al., 1993) and the requirements for a loan imposed by banks were almost impossible to fulfil. Given that the accumulation of capital was not possible during socialism, for the establishment and operation of enterprises, the role of social capital was overvalued. Thus, family, neighbour and fellow worker relationships gained a special role in the accumulation of initial capital (Kuczi, 1997; 2000). Sandu (1999b) calls these small and medium entrepreneurs *innovators* in the Schumpeterian sense – people who distinguish themselves primarily through the creative combination and the original exploitation of the „accumulated relational capital”. Kuczi introduces the term „kreácsolók” (“do it yourself creators”)<sup>3</sup> (Kuczi, 2000: 141) to denote people who, besides the creative transformation of their material environment, capitalize their relationships and social resources in an original way. Thus, in an environment lacking financial resources the successful entrepreneurs were those who took advantage of their extended relational networks in an innovative instrumental manner in order to compensate the lack of capital.

The *lack of legal stability* also had as a consequence the practice of forced substitution of personal relationships, leading to an overvaluation of relational networks (Tóth, 2003:142). In the '90s – and especially immediately after the change of regime – there was a general mistrust against the government, the state and the new institutions of the private sphere (especially against banks). Unconventional, highly risky economic activities (pyramid games or the spectacular transfer of public property into private property) multiplied excessively and continued to diminish trust, while the absence of economic discipline and corruption became general. Under these circumstances, the mainstream opinion was that entrepreneurship represents a dishonest and illegitimate activity, a “trickery”, something opposed to honest work. In the majority of rural settlements this path to success was diametrically opposed to the “self-exploiting” hard work characterising traditional peasant work ethics<sup>4</sup>.

At the beginning of the 2000s the conditions for establishing and operating enterprises somewhat changed: the legislation offered facilities to reduce excessive bureaucracy, the conditions for European Union accession on the whole had positive effects on the legal environment, new fiscal laws have been enforced that were favourable to entrepreneurship (for example the flat-rate income tax), the number of foreign investments grew, European funds became available, banks relaxed their crediting conditions etc. One of the most important evolution was the increase of trust in the relevant institutions and in people in general,

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<sup>3</sup> The term „kreácsolás” was created by combining the notions of creative action and „do it yourself” and refers to the process through which an individual capitalizes his/her material and social environment in an original way with the objective to establish an enterprise (Kuczi 2000: 142).

<sup>4</sup> In this region – as we know it from Pál Juhász – this peasant work ethics is part both of the „protestant ethos” and the „catholic ascetism” (Juhász 1986-1987).

which contributed to the increase of economic cooperation. Also, the consumption-based economic growth and the low levels of unemployment in the years of EU accession contributed to a social climate favorable to economic entrepreneurship.

This positive process from 2007-2008 was halted by the onset and extension of the global economic crisis, beginning from 2009. The government reacted with hard austerity measures, some of which (for example the minimum compulsory taxation) have negatively influenced the functioning of enterprises and, indirectly, the entrepreneurial spirit<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, considering the above-mentioned conditions, we can state that, although the institutional conditions of entrepreneurship have been changing continuously in the last twenty years, for rural entrepreneurs the challenges of the period immediately following the change of regime still persist today, more so, with the intensification of competition on markets that are gradually opening, they are faced with new challenges. From the perspective of economic sociology, this means that rural entrepreneurs have to create the resources that are indispensable for the development of enterprises under rapidly changing conditions, and during this process – in the absence of alternative resources – they are forced to rely on the social environment, on family, neighbourhood, workplace, confessional, etc. relationships (structural conditions). On the other hand, in his/her activity, the entrepreneur has to take into account the stereotype indifference and even the opposition<sup>6</sup> of the social environment and the public space, which is culturally codified, rationalised and continuously reproduced in the context of daily experiences (cultural conditions).

This paper presents a quantitative overview of the entrepreneurial activity in rural Transylvania. First, using local level statistics, we will create the “enterprise map” of Transylvanian villages then we attempt to explain the identified regional differences with the help of economic, geographic, historical and sociological factors. Furthermore, we identify and characterise the cluster of top villages regarding entrepreneurial density. The low predictive power of our regression models and the significant disparity of entrepreneurial density lead us to the conclusion that in Transylvania locality plays an important role in creating the social conditions for entrepreneurial development. Consequently, for future research the elaboration of case studies is recommended on either village or micro-regional level, putting the emphasis on the analysis of the local

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<sup>5</sup> Because the most recent statistics are from 2009, the changes that occurred following the crisis cannot be demonstrated relying on the statistical data.

<sup>6</sup> We have to emphasize, however, that this aspect is not characteristic to all cases. Regarding the acceptance of the profit-oriented entrepreneurial attitude we presume that there are regional differences, which are based on the particularities of social history. Additionally, it is very probable that people have a differentiated attitude towards enterprises, depending on their profile, work organisation etc. (This issue is unfairly ignored by the literature).

social resources (models of economic cooperation, configuration of social relations, local entrepreneurial culture etc.) which can offer more information than the economic models of competitive advantages do.

### **The entrepreneurial activity in rural Transylvania - clusters in the geographical distribution of enterprises**

In Transylvania in August 2009, 89,610 active rural enterprises were registered at the National Trade Register Office<sup>7</sup>. The density of enterprises were the highest in Harghita, Maramureş, Arad, Cluj and Alba counties where the number of businesses per 1000 inhabitants were more than 25. Based on these data we drew up the annexed entrepreneurial maps, where the localities with a higher entrepreneurial density are marked with dark colours and those with a lower entrepreneurial density with lighter colours (see maps 1 and 2 from the Appendix 1).<sup>8</sup> These maps refer only to the rural areas and use as the lowest administrative unit the commune ("comuna" in Romanian), which might be comprised of several smaller rural settlements, most typically between 3-5 villages.

If we analyse the maps, we can see at a first glance that a significant part of villages characterized by a high density of enterprises are concentrated in compact units. In the following we will see that this fact is directly related to the comparative advantages arising from the economic and natural resources or from the favourable geographic location of the localities. We can also observe, however, that a significant number of localities that are characterised by an advanced entrepreneurial activity do not belong to these geographically well delimited groups; they are situated far from these and are more dispersed. It seems that in some cases the arguments of neoclassical economics and of economic geography cannot explain adequately the entrepreneurial activity of

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<sup>7</sup> Enterprises without legal personality (authorised natural persons (PFA), family businesses (AF), individual enterprises (ÎI etc) are included in this figure.

<sup>8</sup> The base population of the analysis is constituted from the communes of the 16 Transylvanian counties; these will be analysed within three separate regions. We delimited these regions because of three considerations: on the one hand, due to the aggregated statistical data the logical solution was to use three development regions, on the other hand, during the analyses we were expressly interested in the ethnic implications of entrepreneurial activity. Consequently, the counties with a high proportion of Hungarian population (Harghita, Covasna and Mureş) were analysed as a distinct region. Therefore, the available data will be presented according to the following regional division: North-Western Transylvania (Satu Mare, Bihor, Sălaj, Cluj, Maramureş and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties), Southern Transylvania and Banat (Arad, Timişoara, Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara, Alba, Sibiu and Braşov counties) and Eastern Transylvania (Harghita, Covasna and Mureş counties). The delimitation of the localities is the one valid at the time of the 2002 census as a significant part of the independent (explicative) variables are from 2002.

higher intensity. In the case of these localities we consider it necessary to conduct a more thorough research of the sociological, anthropological and social history - related particularities.

Considering the geographic dispersion of communes, according to the entrepreneurial activity, we succeeded to identify the following four groups<sup>9</sup>:

### ***1. The closeness of the city as a comparative advantage***

If we take a glance at the map it is immediately apparent that a large part of the communes that are the most active from the point of view of enterprise establishment are situated in the proximity of cities. It seems that this proximity represents the most important competitive advantage for entrepreneurial activity. Most advantaged are those villages, which are intersected by international roads or national roads with high traffic. In North-Western Transylvania, especially the communes situated in the proximity of Cluj and Oradea prove to be the most attractive for investors because of their geographical position and well developed infrastructure. The situation is similar in Southern Transylvania and Banat, in the area around Timișoara, Brașov, Sibiu and Arad, and in Eastern Transylvania in the area of influence of Târgu Mureș. In the case of other cities similar tendencies are more limited or inexistent.

### ***2. Villages relying upon the touristic potential of the natural environment***

In every one of the three regions there are localities close to *natural attractions* or *thermal waters*; these are the most active ones from the perspective of enterprise establishment. Considering the number of their stable residents, these communes were too small to obtain town statute, but there is a high touristic traffic, which generates a significant demand for accommodation and touristic services.

### ***3. Villages close to natural resources***

3.1. One of the most eloquent examples regarding the role of natural resources in economic development can be found in Eastern Transylvania, in Harghita county, where the majority of active enterprises were registered in localities surrounded by *important forest areas*. The more intensive economic activity follows the chain of the Călimani and Gurghiu Mountains and, more to the South, the line of the Harghita Mountains, showing a strong correlation between forestry operation and the number of companies registered<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For the list of communes belonging to these groups, see Appendix 2.

<sup>10</sup> Even though we did not find statistics referring to forest areas belonging to communes, the correlation was unequivocally confirmed by our experience on the field. Related to the example of the commune of Joseni (Harghita) see the study of Emilia Palkó and Zsuzsanna Sólyom (Palkó-Sólyom, 2005).

3.2. According to the existing data at a first look we could include among these localities the *mining areas*, which once offered many jobs for the masses, as well as the *industrial settlements* established in the socialist period, but in most of these areas production stopped immediately after the regime change. As these were monoindustrial areas, the majority of jobs disappeared once the mines and plants were closed and the insignificant number of enterprises could not employ the work force made redundant. Through the political decisions designed to stimulate the economy made in the years 1999-2000 the government declared these zones disadvantaged, trying in this manner – through significant fiscal facilities and support directed towards job creation – to place them again on a trajectory of growth. In most cases the attempt was unsuccessful or brought only limited success: in order to diminish fiscal charges, a multitude of „empty” company branches were created, enterprises that existed only „on paper” in the registry of the commune, but which ran their activity elsewhere. Thus, from the perspective of entrepreneurial activity, these communes need to be considered differently.

#### ***4 Scattered localities with a strong entrepreneurial density***

It seems that the localities with the highest entrepreneurial density do not come from the above-mentioned examples in any of the regions. These are localities in which the comparative advantages deriving from the economic resources do not ensure the necessary empirical coverage to explain the distribution of enterprises.

In *North-Western Transylvania*, for example, the majority of communes with high entrepreneurial activity are those which have an important touristic potential and which are only at a few hours’ distance from cities and are easily accessible. In this category of localities, on the top of the list are the villages that rely on *traditional tourism*. These are situated in compact, territorially concentrated ethnographic regions, the most competitive being those in which, besides the traditional attractions (especially the architectural heritage) traditional handicrafts survived, too (weaving, spinning, wood sculpture, carpentry, pottery etc.) which ensure a living for many small entrepreneurs. This characterisation can be applied especially to the villages from the Țara Călatei (in Hungarian: Kalotaszeg) region with a *majority Hungarian population*. In the *ethnographic regions with Romanian inhabitants in majority* there are similar localities specialized in traditional tourism, although with a more reduced territorial concentration.

These localities represent a separate cluster in *Southern Transylvania* and in *Banat*, too. In Southern Transylvania the Saxon villages form a specific and compact ethnographic region, but we can include in this group other scattered communes, too (for example the village of Lisa near Făgăraș renowned for the spinning of wool).

The comparative advantages that come from the economic resources of these localities do not ensure the empiric coverage necessary to explain the distribution of enterprises. In *Eastern Transylvania* this category also comprises the communes in which the inhabitants *successfully continue to run a traditional economic activity*. In case of the localities that are among the first in what regards the number of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants (Corund, Lupeni or even Ciumani) we could rightly suppose that the wide-spreadedness and economic viability of pottery, charcoal production or carpentry cannot be attributed solely to the existence or absence of natural resources, because such resource structures are present in other areas too, but which do not boast a developed entrepreneurial activity. Consequently, the explanations for the higher entrepreneurial potential have to be searched in the particularities of the transformation of the social environment or in the specificity of the economic organisation models, which are based upon the rules of social co-existence – this demands a diachronic analysis<sup>11</sup>.

Undoubtedly, in these cases the theory of diffusion preferred by anthropologists can be applied (Letenyei, 2002, Rogers, 1995). Following our previous experiences, we found plausible the hypothesis of ideational diffusion, according to which specialisation in pottery, carpentry or charcoal production took place by the imitation of models, which had already proved to be functional. The commune of Zetea from Harghita county represents a significant example: it has the most enterprises established per 1000 inhabitants. In this commune several networks of guesthouses were created, which specialize in rural tourism<sup>12</sup>. In this case - because we are talking about a recent phenomenon – based on the neighbourhood and family relationships we can easily track the “chain of innovation” (Letenyei, 2000) that attracted the respective households to the institutionalised exploitation of rural tourism.

Due to the fact that in these villages there is a more intense economic activity, we can rightly presume that, besides the appropriate natural resources, the successful models of economic cooperation, which characterise the local society as well as the cultural-normative framework stimulating the following

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<sup>11</sup> A similar evolutionist conception represented the foundation of István Kinda's and Lehel Peti's study (2004), according to which the establishment of charcoal production enterprises from Lupeni (Harghita) can be attributed, on the one hand, to the natural environment (the absence of adequate agricultural lands) and, on the other hand, to the transformation of the structure of the local society. The most important assertion of the study is that the specific internal stratification of the society generates specific modalities of economic cooperation, which prove to be viable even in the context of global competition. Our experience shows that also in the case of the other two localities mentioned (Corund and Ciumani – the latter showing a powerful resemblance to the neighbouring locality of Joseni), besides the specific structure of natural resources, the wide-spreadedness of enterprises can be explained also by the characteristics of the structure of the society.

<sup>12</sup> In this respect see the study of Edit Gábos (Gábos 2005). Similar observations were made by Kismihály (2009) in his thesis concerning the commune of Sâncraiu.

of these models represent that additional plus from which results an above-average economic viability and prosperity. We identified these two factors as the cultural condition and the historic-structural condition of the spread of enterprises.

### **The socio-demographic determinants of the spread of enterprises**

In the previous section we drew attention to the fact that the distribution of enterprises in the rural areas of Transylvania is markedly influenced by the socio-demographic particularities of villages. While in urban areas the distribution of enterprises in most cases can be explained through the main indicators of economic resources and, implicitly, through the capacity to attract capital, in rural areas the economic model of comparative advantages often fails to determine the differences between the entrepreneurial attitudes of rural localities with identical resources.

The next step is to identify the social, demographic and geographic-economic factors that favour the spread of entrepreneurship at the level of communes. Thus, the dependent variable will be the number of active enterprises per 1000 inhabitants, presented in the previous chapter. The independent variables come from the following data sources:

1. The longitudinal databases at the level of localities from the project „The Social Atlas of Romania” led by Dumitru Sandu (ATSRsate, IDC, IDSL).<sup>13</sup>
2. Locality level data from the study led by Dumitru Sandu „Development Indicators of Romanian villages”.<sup>14</sup>
3. The commune level longitudinal data of the 2002 census come from the website of the National Institute of Statistics<sup>15</sup>

The effects of independent variables will be analysed according to three broader categories of variables, as follows:

*1. Geographic position and infrastructural endowment:* this group contains the variables which determine the favourable or unfavourable, central or periferic situation of the commune from a geographic perspective (whether there is a European road passing through the commune; the position of the commune at the periphery of the county; the distance between the town and the centre of the commune; the distance between the town situated at a distance of at least 30 km distance and the centre of the commune; the number of villages belonging to

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed description see <http://sites.google.com/site/dumitrusandu/bazededate>.

<sup>14</sup> For more detail see Sandu (1998). Source: RODA – Romanian Social Data Archive: <http://www.roda.ro/public/RO/template.php?url=17>. During the analysis the longitudinal data at locality level were cumulated into commune level data.

<sup>15</sup> <http://colectaredate.insse.ro/phc/public.do?siteLang=ro>

the commune), the indicators regarding the infrastructural endowment of the commune (the proportion of households connected to the water supply network; the percentage of households connected to the electricity network) as well as household comfort indices (the number of persons per dwelling; the number of persons per room; the habitable space per person; the proportion of houses built of clay).

Our hypotheses regarding this group of variables are related to the experiences of internal analyses carried out on a national level (Sandu, 1999a, Stănculescu, 2001), according to which there is a strong statistical correlation between the level of infrastructural development and the level of economic development expressed through the number of enterprises. Our task consists in the nuancing of these premises, starting from the data registered at commune level.

2. *Demographic indices, ethnic and confessional composition*: we included in this category of variables the demographic evolution (population number; the proportion of the commune's inhabitants who live in its centre; the number of inhabitants of the nearest town; the evolution of the number of inhabitants of the commune following the regime change) and the composition of the population by sex, age group, ethnicity and religion.

3. *Human resources, the potential of the workforce*: the human resources included in this category of variables were measured primarily on the basis of the population's composition by level of qualification. Out of the indicators on the potential of the workforce we used the data regarding the proportion of the employed population and the proportion of people employed in agriculture.

Using the three categories of independent variables presented above, in the case of *Eastern Transylvania* we constituted three models of multilinear regression, which will be applied to the sub-samples at regional and county level. The statistical relationship between the geographic situation, the infrastructural endowment and the relative proportion of commercial organizations are presented in Table 1.

From the data presented in the table we can clearly see the link between infrastructural development, geographic position and the density of enterprises. In the case of Mureş county, the area covered by the water supply network also indicates a higher number of enterprises. Furthermore, the highest number of economic units is characteristic to communes situated in the centre of the county (in Covasna county) or in the immediate proximity of the town (in Harghita and Mureş county).

It may sound surprising, yet the higher number of persons per household also implies a higher number of enterprises. This relationship is equally characteristic to communes from Harghita and Mureş counties. Our opinion in this matter is that this variable can be interpreted rather as a demographic than a comfort

indicator (from this perspective it had to be included in the second group of variables). In the context of lower reproduction<sup>16</sup> characteristic to the rural environment, this variable contributes to the positive relationship<sup>17</sup> with the number of enterprises - through the number of active household members.

**Table 1.**

**The multilinear regression model regarding the density of enterprises  
(Non-standardized regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets)  
- geographic position and variables regarding the infrastructure -**

	Eastern Transylvania	Harghita	Covasna	Mureş
The standard error in the estimation of the regression	8.454	9.408	6.004	7.729
Constant	5.593 (5.815)	2.248 (10.455)	27.031 (3.206)	-0.237 (7.265)
The proportion of households connected to the water supply network	0.269*** (0.046)	-	-	0.421*** (0.075)
Number of persons per household	11.073*** (2.442)	9.345* (3.775)	-	8.020** (2.555)
Number of persons per room	-13.584** (4.797)	-	-	-
Periferic position in the county	-3.163* (1.304)	-6.375* (2.732)	-	-4.448* (2.180)
The proportion of agricultural land in the locality	-	-	-	-0.093* (0.041)
Distance from the nearest town	-	-	0.784*** (0.254)	-

\* 0.05>p>0.01. \*\* 0.01>p>0.001. \*\*\* p<0.001. Only significant effects presented.

The demographic indicators included in the second model (Table 2) also support the role of population decrease in explaining the spread of enterprises. Thus, the demographic evolution of the communes in the 1977-1992 period shows a strong correlation with the spreading of enterprises in Harghita and Mureş counties: in the localities where we see a growth of the population the frequency

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the natality indices of the counties included in the research see the study of Tamás Kiss (Kiss T., 2004).

<sup>17</sup> The interpretation of the correlation would also be possible through the inclusion of another perspective, that of social history. According to this perspective, due to a higher population density and a lack of natural resources, a significant part of the population is forced to look for other means of existence, including the innovative way of establishing a private enterprise (Venczel, 1988). However, if we consider this hypothesis in more depth, we find that there is no significant correlation between the two independent variables applied in the course of the demonstration (the number of persons per dwelling and the proportion of arable land in the locality). Consequently, we have to reject Venczel's hypothesis in its original form. Still, the problem remains open because the lack of adequate data, considering that the quantity of arable land does not cover the vast content of the concept of natural resources.

of economic units is stronger, too. In Covasna county the fertility indicator shows a similar correlation, while in Mureş county communes with a larger population of active or older people (the proportion of people of 15-59 years of age and of those over 60) also have a higher enterprise density. The results show that the ethnic composition of the communes does not have a direct influence on the spreading of commercial organizations and that confessional affiliation correlates with the number of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants only in Mureş county. In this case the above average proportion of people of Orthodox and neo-Protestant confession favors a stronger entrepreneurial activity<sup>18</sup>.

**Table 2.**

**The multilinear regression model regarding the density of enterprises (Non-standardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in brackets). - demographic indices, variables related to ethnic and confessional composition -**

	<b>Whole Sample</b>	<b>Harghita</b>	<b>Covasna</b>	<b>Mureş</b>
The standard error in the estimation of the regression	8.466	8.882	6.024	6.951
Constant	42.072 (5.724)	58.603 (13.131)	41.146 (7.783)	-127.812 (29.216)
The relative decrease of the population between 1977 and 1992	39.861*** (6.556)	76.909*** (17.832)	-	33.873** (9.588)
The proportion of inhabitants living in the centre of the commune	5.794* (2.625)	-	-	-
The average number of children in the commune per one woman	-12.474*** (3.204)	-	-13.523** (4.441)	-
The proportion of persons in the commune who are under 14, in 2002	-	-1.446* (0.665)	-	-
The proportion of persons in the commune between 15-59 years of age, in 2002	-	-	-	2.168*** (0.410)
The proportion of people in the commune above 60 years of age, in 2002	-	-	-	1.138*** (0.270)
The proportion of people of Orthodox confession, in 2002	-	-	-	0.077** (0.024)
The proportion of people of neo-Protestant confession, in 2002	-	-	-	0.574* (0.284)

\* 0.05>p>0.01. \*\* 0.01>p>0.001. \*\*\* p<0.001. Only significant effects presented.

<sup>18</sup> These statements obviously require further explanations. However, in the absence of appropriate empirical data we cannot address this issue in detail in this paper. In our previous analyses we explained the more intense economic activity of the Adventist residents of localities with above average neo-Protestant population with the fact that they have transformed their geographically extended confessional relationships into competitive economic networks. On this issue see in more detail: Csata et al., 2001. Kiss T., 2003.

Finally, the linear regression model constituted on the basis of human resources and employment variables (Table 3) shows that the entrepreneurial activity is more widespread in localities in which the proportion of employees is above average (Mureş county). Regarding human resources the hypotheses hitherto formulated (Sandu 1999a, Stănculescu 2001)<sup>19</sup>, according to which there is a strong correlation between the proportion of qualified population and the spreading of active commercial organisations proved to be well-founded.

**Table 3.**

**The linear regression model regarding the density of enterprises  
(Non-standardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in brackets)  
-variables related to human resources, workforce and workforce potential -**

	Whole sample	Harghita	Covasna	Mureş
The standard error in the estimation of the regression	8.719	9.915	6.342	8.577
Constant	0.152 (3.196)	10.301 (5.884)	28.612 (4.863)	2.356 (3.491)
The proportion of employees in the commune	0.389*** (0.125)	-	-	0.832*** (0.142)
The proportion of technical school graduates in the commune	0.780*** (0.285)	1.303* (0.545)	-	-
The proportion of higher education graduates	5.243** (2.293)	-	-	-
The proportion of primary school graduates	-	-	-0.447* (0.193)	-

\* 0.05>p>0.01. \*\* 0.01>p>0.001. \*\*\* p<0.001. Only significant effects presented.

In the course of the analysis we did not yet mention the estimation quality of the regression models<sup>20</sup>. The coefficients of determination show that the most precise estimation regarding enterprise density – through the variables included in the study – can be obtained in the case of villages from Covasna county<sup>21</sup>. If we

<sup>19</sup> For example, Sandu (1998a) maintains that the main catalyst of enterprise establishment is the cultural capital, beside which risk-taking and adaptation to the conditions of market ideology also play a key role in the formation of entrepreneurial attitude. In Sandu's conception, the rural entrepreneur distinguishes himself/herself foremost by the accumulated quantity of cultural, material and relational capital, and he/she is ideologically oriented towards privatisation (Csata-Ercsei, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> This is represented by the values in the first rows of the tables, related to the standard error in the estimation of the regression.

<sup>21</sup> At the same time we must draw attention to the fact that the population studied (the number of communes) is most numerous in Mureş county, this is why lower beta coefficients are also considered significant. The larger variance explained can partially be considered as the outcome of a higher fidelity that comes from the larger number of cases.

carry out a comparison of the standard errors per counties in all three tables we can observe that the indicators included in the first (geographic position and infrastructural factors) and second (fertility indices, demographic evolution) categories are those which explain best the differences in entrepreneurial activity. The variables regarding human resources and labour market status generate a model with a weaker estimation capacity<sup>22</sup>.

In case of the communes from the *North-West Region* these categories of factors were introduced in a single regression model (Table 4). The results show that at regional level the favourable infrastructural endowment (more precisely the proportion of modern dwellings and of the connection to the water supply network) are the variables that follow best the density of enterprises. The demographic potential (especially the proportion of the active population and the size of the locality) and the quality of human resources (the proportion of people hired outside agriculture) also have a significant influence on entrepreneurial density at the level of localities. The causal direction of the relationship between living conditions and entrepreneurial activity is less evident.

**Table 4.**

**The linear regression model regarding the density of enterprises  
(standardised regression coefficients)**

	North-Vest region	Bihor	Bistrița-Nășăud	Cluj	Maramureș	Sălaj	Satu Mare
Geographic position	-0.056	-0.215*	0.156	0.038	-0.128	-0.142	-0.018
Infrastructure	-0.421***	-0.371***	-0.312*	-0.357**	-0.322*	-0.232*	-0.260*
Living conditions	-0.181**	-0.056	0.189	-0.492**	-0.222	-0.072	-0.427**
Demographic potential	0.228**	0.278*	-0.414**	0.504*	0.008	0.556**	0.750***
Human resources	0.126*	0.166	0.539***	-0.089	0.279*	0.116	-0.153
Estimation Quality	24.7	38	26.8	28	10.1	35.0	40.7

\* 0.05>p>0.01. \*\* 0.01>p>0.001. \*\*\* p<0.001.

Compared to the relationships registered at regional level, the dominant factor in Satu Mare, Cluj and Sălaj counties is the demographic potential. Nevertheless, when explaining the differences in entrepreneurial density we

<sup>22</sup> However, we must emphasize the fact that during operationalization we only had the possibility to select from the data that were available; this is why our variables do not cover fully the meaning of the variable category's name. Consequently, our assertions remain only hypothetical.

cannot neglect the role of the ethnic and/or confessional composition of the population. As we can observe on the maps, in the localities with a higher number of Hungarian (and Calvinist) population, the number of economic units per 1000 inhabitants is significantly higher. This is undoubtedly due to the powerful economic vitality of the villages from the region of Țara Călatei and from the region of Șimleul Silvaniei. In Satu Mare a similar positive correlation can be observed in the case of people of Catholic confession. In contrast, in the case of the Greek Catholic population from Bistrița and of the communes with a more numerous Roma population from Bihor county there is a lower entrepreneurial activity.

In Bistrița-Năsăud county the differences in entrepreneurial density at commune level can especially be explained by the quality of human resources. In Bihor and Maramureș counties the same difference can be explained by the lower level of urbanisation and by the level of infrastructural endowment (also, partially, by the favourable geographic position and by the proximity of the town). Due to the fact that, on the basis of our data, we cannot formulate bold conclusions regarding the relationship between the level of urbanisation and economic activity in the contiguous rural areas, it would be interesting to clarify in a future research to what extent can the qualification of the population and employment be the primary determinants of the entrepreneurial activity in the localities with a low level of investment.

Finally, the estimation quality of our models demonstrate the extent to which the factors included in the model are adequate and exhaustive in the explanation of entrepreneurial density (the explained variance of the dependent variable). In this sense, the county level differences are marked especially by government intervention: The cumulated explicative power of the variables included is lower in the regions with more disadvantaged areas (Maramureș, Bistrița-Năsăud). It seems that in these areas the structural organic principles of economic development are inevitably transformed following the artificial stimulation of enterprise establishment.

In Southern Transylvania and Banat we used a single model of linear regression. The data included in Table 6 show that in this case the higher quantity of human resources (especially the higher proportion of employees and the lower proportion of workers in the field of agriculture) influences most the differences regarding the number of enterprises at locality level. This is followed by the indicators regarding living conditions (especially the size of the habitable space), then by the demographic potential (especially the proportion of active workers, the size of the locality and the size of the closest town) and, finally, the geographic conditions of the locality (whether it is intersected by an international road). It seems that in this region the state of the communal infrastructure (the proportion of households connected to the water supply network, the percentage of households connected to the electricity network) does not have a significant influence on entrepreneurial activity.

Tabel 5.

**The linear regression model regarding the density of enterprises  
(standardised beta coefficients)**

	Southern Transylvania, Banat	Timiș	Brașov	Sibiu	Arad	Hune- doara	Alba	Caraș Severin
Geographic position	-0.110*	-0.441***	0.264*	-0.260	-0.069	-0.184	0.068	0.042
Infrastruture	-0.035	-0.004	0.290*	0.171	0.310*	0.089	-0.244	0.131
Living conditions	-0.190***	-0.366***	0.032	-0.060	-0.216	0.283	0.419**	-0.543***
Demographic potential	-0.133**	0.063	-0.301*	-0.172	-0.430**	-0.320*	0.052	-0.004
Human resources	0.375***	0.397***	0.477**	0.055	0.403**	0.079	0.058	0.135
Quality of the estimation	12.2	41.1	48.9	10.3	21.9	6.9	30.3	34.3

\* 0.05 > p > 0.01. \*\* 0.01 > p > 0.001. \*\*\* p < 0.001.

The county level data show that in Arad and Hunedoara counties *the demographic potential* has a more important role in the explanation of entrepreneurial density (within the category it is the proportion of working-age population that indicates the a direct correlation with the higher number of enterprises). As in the case of the *North-West* region the ethnic and/or religious composition of the population also has a more significant role in the explanation of differences in entrepreneurial density. In Caraș-Severin county the proportion of economic units per 1000 inhabitants is above average in the communes with a higher number of Hungarian (and Calvinist) population. In Alba, Brașov and Sibiu counties this proportion is higher in case of a higher proportion of Romanian population (and a lower proportion of Roma population). According to the confessional criteria, the higher proportion of Orthodox population in Alba and Sibiu counties correlates with a greater spreading of enterprises. In Timiș, Arad and Brașov counties *the quality of human resources* (the higher qualification of the population, the lower proportion of people employed in agriculture and the higher proportion of people employed in other sectors) contributes the most to explaining the differences in entrepreneurial density at commune level.

Finally, based on the coefficients of determination we can draw the conclusion that in this region there are too large differences between counties in what regards the predictability of entrepreneurial activity at the level of localities – if we use our groups of variables. These values are the lowest in Sibiu, Arad and Hunedoara counties, which means that the listed socio-demographic factors influence to a lower degree the propensity for establishing an enterprise.

## Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the regression models shows that when trying to explain entrepreneurial activity in rural areas, the information we can gain from regional level analyses is too little, and at county level it is inconstant and inconclusive. We can therefore state that in the explanation of entrepreneurial activity in villages from Transylvania, it is recommended to use smaller scale research methods at the level of micro-regions or localities. We know many localities where, according to the statistics, the value of the entrepreneurial inclination is extremely high compared to the regional average and to the neighboring communes – this cannot be explained adequately neither through the economic model of comparative advantages, nor through the inequalities of the natural resources or the socio-demographic particularities presented above.

This is why we agree with Dénes Kiss's claim (2005), considering that the social relevance of the „local” in rural areas is still rather strong in Transylvania and that, compared to western countries, the traditional structure of these villages desintegrated to a smaller degree. This means that the dimensions applied by Kuczi (2000) (values formed in the past, family and relatives, localism etc.) seem to form a better approach of the social resources that can be efficiently used in the establishment of enterprises in the Transylvanian villages. Given that these resources vary from one locality to the other, it is rather difficult to elaborate a single proxy of the „social capital” and a multi-dimensional approach deserves more analytic credit.

This fact, in turn, shows the limits of the macro level analysis in the study of correlations between the social resources and the entrepreneurial activity. Hence, the more segmented the rural society is and the more differentiated social possibilities are between villages, the more important localism becomes in the creation of the social conditions necessary for entrepreneurship. The reduced propensity for territorial mobility in Transylvanian villages, the greater social relevance of rural residence, prompt us to discover and define unique, smaller scale solutions in the study of the expansion of enterprises, which could serve as a model for the ways in which some communities succeed in using their social resources - mainly of local origin – in the development of entrepreneurship. Consequently, in the future we should analyse those forms of organisation and local networks – initially established for non-economic purposes – employed to foster efficient economic cooperation in these villages.

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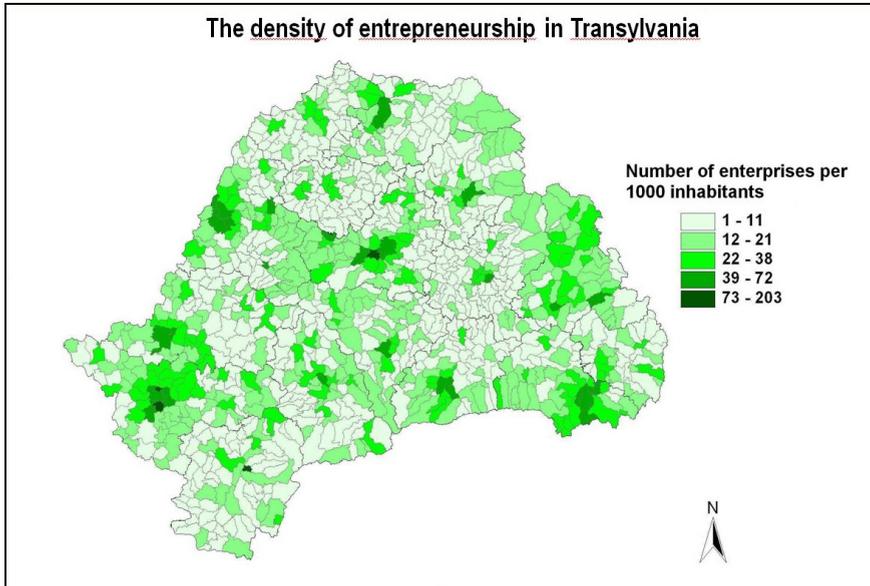
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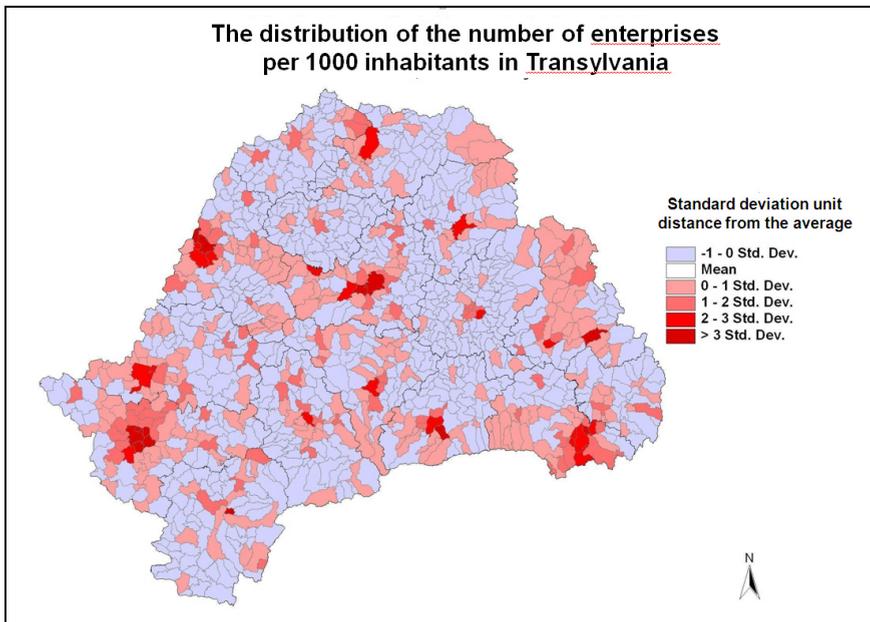
### Appendix 1.

Graph A1.



Source: National Trade Register Office, 2009.

Graph A2.



Source: National Trade Register Office, 2009.

## Appendix 2.

### List of Transylvanian communes with a higher level of entrepreneurial density

#### 1. *The closeness of the city as a comparative advantage*

Communes with high entrepreneurial activity situated in the proximity of:

- Cluj Napoca: Florești, Gilău, Săvădisla, Apahida;
- Oradea: Borș, Biharia, Oșorhei, Sântandrei, Nojorid;
- Timișoara: Dumbrăvița, Ghiroda, Moșnița Nouă, Giarmata, Sănandrei, Bechicerecu Mare, Șag;
- Brașov: Cristian, Bod;
- Sibiu: Șelimbăr, Șura Mică;
- Arad: Livada, Fântânele;
- Târgu Mureș: Sâncraiu de Mureș, Sântana de Mureș, Sângeorgiu de Mureș, Livezeni, Ungheni, Acățari

#### 2. *Villages relying upon the touristic potential of the natural environment*

In *North-Western Transylvania* we should mention the village of Vârciorog (with 58 enterprises per 1000 inhabitants), which holds the first place on the list in Bihor county, the locality and balneotherapeutic resort Băile Felix, known for its thermal waters, Sânmartin (56 enterprises) or the commune of Beliș (33 enterprises) situated on the shore of Lake Beliș-Fântânele from Cluj county etc. In the region of *Southern Transylvania* this category is made up by the communes of Bran and Moieciu (near to Bran Castle), in the *Banat* region by the village of Iablanița (near to Băile Herculane balneotherapeutic resort), in Arad county by Moneasa etc.

#### 3. *Villages close to natural resources*

Socialist industrial settlements: Sângeorz-Băi, Rodna, Șanț (Bistrița Năsăud county), Băiuț, Tăuții-Măgheraș, Șișești (Maramureș), Șarmășag (Sălaj) and Drăgănești (Bihor) from the *North-West* region; Nădrag from Timiș county, in the *Banat* region; and in *Southern Transylvania* Teliucu Inferior from Hunedoara county.

#### 4. *Scattered localities with a strong entrepreneurial density*

In the Hungarian ethnographic region, Țara Călatei: Izvoru Crișului (140 enterprises per 1000 inhabitants) and Sâncraiu (73 enterprises) and Mănăstireni (53) are among the first ten localities of the region.

Ethnographically significant communes with high entrepreneurial activity are also situated in Maramureș, in Valea Izei (the most important ones are: Vadu Izei with 58 enterprises, Poienile Izei with 40 enterprises) and in the environs of Sighetu Marmației (Giulești with 37, Desești with 34 and Sarasău with 32 enterprises).



## ***Romanian Sociology Today***

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

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



## NEOLIBERAL MANAGERIALISM, ANTI-COMMUNIST DOGMA AND THE CRITICAL EMPLOYEE IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper focuses on the tensions created and sustained around the definitions of the respectable employee in Romania two decades after the fall of the socialist regime. I argue that the hegemonic anti-communist discourse has crucial effects beyond shaping the dominant intellectual field, through creating the representational tools by which any claim employees could make in relation to their involvement in the circuits of capitalist production is qualified as illegitimate. The pressure towards understanding oneself as an autonomous, flexible, creative and self-sufficient working subject that the increasingly pervasive neoliberal logic exerts is being multiplied by presenting the adherence to this subjectivity as the only way to prove that one is no longer under the legacy of the (indisputably bad) socialist past. I try to render visible the affinities between the voicing-outs and silences which constitute the anti-communist discourse and the building blocks of the neoliberal scripts for subjectivities on the one hand, and the impossibilities to formulate individual level indignations on the other. Following Boltanski (2011), I differentiate between *reformist critique* (which denounces situations as unjust, but within the overarching framework that holds capitalism itself as a just system) and *radical critique* (which would put in doubt the very fairness of capitalism and would make claims of alternative modes of co-production). I base my empirical claims about the parameters of ordinary critique on the case of middle managers in Cluj, whose working life histories I analyzed. I argue that while reformist critique is abundant in their narratives, the possibility of it coagulating into radical critique is seriously hampered. I focus here on the role played by the hegemonic anti-communist discourse and some of the instances in which it is substantiated in fueling this impossibility. I further argue that sociologies of domination such as orthodox Marxism contribute to making the coagulation of radical critique more difficult because this theoretical position does not allow us to recognize analytically any exterior to capitalism as we speak and live. I use the case at hand to make a more general plea for critical sociology to place the political implications of the narratives it produces at the heart of its theorizing.

**Keywords:** anti-communism, capitalist realism, ordinary critique, neoliberal subjectivity, middle class

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## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Around year 1990, Capitalism's greatest Other crumbled and fell throughout Eastern Europe. This series of events marked a rare moment of adherence to a project of pervasive societal refashioning. While the details were sometimes up to debate, the direction in which Eastern European societies would model themselves was nearly unquestioned, enjoying tremendous legitimacy: away from Socialism and towards Capitalism. Market economy and the societal equilibrium that it was expected to produce became the utmost goal the Eastern European societies set for themselves. 1990 was, therefore, an important moment in the history of capitalism. The failure of its greatest Other was read as hard empirical proof allowing to distinguish between the *right* and the *wrong* imaginable models for societal organization, when *wrong* was obviously *left*. The last (at least discursively) real exteriority to the capitalist system as such suddenly became easy to deal away with.

The central axis of justification for the ample reforms that followed after 1990 was constructed around the goal of minimizing the distance to "democracy" and "market economy" and increasing the distance from the socialist past. While these reforms are often indiscriminately described as being informed by neoliberalism, serious doubt has been raised lately against this view (Ganev 2005, Drahokoupil, 2009). Indeed the countries from this region varied greatly in both the degree of closeness to the neoliberal orthodoxy and the speed with which the reforms were implemented. However much needed the more precise documentation of the nuances of the reforms, their omnipresence and the centrality market economy and democracy had in giving their overall orientation is hard to argue against. In 1990 Eastern Europe lost its status as the Other of capitalism; instead, it emerged as a territory on which capitalism and democracy do not exist yet, but are to be attained as a project. How are democratic political structures to be built from scratch? How is an educational system to be reformed so that it would serve a different economic logic? These were questions preoccupying all types of actors: from policy makers, politicians and analysts both locally and world-wide to academics and simple citizens. Apart from institutions, the political system and economy itself, a crucial matter of concern emerged: the ordinary person. The proper person's attitudes, behaviors and understanding of their own role, entitlements and responsibilities in society became one of the most widely problematized aspects (Eyal, 2000).

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In Romania, references to *people's mentality* were omnipresent in media and political discourses, as an umbrella concept synthesizing various aspects concerning the individual that were deemed important (Heintz, 2005). The concept refers to people's relationship to work, the commitment to the quality of its results, to investment of time and energy, and to expectations from the employer, family or the state. At a more abstract level, mentalities comprise people's understanding of what they can and should expect from the outside structures as well as their own role in the system. The reason why individuals' mentalities are a matter of such concern within the anti-communist and pro-capitalist discursive space is that they are thought to be the ones guiding and determining actions and therefore contributing directly to the success or failure of the top-down projects, depending on whether they are right or wrong. Confronted with various proofs of unsuccessful reform and deterioration of life conditions, mentalities become an important part of explanatory mechanisms: it is the wrong mentalities inherited by individuals from the "bad communist past" that prevent the successful implementation of reforms and that sabotage the entire process of societal refashioning.

The first substantive cracks in the hegemonic definition of reality set in anti-communist terms became visible in the intellectual field. The positions taken by intellectuals who challenged the ultimate truth of the desirable capitalist present and condemnable socialist past rendered both the very existence of the normative discursive space and the content of its possible voicing-outs and silences visible. In December 2006, president Traian Basescu officially condemned communism as illegitimate and criminal in front of the Parliament. It was not a simple statement of a politician, but one that was presented as following the conclusions of a scientific report put together by experts on the basis of systematic and objective research. The Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship triggered a series of reaction of contestation. It was at a publishing house in Chisinau that the volume "The Illusion of Anticommunism" was put in print, bringing together some of these reactions (Ernu et al., 2008)<sup>3</sup>. The contestations did not stem from a unique and coherent position, but had in common the fact that its various contributions challenged the dogma of anti-communism. The sanctions of the hegemons to this challenge put forth what was until then only an implicit definition of the parameters within which intellectual positions could be taken and pass as respectable (Buier, 2010). The dismissal was directed at the very fact that the anti-anti-communists challenged the monolithic take over the past, while the actual substantive arguments that they advanced were not engaged in any way.

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<sup>3</sup> Idea Publishing House in Cluj hosted in 2008 the volume "The Genealogies of Postcommunism", edited by Adrian Sirbu and Alexandru Polgar.

The new narratives were deemed problematic for the very fact that they impinged upon the closure on the interpretation of the past as an unambiguously coherent and bad reality, closure that mainstream intellectuals were very invested in maintaining. The attempts to treat the various dimensions of the complex reality in a differentiated way, to recuperate elements of the past in more nuanced ways were sanctioned as heresies (Buier, 2010; Kalb and Poenaru, 2011; Poenaru, 2011).

In 2010, the new space of positions that was opened starting with the publishing of the volume “The Illusion of Anticommunism” crystalized around the CriticAtac<sup>4</sup> platform, which hosted analyses of the present and the past that implicitly and explicitly challenged the monolithic nature of both socialism and capitalism. Intellectuals of the right started occasionally engaging the debates open on CriticAtac. The official institutions which operate within the parameters of the hegemonic discourse are still colonizing most of the mainstream media appearances, leaving the leftist positions in a marginal and not highly visible position. But while the diagnosis of these analyses as heresies did not change, the substantive arguments advanced from the so called anti-anti-communist position started to be addressed by those in the mainstream and therefore the field itself became more inclusive as it hosted another line of tension.

However, the fact that the analyses which rendered visible the existence of the normative anti-communism pertained to the level of intellectual productions, opened the possibility for another type of dismissal of their relevance. In many interpretations, the only realm in which the anti-communist discourse shapes what can be uttered in a legitimate way is that of intellectuals. The pervasiveness of these categories and the trues scope of their impact are diminished by hiding the fact that they actually structure the possibilities of all individuals to make claims and statements that are legitimate. Therefore, it is not on the struggles of the intellectuals opposing the anti-communist dogma and the way they are dismissed and sanctioned by the hegemons that I will dwell on in this paper.

Rather, I will try to substantiate the fact that the anti-communist discourse constitutes the most overarching framework for reality, setting the yardsticks against which all action, at all levels and undertaken by all actors is to be measured against. It defines at the most general level what heresy is. Mainstream anti-communist intellectuals, left-wing social scientists, middle managers and workers are all acting within this normative space that defines what can be uttered in a legitimate way and what will be sanctioned as a heresy. It is upon the possibilities of qualifying situations of the present as that the anti-communist reality impinges. The politics of memory that I referred to spread throughout the social space. What became visible through the analyses

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<sup>4</sup> [www.criticatac.ro](http://www.criticatac.ro).

is the particular way in which these fights are fought within the intellectual field, the impossibilities and the sanctions. But they are not limited here. I argue that the hegemonic anti-communist discourse has crucial effects beyond shaping the dominant intellectual field by creating the representational tools that qualify any claim employees could make in relation to their involvement in the circuits of capitalist production as illegitimate. The pressure towards understanding oneself as an autonomous, flexible, creative and self-sufficient working subject that the increasingly pervasive neoliberal logic exerts is being multiplied by presenting the adherence to this subjectivity as the only way to prove that one is no longer under the legacy of the (indisputably bad) socialist past.

I will attempt to do this by focusing on another particular area of the social, that of managers. The empirical case I have researched is that of middle managers in Cluj, as non-extraordinary capitalist actors. They are neither the typical elites whose exit on the winning side from the 1989 change of regime (with the privatization processes and the routes to political power that were opened) was amply documented, nor those marginalized categories whose life chances are most seriously threatened by the current neoliberal policies. They are people with higher education, working for relatively good salaries, in a middle scale city – Cluj. They are also relatively young, as all of them graduated university after 1992 and had no significant working experience during socialism. They constitute the middle class invoked by the politicians and analysts, individuals whose proper mentalities are hoped for and whose proper involvement is believed to lead to the accumulation of wealth that would then trickle down to the others as well. They are not left out of the current imagery of society; on the contrary, they are called to be its heroes.

### **Good and bad employees: a recent blog entry**

This section takes a close look at the description of desirable attitudes towards work, as it is visible in a recent blog entry<sup>5</sup>. A young project coordinator in the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Development (CADI)<sup>6</sup>, a think-tank with an explicit center-right position, presents her analysis of the current landscape of Romanian employees. She speaks from the position of the expert sociologist with research experience, who has mapped out the range of possible organizational behavior and who is also well acquainted with the management literature and the way firm success is to be attained. The story starts with a seemingly cautious statement, which is meant to guide the reader in understanding the abstract nature of the subsequent analysis:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://auramatei.blogspot.com/2010/07/doua-tipuri-de-angajati-functionarul-si.html>. Posted on 12.07.2010 (November 2010).

<sup>6</sup> [www.cadi.ro](http://www.cadi.ro) (May 2012).

I delineate two ideal types (in a Weberian vein) of employees: the Entrepreneurial and the Clerkish. Reality is, of course, somewhere in the middle, in between these two, closer to one or the other end of this continuum.

Weber's concept of ideal type is brought in to warn the readers that what follows is the delineation of some abstractions, not a description of any particular case. The two ideal types will define the two ends of a continuum and any empirical example that might come to mind will be closer or further away from these two imaginary employees. What this cautious statement does is to establish a linear continuum as the appropriate frame in which empirical situations are to be interpreted. As it will soon become clear, the two ends of the continuum are the positive and the negative respectively, the desirable and the undesirable employee. In the terminology of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), what is being fleshed out in this text are the features of the Great and the Little employee<sup>7</sup>.

Potential empirical cases are allowed to be very close to one end, to the other, or far away from both; however, we are told that what matters about them is only the distance to these ends. There is no other significant ideal type to refer to, no other "distance" to be measured. Therefore, the framework for interpreting reality proposed in this introduction derives its strength through the fact that it is not falsifiable. No concrete example can shed doubt over the parameters for evaluation it sets because any concrete individual can be understood and qualified within these parameters, even if he or she has features belonging to both the ends. They will be "somewhere in the middle, far away from both ends of the continuum", but we will still be able to tell what is desirable and what is undesirable in the mixture of attributes that they have.

The post continues with substantiating the two ends of the continuum – the Entrepreneur and the Clerk – in several typical situations (employment interview, starting the job) and regarding important topics (job satisfaction, motivation, leisure).

When seeking employment, the Entrepreneur is interested in the general development strategy of the organization and ponders upon whether s/he wants to be part of this strategy, if it will take her/him somewhere and offer development opportunities. The Clerk will be interested in the number of working hours, the length of leave, the food coupons and other incentives. S/he will not ask anything about the organization's vision. The Entrepreneur wants to be ok with the mission of the organization, while the Clerk cares about not being disturbed.

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<sup>7</sup> Following a comprehensive content analysis of management books, they delineate the vision held dominant as desirable in various stages of capitalism. They label the ideal type of person that these normative texts present as the one best embodying the logic of accumulation as Great and it's opposite, the person who fails to understand and act upon these requirements as Little (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

The key idea in this fragment seems at first glance to be the fact that the Great Employee takes the organization, its mission and vision seriously, while the Little Employee does not. However, these are not the only terms that make up the opposition. Instead, what makes the Little the opposite of the Great on this dimension is their interest in the shameful practicalities. This excerpt seems to be delineating the fact that it is desirable for an employee to be interested in the broader picture, in the prospects of development (both personal and for the organization); and that it is undesirable not to be interested in these aspects. However, what we actually learn is that concern with the basic elements of the working contract is not a dignifying one. It becomes shameful and a proof of having the wrong job motivation to express interest in the remuneration, the leave, perhaps pension fund and medical insurance. This interpretation manages to put forth “interest in the practicalities” as the very antonym of “interest for the overall logic of the organization”; while the actual antonym would be simply “lack of interest in the firm’s strategy”.

Once hired, the entrepreneur will ask if s/he can start tomorrow. There’s no office and computer available for her/him yet? No problem, s/he will bring her/his own laptop and will work in the meeting room. The Clerk will ask whether s/he can start in a week, so that s/he can get a rest after the tiresome previous job.

On the Great employee’s end we see willingness to accommodate and surmount the imperfection of the organization through personal initiative, and can only assume that the Little one would lack such spirit. Also, the Entrepreneur’s time availability is maximum: there are no prior commitments that they need to attend, nor anything else that would delay the moment when they can start investing their energies for the common growth of themselves and the firm. The Clerk does not show the same availability and tries to negotiate time to their advantage. The irony in the last sentence suggests that the Little employee uses some alleged tiredness from a previous job as an excuse. Unwillingness to prioritize the temporal needs of the firm over one’s own needs to take a rest automatically joins the series of behaviors stemming from the negative end of the continuum.

The employee’s attitude towards time and priorities is further problematized, as we learn that the Great Person is intrinsically motivated, by the “the content of the work, the relationship with his/her colleagues and will anytime be willing to work more next to people from whom s/he can get the tricks of the trade”. As work is rewarding in itself, as the purpose is always to learn more, to develop to unprecedented levels, as the person sees the greater picture, there is no need to be disciplined by the list of tasks, time frames or even paycheck. Both extrinsic motivations and external control seem to be completely irrelevant for the truly Great. Quite contrastingly, the Little Employee:

will ask what time the “attendance sheet” needs to be signed. The first [the Entrepreneur] will not mention the attendance sheet, because they wouldn’t even be familiar with the concept. [...] Two months after being employed, the Clerk will refuse to fulfill a task because it is not mentioned in the job description. The entrepreneur will, again, have no clue what the job description is. [...] The Clerk derives satisfaction bi-monthly, namely when s/he gets the two paychecks. Once again the Entrepreneur is clueless: s/he does not know what the two paychecks are.

In an attempt to make the hierarchy of motivations more convincing, the author even reaches the conclusion that the Great Person is ignorant of the paychecks. Once more the corollary is that any expression of non-ignorance regarding the paychecks pushes one closer to the negative end. The possibility of refusing tasks is brought into the picture, and then clearly defined and assigned to the negative end of the continuum. The way the situation is framed above, the only reason why an employee wants to be aware of their working profile is in order to avoid otherwise legitimate extra tasks, not – for example – to make sure they are willing and able to fulfill those tasks. Rejecting extra task is unambiguously a sign of the employee’s poor dedication. The alternative in which extra tasks might be the indicator of abusive employers or realistic evaluations of possibilities by the employee remains comfortably unmentioned. Carving out the limits of one’s activities in the firm (by refusing extra tasks of work hours) joins the series of actions that are unambiguously placed in the description of the Little Employee.

Lastly, the perfect reformulation of this opposition:

And, maybe most importantly, the Clerk feels unacknowledged, not appreciated to his/her right value, having been done injustice to and permanently pity themselves. Good things don’t happen to her/him because of the others, while s/he is an undiscovered and unappreciated genius. The Entrepreneur evaluates his position strategically, thinks of what s/he has accomplished and what there is still left to be accomplished and attributes the lack of success to her/himself primarily.

The distribution of responsibility is also clearly mapped out. Voicing discontent, qualifying situations as unjust or being dissatisfied are things the Entrepreneur would never do, because they are aware of their own agentic power. Without needing any additional information about the situation in question, we learn that the Great Person will not attribute responsibility to any other entity than her/himself: not the manager, not the team, not the firm. The crucial implication is that attributing responsibility to any of these entities becomes illegitimate, as it makes one resemble the Little Employee.

Eloquently enough, there is an entire set of preoccupations that is rendered illegitimate, that is stigmatized in these oppositions. Care about one’s entitlements is efficiently neutralized by the association with other features

that are more unambiguously undesirable (interest in the overall mission of the organization, motivation, pro-active behavior). The same happens to resisting to extra tasks or working hours, as well as to formulating critical discourses, that would attribute responsibility to anyone else but oneself. Placing all these elements at the end of the continuum opens up the venue for dealing away with a wide range of demands that employees might have, without needing to treat each of them in their particularity. It is the very category of “claims” that is being dismissed. What is required from the ideal employee in this description is to take part in the circuits of production for the sake of the participation itself. Any element that brings forth the fact that it is ultimately in order to ensure one’s reproduction that people are employed belongs to the worldview of the Clerk.

This blog entry is a normative piece of writing, which distinguishes between what is good and what is bad in individual organizational behavior. Is the context in and the particular time at which it was written of any significance? Is it in any way important that it was written in 2010 in Romania? Fleshing out my “yes and no” answer to this question is the aim of the next section.

### **Neoliberal subjects and mentalities**

I will start with the “no” aspect of my answer. What is required from the post-socialist employee as it appears in the previous description is not in any significant way different from what is required from the exemplary worker in the flexible phase of accumulation of capital. Despite nuances and differences, there is a certain consensus among the analysts of the transformations of global capital about the fact that after the crisis in the 1960s, the very way in which capital functions has changed, together with the way business is imagined. The Managerial Revolution of the time placed the preoccupations with “organizational culture” and Human Resources Management (HRM) as central in the imaginary of business. HRM itself, as the view according to which it is the human resource that gives the competitive advantage of firms beyond any other dimensions, stems from that period (Storey, 2007,). The restructuring of the vision of business comes together with new normative features for individual behavior.

A range of scholars situating themselves in the line of analysis opened by Foucault’s discussion of governmentality have produced convincing accounts focusing on the way the needs of the flexible accumulation of capital are translated into requirements from the subject. The neoliberal subjectivity is understood as

... the ways in which subjects are governed as market agents, encouraged to cultivate themselves as autonomous, self-interested individuals, and to view their resources and aptitudes as human capital for investment and return. Neoliberal governmentality presumes a more or less continuous series that

runs from those macro-technologies by which states govern populations, to the micro-technologies by which individuals govern themselves, allowing power to govern individuals “at a distance,” as individuals translate and incorporate the rationalities of political rule into their own methods for conducting themselves (Binkley 2009:62).

In the same analytical vein, Ten Bos and Rhodes offer an account of the features of the newly invoked “exemplary worker”. The story goes that the “Taylorist automat”, the ultimate executor, whose task fulfillment was cleansed by any personal input, who relies on the state and the employer for security is now being replaced by the flexible, team-work oriented, creative, self-directing autonomous individual that fits the decentralized, flexible logic of the economy (Ten Bos and Rhodes, 2003). It is no longer respect for hierarchies and flawless fulfillment of objectives set by those on a higher level of authority, but enthusiastic engagement, initiative, availability and desire to become involved and invest one’s creative energies and potential. The exemplary workers are easily adaptable and their autonomy makes them not need detailed instructions for their task fulfillment. They inspire and mobilize the others around them. Attributes that used to be categorized as “female” features, like empathy and attention to others’ desires and potential, and therefore inappropriate for the proper male manager, now become central to the very definition of the “passionate manager”, regardless of their gender (Hatcher, 2003).

The commitment to move away from socialism towards capitalism did not stay at the discursive level. On the contrary, the project of restructuring the economy through massive privatizations and attraction of foreign investment was implemented in a very material way. The flexible phase of capital accumulation is highly relevant for the economic context in which employees in Romania work. Through local firms trying to reach international markets or multinationals that outsource part of their activities in Romania, the circuits of production localized here are to a great extent trying to emulate the mainstream vision of doing business. Before 2004, the ultra-nationalist local administration in Cluj had kept foreign investment to a minimum and opted for an indigenist vision over economic development (Petrovici N., 2010, 2011; Petrovici and Simionca, 2011). At the time of my research among middle managers however, the city had made steady steps into a visibly new phase, in which large scale foreign investment and the branding of the city as a “creative” one were central (Petrovici N., 2010, 2011, Petrovici and Simionca, 2011). The desire to prove they are Entrepreneurs, namely the proper economic actor of their times has surfaced recurrently in the narratives of my informants.

So far, I have described through the moralizing tale of the Entrepreneur and the Clerk the features of the Great Employee and her or his opposite. And I have tried to show the continuities between the normative space that this blog

entry is an instantiation of, and the requirements of the wider world of business. Commonalities refer both to the content of the features deemed exemplary and to the fact that the managerial normative space operates with oppositions: the Great Employee always has a Little one in contrast with which the features become explicit. Also, in the normative descriptions of the current business imaginary, the past phase of capitalist organization is often time mobilized as the negative yardstick against which the new needs to gain distance. The Great Person of the new logic is the one who managed to adapt to the new logic and leave behind the previous ways of doing things. The Little Person is rather the anachronistic one (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). My argument is, however, that there are some crucial differences in the degree and type of legitimacy that this normative space has. The extra layer of legitimacy that I would like to highlight is crucial and it comes from the way the relationship between the current undesirable features and the undesirable past is drawn. This is the level at which the context in which the blog entry was written becomes important.

While the Entrepreneur and the Clerk are contemporaries, this normative framework gains its temporal dimension via the association of the latter with the state sector. By this move, the space of references to the socialist past is opened. While the Clerk is a type of employee that can be found throughout the labor market, its “natural habitat” is the state sector. The temporal dimension comes with a causal link inscribed in it: the non-Great behavior of the Clerk is the remnant of the past; not any type of past but exactly the wrong communist one. Linking the Little Employee to the state sector is hardly a far-fetched move. From the “Our mission” section of CADI’s website we learn that they “do not hold illusions that the inefficiencies caused by the state can ever be eliminated”<sup>8</sup>, making their position on the need to reduce the state in favor of the market explicit. The state and the logic of societal organization in which it presumably functions are explicitly viewed as the main source of inefficiency and of undesirable results in the present. Their actions are directed at minimizing the degree to which the state has the power to structure the mode of co-operation in the present. Naming the negative hero of the above story the “Clerk” is therefore no coincidence.

The dominating rhetoric to which CADI and the author of the blog eagerly adhere to maintains that during socialism, the state, as the only employer, allowed and encouraged a flawed work ethic among employees because the state itself did not have any constraints over the quality of the outcomes. The image of the clerk being able to have the inappropriate attitude and behavior because the state simply does not have the mechanisms by which to sanction them is widespread. In opposition to this, the laws of competition which the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cadi.ro/index.php/vizualizare/articole/agenda/57> (May 2012).

free market is ruled by would set up exactly the lacking impersonal mechanism by which individual level behavior is sanctioned or rewarded. The description of individual level attitudes and behaviors is closely intertwined with visions at the macro level: about the role and the desired role of the state and the market, about the right and wrong principles for macro-societal organization. The moralizing tale of the Clerk and the Entrepreneur reformulates at individual level the oppositions of state-market/private sector and socialism-capitalism. The blogger reformulates the overall vision of CADI on the particular dimension of employee profiles.

Not only is the Entrepreneur more than just a local hero, but this blog entry is not an isolated formulation of desirable features in the Romanian context either. While the level of precision with which employees' attitude to different aspects of their job might be rather unique, these oppositions are at the core of one of the most widely occurring discourses: those analyzing mentalities. The concept aims to capture the relationship people have to work, the commitment to the quality of its results, to investment of time and energy and to expectations from the employer, family or the state. The blog entry has actually been an analysis of both the Entrepreneur and the Clerk's mentalities. At a more abstract level, mentalities comprise people's understanding of what they can and should expect from the outside structures and how they understand their own role in the system. Just like it was the case with the previous description, mentalities have a strong normative layer and are invoked in a similar comparative vein. Mentalities can be right or wrong, and most of the time they are socialist. The mentality is a generously encompassing conceptual umbrella, which is extremely powerful in normative discourses. It connects individual understandings and subsequent behavior to macro conditions, as well as the past and the present with a desirable future. While a supra-individual phenomenon (as it is shared by categories of people), the mentality resides within each individual and therefore assigns responsibility to each individual.

In her book about the changing work ethic in Romania, Monica Heintz rightly notices the centrality of the "mentalities" in the popular, political and policy attempts at making sense of the changes occurring, diagnosing problems and the crafting of solutions (Heintz, 2005). Not only does the political significance of her topic not escape her, but she puts great effort into documenting the extent and depth of this aspect<sup>9</sup>. The researcher expresses her commitment to bring a displacement to the lay opinions on the issue and add some extra understanding

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<sup>9</sup> She argues that "mentalities" enable convenient causal models for Romanian politicians to responsabilise the individual and by this minimise the role of their own activity. This responsabilisation is presented however as an example of "incompetent local politicians trying to get away with their incompetence". The way her own narrative resonates with the wider political imaginary that legitimizes capitalism in opposition to socialism escapes her completely.

coming from the anthropological endeavour. In order to achieve this and discuss mentalities from the position of the anthropologist, she introduces the “work ethic” as a more scientific term to replace the value laden “mentality”.

The displacement effort of this piece of research is situated at the level of the causes: it is not an essential Romanianness which shapes people’s mentalities, but a complex of social and economic factors to which the citizens of the country have been subjected (Heintz, 2005). While saving the work ethic from the level of essential national characteristics is indeed a laudable gesture, merely assigning it to a different causal constellation does not do much for challenging the overall normative framework in which it is described. The categories of the discussion remain the same: Romanians (while differently determined), their work ethic, an implicit description of a work ethic that would be the “right” one<sup>10</sup> and the wrong socialist mentalities. The comparisons that follow from here merely reinforce the fact that this is the right framework within which to evaluate reality: how far away are people’s worldviews from the socialist ones and how close have they gotten to the capitalist ones? Work ethic can be proper and improper; it is (most times) proper in the West and improper here. And it is improper here because of the faulty and condemnable communism. It is of course not people’s fault that reality is as such, but reality is still as such.

Even if the conclusion of an empirical research conducted under these parameters would be that people now have the right mentalities (which is, however, not the case in point), it would still reinforce the fact that the overarching framework within which to evaluate situations is that of the degree to which distance from socialism and closeness to capitalism have been achieved. Therefore, the aura of the in-depth anthropological research has been mobilized so that to add another type of specialist to the long list of those who reinforce the greater scheme within which people are to think of themselves and others. It is little wonder that her book was so well received especially among the high rank intellectuals who are the main formulators of the high-language versions of the anti-communist discourse<sup>11</sup>.

### **Diagnosis of legacy or nostalgia effectively neutralizing critique**

What is required from the post-socialist employee in order to qualify as worthy closely resembles what is expected from the worker of the flexible phase of capital accumulation. Therefore, the blog entry I analyzed above is not particularly interesting in respect to the features of the employee it shows as exemplary, as the author quite diligently follows the general scripts for the

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10 - oddly enough using Max Weber’s “protestant ethic” as an “ideology free” yardstick for empirical reality to be measured against, quite contrary to both the way in which Weber uses it and the understanding stemming from here that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) give to the “spirit of capitalism”.

worker of the flexible economy. What is more interesting is the description of the inadequate employee and the resonances it finds in the hegemonic discourses and rhetorical devices of the pervasive anti-communist discourse. Most interesting is to dwell on the tremendous extra-power that the scheme for interpreting (and modeling) reality that the blogger proposed draws from its match with the latter discourse.

What relevance does it have that the temporal dimension inscribed in the framework within which the features of the desirable employee are drawn in opposition to the undesirable one refers back to socialism? What we saw in the description of the Clerk as undesirable features: claims for contractual clarity, job security and boundaries of the self are presented as illegitimate in two mutually reinforcing oppositions: first, they are illegitimate because this is not what a fully-fledged contemporary capitalist subject would do. Second, it is what a socialist subject (such as the Clerk) would do. It is exactly at this second level that the anti-communist aspect of the valorization scheme plugs in. I argue that these oppositions are mobilized in such way that they impinge upon people's ability to defend the claims they could make from their employers as legitimate. Dissatisfaction is dismissed as stemming from the employee's anchorage in a world-view that pertains to communism and that is therefore wrong on much more layers than the strictly economic one. Communism comes with a moral baggage that includes political repression, lack of freedom of speech, human rights violation and generally speaking crimes against humanity.

Therefore, the difference between the Clerk being simply an un-adapted economic subject and a person whose views and actions are in line with the communist past is enormous. Outside of this context, the Entrepreneur is still praised for her/his autonomy, flexibility and initiative and any employee is sanctioned if they prove to be longing for job security, stability or free time. However, accusations of being "old school" are much less pressing than accusations of adhering to an authoritarian regime, of supporting dictatorship and its crimes. In the capitalist core, the past stage that needs to be overcome in the current phase is constructed in a fundamentally different way, as just another phase of the same capitalist system. In post-socialism, the past is not simply an outdated logic, but a completely different system, the Other of the current one, which has been deemed not only economically untenable but morally wrong. While the mechanism that opposes a desirable present situation to an undesirable one in the past might have similar features, the remnants of the socialist past carry a much stronger baggage.

It is the direct influence of past experiences and education that are brought forth to explain the persistence of Clerks: the socialist system has already created the Small People of the present; as for the people themselves, they are guilty of not possessing the internal robustness to adapt, to transform themselves into Great People. Trying to draw academic attention to the way in

which local history influences the outcomes of “post-socialist transformations”, David Stark famously said that capitalism is built not *on*, but *with* the ruins of socialism (Stark 1996). While true, this affirmation does not give the full picture, as capitalism is also built by keeping the ghost of socialism alive.

This becomes particularly well visible in September 2010, when the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER) published a report<sup>12</sup> based on the survey of Romanian’s perception of communism. The figures showed how only less than a third of the population thinks communism was a bad idea, the rest thinking either it was a good idea poorly implemented (44%) or even that it was well applied (12%). The rest had no opinion on the subject. Less than half of the people thought the system was illegitimate (the rest either rejected this idea or did not have an opinion on the issue). When prompted to associate freely communism with a word, nearly a half of the associations were with positive terms (“a safe workplace” being the most popular). The survey was aimed to bring hard statistical data to reinforce the truth that was already well known: communism was condemnable. However, it failed to do so, to the great disappointment of the Institute and others.

It is therefore little wonder that the main stream of reaction once the results of the survey were made public was that of stupefaction and blaming people for being irrational and ignorant enough to have challenged the ultimate truth of current times: that communism is bad and capitalism good. There was, however, another type of reactions, a much more understanding one. In this interpretation, nostalgia was indeed an irrational reaction (of retreat to an idealized past), but a normal one, given the difficulties of the present crisis. While it is the fault of individuals and institutions that they could not raise up to the requirements of capitalism, it is acknowledge in this latter interpretation that the current situation is difficult, and therefore individuals might search for irrational escapes in a past that they can no longer remember well. Therefore, a mutation in this causal mechanism becomes crystallized in the last years, as the direct experience of the past of those found faulty is harder to blame two decades after 1989. The first cohorts with no significant experience during communism are already active in the labor market. While the initial version of the causal model which blames the direct experience of communism is still operating<sup>13</sup>, a variation of it started to emerge. The figure of the “Nostalgic” and the threat of “nostalgia for communism” have been conveniently identified:

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/pdf/ro/evenimente/perceptiile\\_romanilor\\_asupra\\_comunismului/raport\\_sondaj\\_opinie.pdf](http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro/pdf/ro/evenimente/perceptiile_romanilor_asupra_comunismului/raport_sondaj_opinie.pdf) (May 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Communism still creates the mentalities of the young via the institutions that are still alive and via the education that parents who were themselves educated during communism give.

The gallery is [...] enriched with a new one: the figure of the “nostalgic”, with a protean face and any age. If until now, the profile of the enemy was sketched out plainly, in relation to ideological coordinates that were rather clear, in this new age, the entire population, without exception, can anytime become guilty, given the loose structure of the new forms of categorization. Nostalgia can hit anyone, even the youth. Especially the youth. Therefore, the anti-communist struggle, in its *reloaded* version is only now to begin (Poenaru, 2010).

The threat of being labeled “nostalgic over communism” successfully complements or replaces the one of “communist legacy”. The creation of this new rhetoric of the Nostalgic allows the normative mechanism for interpreting reality to operate in the same way, albeit with different accusations. It is another successful linking of the “wrong” to the “past”, silencing the attempts to criticize the present, by rendering the whole population “nostalgic”, and maintaining the link the “wrong” past. Being nostalgic over communism is interpreted as a form of reactionary act, against the prevailing norms of liberal market economy. As the decades that passed since the fall of the socialist regime make it more and more difficult to convincingly deal away with criticism of the current situation on the basis of a communist legacy, it becomes instrumental to do it on the basis of irrationality and nostalgia.

I have already referred to the fact that normative scripts for subjectivity most times have a reference to a past logic of capital accumulation, whose central figures are described and dismissed. However, because it is only about them being old-school, references the past can often times serve as an anchorage for criticizing the present. The past does not need to be treated monolithically, and various aspects of it can be rescued and transformed into positive yardsticks against which to measure the contemporary realities. As the socialist past is always presented as a monolith, dimensions of it cannot be rescued for current comparisons. This is the case, for example, with the “safe workplace” requirement that employee in contemporary Romania might have. Criticizing the present for the lack of safety of employment and bringing in as a case of comparison the past when this requirement was fulfilled is impossible, because the past has already been qualified as wrong, and so are all the features it might have.

Richard Sennett’s concept of the “corroded self” is an example of how some aspects of the dynamism inherent in the change towards a post-Fordist logic of production are criticized by reference to the Fordist one (Sennett, 1998). With an explicit critical stance, he aims to unmask the way the transformations of the circuits of production towards flexibilization are radically altering the possibility of the workers to recover a sense of meaningful life. The short-termism inscribed in the current logic of accumulation does not allow people to relate to any stable values (as it was the case in the past) and therefore they are trapped in a situation

of moral ambiguity and corrosion of character. The reference to a seemingly benign past is rather odd for a sociological concept, as the author seems to be missing the point that the past ways of representing oneself as actors was also in relation to the way capital needed people to understand themselves in order to successfully obtain their participation in the circuits of production. It is not only the flexible autonomous self that is in dialogue with normative formulations from the part of capital, but also the stable Fordist career (and life path). However, the fact that the Fordist past is interpreted as only economically inefficient and not as morally wrong allows not only Sennett, but workers generally to rescue some of the dimensions of the past and present them as legitimate requirements in the present as well.

But this type of operation cannot be done in the context of the hegemonic anti-communist discourse in Romania. The past cannot be invoked to shed doubt on the rightness of the present, because it has already been monopolized exactly for making it look right. It is not only that employees cannot claim work security by saying that the past has proved that this is possible. More than this, any claim about the present is dealt away with by constructing a link with the past, even if this link is not necessarily there.

### **Middle managers and their ordinary critique**

How do these dismissals become visible empirically? What kind of claims can employees not defend as legitimate? What representations do they put forth for their indignations regarding various aspects of their past or present employment represented, and how do they defend them within this normative space? This section is an attempt to sketch an answer to these questions, based on the research I conducted from 2007 to 2008 among middle managers in Cluj (Simionca, 2011). Rather than offer exhaustive answers, the aim of this paper is to draw attention to this very level of analysis. I find it crucial both to make visible the type of critical operations that ordinary actors themselves perform and to problematize the way these operations are intertwined with the larger normative space held together by scripts for subjectivity and by the anti-communist discourse.

Alina Petrovici's ethnographic study in a Cluj corporate environment clearly shows how the possibility for creating discursive spaces by the employees, in which to express discontent towards the enormous pressure for overtime work, is neutralized by an all mighty statement on the part of the managers that "we are a capitalist firm, not a socialist one" (Petrovici A., 2010). This means that it was only during socialism that employees would leave work after the contractual 8 hours and it is not possible to achieve the efficiency required from a capitalist firm unless people give up the nostalgia for the past and start

putting in all the required extra hours. Employees making claims for less pressing time requirements are in this view either faulty of socialist mentalities or nostalgic for the communist times. The difficulty to maintain a sense of being a respectable employee (and person) while making claims from the employer was visible in my informants' discourses as well. The 45 interviews I conducted with middle managers focused on their entire working life history, the turning points it contained and the reasons why they had changed jobs. I was presented rich narratives evaluating their past work places on many dimensions. During the interviews, I probed about the alternatives they felt they had and the reasons that led to their decisions.

Among the reasons of dissatisfaction with their jobs (which in most cases had led to a resignation and a new work place) were low salaries, burdening extra hours, the impossibility for promotion (due to a corrupt logic of the firm), disrespectful treatment by the higher management, routine tasks, uninteresting work or the fact that they could not relate to the end product of their work. Their current firm was presented to me most times as successfully fulfilling at least some of their requirements, and only three of my interviewees were at the time of my research searching for a new job. Even if they might have had a positive bias towards their current situation, all the interviews were rich in presenting the dimensions on which the middle managers evaluate the outcomes of their involvement in the circuits of capitalist production.

The aspects I briefly mentioned above were not equally important in all the narratives. However, there was one dimension that appeared as important in all the interviews, and explicitly so in more than three quarters of them. One of their main concerns was whether the firms in which they were working constituted "proper" business environments (Simionca, 2011). The "properness" of a firm referred to the fact that it was an actual capitalist firm, operating in competitive markets, in which employees were hired following a transparent procedure and based on their merits, not on their connections ("*pile*" in Romanian). The fact that the firm sold its products or services on international markets, together with its comparative success on local ones was an indicator of the same properness. Smaller details like the way the offices were designed, the dressing code or the business cards were also often times considered important. The same desire to be part of a respectable business environment was the main reason why some of my interviewees welcomed foreign investment. Foreign firms were seen as incubators for proper business that would allow employees to compare themselves in a satisfactory way with their western counterparts. It is through this desire to be part of proper business environment that they plugged into the anti-communist discourse. As the socialist past figures into the general imaginary as being a world of corruption and inefficiency, the proper business environments of the present need to be in sharp opposition to that. Several of their past working places were dismissed

explicitly in terms of being “socialist”, because that particular firm was either not sanctioning their colleagues’ poor work performance or the advancement and payment were secured via connections.

In most of the interviews, either the socialist past was explicitly qualified as undesirable, or the capitalist present or future as the right solution. I was not exposed to a single explicit questioning of this reality of right and wrong. It is the very fact that they shared the vision according to which capitalism is the antidote of socialist inefficiencies that made them highly vulnerable to all the dismissals of their claims that higher management qualified as stemming from a socialist mentality. I was told several times that “it is not that I don’t understand that business is tough and if we want to be competitive, all of us need to give their best. However...”. The degree to which what follows after “however” can hold as legitimate is the very point of tension I try to draw attention to.

In several cases middle managers reported changing jobs because their claims were not taken into account, while they considered them to be legitimate. In one example, a sales manager in his early 40s recalls his previous job as requiring unreasonable extra hours and having a chaotic schedule that left no time for any personal life. When he confronted the higher management about it, his complaint was countered in the same vein as the one described by A. Petrovici (2010). Full time availability was presented by the manager as an unproblematic requirement of capitalist competition, which is not up to debate. My interviewee was able to find another firm, in which despite a heavy schedule and long working hours, he could still afford every other weekend fully free and at least 3 afternoons per week in which he did not have to work. It was by reference to this alternative that he could maintain to himself and me the fact that his previous claims were not an indicator of him not being a respectable employee fully adapted to the capitalist logic and longing for socialism. A similar example is that of a middle manager in a software distribution company, who used to work for a satisfying salary in a different but equally successful one. According to him, his previous firm had a very limited inner circle of people who could actually make decisions and whose career advancement was taken into account. For the others, the very stability of the position was at stake. When trying to explain the higher management that he is not happy with the fact that his contract can be annulled at any point despite him working there for more than two years with good results, he was given a reply along the same lines: in a proper capitalist firm which operates by the rules of competition, there is no stability and he would understand that he cannot hold such expectations if he had grasped the true principles of the now capitalist economy.

My fieldwork ended in 2008, right before any of the effects of the word crisis would become visible. At the time the interviews were conducted, the labor market in Cluj was expanding, unemployment was low and therefore

employees had a reasonable leverage in most cases. Even in these conditions of a rather generous labor market before the crisis, the type of tools for delegitimizing claims that the anti-communist discourse provides through the idea of faulty mentalities were strong. We can only expect that the shrinking labor market after 2008 has strengthened these tendencies. Mark Fischer was saying that people within capitalism are no longer aware of the possibility of an alternative. He labels this situation “capitalist realism”, which means that regardless of how many discontents people gather, they can still not put them into a coherent alternative and claim a different system. In the case of my informants, the impossibility of imagining an alternative is even stronger, despite the fact that many of them have actually lived under a different mode of social organization, even if not the opposite of capitalism. It is by the very delegitimation and constant blaming of this alternative that their very impulse of imagining another one is blocked (Fischer, 2009).

Interestingly enough, my informants did imagine alternatives, albeit not in very straightforward ways. The city itself was used to express their desire not for an alternative to capitalism itself, but to a milder variant of it. Besides the properness of business environments, another recurring element in their discourses was the opposition of Cluj to Bucharest. The numerous statements I heard about how Cluj is a nicer city in which life is calmer and more sophisticated partly echo the widespread stereotypes about the interregional differences in Romania, in which Transylvania represents itself as the mannered, civilized and more Western part of the country. But Bucharest was referred to often in terms of the business environment it contains. The option of living and working in Cluj is presented as an enacted opposition to a form of capitalism that is too close to its “pure” and “un-human” variant, which can allegedly be found in the capital city. These differences enclose a dimension of mapping out existing variants of doing business and preference towards some rather than others of its elements. Bucharest is constructed as the place where the real economic logic prevails, and real market events happen (like headhunting as a recruitment strategy), as it is large and dense enough. The accuracy of the statements they make about the two cities are of little interest to my current argument.

In many of the narratives I heard, the smaller scale of the city and its less dense and structured labor market figure as a positive elements allowing for individual initiative. The smaller scale of business was also referenced in positive terms because it allows people to feel less like being part in too large of a system in which they lose sight of the end product of their work. Also, in slower-paced Cluj, time pressure is not so great as not to be able to focus on tasks anymore and loose the sense of the work well done. While Cluj also operates on competitive markets, it does so to a lesser extent and it allows for

the actual working environment to foster a sense of collaboration between the employees and not force them into individualistic races, in which one's survival is at the expense of the others'.

Using the scale of the city in order to claim a milder variant of capitalism that they can defend as legitimate is a way of coagulating critique. Even if projected on the image of a wild Bucharest, people still formulate sharp critique of the way the logic of capital can end up functioning and the negative effects it can have on the people involved in it. The problematic aspect with this particular coagulation of claim making around Cluj itself is the exclusions it implicitly operates. The cosmopolitan Cluj of the creative middle classes working in "proper" business environments is in opposition to the city of the workers of the previous administration (Petrovici N., 2010). Both the professionals themselves and the public administration tap into a definition of the city development which favors large scale foreign investment and downplays the importance of local business. Also, the emphasis lies on the opportunities for employment and leisure of the professionals, excluding the manual workers (Petrovici N., 2010). The manual workers and their job opportunities do figure in my interviewees concerns, but they imagine their inclusion through the trickling down of benefits. If the "creative city" stabilizes as the trope under which claims are made, the faith of manual workers is excluded. The type of work they do and their leisure habits are not included, but equated to the undesirable remnants of the past. Their possible claims subsequently become delegitimized by the fact that they do not fit the definition of the flexible and creative contemporary worker.

Boltanski (2011) was differentiating between *reformist critique* (which denounces situations as unjust, but within the overarching framework that holds capitalism itself as a just system) and *radical critique* (which would put in doubt the very fairness of capitalism and would make claims of alternative modes of co-production). What I have described in this section are elements of the abundant reformist critique that the narratives of my informants provided. Ultimately, the challenge of formulating radical critique would be to put together these and other elements of claims from the circuits of production so that to question whether capitalist accumulation is indeed able to satisfy them for everyone. This would mean questioning the very framework of reality within which we live, namely that capitalism is good (as opposed to the bad socialism). My interviewees' attempt to question the legitimacy of capitalism by pointing out the negative forms it can take if it is too intense (like in Bucharest) and proposing milder definitions (in Cluj) is a starting point towards the formulation of radical critique. We have seen the expression of a long series of requirements that people have from the circuits of production. What elicits the enthusiasm of employees is the fact that their working place allows them to gain a sense of

respectability, to be in touch with the end result of their work, to be respected, to have the time to focus on the quality of results rather than their mere quantity, to collaborate with others and have a certain degree of security of their position. These are important claims, which in this case get coagulated primarily in relation to the trope of the smaller scale city of Cluj. This is because this type of operations presupposes questioning the way business should function, the way employees should be treated and the responsibilities employers have. But, unless this concept explicitly incorporates a wider definition of the employee than that of the “creative” professional, it loses its critical edge and becomes another line of exclusion.

### **Conclusions**

Formulating radical critique is not a straightforward endeavor for any category of subjects involved, be they middle managers, manual workers or intellectuals. A first step that is difficult (but not fully impossible) to make within the anti-communist normative space involves decomposing the socialist past and its mode of production on its various dimensions: decoupling political repression from the logic of factory production, or violation of human rights from safe workplaces. It would also involve seeing that the failures of the socialist system are not automatically resolved by the capitalist system. Further, that it is legitimate to require capitalism to fulfill those elements on which socialism did not fail: if socialism offered security and the current situation does not, claims for security are not an expression of desire to reverse to state socialism. Instead, they are claims made to capitalism to be a more just system. Claims for jobs to offer fair salaries, excitement, the possibility of exploring one’s potential, seeing the end result of one’s work, the possibility to be part of larger collectivities, being respected and appreciated in case of work well done need to be disentangled from the way they factor into representations of the overarching framework of reality that sets right from wrong.

What the anti-communist discourse does is to disqualify the claims made in the present on the basis of the fact that they can only be satisfied in an alternative mode of production. The crucial space for radical critique opens up exactly here. Indeed, many of the claims people have can only be satisfied in a different mode of co-operation than capital. It is just that this alternative is not state socialism. It is in creating this space of imagining, practicing and investing with legitimacy alternatives to the mode of co-production that the role of critique factors in. The type of critical work I refer to separates claims from their solution they are offered in the large framework of reality. Further, it allows them to be visible in relation to the concrete situations in which they were formulated and invites to their re-articulation in different frameworks of reality. Critical sociology itself can play an important role in this, exactly by making visible the critical work done by actors themselves.

I would like to suggest that sociology most times fails to address the challenge of contributing to the articulation of radical critique and actually transforms itself exactly in the type of narrative that reinforces both capitalist realism and the relationship between capitalism and socialism. One way in which this happens can be found in examples such as Monica Heintz's contribution to describing the work ethic of post-socialist Romanians that I referred to earlier in this paper. Another more subtle way in which academic discourse contributes to the reinforcement of capitalist reality comes from the perspective taken by sociologies of domination (Boltanski, 2011).

Analyses done in an orthodox Marxist vein do not find socialism faulty and pay enough attention to the commonalities between socialism and capitalism. However, when referring to ordinary actors (especially the middle classes), they have another formulation for faulty mentalities: false consciousness. Individuals are not faulty for not having gotten rid of a socialist legacy, they are faulty for not unmasking the unfairness of capitalism in a clear cut way. They are faulty for living their lives as a constant recital of neoliberal scripts, instead of pleasing the exterior-and-all-understanding Marxist analyst by playing out different roles, the roles he would rather see: class actors meeting in D day, overthrowing the system and starting all anew. While the intention of these analyses is laudable, by dismissing the actual critical work done even by the less-straightforward subjects of the Revolution, they further diminish the possibility of reformist critique to coagulate into radical one. In these narratives, the actually existing exterior to capital, unfolding in its midst is also being lost. And the realism of capital as the only framework of reality as we speak and live is vehemently reinforced. Critical social science should start off from problematizing the political effects of their own narratives. The case in point – that of ordinary capitalist actors trying to represent their involvement in circuits of production in the midst of neoliberal pressures and anti-communist dogma – comes in handy to show how the perspective from which theories of domination are formulated makes a crucial difference for the possibility of countering the domination they unmask.

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### **Call for papers for thematic issue:**

## **ETHNICITY IN MIGRATION. THE CASE OF EAST EUROPEAN MIGRANTS**

### **Guest editors:**

**Remus Anghel**, researcher, Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca

**Irina Culic**, associate professor, Sociology Department, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

The question of ethnicity in international migration has been for a long time the focus of social science scholars. Early on the role and change of ethnicity in processes of adaptation, integration, and assimilation at immigrants in the U.S. have captured the attention of urban sociologists and policy makers. The formation of new hyphenated societies and the role of ethnic structuration, ethnic mobilisation, and ethnic economies at immigrants in North America and Western Europe have been intensively researched. More recently, large-scale ethnic migration and the politics of ethnic selection came under the scrutiny of scholars. At the same time, immigration scholars have criticized the emphasis on ethnicity in explaining phenomena of international migration and incorporation in the societies of reception.

The thematic issue of *Studia UBB Sociologia* aims to gather a number of articles that deal with the relationship between ethnicity and migration in the case of immigrants from Eastern Europe. It seeks articles that investigate the reconfiguration, reshaping, re-writing, and the re-making of ethnicity, ethnic identity, and ethnic communities in international migration. Among the suggested topics are the following: boundary-making processes at destination, in specific regimes of immigrant reception or ethnic and racial hierarchies; the re-signification of ethnic identity in the context of migration, through the reconfiguration of family, country, social, and political citizenship; de- and re-ethnicization of the place of origin as a result of circulatory migration. Texts based on all types of data and using various perspectives are welcome, from comparative studies using quantitative or qualitative data, to contributions based on ethnographic fieldwork in one or multiple sites.

### **Deadline for manuscript submission: 1 September 2012**

Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic version at: [studiasociology@gmail.com](mailto:studiasociology@gmail.com)

Author guidelines: <http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/download/instr/sociologia.pdf>

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