INHABITING THE ENVIRONMENT.

OLD AND NEW PRACTICES, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE USAGE OF COMMON POOL RESOURCES IN THE DE-INDUSTRIALIZING JIU VALLEY

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the transformation of work and livelihood in the region of Jiu Valley (Valea Jiului) in the decades immediately following the demise of the old socialist regime created new imaginaries of entitlement, legitimacy, shame and pride associated with attempts to ensure individuals' and families' economic survival and wellbeing. As the mines were gradually closed and made derelict, and people began shifting to the collection of scrap iron from the old mining facilities and later to the collection of mushrooms, flowers, wild fruits and other forest harvests, the social cleavage between *Momârlani* - descendants of the indigenous local population, seen as the 'traditional' owners of rights in land and territory in the valley, and *Barabe* - descendants of miners who began moving to the valley following the opening of the coal mines in the 19th century has been brought into focus. Using Ingold's habitation perspective and contrasting it with post-socialist writings on work, I show how, through practice, the people's awareness of their environment reaches unprecedented levels, revealing them as agents capable of meaningful engagement in the re-negotiation of entitlement over common resources.

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on the transformation of work and livelihood in the region of Jiu Valley (Valea Jiului) in the decades immediately following the demise of the old socialist regime. A declining mining region in South-West Romania, the Jiu Valley underwent a major economic and social transformation, instigating very significant changes in people's life experiences and the meanings they currently attach to their roles in society. More specifically, I explore how, as the mines were gradually closed and made derelict, people began shifting to the collection of scrap iron from the old mining facilities and later to the collection of mushrooms, flowers, wild fruits and other forest harvests. These two new occupations, I will show, led them to unprecedented forms of engagement with the environment. This in turn created new imaginaries of entitlement, legitimacy, shame and pride associated with attempts to ensure individuals' and families' economic survival and wellbeing. This new conceptual terrain threw into relief long-standing social cleavages, most important of which is the one between *Momârlani* - descendants of the indigenous local population, seen as the 'traditional' owners of rights in land and territory in the valley, and *Barabe* - descendants of miners who began moving to the valley following the opening of the coal mines in the 19th century. I will show how this dichotomy, is at the heart of notions of entitlement and ownership of the valley's common pool resources, now at the center of attention due to the newly found value of the old mines and the forest.

My work follows the path opened by the numerous recent studies of post-socialist transformations of work in Central and Eastern Europe. The academic interest in the topic is fully understandable given the complexity of the socialist system and the ubiquitous manner in which it dominated people's lives and the degradation of the lives of industrial workers which accompanied its fall. Works by Verdery, Burawoy, Dunn and others, which analyse

the regime change in a realistic way, focus on workers and their experiences as the locus of tensions that reflect the nature of the momentous changes they and the systems they were part of have gone through. This analytical trajectory, which constructs workers as agents capable of engaging in meaningful action at the intersection of specific contexts, produces an impressively nuanced account of a complex reality undergoing dramatic transformation.

In understanding workers as agents acting in a richly structured environment, post-socialist studies on work usually build, implicitly or explicitly, on theories of practice as put forward by Bourdieu, Giddens and Foucault in their earlier efforts to bridge the gap between structure and agency, to overcome the dualism of thinking about the social existing in the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. This conceptual space allows the authors to look at the social reality in a relational way, exploring how agency is manifested at the conjuncture of changing economic and political condition and the more stable structures of meanings. Their analysis show the subtle ways in which economic activities are and remain embedded in the social environment, regardless of the functioning of larger structures. As work is under pressure and undergoes transformations in response to the perceived needs of a capitalist economy, the responses coming from local communities create a rich and diverse palette, depending on the different histories of growth and maturation of each place.

This is especially visible in writings on informal economic activities that show how the legitimacy of economic action cannot be grasped by means of a simple ontological distinction between first and second economy. Borocz (2000), Rasanayagam (2003) and Ries (2002), all show explore informal arrangements, and their logic is one caught between moral criteria of the local communities, the economic logic of accumulation of the market and the confusing regulating logic of the state.

Burawoy and Verdery (1999), going beyond a simple opposition between socialism and capitalism when talking about Central and Eastern Europe, draw on Giddens' idea of

duality of structure as both limiting and opening possibilities of action for actors. In a similar way to Giddens' insistence on how knowledgeable actors, in the processes of everyday life, produce and reproduce structure, Burawoy and Verdery talk about people as more than just passive receptacles of ideology. Caught in a complex web of relations, these people bring back practices from the past to the present, not in the form of legacy but as innovative responses to market pressures during the process of transition, with unintended consequences of change arising in the process.

Elizabeth Dunn, in her book on Poland (2004), analysing mostly the same transformation of work, follows a Foucaultdian line in coupling them with changes in discipline and their effects in shaping the personhood of the worker. She manages to reveal people as acting subjects by working alongside with them, acquiring skills and subjecting herself to the same discipline, and through that gaining a deeper understanding of the situation. In looking at how her subjects respond to the new management practices and techniques with their own meanings and their own experience, she sees them as shaping at the same time as they are shaped by macroeconomic structures.

However, in all these writing is it unclear how, if at all, the meanings people derive from their work is embedded not only in the social environment, but in the material one as well. In this sense, they all fall short to the general critique coming from the direction of the posthumanist studies, as formulated by Latour (2005). He advocates for the incorporation of nonhuman entities in social theory and develops the Actor-Network Theory, making the interesting proposition of thinking of agency as a characteristic of both human and non-human actors. He attempts to re-assemble the social, but in spite of his emphasis on the relational character of it, his vision is flattening, both in the sense that his actors come across as unidimensional entities, and that they are collapsed in horizontal material-semiotic networks.

To further this analysis, I follow the phenomenological-ecological perspective developed by Tim Ingold (2000, 2011). He builds on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, a "system of durable, transposable dispositions", mental or cognitive structures that the individual internalizes through the human body during the course of her/his life. The habitus, the way of acting in the world of a person, reflects at the same time social structures and an individual's particular process of socialization. Bourdieu's notions are very useful in understanding the shaping and position of an individual in the social space, but his vision is concentrated on the body and although he provides a consistent account of its connection with the mind, he cannot think through how the intersubjective experiences and feeling of people tie together in coherent images and representation.

Advocating a comprehensive framework that sees humanity as a complex, evolving entity that combines body, mind and culture, Ingold conceptualizes the three not so much as a composition but as a "singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships" (2000:4-5). His relational thinking brings together human and non-human entities, in a shared history of evolution and engagement. Existing in the world means moving in the world, perceiving our environment through our senses, experiencing it while being integrated in it. In this sense as constant improvisers, humans and non-humans are incessant bearers of agency and creativity. And given the obvious association of agency with humans, Ingold phrases a new concept that encompasses the capabilities of all entities: interagentivity.

Ingold's theory assigns a central place to work. It does so however in ways that go beyond the way work is conceived in Marxist thought as productive activity. Highlighting work as skilled practice, it becomes our basic mode of acting in the world, of interacting in it and of experiencing it. Thinking of the Jiu Valley with these terms offers a link between the changing patterns of economic activity in the region and the transformation of perceptions

people have of themselves, of others and the environment they share. Perception is seen as based in feelings, in the concrete experience of people getting to know the environment in an intimate way, through walking and learning the paths of the forest, the rhythms of the human and non-human environment, through re-learning the building of the mines in a different way by following the geography of the iron trail, through re-appropriating all of these in the current of life.

Historical aspects of Jiu Valley's evolution

Sheep and coal, momârlani and barabe

Jiu Valley (Valea Jiului) is a heavy industrialized region in the south-western part of Romania, in Hunedoara county, situated in the valley of the Jiu river, at an altitude of about 800 m, between the Retezat Mountains and the Parâng Mountains. Along the Valley of the river there are situated several cities and villages: Petrila, Petroşani, Aninoasa, Vulcan, Lupeni, Uricani, Câmpu lu' Neag. These few abstract coordinates have behind them several layers of history and life, along which a few major lines of development of the region can be identified.

The region is mentioned in written accounts starting with the end of the XVth and the beginning of the XVIth century, as a weekly populated, woodland area. The human presence in the area intensified following the demographic and economic development of Ţara Haţegului, the neighbouring depression, with a softer relief than Jiu Valley. The expansion was encouraged by the awarding of property rights to local noble families by the king of Hungary, who at that time had Transylvania, including the Jiu Valley, under its administration (Baron, 1998:32). The population evolution generally followed an upward trend, and consisted of noble families and jeleri, landless peasants in Transylvania, who worked on the estates of nobility, but did not have the legal status of serfdom.

The securing of life necessities was done through pastoral and agricultural activities, the land providing a base for pastures, meadows and ploughings. Intensive agriculture could not be practiced in the area due to the irregular, rocky terrain and the mountain climate, but offered ample space for sheep herding, cattle breeding and plum orchards. The locals' diet was based on corn, potatoes, and beans, milk and cheese, and occasionally meat, and they lived in small, short, wood houses with shingles, fixed on steep slopes.

The mining activities started shaping up around the middle of the XIXth century, when the territory was under Austro-Hungarian influence. The Austrian Mining Law of 1854 placed the underground coal deposits under the principle "res nullius", which attributed mining rights to the person who discovered the deposits, perpetual and free of charge, and pushed people to associate. Coupled with the possibilities offered by the industrial revolution, the law attracted the attention of various investors from the empire, kick-starting the period of systematic extraction of coal. Starting with 1868, the newly constituted Austro-Hungarian Empire invested in Jiu Valley, its modernization efforts depending partially on coal. Hungarian, Polish, Czech and German workers, mostly man, recently freed from serfdom, were brought from all parts of the Empire to work, as the local population was both insufficient and refusing to change its lifestyle. The building of the worker colonies, the constant influx of people, the systematization of industrial units and the urbanization of the area rapidly changed the appearance of the landscape, mainly in the eastern side of the Valley.

At the census in 1870, shortly after the beginning of mining, the population count went up, but the majority was still composed of locals (around 80%). By the 1910 survey, not only the number of inhabitants increased rapidly, but the there was also a much more heterogeneous composition in terms of ethnicity, religion and occupations. For example, while the Romanian population was still in majority (45%), it was followed closely by Hungarians (42%).

The visible changes in the environment that came with the colonization of the region were accompanied by differences in the social dynamics. It is at this moment, of a massive influx of people, that the local population received the name of *momârlani*, initialy associated with the idea of backwardness and stuborness, which has survived to the present as the term designating the successors of the „indigenous" people, but not necessarly as a peiorative

word. Momârlanii, in turn, refered to the workers using the term *barabe* (people witouth a place), to suggest the uprooting properties of the process of colonization for the newcomers.

The evolution of Jiu Valley was also marked by the First World War, at the end of which, in the specific constelation of winners and losers, the terriory of Romania was united with Transylvania, Bucovina and Basarabia. The efforts of integrating the different provinces into a unified teritorry following the Big Union of 1918 included a series of minig law over the course of the next few years (1918-1926), that aimed at bringing the foreing mining enterprises into establishemnt swith romanian capital. Through this process, not only the foreign capital, but the number foreing inhabitans, especially Hungarians, decreased.

The mines were privately owned until the end of the Second World War when they were nationalized in 1948, in the process of centralization of the economy under the communist regime (1945-1989). The 1948 law of nationalization placed under state ownership all the resources above the ground and underground, and the all the private enterprises, having a double impact on the direction Jiu Valley developed from then on.

One the one hand, momârlanii were dispossessed of their lands, both of their personal parcels and the spreads of forest that have been in the common use of the communities since the abolition of serfdom at the middle of the XIXth century. Soon after, the surface mine from Câmpu lu' Neag was built, and the centre of the village disappeared in the excavation process. The compensations, in the locals' opinion, were far from satisfactory and the majority of the households moved further into the mountains, on irregular terrains that the families had, small pastures and meadows that were both hard accessible and of virtually no interest to the socialist regime. They grew crops and re-planted orchards, continued to breed animals and refused to get involved in the mining activities. In Uricani, and even more in Lupeni, the local population engaged in the mining activities, as they did not have the opportunity, or did not opt for the retreat to the mountains, but they still went every summer

to maintain the strips of land they had hidden in the mountains, to mow the grass and clean the debris so the land wouldn't be swallowed by wilderness.

On the other hand, the nationalization law that placed the private entreprises in the state's hands and allowed the country's communist rulers to embark on an intensive industrial growth program fuelled by coal combustion. The Jiu Valley expanded rapidly in the second half of the 20th century as the communist government imported tens of thousands of miners from around the country to meet the labor requirement for the demand created, accentuating the already existing cleavages between momârlani and barabe. The colonization also involved a sustained effort of systematization and urbanization, the demolition of houses and the construction of blocs of flats, schools, hospitals, local cinemas, etc.

Although the socialist process of urbanization was far from smooth, facing problems of resource shortage, lack of coordination and urban planning (Kotkin, 1995; Verdery, 1996), it nevertheless deepened the differences between miners and the local population. The population of the newly upgraded urban localities of the Valley now lived in blocks of flats, with current water, canalization, electricity and walked on paved roads, while momârlanii still lived in their run down, dark houses, depending on the light of day, the whims of the weather, walking around muddy and smelling of animals. In the process of construction of the new system, barabele were the forward looking one, who embraced the comfort of modernity, the embodiment of civilization and progress. Inferior in numbers since the alarming development of the industry a few thousands as opposed to the hundreds of thousands of miners at the peak of the activities, momârlanii were the ones left behind, holding onto their traditions, and who could not be shaken out of their bakcwardness.

Reflections on industrialization, the transformation of work, and the importance of skills

The growing differences between momârlani and barabe, their opposing ways of living were shaped through the historical process of transition to capitalism and the growth of the industry. The rise of large industrial units and the settlements built around them reorganized the process of work in society through separating work and social life, and re-arranging the process of production, dividing it in systematic, mechanic episodes that would be performed with the help of machines as much as possible. In his writing on capital, Marx (1967) argues that the progressively more complex division of labour is the driving force of change, as the more complicated it becomes, the alienation of man from its products, from himself/herself, from society and his/her natural state increases, reaching its peak under the capitalist system, where the fact that man produces not as an individual, but as a member of the society is obscured.

Being a historical materialist, Marx believes that man actively shapes and is shaped by the world he inhabits, but he is growing increasingly disconnected from it through the process of labor, his skills being reduced to the handling of the machines. While momârlanii continued to conduct their productive activities in connection with the current of their everyday lives, the miners were forced to adapt to an artificial pattern, which disengaged them from the social relations in the middle of which they have functioned previously. The inevitable opposition to this process is the birthplace of what Marx refered to as the worker's resistance to the commodification of their labor-power.

The disengagement is done with the aid of the clock and and technology (the machines). E. P. Thompson (1967), referring to rich empirical materials, looks at the generalization of the use of the clock at the time of the industrial growth and the importance of the synchronic forms of time and work discipline in facilitating the development of

industrial capitalism. The use of clock time spilled over from the work place into social life and replaced previous collective perceptions of time as 'time passed' to 'time spent', transforming people's attitudes towards time in the whole society.

In addition, through the spread of the machines, people's abilities, their crafts have also been transformed from the capacity to produce a whole object, from raw materials to the finite product, to that of repeatedly performing a single sequence of the process of production. For Marx, industrialization appears as the evolution from skill to technology.

Despite the very useful analytical tools the Marxist framework offers for understanding essential moments of the historical production and transformation of society, I believe it is lacking in providing a framework for the production and transformation of the people themselves. As laid out in the Capital, Marx believes that a mode of production is a mode of life, hence through the productive activities people produce themselves. When people are alienated in capitalism through the organization of work, they do not produce themselves anymore, but surplus for the capitalists. What is left is the re-production of the labor power of the worker at home, in the private sphere, through consumption. This point has been a building ground for Marxist feminist theories to think of the position of women in society during capitalism as housewives and mothers, and the spread of the nuclear family.

Thinking about the production of human beings in the terms of political economy, as Graeber[1] pointed out, is reductionist. Making the same argument, Ingold rethinks the idea of skills as central to both pre-capitalist and capitalist systems. To see activities as socially embedded is to see them as tasks. In spite of the functions of the clock and machines, meant to disengage activities, Ingold argues that they are re-appropriated by people in the process of

[1] Statement made in a discussion with David Harvey at the Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution Conference held at CUNY in April 2012, accessed May 18, 2012 http://pcp.gc.cuny.edu/rebel-cities-david-harvey-in-conversation-with-david-graeber/

production (2000:323). Strangleman (2007) and other scholars involved in the 'the end of work debate' are right to remark a fundamental change in the nature of work in capitalism, but the evolution work undergoes in capitalism is not one from skill to technology, it is one from one type of skill to another. Through working in the factories, people meet machines as part of their material environments, and engage with them in their daily activities, acting as skilled practitioners, developing skills of coping with machines. The relation between workers, tools and materials suffer a transformation, but continue nevertheless to exist. Working with machines is a productive activity, in the course of which people produce themselves as well, even if the workplace is "a profoundly uncomfortable place to be" (2000:332). This way, work is not separated from the domestic sphere, and it is placed back in the continuum of social life that people inhabit.

[2]Year of the census	Population
1733	~[3]400
1750	~900
1760-1762	~1500
1784-1787	4704
1818	2550
1870	12.671
1910	49.971

Table 1: Evolution of Jiu Valley's population over the first centuries of its evolution

[2] The census data is extracted from Baron, 1996

[3] As at that time, the conscriptions counted the number of families, an estimation was made based on the average number of family members of a family.

Methodology

The current thesis focuses on people's abilities to perform with regularity diverse tasks in the course of their lives, in the process of living, that are formative activities both at the individual and societal level. At the intersection between this and the very specific context of the transformations that have been taking place in the post-socialist space, I chose as my fieldwork three settlements from the Jiu Valley, Romania, the cities of Lupeni and Uricani, and the village of Câmpu lu Neag.

I use a qualitative approach to look at the changing patterns of activities since the restructuring of the mining sector in 1997, and the reconfiguration of tasks contributes to re-drawing moral lines and boundaries inside the local community.

As the topic has been on my mind, in various forms, for several years, the fieldwork has several stages. In the summer of 2010, the initial phase consisted in gathering of historic data and 3 non-structured interviews. In the spring of 2011, I continued to collect information about the area and conducted most of my interviews (11) using a semi-structured interview guide. It was constructed as a work history, but was loosely structured in order because of the very diverse nature of the informal activities in the area, that contained a few key themes: how the person came to live in the Jiu Valley, if she or he have been employed in the formal sector and on what position, if and in what circumstances they gave up their job, what are other working activities they conduct in order to support themselves and how these activities function in terms of people and resources involved. The spring of 2012 was a follow-up and clarification phase, that added 3 more semi-structured interviews.

To sum up, I gathered 17 recorded interviews, with 19 people, out of which 8 men and 11 women, with various occupational statuses: miners, unemployed former miners, unemployed people depending on social security most of their lives, retired persons on

sickness reasons, housewives, forest rangers, temporary migrants, people from the local administration, with ages ranging from 30 to 60 years old, all involved in a way or another in informal activities. Because all the people I talked to are involved in these activities that often border on illegal, although not criminal, I will use different names that would allow them to keep their anonymity.

Initially, the field was restricted to the administrative borders of Lupeni, but it extended as it became obvious that the web of movement of the people in their daily activities covered all three localities and while they accessed diverse resources, they shared a similar, interrelated experience of the environment, under analogous regimes of common property.

Scrap metal collection and the revalorization of the old mines

The revolution of 1989, the change of the political regime and economic direction, accompanied by transformations in labor productivity, the restructuring of the coal sector, and a shift toward natural gas, all contributed to a significant decrease in both production and consumption of coal in Romania. As a result, the Jiu Valley has been profoundly influenced by lack of re-investment, deteriorating infrastructure, environmental degradation, mine closures and massive layoffs.

After the 1989 revolution there were 15 active mines in the Jiu Valley. Seven of the mines (Dalja, Iscroni, Lonea-Pilier, Petrila-Sud, Câmpu lu Neag, Valea de Brazi and a part of Uricani,) have since been closed. The Valea de Brazi and Uricani mines were closed recently in 2004 and 2005, respectively. As of January 2006, the eight active mines are as follows: Petrila, Lonea, Livezeni, Paroseni, Vulcan, Aninoasa, Lupeni, and Bărbateni. From the beginning of 2011, the League of Miners' Unions from Jiu Valley is in negotiations for a merger with one of the two recently privatized electricity companies, Energetica. For the incorporation to happen, four other mines need to be market for closure in the next five years and another lay off is scheduled this year.

The mine closures were generally accompanied by large numbers of laid-off miners. From 179,000 miners in 1979, the peak of its activity, their number dropped to 40,000-50,000 mine workers (including both actual underground miners and auxiliary workers) in 1989. The number of mine workers in the Jiu Valley today is estimated by the National Bituminous Coal Company at aproximatively 8,000[4].

The first decade of postsocialism was marked by the worker strikes called mineriade, protest opposing the closure. In spite of the actions, the 'velvet revolution' meant to

[4] The numbers were provided by the Company as a response to my official request from April 2012.

reorganize the industry started in 1997, and the second decade of postsocialism was characterized by the spread of informal economic activities. After the closing of the mines, the government made an attempt to encourage investment in the area by a series of measures: designating the Jiu Valley as a disadvantaged area (1998), a status under which companies investing in the area would benefit from certain tax breaks and construction on the Campul lui Neag-Baile Herculane road through the mountains to encourage tourism. These measures, however, failed to transform the region. More than a decade later, the road is still under construction, and the government is considering lifting the disadvantaged status, as many believe its main effect was to create a local magnet for financial scams.

With mines being continuously downsized and closed, and with job opportunities shrinking to almost zero, the population, including some of the former miners turned to two types of informal economic activities hitherto associated mainly with the poor and with the Roma population. One is the collection of building materials, particularly iron, from abandoned buildings and mines, and selling them to collection centers in the area. In order to explore the subject, I will use the help of a few of my interviewees as guides, with an emphasis on how they experienced and navigated through life during the last decade.

In the previous section I discussed the implications of seeing every kind of work as a productive activity, as a skilled practice, as the way of living in the world of a person through which they continuously produce their own social identities. The empirical materials on the spread of scrap iron collection in the area will show how, through practice, people discover their surroundings, how they perceive them at the intersection of action and feeling.

Dorin and Claudiu are both former miners, both incidentally 43 years old, who chose to take the severance pay offered by the National Company of Bituminous Coal in the first round of restructuring, in 1997. Recalling the circumstances in which they made that

decision, they relate heated discussion in the locker room at the mines before and after work, as well as inside the families. Between rumors of total mine closure, technical unemployment, the possibility to be rehired a year or two later and the business possibilities opened by the large sum of money that was to be awarded, nothing remained undebated. When they made the choice to leave their job, they did not know what to expect.

For the first year after the 1997 major layoff, both the former miners and the rest of the Jiu Valley population remained confused about the legal details of the compensatory salaries and the future work opportunities. As the year and the severance pay run out, it became clearer that, general closure or not, the people laid off would not be re-hired and that they would have to search for alternative means of sustaining their lives and those of their families.

Because mining activities have a strong gender character, the workers descending into the underground being generally men capable of sustaining a constant rhythm of straining physical activities, during the century and a half of industrialization, even if women were also employed, men were generally the main providers of livelihood. In the same spirit, Dorin and Claudiu, as well as other recently unemployed men were the first ones to feel of the pressure of "putting food on the table" and the first to search for alternatives. The jobs that were available were offered by private entrepreneurs, in small production firms with wood related activities and in tourism, generally with minimum wage. Most of the unemployed, however, found them degraded and unworthy. The frustrations accumulated by these people, the debts, and the fear of the employed miners of losing their jobs boiled over in the mineriads of January and February 1999, in the last massive worker mobilizations after 1989, that in the end, did not bring substantial changes for the Valley.

With the restructuring that was taking place, one of the first alternatives came in the form of empty building of the former mines and their adjacent structures. Programmed to go through a phase of ecologization, the premises that needed to cleared and the buildings that needed to be razed, while waiting for the National Coal Company to obtain the authorization and auction the right to a qualified company, became the focus of attention for a part of the unemployed local population. Taking their cues from the local gypsy population, who's lifestyle, by choice or constrained by poverty and marginalization, included participation in a mostly underground economy of used iron, the former miners returned to their former workplaces to engage with them, this time in a different way.

This was the context in which Dorin and Claudiu came together: living in the same neighborhood and being both unemployed, met in the evening at the benches in front of the block of flats, where their ethnic Roma neighbors were also meeting, and among other topics, the subject of iron collection came up. Considering they already knew the locations, they accompanied their neighbors for a few sessions of iron collection. After they learned the places of the iron collection centers, how they can avoid the police and what to say if they got in trouble, they decided to be each other' main team and to this on their own.

When they first started these activities, in the late 90s, early 2000, they were generally done after nightfall, in order for the dark to hide them when they jumped the fences of the enterprises and collected equipment left behind. As these activities continued, collection centers promptly popped up next to the former mines. Although the law explicitly prohibits the establishment of such a center closer than 500 m from a collection site, they temporarily took residence in the close vicinity of the buildings, in order to accommodate the needs of the people better. Slowly, as a part of the population was involved in these activities, previously associated with the lazy poor or the Roma population, they became a common occurrence, and the stigma and shame associated with them was lifted. Dorin and Claudiu, as well as all

the people I talk to begin to see themselves as making an honest living out of things that no one used anyway, and would only sit and decay on their own, especially when no other alternative existed.

Working on extracting iron was something a lot of people did at least one or twice to ensure their living or add to their income. As most everyone directly experienced it or was close to someone who practiced this, it transformed people's perspective on these activities. Even though they were mostly illegal, a part of Jiu Valley did not experience it as such. For them, instead, it was the basic activity they were conducting virtually daily, the dismantling of buildings their own way of moving and acting in the environment that structured their understanding of the world. The rules left from when the industry was in bloom became empty, dry words that lost their meaning.

To illustrate this point, Claudiu described the process of detaching metal girders from a tower of the former viscose factory. Viscose is a material obtained from wood pulp that needs chemical treatment, resulting in large amounts of carbon disulfide and other by-products of the process, which were dumped in the air through a 200 m tower, placed more or less in the center of the town.

> "It was me who took the girders down from that tower […] Yeah, I climbed to the top and there were…four pieces. A piece like that had around 280 kilos. Those big rails. And one of them fell and got stuck into the ground. […] It had like 6 meters, one of those. […] From the top of the tower, 200 and something. When you would set them loose, when they were falling down, from up there, it sounded like the engine from a plane." (Claudiu, 43, unemployed, former miner).

These activities were far from invisible or unnoticeable, but as both the people I interviewed and the local authorities from Lupeni stated, they were generally not only tolerated, but accepted. The local or national authorities, the ones who are usually in the position of re-enforcing the formal rules, were unable to come up with alternative jobs for the

multitude of people without a stable workplace or income. The general opinion of all the people I discussed with is that the collection activities were advantageous for most of the individuals involved. People could make a living out of this, the local iron business flourished, the National Company of Bituminous Coal signed contracts for ecologization with firms that did not have to do all the work. During my fieldwork, I came over many stories about the local police, the authorities and the collection centers as being in on the same business, while the people collecting being the small fry, working alongside the ecologization companies for a few bricks and pieces of iron. The worst that happened at that point was the police confiscating the day's labor.

For up to five-six years, between 1998-2003, Dorin and Claudiu were mainly occupied in this area. Dorin, in an attempt to make me understand the differences between his life as a miner and his life after he left the formal job, draw a parallel between his life rhythms and the ones of the people still working in the mines. While the miners woke up at 4-5 am in the morning, took the institution's bus and prepared their tools to go in the ground, men previously employed at the mines woke up at the same hours, took their strollers and sledgehammers, and set out on foot, generally in groups of two or three, to the disaffected sites. While the miners descended into the dark, the iron collectors arrived at their destination as the sun was lighting the surroundings. By the time the miners finished their shift and gathered in the cafeteria, the iron collectors had the lunch break. When the miners were out of the gates of the factory and back in the city, their former colleagues started the second round of collection until late in the evening, when natural light was gone. The day was not done for them until they hauled and pushed the strollers with the day's work, through the gates of the collection center. This routine went on from Monday to Friday/Saturday for the miners, while for their former mates, it was a rather irregular rhythm, set in accordance with the weather,

the money necessities, the state of physical health and the existence of other activities. That could mean a full week, or only a few days.

After the initial clearing of the remaining tools and equipment, and the dismantling of the roof, collecting iron implied extracting it from the resistance structures of the building. Claudiu describes how him, together with Dorin and maybe a friend or two, worked on the pillars of the building: they would hit the base of the pillar with the sledgehammer from all sides until it would collapse, and then work around it until it was broken into tiny pieces that would allow them to pull the bars of steel or iron from the reinforced concrete. Working on this would usually take them the whole day. This type of work is, of course, posing a certain amount of danger for the people conducting it, especially without any specialized equipment. It was also a straining activity that puts pressure on the body, which in the absence of any social security, leaves the person exposed to disease and with few solutions of treatment.

Initially, this kind of work strongly segregated on gender lines, or rather reproduced the already existing divides. The men, previously trained by the hardships of work in the underground, were still the ones whose physical work was the main source of income. In order to add to that, starting with the spring and continuing in the summer and autumn, women would venture at the edges of the forest, and pick mushrooms and nettles for food. This used to be a "worker weekend routine", as Mirela, a 42 years old woman, working at a second hand clothes deposit described. At the time her husband was working at the mine, at the beginning of the 90's, when the warm wheatear was in full swing, from the beginning of spring and into late summer, the miners' families would go out at the age of the forest to barbeque on holidays and odd weekends. After the meal, men usually gathered to talk, and women took a walk, venturing in the forest and picking mushrooms, nettle, ramsons or other greens they could use in the kitchen. In the new context of generalized poverty generated by the restructuring of the mining systems, while women continued to stay at home, cook the

meals and take care of the house, they begun making trips to the surrounding forests for supplies.

When, after five-six years (around 2002-2003), the big iron sources were exhausted, the buildings of the former socialist enterprises were raised to the ground, there was also a shift in the dynamic of the activities. Even if men were away the whole day, the activities mostly consisted of walking around searching through piles of rubble and scratching at the surface of the earth for buried pieces. The quantities of iron they could find were not so large anymore, and definitely not in one piece, so the financial reward was not as high anymore. Adding to that the fact that the nature of the physical work was not so strenuous anymore, women were pushed into and at the same time allowed to join in the effort. Adriana, an unemployed 34 years old woman, between the hours of community work she has to do, goes on the river of the Jiu river to dig up pieces of metal and has been doing the same thing for years. Both Claudiu and Dorin were sometimes accompanied by their respective wives. Towards the end of the iron collection period, there have been not only changes in patterns of practice, but also in the relations between people.

The link between changes in practice, triggered by the shifts in the national and international arena, and the meaning of these changes to the people who experience them have already been explicitly explored by scholars such as Borocz (2000) Rasanayagam (2003) and Ries (2002), who are concerned with informal economy, going beyond distinctions of primary/secondary economy, legal/illegal, formal/informal.

Böröcz argues that informality is a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in Central and Eastern Europe, drawing a line from pre-industrial to post-socialist Hungary regarding the importance of informal arrangements. Ries, on the contrary, sees the socialist order as a rupture, as a sudden yet all the more powerful emergence. She looks at how the dominant

mode of "doing things" in post-socialist Russia gradually acquires a stabilizing function in the near total absence of functioning formal modes of economic action. Informality for Rasanayagam is more hybrid, formal and informal arrangements often overlapping and their performance facing varying moral judgments depending on the sphere which they take place (community, market, or state). Rasanayagam emphasizes the differentiation of the social order that materialized in the emergence of distinct spheres with their distinct logics.

The studies draw attention to the changing moral attitudes towards informal or "criminal" arrangements in the social life in the post-socialist world. Just as property becomes "fuzzy" (Verdery, 1999), the moral compass of the citizens living in post-socialist countries seems to become confused as well. Informal and criminal practices are evaluated not according to one coherent moral framework but rather in an ad-hoc manner. If corruption serves the family (communal sphere), it is sanctioned positively, if it serves merely the individual's enrichment (market sphere) it is considered morally despicable. The legitimacy of economic action cannot be grasped by means of a simple ontological distinction between first and second economy. If we look only at these we will see that people have 'contradictory moral criteria'. However, as the accounts shows, there are certain rules to informality, the distinctions coming from the communities in which they take place and the particular regime of value they are ruled by (state, market, or communal).

If we look at the informal economic activities from Jiu Valley in a way that goes beyond the self-enforcing logic of corruption, the acceptance of the local population can be interpreted in this light. People collecting scrap metal to make a living in the lack of other alternatives are accepted as doing legitimate activities because their actions are judged in according to the criteria of the communal sphere, serving the family. Stepping out of that, the owners of the collection centres are harshly judged as making profit on other people's backs, the logic of the market applied to them. The local authorities are caught between the

impossibility of offering social security and defending the law, but they also consider the activities legitimate as long as the collection of materials resumes to the space of the former enterprises and doesn't cross over to private possessions of individuals.

The fuzziness of the moral compass, I argue, is the consequence of the 'fuzzy' link the authors draw between practice and morality. The different moral communities emerge as effect of the changing of practices, but in the mentioned accounts, but it not clear how by performing different activities, imaginaries about the world are re-signified, how they are filled with meaning and appropriated by people.

In order to create a clearer connection between practice and the changing of meaning, Ingold argues we need a way of thinking about life as an emergent process from people's involvement within the lifeworld, that he calls the dwelling perspective. Using this perspective, we can look at the world as "continually coming into being around the inhabitants and its manifold constituents through their incorporation into a regular pattern of live activity" (2000:156). Later, Ingold rectifies the name to the habitation perspective, as he finds dwelling has a connotation of localism that he does not want associated with his ideas based in movements.

As it was been discussed before, for Ingold every kind of work is a skilled practice, and doing a task is performing a certain skill. Skills are developed through the patterning of practical activity, based in movement. When we move through the world, our attention attuned to it, we perceive it with our sense of sight, smell, hearing, touch. At the level of the organism-person, that is mind, body, and culture, the perception of the environment through the senses and movement come together through feeling (2011:60). We experience the environment by feeling it when we move through it, and because all these movements are practical activities, that are intrinsically productive: we produce ourselves and the world around us in the process.

When we have a situation of large groups of people engaging in the environment in similar ways, the result is a shared experience and understanding of the world. The transformation of the local community's imaginary of people who collect and make a living out of scrap materials in Jiu Valley from low lives and thieves to people who make an honest living takes place through this kind of process of re-signification. The shame dissipated and the new value emerges in the context of the very pragmatic engagement with the mostly abandoned spaces of the former mine buildings. The buildings themselves were reincorporated in a web of relations, in a web of movement and they transitioned from the enterprises owned by the state, from the former workplaces to the current focus of attention; they were re-appropriated into the space of the life world as belonging to the collectors because they were the ones that took care of them. The scrap metal 'harvesters' were the ones who contributed to the ecologization of the space in a more grounded way then the companies employed by the National Company of Bituminous coal. The way the people involved have been seeing their activities is as effort of working with the tools that the environments provides them, as opposed to the formal ecologization companies, which they catalogue as working against the mines, as in the process of demolishing building, they see no value or meaning coming out of the mechanical activity simply razing them to the ground.

Forest related activities and the new perception of the environment

After having explored the ideas of work as the fundamental way of moving in the word, of living, and the way in which this movement, through our bodies, with the aid of our senses, shape our perception of the environment, our ideas about the world and ourselves, in this section I will focus on the complex intertwining of human and non-human entities in the environment.

When the scrap metal reserve thinned to almost nothing, around 2003-2004, more and more people engaged in gathering forest fruits, mushrooms, flowers and trees, which became the only constant source of income to turn to during this last decade.

As men moved into forest related activities, there was also a tendency to re-stress their role as a family heads, as they had the physical strength to carry more resources on their back through the mountain paths, an embodied accumulation of their history of soliciting physical activities, and therefore deliver a larger amount of goods at the collection centers, in exchange for a bigger sums of money. The interviews point toward 2004 as the time around which the foraging activities increase in scale.

The intricate mesh of movement begins early in the spring, as soon as snow melts in March, in the forests at the feet of the mountains, and continues to go up the hills and finally in the mountains, to the alpine heights in late summer, to then descend to the forests again with the arrival of autumn. I will use the help of my discussion partners again to describe these activities. My main guide will be Paul, a 53 year old man still working at one of the mines, one of the local people, momârlani from Câmpu lu Neag. He used to be a shepherd when he was a boy and although his adulthood was marked by the employment in the mine, he still goes virtually every weekend on a trip to the mountains. From Monday to Friday he goes to work at the mine, Saturday he and his family are going to Câmpu lu Neag, where his

mother lives, to work in the garden and at the crops, and spends his Sundays walking the mountains. When talking about the commercialization aspect of these activities, Catalina, a 57 years old woman, widow of a miner, will be especially valuable due to her experience of involvement in selling forest harvests for over a decade.

Paul's first focus of the year is the blooming of flowers freshly popping their head above the snow, that he mainly goes to see and brings a few home for his family to mark the arrival of spring. At the same time, the city is invaded by various people selling snowdrops, crocuses, heath dog-violets, cowslips and lady's delight, in small bunches, especially in the close vicinity of March 1 (Spring day) and March 8 (Women's Day).

Immediately after that, the ramsons, mushrooms, and nettle grow, which constitute a good addition to the spring menu of most families. Paul picks the ramsons to use at home and to give it to neighbors who helped him with different occasions. Catalina collects large quantities of ramsons, as it is light and easy to carry and sells it on the street, or at the market in Petroșani, which is the largest in Jiu Valley and offers a larger base of customers. Although it is illegal to do that without a permit, she has been doing this for up to ten years now and has learned how to dodge the police of talk her way out of trouble.

In an attempt to accommodate the large number of people selling at street corners, the mayor's offices from Jiu Valley offer a few tables at the local market for free to people selling forest fruits. Catalina and other people who try to commercialize their collected goods consider that not only the fruits, but all the good that come from the forest are falling under these regulations. When the tax collectors come in the morning, all the people who are there contribute with a symbolic amount in order to be left in peace for the rest of the day.

In the passage from the spring greens to the mushroom season, the Palm Sunday, a mobile holyday usually taking place in April, marking the beginning of the Easter cycle for

the orthodox majority, aligns on the pavement bunches of catkins accompanied by their respective sellers. The branches are used to adorn icons, windows, and doors are very easy accessible at the edge of the forest and on the sides of the roads, etc.

As April ends and May begins, the "mountain season" if officially opened. Every morning, from 6 to around 9, people with baskets are waiting for the hourly buses going to Câmpu lu Neag, to criss-cross the hills and valleys in search of different kinds of mushrooms. The ones who can afford it, team up with someone who has a car to take them as close to the forest as possible and split the gas money. The preferred fungi during this season are the parasol mushrooms, chanterelle, bare-toothed Russula and the ones from the coral family, which are all very sensitive and break easily. In order to keep them intact, the regular collectors have cylindrical, loosely weaved wicker baskets, that they either shove in a knapsack or attach belts to and then carry on their backs through the woods. With the descending of the night, the mushroom collectors make the trip back to the Câmpu lu Neag village to take the bus. During the socialist period and for over a decade after 1989, the buses were regular sized transit cars that momârlanii use to take, going into the cities of Jiu Valley to sell milk at the markets or deliver it to peoples' houses. The buses were distinguishable from a distance, usually dusted from use, and were avoided by the urban population, considered to be smelling of cow manure from the peasants that were momârlani.

As the surface mine from Câmp closed in the first round, in 1997, and a large part of momârlani received significant amounts of money from the common property they have over a part of the land in the area- a specific context that I will discuss in the following chapter – and the flow of people decreased, the buses were replaced sometime in the first half of the 2000s with minibuses. However, in light of the new developments, the space of a minibus is insufficient in early mornings going to and returning in the evening from Câmpu lu Neag. Despite the crowdedness and close quarters, especially after a day's work, the atmosphere of

embarrassment sometimes present before has now disappeared. There is also a change in the behaviour of the drivers, who generally do not hesitate or crinkle their nose anymore when allowing passengers with boots full of dirt to get in. This attitude was influenced, on one hand by the frequency with which the drivers come in contact with people coming back from work, and on the other, by the lack of a separation between the drivers and the travellers in the small space of the car that creates the opportunity for engagements in conversation. In the mornings, during the 40 minutes, respectively 30 minutes it takes to arrive to Câmpu lu Neag from Lupeni, respectively Uricani, lively discussions on the best spots, the best routes, the price rates at different collection centres, one's health and just as important – gossip, fly across the chairs and between the rows.

The discussions are much more subdued in the evening, when people come back tired. This is especially true when in late summer the forest fruits began to ripen the weight of them pulls at peoples' backs. In late July, early August, the raspberry fruits are ready for harvest, and collectors focus on the more widespread kind, with the pink-red fruit, but also gather the blackberries, or even of the less common golden raspberries. For that, the equipment usually consists of a plastic bucket, with a lid if possible, shoved in a knapsack, and a plastic or metal mug, or even a plastic bottle cut in half, tied through its bail or around the mouth with a piece of cloth or old shoelaces to a person's middle. Because raspberries are woody, perennial plants, and the bushes can grow quite tall, people need to have both their hands free to pull towards them and hold the stem, while they harvest with the other hand. Raspberries are also very sensitive fruits, and need to be either commercialized or processed very fast. This is the reason why, in the past, before the widespread collection of the last decade, when the harvest was usually done my women from the area (momârlance), they would only go and harvest if they used them in their own household or by request. The women who used to do this were generally older, unemployed, as it is the case with a big part of the people from the village,

sometimes widows, who in the break between planting crops and harvesting them, in late summer, would have time to make the trips to the places they already knew too well and pick the raspberry fruits one by one.

The places where raspberries grow are easy to identify and relatively easily accessible, even for the people with no previous knowledge of the activity whatsoever. That is not the case, however, with the blueberries and cranberries. They grow at high altitudes, on certain mountains that are not very rocky, but not very accessible either, so that the flocks of sheep don't eat the bushes in the summer. They do grow, of course at lower altitudes and plainer hills, but not as abundant as in the mountains. For the people who are not familiar with the spots, walking randomly on the mountains is both energy consuming, time consuming and potentially dangerous. In spite of this, the way in which people have learned about them has been mostly thought their own experience. Momârlanii are perceived by the barabe as having two defining characteristics: stubbornness and avarice. The barabe had to mostly learn on their own what for the momârlani was common knowledge due to their previous history of involvement with the mountains and the fact that their existence included constant interaction with them. The momârlani may have or may have not refused to share the knowledge about the mountains with the rest of the people, but that type of knowledge is a very practical one. Siting on the cliff of a mountain and looking in front of you with someone pointing out and naming the peaks in the horizon does almost nothing in the way of learning about the specificities of the landscape. As soon as one changes her/his location, and walks to the next mountain top, the whole scenery is different. The peaks have different shapes, and even if they are recognizable, actually walking through all the hills and valleys to get to the top can be a completely different experience than expected if one doesn't have the experience of what are the walkable paths, what is the energy consumption in going on very steep slopes, how easy it is go get lost through mountain pines, etc and generally what are the

physical limits of one's body capacities when interacting with all the elements that make up the mountain scenery.

Paul has learned most of this in his years of walking with sheep. The herds usually have 2-3 rams with bells that signal the location of the ovine population, even when stray from their shepherd. Easily distracted, Paul ended up often with no sheep in sight with any audio signal of their presence, and had to take on valley and hills one after another to find them. Dorin and Claudiu both learned initially while working on collecting mushrooms. As more and more people got involved into these activities, in the early 2000's, it was increasingly hard to find any mushrooms on the beaten path and they were forced to explore the forest more in depth. As they began learning it on their own, they were more confident in their abilities to manage on the mountains. Pushed by the need to ensure the material base of their survival, both of them ventured further and explored the landscape until they stumbled upon the places where the blueberry bushes grow. This was also the story of most of the people I talked to, all of the ones who got into these activities during the last decade doing so through their own process of interaction, guided maybe by rumours and scrapes of information about the "promised land" full of blue fruits.

The process of harvesting blueberries itself is not complicated; it requires a recipient and a myrtille comb, which can be easily put together with a few wood planks and nails. The fruits are easy to gather with that, and they do not require special knowledge. However, Paul takes pride in his ability to avoid collecting twigs and small leaves when combing the blueberry bush, and considers that a reflection of his long life experience with the environment. The hardest part with the blueberry collection is carrying the fruits around when the recipients start getting full, and then down the mountain to the car or bus. Around 2004-2005, when such activities were spreading but haven't reached their peak yet, and people were consolidating their knowledge, the ones who knew the wildest locations, and had access

to a car could gather impressive amounts in one day. It first began with a 10 kilos plastic bucket, when they were still exploring and learning the landscape, upgraded to 20 kilos when they knew exactly where to go, and then even went as far as to carry 60 kilos plastic barrels, plant it in the middle of the harvesting site and fill it during the day, and between 2 or 3 of them, carry it back to the car. If they went alone, they learned to use a thin log on their shoulders to balance buckets on both ends.

As it was the case before, with the iron activities, the activities drew a line between men and women and segregated the community once more. Trained from the mines and/or years of iron collection, the men's capacities were more developed in handling the sustained effort of climbing a mountain and the weight of lifting and carrying things on their backs. Women were generally at home, picking with the children the twigs and leaves from the blueberries, as they have to be clean of any impurities before they are sold to the collection canters. During late summer it is not uncommon to see women sitting on the benches in front of the blocks of flats, with piles of blueberries in front of them, sorting as they discuss with their neighbours.

That changed around two years later, towards 2006-2007, when most people knew where to go to harvest blueberries, and the large number of people made it impossible to gather the same amounts as before. Increasingly during the next period, the trips were made with the whole family, including the children, so as when the blueberries ripen, there where as many hands as possible harvesting in the first two weeks of the season. The sorting was also sometimes done together by the family, especially if they were back in the village before dusk, settled on the grass in front of the collection centres, with the fruits spread on pieces of cloth.

At around the same time of the peak of forest related activities, in 2007, Romania joined the European Union, which opened the way for circulation of people inside the union.

Temporary migration became a strategy for many people across the country, including the ones in Jiu Valley. As many positions were available in the domestic areas, such as cleaning, cooking, and assisting elderly people, activities historically falling in the area of women skills, the position of the bread provider became a shared one between men and women. In the periods of low forest activities, during the winter or in the summer before the forest fruits were ready for harvest, women would try to migrate temporarily and work over the boarders, especially in Spain, Italy, France, in housekeeping (women) or construction (men). In most situation, when abroad, the migrants felt alienated and a part of them tried to find solutions that would allow them to remain in the Valley most of the year. Dorin brought a set of chisels and taught himself how to carve in wood. In the dead periods, he carves wood panoplies in the shape of deer, pine trees and cones and sells them to whomever is interested. Paul cuts hollows from trees and uses them as frames for flower arrangements made out of pressed plants he had collected over the year and sells them at the local art gallery. Claudiu collects frog legs for the local restaurants or weaves mortuary wreaths for a local flower shop in his free time. Traian, a 47 years old former miner, who migrated in the early 2000s for work a few months, bought digital equipment with the earned money and documents social events such as wedding and anniversaries to supplement his current income and be able to stay at home. Lucia and Mariana, two women in their 50s, with illness pensions, help some local momârlani in the harvest season for extra money.

The activities of the local population involved in forest harvests have diversified greatly after the exhaustion of the scrap metal sources. Looking at how they are organized temporarily allows a clearer reflection on the intricate mesh of movement resulting from the history of involvement of both human and non-human entities in the environment. The temporality of the abandoned mine building might be harder to pinpoint, but the temporality of the mountain landscape is easier to identify and aids us in seeing how “the practitioner’s

movements are continually and subtly responsive to the ever changing conditions of the task as it proceeds" (Ingold, 2011:59). The rhythms of people's lives emerge from the way they inhabit their environments, as a combination of both the rhythms of the mountain environment a when they engage in harvesting and rhythms of other productive activities they involve in, in the web of relations in which they move constantly.

It is not simply a matter of the "rhythms of nature, but a rhythmicity of the local community/environment […] the rhythmic structure of social time emerges not only from the interweaving and mutual responsiveness of human movements, but also from the way these movements resonate to the cycles of the non-human environment". (2000:325). The taskscape that result from the "continuous engagement with the field of practice" are dynamic couplings of movement (2011:60).

Looking at Jiu Valley though the lenses provided by this framework offers a different picture than that described by Kideckel (2008) in his recent book on the region.

He is concerned with the nature of postsocialist life and labor, "how it is understood and expressed by workers, and how such expressions influence workers' conceptions of their physical selves and their consequent ability to act in the world on their own behalf" (6). In a Foucauldian line, he argues that worker agency is frustrated by narrative and embodied alienation.

Kideckel is right in believing that workers and the former workers embody their past, and that practices and the narratives around them carry layers of meaning that shape the selves of the workers, but the way he thinks about people, as flat, almost non-responsive actors who only incorporate the degradation around them does not do justice to the creativity of human action. The re-telling of stories, of narratives, is not done in a social and material void by puppets lined up on a string. Instead, it takes place through practice, through the concrete immersion in the world of a person, her/his involvement with the human and non-

human elements in the environment. It takes place through a very concrete context of possibilities of action and perception in which the person does not simply memorizes a story, but lives it, and the meaning is not a ready-made one, but emerges from its groundedness in the present stream of social life.

Debates on ownership and entitlement: use (and abuse) of common pool resources

Compossesorates in the Jiu Valley region

The informal activities that developed in the late 90's, early 2000's in the Jiu Valley were, as described in the previous sections, centred on scarp iron collection and begun at a moment when there was a generalized state of confusion in regards to the future development of the region. That included not only uncertainties about the direction of the mining activities, but was also close enough to the regime change in 1989 that the property rights over the land in the area have yet to be clarified. The Romanian government had already made efforts in the direction of reconstituting the right of property over agricultural and forest land through two laws, in 1991 and 1997, but it was in 2000 that a new law (1/2000) was issued that also referred to forms of common property and that decisively influenced the community of Jiu Valley over the following years.

In the Jiu Valley, the form of common property that existed before the nationalization of 1948 were the compossesorates (composesorate), associative forms of ownership over forests and pastures. These forms of common property became legal entities soon after the Romanian revolution of 1848 from Transylvania, when the local nobles were bounded by the law to open up their properties and offer a portion of their lands to the former serfs, who were constrained to use it in common. The properties thus constituted were translated into legislation later, in 1871, and written down in the Land Registry. The law stipulated that each former serf had a piece of land, bigger or smaller, proportional with the compensation each was able to pay to the land lords when acquiring the terrain, but the land was to be exploited only with the approval of the compossesorate's administrative commission. The property rights were transmitted through the family, to the legal successors. This situation was

confirmed as valid form of property in the text of the Agrarian Reform of 1921 and continued to exist as such until 1948.

The law of 2000 created the framework for retrieving the property rights over common lands, and later the law of 2005 (247/2005) offered the juridical procedures necessary for the restitution of land. The process of reconstituting the composesorates necessitated that each member would bring in the property papers that attested their membership. However, that was a long and complicated process, as some people still had them, others have lost them in the demolishing of the buildings or small natural disaster such as floodings or fires, while others never remembered having them. One of the signs people used on ground level to identify the parcels that had belonged to them or their predecessors were graves. As Câmpu lu Neag was a mountain village, with large distances between houses after its centre has been demolished in 1950's, there was no real cemetery, and people buried their family members in their own gardens. While this was not registered in any way in official papers, it was a point of departure for people when they began re-organising their common ownership.

After they came together, a few of them took responsibility in organizing the legal procedures for each compossesorate with a lawyer, putting together the files needed for the request. Missing property papers were recuperated partly from the national archives, if the predecessors have been mentioned in the official record prepared at the time of the Agrarian Reform of 1921, or if they dated from the middle of the XIXth century, from archived kept in Vienna, the land registries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In Jiu Valley, the compossesorates were recuperated around 2007 are as detailed in table 2. They were organized as before, and consisted of compossesoral members, governed through a general assembly of all the members, with an elected Board of Directors to take care of the administrative issues, usually remunerated for their work. As stipulated by the

law, the property of compossesorates can only be sold to another member, and if the association ever dissolves, the terrains go the local town council. Revenues are made from wood auctions, fees paid by shepherds for animal grazing, or other activities that each compossesorate decided upon as a group. Another source of constant income is the Agency for Payment and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA), a governmental agency allocating funds for the maintenance of pastures and meadows if the members chose to do that themselves instead of contracting the Departments of the Forestry Agency Romsilva. In disadvantaged area such as Jiu Valley, the sum allocated per ha is higher than in other regions. The incomes are divided between members based on the share of the land they own.

Compossesorate	Câmpu lu Neag	Câmpu lu Neag
	Peştişani Community (Obştea Peştişani)	
	Coarnele	Uricani
	Dealu Mare	
	Lupeni-Straja	Lupeni
	Lupeni-Zănoaga-Pasul Vâlcan	

Table 2: The Compossesorates in Jiu Valley

Barabe versus momârlani: How to do things right and how to do the right thing

By the time the compossesorate situation became clear, after 2007, the forest harvests were reaching their peak. The former miners and unemployed people that had no connection with the mountains before had already gained knowledge of the forests, of the areas and periods in which the forest fruits grew, about the locations and weather favorable for the growth of mushrooms, the cycles of flowers and herbs and the movements of animals thought the forest. By now, they knew how to navigate through the environment and they had learned that mostly on their own, by walking on foot on beaten paths and beyond them, by paying attention to the sounds, smells and sights around them. In this process, people became literally grounded in their environments and aware of their surrounding in unprecedented ways.

Paul remarked the changes in Dorin's and Claudiu's attitudes after a decade of being involved in these activities. When they began gathering resources from the mountains, Dorin and Claudiu would leave metal cans lying around after their meals, or be careless with the places they slept in.

> "They were like the ones who would visit a cave and on their way out would knock over a few stalactites and stalagmites, just for fun. Those things took hundreds of years to grow. Now, if we sleep in a hut, they clean it up before we leave and take the garbage that doesn't burn with them." (Paul, 54, miner)

The knowledge, the stories about how things should be done are simple and easy to access. The fact that a lot of materials like plastic, metal and so on pollute the environment is something that, in a way or another, through media, books or conversations, reaches most people. However, it is through practice that it truly attains meaning for people. Meditating on the process of acquiring skills, Ingold explains that stories from the past are not static, closed traditions, but are re-constructed each time, "movement by movement", in the present, through practice. The stories as not incorporated by the listeners as such at the moment they are told, but rather are discovered retrospectively, when the listener is faced with circumstances similar to the ones in the narrative, and used as guidance when they are involved in the performance of a task (Ingold, 2011:56). Through their activities, the people involved in the informal economy in the region have "picked up strands of old practice and carried them forward in a current context" (57). This is very much similar to how Burawoy and Verdery (1999) talk about unintended consequences of the revival of old practices used in an innovative way in the present. However, the essential difference between the tools that each framework offers is the way in which we think about the creativity of work. For Burawoy and Verdery, the creativity of people in their everyday life is something that comes as a surprise, as an "unintended" effect. As opposed to this, for Ingold it is a fundamental characteristic of people, regardless of the type of work they perform; it is intrinsic to living,

people having by default the capacity to act and improvise at any moment they engage with the world.

While the harvesters have recuperated the stories through their own experience of the environment, have revalued them and gave meaning to the elements surrounding them, the former owners, recently reinstated in their right, have in part lost them. From 1948 to 2007, many of the initial co-owners of the compossesorates have passed their right to their successors, most of whom did not have the experience of administering the land themselves. Moreover, a good part of them had found other ways of making a living, generally involving the mines. When they got the land back, most compossesorates made efforts to obtain income from them. The Campu lu Neag compossesorate sold wood exploitation right for two whole mountains slopes, resulting in the instant enrichment of its members. Families who used the money to come back to the centre of the village, where the surface mines has been closed, and built two story houses, cement lined stables, brought cars and apartments in the cities of Lupeni or Uricani for their children. The stories about how to interact with the mountains are not lost, as the change of lifestyle is recent and is only true for a part of momârlani, who were members of that specific compossesorate. However, these is a tendency of not re-discovering the stories on the part of the momarlani, the now rightful owners of the land and traditionally the storytellers, while there is a tendency of re-discovery among the barabe, the landless who now feel the mountains are part of their lives and perceives themselves as entitled to have access.

Paul underlined the tensions that appears in this situation: formally, the lands surrounding the settlements are compossesorates, in the common possession of an association of people, perceived as such by momârlani, while informally, they are used as communal lands, seen and used accordingly by the barabe. This contradiction underlies two different meaning people attribute to the idea of private property. On one hand, private (common)

property for momârlani is not only a formal right guarded by the law, but also the restoration of the injustice that has been done to their families. As long as most members of compossesorates do not get involved in a practical way in the environment, owning remains a formal right. On the other hand, for barabe, there is obviously no formal right of ownership. However, they believe they own it and have the right to access it, or in other words they are entitled to use it through the fact that the forests and al they bear are involved in their lives as much as they are involved in the environment. In Paul's words, to own it should also mean to value it, to treat it as a precious possession.

> "It will take a lot of time until people will learn to take care of the surrounding environment and nature. There will be though years and it will take a lot of time until people will realize they need to take care of certain things. This is learned in time, it cannot be imposed. People have to see for themselves that it is like this and this is the way things need to be done, even if you try, it is not accepted. Everyone lived after the revolution with the idea that there's freedom, democracy, everyone can do whatever they want. But it isn't like that… democracy… it is even stricter than… […] These are thing you learn in time…it takes time." (Paul, 54, miner)

Time is, in many ways, essential, as it is intrinsic to the performance of a task. It takes time for people couple their acts, their movements in the environment with the way they feel it through sound, smell, sight, or in other words to perceive it and be aware of it. In the process, the temporality of people's lives becomes embedded in the temporality of the landscape. When this happens, there is a good chance that people will know how to use the resources of the environment and not abuse them.

At this point, in Jiu Valley, the situation is not clear cut. Some of the momârlani are in a process of disembedding from the mountain environment (and embedding in mining environment or business environment etc). Some of the barabe are on their way of being fully embedded in their material surrounding. How this situation will affect the state of the common pool resources of the mountains is unclear at this moment, but the case of Jiu Valley

speaks directly to debates on commons that are taking place both in the academia and at ground level, in various locations around the world.

Gareth Hardin wrote in 1968 a paper denouncing the commons as a tragic situation that needs to be given up because of the rational person's tendency to seek to secure personal gain, and because it will only lead to the collapse of recourses. Ostrom, the joint winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in economy, revisits Harding's claims, arguing that the commons are a viable option, especially if there is institutional arrangement that helps in organizing and convincing people that the general good is a viable and preferable option.

Most of the debate around this subject is conducted, not surprisingly, in rational terms, in an attempt to realistically asses the potentiality of managing common resources. What remains less explored is the less rational part, the historic circumstances of the group of people in charge of the common pool of resources, their personal and family ties with one another and the role of these in shaping people's choices.

In this sense, my case is an interesting combination of the personal histories of two groups of people, momâralani and barabe, and the ways in which their growth and evolution is tied in different ways in the fabric of the Valley and the mountains around it. When people have a history of involvement in the environment, they are less likely the abuse the resources it offers. The context of the economic and politic transformation of the country, reflected in the Jiu Valley in the concrete way of mine closures, triggered a gradual transformation of the skilled practices of the population from digging in the mines to exploring the forests. While Ingold's framework is not helpful in understanding the dynamics of the global environment, it is useful in understanding how through learning new skills, concentration on new tasks, people re-learned narratives of the environment and re-positioned themselves vis-à-vis human and non-human entities around them. While inhabiting the environment, barabele assigned

new meanings to the relations in which they were involved, transforming in the process the morality of the community through they shared practical experience.

Coming back to the notion of commons, historic circumstances of the group of people in charge of the common pool of resources are relevant insofar as their involvement in the environment is both formal and substantial. Having a shared history, as momârlanii do, is a good starting point. Having formal ownership of the land in order to manage it as they see fit is an advantage. However, this history needs to be retold through practice in the present for it to be meningful to the present owners.

Conclusion

Exploring the transformation of patterns of activities in the Jiu Valley region during the last two decades reveals a very diverse taskscape, a weaving of informal economic activities of scrap metal collection, mushroom gathering, forest fruits harvesting and many other. Building on this very rich empirical material and on Ingold's habitation perspective (2000, 2011), I make an argument that is three fold, in inverse order then it has been laid out in the body of the paper: (1) the practitioner, the person existing in the world is situated from the beginning in and engages with a richly structured environment composed of both human and non-human entities; (2) she/he moves through the environment, feels it in a very concrete way, through her/his senses, in other words perceives it and is aware of it; (3) this experience shapes both the practitioner and the environment. The shared histories of people that result from the inhabitance of the environment intertwine in a processual, ever-evolving history of the world.

Thinking about the world in these terms brings lot of difficulties in understanding the existing hierarchies and inequalities. For example, it does not allow me to understand how gender differences in practices have emerged initially, how histories of growth sediments in lines that divide people, orders them artificially in a continuum where their activities are valued differently. However, at the same time, Ingold offers a deeply political critique in his writings. Through the concepts he offers, Ingold formulated a very coherent critique of the western rationality and the dualist way of thinking that it entails, which places the white, european 'illuminated' person and his knowledge on the top-most position on an evolutionary scale applied to the population of the whole globe. By deconstructing the idea of technology and seing it as a tool among others, not as a product of the mature mind of a human being, his conception of the person as mind, body and culture is fundamentally egalitarian. Kenrick (2011) makes a valid point that the creativeness of Ingold's though grounds people's

experiences in the world they live in, but falls short of grounding them in the immediate context of political struggles.

Even with that set back, I argue that it is still worth reading if not for anything else, at least for his notion of practice because it opens up the world as one of possibilities and not just constraints, where we struggle, as in most of the post-socialist writings on the transformation of work, to grasp people as agents acting though the course of their lives. The way awareness is grounded in our experience is extremely relevant for understanding different struggles in the world today and maybe finding a different approach to practical issues.

If we think about the threat of environmental degradation that circulates more and more in the form of sensational news in the media today, often in a pseudo-scientific form, it becomes clearer why it doesn't reach the large masses. Green organizations have a habit of translating the discourse and localizing it for different parts of the planet. What they need to do instead is to integrate it in the experience of people in a meaningful way. For example, between 2006 and 2009, in Câmpu lu Neag several protest have been organize in order to stop the construction of the road to Baile Herculane following a path through the mountains. In one of the last attempts, the greens activists have dressed in bear costumes and planted themselves on the road, blocking the passage of excavators and bulldozers. Their process of thought is a legitimate one: the site was very close to the entrance in the national Parc Retezat, one of the few places in the country and even in Europe where the Carpathian bear lives in wilderness. The message was simple and clear: the work on the road would disturb the natural habitat of the species and upset the balance of the ecosystem. They actions however, were ridiculed by the media, by the national and local authorities, by the local population, momârlani and barabe, miners are rangers. The reason was that due to the spread of informal economy since the closing of the mines, especially of the growth of forest related

activities starting with 2003-2004, the constant presence of people in the forests and on the mountains in general, the bears have retreated deeper in the Parc, and none has been spotted for years in the vicinity of the road. The way of living of the people, their experience, their knowledge put them in opposition with the actions of the green activists. While action of the sorts just mentioned is important, for it to accomplish its aim of raising awareness, we need to stop looking at Earth as a world of nature that we can conquer and, and instead see it as our environment, which we inhabit, with which we engage and we develop a shared history.

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