Planning the state:
Labour and the making of industrial socialism in Romania, 1944-1955

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Abstract

My dissertation explores the contradictory unfolding on the ground of the early years of socialism in Romania. It centres on the relationship between labour and the state as it was lived in the cities, in the villages and in the factories of a country that constitutes the ideal space for revisiting the core lines of force around which socialist construction in conditions of uneven and combined development emerged, and for a reassessment of its consequences. I argue that socialism was fragile from its very inception, because it forged the needs of accumulation with the requirements of an emancipatory project into an artifficial historical simultaneity. This simultaneity produced class struggle and a surprisingly weak state around several dimensions: labour stabilization, control, and expansion; knowledge production; and conflicting temporal regimes. Along these lines, I explore the Romanian state socialism in its formative years and I choose to approach it as radical nonsynchronicity (Bloch and Ritter 1977) produced by a long history of unnevenness, dispossession, and isolation.

My research is an investigation from below of production politics in Cluj / Kolozsvár, a city placed rather at the margins of socialist accumulation logic in Romania after the Second World War. Its relatively marginal position makes transparent the fundamental relationship between industrialization and its non-socialist, non-industrial, and rural "exterior." The period chosen – the first decade after the end of the Second World War – is both substantially and methodologically crucial for understanding the grounds on which the new world of labour was going to be built. During these years, the contradictions of socialist accumulation were actually magnified. It is this magnifying of the antagonistic nature of capital accumulation and of labour (re)production and expansion, as well as its encounter with the implementation of planning that makes the 1944-1955 period the perfect lense for making the fragility of state socialism visible.

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As labour history in Romanian is in its infancy, one can feel really lost between the huge amount of archival material and the almost total lack of systematic scholarship on the topic. I cannot imagine where my research paths would have taken me if Adrian Grama had not offered me his overwhelming help and his selfless friendship.

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Introduction

> How can you take as a whole a thing whose essence consists in a split?
> Leon Trotsky

In June 1949, only few months after the implementation of the first one-year plan, an article from *Class Struggle*, the programmatic journal of the Romanian Workers' Party, opened with a special quote from Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*. At the time, Stalin's words were circulated widely among Party activists and factory managers and were included in countless articles, lectures, reports, and proceedings of production meetings. Originally, the quote was part of a speech meant to raise awareness around the present and future implications of planning, and it was addressed to the Soviet new economic executives at the end of the first Soviet five-year plan, when Stalin stated: "It would be foolish to believe that the production plan can be reduced to a mere sequence of figures and tasks. In fact, the production plan is the living and practical activity of millions of people. The reality of our production plan lies in the millions of working people who are building a new life. The reality of our program is

constituted by living people, it is us together with you, it is our will to work, our readiness to work in a new way, our determination to accomplish the plan. Do we have that determination? Yes, we do. Well then, our production program can and must be fulfilled."[1]

In the broadest sense, workers' "living and practical activity" underpinning the Romanian socialist economy is the subject of my dissertation, which recounts the stories of the women and men who became both the targets of socialist construction project and its bearers. Following the trajectory of the relationship between labour and the state in the city of Cluj during the period when economic planning was implemented, I examine the roots of the worker's transformation into the subject/object of a particular mission that came with a promise of freedom, equality, and emancipation for all in an abstract and undefined future. Beyond this project, I look at real workers trying to live their lives and to make sense of them in the tumultuous and uncertain historical present of the 1950s. I do this by returning to the classical idea that understanding state socialism as a particular historical configuration requires a re-centring of the analysis on the notions of "social production" and "class."

The return to the productive core of really existing socialism reveals the profoundly antagonistic nature of this historical formation, born somewhere between the Leninist revolutionary experience made into a model of development, localized processes of class and state formation, and the everyday experience of exploitation, oppression, solidarity, and contestation inside and outside the factory. My research illuminates from below the workings of the core contradictions of socialist construction as they were rooted in the very nature of (primitive) socialist accumulation (Preobrazhensky [1926] 1965) and in conditions of uneven and combined development (Trotsky [1930] 2008). At the intersection of these multivocal processes, I look at the collision between the *idea* of a centrally planned economy and planning as "getting things done" in production. From this perspective, planning itself appears as the daily weaving of concrete webs of practices within which the socialist factory emerged as an object of governmentality with its own conflicting regimes of knowledge, discipline, and time. I argue that the unfolding on the ground of these contradictions produced intense class struggle along the lines of labour control, exploitation, stabilization, and expansion. It also gave birth to an excessively fragile state, caught between its historical mission as a workers' state and its task of creating and managing social production processes.

To follow these lines of contention, I carried an exploration from below of industrialization and production politics in Cluj / Kolozsvár, an ethnically mixed and relatively industrialized city in Transylvania in the mid-1940s. As a region, Transylvania shared most part of its history with the Hungarian Kingdom and with the Habsburg Imperial

space but at the turn of the 20th century was incorporated in Romania, one of the most backward countries in Europe at the time. Like the rest of East-Central Europe, Transylvania lived through centuries of economic and political isolation, dependency, and vulnerability. Placed in the centre of this region, Cluj was a culturally and economically contested city, especially along ethnicized class lines and along conflicting visions of historical advancement. It was neither a classical "socialist" city emerging from nothingness like Magnitogorsk or Nowa Huta, nor an interwar industrial hub like Ploiești, Reșița, Łódź, or Petrograd. In a way, Cluj is a case for understanding socialist accumulation at the margins of postwar economic life. It is precisely its relatively marginal position that reveals the problematic nature of labour (re)production in Romania, a space where "proletarians" were generally absent and where socialist industry needed to fundamentally rely on a non-socialist, non-industrial, and non-urban exterior. Treated as an extended case (Burawoy 1998), industrial Cluj and its rural surroundings represent an eye-opening space for understanding how nonsynchronous projects, imaginaries, practices, and relations structured class dynamics and state power in the early years of socialism.

My analysis focuses on a very short historical period, between 1945 and 1955. It starts with the struggles for controlling the city and its factories in the last days of the war and it ends with the successes and failures of the first five-year plan. The first postwar decade was not simply the moment of the communist take-over in Romania, but the foundation of a "leap forward," projected as a way to uncage the dormant energies and forces that would have close the modernization gap between an Eastern European agrarian country and the advanced capitalist core. The leap was a contradictory solution for a contradictory problem and in some ways it would prove deadly. This period represented the most important moment of the Romanian transition to industrialism, a transition that radically transformed social life over one hundred years but condensed much of its power and depth in the first decade after the Second World War. This transformation was far from being simply an economic one. It slowly became all-encompassing, and as "resistance to change and assent to change arise[d] from the whole culture" (Thompson 1967: 80), it brought together forces that intimately shaped people's entire existence. Crucially, this historical bridge was not simply about industrialism in neutral terms, but about the emergence of an industry that was imagined as *simultaneously* capitalist and socialist. During the ten years under scrutiny, the antagonistic tendencies that socialism tried to address were actually magnified, making this moment into an extraordinarily dense time, a time when historical polyphony was still loud enough to be heard. Exploitation, struggle, and existential insecurity were sometimes intensified in

paroxysmal ways while like in other countries in Eastern and Central Europe, ethnic heterogeneity and the frailty of the Romanian national project only added to the lines of tension that crossed the making of a new world.

Grounded in a relational, processual, and critical realist epistemological stance, my exploration made use of a diversity of sources, ranging from factory and Party documents, to oral histories, official statistics, legislation, and newspapers. The choice of these sources was a reflection of the way in which my research object was constructed from multiple yet unheard voices, meant to reveal what was hidden in the plain in the early years of the Romanian socialism. My endeavour was as much historical as it was anthropological. The past was produced as an object of inquiry mainly from written sources and with the attention for detail specific to social historians. The sensitivity to people's lives and struggles for survival in the context of broader historical forces, as well as the permanent awareness of how past continues to be politically charged in the present came from Marxist anthropology. In the same vein, my project represents a profoundly anthropological effort to de-centre – both geographically and politically – the connection between class struggle, progress, and visions of the future, an effort that I believe it is still much needed today, both in global labour studies and in the understanding of planned development everywhere.

This effort can also be read as a plea for localized, in-depth, and time sensitive explorations of those realities that were so easily grouped under the label of "socialism" and as a deconstruction of the taken-for-granted "Soviet model" or "Soviet blueprint," which constitutes the explicit or implicit starting point for most analyses of the postwar Eastern and Central European regimes. This deconstruction does not mean I do not take what the Romanian Party officials called "the Soviet experience" seriously. On the contrary, I consider the (forced) adoption of the Bolshevik path to modernization as a central explanatory dimension for the striking similarities between the initial trajectories of these countries after the Second World War, alongside their historical positioning in the (semi)periphery of world economy and their emergence as nation-states at the intersection of conflicting imperial policies. Thus, the 1930s revolutionary debates on the Soviet industrialization constituted a very fecund line of thinking about Eastern European state socialism as being simultaneously a very particular historical configuration, and one attempt among others to transcend a longer and broader history of backwardness, exploitation and injustice.

Unfolding contradictions: Really existing socialism as nonsynchronicity

The path taken by Romania at the end of the 1940s and maintained through most of the 1950s involved heavy industrialization, central planning of the economy, the nationalization of the means of production and the rapid repression of alternative societal visions (Crowther 1988; Ionescu 1964; Jowitt 1971). With "class struggle" as the main engine and the celebration of manual work as the dominant political trope, these fundamental historical transformations were not supposed to be peaceful. They involved reversing and sometimes simply smashing old hierarchies in the workplace and in everyday life. For capitalists, rural landlords, and certain categories of the peasantry, socialist construction came with raging dispossession. For industrial workers, poor peasants, women and ethnic minorities, it came with the promise of full employment, relative welfare, increased upward mobility, universal access to education, and the historically unique possibility to envision one's life as a linear and transparent project with a predictable outcome.

The functioning of "actually existing socialism" has been imagined by researchers in different ways: as a shortage economy, based on soft budget constraints, bargaining, and hoarding (Kornai [1992] 2007; Verdery 1996); as a redistribution system doubled by a continuous exercise in the legitimation of surplus appropriation (Konrad and Szelenyi 1979); as a spoiler state incapacitating any other actual or potential loci of organization (Gross 1988); as a managerial and bureaucratic monopoly (Djilas 1957; Konrad and Szelenyi 1979); or as a specific discursive formation, within which hegemonic meanings of "class" and "the nation" were produced and revived (Ost 1990, 2005; Verdery 1992). As Burawoy (1985) points out, what these perspectives have in common is the fact that socialism came to be defined through an at least implicit comparison with capitalism, and became in the scholarly imagination everything capitalism was not. Of course, the concrete functioning of state socialism did not accommodate too well the assumptions of this comparison. This is why the historical embodiment of socialist ideas and its continuous underlying comparison with capitalism produced labels such as "state capitalism," "state monopoly capitalism," "bureaucratic state capitalism," or "degenerated workers' state." Since the very beginning, the Marxist tradition itself was split by debates around the nature of the Soviet regime and its European satellites.[2] For Trotskyists in the revolutionary heat of the 1920s or for Western Marxists like Ernest Mendel and Paul Sweezy who were still holding hopes of a world

revolution in the mid-20th century, the Bolshevik trajectory was simply a transitional regime, a historical bridge between capitalism and communism, necessarily containing elements of both, essentially violent, but still leading to a better, fundamentally different world (Mandel 1951; Sweezy 1980). Nevertheless, for other leftist thinkers, especially coming on a post-Trotskyst line, any similarity with the capitalist system came to be considered as a malfunctioning of really existing socialism and as a historical failure of the initial revolutionary project (Cliff [1955] 1974).[3]

As it will become apparent, although informing my thinking about early Romanian socialism, these questions are not the focus of my inquiry. In my project, I adopt Burawoy's suggestion to explore state socialism in Romania as a singular social formation within which particular historical experiences were produced and people's life worlds were shaped in specific ways. From this angle, one does not need to endlessly ask whether the Soviet Union and its satellites were "actually" capitalist or not in order to reveal the combination of exploitative practices and scientific ethos that marked the beginning of state socialist modernization. It does not help much to slice reality in artificial pieces by placing huge chunks of histories and geographies under one label or another just to "discover" that an accumulation regime founded on wage labour, producing and appropriating surplus, and the separation of the workers from the means of production *was* capitalist. Taming this statement by bringing in the lack of spontaneous exchange, the central setting of prices, the more equal forms of redistribution, and the reinvestment of surplus "for the good of all" makes even less sense and does not prevent these regimes to appear as new forms of "political administration and economic distribution of the *same* mode of production" (Postone 1978: 741). Thus, the question about the nature of the Soviet Union and of the postwar East-Central European regimes is almost pointless, since they were neither socialists, nor capitalists, but both: contradictory modes of production, born from historically specific alignments of constraints, contradictions, and their imagined solutions.

Moreover, while framing the problematic encounter between an increasing capacity of the state to *control* the workers and to *own* the factories as "necessary" and "transitional" reflected a hopeful stance towards what was happening in revolutionary Soviet Union, it became irrelevant for postwar Eastern Europe, where workers hardly could envision gaining real power over their own work and lives. While in the Soviet Union the history marked the passage from "premature socialism" to Stalinism as a passage from historical possibility to historical necessity, in the 1950s, people from East-Central Europe were subjected to historical necessity but completely lost revolution as a tangible historical possibility (García

Casals 1980).

Thus, my occasional appeal to workers' experience in capitalism is not a perpetual questioning of the "essence" of Romanian socialism but a handy instrument for stressing two important aspects of the Eastern European 1950s. First, on the shop floor, industrial socialism produced forms of exploitation and domination very similar to the capitalist ones, simply because they were indeed about capital accumulation and labour control. This was just a symptom of the fact that socialist construction in backward societies – both as a project and as a process – inherited and expanded many of the fundamental contradictions of capital accumulation. While their transcendence was placed in an abstract future, the concrete attempts to solve them in the present were often as much "capitalist" as the antagonisms themselves. Second, the regimes of knowledge, discipline, and temporality that characterized the Romanian, the Hungarian, or the Polish postwar factories were part of a broader transition to industrial modernity that unfolded over the globe in the 19th and 20th century. The everyday reality of any postwar factory in Cluj was part of a scaled historical logic that unfolded not only in the centre of Transylvania but also basically in every corner where (Western) industrial modernity writ large penetrated new territories.

While placing the Romanian socialist construction into a broader history of industrial modernity is a must, it cannot be done without a thorough investigation into the daily proceedings that ensured the functioning of socialism on the ground and simultaneously endangered its very existence. During the last decades, the emergence of a scholarship focused on localized practices and relations as they were lived in factories, in agricultural fields, or in people's homes illuminated from below the highly contested terrain of state socialism. This growing literature embodied the hope that the stereotypical, partly blind way of seeing state socialist regimes as homogenous, grey, and lifeless entanglements of populations and territories that were fully subjected to the Soviet rule would be dismantled forever. It was going to be salutary replaced with in-depth explorations of shop floor politics (Harazsti 1977; Burawoy and Lukács 1992; Burawoy 1985; Pittaway 2012, 2014; Kenney 1997), emerging urban identities (Lebow 2013; Pobłocki 2010), radically transforming generational experiences (Yurchak 2005), sometimes counterintuitive conceptions of work and personhood (Lampland 1995), specific notions of "solidarity" and "efficiency" (Dunn 2004), complex forms of controlling time and bodies (Verdery 1996), material and emotional forms of dispossession (Verdery and Kligman 2011), or participation in extensive transnational networks of economic knowledge (Bockman and Eyal 2002).

This literature accomplished much of the hopes it was initially invested with, and

undoubtedly deepened and enriched our understanding of forty-five years of European history. Nevertheless, it also revealed that on the ground, socialism as everyday experience was indeed remarkably structured. In Hungary, in Poland, in Germany or in Romania, workers used the same tactics to escape the control of their foremen, managers negotiated plan figures and resources in the same way, and peasants everywhere seemed to cry more when the Party activists took their animals than when they confiscated their inanimate tools. Even jokes and moralizing stories circulated in the same form in various countries. If these similarities are not to be explained simply through the ordinary appeal to "the Soviet model," top-down decisional flows, or sheer violence, they need to be accounted for in a different way. We need a compelling strategy to think through the striking similarities between the postwar Eastern and Central European regimes without falling back into the trap of homogenizing their histories. In other words, we need yet another way to go beyond the "Iron Curtain" behind which "it was possible to imagine vaguely whatever was unhappy and unpleasant, unsettling or alarming, and yet it was also possible not to look too closely, permitted even to look away – for who could see through an iron curtain and discern the shapes enveloped in shadow?" (Wolff 1994).

Hence, my research starts from problematizing the Bolshevik blueprint itself. The position I adopt is that the "Soviet model" came as an abstraction of a concrete historical experience centred around the necessity to fight specific dimensions of backwardness, which characterized not only the Soviet Union of the 1930s but also the interwar Eastern and Central Europe: the agrarian and unmechanized character of the economy, low capital investment, overpopulation on the land, peasant poverty, weak to non-existent infrastructure, lack of adequately trained bureaucracy, overwhelming illiteracy, widespread illness and malnutrition, and fragile multi-ethnic national constructions. The characteristics of the revolutionary Russia observed by Trotsky in the 1920s– "slow tempo of development," "economic backwardness," or "primitiveness of social forms" – can be transposed without much difficulty for many Eastern European countries in the 1950s. It is not a random linguistic occurrence or a simple propaganda artifice that the 1950s Romanian communists rarely used the notion of a Soviet "model" or "blueprint" but rather the idea of Soviet "experience." Consequently, what explains the striking similarities between the narratives about the communist take-over in Eastern and Central Europe is not simply the imposition of a Stalinist model of development but the emulation of a historical experience set against similar conditions and which produced similar contradictions.

More than anything, in its Bolshevik version, the socialist project represented a

specific way to fight backwardness and open the social world to rationality and scientific progress in a semi-peripheral country. Socialist regimes were discursively, politically, and pragmatically committed to the metanarratives of "modernization," "progress," and "industrialization," adhering without reservations to many staples of any European modernizing project of the 20th century: hierarchical work organization and management, standardization and quantification of social life, (secular) boundaries to the workday, universalistic time frames, wages as a reflection of task difficulty or skill level, and a welfare system built around a nationally bound division of labour. The "labour for growth" impetus was the outcome of a developmental vision which had self-transformation at its core, with personal development, skilling and the formation of a new work mentality as its main dimensions. Individual trajectories were redrawn as historical outcomes of a civilizing process, attempting to tame the peasants into urban workers and to produce modern citizens out of "barbarians." People found themselves situated in a space carved at the intersection between a "deficient modernity" and a "modernity consummated" (Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008), between the backwardness of the semi-proletarian and the advanced historical consciousness of the Stakhanovite, or between being simply "workforce" or becoming "comrades." These radical changes altered the entire previous logic of governmentality and brought with them a new power nexus as an encounter between particular forms of knowledge, discipline, and time, in which the factory was central.

In other words, postwar socialism was not simply the result of sheer force as the post-1989 anticommunist discourse frames it but mainly the emulation of a modernization project built upon the "privilege of backwardness" (Trotsky [1930] 2008). This "privilege" is in fact almost universal, since "[h]istorically speaking, non-development is the rule rather than the exception" (Brenner 1991: 15). It refers to the limited possibility of backward societies to envision a historical leap in the advanced present, the option to burn stages and to adopt the most progressive models of development, together with their technological and political conquests. This leap is always self-contradictory, as it is concomitantly the negation of the backward present "under the whip of external necessity" (Trotsky [1930] 2008: 3) and the refusal of a ready-made chronology and order of historical advancement. According to Trotsky, a backward country does not need to assimilate the achievements of the historically advanced countries in their original chronology. With the emergence of capitalism as one step forward towards universalism and towards the establishment of "progress" as the permanent mantra of humanity, history is not bound anymore to the reiteration of certain cultural stages. As historical processes are always uneven, the whole world is a multi-dimensional mosaic of

developmental stages, which has "a planless, complex, combined character" (Trotsky [1930] 2008: 3), and every historical configuration is "a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms" (Trotsky [1930] 2008: 3). Thus, combined development produces a polyphonic structure of the real, which allows archaic elements to co-exist with the most modern aspects of human life.

While the whole world can be seen as a rich polyphonic unfolding of multi-temporal and multi-spatial forces and processes, the social fabric of backward countries is especially dominated by what Ernst Bloch called "nonsynchronicity" (Bloch and Ritter 1977). They are marked by hard to resolve "polyphonous dialectics" (Bloch and Ritter 1977), which are at the same time synchronous – the fundamental capitalist contradictions that need to be transcended by revolution – and belonging to different times and spaces – like the power of the archaic to trail the rural into a dream of urban modernity, the peasants into the proletariat, and the petty bourgeois craftsmen and shopkeepers into state economy. Thus, the struggle is not simply between two modes of production (or between two political arrangements). It becomes "a critical and non-contemplative" battle to connect the master aim of superseding capitalism with the concrete conditions in which capitalism still needs to be produced. Thus, economically backward and fragile as nation-states, Eastern and Central European postwar configurations were articulated around the essentially antagonistic needs to build socialism and industrial capitalism *simultaneously*. This simultaneity represented the crumbling foundation of state socialism and had far-reaching consequences for the way in which the project of socialist construction took up – and for a while magnified – the contradictions of capital accumulation, and of course, for the way in which it produced its own antagonisms. The positioning of these countries on the spatial and temporal map created by the world's uneven and combined development drove these antagonisms further, enhancing their wide-range implications for a large part of Europe and its people.

Sketching the polyphonic (non)synchronous underpinning the Romanian socialist construction does not mean that my research is an exhaustive investigation into the political economy of socialism. Although at a certain level this inquiry can be read as another attempt to answer the question about the nature of really existing socialism, my aim is much more modest: I follow (unequally) the unfolding of the contradictions of capital accumulation in conditions of backwardness, with an explicit focus on issues related to labour reproduction, expansion, stabilization and control and on how these contradictions talked back to the very possibility of creating a centrally planned economy. The reading on the ground of these

historical rifts requires a manifold understanding of the socialist construction's pillars: accumulation, the workings of class, planning, and state fragility.

Socialist primitive accumulation and the Romanian uneven proletarianization

As an ideal-type, socialist accumulation was supposed to combine capitalist expanded reproduction – in its Marxist classical understanding[4] – and primitive accumulation – envisioned by Preobrazhensky ([1926] 1965) as a double mechanism comprising workers' "self-exploitation" and the continuous squeezing of the private sector (primarily agricultural) in relation with the state sector (largely industrial). "Primitive socialist accumulation," defined by Preobrazhensky ([1926] 1965: 57-58) as "the accumulation in the hands of the state of material resources obtained chiefly from sources lying outside the state economic system," was postulated as one of the central axis of development in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It was a response to the fundamental problems posed by the transition to socialism in a backward, primarily agrarian society and in the absence of the much expected socialist revolutions elsewhere: the need of an absolute and constant increase of capital and the relatively more rapid expansion of the state sector compared to the private one (Preobrazhensky [1926] 1965; Millar 1978; Day 1982).

Preobrazhensky used the concept of primitive accumulation not in its classical liberal sense of "previous accumulation" – as Adam Smith called it – but as an answer to two entangled questions. First, where could (and should) resources for accumulation come from during the transition period to socialism? Second, how must the relations of production transform in order to allow socialism to emerge and to become self-sustainable? For him – as well as for Marx – primitive accumulation refers both to expropriation in its very material sense and to a fundamental change in social relations, expressed most of all as class displacement (Millar 1978; Glassman 2006). In other words, it is constitutive of capitalism and socialism alike.

The answer to these questions involved the reliance on small agricultural production for supplying the developing industrial centres and for ensuring an important part of the Soviet international grain trade. It revolved around the idea of replacing forced deliveries – which proved catastrophic for the Soviet space – with various techniques of squeezing the

peasants, generally by introducing unequal terms of exchange between industry and agriculture – price scissors – in favour of the former. "This process of extending and consolidating the state economy can proceed both at the expense of its own forces and resources, that is, the surplus product of the workers in state industry, and at the expense of private, including peasant . . . economy. Can it be otherwise?", asked Preobrazhensky ([1926] 1965: 226). His unequal exchange solution was completely rejected in the beginnings of the Soviet industrialization debate and labelled as a form of exploitation of the peasantry by the working-class, only to be later adopted and transposed in a violent key by Stalin (Erlich 1950; Nove [1969] 1992). It was this later version that was transferred as a unique developmental option for the East-Central Europe countries after the Second World War.[5] [6]

Socialist primitive accumulation appeared as a violent abstraction of the spatially and temporally located process on which Marx built his account of the emergence of capitalism as a mode of production. Drawing the lines of the British historical experience onto the canvas of a country "privileged by its backwardness" profoundly affected the making of the Soviet working-class in the first decades of the 20th century. The solution imagined by the Bolsheviks for the expansion of labour was the mirror of the process of proletarianization which started in England with the enclosures, a pre-condition for the progressive transformation of agriculture according to the laws of capitalist production. The classical case analysed by Marx is well-known. Primitive accumulation was the zero point for the formation of capital and for turning an important part of the population into wage-labourers. The dispossessed and pauperised rural population was partly absorbed in the new structure of employment in the countryside, partly attracted by the flourishing manufacturing urban centres.

While for Marx ([1867] 1992) the fracture between the worker and her means of production and subsistence constituted the pre-condition for capitalist accumulation, as Rosa Luxemburg ([1913] 2003) and Hannah Arendt ([1951] 1975) brilliantly argued, violent dispossession was not simply the original sin of capitalism. The realisation of surplus values needs a generic "third person," which is always outside the relationship between workers and capitalists as immediate agents of capitalist production because "[c]apitalism needs non-capitalist social strata as a market for its surplus value, as a source of supply for its means of production and as a reservoir of labour power for its wage system" (Luxemburg [1913] 2003: 348-349). It was in this form that capitalism violently travelled in colonial contexts and was deeply transformed when encountering local notions of "property," which it circumvented, (re)produced, used for its own purposes, or simply deleted from the historical scene. At their

intersection, control, exploitation, reproduction and expansion of labour took various and complex forms which combined wage-labour with slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, petty-commodity-production, or reciprocity (Brass 1999, 2011; Brass and Bernstein 1992; Cooper 1996; Cooper et al. 1993; Quijano 2000). Thus, the existence of a "non-capitalist exterior" has always been a critical condition for capitalism and until these days, the emperor has stayed naked: what David Harvey re-coined (2003) as "accumulation by dispossession" remains central to the reproduction of capital, hidden under the shallow veil of "legality" and "democracy."

In the classical account of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the role of the state was to assist and to hasten the process by not protecting rural population from landlords, by expanding territorially and economically in colonies, and by creating the modern system of taxation. In the transition to socialism, the state had to rely first on taxes, price manipulation, and other financial policies to put primitive accumulation into practice. Moreover, the state had at its disposal the resources of monopoly capital to redistribute them both as investment in economy and as safety nets for its workers (Preobrazhensky [1926] 1965). However, it was not this "extraordinary power" of the state but rather an acute sense of its ~~the~~ fragility (so much evident for Romania as well) that convinced Preobrazhensky of the historical necessity and urgency of his solution.

Following the Soviet historical path, nationalization and collectivization in East-Central Europe were supposed to constitute a solid starting point for the socialist project, by simultaneously creating its material foundation, by providing its necessary working arms, and by expanding its internal market. The expropriation of the agricultural population had to ensure the much needed increase in agricultural output, the release of the labour force for the rapidly growing industry, and the necessary internal market for industrial products. The brute force of the state was the instrument of this accumulation form, in itself an economic power, "the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one" as Marx ([1867] 1992: 916) would put it. A significant part of the peasantry of these countries witnessed and lived the dissolution of the old society as a history of expropriation. It was going to be "written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (Marx [1867] 1992: 875) while rural population was to be progressively reduced to a number that matched the requirements of labour force in the countryside. At least theoretically, at the end of collectivization it was not land anymore but employment that was going to decide the possibility to survive in the village. Nevertheless, as the reader will see, in many of these countries – Romania included – land plots and gardens continued to support an important part of people's subsistence needs

for decades to come.[7] So, the reverse was also true: it was precisely land and the urban-rural connection that made survival in the city possible.

Nationalization and collectivization were indeed powerful processes meant to end the reign of private property rights after 1948 and to solve a fundamental contradiction of capitalism: the one between private appropriation of surplus and the social character of production. As processes meant to fight backwardness, they were designed first of all to make production more "social," in the sense of capital concentration and massification of labour. Thus, the process through which the socialist state acquired rights of ownership over the means of production resembled a quick, radical, and successful formation of monopolies from the mosaic of small and medium peasant households and land plots, small workshops and stores, and the majority of factories under 30 employees which dominated the economic landscape of the Romanian 1940s. However, nationalization and collectivization did not entailed total and immediate control over the economy. Both were designed as processes rather than events and their different rhythms would prove at the same time problematic and essential for the reproduction and the expansion of labour. Especially in the first decades of socialism, maintaining a (mainly rural) non-socialist exterior, which could be used as a resource for food, raw materials, and working arms whose reproduction was mainly supported by workers themselves was a crucial condition of possibility for rapid industrialization and sometimes simply for economic and political survival. Controlled capitalist relations were as useful to socialist construction as the nationalization of banks and factories.

The contradictory mixture of accumulation mechanisms, pains of "catching-up," and emancipatory prospects that were articulated in the East-Central European postwar regimes met a vision of industrial modernization centred around the most vivid expression of their *lived* nonsynchronicity – the reproduction and expansion of labour. Exploring the (re)production of a heterogeneous labour force in Cluj factories reveals the emptiness of the central category of socialist construction – the proletarian. My story is one of uneven and combined development further creating uneven proletarianization and making use of the non-socialist exterior that Preobrazhensky was painfully aware of. If capitalism can (and must) produce nonlinear and reversible class trajectories (Brass 1999), this is also true for East-Central Europe state socialism in the second part of the 20th century, a space that offers yet another possibility to implode the classical narrative of industrialization.

The implementation of the "Soviet blueprint" in Romania created an industrial regime where workers were difficult to find, difficult to control, and difficult to keep in the factory.

In an agrarian country with a low level or urbanization, the growth of industry had to rely on categories of labourers who were anything but the ideal revolutionary proletarian. Factories in Cluj and elsewhere in Romania had limited access to skilled industrial workers. They functioned and expanded not only with the help of their core urban labourers but with the help of a largely unskilled workforce made of soldiers, prison mates, women, temporary labourers, and young professional trainees in the factory schools. For these factories, it was the peasant-worker, not the proletarian that was the central figure of early Romanian industrialization. In his body the antagonisms of socialist construction in conditions of backwardness were lived and embodied. As a commuter or as a young migrant living in the factory barracks, he (mainly "he" for the first working generation after the war) brought in the city "barbaric" rhythms and routines, sanctioned by old urbanites with contempt. To make Stakhanovites out of these peasants became the ultimate transformative victory of the state over a reluctant population. The commuter as a "double dweller" and the new migrant to the city as an "urban villager" came to represent the epitomes of a socialist city's failed modernity for scholars embracing the "under-urbanization" thesis (Murray and Szelenyi 2009; Andrusz, Harloe and Szelenyi 2008). Nevertheless, as recent research showed (Petrovici 2013), the continuous reliance on a workforce that combined the resources from the countryside and the city became a conscious and efficient strategy for keeping labour cheap while increasing workers' wages indirectly. Together with an ever increasing social infrastructure around the factories and the working-class neighbourhoods, it was going to be inscribed as an official projection of the rural-urban connection in the late 1960s territorial systematization (Turnock 1986).[8]

In this context, my exploration of the ways in which labour was an integral and central part of the economic and political logic of the socialist state should reveal how this relationship was experienced on the shop floor and in people's everyday lives, and uncover the broad and complex processes which shaped the shifting content of the relationship between the workers and the socialist state. I will follow these processes not by addressing their directly political expressions, but by giving due recognition to the constitutive centrality of production in people's life-worlds. The crystallization of the working-class under socialism is to be understood as a processual alignment of structured contingencies which do not emerge randomly, but as parts and variations of broader processes and relations which can be theoretically accounted for. The sources of the socialist workers' experience, interests, and identity are not identifiable in any immediate way, but are to be found in the historical relationship between the factory, the city and its surroundings, various rationalities of

government, and world economy. To decipher this nested structure of the Romanian nonsynchronous, two things are needed: a historically grounded notion of "class" and a related understanding of "the local" in class analysis.

The workings of class

By *class*, I understand the field of forces defined by historically specific mechanisms of surplus extraction, appropriation and distribution and by the power relations which enforce them, (re)produce them, and justify their legitimacy. This field of forces structures people's possibilities of survival, orients their life strategies, and substantially affects their moral economies, ethical dilemmas, and political imaginaries. My understanding of class is meant to capture not only mechanisms of exploitation and domination, but also people's positioning in relation to these mechanisms, to their corresponding institutional arrangements, and to each other. Classes can be defined only relationally, so it is the complex relationships within which they are enmeshed – not their illusory entity-like appearance – that becomes the focus of my inquiry. Not only are classes defined in relation to other classes and to other fields of force (e.g. the state), but also these relationships are more or less structured in different historical periods. Sometimes, they can be extremely diffuse, and as a consequence we analyse fragmented, unstable, open, locally defined alliances and oppositions between various categories, none of them being able to define structured macro entities in the form that classes have been generally conceptualized. However, there are turning points in history when these relations go through a process of entitization, in the sense that certain distinctions in the division of labour (like for instance between labour and capital, between manual and non-manual work, or between skilled or unskilled labour) grow to be important for the way class relationships are defined and consequently, for their very existence. Thus, classes appear as the historically contingent results of the crystallization of economic, political, and ideological power relations, which are born of and preserved in fundamental distinctions of the social division of labour.

Making claims about "class" always relates to the creation of boundaries that are never purely economic. They resort to people's experience as a whole, as constituted by family life, gender, processes of production, religion, ideology, friendship, ethnicity, or leisure, are mediated through various forms of oppression or empowerment, and are

(re)produced through specific narratives (Steinberg 1996). From this perspective, far from being merely empty nominal categories, "classes" appear to be imbued with life. They are seen here as experiential realities, continuously shaped by the changing power relations they are part of, and in return permanently transforming these relations through people's specific knowledge, understandings and practices.

My exploration of the workings of class obviously goes against the deleterious reading of Marx from *The Communist Manifesto* which invokes "class" as the abstract subject capable to lead (capitalist) history to its end. According to this standard narrative, the capitalist factory was going to be the womb for a process of object-subject transformation, which presupposed a (chrono)logical transition from a perceived commonality of interests due to the massification of workers on the shop floor, to historical consciousness, and finally to action. This divorce from a teleological understanding of class and class formation is a rejoinder of class analysis scholars who dismantled this (chrono)logical sequence for the capitalist world and proposed an anti-teleological, non-deterministic perspective on localized processes of working-class formation. It was based on in-depth historical case studies and accounted not only for production – understood in its narrow sense – but also for extra-economic factors "such as those concerning space, religion, and, above all, the organization of the state and its public policies" (Katznelson and Zoldberg 1986: 23 - 24).[9]

This line of thinking travels in the steps of E.P. Thompson's beautiful, thick historical narrative of "the making of the English working-class," explored as identity formation, the emergence of various communities of interests and of corresponding forms of political and industrial organization, the competing challenges of various intellectual traditions, and the growth of "a working-class structure of feeling" (Thompson [1963] 1991: 213). This endeavour to shows how what it meant to be "working-class" changed in different periods of the British history reveals class as something that "happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" (Thompson [1963] 1991: 9). Thus, although they are rooted in the world of work and in the very necessity of survival, class "interests" do not appear as homogeneous and there is no univocal connection between them and different occupational categories, or even between the interests of the workers and those of capital. Classes are always relational, contingent, and entangled in shared daily experiences of work, family, gender relations, bodily practices, religious meanings, popular institutions, state intervention, or personal losses and gains. Consequently, no law can be predicated about the formation of class

consciousness, identity, or interests.

Don Kalb (1997) proposes an even broader understanding of "class," which takes historical contingency, and a processual and relational understanding of power as its foundations. Thus,

> class presupposes that human interests (broadly conceived) simply and realistically begin with the ways in which people (of both sexes) try to secure their livelihoods by performing their daily work. It emphatically claims that work is never just the act of earning a living, but rather the social and cultural crux around which whole ways of life become organized and maintained. Class, in addition, assumes that work, survival, and reproduction are what bring people together in the first place. It argues that from the daily necessity to secure a living arise specific and complex patterns of social labour, which in turn underpin – and are maintained by – specific forms of civilization and appropriation. It finally holds that human needs for orientation and meaning are part and parcel of the problems and complexities of these basic practices and key relationships (Kalb 1997: 3).

Consequently, one cannot find "classes" out there, in an unmediated way, but can follow the power relations in which individuals, families, and social categories are caught, hoping to find not "class interests," but rather "frictions of interests." Analysing class "becomes a narrative strategy, focusing on the historically embedded, shifting relationships between social groups as they are linked through production and reproduction, alternating between micro and macro levels, and accounting for the complex social processes in which they become entwined – processes which structure their chances and resources and which are perpetually kept going by their actions and interactions" (Kalb 1997: 9).

My exploration of class in socialism builds up on this tradition of thought, sharing with it the refusal to reduce class analysis to a deduction of consciousness and action from the occupational position, the fight against the reification of the distinction between base and superstructure, an emphasis on the entanglement between modes of production and modes of life and their mutual constitution, and a departure from the essentialist assumption that a class in itself will be easy to identify and map, and it will necessarily and naturally "act for itself." It also represents a stance against relegating class consciousness and action to the realm of political organization. It goes beyond "resistance" and "interests" in search of the limits and pressures people exert in their daily fight for survival, reproduction, and dignity in various

configurations of power. A theoretical opening is created, leaving enough room for people's everyday struggles to make a living at the crossroad between global forces and particular local histories. This is also a political opening, as this way to think about class expands and deepens "the complex terrain upon which the contradiction between capital and labour is fought out" (Harvey 2014: 66).

In order to understand the workings of class in socialism one has to explore the ways in which class was enacted and experienced during these simultaneously emancipatory and repressive times, in specific places, shaped by power configurations which are never uniformly distributed within a country's territory. As Thompson ([1963] 1991) shows, what researchers must deal with is not "living standards," but "ways of life." With the present research, "from food we are led to homes, from homes to health, from health to family life, and hence to leisure, work – discipline, education and play, intensity of labour, and so on. From standard-of-life we pass to way-of-life. But the two are not the same. The first is a measurement of quantities; the second a description (and sometimes an evaluation) of qualities. . . . People may consume more goods and become less happy or less free at the same time" (Thompson [1963] 1991: 230-231). How socialist workers' "happiness and freedom" transformed in time becomes necessarily related to how their ways of life nurtured specific institutions, human relations, and meanings.

For me, class becomes a modest instrument of discovery (Kalb 2005), a project for local-national-global explorations, a tool for understanding how people in their daily struggles "make history in the factories, in the barracks, in the villages, on the streets of the cities" (Trotsky [1930] 2008: xvi). These struggles are the ones to create "places" as "windows into complexity" (Candea 2007), as nodes of localized processes that allow me to unveil broad histories of dispossession, exploitation, and backwardness through the lenses of human experience they produce and encounter. Thus, the dissection of socialism follows the nested linkages that were articulated around the "key relationships" of this historical formation through a "continual theoretical movement between the conceptual fullness of a category that focuses attention on surplus labour relations of production, appropriation, and distribution, and its ultimate emptiness until its schematic and homogeneous form is filled with specific constitutive relations of race, gender, nationality, affect, and so on" (Gibson-Graham 2005: 40-41).

Thus, the program for class analysis in socialism that underlies my research can be summarized in three points. First, there is a wider recognition of the contingency of the class relationships, and a strong argument against the teleological understanding of class formation

processes. Second, a more complex analysis of production relations and forces in socialism requires a shift from the traditional understanding of "class structure" towards an exploration of the mutually constitutive relationship between the state and the workers, which connects "the local" with broader historical processes and with the abstract temporal horizon of communism. Third, the image of a totalitarian, monolithic state needs to be replaced by a radical rethinking of socialist governmentality, which allows a deep exploration of the exercise of power which can never be separated from planning and productive practices.

Since industrialization and urbanization in Romania were without doubt state-driven processes, the making of the working-class represents as much a top-down process as it represents a bottom-up one. Apparently, it is exactly the top-down and hegemonic logic that makes working-class in a socialist state an ideal site for proving the teleological aspects of the classical Marxist account of the working-class formation processes. Nonetheless, while "the working class made itself as much as it was made" (Thompson 1963 [1991]: 213), its entitization also represented the outcome of a specific political imaginary that was put to work in a society where most of the processes related to class formation unfolded only after a "popular democracy" was installed, in a regime framed as a "workers' state," constructed and functioning *for them*. So, the battle against the teleology of class is also crucial for understanding the ways in which the vision of history that infused the socialist project in its beginnings collided in the 1950s cities and villages with people's real "frictions of interests" and strategies of survival. Together with the previously unthinkable historical possibility of socialism in a backward agrarian and isolated country, the new Party leaders in East-Central Europe inherited from the Bolsheviks an "economistic view of production and a voluntaristic view of politics" (Corrigan, Ramsey and Sayer 1978: 43) that produced a rather impoverished notion of class.[10] Relegating the political to matters of the state, reducing production to technological advancement according to ineluctable laws of progress, and breaking the problematic entanglement of the two was part of a continuous attempt to drive class struggle out from the factory, into a purely discursive realm.

But because its productive core, state power in socialism was never to be separated from the dangerous workings of class, on whose lines of tension the boundary between production and life, between production and politics, and between state, society and economy were permanently negotiated. Although the socialist project was indeed supposed to be linear and to produce a working-class according to a specific vision of historical advancement, on the ground it encountered real people with their own life strategies, dreams, and desires. The dominant narrative on East-Central European regimes assumes that these strategies, dreams,

and desires were simply smashed by the socialist states in their strive to encompass life and to mute struggles. However, my research shows that far from disappearing, they were imposing themselves to the new regime, leaving the state no choice but to use them as a problematic – although fertile – ground for socialist construction. Consequently, the workings of class that the state wanted to abolish in theory were painfully needed in practice, placing the needs of the state as a manager of production in a structural conflict with the necessities of the Romanian postwar regime as a workers' state. The first outcome was a high degree of fragmentation of class interests, due to what we can call state politics of re-stratification, meaning that at different points in history, the state used policy making for empowering certain social categories and disempowering others, rendering a coherent understanding of the socialist working-class "interests" or "consciousness" impossible. The second one was an inherent fragility of the socialist state itself, which was manifest in its daily functioning, easily noticeable in the factory documents of the time. For the socialist context, the relationship between working-class and the state should replace the classical concern with (capitalist) class relationships. While for the Western world, it is thought that "to belong to a working class is to share with other people a certain relation to capitalists" (Tilly 2002: 19), within the socialist regime, the central relation people share with other people is oriented towards the state.

The production of the experiential dimension of the working-class at the intersection between the socialist "mode of production" and the corresponding "mode of life" and the definition of the boundaries between "production" and "life" (or between what is classified as being "outside production" and what is thought to be "within") are necessary steps for understanding how identity, interests, and struggle are born within these specific power relations and how their emergence can be explained in a "dictatorship of proletariat." Methodologically, the consequence of challenging these assumptions translates into the need for a deeply historicized and highly situated kind of research, a "thick micro-history through time" (Kalb and Tak 2005: 15), which allows the researcher not only to unfold the story of the socialist working-class formation, but also to engage the paradigm from within, showing how a certain narrative moves from the ideal-typical Marxist account of what "interests", "consciousness", or "struggle" are in various capitalist configurations, and how they open a different debate for the socialist case.

Mastering the nonsynchronous: Planning from below and the making of a socialist economy

To govern in state socialism meant to become the master of the nonsynchronous. It required simultaneously to skilfully manoeuvre everything that had not been yet sublated in the nascent, feeble Romanian capitalism of the 1940s, and to effectively articulate it with the requirements of industrial expansion and modernization. This fundamental contradiction of the socialist economy in the making also produced a fragile state, fractured between opposite functions and needs: a workers' state guiding an emancipatory project for an almost absent class, and a manager state creating and running social production processes. In other words, the fragility of the socialist state resided in the contradiction between its functioning as an accumulation regime and its needs to imagine an emancipatory project not only *for* the workers but also *together with* them. This tension was the result of a specific articulation of class in history and the consequence of its placement under contradictory temporal horizons.

This fragility has been partially captured in the revisionist historians' accounts of how the Soviet workers were dealt with after the October Revolution (Filtzer 1986; Fitzpatrick 1999) but their focus on "the social" – so welcome at the time – almost closed the theoretical possibility of rethinking the very notions of "class" and "state" in socialism. This discussion was also basically absent from the literature on workers' states focusing on the East-Central European regimes, even when rich histories of social change, production politics and shop floor negotiations were produced (Burawoy and Lukács 1992; Haraszti 1977; Kenney 1997).

When the nature of the socialist states in Eastern and Central Europe was explicitly addressed, the analysis focused on the shifting nature of the social contract between labour and the Party-state and on "the limits of dictatorship." Going beyond the usual notions of shortages, bargaining and managerial power, Mark Pittaway (2012, 2014) returns to the idea that the relationship between the workers and the state was definitory for the socialist configuration. He centres on how the Stalinist-type forced industrialization of Hungary had in fact many limitations, since informal wage bargaining, labour mobility, and labour indiscipline were common occurrences, as a result of the state's lack of authority over the workers. One of the end results of Mark Pittaway's detailed comparative analysis of factory regimes in early socialist Hungary is the reconceptualization of the exercise of state socialist power as always constrained and limited in its daily encounters with the working-class.

Pittaway's work is crucial for understanding the day-to-day practices of the state and

its constant need to establish legitimacy. He proposes "a historically contingent definition" of legitimacy, which in Hungary was established and eroded several times between 1944 and 1958 and it remained partial and uneven, fluid and contested for decades to come. Instead of the total power presupposed by a "dictatorship," in the daily operations of the Hungarian factories Pittaway observes a modest project of state functioning, "a state of affairs in which a given regime's claim to rule met with a sufficient degree of acceptance to ensure that it was able to acquire the necessary degree of 'infrastructural' power to rule on a day-to-day basis and thus appear as a coherent, unified actor ruling above the rest of society" (Pittaway 2012: 5). From this perspective, repression itself becomes an epiphenomenon that sprang from the necessity to fight the growing perception of the state's illegitimacy. As other scholars show, state socialism functioned as a permanent exercise in legitimation and as a constant search for the best way to describe surplus appropriation and redistribution as "just" and "fair." Nevertheless, this mystification was made transparent precisely by the legitimizing rituals and celebrations designed for "painting socialism" (Burawoy and Lukács 1992) as they became more and more explicitly the expression of the contrast between everyday reality and official discourse, which enabled the workers to define themselves in relation to a common exploiter, the state.

My exploration also starts from the assumption that the productivist core of the state and its relationship with the workers were the spine of actually existing socialism. However, while my thesis can be definitely read as an argument about the fragility of the socialist state, this argument is related neither to its legitimacy, nor to the unexpected effects of its ideology. It is rooted in a specific way of conceptualizing the state itself as a relation of production, one that was highly sensitive not only to workers' capacity to mobilize politically but to the everyday workings of class in a mainly agrarian country, where the "proletarians" were still in the project. Simply put, it starts from the observation that if "socialist workers" were problematic as a notion, as a category of rule, and as a much needed source of labour, this cannot leave the understanding of the "workers' state" untouched. This understanding of the state is fundamentally related to planning and to the regimes of knowledge, discipline and temporality it entailed, and it leads unmistakably to the factory as the space that concentrates those encounters which shaped the "everyday forms of state formation" (Painter 2006) in socialism.

Within the factory, except for the fiction that the workers *owned* the means of production, there was little "socialism" in the model of enlarged reproduction embraced by the newly created and by the nationalized factories in Romania. With all the cautions taken

by the new economic executives who were eager to show that the economic categories of the 1950s were fundamentally different from the capitalist ones, one could easily use *Das Kapital* as the fundamental textbook for the critique of the "new" economy. Like in capitalism, expanded reproduction in socialism was also based on the systematic and permanent use of labour power to produce more than the worker needed to survive in a particular time-space configuration. Production was not oriented simply towards the satisfaction of needs but towards the creation and realisation of surplus, whose appropriation and control was the core of an accumulation regime founded on the exploitation of industrial labour in a more and more monetized economy.[11] For several decades, massive infrastructural work and the expansion of industry ensured the certainty that this value was going to be further capitalized. Socialist accumulation was inscribed in every five-year plan as an expression of the relationship between labour productivity and the historical horizon of "catching-up." It was explicitly addressed in the permanent attempt of the state to regulate supply and demand and in the privileges awarded to the industrial units that provided socialist economy with means of production, as well as in the clear positive balance for the accumulation fund in relationship with the consumption fund. But most importantly, the possibility to engage over and over again in the spiral of production and consumption depended upon labour productivity as a synthetic expression of both humans' mastery of nature, and of the political and social organization of people's life at a given time and in a given space. Reproduction at an ever larger scale rested on the compression of as much possible work in as little time, on wage cutting, extending working hours, and on the absolute expansion of labour.

While nationalization and collectivization were imagined as solutions for the contradiction between the social character of production and its private appropriation, the plan needed to emerge as the magical instrument that would solve the most important contradictions of capital accumulation itself: the contradiction between use and exchange value, the rift between money and the value it stands for, the problematic distance between the creation of value and its realisation, and the unbalanced growth of technology, knowledge, and workforce (Harvey 2014).

The allocation of labour force and means of production, the calculation of prices, the direction of investments and the economic priorities were set through the plan in an effort of giving unity, coherence, and structure to economy. Through planning, allocative power came to be the most important source of political power, streaming from but also providing the foundation for the rationality of growth in state socialism. Within planning, specific social

relationships of consumer-provider and of surveiller-surveilled type (Verdery 1996) were coming together in an assemblage which permanently thrived for centralization but always struggled with it. As the Romanian new executives would find very soon after the nationalization of the factories, the conflict between the *idea* of the plan and the *process* of planning-as-problem-solving was going to be their daily reality. In the trail of this conflict, the socialist factory became a predilect space for the encounter between problematic regimes of knowledge, discipline, and time, as well as for the emergence of an essentially fragile state.

From the very beginning, even devising a plan as "a mere sequence of figures and tasks" proved a daunting endeavour. In order to imagine a plan, the state needed to *know* everything about the available resources in terms of material infrastructure and skills. Learning about population, territory and infrastructure proved to be a continuous struggle in the first years of planning as this knowledge required the creation of specific legibility (Scott 1999) structures capable to function for emergent categories of people, objects and relations. Their implementation was not only uneasy but also insufficient as they could not capture the daily routines of the production process, the roots of workers' consciousness, their life and death decisions, the power relations on the shop floor, or the fabric in which the factories themselves were sewn.

A population which was able to fulfil the requirements of the plan needed to be created as well, so the capacity of the state to pacify its subjects became crucial for its functioning. The execution of the plan claimed not only all the available workers but also all those with the potential of becoming one. The first plans constituted the matrix within which the making of labour as a socialist project started. The absolute number of workers, their skills, their living conditions, their education, their geographic displacements, their leisure, their marriage choices, their mobility chances, and their hopes and dreams for their children will be intimately entangled with the figures and the numbers of the plan for more than four decades. These early attempts to produce knowledge, to create useful categories of rule, to make a population, a territory and an economy, to control the present and to design broken futures for a unique vision of *the* future represented fundamental dimensions of state / class formation and constituted the reference frame for labour politics in state socialism.

Finally, the socialist plan can be understood as the expression of a never resolved synthesis of conflicting temporalities: the time of production colliding with the time of politics. By "time of production" I understand the fundamental expression of socialist accumulation as time-time compression and the practical requirements and consequences

implied by this expression for factory life. The question behind this term is quite simple: why was socialist accumulation expressed directly in time-related tropes instead of being coined around quantitative or financial terms? Why was the political imaginary of the 1950s wrapped tightly, obsessively, and explicitly around direct expressions of time-time compression rather than around quantity, quality, or efficiency? More concretely, what choice was made when people were requested to accomplish a five-year plan in four years rather than being asked to produce a certain number of shoes, chairs, or screwdrivers? Was this idiom a simple translation of its capitalist counterpart "time is money" with a propagandistic twist towards negating financial logic as the engine of socialist accumulation? Or did it say something more, maybe even something different about the relationship between accumulation, exploitation, and historical backwardness?

"Time of politics" was the other side of the time-time compression logic and it related individual workers to a civilizing project meant to transform them from "simple-minded peasants" to proletarians. Since productivity was also expressed by using a temporal language, categories of rule were created and people were placed in them according to how well they could perform in production. But since production in early socialism was a moral issue, time became essential for deciding upon who could become a socialist exemplary and who could not. While a Stakhanovite, the epitome of socialist consciousness, was always ahead of her time, always *already in the future*, a slacker in production was always behind, still in the past.

Thus, in order to control the planning process, the state had to learn how to master different and many times conflicting temporal horizons within which production and workers themselves were placed simultaneously. The relationship between time and planning stands both as the foundation of socialist accumulation and as the neuralgic point of socialist politics of development that vitally effected people's lives and work. The bright future of socialist society required not only a sacrificial and rhythmic present but also a segmentation of all futures in manageable pieces, in fragments of history not yet to be foreseen and which were then to be adjusted according to the real developments of each plan. Juggling time is a crucial dimension of any act of governance but the totalizing capacity of this exercise, at the same time repressive and enabling, made socialist central planning unique among others and placed its extraordinary contradictions at the very heart of Romanian industrial modernization.

The starting point of my analysis was to unpack the very notion of "centrally planned economy." Instead of starting from a top-down image of a "planned" and "centralized" socialist economy and assess its functioning parameters, I realized an in-depth exploration of

"planning" and "centralization" as *processes* and *relations* at multiple scales, focusing on the way the plan was transformed into economic, political, and everyday practices within productive spaces and on how, in return, these practices were both enabling and constraining for the exercise of state power. An ethnographic handling of the historical data allows me to explore not just how the plan was thought and applied by the state, but how the economy and the state, understood here both as *state-system* and as *state-idea* (Abrams [1977] 2006), were produced in the factory as results of a bundle of planning practices and a set of more and more structured interactions.

The end of this economy in the making was the socialist society as a whole, but the process of its becoming also required the weaving of a specific social fabric made of structured and structuring relations, practices, interactions, and subjectivities. Unsurprisingly, a clearly identifiable tendency towards what we could call *programmatic embeddedness* was manifest in the early years of planning in the discursive and practical drive towards a societal project founded on the explicit recognition of the production's characteristic of being immediately social. In this project, "economy" and "society" were constituting each other in a dialectical relationship which embraced the plan as its ultimate expression. Nevertheless, the socialist states as *modern* states needed to appear as "ideological projects of cohesion and unity" (Abrams [1977] 2006: 122), as the continuous exercise to create institutionalized political and economic power as "at once integrated and isolated," a narrative structure which gave "an account of political institutions in terms of cohesion, purpose, independence, common interest and morality" (Abrams [1977] 2006: 117) to the socialist production and politics.

Understanding the socialist state as non-coherent and always in formation also suggests that the ways in which the boundaries between "state" and "society" were produced and maintained might not be such a different question from how "production" and "life" were at the same time bounded and separated within the socialist regime. The image reconstructed from local documents and oral accounts reveals an everyday tension between the need to recognize and reconcile the immediately social character of production and the continuing logic of accumulation for accumulation's sake. Consequently, for my research, the making of a socialist economy and the "coming to life" of the plan represent extraordinary methodological tools, capable of revealing the production of what Mitchell (1999) called "state effect"[12] through ordinary practices, interactions, and materialities. Against the idea that production and politics were simply fused in state socialism (Burawoy 1985) or radically separated (Corrigan, Ramsey, and Sayer 1978), I take Mitchell's methodological advice

seriously and I plead for the necessity of a proper historical grounding of the shifting boundary between the state, economy, and society. I believe this boundary was as important for the socialist modernization project as it was for the capitalist one. And equally problematic.

Industrial Cluj as a case

I built my case on the analysis of the factory life in Cluj, roughly between 1944 and 1955. For my research, I spent almost two years in the archives of Cluj, my home town, and I had the opportunity to access production minutes, economic reports, proceedings of the County and City Committees of the Romanian Workers Party meetings, instructions from the ministries to the factories, along with local newspapers and legislation. Life histories of the workers from Cluj, memoirs, newspapers interviews, and countless informal conversations with old inhabitants of the city rounded the picture of the formative years of the Romanian socialism and their embedding in local relations, moral economies, and narratives. Although my findings are based on archival sources or oral testimonies about the past, my treatment of the case was ethnographic. My hope was to capture the vivid, complex, and contradictory substance of "everyday life in its extra local and historical context" (Burawoy 1998: 1) through "virtual participation" (Burawoy 1998: 28) in the practices and everyday interactions in the 1950s factories in Cluj.

My choice of the case was not that straightforward. At the end of the World War II, Cluj was more industrialized than other cities in Romania and it did have a core of urban skilled workers, both males and females. Few factories developed in the inter-war period and, when the regime changed, retained some features of paternalism, carrying their social infrastructure into the 1950s. Nevertheless, Cluj was not what we could call an industrial city. Other cities in Romania, like Reşiţa, Ploieşti, Timişoara or Arad had a more developed industry and their life was more centred around factories. There were many artisans and craftsmen in the city but in most cases their production was small-scale, family based, maybe with one or two apprentices around the workshop while their distribution networks were restricted to their own neighbourhoods. The suburbs of the city preserved their rural aspect, giving the city the aspect of a household, with a cultural and religious city centre, surrounded by neighbourhoods in which people combined small-scale industry with agriculture, and by

agricultural suburbs which supported urban consumption as much as the surrounding villages. Hence, Cluj was not the typical socialist new city like Nowa Huta, Novosibirsk, or Magnitogorsk, featuring modernist architecture, huge industrial plants and encouraging long-distance domestic migration which produced young autonomous workers and families who were (at least structurally) closer to the ideal image of the socialist worker featuring in the Soviet-inspired posters.

There seem to be good reasons for which Cluj's industry went almost unnoticed by scholars of the region while it featured prominently in historiography and in social sciences as a contested terrain for ethnic struggles and as an important cultural and educational hub, central for both the Romanian and the Hungarian nation-building projects. Located in the centre of Transylvania, the city shared the history of contested belonging of the whole region but it had its own special place in modernization processes and in the national imaginary of two different states. Thus, one reason for choosing industrial Cluj as my case was the fact that in its history, ethnicity and regional belonging featured as importantly as class. But more than anything, it was precisely the invisibility of production that attracted me the most. At a different historical, geographical, and analytical scale, it was paralleled by the invisibility of class struggle and industrial relations from any previous analysis of the Romanian socialism. Nonetheless, the documents of the time showed very quickly that the battle for Cluj was also a battle for its productive resources, as the city had an important place in the emerging logic of socialist construction. This could not be grasped without accounting both for the daily functioning of the production process in the city factories and for people's lives and mundane concerns. It was fascinating to see how class issues were systematically hidden by ethnicized processes of identification and by a negotiation of the right to the city in which intellectuals (Romanians and Hungarians) seemed to be the only legitimate voices to be heard.

There is a different story to be told about the profound transformation of the city during the post-war years. Although having a Hungarian majority, Cluj started in the late 1940s from being central in the cultural logic of nation-building of two states and semi-peripheral in the emerging Romanian national economy. In just twenty years, it developed a flourishing industry and it attracted enough people coming from rural areas to change the ethnic balance in the city in mid-1960s. This is precisely the period covered by my research. From a Hungarian city of learning and culture in which the Romanian intellectuals played their own card in articulating the right to the city, it became a Romanian city concentrating more than two thirds of its population in the industrial areas. At least in Transylvania, the nationalist component of late socialism represented more than just "discourse." It appealed to

long-lasting resentments and bitterness, partially responsible both for the fragmentation of the identity of the working-class and for the creation of a powerful ideological interplay between the Party-state and the "nation,"[13] with the complex relationship between class and ethnicity as one of the fundamental mediators through which political subjectivities were produced in Cluj. It seems that the battle for Cluj was actually won in the factories more than anywhere else through two related processes: making proletarians out of (Romanian) peasants, and making Romanians out of (Hungarian) workers. Both processes will be under critical scrutiny in my dissertation.

Assuming an ethnic identity or a class identity have never been separated processes in the city because of the way political, religious, and economic rights have been historically fragmented in Transylvania and later in Romania. The complex history of the region shaped its occupational structure as well, and its ethnically segregated nature was a salient characteristic until recently. Integrated for centuries into the economic circuits of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Cluj became one of the relatively industrialized cities of Greater Romania after 1918. Before World War Two, more than a quarter of the city population were workers and most of them lived in two areas in the Northern part of the city, combining their time in the factory with independent work for others and with gardening. For centuries, most labourers, craftsmen and tradesmen in the city were Hungarian and Jewish. The same goes for the prewar capital, management, and workforce in industry, which was also predominantly Hungarian, especially at its core: the highly skilled male workers living in the city. Nevertheless, the interwar period saw the rudiments of a collaboration between Hungarian capital and a thin layer of the emerging Romanian bourgeoisie in the upper echelons of factory administration and management. Romanians, although a majority in Transylvania, constituted a minority in urban areas. In Cluj, they would become a majority no earlier than the mid-1960s, when the face of the city changed for ever due to an intensive wave of industrialization which brought Romanian peasants into the newly built working-class neighbourhoods. Thus, rural / urban and unskilled / skilled cleavages, reproduced hierarchies historically constituted along class and ethnic lines in centuries of domination and marginality.

The historically conflictual relations between the Romanians and the Hungarians represented a significant source of fragmentation of workers' moral economies in Transylvania. It is highly unlikely that Romanian workers could identify with the pre-war labour struggle in Cluj, and it is more likely that they would have perceived it as alien and belonging to the Hungarians. Therefore, even for the cities with a significant number of

workers at the end of the war, it was problematic to talk about a "Romanian" working-class. Later, the waves of rural-urban migration created a fragmented understanding of what it meant to be a "Romanian", a "Hungarian", or a "Clujean". The association between "newcomer", "peasant", and "worker" and the distinction between this clusters of markers and the one comprising "real" or "true Clujean, "urban", "intellectual", and "Hungarian" were permanently enforced within the continuous political negotiation for what the place should stand for. Most importantly, the fact that the working-class in a Romanian workers' state was Hungarian opened a broad space for the hopes that the Hungarians would continue to dominate the urban space. In a strange translation move, for the first postwar years, the celebration of manual work was understood as a celebration of Hungarianness. Because in Transylvania class interests and class consciousness could not be separated from the lived definitions of ethnic identity and citizenship, the articulation of ethnic belonging became more and more salient in the first years after the war, complicating working-class identities and narratives, making labour's interests less transparent, and the political project of building a society for *all* workers difficult.

Behind the struggles for the soul of the nation, the histories of everyday lives and struggles of the workers, merchants, craftsmen, agricultural producers, servants, and commuters in the city tell a different story about hardships, joys, and human relationships. The working-class neighbourhoods developed as "white spaces",[14] blank spots on the map drawn by the economic and the cultural bourgeoisie of the city who defined Cluj as "a city of intellectuals, students, clinics, perfume, theatre, opera, botanical gardens, manners, dancing and restaurants" (socialist urban planner quoted in Petrovici 2012: 7).

For a more in-depth understanding of the variations in labour processes and in the positioning of different factories in the urban fabric and in the developmental logic of the state, I focused on the archives of two factories: *János Herbák*, a leather and footwear factory, founded at the beginning of the 20th century and *Armătura*, a producer of domestic and industrial faucets and fittings which emerged in 1949 through the nationalization and the unification of three formerly private workshops. The 1,200 people working at *Armătura* in 1949 were mainly former craftsmen in the nationalized workshops. *János Herbák* was one of the largest factories in the city, employing over 4,000 workers in 1948, a largely feminized workforce around a core of skilled male workers. Due to its size and rapid growth, *János Herbák* was much more vulnerable to labour turnover, and more dependent upon a semi-proletarian workforce living in the countryside and commuting to town for work. Like most factories in the country, in the first years of planning both factories had to contend with

absenteeism, stealing, and various other disciplinary problems from their workers. The factory managers had very limited possibilities to fire workers, since they were faced with endemic labour shortages, extremely permissive legislation regarding workers' behaviour, constraining employment regulations, and fierce unofficial (and illegal) competition for labour. Following the hard postwar years, both factories enjoyed a peak of commercial success during the socialist period. Until 1960, *Armătura* enjoyed a monopoly position, being the only factory of its kind in Romania. *János Herbák* would eventually become the city's pride, and one of the most export-oriented industrial units in the country in the 1970s, under the name of *Clujana*.

The city's industry was treated as an extended case (Burawoy 1998) which connected a broader world historical context with the virtual observation of practices and localized negotiations of power relations. I extended out and contracted in whenever needed to follow a process from the point of production to another analytical scale and I founded the generalizing force of my work on connected (although sometimes the connections are not immediately visible) comparisons between factories or cities from Eastern and Central Europe. Cluj's industry was treated according to its place in the logic of socialist accumulation and to its role within an abstract hegemonic model of historical becoming.

Following the processes through which the city and the factory constituted each other is enlightening for understanding specific politics of production, welfare distribution flows, and everyday experience of the workers. Equally important, the shop floor was the site where the power relations integral to production were enacted, negotiated and contested, the place where the work hierarchies were produced, and one of the privileged spaces for the increasing managerial and bureaucratic power. The shop floor also had a crucial role in processes of identity formation, as identity became crucially centred around work understood as producing meaningful goods (sometimes beautiful goods) and as a very special relationship with one's body and to materiality.

The ultimate site where the core contradictions of socialist construction were (re)produced, mediated, enacted, negotiated, and transformed, was the factory, not only because heavy industrialization was a central feature of the socialist developmental project but also because in a socialist regime production management was imagined as a fundamental part of the "problematics of government" (Rose and Miller 1992). What was spectacular about the socialist factories was the double permeability of their boundaries: on the one hand, the factories' care and control of their workers extended outside their walls; on the other hand, workers' lives and worries penetrated the factory space, transforming it into unexpected

ways. This intersection made the factory a crucial object of governance and governmentality. As such, the factory became a contested space for the encounter of specific "political rationalities" and "governmental technologies", between concepts of government, their moral justifications, and the totality of techniques and procedures which support the exercise of power (Rose and Miller 1992).

Thus, the socialist factory was more than "an exploiter and an expander" (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2001: 39) so it should be regarded more as a "mystery," "the site of a complex of surplus value distribution processes (as well as production processes) . . . an open, rather than given, complexity – a site continually transformed both by 'internal' forces such as historically changing technological patterns and administrative models, and by more general processes shaping the society within which it exists" (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2001). In my reading, the factory was at the same time part of a successful effort to push history forward for countries like Romania, and part of a historical failure to solve the antagonistic nature of capital accumulation, both in synchronous, and in nonsynchronous terms.

Along these lines, the first chapter of my dissertation explores the roots of the Romanian backwardness and places Romania into a broader history of uneven and combined development in Eastern and Central Europe. From this perspective, socialist construction appears then as one solution among others into a series of visions and efforts to "catch-up" with Western Europe. What distinguished these efforts were the ways in which they linked economic development, class and ethnicity to nation-building and state formation. What connected them was not only their position in relation to various imperial interests and later to the capitalist system but also the establishment of a specific relation to historical time by making the Now into a mere vehicle for the future and devoiding it of significance. The chapter concludes by evaluating the Romanian industrialization from above and the labour question as rather ineffective tools for creating boundaries around a specific territory/population space before the Second World War.

In Chapter 2, I analyse the nationalization of industry not as a historical event that changed property relations – understood as relations of production – but as a complex process of taking control over the factories. This control was fundamental for industrialization and entailed the take-over of the factories as parts of a complex urban fabric. In this process, the factories, the city, and workers' everyday lives had to be negotiated as deeply political terrains, not only on the shop floor but also in the streets.

Chapter 3 starts from the assumption that nationalization was never separated from

collectivization, but a different side of socialist primitive accumulation. It follows the beginnings of socialist industrialization by exploring the localized ways in which uneven and combined development produced uneven proletarianisation and by mapping the local labour force in Cluj factories. I argue that although socialist industrialization theoretically depended upon making peasants into proletarians, it actually had to rely on a flexible workforce who covered an important part of its reproduction by grounding its life both in the countryside and in industrial employment. Consequently, the peasant-worker not the proletarian was the fundamental figure of socialist industrialization. The peasant-worker embodied the encounter between a top-down strategy to integrate rural ways of being in the world with wage labour and peasants' own strategies to reproduce themselves as class. Industrial employment became one tool among others to do so.

Flowing from this discussion of uneven proletarianization, Chapter 4 shows how building socialism without proletarians made it impossible for the factories in Cluj to stabilize labour. It produced a highly competitive and difficult to regulate employment regime in which factories competed for "more precious than gold" workers on informal and localized labour markets. In this context, a collective body of workers was hard to emerge, so it was rather mimicked, as shown in my analysis of the Collective Contract, one of the bureaucratic instruments that were meant to produce factories as communities. Chapter 5 takes up the problem of the discontinuities in production created by the reliance on this rural-urban labour force. I argue that because these discontinuities, both authority and "individual responsibility" were hard to establish on the shop floor and socialist factories could not be transformed into effective disciplinary spaces.

Chapter 6 moves towards a slightly different register and explores the forms of knowledge which laid the ground for the first economic plans of Romanian socialism, between 1949 and 1955. I focus on processes of knowledge production within the space of the factory, following industrial management as a fundamental dimension of the exercise of state power in socialism. Against James Scott's concept of "legibility," my chapter shows that the Romanian Party officials were fully aware of the limitations imposed by standardized knowledge and statistics in their planning activity and tried to counteract these limitations by producing in-depth ethnographic knowledge about economic units, production and people. Narrative and interpretative accounts of factory life proved to be the most efficient tools for a state which managed not only populations and resources, but also social production processes. From this perspective, Chapter 6 is a potentially productive way in which the fragility of the (socialist) modern state can be assessed.

I end my dissertation with an analysis of planning as expression of socialist accumulation, arguing that it stood on an impossible to solve tension between accumulation as foundation for development and the civilizing process entailed by socialist construction. I state that the temporal expression taken by socialist accumulation was not a semiotic accident but an explicit and permanent connection between accumulation, exploitation, and historical backwardness that directly linked every worker and every factory to a specific historical opening. Nevertheless, the reverse was also true, and the very possibility of planning as articulation of togetherness in time can be questioned when people who were placed *productively* and *morally* in a radical nonsynchronicity. My thesis is bound to explore the implications of these ideas, hopefully in a straightforward way convincing.

Notes

[1] J. V. Stalin. "New Conditions – New Tasks in Economic Construction", Speech Delivered at a Conference of Economic Executives, June 23, 1931 *Pravda*, No. 183, July 5, 1931. From J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, p. 559. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976 pp. 532-59. Based on J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, *Moscow, 1955*, Vol. 13, pp. 53-82, author's translation from Romanian. (I preferred to translate the quote from Romanian myself instead of using the standard English translation, as it captures the message transmitted to the Romanian new executives better).

[2] The idea that socialism would degenerate into a dictatorial regime which would rather oppress workers than genuinely attempting to emancipate them is as old as the struggles between various factions of the Left. Its roots are to be found in Bakunin's anarchist critique against Marx's theory of the state and in his prediction that "the true despotic and brutal nature of all states, regardless of their form of government" (Bakunin [1872] 1973: 319) would prevail in a dictatorship of proletariat. Bakunin was as radical as to claim that Marx's proletarian state and Bismarck's aristocratic state were identical, both in their internal politics and in their foreign affairs because the use of force was their common and central feature. His prophecy was that new elites would "corrupt" socialism by monopolizing scientific knowledge and expertise and by dominating workers in their own interest. Fears of dictatorship and of excessive centralization and concerns with the transformation of the Party and its relationship with the masses in a proletarian state were expressed by people coming from very different leftist traditions, from social democrats like Karl Kautsky, anarcho-communists like Emma Goldman, or revolutionary socialists like Rosa Luxemburg (Howard and King 2001).

[3] The tendency to consider both really existing capitalism and really existing socialism as (equally) exploitative and unjust regimes was advanced more and more after the Fourth International, when the Trotskyst tradition split in several groups like Johnson-Forest Tendency and Socialisme ou Barbarie (van der Linden 1997)

[4] Marx's idea of expanded reproduction has as starting point his formula for simple reproduction: c+v+s, where c stands for constant capital, v stands for variable capital and s stands for surplus value. For accumulation to

take place, surplus value must be further divided in c+v+s and added to the initial capital. See *Capital*, volume I, section 7, "The Accumulation of Capital".

[5] The turn in the developmental vision of the Bolsheviks and the adoption of collectivization as the next step in the transition to socialism was a response to the 1920s fierce struggles encountered by the unfolding of the Bolshevik politics on the ground. Although predicated upon the alliance between peasants and workers [*smychka*], Soviet industrialization was cornered by peasants' resistance at every step. "Secure the Harvest!" was the mid-1920s motto that reflected not only a practical need but also the seed of a vision which projected the "countryside" as a homogeneous supporting bloc *against* the needs of the towns (Corrigan, Ramsey, and Sayer 1978). According to this version of the narrative, as trade rapidly declined, radical solutions were adopted to support the rapid tempo of industrialization in the Soviet Union: the peasants were expropriated and forced into large farms to increase agricultural production and make people in the countryside available for industry (Binns 1986; Cliff [1955] 1974)

[6] For a well-taken and empirically supported point against this version of the Soviet industrialization the reader might refer to Millar 1970, 1974 and to Ellman 1975. Although their questioning of the concrete support offered by agriculture to the Soviet first five-year plans is compelling, it exceeds the scope of my discussion.

[7] It still does so in neoliberal times but it is under constant attacks from local and international agricultural companies as land grabbing becomes a prevalent phenomenon in Romania.

[8] As Petrovici (2013) shows in an excellent article, this strategy was revived (less successfully) by multinational companies in the neoliberal 2000s.

[9] Needless to say, my perspective on class does not get along well with the sociological endeavours to regard class as a classification (or stratification) issue. The reader will find no frustrating analytical attempt to produce groupings – "classes on paper" as Bourdieu (1998) calls them – or to identify the individuals' exclusive class position. As it will become plain in my analysis of the labour force in Cluj, socialism (like capitalism) was able to function precisely because class lines were blurred (see also Gibson Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2001).

[10] The Bolsheviks and their postwar East-Central European epigones were simply following the theory of productive forces that plagued the left for decades after the Second International, which linked revolutionary transformation to capitalist modernization as the central paradigm of development and to an artificial separation between base and superstructure.

[11] As Marx ([1867] 1992) shows, in order to take place, accumulation of capital depends on four conditions: first, production has to create surplus value; second, surplus value must be converted into money; third, a part of the realised surplus value needs to be added to the original investment and to assume a productive form – as constant and variable capital; fourth, the new capital must re-emerge as surplus value and assume a money form (see also Luxemburg [1913] 2003). All these necessary conditions were setting the parameters of socialist accumulation as well.

[12] As he (1992: 84) argues, "conceived in this way, the state is no longer to be taken as essentially an actor, with the coherence, agency, and autonomy this term presumes. The multiple arrangements that produce the apparent separateness of the state create effects of agency and partial autonomy, with concrete consequences. Yet such agency will always be contingent on the production of difference – those practices that create the apparent boundary between state and society. These arrangements may be so effective, however, as to make things appear the reverse of this. The state comes to seem an autonomous starting point, as an actor that intervenes in society".

[13] For the most comprehensive analysis of the national ideology in the socialist period, see Verdery, Katherine. 1991. *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

[14] Petrovici, Norbert. Reprezentarea periferiei, http://www.altart.org/culturadezvoltare/?p=223.

Chapter 1: The Romanian backwardness in historical perspective

> The social reproductive process is always based on past labour, we may trace it back as far as we like. Social labour has no beginning, just as it has no end.
> Rosa Luxemburg

The coagulation of national movements in the 19th century East-Central Europe was made possible by an alignment of transformations in the realms of market(s), science and technology, administrative practices, and collective memory (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm [1990] 2000; Anderson [1983] 2006). The underlying comparison with "the West" took many faces – from the embrace of its rational ethos to its total rejection – and created stratified and fluid processes of identification through becoming, belonging, and othering. These changes, loosely understood as "modernization," carried with them a new awareness of history's rhythms and direction and a different understanding of time, which were felt as much by the

Czechoslovakian democratic parliament, by the dynamic peasant parties in the Balkans, or by the aristocracy-led bureaucracy in Hungary. For the first time, "nations" could imagine themselves running ahead, falling behind, or even stepping outside history. For the first time, their elites could articulate projects of the future according to a vision of (non)synchronicity and unevenness that infused and shaped the thinking of what "the state," "the people," or "the territory" meant, and of what they *should* mean. This painfully normative time produced radically different and sometimes opposed projects of development that fought for "the soul of the nation," which was dialectically defined in-between the need for historical advancement and the safety of self-preservation.

This chapter sets itself a multiple task. First, it investigates the historical roots of the Romanian backwardness in its second serfdom and its isolation from Western markets. Second, it places the Romanian story into a broader narrative of uneven and combined development that produced Eastern and Central Europe as region(s) and also created specific possibilities for envisioning the future. Third, the Romanian weak industrialization and the labour question before the Second World War are assessed in their relationship with competing modernization projects and to nation-building. From this perspective, state socialism loses something of its apocalyptic quality – the one that the postsocialist intellectuals seem so much enamoured with – and appears as part of a long-term historical effort to imagine a certain future for countries placed at the margins of capitalist accumulation.

Thus, the second section of this chapter will uncover the deep historical roots of the Romanian backwardness between the Middle Ages and the creation of Greater Romania: its isolation from the Western markets and its placement at the intersection of various imperial interests, which further produced internal unevenness between Transylvania, Bukovina, Moldavia, and Wallachia. The third section will sketch the contours of the Romanian Second Serfdom and its impact on the beginnings of the Romanian proletarianization. In the fourth section, I will briefly review the place of industrialization in the interwar competing modernization projects and in the last part of this chapter, I will show how the labour question in an agrarian country was made into a tool of creating an inside and an outside for the nascent Greater Romania.

These are modest tasks, which do not equate with an attempt to "explain" the Romanian backwardness. Not that it would be possible. As an outcome of uneven and combined development at world scale, there was nothings exceptional about Eastern Europe's backwardness. Its rhythms of progress were slow and its trajectory non-linear, just like in the

rest of the world. Thus, there is nothing to be "explained" about the East-Central Europe's economic stagnation; it is rather the dynamism of few states from Western Europe that must be accounted for (Brenner 1991). The roots of Western exceptionalism that constituted the moist hummus for the birth of capitalism have been identified in the particular role of towns, craftsmanship, and citizenship in the Middle Ages (Weber [1922] 1978; Bloch 1961); in the combination between relatively high density of population and the emergence of settled agriculture; in the geographical, economic, and political expansion of the 15th and 16thcentury; in the specific form taken by processes of class and state formation at the outburst of Industrial Revolution (Brenner 1976, 1985); in the emergence of a world economy articulated around Western trade (Braudel [1972] 1992; Wallerstein 1974); or in transnational alliances of the bourgeoisie that resulted in straightforward state capture (Kalb 2013). No matter if the reader prefers one of these explanations or takes them as complementary, it is clear that already in the 16th century a part of Western Europe had a clear economic (agriculture and trade) advantage compared to Eastern Europe.

The 19th century self-understanding of Eastern Europe as "backward" followed its imagining – indeed its "invention" – as Western Europe's "complementary other half," "a work of cultural creation, of intellectual artifice, of ideological self-interest and self-promotion" (Wolff 1994: 4). This "cultural creation" was far from innocent; it accompanied the absorption of a large part of Europe – the "backward" one – into certain slots of the capitalist world market (Gerschenkron 1962) and it justified the spoliation of their natural resources and labour by a West that easily transformed them into intra-European colonies, starting with Bohemia and Poland, continuing with Hungary, and finally getting to the Romanian Principalities[1] and to the spaces previously belonging to the Ottoman sphere. The alignment of their class structures, their increasing dependency on capitalist economy, the timing of their absorption on the orbit of Western capital, and their long-term exposure to conflicting imperial interests actually produced "Central Europe," "Eastern Europe," or "the Balkans" as *regions* (see Allen, Massey and Cochrane 1998). From the end of the 19th century, virtually all these regions became distinctive and unequal combinations of productive forces, technological capacity, and resources that emerged from the articulation of their histories in specific cultural and economic relations with the West. Their combinatory and uneven nature was reproduced internally and, together with their fragility as national constructions, further created non-homogeneous territories and populations battling with the burden of being *in* history.

Historically, contact with "the West" had contradictory effects for East-Central

Europe: in 16th century Poland, it created an all-powerful nobility, a peasantry immiserated by a late (or second) serfdom, and it decreased the power of towns and merchants. German, then English and Dutch entrepreneurs in textile industry created a successful form of proto-industrialism in the 17th century Bohemia, but these developments did not lead to the abolishment of servile labour and guilds, or to general social improvement. To this state of things, the Austrians responded with mercantilist policies, which encouraged the rapid growth of the Bohemian manufactures in the 18th century. Coal mining, sugar beet refineries, and machine industry quickly came in the trail of textiles in the 19th century. Further East, the incorporation of Hungary in the Habsburg world – itself semiperipheral – did not bear fruits of progress until in the 19th century, when railways construction allowed the Hungarian agriculture to be fully exploited. At roughly the same time, dependency on Western markets made the Romanian peculiar neo-serfdom more profitable for landlords and produced an inhumane form of peasant exploitation that lasted well into the 20th century (Chirot 1991; Dobrogeanu-Gherea 1910; Lampe 1991; Murgescu 2010; Stokes 1991). To complicate the picture more, for the Ottoman Balkans it was not dependency upon but the isolation from the Western trade between the 15th and the 19th century that produced "peripheral retardation by another imperial but less capitalist core" (Lampe 1991: 195). For centuries, this marginality delayed any incentive for technological advancement, re-organization of agrarian relations, or craftsmanship development in the Romanian Principalities, Transylvania, or Hungary. Even after the take-off of agricultural exports from Eastern to Western Europe in the second part of the 19th century, the achievement of stable polities that would be able to coherently transform "growth" into "development" would take decades. For some of them, it would materialize only under state socialism.

Catching-up? From the Middle Ages to the 19th century

Transylvania and the Romanian Principalities fell in-between the three economic universes that coexisted in Europe between the 16th and the 18th century – Western, Russian, and Ottoman (Braudel [1979] 1992). Placed on the boundary between the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, and Tsarist Russia, their entitization as states and later as a common national project stood at the intersection between imperial interests centred on the necessity to secure fiscal exploitation, trade routes and military frontiers. Their history placed them in the

interplay between isolation from and dependency upon Western markets (and to a lesser extent technology).

Until the 19th century, Wallachia and Moldavia were relying mainly on cattle export, joining Southern Poland, Hungary, and Denmark as exporters on the trade line that supplied the growing cities of Netherlands, Germany, and Northern Italy (Chirot 1976; Gunst 1991; Murgescu 2010). Apart from this, the trade of the two Romanian Principalities was very limited and involved mainly exports of salt to the Ottoman Empire, Poland, and Russia, and small quantities of other products – wine, tobacco, spirits, timber, honey, and wax. Sharing a relative isolation from the Western markets and a burdening Ottoman domination, nobles in Hungary, Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia generally increased their incomes through internal trade monopolies, mostly on wine and spirits, but also on the licensing of mills, butcheries, and inns (Gunst 1991).

Income from trade in the Romanian Principalities was mostly used for paying the duties for the Porte and the two provinces became increasingly subjected to the Ottoman Empire's "command economy." The taxation of the movement of goods through the Wallachian and Moldavian territories represented the main sources of revenue for the two states and prompted the slow evolution of unified accounting and measurement systems (see Olaru 2013). Until the 19th century, grain was destined to supplying Constantinople and the Ottoman army. Cattle, money, and workforce took the same road in a supply chain involving both tribute and trade in unequal terms (Murgescu 2010; Adanir 1991). These various forms of payments imposed by the Ottoman Empire were managed directly by the Wallachian and Moldavian princes and by a centralized administrative apparatus and produced a heavily burdening fiscal regime for the peasantry (Murgescu 2010).

Due to its strategic positioning in relation to the Habsburgs, Transylvania remained more protected in front of Ottoman domination, which ended in the last decades of the 17th century, much earlier than in the other two provinces. It was ruled by Hungarian princes even when the rest of Hungary was under direct Ottoman rule and it preserved a specific form of political autonomy after it became part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867.[2] Although Transylvania was also part of the European cattle trade routes, due to its gold and silver reserves, its stronger aristocracy with different patterns of consumption, and its more successful cities, it was less dependent upon its exports. The complicated involvement with the Hungarian Kingdom and its nobility's struggle for autonomy severed its direct links with the 18th century Austrian industrialization policy – which was anyway uneven and leaning towards the Western part of the Monarchy. From its position as a periphery of a semi-

periphery, Transylvania did not become integral part of the Hungarian process of industrialization either (Stokes 1991). Thus, it did not benefit from the configuration that made flour and food processing, machine building, and electrical and chemical industries flourish in Hungary in the second part of the 19th century (Stokes 1991).

Transylvania was clearly integrated in the East-Central European "second serfdom," not as a configuration of class relations that emerged to support the cereal production destined to Western markets like in Poland or in Hungary, but as a form of exploitation that ensured the consumption needs of its local aristocracy (Prodan 1968; Murgescu 2010). As such, Transylvania had one of the worst serfdom regimes in Europe, with an almost unchecked power of its landlords hit from time to time by extremely violent peasant rebellions uniting Wallachians (Romanian) and Hungarian peasants alike in their struggle against unbearable taxes and tithes and against the impossibility to move freely on the land.[3] Peasants' struggle got an ethnicized character in the 18th century – although not necessarily perceived as such – as class relations increasingly followed the lines that separated the three *natios* that had citizenship status – Szekler, Saxon, and Hungarian (Magyar) – from the Romanian peasantry and produced a complicated tapestry of class/ethnic relations in the region.

> Transylvania as a whole, then, comprised a feudal aristocratic landowning class with rights to labour (this class being largely Catholic or Calvinist, Magyar-speaking, and resident in the Counties); a collection of bourgeois groups – artisans and merchants – (largely German-speaking, Lutheran Saxons, though a number of locally resident merchants were Greeks, Armenians, and Wallachians); free smallholding peasants (some were Magyar-speaking Szeklers of various religions, more were Romanian-speaking Orthodox and German-speaking Lutherans); and various kinds of dependent cultivators – serfs and cottars (a very few German-speaking Lutherans, some Magyar-speakers, of various religions, and large numbers of Orthodox Romanian-speakers) (Verdery 1983:135).

The formal and short-lived liberation of the serfs in 1785 had limited modernizing influence in the region, as Transylvania's strong conservative aristocracy was still all-powerful, even in front of Habsburg Monarchy's attempts to regulate the lord-peasant relationship in order to preserve and to create a taxing peasantry on the land. Moreover, although Transylvania continued to be somehow integrated in the regional economic structures of the Habsburg

Empire and to convert this integration into a higher agricultural productivity, into a modest growth of the manufacturing sector, and into a more advanced pattern of urbanization, its peripheral position in relation to the Monarchy's economic strategy was obvious: its exports were rather raw materials, metals requiring a low level of processing, or flour from Banat to the flourishing Budapest's mills (Murgescu 2010). Even in the 19th century, the Transylvanian economy never took a step forward, towards machine building, timber industry, or more advanced manufacturing.

Table 1. Urbanization rate in the three Principalities

	1500	1600	1700	1800
Transylvania	3.5	4	5.8	7.1
Moldavia	3	3.6	3.3	5.8
Wallachia	4	5.3	5	5.7
Europe (without Russia)	15.1	17.1	16.7	17.5

*% starting from 2,000 inhabitants, after Murgescu 2010: 59

However, Transylvania was economically more advanced than Moldavia and Wallachia. Moreover, it was one of the island of religious toleration in Europe and its population was more educated, especially the German and the Hungarian *natio*, for whose 17th century serfs was not uncommon to send their kids to school (Verdery 1983). Its urbanization patterns were also different as small localities emerged around salt and ore mines under the control of the Habsburg Imperial state companies that benefitted from the centrally controlled prices of the Habsburgs. Around these exploitations, a labour force that combined agriculture with work in the slowly growing extractive proto-industry was formed (Verdery 1983).

The German cities in South-East developed more rapidly and enjoyed privileged that were uncommon for other localities. They were isolated from the rest of the Transylvanian population and had their own trade routes, structure of military fortifications, and provisioning system. In their territories, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian kings supported the colonization of German peasants for military, economic, and fiscal reasons. It was also hoped that knowledge transfers between colonizers and the rest of the population would take place. In exchange, the settlers were permitted to maintain their social organization under the German law [*Deutsches Recht*] and to preserve their status of free cities (Gunst 1991). For

similar reasons, the colonization of Schwabs was promoted in Banat by the Habsburg monarchy, the settling of Anabaptist Moravian miners was supported by the Transylvanian princes, and the migration of Transylvanians was encouraged by many cities in the two Romanian Principalities.

Urbanization in the other two provinces under scrutiny was entangled with trade and with the weak development of craftsmanship. In Moldavia and Wallachia, the few towns that developed before the 18th century were mainly stopping points on the commercial land roads linking the Black Sea and the Danube to Western Europe. Since the 14th century, they were transit territories and cities for oriental silk and spices, as well as for Western metal work and cloth. As important passage points on these trade routes, the cities did not develop as free cities but belonged to the state, together with their hinterlands. The nascent urban bourgeoisie in the Wallachian and Moldavian cities was dominated by Greek, Armenian and later Jewish merchants or by Austrian, Hungarian, and Jewish craftsmen. This would prove crucial for how the labour question was going to be defined in the 20th century and for its entanglement with the intensifying nationalism and anti-Semitism of the time.

Second Serfdom and the beginnings of the Romanian proletarianization

Peasant communities in the Romanian Principalities were mainly pastoral and their many herds of cattle, sheep, horses, and pigs constituted their main resource, both for paying the Ottoman tribute and for inter-regional livestock export. Plains were generally used as pasture land and as hay reserves. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century in the southern part of Romania, no more than a third of the land that was good for cultivation was cleared for this purpose (Stahl [1980] 2008).[4] Technology also remained primitive and the iron plough itself was still not used in Wallachia until the end of the 19th century.[5] While the peasants from the mountain areas from Transylvania and Moldavia practiced transhumance and migrated to the south every winter for a milder weather, the peasants from Wallachia had shorter routes for their movement and raised their animals around their villages, sometimes even letting them wander freely for weeks, sometimes building temporary enclosures for them in the field. These temporary enclosures were guarded and tended by villagers who spent months away from their homes, inhabiting equally temporary huts which spread around

the fields and the hills into a diffuse pastoral network of shelters, enclosures, hay lofts, and houses that were also efficient in keeping the villagers out of the tax collectors' reach for years. Because of the low population density and the characteristics of the village communities, untouched land was plentiful, so agriculture itself was itinerant and most of the time secondary to pastoral activities, creating a characteristic rural landscape dominated by pasture land and forests but sprinkled with small lots for cereal or vegetable crops (Chirot 1976; Stahl [1980] 2008).

From the 14th century onwards, the history of the Romanian villages can be read as one of many century-long decline, as many of them succumbed to serfdom and to a more and more exploitative agricultural regime.[6] The 15th and the 16th centuries witnessed a deep demographic crisis following a long period of war, famine, epidemics, and raising taxes. Extreme depopulation produced a severe labour shortage in the countryside while the bitter struggle against peasants' mobility and scattering established as a three century long background of the Romanian "second" serfdom. Binding peasants to their land emerged in the late 16th century as a solution for the devastating disintegration of the old village communities – manifested rather as a form of hiding in Scott's (1985) sense –, which made the gathering of the tithe and the collection of the tribute impossible.[7] Only then the bodies of the serfs became "the property of the boyar who could buy and sell them like work animals" (Stahl [1980] 2008: 127), making them part of dowries, moving them from one village to another, or using them as domestic servants.[8]

Nevertheless, although bondage came as an extreme measure to stabilize workforce, it met with fierce resistance from the peasants. People continued to flee, crossing the borders to the North, to the Danube towards the Balkans, or to the mountains towards Transylvania, and were replaced by their counterparts from other neighbouring provinces who tried to escape their own bondage by losing their traces. Many deserted areas were repopulated by force, using local militia or state troops, but many peasants could not be caught or forced to come back to their villages. They preferred to sign agricultural contracts with other boyars who offered them better living conditions, access to more land, or less exploitative corvées. Moreover, the serfs' productivity declined sharply compared to that of the corvée labourers (Stahl 1980). This falling behind in agricultural productivity was going to prove crucial in the 19th century, when cereal exports became the main source of income for the Romanian principalities.

The tension between the two strategies – competing for peasants by contracting their work and violently binding them to the soil – gave birth to a highly conflictual configuration

in which serfdom and quasi-voluntary corvée survived for more than two centuries, until mid-1700s. A parallel evolution is worth mentioning here. As landlords preferred newcomers without ties to the village community on their domains, rich and middle peasants who held a hereditary patrimony and could "prove" its genealogical line were often "freed" from their possessions and chased out of the village. They formed a more and more numerous category of wandering peasants who were offered temporary work for other landlords or for the rich peasants in the nearby villages. They were generally allowed to live simply as workers on the land for which they furnished corvée labour but many of them became highly mobile, travelled far and survived on day wage (in kind or in money) by working in vineyards, fisheries, or salt mines. Later, these mobile peasants would migrate or commute to the towns where they constituted a section of the 19th century emerging proletariat or fell into awful poverty, illness, and misery (Stahl 1980; Pătrășcanu 1945).

The top-down reforms of the 18th and 19th century attempted to untie the peasant from the land by allowing the serfs to "repurchase" their freedom and later by establishing property rights over land.[9] Through the reform of Constantin Mavrocordat – mid 18th century – the rights to the land and to the human beings were redefined: both serfs and the corvee peasants were mixed in a new corvée category (clăcași). They were free personally – which meant that they could not be sold as the slaves – but not economically – for the land they used they had to render corvée and tithes to the landlord. This was the beginning of the process whereby the boyars become owners of the land and could define their rights against the peasants genealogy-based claims. The reforms only stamped the processes already unfolding in the Romanian villages where the dissolution of bondage became economically more advantageous. On the ground, the application of the reforms met another wave of massive depopulation, soon to be followed by a demographic explosion and a devastating land fragmentation in the 19th century. Their practical effect was an accelerated development of the Romanian "neo-serfdom" and a legal punctuation of an exploitation landscape based on a combination of slave labour, serf labour, corvée labour, and hired labour (Dobrogeanu-Gherea: 1910).[10]

Due to their lack of infrastructure, the Romanian Principalities remained outside the water routes for grain trade that supplied the Dutch cities for centuries. Until the second half of the 19th century, they were basically out of cereal Western trade. Thus, in both Principalities, large-scale cereal production started only after the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) made the Bosphorus' waters friendly for the Russian trading ships, after the Ottoman Empire gave up its commercial monopoly in the area, and after the railways built due to a top-down

(state) initiative finally linked Eastern Europe to the world grain trade routes (Gunst 1991; Chirot 1976; Murgescu 2010).[11] The boyars could now engage freely in large-scale cereal trade, so they rapidly turned from animal raising to wheat growing. The transport of grains along the Danube was developed and modern ports were hastily constructed. With the whole economic axis of the country thus displaced, with land routes replaced by river and maritime routes, wheat became the main export merchandise.[12]

When the two Romanian Principalities joined the world grain market in the mid-19th century, their extremely backward agricultural technology and low productivity required a new form of stabilizing and controlling the peasants, one that would function as corvée labour while maintaining the appearance of modern property relations. Thus, although the successive land reforms were dressed into modernizing clothes, they represented a very efficient solution to fill the empty coffers of the state and of the boyars, to stop the continuing fleeing of peasants, and to repopulate the deserted villages. For more than a century, peasants struggled to buy out their freedom but most of them did not have the financial means to do so, so debt bondage spread rapidly. Some were unable to ever repay these loans and fell back into serfdom, this time with increasing obligations to their masters. Even when peasants were able to find the necessary money to buy their liberty, the "free" peasants of the 19th century were not equal to the 15th century ones. They did not have any right to the communal land anymore, and were fully dependent upon agricultural contracts. As a result, the peasants were subjected to harsher and harsher corvées and lived the 19th century as the worst historical form of peasants' exploitation in the Romanian history.

In many ways, the combination of capitalist and feudal class relations that dominated the 19th century also structured the first part of the 20th century. After more than one century since the liberation of the serfs, rural population could still feel the heavy burden of repaying their redemption or for buying their land (Gunst 1991). Exploitative farming and a low technological level of agriculture, overpopulation and a late demographic transition, indebtedness, shortage of capital, and the survival of land communes dominated by the local lords until late in the 20th century led to bloody revolts that revealed the turmoilous fabric of the Romanian immiserated countryside.[13]

While the large capitalist farms in Bohemia, in Poland and in Hungary came to rival the ones in Netherlands, in France, or in Bavaria, in the Romanian Principalities the situation was completely different. Even after what was supposed to be a radical Land Reform after the First World War, the Romanian agriculture was still much behind its European or American counterparts and was still dominated by extremely exploitative relations between landlords

and peasantry. Peasants' land plots were still insufficient and of bad quality, traction animal were scarce or inexistent,[14] agriculture was still extensive and its productivity was low, markets for local products were weak, communications and transportation were underdeveloped, skilled agricultural labour and expertise were almost inexistent, and the price balance between industry and agriculture always favoured the former. In 1930, around 32 percent of the sown areas was still constituted by large estates (over 50 hectares), the only ones to use any agricultural equipment (Pătrășcanu 1945). Peasantry's standard of living was actually dropping: child mortality was the highest in Europe, consumption of basic items decreased, and more than half of the peasants were illiterate. The 1921 Land Reform, although one of the most progressive of the time from a legal perspective, could not stop the future contradictory tendencies of land fragmentation for peasants and land concentration for agrarian capital. Twenty years after, many peasants had to sell their lands because they were insufficient to ensure their families' subsistence and in many villages, the percentage of the land sold during these two decades reached almost 40 percent. Both capital and better-off peasants benefited from the sales, further producing social differentiation and inequality in the villages.

Although the majority of peasants still worked as corvée labourers, wage labour made its apparition in the Romanian countryside.[15] In 1930, more than 15 percent of the active agricultural population was proletarianized. To this, statistics could add apprentices and servants on the large domains but also a large number of peasants whose piece of land was insufficient and needed to work for a living. In fact, estimations from the 1930s set the proportion of poor peasants – less than 3 hectares of land to 33 percent, at a time when less than 3 hectares could not cover even the food needs of the family and less than 5 hectares could ensure the food necessity but not the clothes of the family members (Pătrășcanu 1945).[16]

Two separations – essential for the evolution of proletarianization in the region – were realized in this period: first, the breach between individuals' possession and common ownership; and second, the split between person and land as her own possession. This long history of dispossession produced poverty and a growing category of highly mobile and precarious peasants, wandering for seasonal and daily work and supplying the cities with a flexible and easy to ignore workforce. As the next chapters will show, the mobility of labour was there to stay. This category of peasant-workers would prove crucial for the functioning of the socialist factories as well and was going to be explicitly integrated into an overall strategy of development and territorial systematization in the 1970s. Let us move on to the ways in

which industrialization from above as a solution for escaping backwardness was integrated in the modernization debates of the interwar period.

Industrialization from above in the Romanian modernization debates

At the beginning of the 20th century, East-Central Europe's backwardness was established as "fact" in a world dominated by growing economic disparities within and between states.[17] It was inscribed in the national building projects of every state in the region, which however, resembled more a complicated tapestry of "falling behind" or "catching-up" integrated as failure or success stories by the local modernizing elites. The 19th century Bohemia had a high level of urbanization and industrialization, representing an important internal market for agricultural goods, raw materials, and capital. As part of Imperial Germany's protected area, Western Poland outran and left behind the rural, agrarian Eastern Poland. Hungary's slowly emerging industry was accompanied by an increasingly advanced agriculture, a strong class of large capitalist landlords and a quick process of proletarianization due to the fragmentation of land, insufficient wages, and rampant unemployment.

Starting with the 19th century, the Romanian modernizers struggled to understand how to achieve a *Romanian* industry and what place to carve for it in the national modernization project as a whole. They were soon to understand that these were questions without a straightforward answer. Liberals, social-democrats, socialists, conservatives, and fascists faced the same ardent issues: "the abyss between urban and rural Romania" (Dobrogeanu-Gherea 1910: 5); the (im)possibility to transfer liberal institutional forms from the West; and Romania's multiple dependencies on the West (Jowitt 1978). The solutions were placed in a space carved between the possibility to believe in the uniformity of developmental stages all over the globe, the suitability of open or closed strategies of economic development, and the very possibility of liberal democracy in backward countries (Chirot 1978).

With all their inconsistencies due to the lack of sophisticated technical knowledge of their proponents and opponents, the Romanian industrialization debate conveyed a sense of historical urgency coupled with a clear Gerschenkronian awareness that in a backward country, industrialization must come from above. Or, in the words of an 19th century celebrated economist and historian:

> The entire progress of our nation has taken place in a sense opposite to that taken by other people: instead of developing from below upward, civilization has come to us from above downward. Thus we have a constitution that must teach us freedom, instead of the exercise of freedom giving birth to a constitutional compact; thus we have railroads before we have covered roads . . . . From this it ensues that we must develop industry on the basis of the latest results that Western nations have attained, through large-scale industry (Xenopol 1881 quoted in Montias 1978: 60).

The obsession with the West was indisolubly related to any notion of "independence" the Romanian elites produced in the 19th and the 20th century, as gaining independence meant "making itself intelligible and recognizable to the West" (Jowitt 1978: 21) and, of course, opening the gates to Western capital. This obsession further shaped the debate around the very nature of the Romanian capitalism. The most important questions were: Who (read what class) was going to be the agent of change in Romania? and Where is this change going to come from – from the West or from the Romanian elites' themselves?[18]

The intellectual debates of the time contrasted two visions of development and two corresponding visions of history. The liberal vision had its roots in the class position of its representatives – lesser boyars moving into the expanding state apparatus "to become political rather than economic entrepreneurs" at a time when "the great landowners embraced the institution of neo-serfdom in an overall arrangement that recognized a market in grain but not in land and labour" (Janos 1978: 83). The increasingly protectionist international environment, Romania's newly gained political independence from the Porte, the rising agricultural prosperity due to a favourable price conjuncture, the inflow of Austrian and then German capital, the rise of foreign and domestic banks and the infrastructural improvements led the liberals as the representatives of national urban bourgeoisie to implement protective tariffs for encouraging industrial development (Montias 1978).[19] Their main theoretician, Stefan Zeletin, saw Romania's history as an outcome of fixed developmental stages, which led to the making of Greater Romania as the culmination of a nationalist program that drove foreign capital – and the Jews as its embodiments – out of the country. This process created a promising, integrated economy that was going to prevent the danger of Western capital transforming the Romanian economy into a supplier of oil and grains to the Western markets, dependent upon other countries' (mainly Germany's) manufacturing sector. As a capitalist oligarchy, formed *as* political elite and not *in opposition* to a centralized form of governance, the Romanian bourgeoisie appeared as the only one capable to produce and sustain

industrialism as the next developmental stage. Thus, economic closure and protectionist measures were called for, as this capitalist oligarchy was advised to transform "Greater Romania" into "Closed Romania" (Zeletin 1925). Western democracy was to take a back seat to the needs of the Romanian bourgeoisie, which would lead Romania into its industrial modernization, the one that would "spread through the dead pastoral past and revive the nation, creating a new society and a new type of man" (Zeletin 1925).

This program would find its extreme expression in the emergence of a corporatist vision of the Romanian future, subjected to the rule of a single party who would engineer the way out of backwardness understood as inherent in the structure of the interwar capitalist world economy (as it appears, for instance, in the work of the main exponent of corporatism in interwar Romania, Mihail Manoilescu). The aim of this social engineering was an extreme efficiency, a total elimination of waste, and a complete domination of the country's resources by bureaucratic rationality (Janos 1978).

Both conservative and leftist intellectuals opposed the liberals' program but from very different grounds. As representatives of the large landowners, the conservatives brought forward a reactionary position that mixed a romanticized image of the national past, the village life, and a vision of modernization as danger. Their circles comprised a variety of anti-Semites, anti-modernists, and pastoralists, many of them formed in the spirit of German romantic ideals, conveniently used for protecting a class position threatened by the rise in power of the Romanian industrial capital. This also led the representatives of the Peasants' Party to support foreign investments in Romania as capital inflows were considered helpful to enhance military capacity and to strengthen state administration, both useful for a boost in wheat export, the primary commodity on which the Romanian landlords' fortune depended.

On the other side of the Romanian political space, many socialist intellectuals angrily reacted to the transformation of the Romanian state-space into a "district" of the more advanced part of the world (Dobrogeanu-Gherea 1968) and to the ways in which Western Europe became the only economic, cultural, and social referent for an important part of the local elites. Their strong opposition to the meagre inflows of foreign capital came from an acute awareness of peripherialization, a realization of the fact "that their societies were not headed for capitalist development – that their societies had been absorbed into the world capitalist market for a long time and yet remained backward. This backwardness corresponded neither to a development stage nor to some romantic 'traditionalism'" (Chirot 1978: 36). Thus, socialists and social-democrats had a different vision of the Romanian history at the turn of the century: not as a form of late feudalism or as a social formation

lacking in modernity, but as "a monstruous distortion of capitalism" (Chirot 1978: 40-41). Its history resembled much the evolution of other backward countries. Since the only thing foreign capital wanted form Romania was wheat and the Romanian agriculture was unprepared for this challenge, neo-serfdom appeared as the only possibility to force the wheat out of the peasants' hands (Voinea 1926). The possibility that the weak, corrupt local bourgeoisie would prove capable to lead Romania on a progressive path was simply mocked by the left. Its leading theoretician (Voinea 1926) predicted that a protected oligarchy would not find any incentive for efficiency but rather survive by transferring sheer exploitation from peasants' onto workers' shoulders. Economic closure was not going to work and the historical salvation was going to come only after Western capitalism itself was going to be transcended by revolution. History would prove only his former assertion right.

These were the lines of force that set the background conditions of the Romanian industrialization in the 19th and the first part of the 20th century. As an enterprise from above, it was going to prove weak, a rather hit and miss incoherent endeavour that could not keep pace with the strong industrializing tendency of much of Europe. The Romanian labour question was going to prove especially hard to solve, as there was little Romanianness in the emerging industrial labour force or capital. As we will see in the next section, the historical evolution of social protection and labour legislation in the first half of the 20th century was as much a response to the national problem as it was a reaction to the menace of the work conflicts' radicalization in Greater Romania.

The labour question as nation-building

As one of the winners of the First World War in terms of territorial and political gains, the Romanian state incorporated several new territories: not only Transylvania but also Bessarabia, a territory disputed with Tsarist Russia for over a century, and Bukovina, formerly part of the Habsburg Empire. Beyond the realization of a national ideal, for the conservative landlords, for the liberal lesser boyars, or for the emerging urban bourgeoisie, Greater Romania was supposed to function as an integrated market, which would provide both better access to raw materials and an increasing demand for Romanian goods. Together with these territories, the newly made state inherited a stronger industrial base, especially in Transylvania. The long history of metal working starting from the Habsburg era, the iron ore

reserves in Banat, the machine building technology, the growing chemical and pharmaceutical industry, and the solid supply of water power, charcoal and coking were especially important for the materialization of the liberal ideas of fiscal protectionism and nostrification (the encouragement of industry founded by Romanian citizens) (Turnock 1974).

Uneven development within Greater Romania was clearly understood as an issue that had to be addressed, especially when it came with rampant unemployment and poverty. Thus, for instance, the state provided strong support for the transformation of flax and hemp industries from domestic industries to manufacturing in remote areas. Textiles, although destined to domestic consumption and remaining mainly artisanal were also heavily protected, not only in order to protect local workforce but also to reduce the Greater Romania's dependency on cotton yarn imports. The central industrial region of Brașov was further developed due to its fundamental role of linking the two formerly separated economies. The state also encouraged the important leather and fur centres in Transylvania and Bukovina. The large footwear factories in Cluj, Oradea, Sibiu, or Timișoara were among the main beneficiaries of this support. Nevertheless, fighting uneven development was not something that the state could (or was willing to) support systematically. First and foremost, rapid industrial growth necessarily demanded electricity and a general electrification plan was completely unattainable before the war. Key projects like the Iron Gates hydroelectrical dams on the Danube had been already imagined in 1924 but they were going to materialize much later, in the 1960s. In good Leninist tradition, general electrification would become the first fundamentally integrative work of the communists in the 1950s, and their first major achievement.

But Greater Romania did not simply incorporate a larger market and a more advanced economy. It also had to integrate a population with an alarming proportion of ethnic minorities which were more educated, more skilled, and more "modern" than the Romanian majority (Livezeanu 2000). The initial enthusiasm faded soon after 1918, as the Romanian state started to live its new history in fear: fear for competing territorial claims, fear for minority rights claims, fear for its incapacity to overcome the markedly fragmented character of its economic resources and administrative structures, and fear for not being able to produce identification processes powerful enough to triumph over the fundamentally different histories of its main provinces (Livezeanu 2000; Case 2009; Brubaker 2006).[21]

Table 2. Percentage of Romanians in general and urban population, by province, 1930

	General population (%)	Urban population (%)
Greater Romania	71.9	58.6
Old Kingdom	88.5	74.3
Transylvania	57.8	34.7
Bukovina	44.5	33.0
Bessarabia	56.2	31.0

Source: Livezeanu 2000: 10[20]

The cities proved especially difficult to integrate in the Romanian nation-building project as ethnic minorities made up to 85 percent of the urban population (in Chernowitz, for instance) and dominated the urban space economically, politically, and symbolically. Thus, the interwar effort of unification was centred around education and administrative development.

The Romanian politics explicitly entailed a project of producing an urban Romanian population, supposed to be the bearer of a new form of citizenship: advanced, modern, and national. A certain type of intellectual – the intellectual with a mission – dominated the cultural bourgeoisie of the time (Livezeanu 2000; Faje 2014). Children from rural areas were encouraged to attend school as part of a concentrated attempt to form a Romanian urban elite and a much needed category of Romanian civil servants. This wave of politics promoting Romanianness and massive changes in the administration made more than two hundred thousands Hungarians leave the region for Hungary after 1920 (Case 2009). As Table 3 shows, the Hungarians' proportion in Transylvania's population drastically dropped in two decades, transformation that impacted especially the social fabric of the cities.

Table 3. The population of Transylvania, by ethnicity, 1910 and 1930

	Romanians	**Hungarians**	**Germans**	**Jews**
1910				
Total (%)	51.9	30.6	10.4	3.4
Urban (%)	17.6	55.6	14.2	9.6
1930				
Total (%)	57.8	24.4	9.8	3.2
Urban (%)	35.0	37.9	13.2	10.4

Source: Sabin Manuilă, "Aspects demographiques de la Transylvanie," p.70-73.

Although the making of Greater Romania as a project had social rights and a vision of social progress at its core, these ideals were soon to be swallowed in the disastrous evolution of the entire world during the interwar period. As an agrarian country, Romania was one of the big losers of the agricultural products price fall in the 1920s and in the 1930s.

The economic costs of the political unification of Greater Romania and the consequences of the international crisis were to be amplified by an uninspired dance of the Romanian elites between protectionist policies and an irrational bowing in front of foreign capital and foreign expertise (Murgescu 2010; Turnock 1986). Romania's exports were subevaluated, French experts were controlling the National Bank, and a generally high level of indebtedness (since the 19th century onwards) was used more for the development of a standing army and of a Romanian administration than for infrastructure, industrialization, and general social advancement. This continuation of a five-century long history of accumulating economic and social disparities left Romania of the mid-20th century one of the most backward countries in Europe, a neo-colony which constantly failed to transform its small transfers of capital into systematic growth and even less into development. Interwar Romania was a polarized society where most people lived in extreme poverty, it had one of the lowest incomes per capita in Europe, one of the lowest national incomes, the lowest agricultural productivity, the smallest index of consumption, the lowest life expectancy, the highest child mortality, and the highest illiteracy rate, even among the Eastern European states (Murgescu 2010: 216-219).

As a consequence of this situation, the first serious legislative advancement during the interwar period was in the field of social security. Like most of the debates around the labour question in the interwar years, social security was discussed as part of the project of making not simply an industry, but a *Romanian* industry. The fact that in the 1930s there was still no unified insurance system for the whole territory of Greater Romania was permanently decried. Infrastructural measures – like the founding of polyclinics, health advisory centres for newborns, public baths, orphanages, dormitories for apprentices, and cafeterias for poor children – hit the wall of fragmented legislation and different understandings of "health" and "care" as moral and legal notions.[22] According to the analyses made by the initiators of the insurance system's unification in the mid-1930s, two divergent concepts of "insurance" were dominating in the provinces. In Bukovina, the legislation completely followed the Austrian principle that insurance was a problem of the factory – of the workers and of the employers. In the Old Kingdom and in Transylvania, insurances were regarded as a problem of

"harmonizing the interests of the two antagonistic classes" (MM 1940: 137) and it required the active intervention of the state.[23] Thus, merging the insurance systems of the Romanian provinces after their unification proved to be a half-century long struggle. They stayed different for decades, until after the nationalization of the factories in 1948.

Workers' (professional) education constituted another crucial field of battle for the state in the interwar period and apprenticeship came to be recognized as a nodal point of the national project. The first attempts to introduce state-regulated apprenticeship in Old Kingdom were rooted in the 19th century anti-Jewish stance of the Romanian intellectuals and paralleled the emergence of a legislation for "encouraging the national industry" that regulated the proportion of the ethnic Romanians in the workforce.[24] The law was modified several times for raising the proportion of the Romanians in factories and artisan shops (1912, 1919 and 1921) and it was extended in the newly gained territories in 1920. It was meant to counteract not only the domination of the Jews in trades but also the markedly ethnicized skill lines within the workforce in Transylvania, in Bukovina, and in Bucharest, where only around 50 percent of the workers and artisans were Romanian citizens at the turn of the 20th century.[25] The Jewish dominance of craftsmanship in the Old Kingdom (both statistically and when taking account skills and education) made one moderate liberal politician remark sadly "the strange and unique fact in the modern history of the nations that trades are almost completely outside national activity. The foreigner cuts us in pieces, the foreigner dresses up, the foreigner builds our houses, the foreigner manufactures the various tools necessary to our living. In one word, the foreigner produces and the Romanian consumes."[26]

The system of educating young workers was seen as the main reason behind the reproduction of an ethnicized skill division which kept the gates of better employment and craftsmanship closed for the Romanians. The reasoning continues:

> Ordinary trades are transmitted through apprenticeship. . . . The foreigner, pressured by his natural selfishness, always took a foreigner as an apprentice. This way, they formed a vast closed corporation from which the native is excluded. To individually force the foreigner to transmit his craftsmanship to an indigenous apprentice was impossible. The emergence of the guilds and the obligation of creating professional schools where the number of the foreigners cannot surpass the number of the natives will help us get from the craftsmen as a collectivity what we could never get from each of them individually. (MM 1940. 171-172)

Thus, the law project stipulated a quota for the apprenticeship schools, trying to raise the number of Romanian future workers and artisans.[27] The new law of vocational training in 1912 continued in the same line, defining apprenticeship as a multi-dimensional solution for unemployment – through professional orientation and selection; for indiscipline – through surveillance and education; and for the national question – through facilitating a change in the ethnic structure of the industrial workforce.

The situation got worse in Greater Romania, when "the Jewish problem" was doubled by the trades' dominance by the newly gained Hungarian and German minorities in Transylvania and Bukovina. Although ethnic quotas for factory personnel were slowly generalized in the provinces of Greater Romania, the factory owners managed to go around these legal provisions by employing many unskilled Romanian workers and keeping the skilled and better paid positions for the Hungarians, Germans, and Jewish ones. This solution only reinforced historically produced hierarchies and sharpened ethnic conflict by extending it in the industrial realm. In 1934, the state officials tried to counteract the managers' actions, by imposing a new quota of 80 percent Romanians in every category of industrial and commercial employment.[28] Furthermore, for the rest of twenty percent, the "foreigners" who were married to a Romanian woman and had children were preferred (Tașcă 1940: 198). Nevertheless, although ethnic quotas did encourage the Romanian peasants to send their children to town to learn a craft and kept the hopes of the state officials in a truly Romanian workforce alive, in 1937, the figures for apprenticeship were still looking grim for the Romanian nationalists.

Table 5. Comparison between the proportion of the Hungarian, German, and Jewish apprentices and the proportion of the national minorities in the overall population of Greater Romania

	Overall population (%)	**Apprentices (%)**
Hungarians	7.9	25.86
Germans	4.1	13.21
Jews	4.0	8.55

Compiled from Tașcă 1940: 176

To prevent unemployment and to solve the problem of the allocation of labour in a more efficient manner, the Law for the organization of labour placement was issued in 1921, followed by the founding of the "Placement Offices" in 1922. Again, the measure had to do

as much with industrial employment as with the national problem and with the effort to form a Romanian workforce in the cities. Before World War I, the Old Kingdom was an immigration country where "things went so far with using foreign labourers that the popular language was changed and people used to say 'German' instead of 'mechanic', 'German woman' instead of 'governess', 'Serbian' or 'Bulgarian' instead of gardener, and 'Hungarian' instead of 'servant'" (ML 1940: 197). The Ministry of Labour synthesised the problem:

> A disorganized movement of the working arms from a part of the country to another followed traditional routes and was complemented by the waves of foreign labourers who always found the borders opened. This was the "organization" of employment in Romania. The results of this "organization" was that the foreign workers earned a gratifying living by occupying the best paid jobs while the Romanian workers had to live a modest life. (ML 1940: 178)

Furthermore, the state itself reproduced the dominance of the national minorities in industry through its contradictory actions, especially by prioritizing bureaucratic employment and by attracting Romanian skilled workers into administrative and education-related positions. Tașcă, the above-mentioned labour legislation analyst, bitterly remarked the pernicious tendency to make teachers out of the girls who graduated from vocational schools, and clerks out of the young Romanian artisans instead of letting craftsmanship become part of the Romanians' future.

The way in which the state set its employment priorities during the interwar was reflective of its developmental logic, in which the emergence of a Romanian educated administration was more important than anything else. It also reflected the class logic of the second-rank bourgeoisie and of the landowners who could (re)produce themselves as elites only through bureaucratic expansion – both in absolute terms, and in terms of territorial penetration. "Helped" by the fact that foreign capital was interested in Romania's natural resources rather than in its growth potential, industry remained marginal for the Romanian economy, which was going to preserve its markedly agrarian character for decades. Romania's "workers" continued to be a small, highly mobile, and ambiguous category, with a high proportion of rural commuters who used industrial employment as one among others source of income. It was also weakly unionized and hardly represented in the political sphere. Its ethnicized boundaries made it even more difficult to talk about a Romanian working-class. In this context, war economy would prove important as foundation for establishing a new

economic course. It emphasized heavy industry and it provided the Romanian enterprises with the experience of planning and centralization, as well as with the partial loss of control over the production processes unfolding within their own walls.

It is clear that the idea that Greater Romania was going to become a profitable integrated market as well as an independent polity was indeed appealing, but its materialization proved to be much more complicated than the artisans of the unification thought. The task of the Bucharest governments of the 1920s-1930s was to produce a territory-population nexus that was coherent enough to stand as a stable class configuration, as a state, and as an economy. As history would show, it was a task for several generations, crossing in time and space over a global capitalist crisis and over a world war. It would remain central for socialist construction as a project, and for what the world perceived as a totally new and radical redefining of *class*, *the state*, and *the economy*.

Seen from this angle, the societal transformations after 1945 appear as just one moment in a series of modernizing plans that juggled with the thorny entanglements between national independence, economic backwardness, and the historical possibility to bring future into the present. The socialist state was going to deal with the same outcomes of uneven and combined development as its predecessors: an ethnicized class structure and an absolute and relative lack of proletarians as foundation for its productive and political reasoning. Its solutions were different not only because they placed top-down industrialization at their centre, but because they made a different class the main subject/object of state's politics. Thus, the socialist state was going to assume and expand both a modernizing ethos and a paternalist role, and to firmly establish the factory as its productive and redistributive arms. As we will see in the next chapter, these lines of force would prove important in the postwar configuration, when the take-over of the factories became the crux of socialist industrialization, the ideal site for socialist accumulation, and a significant dimension of negotiating the right to the city itself.

Notes

[1] "The Romanian Principalities" is used for convenience here but it is rather a retrospective notion. Historically, they were called the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia.

[2] The history of Transylvania's incorporation in the Habsburg space is more complex and longer than that. In 1687, the Transylvanian princes agreed to support imperial troops on their territory and to pay a military

contribution. In 1688, they would further accept imperial "protection." In 1691, after the Peace of Karlowitz, the new situation of Transylvania was internationally recognized. In 1867 it became part of the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

[3] The Budai Nagy Antal's Bobalna Revolt 1437; György Dózsa's Székely Great Peasant War 1514; Horea, Cloșca and Crișan's Revolt of 1784, which focused on the abolition of serfdom and on the political equality of the Romanians with the other ethnic groups – Hungarians, Germans, and Szeklers.

[4] The report of the European Commission for the Congress of Paris which stated in 1858 that "up to now, a third of the land good for farming is barely cleared" (Rapport de la Commission europeene de 1858 pour Ie Congres de Paris, in D. A. Sturdza and C. Colescu-Vartic, Acte și documente relative la istoria renașterii României (Acts and documents about the history of the renaissance of Romania), 1889-1909, volume VI, part II.

[5] The most common tool was the wooden plough but wooden hoes were also used in poor areas. Crops rotation was not practiced and the land in the plains was generally not cleared or fertilized except for the slash and burn agriculture that it is still practiced in several Romanian villages. Generally, the ground was sown in spring with millet, barley, buchwheat, and corn for two or three years in a row, with an ever decreasing productivity. In the end, the sterile land was abandoned for new clearings. This is very far from the three-field rotation agriculture practiced in Western Europe during the same period.

[6] Again, the reader can turn to Dimitrie Gusti's monographic school, especially to Henri Stahl's unmatched work, for a better understanding of the matter. For instance, Henri Stahl focused on Vrancea, a mountainous region in the southern part of Moldavia, the only surviving "peasant republic" in the 1930s. The rudimentary pastoral and agricultural technology and the maintenance of old communal property relations gave Vrancea the character of an "ethnographic reserve" that allowed Stahl and his team to make inferences about the organization of the archaic villages in the past. Vrancea preserved the characteristics of the medieval confederations of free villages that were never enserfed but paid taxes to *domnie* (the institution of princedom). It had representatives who negotiated with the Moldavian state and it held a monopoly on salt and passing of the trade caravans. All the outside commerce of the region was conducted by "the merchant of Vrancea", a commercial agent who negotiated prices and sales for all the fourteenth villages. The villages themselves placed themselves under the authority of a general assembly, which had judicial powers but also distributed land strips, decided over the necessary collective work, and set the village boundaries.

[7] The legal provisions which tied the peasants to the land date since the reign of Michael the Brave, who is celebrated today as the first prince who united the three principalities which later constituted Greater Romania – Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania under his rule. Collective memory hardly if ever connects the legendary figure with this legal punctuation of a more and more inhuman oppression of the rural population in the principalities. Personally, I rejoin Stahl in his analysis of the Romanian property relations evolution and in his claim that " the Bond of Michael was only a moment of extreme crisis in a social drama lasting many centuries" (Stahl [1980] 2008: 132).

[8] I adopt here Henri Stahl's position regarding the Romanian second serfdom. However, his assessment of the long and complex historical process which led to the enserfment of the peasants is not shared by other historians (see Costachel, Cazacu, and Panaitescu), who claim that enserfment emerged much earlier and that exploitative relations of a feudal type – similar to those of Western Europe – were already in place in the 15th century.

[9] Constantin Mavrocordat was appointed by the Ottomans as the voivode of Wallachia and later of Moldavia. He

abolished the boyar's right of property over the peasant's body in both Romanian principalities – in 1746 in Wallachia and in 1749 in Moldavia. Later, the Organic Regulations and the 1864 Land Reform introduced for the first time the notion of "property" in the Romanian agrarian relations. Although the peasants received land as well, it was insufficient, financially starved, and of bad quality, so the trends of dispossession and disempowerment continued. The 1867 Law of Agricultural Contracts further stamped the almost absolute power of the landlords to use peasants' arms.

[10] According to Stahl, the three century struggle over the villages produced a complex rural fabric made of "peasants belonging to free village communities, free peasants without land, serf peasants, some bound to the soil but others not, free peasants with serfs, peasants with serfs who sold themselves into serfdom with their serfs, and even serf villages with lordship over another serf village" (Stahl [1980] 2008: 181).

[11] Like in many other parts of the world, the process of railways building in Romania itself can be read as a sign of peripherization. The "Strousberg affair" showed the poor capacity of the state to deal with foreign contractors and with its own corruption: the terms of the contract were the most unfavourable to the Romanian government of the time, all raw materials and most of the labour force were imported, and the project itself was completed after the cereal prices dropped drastically, leaving Romania outside the cereal boom in the 19th century and the railways themselves running in deficit for decades (Murgescu 2010; Berend and Ránki 1982).

[12] Pasture land underwent massive clearing. In 1837 in the Danubian principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, the area sown with wheat amounted to only 249,102 hectares. The number of hectares of wheat had grown to 697,220 by 1886, to 1,509,683 by 1890, and to 1,931,147 by 1916. During the same period the total area under cultivation went from 1,048,600 hectares to more then 6,000,000 (Stahl 1980: 97). This move proved catastrophic for peasants, who could not feed their animals. With the demographic expansion taking place at the same time, what a "rich" or a "poor" peasant meant changed drastically. The fiscal criteria of the 19th century cited by Stahl show that in Moldavia, while in 1805 a peasant was considered rich if he had 18 head of cattle, comfortable if he had twelve and poor if he had six, around 1864, rich peasants had only four heads of cattle, the "comfortable" ones only two, and "poor" peasants could not keep any cows or sheep.

[13] In 1888 and in 1907.

[14] 36 percent of the households did not hold *any* traction animal; these figures were even lower for households who owned less than 3 hectars of land – around 53 percent; around 40 percent of the middle-size households (3-5 hectars of land) did not own any traction animal.

[15] In 1941, this combination of feudal and capitalist relations in the rural world was still regulated by a law that resembled very much the 19th century regulation of agricultural contracts.

[16] According to Pătrășcanu, the rich peasants (7 percent) held around 25 hectars on average, middle peasants had around 5-10 hectars. An estimated of 40 percent of the working arms used in agriculture in the 1930s was wage labour.

[17] Rough estimates of national income in Europe is telling. In 1911, the national income of Romania was around 300 franc equivalents per capita, around 250 for Serbia and Bulgaria, 400 for Hungary, 700 for the Czech lands, and almost 1,000 for Germany (Lampe 1991).

[18] The idea that the change would come from the Soviet Union was considered only by a minority and rather with fear than with hope.

[19] It seems that protectionist tariffs of the 1886 did impacted industrialization (an average of fourteen factories

per year was founded between 1887-1893 as against 8.2 between 1866-1887.

[20] Calculated from Dumitru Sandru, *Populatia rurala a Romaniei intre cele doua razboaie mondiale*, p. 52, and Institutul Central de Statistica, Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei 1937 – 1938, pp. 58-60.

[21] The fears of the Romanian authorities and the hopes of the Hungarian ones became reality in 1940 when the territories which were awarded to Romania according to the Trianon Treaty were lost again. First, Stalin's U.S.S.R. reoccupied Bessarabia, following the German-Soviet Treaty from August 1939, which clearly stated the Soviet interest in this territory, putting an end to any dream that Romania could maintain its neutrality in the incoming European conflict. As a result, Romania joined Nazi Germany in its war effort and, under a military rule, fought the Allied Powers until August 1944. "The Holy War" was proclaimed in 1941, when Romania joined the third Reich for recovering Bessarabia and Bukovina from the USSR. However, the Reich not only stood completely silent when the Soviets claimed a part of the Romanian territory but also forced Romania to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary while Southern Transylvania remained under Romanian control. The Soviet Union's interpretation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty was that the Soviet interest in Transylvania was hurt by the integration of Northern Transylvania in Hungary. Consequentially, the Romanian Communist Party, the precursor of the Romanian Workers Party was very vocal in opposing this political course of events. Their position as synthesized in the leaflet "Our point of view", in 1940, one of the most important Party programmatic documents of the time.

[22] The 1933 Law for the Unification of the Insurance System was the first attempt to make the legal, administrative, territorial, and infrastructural features of the insurance systems in the provinces in a coherent whole. It was preceded by several markedly regional legislative developments. In the Old Kingdom, the Law of the trades in 1912 set the amount of the contributions which would offer people 16 weeks of health care at home or in the hospital in case of illness; eight weeks post-partum financial help, complemented by another six weeks of financial help if the woman breast-fed the child herself; financial help for the funerals of the employees; free health consultations and medicine for the workers' wives and children; a pension for invalidity and old age, supported equally by the worker, the capitalist, and the state. The new insurance system was founded in 1912 and covered illness, work accidents, invalidity, childcare, and old age. The organization of the insurance system complemented the regulation of the trade organizations, the founding of the guilds and corporations, and the conditions for workers' credit. It set new parameters for the functioning of the industry, regulating the age limit for apprenticeship, night shifts, or women's work. It included women's right to a six-week paid leave after birth. It also set some limits for the length of the workday for children – eight hours for children under 11 and 15 years old, 10 hours for the children between 11 and 17 years old, and for women – who could not work more than 11 hours a day if the factory did not get a special authorization from the Labour Chambers.

Transylvania and Bukovina had a more progressive legislation and better support structures for workers than those from the Old Kingdom. In Transylvania, a 1907 law established the founding of an insurance system supported equally by employees and by employers. The employees benefitted from 26 weeks health care in case of illness and 10 weeks health care in case of a work accident. "Health care" was an inclusive notion which referred to medicine, thermal baths, medical accessories and equipment, and financial assistance for the whole period of work incapacity covered by the insurance. Women benefitted from financial help for the first 8 weeks after giving birth complemented by financial help for breastfeeding for another 12 weeks. As employees' wives they benefitted from financial help for birth, medical treatment, and six weeks post-partum help. Only the

miners benefitted from invalidity and old age pensions through their own mutual aid institutions. The Transylvanian insurance system resembled the Bukovinian one which preserved its Habsburgic Imperial features as defined by the 19th century successive laws (1887, 1888, and 1909).

The responsibility for professional risk was highly disputed and various visions prevailed in different countries and it defined and redefined continuously what "work space" signified in various periods. Sometimes, professional risk was entirely the responsibility of the employer who had the whole responsibility for work accidents because the organization of work was the one which created "professional risk" in the first place. This principle, introduced in Germany (1871), France (1898), and the Kingdom of Romania (1912) was the foundation of the insurance systems imagined around the German 19th century model. However, illness, invalidity, and old age were regulated differently: illness was considered an individual risk which was solved through workers' support networks; other forms of risk were supported equally by the worker, the capitalist, and the state. The 1933 Law was the first to unify the notion of "professional risk" (or "risk of work incapacity") at the level of financial contributions, which were shared by workers and by employers and regulated by the state under the slogan that: "insurance is an issue of individual precaution and national solidarity".

[23] Work jurisdictions (prud'hommes) founded through three laws: the law for ensuring the payment of the work from April 21st 1931; the law for creating and organizing the work jurisdiction from February 15th 1993; the law for the unification of social services insurance April 8th 1993.

[24] It was introduced in the Old Kingdom in 1887.

[25] The rest of the industrial producers were mainly Jewish (17 percent), Austro-Hungarian (16 percent), and other ethnic groups (Livezeanu 2000: 195).

[26] Petre P. Carp, exposition of reasons for the project of the apprenticeship law in 1888, quoted in Tasca 1940, p. 171.

[27] Art. 67.

[28] Law, July 16, 1934.

Chapter 2: Productive state apparatuses: Cluj factories in the late 1940s

In the autumn of 1944, the Hungarian majority in Cluj could still remember the joy experienced four years before, when the Hungarian soldiers had been marching on the old streets, smiling at young girls dressed in national costumes. During the war, the Hungarians could hear the cadenza of their steps as a renewed promise that Cluj would be again part of the Hungarian motherland. For the Romanians, the Hungarian soldiers were stepping over their hopes that the city would remain part of Greater Romania, as decided by the victorious Allied powers in 1918-1920. But the days when the Hungarian officers joined the Transylvanians at the tables of the elegant restaurants in the city centre were soon to be over. In October 1944, the Red Army entered Cluj and the Romanian Army was soon to follow. Seen by some as "liberation" and by others as "occupation," the marching of the Soviet soldiers on the streets of Cluj was the sign that the old Transylvanian city was changing its masters for the third time in less than thirty years and for the fourth time in one century.

Red Army soldiers descended the Feleac hill through apple and plum trees orchards. Small houses with two rooms painted in blue and dark green guarded their passage through the Romanian, Hungarian, and mixed villages that surrounded Cluj and supplied it with meat, vegetables, cereal, stone, wood, and hay. At that time of the year, peasants' pantries were already full with jars of pickles and jam, pigs were being fattened for Christmas, hay was

gathered inside the stables for horses, and corn for animals piled. But the bountiful autumn was not peaceful. Firearms were heard everywhere in the trails of the Hungarian and German soldiers who were still fighting in the forest that separated the village of Feleac from the city. They were soon to be pushed towards North and forced to retreat towards the train station, in search for an escape.

The Soviet soldiers followed them into the city entering from the South and passing the Orthodox Cathedral and the 1906 Secession building of the main theatre in the city (Hungarian until 1919, Romanian until 1940, then Hungarian again during the war). They arrived into an almost empty city centre, where people were running away from the windows of their two-floor Habsburg-style houses. Women and children of all ages were trying to avoid the chaos unleashed by the Soviet troops in their victorious passage through Cluj. The young servants of the Hungarian merchants had been long gone to their parents, in the countryside, leaving their small rooms empty. The teachers opened the school basements for their pupils while Catholic and Protestant priests gathered their parishioners within the walls of the medieval and baroque churches that quartered the old centre. Men were hiding, frightened by the rumours that the civilian prisoners taken by the Red Army never returned home. Shopkeepers locked the doors of their stores in the main street of the city,[1] only to see them smashed hours later by hungry soldiers.

In those days, the *Franz Joseph University* hosted no classes. Built in the latter half of the 19th century during the process of expanding higher education in the provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the university had been recast by the Romanian administration as the *University of Dacia Superior* after 1918, a crucial space for the production and assertion of Romanianness. However, in 1944, only the Hungarian professors greeted the representatives of the Soviet Army in the imposing staircases of the University. The Romanian ones, together with their students, were still refugees in Sibiu, where the University moved immediately after Northern Transylvania was ceded to Hungary in 1940.[2] The entry of the Soviet soldiers into the building triggered new fears, hopes, and the seeds of a new political imaginary around the University. In only a few months, the Romanian University was going to come back, retake the building, and try to recentre the cultural life of the Romanian elites around it.

In order to stop the retreating Hungarian and German troops, the Soviet soldiers split. Some of them fought their way towards the Western part of the city. They passed the Central Library of the University and ran on the corridors of the clinics where Hungarian, German, and Soviet soldiers' wounds were tended. They headed West to check the *Beer Factory* for

enemies and, according to oral accounts, depleted it of alcohol. The soldiers left the city centre and followed the long street towards Mănăştur, the outskirts of the city inhabited by Romanians. Integrated in the city in 1895, the former village of Mănăştur quickly became one of the strongholds of Romanian nationalism. The suburbs preserved their rural image, with small pubs, cheap enough for the Romanian students to eat home-made food and drink wine, and houses with two rooms and huge gardens, well-known for the smell of their roses in the summer. Some of them crossed river Someş / Számos into another marginal area inhabited by Romanians around Donáth street, a picturesque combination of poor hovels and affluent merchant houses.

The second group of the Soviet soldiers headed North, quickly advancing towards the train station, and the surrounding buildings destroyed by an Allied bombing in June. They would have searched the enemies on the corridors and in the classrooms of the beautiful *Marianum Collegium*, the best confessional school in Cluj, which was gathering at the time girls from all over Transylvania, preparing them to take teaching and administrative jobs. They probably searched under the red velvet chairs of the most luxurious cinema in the city, at the *Urania Palace* before passing the Fortress hill, where the Habsburgs erected a garrison in the 18th century. They spread over the neighbourhood where the richest Hungarian merchants built their houses in the 19th century, only to be soon mirrored by the Romanian local elites across the city. As the Red Army approached the train station, the old synagogues in the area formerly dominated by Jewish population laid empty, silent witnesses to the deportation of almost 20,000 Jews in the previous three years. The orthodox Jewish schools were now closed, some of them by the Horthyst administration during the war, some of them by the Romanian authorities in the late 1920s.[3]

The soldiers left the central part of the city and rushed towards the North-East, beyond the railways, to get to the locally famous gardens of the *hoştezeni*, who were trying in vain to protect their vegetables, wines, and home made goodies by digging holes in the ground or by hiding them in their tools huts.[4] For the time being, the *hoştezeni* had to forget their rivalry with the *mănăştureni* for supplying the city with the best products. They had to postpone their fistfights in the pubs with the Romanian boys from Mănăştur who had the courage to court their Hungarian sisters. Many of the Soviet soldiers who remained in Cluj after their comrades followed their road to Berlin were accommodated by the *hoştezeni*, whose families had better houses and "a lot of food and drinks to spare." People would resent their unwanted presence, quickly labelling them as "barbarians" in contrast with the "civilized" and "polite" Hungarian or German soldiers sheltered during the war.

The two neighbourhoods of the city where industry started to develop in the 19th century lay further East and were connected by a railroad, as part of the commercial and productive circuit of the Habsburg Empire: one neighbourhood to the West, where the *Railways Workshops* functioned and their workers lived, and another one to the East, well-known for its for its Hungarian and Jewish craftsmen, as well as for its tool shops and warehouses. Many of the almost 3,000 artisans and vendors in the city lived in these areas. At the beginning of the 20th century, some of them had been employed at *Renner Brothers*, a leather and footwear manufacture that constituted the core of the future *Dermata*, the factory which was soon to take the name of the communist illegalist *János Herbák*, and would eventually become the city's export pride in the 1970s, under the name of *Clujana*. Soon after the turn of the century the male workers brought their wives and daughters along, making the footwear factory the employer of one of the most feminized workforce in the city.

Between the wars, life was seething in the workers' neighbourhoods. Four permanent markets and two fairs were placed in these parts of the town. They were at least as good as the ones in the city centre and are still fondly remembered by the people in Cluj. Encouraged by the priests in these areas, people built networks of support for old people and orphans and helped the opening of several confessional schools around the neighbourhood churches. Around the most important factories in the city, *Dermata* and the *Railways Workshops*, the unions supported mutual aid societies, choirs, orchestras, and sporting teams. In the cosmopolitan sporting scene of the city, Hungarian workers' clubs and associations were the oldest in the city. The railroad workers, the butchers, and the commercial employees had their own clubs. Another workers' club was founded to accommodate all those who wanted to manifest their love for play but did not find a place in the factory or in the guild teams. They often played against the other teams in the city, teams built around notions of belonging that had as much to do with class as with ethnic divisions: the *City Athletic Club* was the team of the Hungarian middle-class; *Universitatea* was the club of the Romanian students, the direct beneficiary of the appropriation of the pre-1918 infrastructure of the Hungarian club of the University; *Haggibor* was the Jewish team.

The strikes of the labourers from *Dermata* in the 1920s and in the 1930s had been decided in the North-Eastern side of the city. Probably the male workers had discussed their claims at the tables of the small pubs scattered around the workshops and warehouses. Anger and despair must have haunted the streets when tens of workers were fired, beaten and arrested during the events. From these neighbourhoods, in 1933, the workers from *Dermata* had started their solidarity march with the *Railways Workshops* employees only to face prison

and death together. And maybe the women from the footwear factory had convinced each other to join the protests under the vines in the green gardens of the neighbourhood, under the lead of their Social Democrat unions. Small but relatively strong communist cells had also been organized in these two factories before the war, and acted illegally during the two successive fascist regimes – the Romanian one in the late 1930s and the Hungarian one during World War II. A small but active cell had been organized by the women at the textile factory, which was soon to be named *Varga Katalin*, after the leader of the Transylvanian miners' movement in the 1840s. The *Tobacco Factory* – the only factory which employed mainly unskilled Romanian women – had the weakest union and no known connection to any leftist movement in Transylvania.

Unlike in other parts of the city, in October 1944, many male workers were not at home, protecting the virtue of their wives and daughters from the Soviet soldiers, but in the factories, trying to prevent their dismantling by the Axis armies in retreat. As reported later by the communist newspapers, many workers resisted the Horthyst directives which required the industrial equipment from the factories to be made into pieces and evacuated to Hungary or to Germany. The representatives of the Red Army and of the local authorities involved in the reconstruction effort repeatedly remarked later that their endeavour was eased by the determination of the factories' employees to keep their industrial units functioning by any means.

This image of the workers defending their factories in the way of the retreating Nazi armies was by no means unique. Refusing to accept the dismantling of the economic infrastructure was a powerful act of resistance of the workers from Zala county in Hungary (Pittaway 2012) or from Łódź in Poland (Kenney 1997; Poblocki 2010). But in every case, this act was motivated by very different forms of historical consciousness and produced very different effects. While the peasant-workers working in oil extraction in Zala acted from "a desire to protect the local community" (Pittaway 2012: 30) and to return to the prewar "normality" of American management and conservative politics, the workers in the industrial centre of Łódź explicitly articulated their resistance in terms of class. Like in Cluj (and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe), the 1945 factories in Łódź were „a world of hierarchy and deference" (Kenney 1997: 75), which was articulated as much in class terms as it was in national ones. As the strong anti-German and anti-Jewish feelings in the city were rooted in historically established hierarchies of work and property, in the immediate postwar configuration, with the spectacular decline in the number of German and Jewish workers in the city due to pogroms, population exchanges, and expulsions, the Polish labourers

experienced a new sense of entitlement and empowerment. They claimed factories as *theirs* both as workers and as Poles, and engaged on a road which was supposed to lead to workers' total control over their workplaces. The passionate relationship with materiality reflected in these stories of resistance in front of the Nazi soldiers was foundational for postwar factory life in East-Central Europe but was directed towards different (indeed, opposed) goals: restoration of the prewar life and work for the people in Zala country, revolutionary trajectories and a new sense of entitlement for the workers in Łódź.

In Cluj, postwar economic executives and temporary local administration repeatedly hailed workers' political consciousness in front of war adversities. The (mostly Hungarian) workers resisted the dismantling of the factories by the Hungarian and German armies in retreat in spite of their national, ethnic, and sometimes political loyalties. Nevertheless, as this chapter will make transparent, it was impossible to disentangle the control over the largest factories in the city – like *János Herbák* and the *Railways Workshops* – from the broader field of relationships in which the right to the city was negotiated amidst ethnic and class struggles. While the Soviet and the Romanian armies were approaching the city, the workers' attempt to protect the industrial equipment or the piles of manufactured goods and raw material embodied both the hope of a return to the prewar „normality" and the hope that this normality would (re)produce the factories' and the city's uncontested Hungarianness as experienced during the war. The act of protecting the factories with one's life was reserved only for few Hungarian, male, urban workers who lived around the factories and placed them at the centre of their sense of community. During the next few years, their commitment was to be recognized in various instances, especially when housing, employment, or wage categories were negotiated with management and the Party against the dire postwar conditions. It would deepen the fractures between this layer of core workers and other categories of people – especially rural unskilled workers – who were going to enter the factory gates in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

While the workers in Cluj protected their workplaces, they never claimed the factories as theirs and never explicitly questioned the owners' property rights over them. From the beginning, the workers' councils founded immediately after the front moved towards the West had a provisional character with the explicit function of maintaining the production going until the industrial units were handed over to their owners, to their managers, or to *The Office for the Management and Supervision of Enemy Assets* [Casa de administrare şi supraveghere a bunurilor inamice]. The workers could not see themselves as leaders of the factories but as their keepers until someone else – someone who was "entitled" to govern

them – came forward. Interviews, archives and local memory are equally and tellingly silent about this moment, which was never perceived by workers as an easily missed historical opportunity. Few years later, the fact that the workers in Cluj did not see themselves as entitled to claim property rights over the factories, coupled with the fleeing of the former owners abroad before the Red Army entered the city and with the culture of deference in the city's industry was going to ensure a calm, incident-free nationalization of the main industrial units.

Nonetheless, the take-over of the factories was going to involve much more than the legal and administrative act of nationalization. The late 1940s witnessed a complicated battle for the factories and for their transformation into productive apparatuses of the emerging socialist state, a battle that was going to set the parameters for the long-term evolution of the regime, especially in terms of labour control, stabilization and expansion.[5] Therefore, this chapter cannot be simply about nationalization as dispossession or as a change in property relations. I argue for a very particular perspective on the take-over of the postwar factories that can be summarized in several points. First, creating the factories as political spaces and simultaneously keeping them under control as productive arms of the state proved to be a difficult game to play for the new economic executives. As discussed in the Introduction of my dissertation, this tension between production and politics was not transitional, but constitutive to socialism. In Cluj, it was also strongly related to the entanglement between class and ethnicity against which the right to the city was negotiated. Second, within this process, life itself – workers' bodies and their possibilities of survival – was firmly established as political terrain. The lives of the workers and of their families would become the ground on which the fate of the productive core of socialist industrialization was played out for decades. And third, nationalization cannot be understood as a historical event (or as a legislative act), but as one step in a broader process of assuming control of the factories, which started immediately after the arrival of the Red Army and lasted for many years after 1948.

Making factories political: Party and union membership

The end of the Second World War left Eastern and Central Europe in a state of devastation and confusion. In Romania like elsewhere, war destruction had taken its toll and the

reparations exacted by the Soviet Union put a lot of pressure on the economy. The burden was especially felt in the production of primary goods like oil, timber, or construction materials but consumer goods industry did not escape the general economic trend of the 1940s, dominated by inflation and shortages. Agriculture remained in a desperate situation, traders experienced a chronic shortage of merchandise and foreign currency, key industrial sites were dismantled at the initiative of the Soviet councillors, and industry as a whole became chaotic and almost impossible to control. For ordinary people, hunger, drought, and everyday insecurity accompanied and followed the death of the dear ones, war invalidity, and forced movements across territories and cultures. With border changes and territorial cuts, returning to one's city or village raised questions about the very meaning of "home" and "belonging." Under Soviet guidance, unstable and fragile anti-fascist coalitions took the control of the government, but between 1945 and 1947, parallel states were created in the region by the communist parties, which focused their efforts on taking control of the security apparatus and on infiltrating key-institutions at all administrative and economic levels. By 1947, anti-fascist purges were followed by the expulsion of the other political forces from the wheel of the state under the accusation that they delayed financial stabilization and sabotaged postwar economic recovery.

From the very beginning, the various strategies used by the Romanian Workers' Party to gain control of the government were accompanied by tactics meant to ensure a step-by-step control of the factories. The evolution of the industrial relations in Cluj is telling for these developments. Starting with 1945, many factories in Cluj entered under the administration of *The Office for the Management and Supervision of Enemy Assets*. As German and Hungarian citizens who had ownership interests in the factories in the city fled the country very soon, pushed by the advancement of the Soviet Army, the factories faced a power void that was soon to be addressed by the communist cells through a unified model of organizing production throughout the country. The factories came to be led by factory administration councils, strange combinations of former managers and notabilities of the city who could be trusted by the Party. The factory management had to collaborate closely with the factory committees, formed by workers and unions' representatives, generally dominated by members of the Romanian Workers' Party and by members of the Social Democrat Party, which was still the most attractive choice for the Hungarian workers in Cluj.

In this context, Party and Union membership became crucial for taking control over the factories. It was going to be entangled with the struggle of the Party to assume a paternalist role amidst the dire conditions of the 1940s. As the instructions for the Party

activists in the factory advised, their work had to be characterized by "much brain and a lot of soul" and the workers needed to be attracted towards Party membership in a "careful" and "delicate" way.[6] Face-to-face interactions were preferred by the Party officials as the most effective method in increasing membership. Intimate knowledge of workers' everyday concerns proved an important advantage, which gave the Party the instruments needed to deal with "the undecided" ones. The Party had to take into account ethnic sensitivities, old feuds between foremen and their people, and the interests of the Unified Workers' Front, the political coalition the communists joined in 1945.[7] The most difficult challenge was to convince the workers to join or to support the Party while they were seeing it less and less capable of taking care of their everyday lives. Complex manoeuvres were needed to fight the workers' feeling that, as one Party activist aptly put it in a meeting of the factory organization: "the economic situation is bad. The political situation is similar."[8]

Women were the most reluctant when it came to joining the Party. In January 1946, from approximately 8,000 members, only 2,000 were women. This situation was consistent not only with the proportion of women in the workforce but with their more vocal attitude against the Party. Women from the *hoștezeni* outskirts were more keen to upfront their Hungarianness than their husbands or sons. In 1947, thousands of women asking for "bread" and "justice" protested in front of the city hall, "pushed by their men who thought women were not likely to be arrested."[9] Other protests in Baia Sprie, Dealul Crucii, or Petroșani against the size or the price of the food rations were also dominated by women. Mobilized along ethnic lines in the city and along the struggle for land in the countryside, women were the last to be convinced to join or to support the Party. Being responsible for the survival and for the well-being of the households, famine, draught, shortages, and the imposition of quotas in the countryside affected them most.

The Romanians' membership also became more and more an issue. Reports from January 1946 show that at the time, it was impossible to bring more than 850 Romanians in the Party, while 6,500 Hungarians and 600 Jews "gladly joined the ranks."[10] The Party members who were fluent in Romanian were insistently asked to bring a Romanian comrade in the organization every month.[11] They were also advised to convince at least one Romanian soldier to join the Party.[12] Every communist had the obligation to become a member of a mass organization and to check if the organization kept "a communist demeanour line." In the factories and in the public offices, they had to keep an eye on those who "did not follow an honest, democratic path."[13] Within this trend, a big step forward was the founding of a communist cell at the Regional Police Inspectorate in October 1945. The fact that the cell was

largely Romanian in a city with a dominantly Hungarian population was another small victory for the Party. Thus, the communist cell of the Police was designed to take care solely of the urban space, "where all the reactionary instructions come from," and to counteract the excesses of the Hungarian Civil Guards that still patrolled the city.[14]

Among the workers, the Party had a hard time finding members at the *Tobacco Factory*, the only factory where Romanians – and women – were a majority.[15] The Party called the *Tobacco Factory* "a chauvinistic nest" and struggled with workers' vocal expressions of distrust in the Party for years. The situation stayed the same even after the few Party activists in the factory acted as leaders of workers' struggle for their rights. They convinced the union to contest a prewar order which stated that the workers needed a permit from their foremen in order to go out for their physiological needs and that they needed to be searched every time they stepped out of the factory gate.[16] Only a few months later, when the factory director decided to dismiss all the employees who had been working in the factory for less than two years, the communist cell again put pressures upon the Local Union Comission and managed to change people's employment contracts, making them less vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal.[17] However, the women in the factory still refused to join the Party.

A further fracture was created between the workers who had joined the Communist Party during the interwar period – when communist activity was deemed illegal by the Bucharest authorities – and the workers who joined the Party after 1945. Even if they were only a few, some workers held genuine communist loyalties and bore radical notions of social justice and equality. During the interwar period, these ideological traits carried with them the danger of being imprisoned, beaten, or killed. They resented the workers who joined the Party after 1945 only because they felt the wind of change in the factory. Sometimes, the situation erupted, like in the case of Kertesz Niculae, an old communist foreman who, after less than two years from the end of the war, bitterly turned against his opportunistic colleagues who became Party activists.

Kertesz Niculae was one of the leaders of the workers' strike at *Dermata* in May 1946. Disappointed by the Party's reaction against his colleagues, he explicitly advised his co-workers that "the workers should work, not make politics." For him, the time of politics had passed. He repeated his ideas during a Party meeting, provoking the other Party activists to intervene and to explain the workers that they had to work but they had to participate in politics as well, in order to make a better future for all. One of the activists who discovered his communist sympathies only after 1945 furiously turned to Kertesz Niculae, telling him that he should remove his hat in front of the workers and not lecture them from a position of

superiority. Kertesz Niculae was dismissed from the Party. The following report accompanied the decision of the factory organization:

> He officially joined the Party in 1945, after an interruption caused by the war. He was a member from the illegal period of the Party. At the beginning, he was very active, went to all meetings, and mobilized other workers for joining the Party. Later, he resigned and ceased to attend the meetings. When he was repeatedly asked to come back to the meetings, he wrote a letter to the factory organization, stating that until the recently trained members, the "October communists" as he called them, will be the leaders of the factory, he will not participate in any political activity. But when the strike started in May, he was the first to stop the main engine of his workshop and to hinder production. Even those workers who wanted to work, could not. He listened and applauded the reactionary discourses of the workers in the factory and he was the first to say that the Party should take care of workers' interests and the strike *is* in workers' interests.[18]

The decision to dismiss Kertesz Niculae from the Party was signed and had the rare mention that he could not rejoin the Party even if his innocence was proven (!), indicating that workers with a genuine communist past became a danger for a unified field of politics in the socialist factories. Thus, Niculae was not only dismissed from the Party; he was fired immediately, with the stipulation that no factory could hire him in the future. The representatives of the Union in the factory signed both documents.

The fact that the Union leaders agreed to sign a decision against one of their members who was central to workers' struggle shows how quickly the unions became part of the new logic of organizing class struggle from above. In 1946, the unions in Cluj had over 32,000 members, of which 9,700 were women and 1,100 were apprentices. Because the unions had a solid ground in the most important factories in Cluj, they became central political spaces for the emerging regime. Consequently, the 1946 union elections were an important terrain for political struggle. They were also a good opportunity to assess the position of the Party in various factories in Cluj. The resulted picture was mixed. At the *Railways Workshops*, the newly elected Union's representatives were all communists and the Party declared a "crushing victory," followed immediately by a series of purges "to get rid of reactionary forces in the factory."[19] However, at *Dermata*, the other stronghold of the Party, the elected union's representatives were perceived as rather outside party politics of any kind and were

all Hungarians. Two social democrats and two communists on the list did not get elected at all and the insistence of the Party that a Romanian leader would be elected met with indifference and then with angry resistance from the workers. The Party cells and the factory committee requested the annulment of the results and the factory quickly transformed into a turmoilous space, beyond the control of the Party for months.[20]

Although only approximately a fourth of the unionized workers were Party members, the control of the Party over the unions was already much more extended. The Party took rapid steps to break the former solidarity networks weaved by the interwar workers. Only few months after the founding of the Local Unions' Commission the 21th of October 1945, the unions were already reorganized around the industrial units, comprising all the employees of a certain factory, irrespective of their profession. Manual workers and administrative staff became members of the same union and, in theory, they had to fight the same battle for increased production and for a better life. The previously regional corporate logic of the unions – one guild for every historical region with a union of guilds serving at national level – was first to be dismantled in the postwar years, when the factory (not the guild) became the basis for unionization. In just three years after the war, the guild logic of unionization disappeared and was replaced by a different one, based on the factories' capacity of becoming redistributive arms of the state.

However, although colonizing the unions seemed to be one of the easy tasks of the Romanian Workers Party in its attempt to control the factory space, their transformation in redistributive belts of the state would prove problematic from the start. The short period before the official nationalization of the factory and before the political confrontations that marked the political victory of the communists in Romania reveals the entanglement between production and life as the most fragile node in the power relations that were born and reproduced in the factory but also constituted it. As the next section of this chapter will show, the take-over of the factories involved an everyday negotiation process, which was mainly shaped by people's everyday needs as they appeared articulated around the work/survival nexus.

Life as political terrain

A whole notion of "politics" was articulated around workers' bodies and around a more and

more inclusive notion of "care" in the late 1940s factories. As part of its endeavour to move from the status of a party backed up by the Soviet Union to an overarching state structure, the Romanian Workers Party tried to link its name to important resources at the factory level. The very possibility of employment as well as the social rights and benefits that were running through the factories came more and more under the control of the Party organization and of the unions. Communists also appeared as the leaders of the reconstruction effort that started with the repairing of the roads, the bridges, the factories, and the administrative buildings and with the reorganizing of the fire-fighters service, the ambulance, and the city cleaning services.

The quasi-paternalist functioning of the large factories in Cluj that was established in the interwar was the first to be appropriated by the Party activists, although they were quickly to find out that in the postwar context, these efforts would bring them more problems than benefits on short and medium-term. An interplay of promises and step backs dominated the relationship between workers and the Party in the factories. However, keeping promises proved to be an almost impossible task while chaos dominated the city. Hunger, drought, a debilitating housing shortage, an epidemic of thefts and violent attacks, the passage of hundreds of trains with refugees, and the difficulties of replacing the Hungarian administration of the city kept the first pages of the local newspapers. Although the government fixed the prices for basic commodities and tried to secure their exchange between the city and the countryside, food, clothing, and firewood were hard to find, and prices on the market were soaring. Responding to workers' grievances related to food scarcity, famine and drought relief, rationed goods, lack of housing, forced evictions, and layoffs was a daily task that generally revolved around promises that a solution for any concrete complaint would be found soon. Thus, the downside of the promises was that they had to be kept, not only for forming political loyalties among the workers or for preventing their opposition against the Party's politics to become stronger but also for preventing the always-in-the-air strikes, production stops, and walk-outs.

The popularity of the Party among workers varied along very mundane issues. Things as small as rationing flour pacified the factory space for a few days, until other economic hardships made workers' raise their voice again. In April 1946, shortages of bread, corn, and housing escalated in the city. At the same time, production stopped in most of the factories due to shortages of raw material, leaving many workers without their monthly income. Workers' daily threats that they would leave their workplaces for good stopped in May, when lines of credit were opened for both the industrial units and for the workers themselves, raw

material was received from the Soviet Union, and the production started again at the majority of the factories in the city. The same month, people at the *Railways Workshops* accepted to spend 14 hours a day in the factory when requested by their union's representatives, and the Party was ready to read the relative apathy of the workers in the city as the sign of a new social peace and of the growing influence of the Party everywhere.

In this context, the end of May general strike at *Dermata* took the Party activists by surprise and found them unprepared to deal with workers' claims. 4,000 of the 4,500 employees of the factory left their workplaces and gathered in front of the factory to protest against a reduction of their salaries. At the request of the fellmongers' union (!) 105 people were fired few days later, accused of sabotaging production and instigating other people to strike.[21] Some of them were arrested. The insistence of the Union's representatives that the guilty ones should be punished shows that the unions already acted as controlling arms in the relationship between workers and the state.[22] However, the fact that the leaders of the strike were influential union members as well, raises question marks to the idea that the total and actual control of the Party over the unions was a fait accompli or that political boundaries in the factory were already clear.

The next day, an angry *Manifesto* was displayed on the factory walls by the Party organization.[23] It was titled "What the factory did for its workers" and it listed all the benefits of being employed in a large factory as "gifts." The factory contribution to workers' food in the cafeteria – due to a piggery, several milk cows, and a vegetable garden, the coverage of the workers' health insurance and of their taxes, the difference between the sickness compensation and the wage, the sporting facilities, the summer colonies, the free footwear, the nursery, the dentist, and the emergency room in the factory were all mentioned. The fact that much of the social infrastructure of *Dermata* was inherited from the interwar period was not. Workers were also reminded of the rise in wages without any mention of the soaring inflation. Sabotage was blamed for the hard situation of the factory, where production repeatedly stopped, leaving people without work and payment.[24]

The attempt of appropriating the rights won by the workers themselves in prewar negotiations was not unique. Work-related benefits were presented as the conquest of the communists (and the social democrats) in the factory even if they belonged to an older history of expanding the factories into the realm of social reproduction. Nevertheless, the reading of the strike by the Party organization clearly shows how the Party's interest to keep production going and to ensure a stable basis for nationalization and central planning already fractured its fragile and transitory alliance with the workers in the factories. Like in the case

of Kertesz Niculae's dismissal from the Party, workers' struggles for rights and recognition were by now silenced on grounds of illegitimacy, and the Party officials in the factory were ready to make things clear: workers' voices could be heard only through their vanguard.

Only a few months later, the Party reports for August 1946 were dominated by an obvious trust in workers' goodwill and in their continually improving political consciousness. In the last days of the month, however, the price of bread raised rose suddenly sharply and the factory stores could not no longer supply the population with rationed bread.[25] The workers at *Dermata* and at the *Railways Workshops* immediately surrounded the Party activists on the factory corridors to make them directly accountable for the lack and the price of bread. Exasperated Party activists started to question the central strategy of the Party regarding its communication with the industrial workers and to reflect upon their fragile position in the factories:

> Our slogan, that we will raise wages without raising prices was completely wrong. We imagined a campaign around this issue and we ended up ashamed when we had to allow prices to rise faster than people's incomes. We could not find a just explanation when people came to confront us about it. We are weak at unmasking economic sabotage, so people's anger is unfairly directed against us.[26]

The rocketing inflation and workers' impossibility to buy even the most basic goods on the market further produced a wave of discontent which translated into an explicit menace of strikes and open conflicts in the factories. The Party activists started to feel threatened and kept a low profile for many days, hoping for the workers' mood to improve.[27]

Things were not easier when looking at production. With the war economy collapsing, the factories started to have problems with distribution and supply. They needed to fight to bringing back old clients and to finding new ones. Production stopped all the time, raw material was short in supply, and the management found paying wages a monthly challenge.[28] The lack of capital for the factories reached alarming levels in the autumn of 1946, just before the general elections. With the war being over, the factories which were most connected to the war economy suffered most. Heavy industry almost collapsed because of the lack of demand for their products. As a result, the factories could not procure raw material and production had to stop for days. The employees lived on credit for months but soon the factory economats – cheap factory stores offering basic goods at subsidized prices – faced the impossibility to pay their suppliers.

Workers saw their interests further threatened by inequalities in wages, and by the fact that various types of aid were offered to the employees of certain industrial units as explicit advantages. Aid for rent, salubrity, or children support, as well as compensations for taxes was allocated only to certain factories, depending on their size, centrality in the economic logic of the moment, and relative loyalty to the new regime. In time, these forms of compensating everyday hardships disappeared, leaving space for standardized advantages for certain industrial branches and instituting a clear division between heavy and light industry.

As purchasing food and consumer goods was increasingly tied to the factories, the lack of capital meant that supplying the population with food was a daily challenge. It became more and more so as workers earned very little, started to miss work, were fired and could not find work in other factories.[29] As production stagnated and the factories had to fire their workers, the number of unemployed was growing. The 20,000 unemployed in the city became an extremely vulnerable category who saw their basic survival endangered daily. Urban unemployment after the war was tragic precisely because the increasingly paternalist role of the factories made survival outside the workplace impossible as it became the foundation of provisioning in the city. The rationing system was ran and administered through the workplace and industrial employment provided access to a privileged food and clothing distribution system in which the economats were central. In most of the cases, together with their wages, the urban unemployed completely lost their access to any means of survival and the only available safety net in the city. As a consequence of the growing poverty in the city, black market and crime were on the rise and a climate of insecurity and fear penetrated every corner of everyday life.[30]

As Party members dominated factory committees and the unions, deciding over one's employment in the factory became one of the most important sources of power for the communists until planning was implemented and unemployment left room for the reverse tendency: a severe labour shortage that set the parameters in which industry in Cluj functioned for decades (see Chapter 4 for more information along these lines). "The politicization of employment" as "endemic clientelism, which bordered on open corruption" (Pittaway 2012: 75) gave the Party its first instruments for gaining allocative power and securing precious positions for its followers. The constant need for new members of the Party, met people's fundamental need for jobs to produce an employment regime that informally (but very explicitly) linked recruitment for work to recruitment for politics.

This section showed that the politicization of the entanglement between production and life was far from being unproblematic for the emerging Party-state. The daily

negotiations between the Party organizations, the unions, the factory committees and the workers reveal the fragility of a social project that, in order to function, needed to make workers' bodies its own, in a move that simultaneously embraced productive and political reasoning. Nevertheless, this does not mean these efforts were for nothing. They would prove important for ensuring a mass that was usable for political action, including for taking it out in the street to support the Romanian Workers Party or to silence other important voices in the cities. In the case of Cluj, these voices were fractured along class and ethnic lines and openly struggled for their right to the city, as we will see in the next section of this chapter.

In the street

As months went by, factory politics competed and collided more and more to the expectation that the workers would become explicitly "political." The Union elections and the intensification of Party recruitment accompanied the general elections of 1946, the year which remained in the history books as the one when the Romanian Workers Party, in coalition with other parties, won the elections under the electoral sign of the sun. The elections stood under suspicions of fraud from the beginning (Frunză 1990; Tismăneanu 2003; Țârău 1994, 1996, 1997, 2005).The Army, the state administration, and ethnic minorities were the first to vote for the leftist coalition. In the Transylvanian cities, the 1946 election campaign of the Democratic Block[31] was bilingual and addressed problems like minorities' rights and the quick return of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust home. Although women voted for the first time in 1946, allegedly due to the political pressure of the communists, they proved to be a disappointment for the National Democratic Block, especially in the countryside, where they voted massively with the National Peasant Party. The campaign was also marked by violence, threats, and bribery of all sorts. In Cluj, the supporters of the National Democratic Block confronted the supporters of the National Peasant Party in street fights. Many members of the agitation and propaganda sections of the Romanian Workers Party learned the craft of activism by breaking the demonstrations of support for their opponents.

In 1946, the elections year, the workers were caught in forms of political participation little experienced before the war. According to the Party documents, street manifestations and protests became almost an everyday experience. The streets of Cluj seemed to be always full

of people protesting, supporting, or celebrating. In March 1946, 40,000 people took the streets for a communist demonstration. Only two days later, 10,000 women celebrated the 8th of March in the main square. On the 10th of March, 1,500 students staged a pro-monarchy manifestation in the city centre, carrying banners which read: "Down with terror," "Down with the terrorists," "Freedom," "Long live the King and the students," "Long live the King and our country."[32] On the 15th of May, 10,000 workers left their workbenches and joined a demonstration organized by the Party for supporting death penalty for war criminals. On the 19th of May, 20,000 peasants were brought to Cluj for celebrating the Congress of the Ploughmen Front.[33] In July, 35,000 people, many of them workers, craftsmen, and peasants were out in the streets again for a popular gathering celebrating the Party Congress.[34]

As people in the interviews told me, the reasons for participating in these demonstrations were very diverse. Sometimes, the workers sincerely supported a measure of the government, like on the 6th of October, when 35,000 workers and artisans gathered to celebrate the distribution of the land titles for the peasants after the Agrarian Reform.[35] On the 17th of October, almost 80,000 people were waiting for Vasile Luca, a top Party activist, Hungarian by birth, responsible for the minorities issues, and perceived by the Hungarian population of the city as their representative in the Party's top echelons.[36] Other occasions were good opportunities to escape from work and join a popular celebration followed by music and dances. The workers realized quickly that passivity was no longer appreciated and fully felt the pressures of the local Party organizations and of the factory committees to participate in mass demonstrations for securing employment or for advancing at their workplace. In the second part of 1946, they started to see these manifestations as an opportunity to manifest loyalty (real or mimicked) for the Party and to look good in the eyes of their communist foremen or union leaders.

The signs of the new times became clearer with the lavish parade for celebrating the First of May. Seventy allegorical cars, 70,000 participants from all social categories, and cultural events all over the city could hardly mask the apathy of the crowd which transformed the moment in "an almost mute demonstration."[37] The situation was different at the parade of the opposition on the 9th and the 10th of May, when people celebrated King Michael's birthday. Although only 8,000 people – mostly students and intellectuals - participated in the events, the activists of the Romanian Workers Party complained that they could not "dominate the field" and the demonstration succeeded in transmitting its "chauvinistic, fascist" message.

> During the official speeches, students and other reactionary fascist groups managed to isolate the workers' counter-demonstration and dominated the scene. The local officials were booed and interrupted by the students shouting: "we don't want politics today." When the representative of the Hungarian Popular Union was talking, the students started to whistle and to sing nationalist and legionary songs.
>
> The peasants who participated in the parade did not take over the reactionary slogans of the students. They marched peacefully with the King's portrait. Some of them held the portrait of our prime-minister, Petru Groza and some banners with democratic slogans.[38]

The following weeks stood under the sign of discontent, with small protests by of the students, followed by arrests and beatings by the Police and even by the Romanian Workers Party's activists. The tense situation culminated with the students' strike on the 28th of May. The stated reasons for the strike were the harsh living conditions of the students, the need to depoliticize the University (read: to take out communist politics from the University), and the necessity to separate the past of certain professors and students from their educational performance (read: in some cases, to ignore and leave unpunished their fascist past). It was bad enough to make Party activists worried that they could not pacify the University for a long time and convince them to take radical measures.

Although the reports related to the protests in the city between January and May 1946 disappeared from the files, one declaration escaped the "cleaning" of the archives. [39] [40] According to an activist from the City Party Committee, on the 28th of May, the students prepared another demonstration in the main square of the city. Around 7.30 PM, a high rank police officer announced the Party Committee that a small group of students displayed a portrait of Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasants Party in front of the Local Commission of the Unions, as the unionized workers were considered to be the most loyal supporters of the National Democratic Block, the coalition gathered around the communists, the social-democrats, and the Ploughmen Front. At the phone, it was labelled as "an instigation to violence against the working-class," and the police officer emphasized the need for immediate measures. He also declared that no police forces were available to help the Party activists, so they should "do [by themselves] as much as they can, as fast as they can." As the students continued to gather in front of the University and in the main square, the police did send some troops to control the small crowd and the Party activists called the members of the local organizations at the *Railways Workshops* and *Dermata* to mobilize the

workers, only four days after the workers' own strike.

The workers were brought to the city centre by the factory lorries and armed with clubs, chains, knives, and pistols. Since the students had already left the square, the workers followed them in the dormitory and "the lesson" imagined by the Party activists degenerated quickly. The workers attacked the dormitory, destroyed the furniture, and beat up the students. After the students called the police in vain, they turned to the people from Mănăştur for help. The police was massed at the entrance to the city, preventing the mănăştureni to join the students and to attack the workers from *Dermata* and the *Railways Workshops*. The conflict ended when one stone (or bullet according to other witnesses) hit the window of the Soviet headquarters across the road and the officers threatened that they would shoot the whole crowd if order was not immediately reinstated. The Party activists quickly came to regret the amplitude of the event and the fact that the situation could not be solved "by beating only few students in the main square" and forcing them to end the protest. But the message was clear: the voice of the nationalist intellectual elites had to be silenced.

As we have seen, the postwar years in Cluj were marked by conflicts and uncertainty. The everyday interactions and the open conflicts described here were unambiguously translated in ethnic terms by the scholarship on the region. The postsocialist intellectual field abounds of efforts of reconstruction of the events surrounding the students' strike. Many books and articles have been dedicated to the events (Ţârău 1992, 1997), which are also central in the memoirs of several city notabilities (Anania 2008). Strangely enough, no place for workers' memories of the incidents is to be found in these books and the memoirs. No trace of the workers' own strike and its consequences was redeemed by historians of socialism. Local memory recorded the event as one instance when "the Hungarians" ("the workers"?) came to brutalize "the Romanians" ("the students"?). The workers' attitude was labelled by the future intellectuals as "rage" and "savagery" and the people themselves were described as "brutes," "primitives," and "animals." The events seem to be suspended in a very thin web of actions and significations, with the anti-communist resistance of the students unambiguously understood as patriotic and heroic, and workers' actions (never reactions?) definitively thrown into the dust bin of history as anti-national and illegitimate barbarism.

The Party saw the events very differently than these later interpretations. Students' requests for better food and living conditions were labelled as a form of hooliganism that attacked national interest at its heart.[41] Many were expelled, arrested and beaten by the authorities. But for years, during the University meetings, the students continued to react sharply against the workers' leadership of the Party. They brought forward their education

and their culture for arguing for their readiness to lead the Party and to assume their elite role. The image of the factory as the place where the "brutes" from the working-class toiled was reinforced in the intellectuals' minds. From the perspective of the Romanian intellectuals in the city, it had a strong ethnic component. As an older historian told me in an informal conversation, of all factories, *János Herbák* came to be seen as "a Hungarian nest" by many Romanians in the city. It was also seen as a "communist nest," although during the interwar period the workers from the leather and footwear factory were attracted mostly to social democratic politics. Even workers from other factories, especially the new ones, like *Tehnofrig* or *Armătura*, had the same impression about this industrial unit.[42]

Even after the events of 1946, the Romanian students followed the lines of the political imaginary produced by the 20th century Transylvanian history. The Romanian intellectual elites defined themselves as having a crucial part to play in a different modernization project, which opposed the preservation of the city's Hungarianness and actively promoted the cultural and administrative transformation of Cluj. As times were changing, backwardness came to be imagined differently and had to be fought against differently. The making of the peasant into an urbanite through education was replaced by a different transformation – from peasants to industrial workers. While the interwar project made the University central for the former, the factory would become crucial for the latter, so the Romanian intellectuals found themselves robbed from the object of their emancipatory work, from their civilizing mission, and implicitly, from their symbolic and institutional capital. More important, for more than a decade, the gates of the universities and administration shrank for them and largely opened for workers, for whom the first postwar years came with the promise of a generational opening towards education, social mobility, and a generally sheltered life. Nevertheless, although the open confrontations in the 1940s did not succeed in producing the simultaneously desired and feared unity of class "interests" or "consciousness" and did not immediately transform the workers into the Party's object of action and representation, they succeeded in creating a form of class awareness, an acute sense of boundaries which would fracture the city for years, preserving a form of ethnicized class underneath a seemingly hegemonic internationalist discourse.[43]

My description of postwar Cluj leads into a different direction than Brubaker's and his colleagues' (2006) understanding of ethnicity as subjective belonging and contingent discoursive resource. Although they do make "a powerful case for de-essentializing ethnicity and for rethinking it as a process and not as a 'thing-in-itself'" (Poenaru and Pulay 2009), I would suggest that the end result fails to recognize the complex and sometimes messy ways

in which people in Cluj used ethnicized terms to express economic and social struggles. Of course, these struggles *were* ethnic, but they were also building upon long-term economic inequalities and disempowerment. As Petrovici (2011) shows in his critique of Brubaker's analysis of ethnic relations in Cluj, ethnicity is not an equally distributed resource, it is not "randomly" used by people, and it is never constituted outside a field of power in which class is central.

The attack of the (Hungarian) workers against the (Romanian) students cannot be understood in isolation, outside a struggle for "articulating the right to the city" (Petrovici 2011) or outside the forms of moral economy developed by workers in the 1940s. These forms were neither in conflict nor in consensus with Party's policy but rather syntheses of available political options, in a complex relational field where dispossession, displacement, and disenfranchisement emerged differently for different social categories in the city and in their encounter with newcomers and passengers. But they were always traumatic, and always appeared both as material and as cultural experiences (Kalb 2011). This repertoire of contention (Tilly 2002, 2003; Tarrow 1998) was partly rooted in past struggles and in workers' narratives about themselves, and partly fed by a newly felt empowerment in their relation with the management and with the state. In Cluj, none of these was ever separated from ethnic struggles.

Thus, on the one hand, the Hungarian nationalism of the factory met the Romanian nationalism of the University. On the other hand, the people in the factories faced the emerging intellectual elites as *workers* in a new situation of empowerment which, at least at a discursive level, functioned as a trigger to recognize class lines and smash them. Consequently, the Romanian intellectual elites saw their position in the city completely endangered by this new ideology, which stated the possibility that the workers, those *Hungarians* leaving in the neighbourhoods where no honourable person would walk, could take the city and make it their own. But the factories talked back. And, as expected, their voice was enthusiastically ethnicized and brutally classed.

The take-over of the factories was negotiated against this urban fabric and in the first years after the war was never separated from the struggle for the right of the city. The process of nationalization would further transform the workings of class and would slowly silence ethnic voices, only to let them re-emerge stronger in the 1960s, this time as part of the nationalist turn of the Party politics. As the next section will show, the process of nationalization itself was grounded in these localized relations and never acquired the radical, eventful appearance that scholarship and post-socialist politics alike seem to assume. More

importantly, it was not simply about changing property relations, but about appropriating and constituting new power structures in the factory, structures that would be able to contain, constitute, and exploit the socialist workers for decades to come.

"A workers' factory": Nationalization and its aftermath

Although seen by the Romanian historiography as the cornerstone of the socialist economic transformations, the nationalization of the means of production, of the financial system, of the mines, and of the transportation network was surprisingly quiet at the time. The newspapers were completely silent about the forthcoming change. Even the Party records in Cluj display an astounding lack of debates and discussions about "the first act of socialist accumulation (Preobrazhensky 1965 [1926]: 80) during the meetings preceding the 11th of June 1948, when it officially took place.

There are several factors to explain this non-event character of the nationalization. First, Romania was deeply integrated into the German war economy, and state ownership was already central to industrial production. Later, this dependency on Hungarian capital and on the German war effort became convenient for the postwar administration of industry, as most factories were immediately placed under the administration of *The Office for the Management and Supervision of Enemy Assets* [Casa de administrare şi supraveghere a bunurilor inamice] which controlled all movable and immovable assets belonging to the German or the Hungarian state, to citizens and residents of these states, and to people of German or Hungarian nationality. This was also true for other regions in Romania who were under German political protectorate in the late 1930s and depended upon an important flow of German capital. The relationship between the two states was close enough to justify labelling post-1918 Romania as an "intra-European German colony" (Verdery 1991; Chirot 1976).

Second, between 1944 and 1948, the Party organizations and the unions effectively prevented the remaining owners from exercising actual control over the production process and over the workers. In the words of a Party activist from the Cluj County Committee in 1947, "the Party does not touch private initiative. We even help it. But we also direct it, so the ones who work can profit from these initiatives, too."[44] Third, tendencies of centralization preceded nationalization due to war economy and to the postwar administration of industry.

This is also true for the implementation of planning as a form of economic coordination. At the time of nationalization, the factories had already had the experience of war planning and of a six months economic plan in 1947. Consequently, their administration was not going to appear that different in terms of everyday practices and routines. Fourth, many industrial and commercial units were kept in private hands to ensure pockets of flexibility in supply, both in production and in the service sector. Although for a much shorter period of time and to a different extent, keeping private enterprises in industry and trade alongside state economic units sprang from the same primitive accumulation rationale as keeping peasants on the land for more than one decade after the start of the collectivization. And fifth, the complex negotiations between the Party and the labourers within the factories after October 1944 prefigurated the issues that were going to be the stake of this relationship for decades: the line between production and life, and between production and politics. As we will see in the next chapter, these problems were rooted in the problematic content of the category of "proletarians" itself.

At the beginning of 1948, foreign trade was already under governmental control, through the mediation of national trade companies for every industrial branch. In order to influence prices and to keep inflation under control, the state had established departmental stores and local markets all over the country. State companies for collecting cereals, milk, fish, meat, or waste had been launched together with trade and supply companies for textiles, footwear, and other types of consumer goods. The Romanian-Soviet trade relations and the war reparations were managed through joint companies, which – although fundamentally unequal – allowed the Soviet Union to provide technical assistance and capital for Romania's industry and infrastructural projects in return for primary commodities and several types of manufactured goods.

In June 1948, the Romanian government nationalized the most important factories in the country, the mines, the financial system and the transportation infrastructure.[45] In Cluj Region, the first wave of nationalization targeted 48 industrial units belonging to the Ministry of Industry and to the Ministry of Mines and Oil, 26 mills and oil presses, 6 metallurgic companies, 3 electronical companies, two mines, seven construction trusts, five timber factories, two graphic art factories, six textile factories, two leather and footwear factories, six chemical industrial units, six factories belonging to the food industry, and one insurance company. Some smaller firms were nationalized as well but generally the decision was revoked once contested by the owner. Some of the factories were simply too unproductive to be kept in function and were dismantled.

A reconstruction of the administrative proceedings from the 11th of June 1948 shows how carefully the Party prepared the day of nationalization. At five in the morning, the most important factories in Cluj were already guarded by the police. The leaders of the Party organizations were spread in the workshops, in the cafeterias, and in the workers' locker rooms. At 5.30, the agents of the Nationalization Commission started their work by sealing the cash safes and the documents for their full checking. At two o'clock in the afternoon, all workers and the rest of the factories' staff were presented the act of nationalization and the new management.

The factory directors, long-term collaborators of the Party – and many times Party members themselves – received the news with calm, but became immediately disappointed when the agents of the Nationalization Commission presented them the newly appointed managers of the industrial units. At the moment of nationalization, the Party had been de facto controlling the factories for at least two years through the appointed factory directors, as a report of the Regional Party Committee regarding the conditions of the nationalization process in Cluj shows:

> Here, in Cluj, we have a somehow different situation compared to other cities, because the majority of the industrial units belonged to Hungarian, German, or Romanian fascists who left the country together with the troops in retreat. The factories have been under CASBI administration since then. Basically, these factories were under *our* leadership lately. The managers of these units were petty-bourgeois elements, Party members, who took good money for doing nothing and were simply a burden for the factory budgets.

The factory managers appointed by *The Office for the Administration of the Enemy Goods* not only were Party members but also considered simple puppets who could be manipulated and controlled by the factory committees and by the local Party organizations. Although they never saw themselves in this light, the pre-1948 factory managers had a transitory role and were never intended to become part of the newly emerging power structures. The situation was made even less bearable for them as, according to the law, the old managers had to stay in the factory until the new management was in place and to help the new leaders with any information and advise needed. Moreover, for three months after the nationalization (but prolonging indefinitely in some cases), the administrative and the technical staff of the factories was forbidden to resign or to ask for a transfer.

The factory documents reveal the fact that already in April 1948 the Party organizations of the factories made proposals for the appointment of new directors for the nationalized factories. Their proposals tended to take into account work experience and technical expertise more than clean social origin and loyalty to the Party. Alongside old core workers, engineers, former technical managers, and even workers having a petty-bourgeois background were named as possibilities of replacement for the pre-nationalization management. Few of these proposals are illustrated below:

> The power plant: Pentek Ioan, 42 years old, six years of primary education, a boiler stoker with 25 years length of service.
> Party member since February 1945. Honest, hard-working, loyal to the working-class. Good guide for the workers. Very popular among them. He is a good organizer of production and proves capacity for initiative. He is combative and vigilant against the enemies of the Party. Although he does not have much political knowledge he reads a lot and has good perspectives for growing as a dignified leader of the working-class. Good worker.

> Ursus (beer factory): Vaidasigan Grigore, 41 years-old, four years of primary school, 26 years length of service, locksmith.
> Employed at the Railways Workshops since 1922. Party activist since August 1944.
> Social origin: peasant. Party member since May 1945. Educated at the Cadres School in Constanța.
> Honest, diligent, disciplined element. The workers like him. He works well in teams. Sometimes he is slow and does not have enough enthusiasm for his Party work. But he is thorough when he gets tasks from the Party Committee. He is not politically developed. We can trust him but he corresponds better to production than to political work.

> Victoria cooperative: Zador Arpad, 50 years old, commercial college, private clerk, 33 years length of service.
> Social origin: petty-bourgeois. Party member since April 1945. He did not do any kind of politics before the war. Honest, devoted to the Party, and disciplined. He fulfils any task we give him and is very responsible. Generally apolitical, without much political knowledge but striving to overcome these problems. In production we

> can count on him. He is diligent and totally reliable. The interests of the Party are at his heart. He is an excellent accountant, skilled in all the fields of the administrative work. Very useful element.

However, the Nationalization Commission rarely took into account their proposals, which were considered "not radical enough" for the new times.

The new leaders of the nationalized factories were mostly workers with only few years of education who had proved their loyalty to the Party in the postwar years. In Cluj, 44 of the new directors were workers and only four were engineers who were "loyal to the working-class cause." The agents reported the disappointment of the former directors who were suddenly losing financial advantages and power in favour of other Party members. No act of resistance was recorded in Cluj but the tension grew when the technical staff was requested insistently to help the new directors understand the functioning of the factory and their administrative tasks. This second layer of technical management would de facto lead the industrial units for the years to come, until a new generation of engineers with "healthy social origin" were prepared to take their places in production and to become the heads of the socialist factories.

Although obscured by the memory of nationalization as a one-day historical event, the logic of the process was somehow similar to the logic of collectivization. The state needed middle sized enterprises and shops to cover services and supply of consumer goods which were not covered by the large industrial units' production exactly as they needed an initial alliance with middle peasants for supporting the growing population of the cities. A strange period, with a partly controlled, partly chaotic market started.

Equally misleading is the image of nationalization as event when taking into account the length of the process itself. It is often forgotten that the Nationalization Law referred only to the financial system and to the large commercial and industrial units. The small business survived until the mid-1950s in order to ensure a much needed flexibility of supply and demand, both for consumer goods and for services. While the nationalized factories were still doing business with the privately owned ones, the idea that they could choose the logic of the market to account for their decisions was dismissed as reactionary and dangerous by the Party activists. The new director at Dermata was scolded by the Economic Section of the Regional Party Committee when he chose a private print shop instead of a nationalized one, "for the mistaken reason that the private print shop was cheaper."

Although needed and kept for a long time as a necessary evil, small businesses faced

pressures to organize themselves in cooperatives and to unify their networks. Already in 1945, the communist cells of the artisans in the city complained daily that raw materials were directed mainly to the large industrial units and their taxes were suffocating. They also had to deal with various waves of interdictions to hire labourers, who were badly needed in the larger factories. After the Nationalization Law and the new Education Law that introduced the professional schools were adopted in 1948, the artisans and the vendors in the city could not count anymore on apprentices either. Employment regulations of all sorts would make their life harder and harder until almost all shops were either unified in cooperatives or dismembered and included in larger industrial units.

However, the situation of the large industrial units was not that clear, either. Some owners succeeded to negotiate their position with the Party and keep their privileged positions until the beginning of the 1950s. One of the most informative cases is the case of Blajiu Guban, the owner of Guban chemicals, a small-sized footwear manufacturer, which would become famous during the socialist years for its specialization in luxury shoes. Grama (forthcoming) describes the fascinating trajectory of the case of Blajiu Guban, who was, for few years after 1948, a factory owner, a Party member, and a technical adviser to the Light Industry Ministry, all at the same time. In 1951, the factory was still not nationalized and the Party officials started to worry that singling out Blajiu Guban would send the wrong message to factory managers and workers everywhere. A *réquisitoire* describing the most pressing concerns related to Guban chemicals was issued. The accusations concerned the fact that Blajiu Guban, as a public servant, "was able to obtain raw materials outside the plan, without paying on delivery and thereby accumulating exorbitant debt," that "he did not adapt the advertising strategy to the national market," and that he "ignored labor regulations; paying his employees more than what was legally allowed and thus provoking the envy of those working for state factories" (Grama forthcoming).

The boundaries between "the state," "society," and "the market" not only disappeared in this case, but they were rendered more and more problematic as Blajiu Guban came to lend money to the local branch of the Metal and Chemical Trade-Union and to the Financial Office of the city administration. In 1951, the situation got out of control when the Light Industry Ministry's investment plan allocated a budget for an expansion of the privately-owned Guban chemicals and when Blajiu himself bragged about the disponibility of the state to invest in his factory. The state controlling the banks and still borrowing money from a private owner and investing in a privately-owned factory stretched the notion of what the "socialist economy" was. The fact that this private owner was one of their own introduced a

tension into the notion of what the "workers' state" itself was. Or, in the words of the Party leaders in the above-mentioned réquisitoire: "To prolong the current situation will only compromise the higher echelons of the Party in the eyes of the workers; it will confuse the mind of the working man incapable of understanding why a comrade from *ilegalitate* is an owner in the age of building socialism and why the state backs him up" (Grama forthcoming).

An equally fascinating case was the business success of the foreman Luka Francisc from the Electrical Company in Cluj. Luka Francisc was employed as a foreman and promoted immediately as the head of the mechanical sector by the regional branch of the company. A 1951 report about the situation created by his alliance with the factory director showed that, before 1948, Luka Francisc owned his own industrial unit, employing 90 workers and around 20 apprentices. Nagy Alexandru, the post-nationalization director of the regional branch of the Electrical Company had been employed as a lathe operator at Luka Francisc's factory at some point during the war. In 1950, the company manager offered a contract to his former employer and made him responsible for the whole mechanical sector. The workers complained about his "dictatorial attitude," manifested through the lack of empathy and the remains of his "bourgeois mentality." One day, he supposedly even slapped one worker, member of the communist youth, and spit him, shouting "*Zdravstvujte*!" Nothing was done against the foreman as he was protected by the company director himself.

The most important accusation against Luka Francisc was related to his refusal "to understand the Nationalization Law." He was found guilty of sabotage when the authorities finally discovered how his business, although nationalized, continued to operate in much better conditions than before 1948. Few days before the buildings which sheltered his workshops were requisitioned, Luka Francisc moved all the industrial equipment into various factories. He hid most of them at the regional branch of the Electrical Company which, like the other factories used by the former owner to hide his equipment, failed to list them in the inventory. The machines came under Luka Francisc's own control once the company director employed him as a foreman and as head of the mechanical sector. Moreover, the private activity continued, and Luka Francisc used the machines "like they were his own," asking his subordinates to work after hours, paying them from his earnings, and offering them higher payments than the factory itself. He refused any vacation and continued to work 16 hours a day in the factory. Checking Luka Francisc's case, the Party discovered that at least two other foremen who "donated" some equipment to the factory before June 1948 conducted their own small businesses from within the industrial unit. They sold their products on the black market

but also to the state factories which were in short supply of everything. Because these factories could not pay their work directly, Nagy Alexandru took care to arrange important bonuses for them inside their own factory. According to rumours, Luka Francisc shared his profit with the factory director.

The director was charged with the accusation of "familiarism" manifested in the large amount of money (wages and bonuses) that were paid to his close collaborators. It seems blackmail perfectly functioned at the regional branch of the Electrical Company, where the factory director declared in private conversations he needed to save the best positions for certain people because they knew many things about his illegal dealings. The intricate situation around the factory management was summed up by Nagy Alexandru himself when he stated in a meeting: "I always feel like one of my feet is already in prison. But if I am going to prison, many will come with me." Probably this is why the Party could not find out the extent of the networks of private production operating in the factory. Moreover, when the Party organization tried to find out what was happening, its own members started to use blackmail as a strategy, trading information about the endemic corruption in the factory in exchange for access to housing or to better employment.

Nationalization was problematic in terms of politics as well. In their reports, the Party activists contradicted the propagandistic voice of the newspapers which recounted the exaltation of the workers on the 11th of June and remarked with sadness that the workers did not expressed "an extraordinary joy" and "were not deeply moved by the revolutionary act in itself, which opens future perspectives for the working-class."

> The class enemy tries by any means to compromise the act of nationalization. The County Committee helped the Party organizations understand the cunning of these people who use various methods to undermine our power. They launched a dangerous rumour, that the whole profit of the factory will be distributed amongst workers. They also promised a prepayment of 10,000 lei for every workers in the factory and they encouraged the workers to request improvements in the social infrastructure of the factory, for their own benefits and comfort, like bathrooms, toilets, cafeterias, and kindergardens.

The political atmosphere in the factories continued to vary along very mundane problems after nationalization. In August, the workers started to murmur against nationalization because they were convinced their income would grow. Rumours full of hope were spreading

in the factory, making the workers believe that the whole profit of the factory would be shared between them, that they were going to receive a large amount of money, and that they were not going to pay anymore for social security. Some of their informal leaders pushed things forward stating that "the workers should get better wages because the factory is theirs now."

In September, the workers in several factories complained that the piece rate system was not introduced everywhere and the salaries were still small. They started to discuss the collective contracts as a chance to supplement their income with food or various financial compensations from the factory. The Party activists complained that the workers proved unable to see that the collective contract was "in substance different from the one before the act of nationalization" but in form had to remain practically the same. As we will see in Chapter 4, the Collective Contract was going to be different and to fulfil a different role in the factory than the workers believed after the nationalization. However, like before "the greatest historical act of the working-class," shop floor peace was going to depend on how the factory was able to function as an efficient redistributive node and to take care of workers' reproduction. Thus, a daily supplement of 250 grams of bread for the workers at *János Herbák* ensured a peaceful October month. It was not enough for November, when the workers protested vehemently and threatened to leave the factory if their jobs continued to be considered in a different wage category than they deserved.

Things were complicated by the fact that for decades, state factories needed to rely on a non-socialist exterior made of a complex and politically ambiguous fabric of capitalist relations. If "the process of exchange between the capitalist and non-capitalist environment acts as a feeding ground of accumulation, and is a *sine qua non* of the existence of the capitalist economy" (Luxemburg 2003 [1913]: 426), the same can be said about the myriad of exchange threads between the nationalized and the private sector in socialism. It was precisely the limited and contradictory reliance of socialist industry on a non-socialist exterior – mainly rural – that allowed the factories to function and expand in the 1950s.

Thus, after the nationalization, the large factories in Cluj became the property of the state, received their credit from the State Bank, and their production programme was laid down by the State Planning Commission in collaboration with the corresponding ministry or governmental office. However, they were connected in multiple ways to the private sector. Like most nationalized factories, *Dermata* (later *János Herbák*) sold its footwear through its own stores, through state stores, and through private ones. Until mid-1950s, state industrial units employed private cartmen, many of them coming from villages around Cluj, whose

survival depended upon their connections with the town. Carrier services had a price fixed by the state, but since they were in short supply, the factories were ready to pay much more, making cartmanship a very lucrative business for more than a decade. The same applied for the repairing of industrial equipment, which was many times outsourced to the few hundreds craftsmen who were still operating in Cluj until 1952. The artisans and craftsmen who were still working in their own workshops, the small tradesmen who ran their own stores, or the carriers and the carpenters who serviced the state factories were able to made factories pay a market price for their services, although theoretically the state imposed fixed prices for much of the private sector.

The provisioning of the cities was also dependent upon a manifold connection between them and the countryside. Until the beginning of the 1960s, when most land was included in collective farms, small-scale agricultural producers delivered their surplus in three ways: by fulfilling their imposed quotas, by selling it to the state at disadvantageous prices, and by selling it freely on the city markets (Iordachi and Dobrincu 2009; Verdery and Kligman 2011). Peasants who managed to keep a part of their products out of the state's hand sold them on the market or distributed them directly to regular clients. State factories also depended upon intricate connections with rural economy. Besides supplying state industry with raw materials and urban food stores with meat, grains, or vegetables through forced deliveries to the state, peasants from the villages surrounding Cluj as well as those around other Romanian cities provided industry with supplemental raw material, food for their cafeterias, milk for their nurseries, fodder and manure for their annex farms, or firewood for their workers. In turn, factories were supplying peasants with consumer goods and agricultural tools through rural cooperatives, at prices, which were generally beyond peasants' reach. But the crucial dependency of industry on a non-socialist exterior is to be found in its desperate search for workers and in the daily struggle to produce and expand labour that accompanied socialist industrialization for decades. This will be explored in-depth in the next three chapters.

It is clear that "the take-over" of the factories was neither simple nor uni-directional as generally assumed. It was not simply about building legitimacy either, in these Mark Pittaway (2012, 2014) would have interpreted it. Although largely unseen, the struggle over the control of the factories in the post-1945 period was fierce. During approximately four years, the complex transition undergone by the factories from contested political spaces to state institutions entailed a battle to control labour and management alike, while keeping and even expanding the productive potential of the factories. It required the involvement of the

workers in new forms of political participation, while under-cutting and re-interpreting their own moral economies and ideas of social justice. This transition was not completed in 1948, when the most important means of production and the financial institutions were nationalized. It continued for years, manifested in the myriad of ways in which the state envisioned its subjects and in people's countless responses to that vision. In this negotiation, the factories became fragile nodes of state power in which the need to manage production collided with an emancipatory projection of a better future and with people's own struggles for existence and recognition.

But nationalization did accomplish something else. As Ost (1990) showed for the Polish case, this impossibility to escape a position of interiority within a self-declared workers' state had definitive consequences for how the workers could imagine and frame their claims and for how the state could respond to them. If "being planned" meant to be made into an everyday part of the structures of power and knowledge that the state used in its essential task to structure the relationships responsible for mobilizing social labour that people in the factories needed to be intimately connected with the same structures that dominated or exploited them. Again, this is not so far from the functioning of any modern structure of governance. Nonetheless, what is central to the functioning of the socialist states is their need to permanently (re)create a double bond between power structures and the people, both as *workers* and as *political subjects* within the factory space. Although the modernization project animating the socialist project from the beginning was theoretically founded on the necessary collapse of the boundary between the state, economy and society and on the fusion between production politics and state politics and between state and civil society (Burawoy 1985), the direct double determination of its subjects made the socialist state strong and vulnerable at the same time.

This had less to do with any Bolshevik ideological drive than with the necessity of the state to make itself and its projects visible to the working people and to involve them in its everyday functioning. Because of the huge knowledge prerequisites of each plan, the active involvement of the people in the heart of the state action itself was much more intense than in a capitalist state. Like in any modern historical formation, people of the socialist regimes encountered the state through the law, taxes or regulations of their daily behaviour. But they also had to face the state as *knowing subjects* whose actions reenacted the regime daily through the simple presence at the workbench and whose belonging could not easily find a space for contestation neither from their part nor from the Party officials. No externality could be derived from the workers' position as it was permanently obscured by the

perpetually underlined "participation" of the workers themselves in politics and in the making of their world. "Participating" was not optional since the act of work itself was seen as a political act – foundational if it was the expression of good-faith and skill and subversive otherwise. For many people, "building socialism" and being political subjects meant simply *producing* while identifying workers' opponents within a workers' state became more and more difficult and no *us* and *them* could easily be imagined within these emergent structures.

Notes

[1] Deak Ferenc street, later named Petru Groza, the name of the prime minister of the first postwar government with communist participation, the president of The Ploughmen Front.

[2]After the Second Vienna Arbitration. People from the countries that lost territories in the First and the Second Vienna Awards generally use the term "Diktats" to refer to the Arbitrations.

[3] See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 5, page 618.

[4] The *hoştezeni* were living on the outskirts of Cluj and were supplying the city with fresh fruits and vegetables. They were brought from Central Europe by the Hungarian authorities in the 17th century but they claimed no German identity and did not speak the language. Their name comes precisely from *Hochstadt*, signaling their position outside the city walls. The *hoştezeni* survived the collectivization due to their crucial role in supplying the city with fresh food. However, after 1978, in just few years, their gardens disappeared when the new neighbourhoods were built in Cluj. Many of them committed suicide when they were forcefully moved in blocks of flats.

[5] Invisible until now in the Romanian historiography

[6] Also invisible in the scholarship on Romania.

[7] Especially of the Social Democrats, who were relatively powerful in the factories and of the Ploughmen Front, who was strong in the countryside.

[8] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatie de Partid din sectorul II – 2 August 1945; P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatie de Partid din sectorul II – Iulie 1945

[9] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R., Sectia Educatie Politica, Raportul politic al Comitetului Judetean Cluj, August 1947.

[10] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Organizatii de masa, Raportul pe luna ianuarie al sectiei organizatiilor de masa.

[11] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Educatie Politica, Circulara, Cluj, 14 August 1946

[12] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatie de Partid din sectorul II – 2 August 1945

[13] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul I Institutii, Celula: Prefectura Judetului Cluj, Proces Verbal al sedintei celulei comuniste a Prefecturii Judetului Cluj, 18 August 1945

[14] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul I Institutii, Celula: Inspectoratul Regional de Politie, 21 Octombrie 1945; P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul I Institutii, Celula: Inspectoratul Regional de Politie, 9 noiembrie 1945

[15] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Celula: Fabrica de Tutun

[16] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatiei de Partid din sectorul II – 2 August 1945

[17] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatie de Partid din sectorul II – Septembrie 1945

[18] Report about Kertesz Niculae, department head of the Industrial Belts workshop at *Dermata*, Cluj, September 10, 1946

[19] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Organizatii de masa, Raportul pe luna septembrie al sectiei organizatiilor de masa

[20] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Organizatii de masa, Raportul pe luna martie al sectiei organizatiilor de masa

[21] Cerere catre Inspectoratul Muncii Cluj, nr. 1583 din 30 iulie 1946

[22] Telegrama fulger catre Ministerul Industriei si Comertului, directia Industriei, Bucuresti, 7 Mai 1946, "Ca urmare a conflictului colectiv de munca sambata 25 Mai, productia incetata. Stop. Productia reinceputa conditionat Luni, 27 Mai. Stop. Inspectoratul Muncii Cluj incunostiintat". (53)

[23] Fond Clujana, Dosar 80 / 1948, Corespondente in legatura cu incetarea productiei, exemplare din Monitorul Oficial, Document afisat de organizatia P.C.R. din Dermata cu ocazia intreruperii productiei

[24] At *Dermata*, production stopped completely for days: in 1945, November 4-19 and November 20 – December 6; in 1946: January 2, March 6-11, and May 4. The units of the factories stopped multiple times, sometimes for more than a month.

[25] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Raport politic pe luna August 1946, judetul Cluj

[26] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Organizatii de masa, Raportul pe luna septembrie al sectiei organizatiilor de masa, Raportul pe luna octombrie al sectiei organizatiilor de masa

[27] Although it went unnoticed in the Romanian historiography, labour unrest was a daily reality in the 1940s. The factories in Cluj saw daily interruptions of production, spontaneous gatherings of the workers to claim their rights, and vocal complaints to their unions and factory committees. The events at *Dermata* in May 1946 were among the very few labour conflicts in the country that could be properly labelled as "strikes" but explosive situations did emerge in Cluj, as they did in other important industrial centres like Bucharest, Arad, and Reşiţa. One of them in particular was extremely violent, making the Party fear workers' reaction when pushed to their limits. In the spring of 1947, at the *Textile Enterprise* in Arad, the workers striked. Women made up the most important part of the factory's workforce. Their complaints revolved mainly around issues of survival – low wages and the problem of access to food through the factory economats but also demands regarding the lack of transparency in the ways wages were calculated and communicated to workers. The question of the economats had been contentious for long in Arad. Most of the time, it referred to their transformation into businesses by few people (sometimes Party members) who hid the goods destined for workers' consumption and sold them on the black market. The workers sent delegations to other large factories in Arad to carry their call to solidarity. However, although smaller work conflicts were common in Arad, the rest of the workers refused to strike at that

point. The Party secretary in the factory refused to negotiate with the workers and, "instead of coming with a good word, he swore the crowd, especially the women" (interview with a participant in the strike, in Sala 2006). Women were the firsts to hit him. Beaten and threatened, the secretary ran to the city headquarters of the Party and tried to intimidate the workers pointing a machine gun against them. One woman attacked the Party secretary from behind and disarmed him but the gun accidentally fired. Nobody was hurt but the fury of the workers could not be stopped anymore. The Party secretary was tortured for hours and finally beaten to death together with a guardian who tried to intervene. The crowd refused to let the doctors help the two men.

[28] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Sectorul II, Raportul Organizatiei de Partid din sectorul II – 2 August 1945, Celula cooperativei lemnarilor

[29] Raportul Sectiei de Educatie Politica a Judetenei Cluj pentru Conferinta pe tara a secretarilor de Educatie Politica

[30] For very similar descriptions of the postwar situation in Hungary see Pittaway 2012. For Poland, see Kenney 1997 and Lebow 2013.

[31] The National Democratic Block was formed in 1946 through a protocol between The Ploughmen Front, The Social Democratic Party, a wing of the National Liberal Party (Tătărăscu), The Popular Hungarian Union, The Jewish Democratic Committee.

[32] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R., Sectia Educatie Politica, Raportul Sectiei de Educatie Politica a P.C.R. Cluj, din 25.02 pana in 25.03

[33] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R., Sectia Educatie Politica, Raportul Sectiei de Educatie Politica a P.C.R. Cluj, din 25.02 pana in 25.03

[34] P.C.R. Fond 2, Committee Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Educatie Politica, Raportul Sectiei Educatie Politica, Iulie 1946

[35] The Agrarian Reform of 1945

[36] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Educatie Politica, Raport politic pe luna Octombrie 1946, judetul Cluj

[37] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Educatie Politica, Raport al Sectiei de educatie politica, luna mai 1946.

[38] P.C.R. Fond 2, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Sectia Educatie Politica, Raport al Sectiei de educatie politica, luna mai 1946

[39] The successive laws concerning the functioning of the archives allowed for the periodical disposal of certain categories of documents. However, the employees of the archives claim that in 1965 the Party decided to clean the archives from the most incriminating documents for the period between 1944 and 1965. The fact that the files still exist and only the pages containing the reports and the declarations of the participants in the events were ripped supports their memories.

[40] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Declaratie, 5 Iunie 1946, Semnatura indescifrabila

[41] Scînteia, 2 iunie 1946, seria III, anul XVI, nr. 538

[42] Romanian foreman, later engineer at *Tehnofrig*, born in 1925.

[43] See also Giddens' distinction between class consciousness and class awareness in "Class structure in advanced societies".

[44] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R., Sectia Educatie Politica, Proces Verbal adresat la Conferinta

Judetenelor de la Cluj, 19.06.1947, p. 142

[45] In Romania, the nationalization of the factories, banks, insurance companies, mining companies, and transportation took place on 11 June 1948, under the Law no. 119 / 11 June 1948.

Chapter 3: "Proletarians" as an empty category: Mapping the early socialist workforce

> In order to abolish classes it is necessary . . . to abolish the difference between factory worker and peasant, to *make workers of all of them* . . . The proletariat must separate, demarcate the working peasant from the peasant owner . . . In this demarcation lies the *whole essence* of socialism.
> Lenin, 1919

Some remarks on the Romanian socialist proletarianisation

Seen from the perspective of the standard narrative of postwar industrialization, proletarianisation in socialist countries was supposed to come in a condensed form, by compressing time and burning historical stages, and by redefining the worker/peasant and the worker/craftsman nexuses (Siegelbaum and Suny 1994; Zelnik 1994). Figures are generally used to show how postwar industrialization produced an ever-increasing population of

"workers," which grew steadily and transfigured the landscape of the Romanian labour (Turnock 1974; Murgescu 2010; Crowther 1988). As the story goes, because of the collectivization, life with all its possibilities gradually moved in the city, and a new urban fabric was weaved around the factories, bringing together people and materialities and constituting networks of houses, neighbourhoods, sport teams, cultural programs, health facilities, child care, education, and leisure. In this sense, the collectivization process made people "free" to sell their work by leaving them without almost any means of subsistence in the countryside. On the ground, making proletarians entailed processes of social mobility and personal stories of becoming or falling apart (Bertaux, Thompson and Rotkirch 2004) and it involved radical ruptures in values and attitudes toward work, family, friendship, politics, and money (Lampland 1995). It proceeded through the transformation of some categories and the exclusion of others, producing winners and losers of history, and reshaping people's biographies for the generations to come.

Nevertheless, during the period analysed in my thesis, although socialist industry did fundamentally depend on attracting a predominantly rural workforce into the factories, it could not afford to welcome them into the cities. Many factories – including the ones in Cluj – needed to rely on an army of not-yet-urbanized labouring arms, comprised mainly of young male commuting from the nearby villages and of a gender-mixed workforce from the outskirts of the city, which they inherited from the prewar period. As long as the state could not provide housing, food, and transportation for all, people still needed to take care of a large part of their lives. It was convenient – and necessary – to rely not only (and not mainly) on proletarians – be they old urban labourers, former craftsmen, or peasants made into workers – but also on a flexible workforce, who could take care of its own reproduction and who would swing daily or seasonally between the city and the countryside. So, while discursively the state officials decried the behaviour or a not-fully-urbanized labour force, they had to rely on categories of population who were not completely "free" from their means of production or of subsistence. The ideal form of modern employment, which involved workers' total dependency on wages, insurance system, and factory social infrastructure, had to wait for an indefinite future.

As this chapter will show, it was not the proletarian but rather the peasant-worker and other categories of labourers that sustained accumulation in Cluj early socialist factories. The peasant-worker remained the crucial pillar of Cluj industry until the end of the 1960s, when the city saw a massive boost in housing construction and industry benefited from increased technological investment. Even after that date, the inclusion of Cluj in the third wave of the

Romanian socialist industrialization and the radical program of urbanization that dominated the 1970s was going to solve this situation only partly. With all the techniques of stabilizing and expanding labour in an urban environment, the entanglement between rural and urban life would continue to be fundamental both for workers' own reproduction and for the functioning and the expansion of industry until the collapse of the regime.

Although tense and problematic, the dependence on the countryside for the development of the city was one of the core contradictions of socialist construction that never went away. However, I do not see the daily presence of "double dwellers" and of "urban villagers" in the socialist factories as the epitome of "under-urbanization" and the sign of a failed modernity (Konrád and Szelenyi 1977; Murray and Szelenyi 2009; Andrusz, Harloe and Szelenyi 2008). I rather read it as the outcome of an encounter between a top-down opportunistic strategy for industrializing an agrarian country by keeping labour cheap and people's own re-thinking of their lives, worth, and opportunities. As other scholars have shown (Petrovici 2013) the reliance on a workforce that could make use of both rural and urban resources was a conscious strategy that led to a partial externalization of labour reproduction costs.[1] It mirrored the twin strategy of expanding the factories as welfare nodes and it became more and more articulated with time, especially as part of the late 1960s territorial systematization (Turnock 1986, 1974). Thus, articulating an economic plan in which industry and agriculture could be seen as a totality but also as bounded objects of governance and governmentality, proved to be not only difficult but also partly undesirable for decades.

This chapter sets itself a straightforward task: to map the workforce of the factories in Cluj at the end of the 1940s and during the first five-year plan in order to reveal the central category of rule of the socialist state – "proletarians" – as an empty category. I argue that early industrialization in a backward country not only lacked proletarians but also strategically postponed their making by relying instead on a particular rural-urban fabric that produced various forms of labour: wage-labour, forced labour, and temporary or seasonal labour. Socialist accumulation appears then as a combination of workers' forced self-restrain (one of the easily forgotten dimensions of Preobrazehnsky's primitive accumulation), directly unpaid labour, and externalized reproduction costs for a flexible but unruly rural workforce. As the next chapters of my dissertation will show, this urban-rural fabric set the limits within which the making of a socialist economy was imagined and it shaped state socialism's knowledge production mechanisms, disciplinary practices, and temporal regimes.

Together with the analysis of the severe labour shortage, employment regulations, and

competition for workers in the next chapter, this mapping of the "arms that built socialism" reveals a different possibility for understanding uneven proletarianisation and the commodification of labour in socialism. Analytically, commodification of labour refers to an abstraction: the decoupling of labour power from living labour, or the artificial separation between people's mental and physical capacity to work and the waste of their bones, blood, and sweat in the act of work itself (Marx [1867] 1992). This objectification of labour is fundamental for the possibility of selling one's labour power and for all the consequences of this possibility: setting a price for labour, defining a labour market, or calculating demand for workers. And it was constitutive for capitalism and socialism alike (Postone [1993] 2003). Nevertheless, historically, this separation was contingent and never fully accomplished. As its long and convoluted trajectory shows, it have been constituted into a field of battle that was fought at the intersection between production and life at the core of both Western and Eastern European history of the 20th century. Europe's history was fundamentally marked by the inherent tensions between the need to make the worker-behind-the-work completely invisible and the impossibility to dismantle notions of "welfare," "solidarity," and "responsibility" by decoupling productive forces from the complex field of their reproduction. From this perspective, a rather thin analytical line separates Bismarckian social security ideas or its post-World War II welfare states variants from social engineering projects like Fordism or from state socialism's emancipatory dream.

Thus, the exploration of the processes through which "labour becomes something objective and independent" from people's own bodies (Lukács 1971) requires at the same time an effort to reveal the limits of these processes. Any discussion about labour commodification and proletarianisation needs to be de-centred from its original context of Marx's England by rescuing it both from the Anglo-Saxon language of rights and from the translation of a particular industrialization narrative into a universal model. The debate needs to be re-scaled in order to avoid methodological nationalism and the assumption that proletarianisation is a process that ever develops nationally. And lastly, it is necessary to move on from a universalistic and uni-directional grand narrative that frames proletarianisation as a linear process. As history shows, this was basically never the case for capitalist world. From Zambian copperbelt (Ferguson 1999) to Venezuelan Andes' coffee and petroleum (Roseberry 1991), or to contemporary Mexico's stonemasonry (Binford and Churchill 2007), there are endless examples of how uneven and combined development produced sometimes striking entanglements between various forms of labour control, reproduction and expansion (Munslow and Finch 1984; Cooper 1996; Cooper et al. 1993).

Capitalism (and state socialism as its "eccentricity" (Lampland 1995)) have had rather complex and fragmented trajectories that produced localized pockets of class formation and class struggle around processes of depeasantisation, peasantisation, proletarianisation, deproletarianisation, or reproletarianisation (Brass and Bernstein 1992; Brass 2011). Thus, we need a re-turn to but also a serious re-working of the classical Marxist perspective, but always preserving its analytical core – the separation between labour power and living labour, and a deep historical understanding of the two dialectical moments presupposed by the notion of "free labour."

In the opening of the sixth chapter of *Das Kapital*, Marx identified labour, or labour-power, as the only commodity whose use-value is in itself a source of value. Understood as the totality of intellectual and physical abilities of a human being that can be exercised whenever people work, labour power appears as the only commodity whose consumption creates surplus value. But for labour to appear as a commodity, two conditions are necessary. First, the seller and the buyer have to meet in the market as "equal[s] in the eyes of the law" (Marx [1867] 1992: 271). In order for this legal equality to be preserved, the workers can alienate their labour power only temporarily, otherwise they would become commodities themselves, instead of possessing their labour as commodity. The *legal* separation between the worker and her capacity to produce is achieved. Second, once the workers can temporarily dispose of their labour power without any legal proscription, they should be compelled to sell it by creating specific historical conditions which would leave them without any means of subsistence. Labour power has to be their only means of production and the reproduction of their labour power – inseparable from the reproduction of their own lives – must fully depend on their wages.

> For the transformation of money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must find the free workers available on the commodity-market; and this worker must be free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of his labour-power (ibid.: 273).

While the first dialectical moment in Marx's scheme involves a long history of struggle for civil rights in Britain, the second one entails radical transformations of social production and it requires the separation of use-value from exchange-value as well as the emergence of

money in all its capacities – as equivalent of commodities, means of circulation, means of payment and hoarding, and world currency.

All these conditions for the production and the circulation of commodities are pre-conditions for capitalism but *not* capitalist *per se*. Capital accumulation is in fact fully dependant upon this historical encounter between "the owner of the means of production and subsistence" and "the free worker … as the seller of his own labour-power" (ibid.: 274).[2] Capitalism as a political and moral arrangement finds its foundations in this sphere of commodity exchange, to become "a very Eden of the innate rights of man" (ibid.: 280). The whole notion of citizenship that crosses Western modernity appears then to be centred around and marked by four notions: Freedom, as the legally unconstrained possibility of the buyer and the seller of labour to seal a contract; Equality, as they meet in the market as owners of commodities which are exchanged as equivalents; Property, as both the buyer and the seller dispose of their own possession in this exchange; and "Bentham," because individualism, selfishness, and financial gain are the reasons behind these encounters.

Of course, planned economies were not that "very Eden of the innate rights of man" ironically evoked by Marx. They were certainly not the realm of Freedom, Equality, or Property in the above mentioned sense, because the worker – as the seller of labour-power – met the state – as the buyer – in a highly regulated environment, in which employment was theoretically both universal and mandatory. Property in socialism was defined as collective property, so the boundaries between who was buying labour and who was selling labour were discursively blurred.

Moreover, in the Romanian process of proletarianisation, to "free" labour had a different meaning from the classical Marxist one. First, from a legal perspective, although it did refer to an individual right to work, the right to be hired by different employers was severely limited. In order to work where they wanted, the workers had to be recognized as "free workers" and stamped as such by the state. In the first year of planning, factories were imposed the obligation to publish with local press and to display at the factory gates their job openings. But the rule – both for the factories and for the prospective workers – was clear: "Only *free workers*, whose payroll card is stamped with the mention that the last factory where they activated consents to their hiring elsewhere can be employed. *The Office for Labour Force Planning* will be informed about all the hirings."[3] This dimension resembled more a feudal card of passage then the capitalist notion of "freedom."

According to the legal provisions of the postwar years, the worker had not only the right but also the obligation to work. This obligation to work is still alive in people's memory.

It repeatedly emerged in our conversations in the form of a story, always the same but with different characters: everybody seemed to have a lazy cousin, neighbour, or an acquaintance coming from the same village who was caught wandering in the streets, taken by the police and immediately led to an employment office. Although much more inefficient than police action, the visits paid by the Union leaders and by the members of the local Party organizations to workers' homes followed the same line, trying to convince them to come to work and to pressure them to become conscious productive subjects of the socialist state.

Second, the fact that in state socialism, labour power continued to be sold and bought as a commodity requires some specifications. On one hand, labour power did enter the calculation of prices for every product manufactured in the factories, traded between economic units, or bought by people in commercial stores. On the other hand, the price of labour was fixed by the state. However, it was far from being homogeneous. There were significant differences in payment between heavy industry, light industry, and trade cooperatives, deepened by a hierarchical distribution of incomes within the same industrial branch. Both differences reflected the developmental logic underlying the economic priorities of socialist construction in a backward country, but in specific ways. On one hand, wage differences between industrial branches were an expression of the centrality of heavy industry for expanded reproduction as foundation for economic growth and socialist accumulation. On the other hand, the differences in wage categories corresponded to a skill ladder defined by the government. Nevertheless, in most cases, the work was the same. Many of the workers whom I interviewed executed the same operation, on the same machine, for almost all their working life but their wage went higher and higher as they moved up on the skill ladder. Thus, financial gain also represented an incentive for undergoing a process of self-transformation through education and skilling, which were supported by the state, ran through the factories, and were basically free for workers. As such, professional was part of the mechanisms of (re)producing labour power twice: first as free public service, and second as financial reward once completed. Seniority and stability were also recompensed financially, as a measure of workers' loyalty to the factory. Thus, wage differences in state socialism did not express a difference in the difficulty of the operation itself. It was not execution but labour power as a combination between the costs of its reproduction, skill and seniority that entered the production costs of the manufactured goods.

As the next chapter will show, intense labour shortage, governmental employment regulations, and managerial coping strategies defined a historically specific labour market in which workers were "more precious than gold"[4] and the competition for labour was fierce.

One of its main characteristics was the disequilibrium between the demand for workers and their availability. The other was the fact that although the relationship between supply and demand did not determine the price of labour power like in the neoclassical model (does it ever?), it did influence the possibilities of earning more or less within local negotiations over employment and wage categories. Further on, this localized competition and mobility of labour represented the space where people could imagine and pursue survival strategies, negotiate their worth and acquiring forms of rationality expressed in more and more monetized forms. It was also accompanied – like in capitalism – by "ideologies of work and value" that were "lived in particular relations of production and property, in specific social configurations of class and community" (Lampland 1995: 1).

Third, the state's control over redistribution went way beyond the labour-power/money exchange. Through the factory, the state regulated access to food, clothing, childcare, healthcare, leisure, and education. Social protection in socialism continued and expanded a long-term European trend of combining care and control in order to keep labour unrest at bay. The whole social infrastructure – kindergartens, professional schools, hospitals, libraries, sporting facilities, vacation resorts – was part of the state's effort to partially take over the reproduction of labour power. On this line, the exercise of state power in socialism – managerial, legal, infrastructural, and allocative – was deeply dependant upon the recognition of the impossibility to separate labour power from workers' bodies. The reproduction of labour power was not supported (mainly) through wages but rather integrated into a larger societal project that connected the individual, through the factory, to the state. This connection simultaneously made workers less dependant on the monetary expression of their wages *and* more dependant on their employment.

Fourth, nationalization and collectivization were supposed to play the role of primitive accumulation for the socialist regime, freeing labour for industry by tearing down the structures of subsistence and the moral communities built around ownership of the land in the countryside or of industrial, artisanal, and commercial units in the cities. They did proceed through dispossession and imposed an exclusionary logic upon the first postwar generations' lives. Unlike in other times and in other parts of the world, this process of expropriation was compressed (but never fully completed) in less than two decades, both in urban and in rural areas. This historical density gave nationalization and collectivization an illusory eventful appearance, obscuring their different and conflicting rhythms and the fragmentary reality they produced on the ground.[5] Because they went against the liberal notion of "property," their interpretation as arbitrary political acts also hid their functioning

as pre-conditions for an accumulation regime based on labour. However, while nationalization and collectivization as expropriation and dispossession were imagined to ensure the material base for socialist accumulation in the 1950s, their conflicting and sometimes violent unfolding on the ground as *processes* kept the socialist project alive. For almost two decades after the war, actually existing socialism survived on an entanglement between various forms of property – state, cooperative, private – and between various forms of labour – wage-labour (for the state sector and for the capitalist one), self-employment, reciprocity, and forced labour – that in some cases survived to its very end. It was also fed by an interplay of planning and market forces that were rarely taken into account in a systematic way. These entanglements produced unstable, unexpected, and locally specific loyalties and struggles that reflected people's deep insecurity and ever-changing strategies for survival.

Thus, the different rhythms and tempos of collectivization from those of the nationalization, its advancements and retreats, produced a complex configuration of positions from which various categories of people confronted their wages and their contractual relationships with the factories. At least in the first decades of the Romanian state socialism, the factories had to deal with a workforce who could partially support its own reproduction. It was an unreliable, hard to control, but still flexible and convenient workforce who took upon itself a large part of the responsibility for its food and shelter. So, the tendency to commodify labour was counterbalanced both by the state's effort to provide for the workers and by its opportunism manifested in the maintenance of a category of flexible workers who were not fully dependant on wages and on the factories' social infrastructure. As we will see, for most people in Cluj factories in the 1950s, industrial work was not their only or main means of subsistence. It was used to complement other earnings, or to add monetized resources to households in the rural areas or in the suburbs. The structure of possibility underlying early socialism was centred not only around the need to bring people into the factories but also around the necessity to keep their reproduction either outside the factory walls and outside their wages. The slower rhythm of collectivization was the crux of these processes, especially at the margins of socialist accumulation, in cities like Cluj, which were only slightly touched by the first two socialist industrialization waves. This opening was produced as the outcome of a long history of dispossession and exploitation that was gendered, ethnicized, and classed.

Bringing life into a dead body: Production in state socialism

The implementation of the first one-year plans in 1949 and in 1950 prompted the Romanian economists to explicitly link the fundamental economic law of socialism – satisfying the material and cultural necessities of the working people – to the idea of even development. Discursively, this would become the mantra of progress for much of the socialist period:

> In a socialist society, the task of satisfying the material and cultural necessities of the working people lays at the foundation of the territorial allocation of the productive forces. The fulfilment of this task becomes possible only if we ensure the even economic and technological development of all regions, the uplifting of those left behind to the level of those who are economically and culturally in advance.[6]

The general principles of the planned territorial allocation of the productive forces were meant to uniformly develop all the regions that were "left behind" during the pre-war period and to increase economic efficiency by attracting all the available labour and natural resources in the economic circuit by minimizing the physical distance between raw materials sources, production, distribution, and consumption.[7] New industrial towns were to be created, some villages were to be remade into small industrial suppliers, and manufacturing was to be generally encouraged through the founding of production cooperatives and small productive units all over the country.

As a political and economic vision, even development stood in firm opposition with the distribution of the productive forces and their corresponding infrastructure in the territory during the interwar capitalist period. Consequently, the new executives discursively regarded the way capital structured the Romanian territory as the manifestation of a "stychia."[8] New materialities were going to produce a new territory, an ordered reality understood as *kosmos* against *chaos*, or as enlightenment against a pre-rational historical phase. Planning was supposed to become the main tool to achieve the ideal of even development and to carry on the transformative power of the socialist construction to redefine territory through a full recognition of the social dependencies created by production itself. This territory appeared then not as a pre-given container of the economy, but as its direct product, the outcome of very material relations, jobs, infrastructure, transportation routes, factories, or housing (see also Collier 2011). An always in the making and never fully realized political project, this territory was to emerge within an essential relationship with a *working* population, which was both the final aim of this project and its condition of realization.[9]

A specific relationship between the city and the countryside was central to this notion of even development. The ideal territorial systematization that theoretically was going to accompany socialist industrialization was the mixed region, with industrial centres, small industrial towns and an agricultural production capable to sustain them. Although the regions were going to specialize around their main industry, they also needed to develop small units of local industry for covering the immediate consumption necessities of the villages and to maintain the agricultural production to a level which (ideally) would suffice for a basic food supply of the industrial centres. The Romanian politicians described this image of progress as a coherent sequence in which the fast industrialization of the left behind regions would lead to urbanization and to cultural advancement and would produce economically complex regions within which agriculture and industry would complement each other in a coherent entity. Their focus had "both an economic importance and a political one, because creating industries in these regions not only leads to their economic rising but also to the increase in the workers' number in these regions, which further means the political elevation of the population."[10] This political elevation would have represented the solution for the national problem as well, as nationalism was considered the result of historical class domination translated in ethnic terms.

The principle of proportional territorial distribution of the productive forces represented a clear recognition of the political potency of neglect, and a full affirmation of the allocative power as the spinal column of socialism. Its imagined function was to link centres of production, distribution, and life and to sew together the social fabric as an organic whole. Spreading factories all over the country was equated with bringing life in dead organs. Biological terms like "pulsating" were used to describe industrial rhythms.[11] However, economy was not just compared to life; it *was* life itself, as revolving around production and reproduction. The organicist vision of the Party seemed to follow the developmental ideal of a society where "the individuality of the whole grows at the same time as that of the parts" (Durkheim [1893] 1984: 85). Socialist construction was predicated upon a new form of social cohesion, arising out of an understanding of economy as *shared* life, a structure of common experiences which further constituted the ground for new disciplining techniques and for different forms of moral regulation. Nevertheless, the organic solidarity of early socialism was not understood simply as the outcome of differentiation and interdependence in a world increasingly centred around the factory and not around the artisan's workshop or around the peasant's household. It was not to emerge automatically to match spontaneous changes in the division of labour of a modern, industrial society. It was the result of a struggle (Pearce 2001)

articulated in a coherent political project that advanced "class" as the key to a deeper understanding of all social fractures and to the formation of a new historical consciousness.

Nonetheless, the organicist vision of socialist even development hardly described what was happening on the ground. In practice, economic efficiency was the most important criteria for allocating investments and creating or preserving industrial infrastructure. In the actually existing territorial logic of socialism, labour was considered more and more a highly mobile production force while capital had to be fixed in the proximity of natural resources and transportation lines (Lux 2008). This tension between the need to polarise resources and the need to evenly distribute jobs, wages, infrastructure, and "culture" in the broadest sense was an everyday reality of state socialism but did not prevent the general tendency to further develop the existing industrial centres while financially starving other regions.

The first five-year plan was the one that focused most on the more advanced regions, concentrating investment in the metallurgical and engineering centres like Hunedoara, Reșita, Bucharest, or Brașov (Turnock 1986). Creating industrial agglomerations and neglecting peripheries was not a Romanian phenomenon. It reflected the constraints faced by the socialist governments elsewhere. In Hungary, between 1949 and 1953, 44.7% of the new jobs in Hungarian industry were created in Budapest (Lux 2008). Between 1951 and 1960, Krakow and Łódź cumulated 54% of all industrial investments in Poland. Like in the capitalist world, polarization was the law, not the exception, so several cities in Eastern Europe became industrial super concentrations: Budapest hosted 34 percent of all Hungarian industrial jobs, Sofia 16 percent, Katowice 20 percent, and Bucharest 16 percent (Lux 2008).[12]

The development of industrial super concentrations or regions further (re)produced a process of uneven proletarianization. Data from the mid-1960s shows that migration flows followed the three heavy investment waves in the Romanian socialism.[13] As the first investment wave was directed towards old industrial centres like București, Brașov, Hunedoara, and Banat, people from other areas started to knock at the doors of their factories.

Table 1. Migration destinations in 1966

	Urban population (percent)	Investment per head (national average = 100 percent)	Industrial production per head produced value of (compared to the national average	Rate of migration per 1,000 people

Wave 1	63.8	133.6	164.2	7.96
Wave 2	36.3	100.7	100.1	- 1.32
Wave 3	25	75.8	60.3	- 3.87

*Regions from wave 1 – post-nationalization investment: Banat, Brașov, București, Hunedoara

**Regions from wave 2 – capital investment in the late 1950s: Bacău, Dobrogea, Galați, Maramureș, Ploiești

***Regions from wave 3 – heavy capital investment after the mid-1960s: Iași, Argeș, Mureș, Cluj, Crișana, Oltenia, Secuime

But the state was "anxious to avoid the heavy costs to families forced to move into urban growth centres in conditions frequently unsatisfactory, considered such levels of inter-regional migration undesirable" (Turnock 1974: 17). Migration as a whole indeed declined sharply, from 20.9 per thousand inhabitants in 1956 to 14.5 in 1964, short-distance migration routes became the most important and commuting became the preferred way to bring rural population in the factories. Cities like Cluj, which were administratively "closed" because of the paralysing lack of housing, were following this trend from the beginning. The solution adopted by people from other regions who wanted to work in Cluj was to settle in the villages surrounding the city and commute daily from there. A suburban belt was created, one that offered people the possibility to live in individual houses, grow vegetables in their gardens, and raise animals in addition to their factory work.

In this context, producing knowledge about commuters and their everyday lives became a central preoccupation of the state, in whose name countless studies and pieces of research tried to decipher the reality of those people who left their villages everyday at four o'clock in the morning to sweat in hot foundries or in smelly tanneries. This knowledge was meant to provide the foundation for a new administrative system and later for the rural systematization that was going to harmonize population, territory, and employment by making commuting an even more common practice. It was an explicit attempt to "enable rural dwellers to combine the advantages of co-operative farm membership and rural amenity with a salary derived from industrial employment and also enable the state to limit its urban housing programme" (Turnock 1974: 17).

The "mature" regions of Cluj, Ploiești, Brașov, and Timișoara were taken as an example for how commuting should be extended to the entire country and for how it was "to be made universal and kept local" (Turnock 1974: 39). The tendency, then, was not to produce an exclusively urban proletariat who was going to survive solely on factory wage,

but to preserve a cheaper and more flexible labour force that was going to be used in the city and to use the village for its own reproduction.[14] Commuting and not transforming peasants into urban workers came to be finally considered the official strategy for covering the necessary workforce, for keeping labour cheap, and for solving the housing problem. It met with peasants' historically produced "stubbornness" to reproduce their lives qua peasants, not through the so much commented upon conservative thinking and resistance to change (although they were certainly present in the Romanian villages) but through the incorporation of new resources and possibilities in a life that had been given to them.

Agriculture was left as a residual employer, mostly seasonal, a relatively labour intensive sector that in the last decades of socialism was kept alive with the contribution of school children, students, and soldiers who could help at harvest and with the input of the industrial workers themselves, still embedded in their rural world, working at the collective farms during the weekends and working their gardens or their parents' after exhausting factory shifts. This was going to be a long-term trend, which only furthered the backward and dependent state of the Romanian countryside. In the 1960s, more than 70 percent of the Romanian villages still had a population of less then 1,000 and in the much debated systematization that was going to change the rural landscape for the decades to come, almost two thirds of these villages were considered nonviable. The lack of schools, health facilities, or transportation accompanied the severe seasonal unemployment that plagued many collectivized villages between November and February, when there was no agricultural work to be done. Other localities were slowly transformed into distant dormitories for industrial cities like Brașov, Galați, Buzău, or Focșani, with more than 30 percent of their total population – basically the majority of young men and women in the villages – daily commuting to work. Their very existence came to be questioned and complete resettlement of their people in larger villages was considered as a rational solution to the increasingly inefficient use of working arms and resources, to the widely spread seasonal migration and unemployment, and to the need for daily commuting (Turnock 1974).

Thus, preserving a layer of flexible workforce – somehow more and somehow less precarious than their permanent counterpart – grew out to be one of the most important mechanisms for ensuring the socialist factories' functioning. The importance of this layer varied much, according to local conditions and mechanisms of reproducing lives and families. It was the product of previous trajectories of unevenness, both in terms of historical advancement, and in terms of proletarianisation. This unevenness proved fundamental (but in different ways) both for those areas that fell behind the industrial 20th century and for those

areas that were chosen as pockets of investment by the socialist state. And it was paradoxically furthered by a modernization vision that had even development at its core.

Vinituri at the gates

While factory documents are full of complaints of the factory managers about the impossibility to stabilize labour because a large part of the workforce were commuters – "all sorts of people" who did not consider their work in the factory as their main activity – it seems impossible to find a single mentioning of their actual number in the 1950s. We know their number was large enough to endanger or even stop production during the summer months, when working arms were needed in the village. The fact that the commuters were hidden in the plain not only for economic geographers or scholars on rural-urban migration but also for party activists or government officials had a lot to do with the fact that labour fluctuation both in the city and in the factories was so great that it was simply impossible to follow these workers' trajectories with the weak statistical apparatus factories had at their disposal. Nevertheless, the commuters' prominence in the accounts of production and their invisibility in numerical reports was more fundamentally related to the impossibility to discern between permanent and temporary work and to the factory managers' effort to defend areas of flexibility in employing rural labour. Thus, for years, many of these people who came to work for few months during the winter and then disappeared were paid not from the wage fund of the factory but from other sources.

Production costs, wages, and long-term investments were planned in detail, which theoretically gave little flexibility to how the factory managers could handle the finances of the enterprise. One of the tools at their disposal was the director's fund. The director's fund was established as a means to improve the working and the living conditions of the employees – housing, workers' clubs, kindergartens, summer camps, health facilities, and cafeterias.[15] Leaders in production and Stakhanovites were supposed to be financially rewarded with the help of this money.[16] Cultural and leisure activities also had to be partially covered from the director's fund, especially the ones that were supposed to create a sense of community in the factory, like parties, Sunday trips, and sporting events. How the factory managers actually used this fund was, however, very different. Mostly, they used it to solve issues related to the workers' payment.

This source became even more important with the implementation of the first one-year plans in 1949 and in 1950, when many newly nationalized industrial plants were in a very difficult situation, not being able to pay their workers for months. The state covered completely and immediately the wages of the permanent workers, in an attempt to secure their good opinion about the nationalization by showing them that, under the state's rule, their work would be always recompensed. Nevertheless, other overdue payments were dealt with differently. Temporary workers were simply left at the good will of the pre-nationalization leadership of the factory, who had no power left to honour their financial promises. This way, the state could easily "forget" some payments and release a small part of the nationalized industrial units' debt burden. But there was something more fundamental to this decision: it was a clear statement on how responsibility for various categories of labourers was going to be split between the state – in its official, legal form – and the quasi-informal arrangements of the socialist factories as productive state apparatuses. The state made clear the fact that it was not going to support temporary work financially and that the factory managers were responsible for covering the external working arms by using the limited funds available to them. When the directorial fund was established as a financial instrument in every factory, this situation would become the norm.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the cities could not welcome the workforce that was much-needed in the factories due to a paralysing housing shortage. Alongside food supply, housing became the most pressing issue and put further pressure on the complicated encounter between the newcomers and the urban workers. In Cluj, only between 1944 and 1946 the city's population rose from 120,000 to 160,000. The neighbourhood around the train station remained practically uninhabitable for a long time because of the heavy bombing in the summer of 1944 (Ţârău 1996). Many private houses had been converted into official institutions or in headquarters for the Soviet soldiers in the city.

Many working-class families came to live in horrible conditions, sharing a very small space in which sanitation became more and more problematic. The Party Committee got daily reports of scandals because of the lack of space. Cases when three families with 8-10 members shared one room and a tiny kitchen were so frequent, that the local authorities started to worry that an epidemic was simply inevitable.[17] Some parts of the working-class neighbourhoods slowly transformed into veritable slums where overcrowding was accompanied by the poor state of the roads, by the lack of gas, electricity, water pipes, or sewerage, and by the increasing degradation of the walls. These spaces remained problematic territories for years as they continued to constitute pockets of extreme urban poverty, which

did not allow people to see real improvement in their lives even when broader economic and political processes led to positive developments for other social categories.

A 1955 memoir of the Regional Party Committee painted the grim picture of the housing situation in Cluj at the end of the first five-year plan. The population in Cluj rose by 72 percent in ten years: from 105,000 people in 1945 to 180,000 in 1955. Between 1945 and 1955, around 600 houses had been destroyed and only around 130 had been built. Around 800 buildings, initially allocated to housing, had been occupied by industrial units and institutions. Eighteen new factories had been added to the city industry in the last decade, many of them employing over 500 workers and two of them – in the construction sector – over 1,000 workers. The number of workers in old factories like *János Herbák*, *Menajul*, *Unirea*, or the *Railways Workshops* grew by more than 5,000. Sixteen trade cooperatives added more than 3,000 people to their prewar workforce. Ten institutions of higher education, two operas, three theatres, 41 schools, 10 professional schools, 29 day care centres for children, 41 kindergartens, three museums, six cultural houses and several libraries occupied many buildings in the city. The Party and the state institutions also took several of the most imposing buildings in Cluj, previously used for housing.[18]

The locative surface in Cluj was 4.1 square meters per person, instead of 8 square meters – the health standard imposed by the state itself. This calculation was optimistic because many people were not registered as living in Cluj but still rented a room somewhere, sometimes in houses without bathrooms or kitchens, sometimes sharing them with other four or five families. Almost 10,000 requests for apartments had been registered at the office for housing of the City Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party and less than 2,000 had been solved.[19] More than 4,500 students of the over 8,000 enrolled in the two universities in 1955 were housed by families as "tolerated in the family."[20] Another 3,000 workers were living illegally in the city, paying a monthly rent which varied between 70 and 200 lei.

For people from the outskirts of Cluj and for those residing around the continuously growing factories, transforming tool huts into small rooms and renting them became a supplemental – sometimes crucial – source of income. Many workers whom I interviewed lived in this kind of rooms, with an outdoor toilet, even after they got married and had their first child. The wet autumns, the freezing winters and the choking smoke coming from their improvised installations for heating and cooking are still vivid in the memories of their youth.

Although continuous efforts were made to compensate this lack of comfort at home with the help of the factories' social infrastructure, this was still under developed. Showers, toilets and hot water were never enough, food at the cafeteria seemed to be always

insufficient or of low quality, and work clothes came to look awfully as very poor workers had to use them as street and home clothes, too. Meanwhile, the factories needed to take over the entire issue of accommodation and meals for the young male workers coming to the city for work from further villages or cities. They were accommodated in shanties or dormitories where 20 to 30 people were crowded together, in conditions that were resembling those from the army. The memories of life in these rooms are bitter sweet. One man who became a foreman at *Tehnofrig* fondly remembers his encounter with the 19-year old peasant who became his life-long friend; another one still feels the joy of having a warm water shower in the morning and an indoor toilet; and a former unskilled worker at the *Railways Workshops* smiles as he recounts the feeling of freedom when he could invite a girl – his future wife – out for a coffee and a cake from his own salary.

Some memories are different, as people recount the occasional fights between the Romanian and the Hungarian young men, the "Hungarians' stubbornness not to learn the language," or the loneliness and confusion when they left their villages. They remember their coming to town not as a path to freedom, individual autonomy, and a better life, but as an existentially painful fracture, forced upon them because "in the village there was no future left." Although coming from a peasant family himself, Ion, a worker employed in 1949 at *János Herbák* described his shock when confronted with the "chaos" of male sociability in the factory dormitories. He compared those "animals" with his "serious family" of middle-peasants from a village around Bistrița, with a religious mother and a non-drinking and non-violent father who worked "from dawn till dusk" and "never said a bad word to anyone." After just two months of "despair," although money was tight and he wanted to save as much as possible, Ion rented a room on his own and moved out from the crowded room. He lived there for another year, until he got engaged and needed to find a room to accommodate both him and his wife. It was not until 1962 when the family was assigned an apartment by the factory. By then, their son was nine.

The fact that people I interviewed repeatedly referred to their coming to town in search of a *future* or because there was no *future* in the villages does not mean that the Romanian villagers had brighter perspectives before the war. As the literature surveyed in the first chapter of my thesis shows, extreme poverty, illness, illiteracy, lack of electricity, roads, or transportation, and an extremely poor diet were everyday realities for most peasants in the Romanian historical provinces. Thus, this lack of "future" in the postwar era must be understood rather as people's growing impossibility to reproduce themselves *as peasants*, in the sense of reproducing the production relations they were part of and within which they

could see, think, and imagine their survival. In other words, it must be understood from the perspective of class, in a historical context in which life itself was shrinking in the village.

This shrinking of life refers first of all to the employment possibilities in the rural areas. Before the war, the peasants who were landless or had too little land to ensure the survival of their families found daily or seasonal work on the domains of the local landlords or on the land of the better-off peasants. Those who were at an "easy distance" from the towns became apprentices in the artisans' shops or carriers. Young Hungarian girls from the Transylvanian villages easily found work as servants and kitchen maids in Cluj, Oradea, or Târgu-Mureș. Although poor peasants received some land at the 1945 Agrarian Reform, it was not enough for making them independent of taking work for someone else as often as they could.[21]

The expropriation of the *kulaks* and the slower disintegration of middle peasantry during the 13 years of the collectivization process further narrowed the structure of possibilities in the countryside. The disappearing employment, the postwar famine and the drought were complemented by almost impossible forced deliveries for peasants, whose children, mainly men in this generation, left the countryside for the city or started to commute daily simply not to face brutal hunger and to release the pressure off their families.[22] Compulsory deliveries had to be made by peasants at very low prices, while agriculture was left with only ten percent of the investment total during the first five-year plan. In 1949, agricultural taxes were fixed at rates between seven percent for incomes of 12,000-15,000 lei to 37 percent for incomes of 400,000. Local councils could claim another 20-50 percent of the *chiaburi* incomes. Anyone who held more than ten hectares of land or hired labour could be declared *chiabur* and local councils could claim another 20-50 percent of their incomes. There were further attempts to replace seasonal or daily employment on their lands with permanent contracts. Thus, agricultural labourers could not be discharged anymore and had to be paid monthly with a wage of at least 3,300 lei. Further pressures were added with the financial reform of 1952, when money from better-off peasants was confiscated immediately after they sold the harvest (Turnock 1974: 181).[23] In face of the constant deficit of agricultural products, compulsory deliveries were basically abandoned in 1957 and replaced by more advantageous state contracts. However, a last wave of collectivization at the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s, finalized the Romanian collectivization process (Verdery and Kligman 2011; Iordachi and Dobrincu 2009; Țârău 2000).[24]

Moreover, famine became tragic with the draught of 1946 and waves of migrants joined the lines of the hungry, unemployed, and homeless people in the city. The older

generations still remember the people from Moldavia and from the Southern part of Romania "invading" the city in 1946 and 1947, in their desperate attempt to escape dying of starvation and thirst because of the terrible drought in these areas. The geographical origin of the *vinituri* was hard to assess by the old Clujeni so many myths were born around the daily exercised of putting these people on the map but my grandparents' generation is still convinced that many of the people coming to the city were not from Transylvania. But wherever they came from, it was clear that these people were not seen as the kind of "good people" who formed the population of the old city. Even worse, they were coming to a city dominated "not by class struggle but by the struggle for food and for our stomachs" as a former worker, teenager then, told me. While many people offered them shelter and water, to share the square pieces of *mălai*[25] with the newcomers made many people seeing them as the ones "who were taking the food out of [their] children's mouths".[26]

Many of the newcomers, especially people coming from remote regions were also considered a health danger for the city population.[27] Special hygiene measures were required and people needed to be educated to wash themselves and their clothes, to prepare their food in a certain way, or to go to the hospital when they were sick or giving birth. The Party activists complained bitterly that people who came to Cluj from remote areas still used charms and incantations when in need for medical assistance.[28] Special conferences about hygiene and communal living took place in the factories while the foremen and the experienced urban workers were asked to actively become models to be emulated by the *vinituri*.

Moreover, a new wave of ethnic tensions travelled to the city with the Romanian and Hungarian youngsters moving to Cluj. They encountered the nationalism of the urban workers and pushed the factory into remaining an ethnicized space for years. The tendency of the workers and of the administration of the factories to be segregated along ethnic lines was harshly criticized by the Party activists but their comments had little to no importance for the local situation in the late 1940s or in the early 1950s. A report of the Cluj Regional Committee of the Romanian Workers Party[29] about the persistent "national problem" in the city and in the nearby villages clearly showed the tendency of the Hungarians and of the Romanians to live separate everyday lives.[30] The choir of the *Railways Workshops* had no Hungarian or Jewish members. The workers' theatre at *János Herbák* was purely Hungarian and the members refused to play anything in Romanian. When the factories were decorated, only the red flag of the communists appeared on the corridors and the Romanian national flag was nowhere to be seen.

Both Romanians and Hungarians endlessly complained about the language used during the meetings, which were held daily in various institutions. Although the Romanians understood Hungarian and vice versa, everybody claimed suddenly that the discussions at these meetings were beyond their linguistic competence. However, the ability to speak both languages and to be tolerant about the use of Hungarian in everyday life and at the workplace often united Romanians and Hungarians in their identification as "old Clujeni" against "*vinituri.*" As Samuel, a Hungarian worker from János Herbák between 1945 and 1995 told me, when someone was upset about hearing people around speaking Hungarian, "he failed the test of being a real Clujean".

Although ethnic tensions remained important for years, the battle for the city and the factories moved around a more and more important fracture: the one between "real" Clujeni and *vinituri*. When talking about his own nationalism at the time, Laszlo, a former worker born in 1937, recalls:

> I have always been a nationalist. You are Romanian, but I have to tell you this. I have always been a nationalist. But I must explain this! [He starts to walk around the room, in a state of agitation]. You know, Cluj was a Hungarian city. I think it was Hungarian until Ceaușescu came to power. But I was never against the Romanians. Never! I had Romanian friends; there was never a problem with them in the city. We all spoke Romanian and they spoke Hungarian. But when these newcomers [*vinituri*] came, we all had a problem. They did not speak Hungarian, they did not wash themselves, they were aggressive with our women in the street, they fought, they spit in the streets. They were peasants. The Romanians who lived in the city before the war also hated them. So I have nothing against the Romanians. I have a problem with these scums [*scursuri*] who invaded us. And most of them were Romanians.[31]

Many of the younger people, including the Romanians, still charge the boundaries around the notion of "real" urbanites with a lot of emotions. They still defend it discursively against *vinituri*.

Interviewing a younger Romanian woman, born in the 1950s, reveals the same positioning towards the peasants becoming workers in various rural-urban migration waves. Georgia, the daughter of a Party activist who joined the Party in 1945, and a quality controller at the *Brushes Factory* herself, emotionally remembers the stories of her parents about the city and concludes:

> You know, communists did some very good things. I don't feel guilty that my parents were activists. They really believed people's lives should be bettered. And they loved their city. They loved Cluj so much! Even when I was a little girl, the city was like a garden, like an orchard. When they [the Romanian Workers Party] started to build the new neighbourhoods they tried to preserve them like this: with grass, trees, flowers and the river down there. . . . But they also brought the peasants into the city. This was the end. It is true that they received houses and jobs and they were very poor. They were really poor. For them, it was better. But this was the end of the city as I knew it. I can still see these peasants in my block of flats behaving worse than on their father's field.[32]

The fact that bringing the peasants into the cities to work and to live did not mean they became workers over night was clear not only for people like Georgia or Samuel but also for the Party activists themselves. They knew not only that this transformation was going to take time but also that it could not be simply framed as a "cultural" or an "ideological" problem. It was also the lack of access to basic resources like food, shelter, and amenities that made the encounter between the old core of urban workers and the newcomers extremely problematic. The situation was only going to get worse in the following years, as peasants increasingly needed to take factory employment to be able to support their households in the village. Nevertheless, using commuters and bringing peasants into the factories was not enough as a first consistent step on the path of socialist industrialization. As the next section of this chapter will show, it was also not unproblematic. So, other arms were called to build socialism as well.

Arms that built socialism

The important weight of commuters in the structure of labour force in Cluj gave a specific face to the process of proletarianisation in the region. Many came from the villages surrounding the city: Feleacu, Chinteni, Apahida, Florești, Gilău, Sânnicoară, Vâlcele, or Dezmir. Some of them owned gardens or small plots of land themselves or together with their families. Others worked as day labourers for other people and (most of the time) they were

better paid then in most factories. Most importantly, they had access to food in a period when scarcity and even famine dominated everyday life. Having vegetables on one's table was simply a luxury when the most spread meal of the workers consisted in a big slice of baked polenta. Even the workers who were living in the city also chased the possibility of reaching this luxury by sometimes working in the countryside in exchange for milk, potatoes, eggs, or vegetables.

The difficulty of disciplining the commuters was obvious, as a report of a City Party Committee in 1953 shows:

> The Party could not convince the workers from rural areas that their first task is to work in the factory. This is why they continue to work in their villages. Even our comrades who live in the city often go to the villages to work for wheat, flour, or vegetables. Many workers at *Herbak* are young, they could work a lot and we would not need extra workers. But the Youth organization does not educate young people to be disciplined, they could not convince them to have a just attitude towards work.[33]

The reason was simple: workers' earnings were very low even if they exceeded their norms by 50-80 percent. Shortages, assaults in production at the end of the month, discontinuities, overtime, and penalties for quality even in these conditions made the work of the propaganda and agitation section a nightmare. The workers simply left the factory to work their land in the countryside and returned when the need of cash surpassed the advantages of working in the field.

The prevalence of semi-proletarian and unskilled work transformed some economic sectors in seasonal activities which barely functioned during the summer. For construction work, for instance, where summer was the most important part of the year, this was equal to a catastrophe. In the constructions sector, the situation became simply dramatic as construction yards were dominated by unskilled, semi-proletarian, low wage workers, who earned little and had few reasons to stay in a fixed job. The increasingly worrying situation forced the Party to place construction work in superior wage categories for stopping labour fluctuation. It became one of the best paid sectors of the socialist economy but it remained for decades the one sector that could never keep its workers.

Women who wanted a stable financial situation dreamed about marrying a construction worker. But there was also a price to pay, as one former worker told me about her best friend's marriage:

> The construction workers were better paid. Women had more money, their children had nicer clothes. But these men were also scoundrels. My friend was married to one. He drank half of the money before he brought his wage home. She was lucky that he was sluggish and so he did not beat her. But many were hitting their wives. They were jealous, you know? Because they spent so much time away, drinking, surrounded by brutes coming from everywhere. When they came home they were also drinking and there was always scandal.

As the same woman told me, because their frequent leaves, construction workers were less flexible when it came to their wives' factory work. They became known as a category of workers who were to be avoided by young girls although "they could buy them nicer presents" and provide for their kids.

Because it brought so many problems in its trail, the issue of semi-proletarianisation came to be understood as one of rural versus urban mentality and, even more explicitly, as a lack of crystallization of the working class.

> Work indiscipline also comes from the fact that these people have an old mentality. They see themselves as seasonal workers, like in the countryside, working in many places just to earn more money. . . . These comrades have a careless attitude towards work and no class consciousness, because *we do not have only industrial workers here but all sorts of people*.[34]

Nevertheless, the issues at stake were not in a straightforward way an issue of backward mentality and careless work ethos. They were more related by a continuous attempt to make commuters' labour cheaper and cheaper.

From the beginning, the legal treatment of the commuters made staying for long in a workplace in the city a not very attractive option. There were many differences between the social rights of the workers residing in the city and those living in the countryside and holding a small piece of land. The commuters did not have the right to cards for rationed food and could not receive credit from their factories. The possibility that the factory would pay for the commuters' transportation was subjected to continuous negotiation and successive legal provisions encouraged or not the factories to financially support the transportation of their workers from the countryside. As paying the transportation of the commuters increased

the commodities' prices, the government tried to force factory managers to find local labour force. Thus, commuters had to walk several kilometres every morning in order to get to job. The lucky ones were biking to work, but having a bicycle in the 1950s was uncommon because they were expensive and almost out of reach for most workers. However, in 1950, labour shortage forced the governmental officials to reconsider their position and to allow state institutions to pay for the transportation of their employees if they lived within 5-45 kilometres from their workplace.[35] The payment was confined to those who could prove that they could not find housing closer to their workplace and that the factory could not find the needed personnel in locality. The factories immediately submitted the documentation and some of them bought buses for their workers.

This measure came as a result of an analysis made by the Ministry of Labour at the end of the first year of planning, which concluded that "the development of our national economy led, to the end of 1949, to the exhausting of the skilled and unskilled labour force in the industrial regions of our country."[36] The most important solution was to enlarge the field of activity of the *Office for the Reallocation of Labour Force* to the countryside in order to find workers ready to commute and to direct them towards the factories which needed them. The national campaign's outcome was a list of 65,874 people who were ready to work in the cities. 46,112 workers were distributed immediately to the factories. At the end of the campaign, 19,762 people were still available but in less than one month, no worker without a contract could be found on the list of the *Office*.

The commuters themselves faced "the rural mentality" in their villages, especially the women. Working in the city was not a popular option for girls who were born in the 1930s and in the 1940s, who were part of a world in which they still had to face the prejudice against women commuters. Although young girls from the surrounding villages did work as servants in the middle-class homes in Cluj before the war, factory work was different because it almost completely escaped parental control. Like Lampland (1995: 45) shows for the Hungarian case, "control of labour was in the final analysis a male prerogative, which extended not only to his own labour, but to that of his wife and children. Women could never fully achieve mastery of self, no matter how hard they worked as managers of the family household." If controlling one's labour was key to the social hierarchies in the village, the increasing possibility to go to town for work must have had the side effect of increasing gender inequalities in the countryside.

Another generation would pass until women from the countryside would force the factory gates and start to come in mass to school and to work as young girls. This transition,

which took place mainly from the 1960s onwards, can be related to many factors: the precariousness of life and the quasi-impossibility to practice subsistence agriculture for the families with many children after the land was collectivized; the ever shrinking employment within the village boundaries – including for day labourers; the weak chances of finding a suitable husband and the attraction exercised by a marriage outside the village; the hard work in the collective farms, where labour force became increasingly feminized and ageing; the newly built flats in the city and the promise of a separate home from both her husband's parents and her own; and the universal obligativity of education which drove both boys and girls far from the remote villages into larger localities. Propaganda which accompanied recruitment in the countryside increasingly targeted women when male labour force was exhausted. As my interviews with female workers show, it met with fantasies in which *the city* was represented as a world of openness, freedom, wealth, security, easier life, and love. However, for women, it was not earlier than the beginning of the 1970s when going to the city for work became, as women told me in the interviews, "the possibility of having a future or nothing."

This does not mean that female workers were a rare occurrence in Cluj industry. Factory work was common for women even before the war for the daughters and wives of skilled industrial workers, who worked side by side with their husbands or fathers. Especially women from the outskirts of the city had already been an important resource for the factories in Cluj since the interwar period. Many of them were Romanians and tended to join the factories to complement their husbands' precarious incomes as unskilled workers or day labourers. As their male commuters counterparts, they also travelled long distances by foot to get to work and combined subsistence agriculture with industrial employment.

Women were brought in the factory by their parents when they retired, by their husbands or by other relatives. They started when they were 14-15 years old and later brought their children with them to work temporarily in the factory. At the moment of employment, most women at the *Tobacco Factory* were not at their first work experience outside their homes. Most of them had already worked temporary or by day, or had helped their husbands at their workplaces. Most of these women's husbands were journeymen, and those who did have a stable income were employed mainly in the Romanian army or received various forms of benefits from the state. Their earnings were always insufficient for sustaining the family, so their wives and children took up the task of supplementing family's money.

The best account available for women's prewar employment is a social inquiry realized in 1936 by two students at the Superior School of Social Assistance "Principesa

Ileana" from Bucharest at the *Tobacco Factory*,[37] an industrial unit with a largely feminized labour force – 519 women to 174 men.[38] For their study, titled "The working-woman," the students sampled 100 women from the factory and inquired them about their income, their work conditions, and their family life.

Table 1. Income structure for the families of the *Tobacco Factory* women

Main source of income	**Number of households**
Woman's earnings	17
Husbands' earnings	70
Inheritance	10
Pension	3
Total	100
* Children work to supplement family income	10

Women's declared reasons for starting to work were poverty, the desire for financial independence, being orphan, the perspective of having a pension, their husbands' unemployment, and their need to support their many children. Many of them came from the Mănăştur area and owned houses with gardens and sometimes even a little bit of land. The lack of cash to support agricultural production and to build, repair, or improve their houses was one of the most important incentives for women to work before the Second World War, which suggests a quasi-similar logic of reproducing one's survival structure of possibility as in the case of rural families.

Women's dexterity was often praised but it was not enough for ensuring them better wages. They were *all* unskilled, while almost half of the men in the factory benefited from a form of professional training. Almost one third of the women were illiterate. Their work norms were extremely high as they were always set against the speed of the best worker on the shop floor. The social inquiry reported that most women could not even stop to drink water until noon because of the way the production targets had been set. They worked in very harsh conditions, constantly falling sick because of the dust, cold, and nicotine. Women's loss of pregnancies was much higher than in other factories and tuberculosis was also very frequent at the *Tobacco Factory*. In 1936, more than half of the workers at the *Tobacco Factory* had some sorts of pulmonary problems. In average, all workers got sick more than three times in a year. Although the factory had a nursery, grandmothers, neighbours, and older brothers actually took care of the children, because the workers could never count on a

regular schedule. In average, the women from the *Tobacco factory* worked 12 hours a day in the factory and spent more than two hours walking to and from work. After hours, they continued to work at home, cooking, cleaning, and working their gardens, as factory employment was just complementary to practicing agriculture.

The prewar situation was different for the Hungarian women at *Dermata* (the future *János Herbák*), where they generally worked at the side of their husbands and sometimes were better skilled then them. They were also involved in structures of apprenticeship, although it was expected that any woman would be "skilled" anyway for certain tasks like cutting material or sewing. Given this structure of the leather and footwear factory's workforce, it was not surprising that it was families that came at the front of struggle in the strike of 1946 at *Dermata*. It was also not surprising that they brought with them their solidarity networks built around the old working-class neighbourhoods in the North-Eastern part of the city.

Still, even late in the 1950s, many women in Cluj were still not employed in state factories or institutions but continued to run their households. Many of them, especially the *hoștezeni*'s wives and mothers, contributed to their families' revenues by selling agricultural products on the local market. Unemployed women remained a category especially vulnerable to nationalist and religious rhetoric, and for years after the war they were considered a risk for the stability of the city's industrial neighbourhoods and semi-rural outskirts. However, their working arms were needed more and more, complementing those of the commuters and of the newly arrived men.

Nevertheless, men's wages, although enough for covering the basic needs of young individuals living in a dorm or even renting a room, were hardly enough for a couple and totally insufficient when starting a family and children came. Conscious or not, keeping men's wages low proved a good strategy to push women into factories. As a result, the meaning of what a "good girl" was changed. At least for urban and newly urbanized workers, a woman's worth came to include a good factory or commercial job. According to former workers' own assessment of their colleagues' desire to start a family, young people who migrated to the city seemed to be quick in getting married, both for pulling resources and for coping with the sense of loss and loneliness when faced with the new and different world of the city. Although statistics to confirm this are absent, commuters must have felt less pressured to get married very quickly after coming to town. It is more probable that their money was needed by their parents and younger brothers. Moreover, with no land to inherit, they probably needed more time to save in order to be able to support a new family and their

own children. Women themselves could contribute little with money to a rural household, in a generation when they were still not commuting for factory work and the possibility of being employed as servants in the cities was shrinking everyday. The fact that women were and became much less mobile than men in the 1950s generation completed their experience of being the crux of reproduction of household economy in the village. This partly explains their strong, many times violent reaction to the dispossession entailed by collectivization as dispossession (Verdery and Kligman 2011).

Not only women but also children continued to enter the factory gates. They were especially important for the periods when the ban on employing extra workers became paralysing for the factories. For instance, in the summer months, this interdiction was doubled by the obligation to allocate a certain period of the summer for workers' vacations. Although employing supplemental workers during the summer was not allowed, the factories by-passed the regulations using a simple method. Since many industrial units were required to offer a space for the mandatory training in production of the youngsters, they used children and students, the sons and daughters of their employees, as their last resort.[39] At *János Herbák*, employing children and students for the summer was possible only if a parent made an official request to the Light Industry Ministry or to the Leather and Footwear Central Department. Hence, the factory management circulated a collective announcement during lunch time (the preferred communication channel of the Party), requesting their employees to ask that their children be sent to their own factory, where their summer work was very much needed.[40] The possibility of keeping their children under surveillance while they were earning extra money for the household was enthusiastically received by workers who responded promptly to the director's request. Still, this was far from enough to solve the problem.

Replacing apprenticeship with professional schools constituted a source of cheap labour for the factories. In time, moving the secondary socialization from the family to the factory proved to be fundamental for forming loyalties and a sense of solidarity on the shop floor. But in the 1950s, the professional schools were just in their beginnings. Parents still needed their children at home, in the countryside, to work the land and the girls were still likely to stay at home, under their parents' control, until they got married. However, professional schools started to function under the patronage of the factories who paid for students' accommodation, meals, and education. Teenagers were hosted in the dormitories, had their own cafeterias, and learned a craft by working in the factory in the afternoon for the duration of their schooling. Parents signed a contract through which they obligated them to pay the whole amount for their children's education if they did not stay in the same factory

for three years after their graduation.[41] This way, professional schools had the double logic of producing skilled workers and ensuring continuity in production for at least six years. For few years, the youngsters received a fixed salary for their work in the factory. But at the end of the five-year plan, when the production was destabilized by unaccounted absences, lack of discipline, and labour turnover, their hours in production increased from 24 to 36 hours weekly. Moreover, they entered the piece rate system and started to be paid according to the quantity they produced and to the quality of their manufactured goods. The measure was presented as advantageous for them, but the novices could not keep the pace of the older and more experienced workers so they ended up working more and earning less than before. The disappointment made many of them leave the factory never to return.

Army soldiers were also a source of cheap (and sometimes free) labour for the factories who needed not only more workers but also disciplined ones, who were easy to control and whose fate was ultimately not the responsibility of the factory. Prison inmates also came to be used more and more for the most physically challenging tasks in several factories in Cluj. *János Herbák,* for instance, used both soldiers and inmates in construction work and in the tanneries, where ordinary workers refused to enter because of the unbearable smell and because of the heavy lifting required. The inmates were brought in the morning with a truck, permanently guarded during the day, and sent back to their cells in the evening. This practice was common until the 1980s in the workshops where mechanization was not possible and the work conditions were dire.

But temporary work was unproductive and increased production costs. It was also considered a form of encouraging people to continue searching for better jobs. Nevertheless, the difference between the time spent in the factory by the temporary and the "permanent" workers could not have been very big in the first years of planning in conditions of huge labour turnover. Except for very few workers, generally skilled Hungarian males from the old factories from Cluj and their wives, who spent decades at the same workplace, the distinction between "temporary" and "permanent" was very blurred. Many workers with a permanent work contract left the factory during the summer months to work somewhere else or to take care of their parents' crops and many of them never returned. Sometimes, young girls entered the gates of the factories just before they got married and got pregnant. They used the child benefits and the paediatric facilities of the large factories but then switched to another job just before their maternal leave was over. Considering a job as temporary although it was defined as "permanent" by their employment contracts was common practice among unskilled workers who were always in search for something better.

The Party also made an effort to integrate Roma people in the factories, mainly in the fields where they were also seasonally employed before the war. In Cluj county, the first attempt to settle Roma population were related to the Agrarian Reform in 1945. Orchestrated by the Romanian Workers' Party, this complex endeavour hit the wall of the historical fractures between Roma and sedentary, regulated forms of life. The struggle of the Party activists in Cluj county were wonderfully described in a fragment of the memoirs of Egon Balas, a Party activist himself:

> We created all kinds of incentives for the Gypsies to settle down. From being nomadic semi-beggars they had now become landowners, and we told them that if they worked they could become respectable, well-to-do farmers. We set up courses to teach them how to work the land and gave them all kinds of financial advantages. Settling the Gypsies successfully was for us a matter of party prestige, one way of exposing the falsehood of the racial prejudice that held Gypsies to be inherently lazy, inclined to thievery, and disinclined to work. But it was incredibly hard. We did not give up, of course – communists never give up, nor do they admit defeat. But in order to accomplish what the party wanted, the Gypsies had to be literally forced to stay on the land and forbidden to leave the village under threat of arrest. Of course, forced farming cannot be good farming, and the Gypsy village, poor at start, remained poor (Balas 2000: 171).[42]

In the 1950s, Roma people in Cluj still lived in nomadic groups and slum areas. Almost all of them were unskilled workers. Thus, they earned little, were placed in the heaviest jobs, and were even more tempted to leave the factories and find day-by-day solutions for survival. At the brick factory, the director was complaining in an address at the City Committee Plenary Meeting that 250 unskilled Roma workers missed work in June 1954. They were recruited to work in the countryside in other Transylvanian regions and preferred to leave the factory because "we introduced piece rate but they did not work thoroughly so they could not earn enough. They were very upset and left the factory without having our permission."[43] Years would pass until part of the Roma people employed in the factory would start seeing their workplace as more than a temporary strategy among others.

Another category of new and inexperienced workers was that of the former civil servants, magistrates, and clerks. Some of them were made redundant because of various administrative reforms, especially the 1949 one when 97,000 governmental jobs were

eliminated and 66,000 thousand people were left without employment. Many of them were sent into production, together with former landlords, artisans, or owners of small shops as a form of redemption and re-education. Their re-education required first of all their transformation in productive citizens. They were offered a possibility to become *useful*, a usefulness that was assessed very differently from what they had already learned about this notion. After the *Office for the Reallocation of the Labour Force* was created in March 1949, they started to direct these people to the economic sectors that were developing most rapidly. Of course, heavy work was preferred for the political project of their transformation but, accidentally or not, they ended up simply where labour force was most needed. The foremen, the engineers and the leaders in production were asked "to give them comradely help in order to learn faster. They should show them patiently how each tool has to be handled and to take into account the fact that these clerks are way beyond the age of apprenticeship. But if they are thought how to work, they can become productive elements."[44]

But the integration of these people in the factories proved to be difficult. For instance, in a factory in Cluj the foremen stated there was no other work for several former magistrates than cleaning the floors of the workshop. At other factories, the workers made obscene drawings with chalk on the back of their new colleagues or handed them very hot tools. These categories of workers had less options to leave their factories if they were ill treated. They needed special permits to work and were less employable because their biographies were far from being "clean" and "healthy" even after they passed through the process of purification described in chapter 4. These constraints extended many times to their sons and daughters who had to accept any job although there were so many openings around. The reasons behind this behaviour are hard to assess but the most plausible explanation lies in the modalities in which the social category of "the ex-" was constructed through political representations of these people and propagated through an overwhelming propaganda apparatus which convinced the workers, through every banner, poster, newspaper article, meeting, or theatrical representation that the "class enemy" was among them.

All these workers who were used to cover the productive needs of the factories in the 1950s – commuters, seasonal workers, women, inmates, soldiers, and children – were all part of a flexible workforce, which was cheaper, but also unreliable, unruly, unskilled, and politically uncomfortable. Their relationship with the socialist state varied according to people's own strategies of survival. What all of them had in common was the fact that they failed to fall under the total control of the factories. The making of the socialist economy and the exercise of state power itself heavily depended upon historically grounded systems of

provisioning (Narotzky 2012) that the socialist state simultaneously attacked and preserved.

As we will alo see in the next chapters, ordinary lives in state socialism were far from simply enacting history. And to the extent that these lives were an enactment of broader historical processes, they were far from being simple moves from "peasant" to "proletarian." In the city, the *vinituri* settling next to old Clujeni pushed forward a move that was rather from "peasant" to "other" (Roseberry 1991) than from peasant to urbanite. From the state's perspective, in the factories, the "peasant" confronted the "proletarian" as artificially made categories of rule and as moral standards reflecting the chasm between the backwardness of a rural past, and the always facing to the future industrial world. But on the shop floor, the encounter between peasants, women, former better-offs, and old workers was going to prove a complicated one. As a "transition" to a specific process of industrialization, it was going to be painful, rather a passage "from a disordered past to a disordered present" (Roseberry 1991: 58), always facing a universally bright and abstract future but always chasing it in a present that was classed, ethnicized, gendered and localized.

Notes

[1] The same strategy was going to be used by multinationals in the 2000s when they placed their industrial units in the countryside, making use of a cheap labour force that could combine industrial work with subsistence agriculture (see Petrovici 2013).

[2] "The capitalist epoch is therefore characterized by the fact that labour-power, in the eyes of the worker himself, takes on the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently takes on the form of wage-labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the commodity-form of the products of labour becomes universal." (274)

[3] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, *Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare*, 319

[4] The expression belongs to one of the former factory managers who used it to emphasize the impossibility to fire workers due to unexcused absenteeism or indiscipline. This will become important in chapters 4 and 5 when I discuss labour instability and factory (in)discipline.

[5] For a very informative discussion of nationalization as a non-event, see Grama, forthcoming.

[6] *Probleme economice*, Iunie 1956, "In legatura cu repartizarea socialista a fortelor de productie in industrie", N. Stern si M. Costache (3 – 16). The figures are calculated on the basis of *Anuarul Statistic* 1939-1940 and *Enciclopedia Romaniei*, vol. II, p. 4.

[7] *Probleme economice*, Iunie 1956, "In legatura cu repartizarea socialista a fortelor de productie in industrie", N. Stern si M. Costache (3 – 16). The figures are calculated on the basis of *Anuarul Statistic* 1939-1940 and *Enciclopedia Romaniei*, vol. II.

[8] *Probleme economice,* Iunie 1956, "In legatura cu repartizarea socialista a fortelor de productie in industrie", N. Stern si M. Costache (3 – 16). The figures are calculated on the basis of *Anuarul Statistic* 1939-1940 and *Enciclopedia Romaniei*, vol. II.

[9] In her book, Manu Goswami offers the same interpretation of the consequences of infrastructural growth in colonial India. She shows brilliantly how infrastructural development contributed to the consolidation of the capital flows within the Empire but it also produced a form of economic, social, and territorial integration which made the notion of "India" (as entity distinct from the metropolis) possible.

[10] Document: *Probleme Economice*, Ianuarie-Martie 1949. "Planul de stat al RPR" (S. Zeigher) (36 - 47) (p. 42).

[11] *Probleme economice,* Iunie 1956, "In legatura cu repartizarea socialista a fortelor de productie in industrie", N. Stern si M. Costache (3 – 16). The figures are calculated on the basis of *Anuarul Statistic* 1939-1940 and *Enciclopedia Romaniei*, vol. II.

[12] The results of this failure to develop equally various regions of the socialist countries were obvious in the 1970s, when the industrial jobs as a share of the total in Eastern and Central Europe still varied between less than 35% and above 61% (Lux 2008).

[13] These patterns were complemented by seasonal long-distance migration and by all the other strategies to keep factories alive. It seems that urban centers attracted most temporary migrants but state farms and rural industry also absorbed seasonal work. Some occupations, which traditionally involved movement across the country – like sheep grazing or forestry – also attracted an important number of seasonal workers (see Turnock 1974). As we will see in the next chapter, among industrial branches, constructions were notorious for the use of seasonal and temporary work.

[14] The idea was that villages should be in the range of ten kilometres from a town, so more than 300 towns were to be built in the 1970s to ensure that commuting was easy.

[15] Decret Nr. 51 din 10 februarie 1949 pentru varsarea beneficiilor.

[16] The director's fund represented a quota from the benefits of every factory – 4 percent for the heavy industry ones and 2 percent for the others.

[17] P.C.R. fond 2, Comitetul Judetean P.C.R. Cluj, Raport politic pe luna Octombrie 1946, judetul Cluj.

[18] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 93 / 1955, Referate, note informative intocmite de sectorul 'Bunuri de larg consum', Memoriu privind propunerile de imbunatatire a spatiului locativ din orasul Cluj (p.55-60).

[19] Relying on HCM 1509 si 4299 and of the Decree 78

[20] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 93 / 1955, Referate, note informative intocmite de sectorul 'Bunuri de larg consum', Memoriu privind propunerile de imbunatatire a spatiului locativ din orasul Cluj, p. 56

[21] The Land Reform in 1945 took around 1.5 million hectares from the remaining large landlords, from smaller landowners who did not work the land themselves, and from the Germans and distributed it between state farms, 400,000 landless peasants and 500,000 "dwarf" peasants who held very little land.

[22] Eugen Weber called migration "an industry of the poor". "For many in France, staying put would have been more likely to threaten their lives: leaving home was the price paid for survival. In those parts difficult of access, where roads were scarce and rail roads late in coming, the only easy export was men. The poor sought

out the richer regions, the mountaineers went down into the plains. Their earnings supplemented scarce resources, their absence eased the pressure of a population too numerous for the land to feed." (278)

[23] Cooperatives were not completely new for the Romanian peasants. Some examples were set at the end of the 19th century, emerging on the foundation of the rural credit societies and were controlled by the government mainly through the central bank.

[24] In the mountains, many villages were never collectivized and peasants could keep their individual plots and a part of their animals in exchange for animal products and wood cutting. However, the state's lack of interest in the mountain areas meant that investment also failed to come in many of these rural regions and kept them more backward than their counterparts in the plains until these days.

[25] Pieces of corn flour baked in the oven.

[26] Interview, former clerk, Hungarian, female, born in 1922.

[27] Ţara Moţilor was an especially problematic region. A mountain region, with a pastoral population, it was considered extremely backward. After the war, an outburst of typhus and syphilis required complex and radical sanitary interventions in the area. However, with the people moving a lot and coming to town for work, the epidemy could not be stopped for years.

[28] P.C.R. fond 51, Comitetul Raional P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare, Proces verbal, sedinta de birou a Comitetului Raional Cluj, 22 Februarie, 1952

[29] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 36 / 1951, Proces verbal nr 36, 29 Mai 1951

[30] This tendency to live separate lives and to create spaces of Hungarianness in various institutions was much stronger after 1989. For an analysis of the emergence of a parallel "Hungarian society" in Transylvania, see Culic 2014.

[31] Interview Samuel B.

[32] Interview Georgia S.

[33] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare are Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 3 / 1953. Planuri de munca, rapoarte, referate, informari, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, note informative, Proces verbal, 12.08.1953.

[34] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare are Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 3 / 1953. Planuri de munca, rapoarte, referate, informari, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, note informative, Proces verbal, 12.08.1953, p. 21.

[35] HCM nr. 441 din 25 Aprilie 1950 and Fond Clujana, Dosar 28 / 135 / 1950, Instructiuni D.G.I.P.C., Instructiuni nr. 12, 25 Mai 1950.

[36] Fond Clujana, Dosar 28 / 135 / 1950, Instructiuni D.G.I.P.C., Circulara nr. 5146 / 1950 a Ministerului Muncii si Prevederilor Sociale.

[37] Ministerul Muncii – Oficiul de studii sociale si relatii internationale, dosar 333/ 1937, Scoala superioara de asistenta sociala Principesa Ileana, "Femeia muncitoare in fabrica." (The study has been carried for 100 worker mother at the Tobacco factory in Cluj).

[38] I am grateful to Alexandra Ghiţ for making this inquiry available to me.

[39] Fond Clujana, Dosar 0 / 1949, Circulari si Publicatiuni.

[40] Fond Clujana, Dosar 0 / 1949, Circulari si Publicatiuni.

[41] Three years was the duration of their schooling.

[42] Egon Balas was a fascinating figure of the Party. As a young Jewish intellectual and a communist, he was deported from Transylvania but survived the war. He was an activist on the rise but soon suffered from the anti-intellectual stance of the Party leaders in Bucharest. He was arrested by the Securitate and interogated. Later, he immigrated to the United States where he took a chair in Mathematics at a prestigious university.

[43] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 2 / 1954, Nota informativa in legatura cu cauzele nerealizarii planului de productie pe trimestrul II la Fabrica de Caramizi, 7 Iulie 1954, p. 196.

[44] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 106 / 10, Instructiuni cu privire la prelucrarea hotararilor C.C. al P.M.R. si a legilor votate de Marea Adunare Nationala.

Chapter 4: "More precious than gold:" Stabilizing labour in the 1950s

"Fixing" labour

The Collective Contract: A bureaucratic instrument in search of an author

In 1949, the new economic executives could read in *Class Struggle* – the most important programmatic journal of the time – that the historical possibilities opened by the implementation of the first one-year plan should make them happy to be the leaders of the newly nationalized industrial units. The "luck" of running a socialist factory was contrasted with the hardships of a capitalist economy where "the anarchy of social production opposed the organization of production in each factory."[1] But the factory managers' experience in Romania was going to be quite different: in the emerging socialist economy, the anarchy of production in each factory was conflicting the organization of social production as a whole. This anarchic experience was the direct consequence of grounding the industrialization process into the rural-urban fabric explored in Chapter 3. As we have seen, although necessary, the forms of labour of early socialism were inconvenient, rowdy and outside the state's exercise of power. Thus, like in almost any dawn-of-industrialization narrative, "the disordered present" of the first years of planning was related more than anything to the impossibility to stabilize and control labour.

Most importantly, the new factory directors were about to learn that the transformation of the capitalist industrial units in "socialist" ones, as well as the translation of market routine interactions into planning, required them to adhere to a very specific vision of the factory as a management object. As this chapter will show, unlike some scholars analyzing the everyday functioning of the socialist factories (Burawoy and Lukács 1992; Haraszti 1978), the newly appointed managers knew very well that nothing happened solely on the shop floor and that factories were not simply about production. Piece-rate, socialist competitions, Stakhanovism, or wage categories made no sense outside a relational field in

which the transformation of iron into ploughs or of leather into shoes also required the transformation of human hearts and minds. As new people who needed to act like workers but still had to be made into ones flooded the gates, it became impossible to imagine the factories as bounded isolated objects. Their porous and transparent walls made poor boundaries for a space that needed to be defined and regulated but nobody could actually say where it started, where it ended, and who participated in it. And what to do with those bones, muscles, and blood, with those things, relations, needs, and hopes that emerged "outside" the factory but were actually incorporated in every nail, in every piece of silk, and in every book that was produced on the shop floor?

The vast literature on plan bargaining often addressed the "allocation of labour under socialism" by bringing together structural dimensions of the socialist industrialization like chronic labour shortage and hoarding under what Kornai called a "soft-budget constraint economy" (Kornai 1979a, 1979b, 1986, 1992; Ellman 1989; Jeffries 1990). This literature was, however, a literature of the economists and never made visible the fundamental connections between industrial employment and people's everyday concerns, or the implications of stabilizing labour for the very nature of state socialism. My chapter takes labour shortage and hoarding – also a central characteristic of the Romanian economy in the 1950s – as a starting point for a broader investigation of labour stabilization in socialist factories. I reveal the hopelessness of the attempts to deal with an out-of-control labour turnover, with a wild competition for workers, and with the ingenious managerial strategies meant to shortcircuit the legal restrictions on labour's movement. From this angle, the issue of employment appears as immediately connected to localized power structures within and outside the factories, and it becomes an important key for a deeper understanding of people's survival strategies in early socialism. It also sets the limits within which socialist factories struggled to function as disciplinary regimes, a topic that will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The next section of this chapter shows how building socialism without proletarians produced an employment regime dominated by a chaotic competition that was played on informal and localized labour markets. Nonetheless, my investigation is not a return to "the unfortunate preoccupation with the relative freedom of [labour] markets in socialism as an indication of the degree or possibility of commodification" (Lampland 1995: 7), simply because in these contradictory fields of forces, both the factories and the workers themselves were "free" and "unfree" at the same time. Moreover, they were only contextually able to play a better hand in a game that in many cases had survival as its stake. It is not these

markets' relative freedom, informality, or even effectiveness that are interesting for me, but rather their direct emergence from local nexuses of production and life in which the factories were embedded, and from the unintended consequences of the state's attempts to regulate "the issue of employment," which paradoxically resulted into an even wilder competition. Thus, I follow the production of the local labour market in Cluj early socialist factories as a structural effect of the encounter between severe employment regulations, chronic labour shortage, and a severely deregulated informal relationship between the factory and its workers, which was most of the time beyond state's control. As the reader will see, this encounter made it impossible for the factories as productive state apparatuses to stabilize their labour force, although this fight was crucial for solidifying the new relations of production.

The background for this impossibility of stabilizing labour came from an important source of power for the socialist workers that is rarely if ever mentioned in the literature: the fact that in postwar Eastern and Central Europe capital could not simply move. It could not strike and it could not withdraw. Of course, some enterprises could be punished by being allocated less resources, but they could not be simply starved, because they were *planned*; and being planned meant their production was definitely needed somewhere else. The contradiction between capital as thing and capital as process (Harvey 2014) was going to be only partially resolved through the clear preference for fixity and rootedness of constant capital. Of course, this "preference" was not simply ideological. First, it was related to the profoundly national – and nationally bounded – character of postwar socialism in Europe and to the fact that capital had no place to go except within the country.[2] Second, although capital had many places to go internally – because for decades to come, the non-homogeneous territories and populations of these countries were going to starve for infrastructural, social, and economic investments – this was not easy. As shown in the previous chapters, theoretically, internal unevenness had to be fought through a coherent centralized strategy. Nevertheless, in practice, previously industrialized regions and urban agglomerations were privileged by the new economic executives as sites of accumulation, even when their infrastructural capacity did not allow them to be effective sites of reproduction. In the case of the Soviet Union this strategy already showed its limits in the 1960, when the Soviet Union started to look for different territorial arrangements as *avant la lettre* "spatial fixes" (Harvey 2001, 2003, 2006; Jessop 2006) for the obvious slow down of its growth rates. Third, not only labour but also capital were in short supply and moving industrial capacities was expensive in an era when means of production were more fixed in place. This was true for the

rest of the industrial world as well. Although constant capital in the West seemed to be more fluid than in the Eastern Europe, it still had not acquired the speed and flexibility that characterized it later.

As Kornai (1979a, 1992) convincingly showed, not only the fixity of capital but also its movement was problematic in socialism, being dominated by shortages, routinised bargaining, and bottlenecks. As the next chapter will show, the impossibility of maintaining continuity in production also made labour control difficult and authority in the factory more like an endless quest than something that the state could take for granted. These constraints were further complicated by the fact that by default and by means of labour shortage, the state could not afford punishing workers by not employing them. Moreover, while the infrastructure of production could not easily move, this was not true about socialist labour, which became one of the most fluctuating and hard to stabilize workforces in Europe.

As coercion was ineffective and too costly in a self-declared workers' state, the solutions for stabilizing labour generally came from a paternalist tradition inscribed in and magnified by the Bolshevik blueprint. According to this tradition, the conjunction between the factory and the city was supposed to gain an incredible transformative power over territory and population. A solid scholarly literature has been documenting for years the functioning of the socialist cities as spaces for visions of the future (and of the past), planning strategies, biopolitics, state control, and everyday resistance (Lebow 2013; Szelenyi 1996; Enyedi 1996; Smith 1996; Petrovici 2012; Alexander 2007, 2013; Bodnar 2000; Poblocki 2010; Marginean 2013). Through a form of total planning (Collier 2011), infrastructural support for urban life was meant both to satisfy production needs and to spring directly from them. Much of this infrastructure was legally, economically, and politically connected to the materiality of the factories. In the socialist cities, pipes, heating and electrical systems, roads, hospitals, cultural events, and sporting facilities were financially supported or entirely dependent on industrial units. In Romania – as a strategy that mirrored the reliance on country life for externalizing the costs of labour reproduction – the state also internalized some of these costs in forms that kept wages low and people's actions under surveillance (see also Petrovici 2012, 2013). Thus, the late-1960s project for territorial systematization became the synthetic expression of the encounter between these two strategies: on one hand, the official acceptance and integration of commuting and rural-urban life arrangements; on the other hand, the strengthening of the major industrial cities through a more and more complex infrastructure and through a comprehensive program of housing. And it was explicitly related to the desperate need to stabilize labour, both in the cities and in the countryside.

But these strategies could not enter the political imaginary of the first years of planning. As we will see, between the postwar reconstruction and the making of a centrally-planned economy, the Romanian factories daily faced the impossibility to keep workers in place if they could not be offered housing, food, and other amenities. Poor wages and the possibility to earn money in the private sector or simply to return home in the countryside whenever they needed continued to drive away people from the factories and to make them consider industrial employment as one among other possibilities to survive in a rapidly changing world. Moreover, shortages and production disturbances affected people's payment, especially when coupled with the state's insistence on introducing piece-rate systems in the entire industry. In this context, the relationship between the state, the factory, and the *collective* body of its workers proved to be fragmented and incoherent and to account for much of the socialist construction's fragility.

The Collective Contract represented the expression of this relationship within the space of the factory. Early socialist historical transformations and continuities were inscribed in the evolution of the Collective Contract from a binding law at industrial branch scale to a bureaucratic instrument confined to the factory space. These changes took forms that had already been envisioned by the Bolsheviks themselves in the 1920s, as important steps away from a capitalist world built through summing individual actions towards a different one, in which individuals *consciously* adhered to the working of the whole. In Trotsky's words, for any worker, "[b]efore it was sufficient to grasp his position in the workshop by feel and then he would in essence correct his position in society. But now on the contrary he must become aware of the building of all Soviet society in order not to lose his way in the workshop" (1922: 11). The hope in the effectiveness of this transition can be also followed in Cluj factories, where the Collective Contract was one of the ways through which the state was supposed to make itself known to the workers, to cultivate their awareness, and to guide their actions. As a bureaucratic instrument, it communicated plan figures to the workers and explicitly related the roots of their well-being to socialist accumulation and to the materiality of the factories. It was supposed to bind people together and make them stay in the factory due to their allegiance and belonging to a community defined by one common ethos and by one purpose – socialist accumulation expressed in the plan itself. As the last section of this chapter will show, alongside other legal and administrative measures, the Collective Contract was an epic failure as a means to stabilize labour and to shape a notion of "community." Since the new economic executives found it impossible to solve most issues of the "contract," especially those related to people's provisioning, I argue that its main function remained one

of mimicking both state power and the actual presence of a collective subject in socialist factories.

"Fixing" labour

The struggle against labour's instability started already in 1947, when the "rational reallocation of the workforce" became a top priority for the communist-led government.[3] Less than one year after the elections that marked the official change of the regime in Romania, the 88 branches of *The Central Commission for the Rational Reallocation of the Labour Force* were founded as regional calculation centres specialized in compiling statistics about necessary and available workforce at a given time. Their founding was preceded and followed by rounds of lay-offs meant to reveal the hidden unemployment in the factories. This unemployment was supposed to disappear if factories were going to get rid of the "unreliable" elements, mainly the politically uncomfortable workers and the unstable semi-proletarian labour force.

The endless need to report on these issues shows that although raising productivity was the master logic behind these attempts to get rid of hidden employment, making the complex social universe of the workers transparent in the process also proved important for the new authorities. As we will see in Chapter 6, this added to the almost impossible task of making the factory life visible for the Party and to the fundamental belief that economic growth was already *there*, hidden in various practices and routines, which ranged from modes of calculating and reporting to the labour process itself. Production management and production politics became programs of revealing and actualizing this potential on the shop floors or in factory offices.

The suspicion that hidden unemployment plagued the Romanian factories was strongly related to the Soviet experience of the 1920s, when growing unemployment coexisted with labour shortages due to the unequal distribution of industrial and construction projects all over the country. This ideal-type of revolutionary chronology must have been important in the Romanian scenario for nationalization, so the Romanian Party officials proceeded according to the concrete Soviet experience and tried to "guard the gates of the factories" (Goldman 2002) even if the need for workers was growing continuously.

The Romanian government seemed to ignore the follow-up of the Soviet story that

continued with huge labour shortages in the next decades (Goldman 2002; Filtzer 1986). They also made little use of the parallel experience that accompanied the beginnings of the socialist industrialization in Hungary (Pittaway 2012; Kornai 1992), or in Poland, where labour turnover became "the most burning issue in lower Silesia" (Kenney 1997: 153). For instance, in Wrocław, at the end of the 1940s, annual turnover was over 100 percent while unexcused absenteeism reached around 20 percent daily. As Kenney (1997: 155) shows, this was the consequence of "[t]he wide-open labour market," which "gave workers a clear advantage, which neither authority nor incentive could easily diminish." There was always another factory, another city where management was willing to pay a little more to lure desperately-needed workers. This was exactly what the Romanian industry was going to face in the following years.

The successive rounds of lay-offs in 1947-1948 made life difficult for factory managers and endangered the realization of the production targets. They were constantly asking for more people when workers were getting sick, when they were joining the Army, or when they were needed for large construction projects all over the country.[4] Most of the time, their requests received a negative answer, like the one which the factory managers from *János Herb* read at the beginning of 1949 in a circular from the Light Industry Ministry: "The annual fund calculated for wages cannot be exceeded by any means in any industrial unit because this would lead to economic losses. We refuse to pay for any increase in production costs."[5]

However, factory managers ended up employing people anyway, knowingly facing the anger of the higher echelons of the Party and of the ministries. By 1949, their stubbornness to ignore governmental instructions became a nation-scale issue and came to be widely discussed at the Party meetings. An entire conference was dedicated to "the principle of thrifty economy" [*principiul gospodăriei chibzuite*]. The opening speech, later published in *Economic Problems*, started with complaints against the factory managers who knowingly tried to push the limits of their privileges by employing more workers than they were allowed to.[6]

> We still have cases when the leaders of an industrial unit estimate the production plan figures but forget to send us their financial plan. They employ more workers than they should, use more money for wages than necessary for production and get into trouble. Then, they need new credit for continuing activity.
>
> The workers and the technical staff are here today, there tomorrow, wandering from

> one place to another. Factories even steal people from each other. We have to allocate labour force better. We need to put a stop to this instability; us, the Party and the unions together. We also need to bind the workers to the factory by offering them incentives that are correlated to production indices, so they don't feel like changing their workplace and disorganize everything all the time.[7]

This passage illustrates a whole range of problems factories ran into for not being able to secure a stable work force: productivity declined, financial production targets were not met, and their further functioning required more money. As a consequence, "planning" was suffering in its very core, as politics of calculation and anticipation. Moreover, by not being able to keep their workers, socialist factories failed as productive arms of the state that were meant to create a new (very modern) relationship between territory, production, and population, a relationship that involves fixity for any modern state (Scott 1998). In short, labour turnover set crucial limits to the state's power to create and manage social production processes. As we will see in the next chapter, this situation would have further important consequences for the failure of plan/state/labour discipline.

The discourse against the factory managers who dared to ask for permission to employ more workers was so widespread that its inefficiency is somehow striking. But factories continued to employ more workers than the ministry allowed, with fluctuations, for the whole socialist period. It was relatively easy to do so even after 1951, when the introduction of the new Labour Code initially worried the economic executives that the plan would really have to be fulfilled using only the eight official hours of work and the workers they had at their disposal.[8]

The fact that technical staff was also in short supply strengthened the requests of the factory managers. Following the 1948 nationalization, an attempt to replace the first echelon of factory management was made. For propagandistic reasons, industrial workers had to stand in the front row of the societal project, so a worker (preferably young, rarely a woman) coming from a poor family and totally compliant with the new regime was the image of the perfect new economic executive. However, as we saw in Chapter 2, many prewar economic executives continued to have leading positions in their factories because there was nobody trained to take their place. But towards the end of the first five-year plan, repressive measures – including their arrest – were taken against the top management of some factories by the Party and the *Securitate*, especially in those factories that had problems in meeting plan figures. These measures perpetuated the lack of trained specialists and managers and the

instability of the factories for many years to follow.

Workers were the first ones called to fill in these positions. However, the need for productive personnel ran deeper than the ideological drive to see workers at all hierarchical levels of the Party and of the factory. Labour shortage became so severe that the fear of the danger to further disorganize production surpassed the desire for entangling Party and administrative bureaucracy. At a national conference, an important Party official admitted that

> Of course we need working-class key elements for various crucial positions in our state apparatus in these moments, when we carry this historical fight for building socialism. Working-class is the ruling class, so it has to rule. But to take a turner and ask him to do the work of some petty administrator just for the sake of having a worker in this job means slowing down the construction of socialism, disorganizing and shrinking production, provoking important losses, decreasing the benefits of the state and compromising socialist accumulation. And this only because somebody thinks we should take decisive elements out of production? And place them where?[9]

Alongside the revelation that workers could not actually become economic executives overnight, the desperation caused by the endemic labour shortage produced a contradictory political message: although the workers had to rule a workers' state, they had to stay in production as the main source of socialist accumulation. Moreover, with tens of workers from every factory becoming involved in a form of adult education – sometimes higher education – the production process itself remained orphan of its best labourers. Thus, social mobility – one of the staples of early state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe – proved to be disruptive on the shop floor.

Labour shortage produced impossible situations in the factories. Even the repairing of industrial equipment became almost impossible. In Cluj, factory managers endlessly complained that the repairing plan was not fulfilled and many pieces of equipment were laying unused on the floor. At *János Herbák*, the "lack of enthusiasm" of the mechanic in-chief was first to be blamed for this situation. The head of the repairing workshop responded bitterly that their department hardly lacked "enthusiasm," but workers, especially skilled ones. Moreover, some of the machines were so old that fixing them was a total waste of time. He also complained about the uselessness of working in shifts when workers were nowhere to be found, showing how during the afternoon shift 12 of 18 lathes generally remained

unused. After counting many other problems of his division, his conclusion was simple: "You can be sure that when our work is planned for 16 hours, we can actually do it in 160."[10] This cynical conclusion was not only true but it synthesized the almost impossible situation created by labour instability in the late 1940s and the 1950s, which had important consequences for the functioning of the factories as *planned* productive apparatuses and as disciplinary regimes.

The need for workers was intensified by the lack of discipline of the newly (and only quasi-urbanized) young people coming to town in search for a job. A synthetic look at the factory reports shows that workers were rarely fired for indiscipline acts, even if the law required the termination of their employment. My interviews with two former factory managers at *Armătura* confirmed that for decades, the directors of the industrial plants in Cluj faced various kinds of pressure when considering firing someone. First, labour shortage itself made them aware of the low probability that they would find a better worker than the one they fired. Second, an understanding and tolerant factory director was an important bidding element in the competition for attracting workers. Third, the Party explicitly demanded the new economic executives to keep workers happy even if this meant to place the responsibility for workers' mistakes on someone else. Fourth, the Party organizations and the unions often exercised their right to influence management decisions; they were most of the time against harsh penalties to ensure Party popularity among the workers.

The 1950 Labour Code itself specified very lax provisions for discipline. Article 20 stipulated that the individual work contract could be terminated if the employee did not exercise his or her duty for one month without a good reason. Women could be fired if they failed to return to work for three months after their maternity leave had ended. All employees could be laid-off if they were unable to exercise their duties for more than three months for medical reasons or if they were incarcerated for more than two months. Any penal sanction related directly to their work or to their activity in the factory could be sanctioned by terminating their employment but the precise conditions under which this could happened were left open.

So, instead of being fired, workers were typically moved around. It was certainly easier for a director to justify this solution than the decision to fire a worker, so transfers, sometimes between industrial units, were the preferred way to deal with problematic situations. Since drawing the line between a disciplinary transfer and a regular work transfer was difficult, employees who faced transfer as a sanction benefited from the same rights as the others, and even received the same allowance to help them with travel and moving

expenses.[11] But "everybody should earn a bread" was a leitmotif in the interviews I conducted few decades later. Former factory directors and a few workers told me during the interviews that the preferred strategy for dealing with slackers or with people who could not do their job properly was finding a new workplace for them, where "they could be useful," or at least "not hamper others' activities." Both managers' and workers' interpretation of this strategy went beyond the problems raised by labour turnover. It was considered rather a form of caring for "their people" and of ensuring their well-being even when workers proved incapable to do so themselves.

While competition between enterprises for attracting labour force was legally prohibited and the internal upgrading of the existing labour force's skills was preferred, factory managers faced the other economic executives in a harsh unofficial labour market dominated by big players from heavy industry branches, who were overbidding for workers by offering them higher wages, access to housing, and other advantages. The records of several 1950 meetings of the Cluj Regional Committee – gathering all factory directors from the region – help us map the consequences of this competition.[12] In his address, the Prime Secretary deplored the way the workers were "stolen" from their workplaces and lured into other factories. He complained that when outsiders were offered various incentives, older workers often felt their position was threatened and left their own factory in order to get higher advantages elsewhere. He further advised the new economic executives:

> Labour fluctuation is not the problem of one single industrial unit. We need to work together constantly to keep our people. Comrades, we have these difficulties and we need to be careful not to use unjust methods like telling people to leave their workplace and join another industrial unit. These are not healthy methods! We need to follow the path of growing our own people if we need them. We have wonderful results at the *Railways Workshops*, where they manage to transform an unskilled worker in a specialist in six to eight months. All the factories have to follow their lead. This is the best way to create cadres in all fields.[13]

In the following hours, the directors responded by reporting the problems faced by their industrial units when trying to employ or keep their labour force.

As their speeches showed, stabilizing labour was a regional problem, but every factory faced it differently. At the *Electrical Company*, the workers were leaving *en masse* and new workers refused to enter the factory gates because the company did not offer any

possibility for piece rate work. Consequently, the labourers felt they could not control their earnings. As a result, not even the unskilled workers wanted to work there. At *János Herbák*, there were almost five workers leaving the factory for every newly employed one. Locksmiths and turners were in the most difficult situation because they earned less than the locksmiths and the turners employed in heavy industry. So, they were often leaving the factory. Sometimes, they even preferred to work far from home or to leave the city all-together for towns like Reșița or Brașov, where heavy industry was more developed than in Cluj. *Industria Sârmei*, a large wire plant from a small city near Cluj was one of the few to report a surplus of labour force and no problems with raw materials, due to its reliance on an important pool of rural workforce and local resources. The director of *Armătura* bitterly related how he met one of the six drivers who left the factory without notice and went to the Danube-Black Sea Canal where they could earn even 40,000 lei when a skilled worker in his factory made around 7,500 lei.

At a small factory in Cluj, *Breiner Bela*, with a preponderantly womanised work force, the workers were quitting because they were forced to work in third shifts, although women were legally exempted from working late at night. To plea for the elimination of the night shift, the director invoked childcare and women's safety. However, he felt compelled to show that the night shift was, "first of all inefficient" because women's work was poor and productivity was lower. The consequences could have been dire as the factories supplied by *Breiner Bela* risked to be left without the needed materials. This double logic – of care and efficiency – was going to dominate the requests for workers or for the improvement of their lives in the factories for the following years. It reflected the way in which labour faced the state simultaneously as subject of care and protection and as productive resource. The two were never to be disentangled.

Legal measures to stabilize labour continued to flood industry for the following years but failed to become more than an empty promise of a reliable work force. For instance, in 1951, all factories in the country received governmental instructions on the implementation of a Decree[14] that specified the regulations of employing, transferring, and firing personnel. The Instructions emphasized the importance of the "continuous strengthening of the socialist organization of labour" for the development of the national planned economy and tied this organization with the "conscious and freely consented discipline of the working people in the production process."[15] The document also underlined the fact that "conscious work discipline is the result of a process of educating and re-educating the masses who were now freed from exploitation"[16] and that this process would be realized in a long time and only under the

leadership of the Party. Labour competitions, the "patriotic initiative" for fulfilling the 1951 plan in eleven months, and the new wage system were rhetorically considered equal incentives for promoting a "new attitude towards work." The struggle against those who had produced damages to national economy through their acts of indiscipline – including absenteeism and fleeing to a better workplace – was proclaimed.

Positive measures against labour turnover were specified in the above-mentioned 1951 Instructions: higher pensions for the workers who could demonstrate continuity at the same workplace, facilitated access to apartments and credit for housing, and an annual financial bonus awarded for continuity in certain industrial branches – coal, mining and non-ferrous metals.[17] Through a classical carrot/stick move, the Instructions also emphasized the legal sanctions against those who left their workplace without the explicit approval of the factory director. Transferring people within the same industrial unit was also limited and needed governmental approval. The doctors "who help[ed] the backward elements to skip work" or to get transferred faced serious penalties. Only health, pregnancy, child care, and the necessity to follow one's life partner were considered "justified reasons" to leave employment, while the factory managers faced even the threat of imprisonment(!) for a period between three and twelve months if they facilitated an illegal transfer of a worker or if they employed workers who left their job without justification and without written consent.

These measures seemed pointless. In the middle of the first five-year plan, labour turnover was escalating everywhere. The reports from 1953 were more than ever flooded by complaints from the factories and the local Party Committees showing that enforcing discipline, especially with regard to labour fluctuation, was an almost impossible task.[18] They always exceeded their planned number of workers due to endemic turnover. In August 1953, at the leather and footwear factory around 16 percent of the workers missed work daily and seven percent gave no reason for their absence. A synthetic report for the labour force of *János Herbák* shows that at the beginning of 1953 the factory had 3,880 industrial workers. During the year, they hired more than 900 workers but approximately 950 left the factory. The liquidation slips show that, among those who left the factory, 19 percent refused to renew their employment contract; around 3 percent were cases of illness or disability; almost 11 percent retired; around 45 percent left the factory by request; almost 9 percent left to continue their education; and 14 percent were fired.[19]

The consequences of labour instability were more severe for newly born factories like *Tehnofrig*, which did not benefited from a pre-war small core of skilled and stable workers like *János Herbák* or *CFR*.[20] In its first years, *Tehnofrig* not only had to face the same

problems as the other factories when it came to semi-proletarian and semi-seasonal work but it got all the workers who were fired from other industrial units for political reasons or for severe indiscipline acts. As a result, *Tehnofrig* could not fulfil its plan for 1953. The attempts made by its director to "talk more energetically to the workers" produced discontent and a wave of complaints that he was "dictatorial and he distanced himself from the working-class."[21]

The situation was comparable at *János Herbák*. The reports from the Party organization to the City County Committee are full of complaints that the workers who resided in the countryside could not be convinced to see the factory as their primary workplace.[22] During the several severe bread crises, even the urbanites went to work in the villages in exchange for wheat. Moreover, the workers constantly complained to their foremen about their wages. Due to the shortages, the work was massed at the end of the month and the workers could see neither the logic of coming to work just for staring at the walls for days nor the logic of working 16 hours a day at the end of the month for a very low wage and no benefits. Even the political agitators found their task impossible and showed that an agitator who earned such a low wage himself "could not convince anyone to come to work." They tried to offer this possibility to the rural workers and persuade them to come to Cluj only to complement their income. But the newcomers were not qualified for their work, they produced little and could not meet the planned quality standards.[23] Because many factories had already introduced the piece rate system, unskilled workers were earning even less, so they decided very quickly to go back in the countryside or to find activities that required less precision or dexterity. During the summer, the foremen and the technical staff from several workshops simply started to do the work instead of their team members[24] but this resulted in an almost total lack of surveillance and control of their workshops and truancies multiplied.

For the Party members, the mistake of skipping a work day for working somewhere else was seen as a betrayal of their political goals. They were many times excluded from the Party for indiscipline acts and for not setting the right example to the masses. Comrade Oltean from the tannery was scolded for missing work in order to work some lease land in his home village, where he was also the secretary of the Party organization. His "attitude towards work discipline" was labelled as "intolerable" and proletarian anger was manifest in the last line of the factory newspaper's article: "Look how comrade Oltean understands the struggle for strengthening our popular democracy regime: being an employer of our factory, he helps the *chiabur* to gain fat."[25]

The impossibility to stabilize labour was also related to the difficulty of ensuring continuity in production because of raw materials shortages, bad weather, broken industrial equipment or bad coordination of the plan figures. It was hard for the factories to keep their workers when nothing was produced. Moreover, the introduction of the piece rate system and the successive renegotiation of norms almost everywhere in Cluj made life impossible for the workers during those months when the production stopped for days and they could earn nothing. Thus, heavy rain became fatal for the brick factory, lack of wood was lethal for the furniture factory, and lack of copper was blamed for the low earnings of the workers by the leaders of *Armătura*.

The workers were grumbling all the time during the factory meetings and their questions and complaints felt "endless" for the factory managers. Things were heated and political manifestations of anger erupted all the time, like for instance, at *Armătura* in 1954:

> there are even manifestations of distrust in the measures taken by the government and by the Party regarding the raising of the work norms. For instance, comrade Kálman, a communist, told us in the meeting that the Party promised that the workers' earnings won't be lowered and they were. For more than a month he did not earn more than 380 lei. He cannot find food and clothing in the state commercial stores so he has to buy everything on the black market. The prices on the market are too high compared to the workers' earnings. He declared in front of everybody that he would live the factory if the work norms are raised again. . . . Then other people stood up to tell us they could not realize the plan because they didn't have raw materials to work with. Workers don't earn enough and prices go higher and higher all the time. For example, they cannot find shoes in those stores that sell consumer goods on ration books. But the shoes they find outside the system cost 400 lei so no worker can buy a pair of shoes from his salary.[26]

At *János Herbák*, an average of 22 percent of the workers missed their work daily in 1954 and many of them used this as a reason to be fired and go somewhere else.[27] The situation complicated even more when the industrial plant was planned only for 40 percent of its capacity and still did not have enough raw materials to cover the lowered production. The consequences for the workers were dear. The management could not ensure continuity in production for months and they had hundreds of extra workers who were not earning their money and who waited anxiously to run through the factory gates.[28] The average wage fell

from 375 lei in September 1953 to 230 in October 1954. Table 1 below displays a comparison between the distribution of the first three months of the year average wages for 1953 and 1954 at the Footwear Factory. It shows how many workers realized their average income for the same period of the previous year.

Table 1. Average monthly income for the workers of the Footwear Factory for the three months of 1953 and 1954[29]

Income (Romanian lei)	**Number of workers January-March 1953**	**Number of workers January-March 1954**
1-20	26	20
21-40	31	19
41-60	45	32
61-80	55	41
81-100	69	58
101-150	225	175
151-200	386	317
201-300	851	193
300-400	1199	404

But the averages expressed nothing of people's despair, especially during the winter months when the production stagnated almost 75,000 hours and 223 workers earned nothing.

A special commission from the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party came to Cluj and declared the situation at *János Herbák* an "emergency." As a result, the factory managers took the following measures: many workers were sent on vacation although they had not planned it; some of the workers were temporarily transferred to other workshops at *János Herbák*, but also to other factories and cooperatives in the city; and some new models of footwear were introduced to absorb more workforce. But the main concern was to convince people not to leave the factory as their close friends and neighbours who were working in other places were quick to report to their foremen about the difficulties of *János Herbák*. Through these kinship and friendship networks, the workers from *János Herbák* were immediately lured into more advantageous situations, persuaded to quit their factory and work somewhere else. It was tempting and many of them did it.

As countless of factory reports show, the situation failed to improve during the first

five-year plan, and actually deteriorated towards its end. The most important reason for this failure was the need to keep production costs and wages low. In a memoir regarding the impossibility to pay the workers in August 1954 at *János Herbák*, the circumstances surrounding labour turnover received a lengthy treatment. Analysing the causes of the truancies and the reduced possibility to hire new workers, the leadership of the factory got to the following conclusions: a. The differences between wage systems in various industrial branches and the decision not to improve the wage system for the leather and footwear sector led to the orientation of the workers towards those branches that have more advantageous wage systems. b. The slow rhythm of agriculture's transformation compared to industrial development and growth did not free as much manpower as needed by the continuously expanding needs of the industry. c. Some of the absentees were leaving the factory for seasonal and occasional work, especially in the agricultural private sector where they could earn daily 30-40 lei and food, while in the factory they could not earn more than 15 lei.[30]

The "solution" – of purely propagandistic nature – was also presented in detail:

> For strengthening discipline, the leaders of the factory, together with the Party organization and supported by the factory committee, formed comradely collectives who visited the absentees at home. The collectives tried to explain the workers how wrong their attitude is, telling them how many difficulties they provoke in production – bottlenecks, low productivity, and, finally, falling earnings for all the others.
>
> However, since the absentees have been found at home, doing various kinds of work which provides a much higher income than their factory wage, our actions were useless.[31]

Useless as these actions were, the grim images painted by the pleas of the "comradely collectives" were true, as the same memoir shows. The wages in the leather footwear industry failed to attract workers in the factories and to mobilize them. Almost 50 percent of the workers at *János Herbák* were included in the first, second, and third categories of payment, earning between 176.80 and 210.40 lei. Even the good workers from these categories, who exceeded their norms by 50 percent earned less than 300 lei monthly and were tempted to leave the factory for days, just to earn money somewhere else.

But the truancies had a devastating domino effect in the factory, leading to more and more unaccounted absences daily. In the memoir it was presented in a sequential manner, almost like in a movie.

> In the beginning, those who were unjustifiably missing work belonged to the first and the second wage categories. Because they were missing all the time, we needed to reorganize the existing workers to ensure the continuity of the production process. The regrouped workers, not having the skill to execute all these operations, earned very little, so they did not come to work anymore. This induced irregularities in the rhythms of production and the plan was not fulfilled. The income of the workers from the fourth and the fifth categories fell. Consequently, the key-workers, the highly skilled ones, started to have many unaccounted for absences, provoking more and more bottlenecks and leaving the workers from the next operations without work.[32]

Because of these problems, the plan for August 1954 was not fulfilled. More important for the political atmosphere in the factory, the income of the piece rate workers drastically dropped. The ones who worked for a fixed salary were soon to be paid, after the government issued a derogation from the law, admitting that the factory was not to blame for the situation created.[33] However, the administrative staff and the foremen – who were paid according to the percentage of the plan fulfilled during the previous month – bore the sanction and saw their earnings cut almost by half, although the factory managers tried hard to place the blame for their failure outside their industrial unit. They argued that the sanction was not deserved since the administrative staff actually worked more during those months when the plan was not fulfilled and as a consequence, the factory had to send innumerable extra reports and memoirs for justifying the "catastrophe."

Nevertheless, the most serious problem was posed by the foremen, who threatened to leave the factory in mass if their salaries – including overtime – were not paid. The memoir describes how in the summer months, when workers' unaccounted absences sky rocketed, the foremen were the ones to keep the factory alive.

> The foremen started to execute multiple operations in place of their key-workers. They moved frantically from one machine to another, staying extra hours in order to prevent the complete stopping of production. Some of them executed two norms every day.[34]

Since their requests to leave the factory was not approved, the foremen requested to go back in production as skilled workers, in those workplaces where their dexterity and their will to

work two norms in a day would pay off.

The foremen were generally among the few workers who had experience of 15-20 years in production. They were recruited from the most loyal workers and they were known by the factory leadership to be responsible and reliable. Although they earned less than many of their best skilled workers and complained endlessly about it, foremen were generally still willing to get their job done. Like in Hungary (Burawoy and Lukács 1992) or in Poland (Lebow 2013), foremen were key-workers who found themselves a world-apart from the peripheral ones. As such, they were the direct product of the impossibility to stabilize labour in early socialist economies. They emerged later as a new labour aristocracy, as the possibility of losing them for other factories and the knowledge that no good worker would accept to become a foreman in these conditions put the management in an impossible situation. This conjuncture placed the foremen in better positions to bargain their way to a better life, sometimes at the expense of other categories, especially the unskilled, the inexperienced, and often women.

Far from being more and more controlled, the competition for hiring more workers (and the best ones) also exploded at the end of the first five-year plan. In a plenary meeting of the City Committee, comrade Szekely, director of *János Herbák* proposed the building of a new hospital for the industrial plant and other infrastructural improvements, so the workers would appreciate their workplace more positively. He continued by presenting the problems of his factory:

> I don't know how the problem of discipline is solved in other places but if we had the discipline we had two-three years ago, we could produce 10-15 percent more. Two years ago 15-20 workers were missing work daily. Today, 150 are missing. They are using this tactic to get fired to work somewhere else because we cannot sign their transfer. At the soles factory the situation is dear. We need workers but we cannot transfer people because they simply don't want to go, saying that they would better not come to work the next day than to work there. And it is not only about the money. I demand the other factory directors promise nothing to our workers! They are learning their skills in our factory and then leave us to earn more somewhere else.[35]

The differences in payment were not confined to those between economic sectors, although inequalities between heavy and light industry were significant.

Some of the highest differences were those between local and republican industries.

There were huge disparities between the cooperatist system of local production and state industry, not only regarding the wages but also in technology and work conditions. This appears clearly in a 1955 note of the Documentary Section of Cluj Regional Party Committee realized after one of the Party ethnographers spent few days at the small textile factories of *Centrocoop*:

> The workers from the textile factory *Victoria Cluj* are unhappy with the fact that the wages situations was not solved. Their wages are extremely low, their equipment rudimentary and still they produce the same goods and have the same work norms as at *Varga Katalin*, which is part of the Light Industry Ministery. *Varga Katalin* has better machines and the women there earn around 500 lei and even more. . . . This is why there was a large fluctuation of workers at *Victoria Cluj*. For instance, in 1954, 140 of our 240 workers left the factory only 3-4 weeks after they were employed. This turnover compromised the plan because the newcomers had to be initiated in what they had to do and were not efficient.
>
> For instance, while we were there, Vincze Gizella requested a raise in her wage because she does not have money to feed her child. Her income is simply not enough for buying bread and milk. She does not have the strength to work anymore because she is malnourished. Other women told me the same thing: they cannot work because they don't eat enough.
>
> They also complained that the director shows contempt to them when they complain about money or problems with their children. He also ignores them when they recount how they are attacked by dissolute men in the street at night because the factory does not solve the illumination problem.
>
> If things continue like this, the cooperative will disolve soon.[36]

The fact that many of those working in the cooperative system were women did not help their situation. Although the regime proclaimed the equality between men and women, at least one generation seem to have passed through a different experience at their workplaces.

Until late in the 1950s, reports about sarcastic responses from the factory directors when they presented with "womanly" issues are common. As we saw, transferring people from one workshop to another was a handy solution for many problematic situations. Minutes of the factory committee meetings at *Armătura, The Railways Workshops*, and *Varga Katalin* show that, following open expressions of discontent from the workers over low wages,

women were asked to occupy the worst paid positions because they were not the heads of their families or because, as young unmarried girls, they did not have to support their children. Generally, the economic executives did not go as far as forcing them to move to these workplaces but rather trying to persuade them by presenting the new workplace as "safer" or "easier." If forced transfers happened, they were not visible in the reports for the local Party Committees. Moreover, not all women had a weaker negotiation power compared to men's. The field of battle for labour was obviously gendered but highly differentiated. The position of the women who worked at *János Herbák*, for instance, could not be compared to the position of the women who worked in the same industrial branch but in cooperatives or in smaller industrial units. Larger factories like *Armătura*, *Carbochim*, the *Railways Workshops*, or *János Herbák* many times employed families, husbands and wives working together, sometimes even in the same workshop. People who brought their spouses in the factories were more likely to be part of the skilled and stable workers in the factory. So, although not directly readable in the reports, their requests probably weighted more than others'.

As this section showed, early socialism was marked by a high instability of labour, which further produced labour shortages, bottlenecks, and huge difficulties in controlling the factory space. For a long time, state officials continued to complain in vain about how many workers had been employed by the factories without having the means to pay them.[37] However, it was futile and probably many times simply an empty rhetorical artifice, because the socialist factories needed to function continuously, so their leaders were in fact allowed to use a wide range of informal practices in order to secure the production flow. For many years, they were punished only when the quantitative targets of the plan were not reached. Respecting other indices of the plan, although desirable, was not enforced through any disciplinary measure beyond cutting the insignificant management bonuses of the administrative staff. Moreover, factory managers had the certainty that the workers would not remain unpaid and that any expenses for employing more workers or for asking them to work more than eight hours a day would be always covered at the end of the year. These were hardly effective incentive or coercive forms in the chaotic situation of the 1950s.

But labour instability had deeper roots than the soft-budget constraints analysed by Kornai. Factory documents show clearly that the new economic executives were fully aware of the fact that labour shortage could never be considered in absolute terms – as simply a "lack" of industrial workers – but as a by-product of labour instability in a complex environment where people needed to ensure the survival of their families in a time when the factories were incapable to do so. This awareness made them use everything they could to

join a rough competition for workers that produced localized and contradictory labour markets, within a field of forces dominated by the permanent failure to stabilize labour. As we will see in the next section, the Collective Contract was the bureaucratic expression of this struggle. As an administrative means to "fix" labour, it would prove as ineffective as legal measures to regulate employment. As a bureaucratic instrument, it needed to achieve something different: the enactment of the "collective" in the socialist factory. Nevertheless, I will argue that on the ground, this "collective" was rather a form of mimicking than the reflection of a real historical possibility.

The Collective Contract: A bureaucratic instrument in search of an author

Theoretically, the Collective Contract was an annual convention between factory management and the workers about production targets and the improvements brought by the factory itself in people's lives. These improvements were an attempt to define, partly take care of, and control people's everyday needs. Most of them were the domain of the industrial units themselves, both spatially and financially. Socialist regimes as specific historical expressions of paternalism brought much of the concern with people's bodies in the state's field of action. Health care, education, insurance for incapacity to work and old age, rest, work conditions, leisure, culture and the infrastructure required for the satisfaction of workers' needs were all included into the legal provisions of the 1952 Constitution and the 1950 Labour Code. They were all related to the fundamental right and obligation to work, which were guaranteed by the state.[38] They also became integral part of the Collective Contracts signed once a year by the workers in every socialist factory. It was another way in which the factory was made into the spine of the socialist societal project by linking it more and more to the necessity to obtain labour's acquiescence and productive arms through care and improvement in workers' living standards.

The Collective Contract was the explicit expression of this function of the factories as it was transformed into a bureaucratic instrument meant to define the factory as an important node of managerial, allocative and infrastructural power and to rewrite the behaviour of the workers in a socialist modern key. Explicitly introduced by the 1950 Labour Code, the socialist Collective Contract replaced the interwar collective convention, a transformation

that reflected the new relationship between individual contracts and the professional standard of employment. The new form taken by the Collective Contract was meant to undercut solidarities based on class, ethnicity, and sectional economic interests, and to place the factory – not the corporation or the guild – at the centre of the state. This would change in time, starting with mid-1960s, when new forms of thinking about sectionality and industrial management came to dominate the economic and political logic of late socialism.

According to the 1950 Labour Code, art. 3, the Collective Contract had very limited to none legal binding power.[39] However, it was a crucial manifestation of the state *in* the factory, an evident expression of the ambiguous nature of the socialist state and of the ambiguous nature of its subjects. It linked production and planning to life and provisioning of the workers in an effort to define them *as a community*.[40] Like other bureaucratic instruments, it was the perfect vehicle for communicating the double nature of work in a socialist state, as productive activity and as foundation of citizenship. Production was once again considered as source of the general wealth of the working class and a broader "public interest" was summoned against labour's instability and its consequences: the need for overtime, indiscipline, delays in the execution of the plan, or stalling. The workers had to learn that provisions of the Collective Contract – like workers' housing, bathrooms, or nurseries – were necessarily flowing from the surplus they produced. The Collective Contract was also a significant bureaucratic instrument for expressing the common mission which gathered together the administrative executives, the Party hierarchies, and the workers of the same factory. In very crude terms, alongside other legal and regulatory frames, it produced factories as places.

By signing the Collective Contracts, the workers committed to participating in production in order to fulfil the state plan and the factory managers agreed to improve the working and living conditions of the working people. The explicit logic underlying the Collective Contract was "to make every worker feel that both the industrial unit and the worker has obligations and duties."[41] [42] It stated meeting specific plan figures, respecting plan discipline, and complying to factory regulations as general obligations of the workers. It also listed a series of obligations of the factory management towards the workers, which included issues related to work conditions, work protection, housing, nurseries, hospitals, qualification courses, conferences, leisure, and general investments in the social infrastructure of the factory. At discursive level, it was the reflection of workers' social rights in their direct relationship with the factory and it was often contrasted with the capitalist past of the country and with the exploitative present of another parts of the world.

A process of standardization accompanied the implementation of the Collective Contracts in the Romanian factories. Every year the main points of the Contract were transmitted from Bucharest to all factories.[43] For instance, in 1950, they included: 1) the obligations of the factory management – especially the over-fulfilment of the plan; 2) introducing correct work norms in the process of production and convincing the workers that they are fair; 3) improving workers' living and working conditions; 4) supplementing workers' food with products from the factory farms; 5) the functioning of the nurseries; 6) attracting the workers in sporting activities.

The contract mirrored the production and the investment plan of the factory and was instrumental in making the workers aware of their place in production. To this end, the whole propaganda apparatus was used for communicating the project of the Contract to the workers: the Youth Union of the Romanian Workers, the Party Organizations, and the Unions discussed its main points in their meetings. The project was displayed in the most visible spots. The ones responsible with agitation and propaganda were instructed to use all the instruments they had at their disposal: slogans, banners, wall paper articles, enthusiastic calls for proposals through megaphones, and, most of all, man-to-man conversations.[44] The report for 1950 of the Romanian Workers Party City Committee claimed that for the entire city, 70,000 proposals from workers were collected and 20,000 were approved and introduced in the Collective Contracts.[45] The local expression of certain developmental priorities of the state were generally reported as coming from the workers, like expanding production by 13%, the building of a workers' colony for the people from the *Railroad Workshops* and working-class apartments for the people from *Iris* and from *János Herbák*, an increasing number of qualification courses offered by the factories, and an expanding social infrastructure around the same factories.

It was a general practice of the factory management and of the Party Organizations to report the realization of their own projects and ideas as demands communicated explicitly by the workers. Nonetheless, there were also genuine attempts to a bottom-up formulation of the Collective Contract. "Proposal boxes" were installed in each workshop and the workers could introduce anonymous notes with suggestions and requests for improvement. Most of them could find their solution locally. From the 397 proposals coming from 96 people in a factory from *János Herbák*, 211 had their solution at the workshop level and 186 were forwarded to the factory director.[46] From there, some of them were going even further, to the Economic Section of the Regional Party Committee or to the Light Industry Ministry. Some of them were emphasized by the factory managers in their correspondence with the higher level

hierarchies, especially when the workers' requests legitimated the demands of the management itself. A list of proposals was issued when the boxes were opened by a team composed of representatives of the factory management, of the Party organization, and of the Union. Sometimes, an old and experienced worker or a Stakhanovite joined them to give further explanations for the demands expressed by the workers.

The list compiled on February 6, 1953 in the Tannin Factory offers a good insight into the everyday problems that people already felt they could address in the factory space.[47] The impressive variety of requests referred to tools: hay forks, shovels, weighting equipment, and better pencils for the shop floor technical drawing; work protection measures: 200g bacon for those involved in exhausting tasks, better protection equipment, (boiled and warm) milk for those who worked in a toxic environment, and pain killers in the sanitary box; the improvement of their working conditions: the isolation of the attic, better ventilation of the workshops, moving the dust collector further from the people, and periodic disinfections; and living standards: 24 supplemental vacation days each year for those working in difficult conditions and for those who were over 55 and had been industrial workers for more than 20 years, free vacations in the mountain and seaside resorts for the old workers, free medicine for the unemployed or retired family members and for those workers who earned less than 360 lei, food vouchers for everybody, including those who had one hectare of land in the countryside, paid transportation for those who were coming from the surrounding villages, the elimination of the queues for the restricted goods, electrification of the workers' housing offered by the factory, better food in the cafeteria, and two more paediatric surgical sections in the city. Some notes were left unspecified but asked the factory director "to take more seriously the economic hardships of the workers."

Following the events in the next days, one can see the first consequences of these proposals. First, a meeting for their analysis was announced. At the meeting, the majority of the proposals related to the factory were given a proper closing. But it was also concluded that the lack of available funds made the solutioning of some of the proposals almost impossible. It was reminded that the office for work protection had only five employees who could not deal with all the problems because the factory buildings were widely spread spatially. Moreover, it was shown that all previous proposals of the office regarding an improvement of work protection were rejected for lack of funding. The factory management asked the Union to help them communicate the needs of the workers "up," to the Party officials who could have a say in their resolution.

The *János Herbák* economic executives only partly fulfilled the issues raised in the

1953 Collective Contract. Especially the requests for workers' housing had to be postponed because the building process was slower than expected. The smaller issues became the object of mockery in several August editions of the factory newspaper which exposed how the factory management simply passed by several articles of the Contract.

> "Art. 90. In the technical room a permanent exhibition for our innovations will be organized". This was done, indeed, and the exhibition is "permanent" because the same innovations have been displayed all the time.
> "Art. 96. A shooting range will be equipped until April 1". At this point, the management simply missed their target because the shooting range is not ready even today.
> "Art. 83. Three peasant costumes will be purchased for our theatre team." Because the theatre team still hasn't received the costumes, they will use the red outfits of the football players for their next play.
> "Art. 63. Toys and equipment for gymnastics will be installed in the children daycare yard. We will also buy 30 balls for children's outdoor activities." This commitment was not realized because those who are in charge played the ball themselves with the factory budget until our children's toys disappeared. And this is how the small problems grow into big ones.[48]

As the voice of the Party organization in the factory the factory newspaper followed the general line of the complaints related to the formal character of many points included in the Collective Contract. A member of the Economic Section of the Cluj Regional Party Committee was complaining in a meeting that not even the unions were able to control how the obligations of the management to the workers were respected. The unions limited themselves to mobilize the workers for meeting the plan targets, without fighting for their rights in front of the administrative staff.[49] Actually, the factory management was generally disinterested in the propaganda activities like mobilizing the workers to participate in Russian language and civilization courses, or organizing various conferences and lectures, all included in the Collective Contract. However, they genuinely struggled to improve work conditions and to solve workers' problems like housing, illumination, child care, or transportation.[50]

Sometimes, confusion and conflict dominated the signing of the Collective Contracts in the factories. The workers used those opportunities to criticize management and to show

how previous agreements had proven empty promises. An informative note about the signing of the Collective Contracts for 1953 at *Triumf* factory alarms the Party activists at the city level that the meeting went wrong. The workers started to shout at the managers and at the union representatives that less than 15 percent of the problems mentioned in the 1952 Collective Contract had been solved and that Collective Contracts were nothing more than "empty promises."[51] In other factories, workers pushed the Party activists in the factory to answer "one simple question" and explain to them who was the other part of the Collective Contract: the ministry, the management, the union, or the Party. The response of the Party activists, that the Collective Contract was an agreement between workers and the factory was not satisfying for people. Since their requests to the management to honour their promises were met with an almost universal complain about money and lack of funding from the Ministry, the Ministry *was* part of the Collective Contract.

Although the Collective Contract could not fulfil its main function of creating a connective tissue of people, aims, and materialities in early socialist factories, it was ideal as an instrument for encompassing the factories in the pedagogic activity of the socialist state. There were two basic ways to transform the signing of the Collective Contract into a public teaching moment. Through its sometimes genuine openness towards workers' proposals, the Collective Contract mobilized the workers around the concrete problems of the factory. Through its standardization, it provided the frames in which the actors, starting with the workers, were taught how to think and perform in order to respect the political terms, the ethics, and the temporalities of socialist construction.

The Collective Contract was instrumental to make the plan figures known in the shop floor and to ensure the sense of participation in a broader societal project in the workers. It translated the plan from a dry numerical inscription into a common political statement of *all* members of an industrial unit. The state officials and the economic planners realized very quickly that the enactment of the plan further required the merging between what the state officials knew and what ordinary people knew about the plan, in order to transform it from a virtual object into living activity. Planning and, correspondingly, the functioning of the socialist state depended both on *seeing* and on *being seen*, or, as the state officials would claim:

> For planning, we need to know the objectives, the development line, the proportions and the allocation of the raw materials, labour force, and means of production. In a word, everything needs to be decided and allocated before we proceed. If this

> economic law is unknown, it cannot be implemented. It is known by the Party and by the Government who decide over the economic and political objectives of the plan but *it also has to be known by the popular masses* organized and guided by the Party and the Government who participate in elaborating the plan and then, enhancing their creative forces, safeguarding its achievement. Therefore, the first and most important condition of the execution of the plan, as a fundamental law of the socialist economy, is *to be known*, to be implemented in a conscious way.[52]

As shown, people also had to be permanently aware of the plan, to *know* the plan intimately. A certain familiarity between the state and each individual was born as every factory manager, every foreman and every worker became more and more aware of their assigned place in the *vision* of the plan as a whole.

Being planned meant being under the control of the state but it also meant relative empowerment for the workers. Being the ones who put the plan into motion, workers' location within the political rationalities of the time (in Rose and Miller's 1992 terms) became consequential. People were needed in order to make the plan work, so the importance of their daily living activity was for the first time made partially transparent to them. Thus, the problem of mobilization became central for the realization of the economic and political objectives of the state for the whole socialist period. But this further entailed that to a certain degree the state also needed to make itself visible and accessible to the workers. In every division, team, and workshop, the plan was detailed not only for each week and for each day, but also for all the workplaces, because people had to know *as individuals* exactly the part of the plan that had to be done at a certain time by a particular worker.[53] In this sense, the Collective Contract functioned as the expression of the a both-ways connection between individuals and the state, based as much in everyday work routines as it was in political decisions at country-scale.

This dependency of the plan on various categories of population introduced from the very beginning a tension at the heart of the planning process. The state not only had to unveil the social but it also had to unveil itself as much as possible exactly in the economic practices at the factory level. But this unveiling was misleading because seeing was already hierarchical. In a planned economy, each person had to have a certain vision of the state and of how it functioned but this vision was different for a worker or a manager. Knowing the plan figures and their relationship with the production process as a whole was a privilege and a resource that was reserved only to few.[54]

While differentiated unveiling of the plan and workers' mobilization were important, the crucial function of the Collective Contract as a bureaucratic instrument was to contribute to the complex art of mimicry meant to create the illusion that the structures of the socialist state, which were emergent themselves, were already functioning, although sometimes they were simply not there yet. In the Collective Contract, the state appeared *as if* it was already there, mimicking the historical actualization of the socialist state-idea (Abrams [1977] 2006; see also Navaro-Yashin 2002). The Collective Contract held the mirror of a state that ran social production processes: a collective-subject-idea who also acted *as if* the state as such was real and coherent. The illusion that state power in state socialism as "politically organized subjection" (Abrams 1988) was relegated to the domain of the political and not always in production might have been the greatest illusion of all.

Notes

[1] *Lupta de clasa*, Seria a V-a, 1949, iunie, p. 95.

[2] I exclude here, for simplification, those commercial agreements that made investment in other countries possible, especially in the last two decades of socialism. Also, although it is true that East-Central European countries had no colonies, the character of the Soviet Union's economic relations with the Eastern block is at least debatable.

[3] *MO* on the 12th of July 1947.

[4] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei Janos Herbak, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie, 9 Decembrie 1950.

[5] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare, Dispozitiunile tov. Ministru Adj. Miron Dumitru, primite cu adresa nr. 40.342 / 1949, p. 93.

[6] the main programmatic journal of the Party in the economic sphere.

[7] "Probleme economice", Noiembrie 1949, Conferinta Vasile Luca, "Despre Organizarea Intreprinderilor de Stat pe Baza Gospodariei Chibzuite" (1 – 19).

[8] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei Janos Herbak, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. 9 Decembrie 1950 (p. 8).

[9] "Probleme economice", Noiembrie 1949. Conferinta Vasile Luca, "Despre Organizarea Intreprinderilor de Stat pe Baza Gospodariei Chibzuite" (1 – 19) (p. 17).

[10] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei *Janos Herbak*, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie, 9 Decembrie 1950.

[11] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare, Adresa Ministerului Finantelor, Directiunea Statelor si Drepturilor de Personal nr. 1001650 din 29.07. 1949: salariatii transferati disciplinar au dreptul la indemnizatia de transferare ca si salariatii transferati in

interes de serviciu". (408).

[12] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 8 / 1950, Procese verbale incheiate in sedintele de birou ale Comitetului Regional Cluj, Proces verbal, 24 Noiembrie 1950.

[13] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 8 / 1950, Procese verbale incheiate in sedintele de birou ale Comitetului Regional Cluj, Proces verbal, 24 Noiembrie 1950, p. 152.

[14] Decretul nr. 207.

[15] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 27 / 1951, Instructiuni, Circulare, hotarari primite de la C.C. al P.M.R. Indreptar pentru prelucrarea Decretului nr. 207 cu privire la unele masuri privind angajarea la munca, transferarea si desfacerea contractelor de munca (Pentru uz intern!) (105 - 110) (28.11.1951).

[16] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 27 / 1951, Instructiuni, Circulare, hotarari primite de la C.C. al P.M.R. Indreptar pentru prelucrarea Decretului nr. 207 cu privire la unele masuri privind angajarea la munca, transferarea si desfacerea contractelor de munca (Pentru uz intern!) (105 - 110) (28.11.1951), p. 105.

[17] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 27 / 1951, Instructiuni, Circulare, hotarari primite de la C.C. al P.M.R. Indreptar pentru prelucrarea Decretului nr. 207 cu privire la unele masuri privind angajarea la munca, transferarea si desfacerea contractelor de munca (Pentru uz intern!) (105 - 110) (28.11.1951)

[18] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare are Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 3 / 1953, Planuri de munca, rapoarte, referate, informari, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, note informative, Proces verbal, 1 Iulie 1953.

[19] Fond Clujana, Dosar 14-28 / 1955, Instructiuni, memorii, situatii.

[20] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 132 / 1954, Planuri de munca, rapoarte de activitate, note informative intocmite de sectia Industrie Usoara, Nota informative, 20.02. 1954, p. 32.

[21] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 132 / 1954, Planuri de munca, rapoarte de activitate, note informative intocmite de sectia Industrie Usoara, Nota informative, 20.02. 1954, p. 32.

[22] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare are Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 3 / 1953, Planuri de munca, rapoarte, referate, informari, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, note informative, Proces verbal, 12.08.1953.

[23] Fond Clujana, Dosar 31-18 / 1953, Procese verbale, Proces verbal, 18.02.1953, sedinta de colectiv largit, analiza muncii pe anul 1952.

[24] Fond Clujana, Dosar 31-18 / 1953, Procese verbale, Proces verbal, 12.08.1953, sedinta de colectiv largit, analiza muncii pe anul 1953.

[25] Viața uzinei noastre , 15 August 1953.

[26] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 2 / 1954, Nota informativa nr 180, 7 August 1954, (374 – 376).

[27] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 2 / 1954, Proces verbal, 31 Octombrie 1954, p. 246.

[28] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 2 / 1954, Nota informativa asupra uzinelor Janos Herbak, 14.04.1954, p. 179 – 183.

[29] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 2 / 1954, Nota informativa asupra uzinelor Janos Herbak, 14.04.1954, p. 179 –

183.

[30] 20.09.1954, Memoriu privitor la plata muncii pe luna august 1954 (59).

[31] 20.09.1954, Memoriu privitor la plata muncii pe luna august 1954 (59).

[32] 20.09.1954, Memoriu privitor la plata muncii pe luna august 1954 (59).

[33] Derogation from art. 5 of H.C.M. 1156 / 1954.

[34] 20.09.1954, Memoriu privitor la plata muncii pe luna august 1954 (59).

[35] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare ale Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 1 / 1954, Planuri de munca, rapoarte, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, note informative, Proces verbal, 23 mai 1954, p 269 – 270.

[36] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 230 / 1955, Nota nr 10 / 1955, Comitetul Orasenesc Cluj, 29 Ianuarie 1955, p. 150.

[37] "Probleme economice", Noiembrie 1949. Conferinta Vasile Luca, "Despre Organizarea Intreprinderilor de Stat pe Baza Gospodariei Chibzuite" (1 – 19) (p. 15).

[38] 1948 Constitution, Art. 19; 1952 Constitution, Art. 77.

[39] Art. 116 regarding labour jurisdiction.

[40] 1950 Labour Code, art. 3.

[41] The collective agreements could have been signed only in industry and commerce, not agriculture until 1932 – art. 5 of the 11 October 1932 law – changed the labor contract law – the labor contract, the team contract and the collective work agreement were used in agriculture as well.

[42] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Proces verbal, 28.02. 1951, Contractul pe 1950.

[43] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Proces verbal, 28.02. 1951, Contractul pe 1950.

[44] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 34/ 1951, Darea de seama a Comitetului Regional de Partid Cluj pentru Conferinta Regionala; Comitetul Regional PMR Cluj, Fond 13, Dosar 37, "Cum este aplicata Rezolutia Biroului Politic al CC al PMR in chestiunea nationala si cum se face educarea maselor in spiritul dragostei fata de patrie in regiunea Cluj" (418 - 430), Raport asupra desfasurarii campaniei de incheiere a contractelor colective pe anul 1951, 7 Aprilie 1951.

[45] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Proces verbal, 28.02. 1951, Contractul pe 1950.

[46] Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 30 / 1951, Instructiuni 1951, Proces verbal, 6 Februarie 1953, la deschiderea laditelor cu propuneri din partea muncitorilor.

[47] Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 30 / 1951, Instructiuni 1951, Proces verbal, 6 Februarie 1953, la deschiderea laditelor cu propuneri din partea muncitorilor.

[48] *Viața Uzinei Noastre* (*The Life of Our Factory*), 1 August 1953, p. 4.

[49] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 87 / 1955, Rapoarte ale Sectiei Economice a Comitetului Regional PMR, p. 168.

[50] Comitetul Regionl PMR Cluj, Fond 13, Dosar 9/87, Sectia economica, Referat asupra modului in care se realizeaza prevederile contractului colectiv in diferite intreprinderi (165 - 169).

[51] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare are Comitetului Orasenesc, Dosar 1 / 1953. Plan de munca 01.01 – 31.03.1953, Nota informativa despre felul in care s-au incheiat contractele colective pe anul 1953 (285 – 288).

[52] *Probleme Economice*, Ianuarie-Martie 1949. "Planul de stat al RPR" (S. Zeigher) (36 - 47) (p.42).

[53] *Probleme Economice*, Ianuarie-Martie 1949. "Planul de stat al RPR" (S. Zeigher) (36 - 47) (p. 39).

[54] This was clear in my interviews, when the workers and the former factory managers were asked to draw a diagram or to recount the decision chain in the factory and the succession of various operations in the production process.

Chapter 5: Factory (in)discipline and the quest for authority on the shop floor

> For there is no such thing as economic growth which is not, at the same time, growth or change of a culture; and the growth of social consciousness, like the growth of a poet's mind, can never, in the last analysis, be planned.
> E.P. Thompson

This chapter analyses factory discipline as a cornerstone of the pedagogical project in which workers were recast into subjects of socialist construction. Starting from the documents from the local archives in Cluj, it maps the "actually existing" configuration in which this project emerged, exploring its constraints and its proceedings during the first years of planning, as an attempt to reveal the failure of the Romanian socialist state in transforming the factories into effective disciplinary spaces. I use issues as diverse as stealing and poor quality work to reveal how various indiscipline acts were negotiated and how the managerial power of the state was exercised and constituted. I explore how within the factory space, making "new"

workers could not be separated from the encounter between labour instability and the state's effort to organize production and life along a broad Fordist vision coming on the Soviet pathway. I argue that this effort was ineffective in producing an easy-to-control factory regime and associated forms of moral regulation in early socialism.

Factory discipline was understood as a central dimension of the never quite realized attempt of the Party officials to produce an equivalence between the discipline of the state, the discipline of the plan, and the discipline of the working-class. Thus, plan/state/labour discipline became the foundation of several power dimensions of the socialist state: managerial, infrastructural (Mann 1984), and allocative (Kornai 1979a; Verdery 1996). Plan/state/labour discipline as the bone of democratic centralism became the key trope of the production minutes and the mantra of every factory manager and local Party official. Or, as a factory manager in a 1950 Factory Committee meeting put it:

> The concern for the plan must be imprinted deeper in our comrades from services and sectors that are directly related to production. . . . The discipline of the state . . . must be expressed in the way we strictly fulfil the orders we get hierarchically. . . . The enterprise must respect the work discipline, the iron proletarian discipline. We must imprint in each person the need to respect our given directives. State discipline is the discipline of the working-class, the discipline of the proletariat,which will strengthen the spirit of the individual responsibility. . . . We must have an iron discipline, based on democratic centralism.[1]

Attaining this ideal would have ensured the Party officials that the state's hierarchical structures were enforced at every moment in the production process and that its totalizing vision was present in every economic practice performed.

Nevertheless, labour control proved to be a field of battle around workers' everyday needs and struggles for survival, around their fragmented efforts to re-appropriate alienated social relations, and around their strategies to delineate a safe space for their own lives. The historical transformations of the 1950s had factory discipline at their centre but as the factory managers and the Party officials at all levels realized soon, disciplining labour was a long-term process that claimed for fundamental changes in workers' mentalities and behaviour. Thus, socialist factories – in Cluj like elsewhere in Romania – had to function with low labour productivity, poor work quality, large waste of materials, drinking, small thefts, but

most of all with a huge labour turnover, endemic truancies, and hundreds of delays everyday (more about this in Chapter 7). Workers' unrest was almost always confined to the factory space but not uncommon. The dissatisfaction of the workers with management structures was often translated in ethnic terms and made the tensions between Bucharest and the Transylvanian cities more acute. The endurance of pre-war capitalist mentality, the continuities between rural behaviour of the young peasants transformed into workers over night, and the persistence of class struggle in the workshop were considered to be the sources of the quasi-impossibility to mould an entire class into the shape desired by the Party officials.

The newly socialist states received from the post-revolutionary Soviet Union a ready-made understanding of the proletariat as the bearer of "idealized (male) qualities: 'hardness,' the merging of the self into the collective, and a revolutionary, scientific worldview" (Browning and Siegelbaum 2009: 233). Like in early Soviet Russia, workers' perceived "lack of class consciousness" was the most serious problem to be addressed when the reports showed them defending privileges or former workplace hierarchies, engaging in wildcat strikes, or responding bitterly in production meetings. While it is not simple to reduce these intricate transformations to the one-to-one imitation of the Soviet model imposed upon the post-war Eastern European countries, one can easily see that socialist governments encountered many of the structural issues faced by the post-NEP transformative projects of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Labour shortage, huge labour turnover, stealing, drinking, and unexcused absenteeism were common features of the 1930s world of labour in the USSR (Filtzer 1996; Fitzpatrick 1999; Siegelbaum and Suny 1994; Goldman 2002).

They were also part of the everyday experience of factory life in postwar Eastern and Central Europe (Lebow 2013; Fidelis 2010; Pittaway 2012; Kenney 1997; Burawoy 1985, 1992).[2] In Hungary, the 1956 Revolution made the failure of the political project of transforming the workers more visible than anywhere else. This failure rested both on persistence and the reproduction of pre-war identities and on the clearly exploitative manner in which planning was imagined as a way to increase work intensity, reduce wages, and impose work discipline in the workplace (Pittaway 2012). In Poland, although the post-war (re)construction effort and the beginnings of planning encountered a genuine enthusiasm among the young workers, the mixture of national, regional, and generational loyalties that stood as foundation for this enthusiasm produced unexpected effects in various local settings. Therefore, people's everyday lives and struggles as well as their effort of self-transformation intersected political projects in surprising and sometimes chaotic ways. "The worker" as a

collective subject was never simply there, as an embodiment of the wishful thinking of the post-war socialist governments. In Wrocław, the large variety of migrants reproduced their regional allegiances or adopted a strong individualist perspective rather than feeling themselves part of a labour community, or part of a (re)emerging working-class. While "community, in its absence, was the essence of Wrocław culture" (Kenney 1997: 160), building a town from scratches or participating in labour competitions indeed created a form of moral community in Nowa Huta. However, this community worked against the state by gradually excluding the Party activists from its core. In the later years, it came to represent a solid basis for workers' resistence against the Party (Lebow 2013).

Some authors explicitly addressed the issue of the fundamental relationship between labour control, managerial authority and state power in socialism (Pittaway 2012). They chose to look at this relationship from a quasi-contractualist perspective which claims that negotiating the right to the factory was a question of establishing legitimate domination over it. From this perspective, a "social contract" between labour and the state was needed to ensure legitimacy to a political project that lacked popular support. Although the workers were crucial for the legitimacy of the state, early socialist regimes were not actually founded on the political representation of the working-class but on a tension between the state's claim to class-based legitimacy and "the aspirations, cultures, and political identities of 'actually existing' industrial workers" (Pittaway 2012: 6). As Pittaway shows for the Hungarian case, a historically contingent definition of legitimacy stood as the foundation the socialist regime. It could never be held but in only few years it could be established, eroded, and unevenly distributed for various state institutions.

The great merit of Mark Pittaway's analysis was that it convincingly demolished the ground of prior investigations premised upon an understanding of socialism as dictatorship, which – in its best version – simply aimed at identifying "limits to coercion." He replaced this conceptualization of socialism with a relational analysis of the fragile web in which the state's claims to legitimacy and the workers' complex positioning into the new world were negotiated. Nevertheless, the factory space was essential not mainly (and not only) for establishing, eroding, or losing legitimacy. It was a multi-dimensional site for state making in which new (but not historically discontinuous) regimes of knowledge, discipline, and temporalities emerged through a daily negotiation of what a factory *was* and of what a factory *should be*. Unlike the capitalist states where this relationship has been generally obscured behind the myth of the separation between economy, society, and the state, production in socialism was directly and openly connected to state functioning. In Cohen's (2004: 21)

words, "the regime of industrial efficiency was a part of the political regime of state efficiency. In particular, managing industry meant managing the public sphere, as well as manufacturing goods." Or, from a post-foucauldian perspective, in state socialism, production management was an essential dimension of "political rationalities" and required the use of specific "governmental technologies" (Rose and Miller 1992). Their effectiveness was never guaranteed. Thus, the efforts to control and pacify labour had less to do with an (failed) quest for legitimacy than with the tension between the state's productive endeavour and its emancipatory project, both played out against people's own essential needs as they were articulated around work. Creating and running social production processes produced a specific type of state which had to function simultaneously as a manager-state and as a workers' state.

Following a conceptual line opened by the French sociology of labour, I link this lack of effectiveness in constituting the factories as disciplinary spaces to labour instability and I show that building authority within the factories in Cluj was almost impossible due to the difficulties to ensure a continuous flow of production. As we have seen in Chapter 4, together with shortages of raw material or fuel, finding workers who would actually stay in the factories for a longer period was a daily challenge for the factory managers. This situation plagued Cluj industry with recurrent and systematic breaks in production. As a consequence, the plan itself could not function as the plan-idea would have predicted: as an uninterrupted, coherent sequence of knowledge, decisions, and actions, or as the scaled analogy of a Fordist assembly line. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss the consequences of these discontinuities and the ways they extended beyond the realm of production. I show that while planning had to function as a formidable machine to produce modernity through manual labour and mobilization, the fact that in the 1950s factory managers could not keep the workers in the factory and the production process continuous, set clear limits to the type of authority that could be constructed in the factories. Matter actually mattered for an explicitly materialist societal project.

Along these lines, this chapter starts from an investigation of the complex negotiation of stealing and sabotage, because of all problems related to labour control, they were placed most decisively on the ambiguous boundary between "repression," "discipline," "law," and "ethics." As we will see, on the ground, this boundary was drawn not around socialist ethics or legality but between acts that stopped (or slowed down) production and those that didn't. My chapter continues with an investigation of the problems created by the (in)discipline of the plan itself, as manifested in poor quality work, in failing to meet production indices, and

in the structural incapacity of the factories to maintain the tempo and the rhythmicity of the plan. Discontinuities in the labour process provide an entry point into what can be called "the dream of Fordism without assembly lines": a political project that should had gathered workers' practices around a specific organization of production that was imagined in similar terms to the original Fordist idea. However, my argument is *not* about the consequence of an absent technology or about the transfer of an ideology of work organization from the United States to the Soviet Union and then to Romania, but about the failure of the plan itself to function as a conveyor belt for the whole economy (as Lenin imagined it). I argue that this failure was fundamental, as discontinuous production also meant the impossibility to establish stable authority in the socialist factories. Further on, the negotiations between the workers, the factory management, and the Party organizations as they struggled daily to fulfil the plan produce a fascinating picture of the equivocal forms in which "(individual) responsibility" appeared in socialism. If we see the factories as productive arms of the state, it follows that the lack of authority on the shop floor introduced further vulnerabilities into the functioning of the socialist state as a whole.

"No factory ever went bankrupt because of a sledge:" (Not so) ethical dilemmas around stealing and everyday life

When analysing factory documents or political speeches in the 1950s, one can easily see that (in)discipline was not a unified field of battle for the Party. At the most general level, stealing, truancies, fighting, drinking, or producing poor quality work were all understood as the outcome of a temporary failure in a historical process of controlling labour. But various indiscipline acts bore very different sanctions, had very different political consequences, and produced different alliances and fractures in socialist factories. There was a clear demarcation between stealing and other indiscipline acts and a further emphasis on misbehaviour that hindered productivity. And there was a further distinction between indiscipline acts that stopped production and those that did not.

The anti-stealing and the anti-sabotage rhetoric was directly connected to the establishment of a new property regime. However, as we have seen, because nationalization was not only and not mainly a fundamental change in property relations but a battle for power over the factories, dealing with thefts or with (intentionally) broken equipment proved

to be not a straightforward endeavour for the new economic executives. As this section will show, anti-stealing rhetoric was crucial for drawing not-so-clear boundaries within the factory space between repression, discipline, and the rule of law. It was a powerful instrument for weakening shop floor solidarities by creating fear and distrust in people's everyday interactions. It also communicated to the newcomers to industrial employment that they were continuously being watched and assessed, and that a demarcation line should be drawn between the factory and the rest of their world. Nevertheless, against the Party's efforts and higher prosecution numbers, thefts multiplied every year and it was not long after the end of the first five-year plan when everybody could see the battle against stealing had been lost. If the anti-stealing rhetoric and legal measures were such failure in moral and juridical terms, one wonders why the Party continued to emphasize it so much for the years to come. Why, or rather when was the act of stealing really problematic for the newly nationalized factories?

It is my interpretation that the answer has little to do with socialist ethics but rather with the regime of efficiency that accompanied socialist industrialization from its beginnings. Instead of operating simply with legal or categorical distinctions, the new economic executives dealt with rather practical separations like those between small and large thefts, or between stealing for personal consumption and stealing for profit. Nevertheless, as the factory documents show, the most important line of demarcation for deciding if stealing was serious or not was production stoppage. From this perspective, it became part of a broader attempt to create permanent and continuous movement on the shop floor and to circulate capital and commodities. Planning depended on that and – like in capitalism – accumulation depended on that.

This is why small thefts – like the ones of the protection equipment that people wore at home or sold at the Sunday fairs – were generally noticed only in passing, as a problem of people still lacking "the advanced consciousness of the proletariat," while more serious acts of stealing were punished by imprisonment, forced labour, or death.[3] The fight against generalized small theft was mostly discursive. People were explained in face-to-face meetings, in front of the factory disciplinary commissions, or in the newspapers' pages that they were not stealing from the factory but from themselves. Financial sanctions or the request to cover the costs of the material or of the stolen goods were following these meetings. However, labour shortage prevented factory managers to fire the workers if their deeds were not too serious.

Supposedly, the workers themselves manipulated the idea of collective ownership of

the factories to fight against harsh sanctions of the management and of the Party when caught stealing. A legend started to circulate in Cluj in the 1950s about a men who stole a piece of equipment to use it at home. He was caught by the guards and in few weeks he was brought in front of the disciplinary commission of his factory. When accused of stealing, he denied the theft by saying: "I did not steal anything. Everything is the property of the people. The factory is ours." Supposedly, the members of the disciplinary commission were baffled and could not say a word. No sanctions were issued against the worker. Depending on the person interviewed, the worker was from *Tehnofrig*, from *János Herbák*, from *Carbochim*, or even from *CUG* – an enterprise that opened only in the 1970s. The hero of the story was always a man and, depending on the age of the workers interviewed, he was a member of the 1950s or of the 1960s generations. But the story told was surprisingly similar and all my interviewees ended it with a clever smile on their faces which showed so much pride for "their" fellow's deeds. His cunning, real or not, still produced satisfaction for turning the logic of the local power structures upside down.

Nevertheless, more serious cases did become exemplary for the easy glide between disciplinary and the repressive power of the state. In an instance, stealing could become a political act against the official leadership as it could be legally framed as "sabotage" or "acting against national economy." Serious stealing at the workplace was simply interpreted as an anti-state act. Therefore, it was understood immediately as political action and repressive sanctions like many years of prison, forced labour, or even death followed. Stealing was not the only misdemeanour that stood on this slippery legal and political terrain. Serious accidents or the deterioration of the industrial equipment could be easily framed as "conspiracy against the security of the Romanian Popular Republic," treason, or "working for the enemy." After 1949, all these were punishable with death. Failing to denounce these criminal acts was punishable with five to ten years of forced labour.[4] Moreover, things as different as accidental fires, stealing, destruction, technical mistakes, failing to direct production as set by the plan, or "instigating the workers to issue *unjust* claims" came to be labelled "sabotage" when the Party needed a goat scape for a specific situation.[5]

This was the ouverture of an ongoing struggle against thefts that the Party initiated in the factories, which culminated with a huge national anti-stealing campaign of 1952. Although it involved both legal and propagandistic action, the 1952 campaign was not a success story. At the end of the first five-year plan, the failure to limit this form of delinquency led to the introduction of a new law which (following a Soviet model) reframed stealing as "violation of public property." But instituting harsher penalties, heavy fines, and

increased jail time proved incapable of stopping this endemic phenomenon. According to Bottoni's (2003) figures, only between 1957 and 1959, 150,000 people were caught for stealing and numbers went even higher after 1960.

However, the campaign was important for other reasons. As Bottoni shows for the Hungarian Autonomous Region, the anti-stealing campaign was instrumental for creating fear and distrust and for weakening the social fabric in the factories and in the villages. The disappearances of the old employees, accused of stealing and imprisoned or executed, were followed by the appearance of the new ones, people coming from other parts of the country or employees who were known to be loyal to the Party. Anti-stealing campaign was also important for purifying the system of various politically untrustworthy "elements," effectively accompanying the most radical purges of the Romanian Workers Party in 1952.[6] The line between stealing or material destruction and other forms of misconduct was drawn as a line between the pedagogical language of discipline and the coercive language of right. Through these different languages, factory thefts and their consequences had the function of making explicit the merger between the legal and the managing functions of the state. They were marking another collapsing boundary between legal power and management or between economy and the state.

The special place stealing and sabotage had in the disciplinary and legal logic of the state was manifest in the way it was made explicit within the factory space. In Cluj, circulars coming from the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party or from the ministeries repeatedly communicated the regulations and the harsh sanctions to the workers.[7] At *János Herbák*, lunch was an especially preferred time for making these announcements, not only because all the workers were together but also because relating these announcements to biological functions like eating or resting transformed fear into a bodily experience. As a measure of prevention, the potential consequences of their acts was literally inscribed on the workers' bodies.

But playing the threat card was never easy. A report of the Cluj County Committee for January 1949 shows that the newly introduced death penalty produced not only fear and conformity but also made people angry and made them frame various situations in unexpected ways, quite far from the ones wanted or anticipated by the Party.[8]

> The Reaction tried to use all the laws passed by the National Assembly against the Party and against the regime. They used the death penalty against us and told people

> that it was strange to introduce this law exactly when it was abolished in the United States. They tried to show that this law would be used against the workers who would make even small mistakes in their work. At the *Railways Workshops*, the Party organization did not do a good job in explaining the new laws to the workers. The factory management got Instructions from the court of law and the Party did not even know. After we went to explain things again, political mood was better. There is also a rumour that we introduced the death penalty because the war is coming.[9]

So, while fear and distrust were important, they needed to be controlled, never to become disruptive for production or Party politics in the factory. But discursive lines were hard to draw between "small mistakes" and acts that could be framed as "political," "reactionary," or "endangering socialist economy."

This was also true for legal sanctions, which were permanently negotiated by factory managers. Stealing, sabotage (or simple accidents framed as sabotage) brought with them truly important sanctions only when they stopped production. Some missing leather, few nails, or an accident in the foundry could have been quite easily hidden and overlooked by the factory management if production was not directly and immediately affected by their disappearance. If production did stop, the Party organization in the factory was the first to know and advise upon the measures to be taken. Nonetheless, the way its members acted upon this information was not homogeneous and it quickly became a problem for the higher bureaucratic echelons. Many times, the Party organization acted as expected from them by their leaders and immediately communicated the issue at hand to the Economic Section of the Regional Party Committee. But towards the end of the second one-year plan, alliances between factory managers, members of the Factory Committees, and Party hierarchy were exposed more and more as the source of most of the factory problems under the label of "familiarism." A 1950 report on the activity of *János Herbák* showed how the secretary of the Party organization and the secretary of the Factory Committees (two brothers) "do not use critique against the factory director but hide each other's mistakes."[10] The accountant was also pointed out for his "lack of love towards work" while his loyalty and his attitude towards the workers were questioned because of his efforts to leave the country. Thus, anti-stealing and anti-sabotage campaigns became instrumental in breaking cross-hierarchical forms of solidarity within the factory.

Of course, stealing was often framed not as an administrative or even as a legal

problem, but as a political and moral issue pertaining to the domain of the "proletarian ethics" and "proletarian morals" (Rogers 2009). And this framing was directed precisely towards the rowdy rural-urban population that the factories needed to rely on. Even without statistics to prove it, the moral effects of employing temporary workers were always brought forward at the Party meetings. The Party activists from the Cluj Regional Committee and the government officials often asserted that besides breaking the law when employing temporary workers, the factory managers risked introducing "unknown and unhealthy elements" who created disciplinary problems. At a first glance, the reports from the factories seemed to confirm the relationship between temporariness and problematic behaviour. They emphasized the tendency of the temporary workers to do poorly at work, to sleep during the night shifts and to walk away the minute they did not like something about the factory.[11] They were perceived as a risk for the security of the factory and many thefts with unknown author were considered to be their deeds. But again, it is hard to assess if there was indeed a difference between temporary and permanent workers' practices when in the same report we find complaints that the thefts became generalized and even the security guards and the firemen were caught stealing. Most probably, discipline in this context was just a rhetorical artifice meant to establish geographical fixity, permanent work and the feeling of belonging to a factory as desirable and the wandering around as a social danger.

However, as we will also see in the last chapter of my dissertation, transforming a moralizing rhetoric into a set of practices and rules about workers' conduct was going to be an almost impossible historical task. Moreover, it was going to be a task that many factory managers and Party activists did not want to take when they had to define their own moral stance towards the workers. Sometimes, their "working-class solidarity" and their "mistaken notion of understanding the workers" went much further than the Party wanted to and factory managers refused to take for granted the delineation between the factory's interests and people's lives. A new difference between "stealing" and "eating from one's workplace" became the expression of an emerging informal entanglement between industrial employment and workers' reproduction. In a way, it became an expression of care.

These limits of the struggle against everyday thefts were made clear to me in an interview with a former factory director at *Armătura*:

> Nobody wanted to upset the workers. The Party was always there to watch us. Sometimes, the Party organization took our side but generally they supported the

> workers because, you know. . . the whole thing with "the working-class" [he laughs and then stays silent for a while]. Actually, I think we also understood people from our factory well. They were poor, uneducated, and they worked a lot in very hard conditions. It was not a problem for us when they took two faucets to use them at home. The factory gave them credit for buying the land for those houses anyway. We just closed our eyes and left them alone. In other factories they were controlled all the time. But maybe this was later, I don't remember when. Yes, we knew they were stealing some materials but we did not care too much. It was not a big loss at such a large quantity. And anyway, what would you say to a worker who realizes his norm and at the end of the program makes a sledge for his little girl with factory's materials. What would you say?

Asking me this, he looked at me as his question was not rhetorical but a real moral dilemma. I tried not to give him a personal opinion but to discuss with him the fact that after 1989, everybody talked about theft as a generalized phenomenon in socialist factories. Asked to position himself in relation to the postsocialist discourse, he shrugged his shoulders. He stood silent again for a while, then spoke softly: "No factory ever went bankrupt because of a sledge."

The (in)discipline of the plan

But if no factory ever went bankrupt because of a sledge, it does not mean factories were not close to go bankrupt because of the impossibility to keep production going for all sorts of other reasons. As this section will show, the impossibility of maintaining the continuity of production because of shortages, outdated industrial equipment, delays in the planning process, changes in plan figures and extra tasks imposed by the governmental offices on the factories was intimately connected to the difficulties in establishing individual responsibility and authority on the shop floor.

During the first years of planning, the "rhythmic accomplishment of the plan" was requested at all bureaucratic levels. Factory managers and workers alike were daily flooded with indications for maintaining continuous flows of production, in terms underlying a very modern notion of efficiency, not very different from the capitalist one. Raw materials and

products had to circulate perpetually. Stagnation had to be fought at all levels. Having items which "have been manufactured but are still in the storage room and cannot circulate"[12] was as scary as not producing enough of them. Any break in production had to be immediately communicated to the County Planning Centres and to the head of the Light Industry Direction.[13] Movement was fundamental to socialist accumulation and stagnation was dangerous for the fragile equilibrium of the plan. This movement was expressed as a strict chronology which articulated demands and practices at various scales and at specific points in time.

A 1954 Report of the Economic Section of the Regional Party Committee is a good synthesis of the problems which led to discontinuities in production in the enterprises in Cluj:

> Failing to accomplish several plan indices at the industrial units in Cluj is the result of poor organization. The technological flux is not well integrated, there is a constant gap between the forges and the foundries and the processing sectors. The industrial equipment is not used completely and many machines just lay there unused for half of the month. At the end of the month, the assault on production starts and the quality of the products falls below the line. In several factories, the use indices for the machines is very low: 45% at *Armătura*, 57% at *János Herbák*, 41% at *Menajul*. Production costs are very high as the amortization is spread along many more years than initially calculated. We are behind time with the planned costs of technological advancement and the situation is getting worse.[14]

Moreover, the outdated industrial equipment made the "rhythmic accomplishment of the plan" impossible. It needed permanent repairing and demanded a continuous development of the capacity of the repairing workshops that came to have "the appearance and the proportions of an industrial plant".[15]

Shortages and postponements in supply provoked local crises and often made the production cease completely. Shortages also made the factory live by specific rhythms. While the beginning of the month was idle and the production often stopped, in the second part of the month plan figures were obsessively chased, overtime was used and the workers were compelled to produce more and more in less and less time, sacrificing not only quality but also their health and safety. Or, as a factory report from *János Herbák* showed,

> If we analyze the activity of this sector in the four trimesters of the year, we ascertain that in the first two quarters of the year the production plan was over-fulfilled but in the third quarter its tasks were not realized. In the fourth trimester, the figures of the plan were massively exceeded, partly because we needed to clear up our obligations, and partly because we had to meet our commitment to fulfill the plan before the deadline, which is the same with producing commodities over the plan. The unwanted consequences of our supply problems prevented us to follow the legal provisions with regard to the uniform rhythm of production.[16]

Different rhythms of production made the articulation of the plan very difficult. For instance, at *János Herbák*, the reports showed that during the second one-year plan in 1950 the problems of articulating the productive tempos of various sectors were central to the organization of the factory. They showed, for instance, how the production of the tanneries could not maintain the pace of the shoe factory, which went much faster and the factory management was forced to supply the factory with imported raw material.[17]

"Chaos" and "long unproductive time" forced the workshops to wait one after each other and not to take into account the needs of another workshop when deciding what component they manufactured next. Stocks of semi-fabricated commodities were finished quickly at the end of the month, without regard for quality and with the consequence of many refusals. The same "end of the month" pressure was found a rapid solution in replacing lighter products with heavier ones, so that the quantitative plan could be fulfilled. The ratio between small components and large pieces was not respected and the factory became a source of shortages in other economic sectors. The examples of August and September were used to exemplify "the wonders" of the factory "when on the 25th of the respective month only 40-50% of the plan was fulfilled" and still, the end of the month found the plan 100% realized.

Although constant rhythms were crucial for the functioning of the plan, interruptions in production were many times imposed by the ministries themselves. Complaints about how breaking the rhythms of production always made life difficult both for the factory managers and for the workers abounded.[18] The fabrication cycle was regularly disrupted by urgent and innumerable requests from other commercial enterprises and factories. Many beneficiaries were not scheduled in time with the necessary articles so the distribution orders had to be issued as "urgent", "extraurgent" or "immediate", interrupting the normal flow of fabrication

and delaying the fabrication of other items.[19]

The planning process itself became a source of discontinuities. The factory managers were often complaining that there was not enough time to work out all the details before the plan was put into motion. "The deadline for putting together the plan figures was short", a chief engineer from *János Herbák* was saying in a production meeting to a Party activist who was visiting the leather and footwear factory:

> Several days are necessary for the plan figures, the forms, and the instructions to arrive. Then they have to be communicated further to all our main and secondary factories. Then all the links between these have to be discussed. Putting together and harmonizing the entire apparatus necessary to elaborate the plan requires several days dedicated only to clarifications, deliberations and calculations. Especially for the secondary factories, it is impossible to elaborate their plans before the main factories crystallize theirs. All these considerations imperatively require longer terms in the future. The more time we have at our disposal, the better our deed.[20]

The rhythmic flow of production was prevented by delays in the communication of plan tasks, which were many times sent after the beginning of the year.[21] In these conditions, the factory managers had to decide by themselves on the sorts of goods and on the quantities to be produced. However, once they arrived, the figures of the plan rarely matched their decisions. Endless exchanges of messages between the factory managers and governmental officials followed these "mistakes" and the economic executives of the industrial units were admonished and made aware (at least discursively) that their incapacity to meet plan figures (actually to anticipate them) meant wasting important sources of profit.[22]

As we saw in the previous chapters, ignoring employment regulations was the first point where plan/state/labour discipline was broken. The second one-year plan and the beginning of the first five-year one appear as the moment when the state launched its most radical assault on (in)discipline and tried to transform the factories into spaces of individual and collective accountability but it still encountered many problems in translating this idea into reality. In 1950, the call to conform to the "discipline of the plan" became a central one in the discourse of the Party and in the concrete instructions received by the factories from the ministries.[23] A note of the Planning and Statistics Service of *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear* to the director of *János Herbák*, Mauriciu Devenyi, reads:

> Through this note we let you know that, according to the oral communication of the CIP Director with the occasion of the plan reports for the second semester, in the future, complying with the discipline of the plan will be required in the most rigurous way. The director of the *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear* understands through this statement that the plan tasks have to be complied with not only as a whole but for each assortment. Any unaccomplishment can be the object of an official inquiry from the official competent bodies.[24]

Almost no requirements for extra raw material, industrial equipment, labour force or work time were accepted by *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear* or by the Party cadres even in those periods when the factory received supplemental tasks.[25] The figures of production could not be modified by any means, they were considered mandatory tasks and they came to be important not only as global images of production but as sociological indicators for the political obedience and discipline of the factory managers and of the workers.

Operative sessions and daily reports at the factory level were accompanied by individual charts to monitor people's work progress and were centralized by the Planning Service of the factory. Both the achievements and the problems in production had to be reported each morning before 8.30 and any delay in the execution of the plan was analysed in detail on the spot. The hierarchical chain was put in motion for solving any situation and information circulated up to *The Ministry of Light Industry* if any problem threatened the fluidity of production for more than few hours.[26]

But as we saw in Chapter four when the allocation of labour was discussed, the limits set by the governmental officials to the factory managers made their mission impossible. Thus, the over-fulfilment of the plan was possible only due to ingenious management strategies. The factories had to use their maximal capacity and to reorganize work several times every year to meet their obligations. The government officials complained almost daily that the factories picked certain indices of the plan while failing to comply to others, especially labour productivity. Factory managers interpreted quantity "in very creative ways." For instance, they did not respect the assortments set by the plan and chose to manufacture those items which were heavier and easier to produce as they required less skilled work, and less expensive raw materials. The same imaginative way to read plan

figures and the Instructions from the Ministry applied to financial indicators. The new economic executives chose the most expensive products and failed to produce cheaper goods which were nonetheless crucial for the functioning of other factories or for the consumption needs of the population. In other cases, unfinished products were included in the final reports and calculated as fulfilment of the plan while sometimes they never came to be delivered to the beneficiaries.[27] Governmental officials vehemently argued against generalized practices like exaggerating the supply plan or hoarding materials and labour. Simply lying about the capacity of the factory and about the assortments that the factory can produce when the plan figures for the next year had to be estimated was also common.

Economic executives were permanently admonished for their failure to find more rational solutions, to expand the use of Soviet technological solutions, to replace certain raw materials whose supply was deficient, to employ less labour force, not to use overtime, and not to increase the wage funds of their industrial unit. In certain factories or industrial branches the Government even tried to limit the over-fulfilment of plan figures to 2-3% for each variety of commodities,[28] in an almost desperate effort to undermine the strategies used by the factory managers to bypass the rules of the game.[29]

Quality in the production process was a field of battle which functioned both similarly and differently from the battle for quantity. Bad quality work was very often on the list of "bad habits" which had to be exposed in the pages of *The Life of Our Factory*,[30] the newspaper of *János Herbák*. Comrade Biji, a quality controller, was publicly scolded for a presumed alliance with the workers who did not respect quality standards, although the fear for not fulfilling the quantitative requirements plan was an equally plausible reason. Whatever his reasons, comrade Biji failed to return the products to the workbench even when he observed their poor quality.

> Quality controllers have to take into account the fact that those who are going to buy the products of their factory are also working people. A telling example is comrade Biji, a quality controller in the boots section. He bought some boots for his son and they broke very soon. With much shame he observed that they were produced by our own factory. Since then, he is very thorough in his work because he understood the essential: "We work for ourselves."[31]

As part of the broader discourse against "familiarism" in the factory, the writers from the

factory newspapers used his example for complaining that quality controllers were not "ideologically well prepared" and that they need to take into account a larger alliance of the working people instead of considering local interests and friendships prioritary.

Although the instructions from *The Central Office for Leather and Footwear* or from *The Light Industry Ministry* always emphasized the obligation of fulfilling the plan exactly as it was imagined, the factory managers simply could not comply to these rules. They were required to use as little raw material as possible but without decreasing the quality of the products. Or, as the factory director in one of the production minutes at *János Herbák* "the Government and the Party ask from us cheap footwear for the working people, but in large quantity and of good quality."[32] As always, the economic executives had to apply a disjunctive logic and decide which of the figures of the plan would be the most important. They also had to sense the quasi – hidden priorities in the momentary logic of accumulation of the state which was not always fully transparent to them. This capacity to *see* the state from within and to act according to fluid and not explicit parameters was crucial for (political) survival and for getting by at all levels.

In their own factories, keeping the workers happy was one of the most important tasks of the newly appointed directors. They always had to calculate how much pressure they can put on people and how to save their financial incentives regardless the problems that prevented the factory to meet the production figures. As a result, people did not get penalized for not meeting quality requirements, certain levels of productivity, or the cost reduction standards set by the plan; they did get, however, a special bonus if they met these indicators.

> In order to get the financial special bonus for the fulfilment of the plan, all three conditions must be met: production, quality and cost; there will be no bonuses if the fulfilment or the over-fulfilment of the plan are chosen against quality or cost. The cost of *any* product should be at least equal to the one in the official publications, minus the benefit of the enterprise. . . . For those cases when the plan is quantitatively over-fulfilled, each extra percentage will be awarded a fixed bonus. For reductions in the costs of production, people will get a fixed bonus multiplied by the reduction percentage. For quality improvement, the bonus will be calculated according the instructions from the brochure "Quality control for establishing the right to financial bonuses."[33]

However, quite quickly in the process, the factory managers, the engineers and the workers gave up the fight for quality improvement and, at the end of 1950, the quality of the shoes produced at *Janos Herbak* could still not be compared to its 1938 level. The poor quality of the footwear led to a series of reclamations from consumers. More seriously, several lots of military boots were returned to the factory by the Red Army.[34] Numbers related to quality improvement were the easiest to manipulate in reports and the most difficult to be checked by the hierarchically superior cadres. The factories did report quality improvement all the time, although the Factory Party Committee and the Union supervised quality control closely. However, neither the Party, nor the Union had any reason to contradict factory's official reports. At the end of 1949, a director from the Central Office of Leather and Footwear was complaining that the factories exaggerated a lot their successes, reporting as much as 45% improvement of the products' quality.[35] Reporting quality improvement was the easiest way to ensure bonuses for the workers and for themselves, so a tacit alliance at the workshop level between the local Party activists, the management, the Union, and the workers themselves emerged at the end of 1949.

Since indices were arbitrarily chosen by the managers and equally disregarded by workers themselves, the plan itself as articulation of supply chains became problematic. It was impossible to meet the quality standards and the financial incentives did not produce the desired outcome with regard to quality, costs or productivity.[36] The quantitative indices of the plan were easier to meet, easier to follow, easier to be controlled by the higher echelons of economic executives, and easier to be ignored by the workers. Even these plan figures were read and interpreted in creative ways.

Of course, when production stopped or when manufactured goods were so unreliable that they compromised production elsewhere, somebody needed to take blame for the small, unmeasurable mistakes and decisions. So, a question permanently haunted the factory documents and the production meetings of the early 1950s: *who is responsible for the failure of the plan*? The answer to this question was always a mixture of at least three elements: workers' indiscipline, the poor organization of the production process, and the contingent alliances between various actors in the factories. Things as different as the strategies used by the workers for stalling, the fluctuation of the labour force, and the time off which the workers felt almost free to take whenever they wanted to were collapsed into problems related to deficient supply, planning deficiencies, outdated machinery, the difficulty to generalize the practice of working in three shifts, or to familiarism, lack of loyalty, local alliances, and intentional lying to the Party. But in order to find an answer to this question, a

concrete situation always needed to be compared against a complicated and many times arbitrary notion of "normal conditions of production."

"Normal conditions of production," individual responsibility, and the quest for authority on the shop floor

Although sanctions against stealing and sabotage were instrumental in fracturing the factory alliances, maintaining fear had the side effect of paralysing interactions that were crucial for the functioning of the factories and people quickly adopted strategies to counter the possibility of being caught doing something illegal or simply of being found *responsible* for any concrete task. They generalized these strategies to all spheres of activity, including the most mundane concerns. Every small detail had to be written on paper and signed by someone, explicit directives were required for every step and no one accepted to do anything without official approval.[37] In the factory, if something wrong happened, the Party and the Union were the first to know.[38] This was especially important when industrial equipment went broken, work accidents took place, or production stopped for any reason. Responsibility was replaced by fear for retaliation as, when needed, any production process could be easily transformed into a political one and any economic failure could be read as "sabotage" or as "submination of national economy." Both of them were punished by imprisonment or death.

For instance, during the first years of planning people needed to fight the insecurity and disorientation which resulted from the impetus for changing things at a very rapid pace. The chief of the mechanical workshop at *János Herbák* was complaining in a production meeting that the pressure to change things was sometimes chaotic and irrational: "There are too many transformations everyday. As you can see, we have made 260 changes; I am not able to determine if we were right to make all these changes."[39] Applying these changes in a mechanical way, not questioning them, and then not being accountable for them was not only his way to deal with pressure but also his colleagues'. "There is a kind of hysteria in the mechanical sector," the chief of the mechanics stated in the same meeting.[40] "When something is broken, everybody says they would not be held responsible if the plan will not be fulfilled for this reason". Thus, *not to be held responsible* became one of the most important sources of the subjectification processes for large categories of population, as it was entangled as much with managerial strategies as with everyday routines at the workshop

level.

Discursively, everybody was encouraged to use "the weapons of critique and self-critique" but exposure was often followed by conflicts in the workshops. Hierarchically, the Party leaders and the economic executives hardly accepted the critiques of the ordinary workers.[41] The workers were also upset when they were publicly shamed and sometimes their hurt feelings released their fists in angry encounters with those responsible for this exposure. Self-critique was even more problematic. It was a form of public self-acknowledgement of one's mistake and it had to produce further effects in the conduit of the worker. Self-critique usually followed (and had to follow) critique or it was a means to anticipate it and prevent it. But sometimes the workers simply refused to comply with this requirement and failed to assume their mistakes or bad practices.

For instance, the response of comrade Papp Irma, criticized on March 28 in *The Life of Our Factory* for not taking care of the professional qualification of the new workers and "for disheartening" them was analysed in the pages of the newspaper:

> Comrade Papp totally rejects our critique and blames comrade Racz Ileana by presenting the situation in such a way that comrade Racz Ileana, who just came out of school, appears as negligent, coarse, distant, and arrogant. But we ask comrade Papp: who is called to help comrade Racz Ileana to eliminate her mistakes if not precisely comrade Papp who has life experience and professional knowledge?[42]

The weapons of critique and self-critique as dimensions of the struggle for self-improvement met with resistance in the factories. Individual responsibility was desired and chased at every level of the socialist bureaucracy but people found ways to escape it by placing it in a diffuse network of collective responsibility in which workers were rarely to be blamed for anything.

Individual responsibility was hard to isolate anyway, except for the cases when a witch hunt started. In those cases, individual responsibility was invoked as a specific form of individual failure and had a name attached to it. This type of reports consistently exposed the complex causal configurations in which structural problems of the factory functioning met with personal antipathies and loyalties. The ideological difficulty to blame the workers as a collective subject for problems in production made the placement of responsibility on the shoulders of *one* worker very problematic. Even more important, attacking one's income could be interpreted as playing with local solidarities formed on the shop floor. Both the

Party and the factory managers considered it a dangerous game and tried not to make people angry when possible.

The government executives promptly reacted to the attempt of the factory managers from *János Herbák* to pass the responsibility for not fulfilling their export plan in January 1950 on the shoulders of the employees from the Light Ministry Industry. Factory managers invoked the supply with poor quality leather for their failure but the governmental executive did not seem to be impressed. One part of their response letter was especially telling and read: "We must state clearly that our planning cannot take into account this reason. If the production of your leather sides had gone normally – which is what our *Planning Office* assumed, because it could have not *anticipated* otherwise – you would have been able to fulfil your export plan. The quality of the leather sides manufactured by your factory is your fault."[43] As the only worry of the government was to made clear that the failure of the factory in their jurisdiction was due to factors that were external to planning itself, one can easily see that the strategies used by the mechanics or by the lathe operators when explaining their failures were not much different from those employed by the new economic executives at all bureaucratic levels.

As we have seen, it was extremely difficult to isolate individual responsibility from the failures of the production process itself. Responsibility was a standard, always related to a specific set of practices which constituted what the documents called "normal conditions of production." "Normal conditions of production" in an emerging planned economy presupposed temporal regularity in terms of sequential structure, duration, temporal location, and rate of recurrence of practices and actions (Zerubavel 1985). These "normal conditions of production" were taken as standard when plan figures were calculated. This meant that since during the calculation of the plan figures the parameters of the production were considered to be constant and uniform, factors like bad quality of the raw material, truancies, or thousands of delays could not be taken into account in the planning process because they could not be truly anticipated. And, as Lenin stated for politics and economy in general, planning, as description of a living phenomenon in its unfolding cannot work with the present. The planner either anticipates, or falls behind the production process itself.

In Chapter 15 of *Capital*, Marx described the emerging factory system as "technical oneness," simultaneous "pulsations of the common prime mover," ([1867] 1990: 260) stressing the imperativity of the production process' continuity as technology advances. The factory becomes "[a]n organised system of machines, to which motion is communicated by the transmitting mechanism from a central automaton, . . . a mechanical monster whose body

fills whole factories, and whose demon power, at first veiled under the slow and measured motions of his giant limbs, at length breaks out into the fast and furious whirl of his countless working organs (Marx [1867] 1990: 262).

Walking in Marx's footsteps, the French tradition of sociology of labour made the link between materialities of production and the possibility of instituting authority in the factory explicit. "Installations" which maintain the productive flow were also considered parts of the institutional network of instructions alongside orders received through a hierarchical chain. Georges Friedmann (1948) extended the category of *auctoritates* not only to written texts but also to material objects like tools, industrial equipment, or buildings. In Fordist factories the conveyor belt was the most important among them, having almost the role of an "artificial leader" of the production process (Friedmann 1948). Together, the organization of production, the objects, and the bodies involved in the production process should ensure a continuous flow which would produce the worker himself alongside the manufactured goods.

Fordist ideals like the rapid and dramatic increase in productivity, the decomposition and recomposition of tasks, the standardization and the interchangeability of parts, the separation of production from assembly and from conception, technological dynamism and the easy discovery of bottlenecks were all present in the ideal management of the Romanian factories, embodied in the very act of planning. Nonetheless, the failure of producing a stable labour force for the socialist factories led to frequent discontinuities in production. The drive towards increasing productivity could not benefit from the underlying technology that would keep workers together, building a coherent, uniform whole capable of always producing "faster, better, and cheaper." Conveyor belts would appear much later in the Romanian socialist factories (like elsewhere in Europe). But most importantly, workers themselves proved hard to control. The labouring mass which had to undertake the task of building socialism and to put factory work at the centre of their lives was simply absent.

The first consequence of labour instability was the fact that almost each worker – machine unit was disfunctional for days or for weeks. In these conditions, "not only was materiality incapable of guiding action, it was expressly deprived of any authority—all of this, of course, was rather paradoxical in a country that was officially led by a materialist ideology" (Cohen 2004: 12; see also Cohen 2013). Discontinuities in production were disruptive because if people did not assume a fixed place, the timing of production could not be calculated or anticipated. Planning required bodies to carry it on, and those bodies had to be in place, to be trained, routinized, and to continue the activity of other bodies.

The impossibility to control the unfolding of the labour process also meant hours, days, or even weeks when the state could not control the workers. When workers left the factory they followed their own aims and needs, and led to "alternative deployments of bodies in time" (Verdery 1996: 40) and in space. Factory discipline in early state socialism required a specific relationship between time, labour, and the body that was escaping state's control. As other authors show labour control became essential "to make up for the nonoptimal distribution of the other productive resources" (Verdery 1996: 43) by seizing time from workers once production became possible again. But the workers found ways to reappropiate their time and their bodies in unexpected ways. More importantly for the exercise of state power, this reappropriation could not be anticipated. In other words, it *could not be planned*.

Paradoxically, from this perspective In this context, rural workers – theoretically spending more time outside the state's gaze – became easier to manage. As one of the factory directors told me in an interview, the difference between a worker form Cluj and one form the village was ultimately the fact that the urban labourer was going home, got drunk, played cards and talked politics with his friends, while "the peasant" went home and worked some more until evening, then went to bed, slept few hours and came back to work. The rural-urban workers were doing what they were supposed to. Working the land was definitely less dangerous than constructing male sociability around the city's pubs.

If we take Fordism to be "the quintessential form of capitalist rationalization that begins from the organization of production and extends outwards to embrace ideology and politics" (Burawoy 2003: 233), we see that production was a poor foundation for socialist politics. The failure of planning to act as an assembly line seems to prove Gramsci right. What socialism needed was Fordism as a process that should first transform the deep structure of society and create new types of workers, educated and socialized in a certain way, in a deep relationship with the machine, almost like an extension of a technical function. From this angle, the worker ceases to be a *datum* and what it is left is the process of her perpetual becoming. Building proletarians would proceed in a dialectical way, with Taylor's "trained gorilla" as a dialectical moment, the embodiment of the Hegelian freedom of the void upon which the triumphant New Man would be built as the negation of the negation. The next step, placed into the abstract temporal horizon of communism, would entail the under-cutting mediation of all the intermediaries – class, the state, ideologies – and would allow hegemony to be born in the factory, where the social character of production would finally come to be seen as it is: direct and immediate. Thus, this chapter can be also read as

an attempt to show how early socialist factories were not the wombs of a new hegemony but its daily contestation and sometimes even its clear negation. And the reason is indeed what Gramsci would have taught us: the immediately social character of production was an impossible target in a class society.

Notes

1 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. 9 Decembrie 1950 (p. 7), factory general director speech.

2 In fact, labour control proved to be equally problematic in capitalist societies. Starting with Ford's company in the 1910s, interruptions in production, deterioration in quality, absenteeism, sickness, labour turnover and the growth of trades union activity were the terrain on which industrial activity had to be built. Various attempts to control labour through the creation of new „skill-wages ladders, restructuring of job categories, and rewards for continuity went together with forms of moral regulation which, in Ford's case, were developed, monitored and enforced by "The Sociological Department" which used an even more direct form of ethnographic knowledge than the one practiced by the state and described in Chapter 6.

3 P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Proces verbal, 28.02. 1951

4 Legea nr. 16 votata de Marea Adunare Nationala in sedinta din 13 Ianuarie 1949 a fost introdusa pedeapsa cu moartea pentru sanctionarea unor crime care primejduiesc securitatea Statului si propasirea economiei nationale

5 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33 / 105 / 1949, Instructiuni provizorii catre directorii intreprinderilor nationalizate

6 After the sanctions against Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu, and Ana Pauker.

7 Fond Clujana, Dosar 0 / 1949, Circulari si Publicatiuni, Circulara 15, 22 Ianuarie 1949

8 P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 103 / 7, Rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Judetean PMR Cluj, Raport de activitate pe luna Ianuarie 1949, p. 1-16

9 Ibid., p. 3

10 Ibid.

11 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei Janos Herbak, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie, 9 Decembrie 1950

12 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950, p. 4

13 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33 / 105 / 1949, Instructiuni provizorii catre directorii intreprinderilor nationalizate

14 Comitetul Regionl PMR Cluj, Fond 13, Dosar 9/87, Sectia economica

15 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950 (p. 2)

16 Fond Clujana, Dosar 18-4 / 1952, Dari de seama asupra activitatii intreprinderii pe anul 1952, p. 16-17

17 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950, p. 3

18 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950, p. 4

19 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950, p. 4

20 Fond Clujana, Dosar 16 / 1950, Plan de productie pe anul 1950, p.10

21 Fond Clujana, Dosar 18-4 / 1952, Dari de seama asupra activitatii intreprinderii pe anul 1952, p. 31

22 Fond Clujana, Dosar 29-23 / 1952, Instructiuni si adrese M.I.U.

23 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat

24 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat. Serviciul planificare si Statistica Generala, catre Conducatorul Fabricii, Tov. Devenyi M., Cluj, 15 Martie 1950 (p. 56)

25 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat. Adresa Uzinelor János Herbák catre Serviciul Planificare, 6 februarie 1950 (p. 26, p. 44); Nota interna, Serviciul Planificare, cuprinzand adresa Dir. IPC nr 34299 din 13 Mai 1950 (p. 84)

26 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat. Adresa Ministerului Industriei Usoare Directia Industriala a Pielariei si Cauciucului nr. 93 / 1644 din 31 Ianuarie 1950

27 Lupta de clasa,Seria a V-a, anul XXV, nr 10, Octombrie 1955, "De ce productivitatea muncii trebuie sa creasca mai repede decat salariul mediu?" (105 – 110)

28 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat. Serviciul planificare si Statistica Generala, catre Conducatorul Fabricii, Tov. Devenyi M., Cluj, 15 Martie 1950 (p. 59)

29 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. Raport despre activitatea intreprinderii pe trimestrul III, anul 1950 (p. 13)

30 Viata uzinei noastre,29 Noiembrie 1951

31 Ibid.

32 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare. Instructiuni nr. 23, 17 Iunie 1949 (p. 273)

33 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare. Completari la instructiunile privitoare la primele de productie, 8 Iunie 1949 (p. 252)

34 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. Raport despre activitatea intreprinderii pe trimestrul III, anul 1950 (p. 13)

35 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare. Instructiuni nr. 25, Prime de productie (p. 307)

36 Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare. Completari la instructiunile privitoare la primele de productie, 8 Iunie 1949

37 Fond Clujana, Dosar 31-18 / 1953, Procese verbale, Proces verbal, 18.02.1953, sedinta de colectiv largit, analiza muncii pe anul 1952, p. 30

38 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. 9 Decembrie 1950 (p. 3)

39 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. 9 Decembrie 1950 (p. 6)

40 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei János Herbák, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. 9 Decembrie 1950 (p. 3)

41 Viata uzinei noastre, 15 August 1953, p.3

42 Viata uzinei noastre, 15 mai 1953

43 Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, p. 34

Chapter 6: Producing knowledge in productive spaces: Ethnography and planning in early socialist Romania

This chapter investigates the ways in which during the formative years after the nationalization knowledge proved to be the cornerstone of an economic vision which had the historical consciousness of the worker at its core. I argue that converting the vision of the infinitely expanding productive potential of socialist labour into reality required the transformation of the state into a skilful ethnographer, reliant upon being there and upon a distinctive set of methods and instruments. As we will see, the state dedicated the 1949 and 1950 one-year plans almost entirely to learning about existing economic processes and to training personnel who could process newly acquired information about nationalized factories. Thus, the first plans were mainly directed towards transforming the state itself into an extraordinary machine which was able, in a relatively short time, to originate its *vision* in *seeing*.

Investigating the factory as the ground on which central planning was made possible opens a broad space for a critique of James Scott's (1998: 2) argument, that "legibility as a central problem in statecraft" became the ultimate way of knowing in modernity. The gaze of the state and its "politics of measurement" (Scott 1998: 27) came to involve the simplification, the quantification and the standardization of knowledge through the suppression of *mētis*, understood as local and informal knowledge, practices and spontaneous improvisations. Eliminating other forms of knowledge and replacing them with techniques of counting and mapping was necessary as an instrumental intervention in reality, which was

supposed to be "sliced," represented and remade.

The import of the Bolshevik socialist project in Romania had all the elements of a high-modernist project: an administrative ordering of nature and society; an authoritative state; an almost blind faith in scientific laws, technical progress and rational social engineering; and the collapse of civil society. Nonetheless, my research demonstrates that the Romanian socialist government relied not only on statistical, standardized and schematic information, but also on local knowledge extracted from contextualized practices of the factory managers and from workers' ways-of-doing. The state was predominantly interested in an efficient organization of work as the general task of governing concrete locations. I argue that socialist planning could not function by suppressing practical, locally situated knowledge. Instead, many economic decisions were based on information coming from very specific situations, explored and described in the documents of the time with an attention to local practices very different from the universalizing knowledge predicated by Scott. Not only did the Party know the limits of knowledge simplification beyond numerical production, but it also addressed these limitations by using other forms of learning about their object of governance. It is my central claim that, alongside standardized observation coming from the scientific management tradition, the production of ethnographic knowledge was central to this project.

The factory documents of the time bear witness to a continuous effort of centralization, always emerging from the articulation of the plan figures. However, the archival material also reveals an everyday struggle to make production understandable beyond numbers, while the direct involvement of the state in production problems led to an increasing reliance on observation and interpretative work. As other scholars show, ethnography, both as method and as a specific form of knowledge, was central to modern statecraft, especially in imperial context (Clay 1995; Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001; Hirsch 2005), and often explicitly linked to administrative practices of domination and control (Chandavarkar 1992; Pels and Salemink 1994). The Romanian ethnographic tradition itself was tied to the interwar societal project of rural emancipation and served as a political tool for nation-building and state formation (Rostás 2001). Most of these efforts stopped after the war, as their relationship with nationalist politics was deemed dubious by the state officials. In the 1960s, when experts in development started to utilize ethnography again, their efforts remained concentrated in the countryside and were tied to the re-emergence of a nationalistic political turn. Little is known, though, about the place of observation, description and interpretation in socialist factories. This is rather surprising, since in socialism the factories

constituted key spaces for entanglements between state-making, class formation and modernization, which cannot be understood outside shop floor politics.

My chapter shows how, without drawing on the help of pre-war trained anthropologists, the state did produce personal interpretative accounts of practices, routines and interactions within bounded locations, based on direct experience and limited time immersion in this localized concrete reality. They were part of a "grand-scale ethnographic work" (Poenaru 2010), which involved not only the Secret Police but also institutions as diverse as schools, hospitals and universities. In the factories, this concern to document reality in situ was visible in ordinary interactions between members of the Party organization, managers and workers. It can be followed in their weekly or monthly reports, in their interventions in the production minutes or in their daily interference with the production process. I will emphasize, though, the role of the activists trained in the Party Schools to take up work in the Documentary Sections of the Regional Party Committees. They were taught to sample locations according to the most relevant criteria for the problem under study, to contact informants, to ground their findings on multiple sources, to analyse the ways in which their presence affected the behaviour of the workers and to write detailed reports comprising not only crude facts but also their interpretations.

Focusing on planning and centralization as "economy in the making" allowed me to uncover various forms of knowledge employed by the state in its attempt to make the world readable and manipulable. First, I will show how the state produced quantified, simplified and standardized information about economy, territory and population, by using techniques similar to those covered by Scott's notion of "legibility." The necessities related to planning led to the emergence of specific legibility structures, which reflected shifting and overlapping power hierarchies within the factories, and brought the plan to life by breaking it into millions of pieces and space/time fragments. Although crucial, legibility structures were not enough to ensure production management and political control. Numbers could not link economic performance to work practices and daily routines, and could not reveal the productive "hidden reserves" of society upon which early industrial socialism as a labour-intensive regime depended.

The manager-state appealed to the Soviet transposition of Taylor's principles of scientific management in an attempt to extract workers' embodied knowledge and to understand production processes on the ground. Although notions of "efficiency" and "productivity" had been articulated at an unprecedented scale, the Party officials could not stop there. Their data, no matter how complex, did not yet render understandable the

relationship between production and life, or between the productivism of the manager-state and the moral regulation of a workers' state. Such knowledge was also deemed completely useless, unless the workers could be convinced to consent and comply, especially in the factory, where the struggle for the legitimacy of "the workers' state" was fought more than anywhere else. Neither statistics nor scientific management could help the state understand how economy and society were entangled in the everyday functioning of the plan. Accordingly, the state needed a form of knowledge of an ethnographic inspiration able to capture the messy, contradictory and fragmentary character of everyday interactions and practices at the factory level, and their relationship with people's everyday lives.

Observational and interpretative accounts of what was happening on the ground allowed the state to act locally, upon very concrete situations. At this stage, the role of unions and of local Party organizations was crucial, precisely for linking knowledge with mobilization, control and the (re)organization of production. State agents were explicitly asked to see what was happening within factories, to discover what was going wrong, to understand why things were not as they should and to act as intermediaries between various local power structures. Knowledge was produced through first-hand experience, or, as Geertz (1988) would put it, by being there. Placing "a heavy emphasis on the present" (Asad 1994: 57), but always relating this present to a dark past and to an ideal future, the state constructed an ethnographic object, by producing descriptions and narratives about daily routines, practices, work-related rituals or about ordinary people breaking the rules. Even feelings or emotions (taken as proxy for political loyalty) were the purpose of inquiry. The lives of "informants" and "subjects" were reconstructed not only through observation, but also through gathering texts of all sorts: declarations, interviews or institutional records.

Furthermore, the use of ethnographic knowledge enabled the state to produce a kaleidoscopic image of the social world it intended to govern. Knowledge about local ways of doing also allowed for rescaling and centralization. It was articulated in political tropes like "problems in production" or "work improvement," and this further surfaced in the formulation of laws, governmental instructions and political priorities. As the methodological reports of the Party activists reveal, worries about case choices and about the possibility of generalization explicitly accompanied any study of factory life. The Party leaders used ethnography both to understand what was happening in every factory, and to shed light on what was happening in other factories of the same kind. This is a powerful case against Scott's impoverished notion of "legibility" because it shows that, while the factories appeared as categories (reductions or simplifications) in the plan's figures, through the use of other

forms of knowledge, they preserved their position as *cases*, even when understood as parts of the broader economic and political concerns of the state.

Understanding the place of various forms of knowledge in the socialist construction project enables us to understand differently the evolution of socialist modernization. Factories, as key spaces for state-making in socialism, offer a unique opportunity to explore the complex ways in which knowledge is fundamentally related to what states do and to what states are. While Scott rightfully argued that totalizing projects are organically related to forceful legitimacy and schematic knowledge, he failed to notice that socialist states – as manager-states – did not just administer populations and resources; they also ran and created social production processes.

These social production processes were classified and acted upon not only according to their efficiency, but also according to their political relevance. For the socialist states – as workers' states this time – a particular interpretative endeavour was necessary to assess the evolution of the relationship between labour and the state. Ethnographic forms of knowledge provided a different, non-quantitative measure of the advancement of working-class consciousness. It was fundamental for supporting the main *raison d'être* of the socialist state: directing subjectivation processes towards a new form of rationality, loyalty and self-awareness, totally absent both from any of Scott's accounts of a highmodernist project, and from the classical Taylorist industrialist vision.

Both the failure and the limited success of socialist projects in the twentieth century seem to have little to do with a poor mastery of knowledge production processes. The fragility of the socialist high-modernist project appears to be more the result of an in-built tension between knowing and acting simultaneously as a workers' state and as a manager-state. Different models and practices of knowledge production suggest another way to understand the socialist-state-idea, as Abrams would put it. "Seeing like a state" appears to be intimately related to seeing the state itself as a multidimensional, always emergent and unfinished project in which certain categories are the object of its action, the mirror of its evolution and the active agents of its making. This exploration of planning as an activity of assembling information flows is in line with any anthropological tradition which considers state functioning as depending upon its capacity to make the world readable and understandable, further hinging on the ability of its local officials to transform any kind of political project into a situated reality. In order to be effective, any (modern) state structure and regulation must be recognized as such, and must enter the repertoire of institutions and practices which fill the state idea with content at a particular point in time and in space.

Constructing legibility structures

After the nationalization of the means of production in June 1948, the Romanian state officials had only six months left to gather the needed information about factories before they implemented the first one-year plan. But the Party lacked the experience, the cadres and the categories to produce this knowledge. Thus, learning about its object of governance required the creation of specific structures capable of functioning for emergent categories of people, objects and relations. Through these vertical and horizontal flows of information, knowledge was fundamentally linked to allocative power (Verdery 1996), to mobilizing social labour and to plan bargaining (Kornai 1980). These structures were not simply bearers of the state's will; they were created because of the plan and for the plan, encompassing very particular institutions and practices which were meant to cover all its points of articulation. Hence, in Scott's terms, the state's need to map the object of its economic activity gave birth to legibility structures which were built exactly on the information routes which connected the factories to the local Party Committees and to the government. These structures depended upon standardized knowledge and upon a quick professionalization of accountants, statisticians and planners. They would reflect the shifting power hierarchies at the factory level throughout the socialist period. Who was reporting to whom, and who could ask information from whom represented a clear expression of how power relations involving workers, factory managers and Party organization evolved.

This process started in November 1948 with the census of the industrial units. It continued with the establishment of the *State Planning Commission*,[1] the founding of the *National Standardization Commission*[2] and the introduction of standardized accounting at all levels. For the first years of planning, another crucial institution was the *Institute for Planning and Economic Administration*, which in the following years produced generations of planners who would take their places in every factory, department or public institution. Planning and accounting departments were created at the factory level, with the explicit mission to reproduce the logic of the plan and to convey it to its final destination point: the worker/machine unit. These offices needed to be staffed by people who were going to embody this rationality.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, in Cluj, all factory directors were replaced by workers

at the time of nationalization. Since Hungarian and German capital was dominant in Transylvanian industry before the war, those who had ownership interests in factories had already left the country. Many of the second-rank executives were removed for ideological reasons and as a way to prevent resistance to new economic policies. The situation was further complicated by the need to find Romanian-speaking specialists in an area where historically, industry was dominated by Hungarian capital, management and labour. The official discourse maintained the Bolshevik revolutionary assumption that the vanguard party had a unique capacity to see the political and economic situation as a whole. However, the Romanian Workers' Party officials knew from the very beginning that in the process of building a new society they had to rely on the knowledge of the members of the old one. Thus, many inter-war experts had to be kept in factories, without retaining their previous power positions, simply to keep production going. Some of them had been directly involved in the war economy, and their expertise in management and planning was invaluable. They remained under the supervision of the Party organizations and of the Soviet consultants who watched over the USSR's interests in the factories until the end of the 1950s, when the Red Army left Romania.

This was only a temporary solution, and soon the production of new competent cadres was at the top of the Party's agenda. The activity of producing good norm-setters, accountants and administrators was checked periodically, and the Economic Section of the County Party Committee kept track of good students from these cohorts.[3] The emergent socialist bureaucracy was fundamentally linked to the production of numerical information of all sorts and to the quantitative logic which was soon to become the frame for how people thought about their daily work. The production of numbers and statistics quickly transformed the factories into "calculation centres" (Latour 1987; Rose 1991) that were directly or indirectly linked with one centre. Thus, centralization primarily depended upon being central in the flows of information which were explicitly meant both to represent the social and to project its future.

The same logic of making the world readable and manageable also encompassed other dimensions of economic activity, such as the elimination of barter, the uniformization of prices and, most importantly, the employment and organization of the labour force. The uniformization of the statistical reports and the creation of the most appropriate frames for this numerical production represented very early priorities for the government. However, the "Standardization Bulletin," a register containing the official standards for all the products manufactured in Romania, first appeared only in May 1949. It was not until June 1949 (one

year after nationalization) that the State Planning Commission had the first set of minimal technical and economic indices ready for use by the planning services in the factories. They were to be applied no sooner than 1950 and would change multiple times in the years to come.

These continuous changes made life extremely difficult for the new economic executives. In 1950, an exasperated representative of the Economic Division from the Regional Party Committee in Cluj distributed a detailed list which tried to make the correct mode of reporting on industrial production clear.[4] Each industrial unit had to send to the Regional Party Committee multiple tables containing a complete list of their products, the number of employees, the names and the qualifications of the employees (from director to unskilled workers), security measures, various observations, as well as production graphics for each month of 1950.[5] The process did not go smoothly, and the Party leaders at all levels constantly complained that the factory administrative personnel was simply unable to fill in the forms correctly and on time. The factory managers responded bitterly that the requirements of the upper echelons were impossible because the factories did not have the necessary personnel, time or experience needed for these tasks. Moreover, the forms of the reports were changing monthly and "if in April the factories finally learned how to fill in the IPL form, this was replaced with the ETL form in May and the problems started all over again."[6]

Even the language of planning had to be defined and disseminated before it could become the language of the economy. For instance, the most important programmatic journals of the time, *Economic Problems* and *Class Struggle,* introduced a recurrent section with the title: "Helping the planner: Basic terms for planning activity", which was used to define fundamental terms like "industrial unit" or "synthetic indices of production." The journal was often read during production meetings in order to help the new economic executives lacking both experience and formal training in economics. The subsequent stabilization of these categories was furthered by the adoption of this language for justifying the impossibility of fulfilling the tasks set by the plan. Not only were the first plans part of the struggle to make the existing world calculable, but they also helped to (re)create it in a new form through numerical inscription and the reification of categories used in everyday practice by accountants, statisticians and, above all, planners. The first economic plans in post-war Romania seemed designed as a perfect illustration of Corrigan and Sayer's idea that "state formation, because it is cultural revolution, donates the terms through which 'the State' may be worshipped, criticized, grasped, reformed, reconstructed, denied, held together,

affirmed and carried onwards" (1985: 164–165).

During the few months necessary each year for debating the plan figures, some initial numbers emerged from the government offices as "promises," which were then confronted with other numbers that appeared to be expressions of local realities. Throughout the year, at each level, people were promising and justifying numbers. Nevertheless, the emergence of standards as "forms of compression and representations of actions" (Lampland and Star 2009: 4) and as an essentially modern political project of uniformization and homogenization introduced from the beginning large inequalities in the way different categories of rule were acted upon by the state. Thus, knowledge about the economy met the mix of ethics and pedagogy on which socialist construction was founded. The way a factory manager could meet the plan figures, or the way a worker could accomplish rates were read by the Party officials as proofs of compliance with the regime. Plan figures were never simply numbers; they were considered expressions of personal responsibility that contributed to classifying people as trustworthy or not, according to how well they performed within this quantitative logic.

As squeezing as much work as possible in very little time was essential, the new economic executives were taught to calculate every bit of time and saturate it with work. As we will see in this chapter, immediately after the nationalization, it was not even accumulation itself that concerned the state officials, but rather the possibility to assess the capacity of the factories and to clearly understand the hierarchical chains through which any decision had to flow.[7] Detailed instructions about how to calculate labour productivity, about how to assess the number of hours *actually* worked by factory employees, or about how to set the work norms were sent to the factories very early after nationalization and represented the top preoccupation of the state officials for the times to come.[8] Controlling work *in time* simply meant controlling accumulation rates.

Although over-fulfilling the plan represented the cornerstone of the socialist logic of accumulation, discovering the sources of this accumulation and getting as much static information as needed for imagining a measure for future accomplishments was much more important for state officials than the surplus itself. Attempts to "freeze action" in order to get a fixed image of the resources and the capacities of the socialist units resulted in temporary interdictions against over-fulfilling the plan for long periods. In 1950, at *Janos Herbak*, the direct Instructions from the corresponding government office set the interdictions:

We ask the comrade directors together with the chief engineers, the technicians, the

> workers, the Party Organization and the Union to analyse and to disseminate the plan figures and to assess the possibility that these figures could be accomplished before the deadline. Until February 28, the industrial units will communicate to our Planning Service if the plan can be accomplished before the deadline and if it can, until what date. These instructions do not give the right to the factories to over-fulfil the plan or to shorten the time needed for its fulfilment without a written approval from the Director of the Office. We draw attention to the fact that until now, CIP did not approve any over fulfilment of the plan or its realization in less than 12 months.[9]

In the following months, the factory managers who over-fulfilled their production plans were always scolded by the local Party leaders who were present at the factory meetings. In a general assembly transformed into a public teaching moment, comrade Rado was admonished by comrade Ungar: "Who gave you the order to execute and over-fulfil the plan even if you had to use overtime? For this year, the Ministry demanded a fulfilment of 100% of the plan. No slogan for the over-fulfilment of the plan could have been heard by comrade Rado because all the industrial plants were programmed at their maximum capacity."[10]

Factory managers seemed to live in a permanent tension between ensuring the continuous flux of production, and collecting information according to the new indices. Since standardization meant exactly crystallization and stabilization, the planners were always puzzled by the production process as flow and tried to fix its image in an artificial way. Thus, the Romanian Party officials quickly came to realize that statistics were inadequate in situations that required mastery of how things were actually done. Economy and labour process as movement proved hard to grasp. Contextual knowledge was extremely difficult to exploit, and production figures could be easily manipulated if the state's gaze did not penetrate the walls of the factories. The use of managerial knowledge came as a first solution for the partial blindness of the state.

The manager-state

As the governmental instructions and the factory reports repeatedly stated, the models for these knowledge production practices were to be found in the Soviet historical experience. The Soviets drew on the possibilities opened by Taylor's original project of observing

workers' practices and transforming them into standardized tasks. Like in Taylor's original proposition, employing the principles of scientific management was supposed to pacify workers, to prevent systematic soldiering and to lead, in time, to an organic co-operation between workers and management.

Unlike the USSR in the first decades after the Bolshevik revolution, where the Soviet fascination with Taylor and scientific management was made explicit (see Bedeian and Phillips 1990; Beissinger 1988; Corrigan, Ramsay and Sayer 1978; Filtzer 1986; Sochor 1981), in Romania Taylor was seldom if ever mentioned in the official discourse. However, his notions of "efficiency," "control," "rationality" and "knowledge transfer" lived a full life in Romanian enterprises. Starting from the classical Taylorist assumption that workers together possess a kind of traditional "embedded" and "embodied" knowledge (van den Daele 2004) which was hardly accessible to the management (Braverman [1975] 1998), the manager-state tried to extract this knowledge in forms that allowed for its governance. Thus, from the start, the instruments for accumulating knowledge also had been established as instruments of Party control over the factory management and, most importantly, over workers.

The technological chart was one of these instruments, which was meant to enhance discipline, to follow the manufacturing of each item, and to help the planners decide how much raw material or fuel was needed in a specific production cycle. The new economic executives hoped that the introduction and the generalization of the technological chart would enable them "to introduce the technological plan in the factories, a scientific plan for an optimal usage of all the capacities of the industrial unit, from industrial equipment to differently skilled labour force."[11] The individual charts of production were another privileged instrument of vision and control, but they were also meant to teach the workers to evaluate themselves while working. The organization of this system was the task of the Socialist Competition Bureau, a body which included mainly members of the Union but also Stakhanovites and some of the best workers, whose main responsibility was to mobilize the others for competitions in production.

Not only the economy as a whole, but also workers' practices had to be observed as movement, which involved a deep understanding of the production process. The effort of establishing the right workload for the workers in each industrial branch involved, first of all, the need to explore the capacity of these workers, not through abstract figures and indicators, but through a profound analysis of what they actually did when manufacturing a shoe, a nail, a chair or a faucet. The factory directors were constantly complaining that they were still

lacking precise instructions on the rate-setting process, which resulted in work-norms that "were not scientifically set, because they were *mainly based on statistical data*."[12] In the case of rate-setting, observation was, by far, the preferred method. Some methodological decisions had to be made about who should be observed, when and in what conditions. Another question was if the workers should be aware they were being observed. The rate-setters knew that the workers were slowing their motion when they saw the chronometer, clearly resisting the rise in their norms and the corresponding cut of their wages.

The methods of gathering information about workers' practices became more sophisticated as scientists and university professors became involved in the process. In 1955, at the end of the first five-year plan, a study was conducted at *Armătura*. The team was led by university professors, engineers, economists and the members of the technical club of the factory. Their central goal was to "photograph" the workday of 175 people belonging to the factory's productive personnel by registering the different time costs per operation in a chronological order. The end result was going to be a report accompanied by detailed diagrams showing as precisely as possible how people moved and what abilities they used in the process. Although the notion of "photographing" was used as a metaphor and no photographic material (in the visual sense) was produced during these sessions, the metaphor in itself is very telling because it speaks back to the obsessive need of the Party officials and economic executives to transform social production processes into representations which could be analysed, aggregated and used as bases for intervention.

While 75 people were observed by their team members, the daily routines of the other 100 had to be recorded by the workers themselves, in what the team called "self photographing." The method was of Soviet-Taylorist inspiration, and the study was meant to "reveal the losses in the use of the working-time, the causes of these losses and the possibilities to improve the use of the working-time."[13] The methodology of the study was explained in detail:

> Photographing and self-photographing need thorough preparation which includes: choosing the workplaces where the analysis will be carried out, elaborating an action plan, and convincing the workers, especially those whose activity will be investigated, to participate. … Selecting and preparing for photographing differ according to the purpose of the action – rate-setting or uncovering working time reserves. The workplaces of the good workers will be chosen for observation in order to elaborate the progressive technical norms, and optimal conditions will be created on the day

> when they are observed. If the purpose of the observation is the discovery of internal reserves of working time, typical workplaces from all categories will be selected, in such a way that among them we will find leaders in production, mediocre workers and the weakest ones. In this case, no change should be made in the working conditions of these workers in the day of photographing. In any case, for every workplace many observations will be carried on. For identifying internal reserves of working time, the observations will be conducted in different periods of the month to control for working conditions and for changes in the production rhythm. For discovering the causes behind the lack of uniformity in the production rhythm, the delays at the beginning of the month and the 'assault' at the end of the month, at least three observations will be conducted: at the beginning of the month, at the middle of the month, and at the end. If there is more than one shift, it is better to take photographs of the labour process for each one of them.[14]

The fragment reproduced here shows that the ideal form of organizing production was supervision and control, like in any company which uses scientific management for controlling its employees.

But in socialist factories, this ideal had to be permanently confronted with the expectation that workers would "manage" themselves and the labour process in such a way that they would ease the task of the factory management and of the state. They would willingly increase work rates, be more productive and "rationalize" their work within a system of scientific self-management. Instead of struggle at the workshop level, the state expected workers willingly to extract the best work methods from themselves and from their colleagues. Apart from Taylor's (1911) old idea that scientific management was in the workers' best interest because their earnings would increase, workers' rationality would assume an expanded form in socialism as an explicit dimension of the ethical and pedagogical project aimed at achieving the transformation of society through the transformation of each individual.

Some forms of producing knowledge about workers' routines were founded precisely on this assumption, but the methodological worries which accompanied the idea of "self-photographing" showed that resistance at the workshop level was expected along the way.

> The Party Organization and the Union were instrumental in convincing the workers to respond to this initiative by self-photographing their workday and to participate

> voluntarily in "the struggle for a better use of the working time." The self-photographs are prepared daily; the workers show their time losses for each day and the causes for these losses. They also suggest methods to eliminate these problems. This way, this action transforms into a mass action of the workers in their struggle to improve the factory activity. In addition, it will be possible to assess the permanent or the variable character of the deficiencies revealed by this method.[15]

Ideally, no worker should have been forced to participate in this kind of research. Workers had to realize that at a very different, non-tangible level, as accumulation rates looked more and more promising, they were actively building a future for all of them. They would benefit from an unprecedented level of redistribution of goods and services, even if workers had little control over this redistribution. Working more efficiently meant producing more. And producing more was required from them not only as workers but also as political subjects.

Accompanying Taylorist technicism on the shop floor, early socialist wages themselves were expressions of the "conscious self-restraint by the working-class" (Preobrazhensky 1926: 123), a reflection of their self-exploitation as envisaged by Preobrazhensky for the Soviet 1920s. This "self-denial" of the workers (Millar 1978: 391) needed to match the successes of primitive accumulation in the private sector. Obviously, the peasant-worker, our old acquaintance from the previous chapters, was the one who could experience self-denial both on the shop floor and in the garden of his home.

Thus, there was explicit pressure on workers themselves to rationalize and innovate in the production process, together with foremen and engineers. By 1950, the workers who were proposing innovations became highly appreciated as exemplars of a new attitude towards work. They were distinguishing themselves from the masses who were labouring "just for wages" and came to embody the Party ideal of workers' involvement, mobilization and loyalty. Their efforts were financially rewarded and symbolically recognized through popularization on the billboards of each sector. The "creative initiative of the working people" was considered decisive for bringing out "those possibilities which could not be known yet when the plan was conceived but which exist within the heart of the socialist factories" and which "can be unveiled only when the plan is executed through perfecting the organization of work and production, through enhancing labour discipline."[16]

The logic of socialist accumulation and the central role played by workers' knowledge in relation to this logic comes close to the surface in these examples. Knowledge was always prospective; it was always oriented towards the future and towards discovering what society

was veiling. There was always an assumption that there was more than met the eye of the planner in each factory, in each workshop and in each worker. Although the capacities of the factories were planned, they were always also considered to be unknown, as they were always bearing an uncovered potential for increased quantity, quality or mobilization. The continuous increase in the planning figures was grounded in the belief that people could do more every year, due to their involvement in a permanent learning process. Supposedly, society held reserves of creativity, productivity and labour which could not be exhausted because they were perpetually regenerated within the labour process itself. Uncovering these hidden resources became one of the central tasks of government and, according to official discourse, one of its major achievements.

The ethnographer-state: Governing beyond numbers

As the Party leaders knew very well, labour control was as much a production problem as it was a political one. Within the space of the factory, the workers encountered the state not only as employees to be managed but also as political subjeycts. Consequently, in a workers' state, they were also supposed to become active agents of state-making. The transformation of workers' selves into productive and political resources was both the condition and the aim of the new societal project. This productive/political metamorphosis was a central dimension of the specific relation the Bolsheviks (and the Romanian Workers Party implicitly) had with history, especially with their belief in the political capacity of the socialist state to compress what was seen as necessary stages of a civilizing process. Since "[t]he Bolsheviks … set out to accelerate the historical process by acting on the economic base, social forms, and culture all at the same time" (Hirsch 2005: 6), they needed to rely on a form of knowledge which could intimately relate representation and action, particular and universal, backwardness and an ideal image of the future. Socialist construction required forms of knowledge that linked production politics to state politics (Burawoy 1985) in the same way the idea behind the Sociological Department in Ford's company linked production to corporate interests (Clarke 1990).

In-depth, contextual knowledge was crucial precisely because it was able to capture this dual nature of the state as manager-state and workers' state, while also revealing the dual nature of its subjects and the factory as the institutional setting of their encounter. For the

socialist states, productivity and efficiency were never separated from workers' political loyalties or from their everyday concerns. Producing more pairs of shoes or more fittings could not be understood outside a complex relational field whose elements were at once specific for every factory and common to many of them. Thus, thick descriptions about one factory shed plausible light on the problems of all factories.

Party officials came to a surprisingly anti-positivist stance, refusing to consider statistical facts as scientific facts and choosing observation instead of other methods when they needed to understand labour process and production problems. Although the Economic Section of the Party County Committee received statistical reports from the most important factories in the region, sometimes even daily, the Party officials complained that they did not get sufficiently rich and detailed information documenting the problems of the production process. In reports, positive and negative examples, concrete results, and locations and names were heavily underlined in pen or pencil, while the statistical and general information seemed to have gone almost unnoticed.

There was an almost universal awareness that if the Party wanted to read what was happening on the ground, they required the stories behind the numbers and needed to separate discourse from facts. The local Party officials insisted on concrete information as often as they could, and the most successful reports were always the ones which offered detailed description of the most trivial aspects of the workshop activity. The reports were supposed to offer a special kind of knowledge, of an ethnographic inspiration, which was meant to enable the Party officials to understand the processes and the practices hidden beyond statistics and numbers. In this way, the state was trying to separate discourse and "quantifacts" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006) from very mundane practices, as a veritable ethnographer-state, demonstrating full awareness of the weaknesses of the processes of knowledge production presupposed by the (socialist) modernization project. Simply put, they knew that real limitations in their capacity to see represented drawbacks in their capacity to act.

Following the Soviet model of Party organization at local level, Documentary Sections were founded at the regional level. Their employees were specifically responsible for documenting in an ethnographic manner the processes at play within the factories, offices and villages. As governmental instructions show, the activists were especially trained for these actions by people who were acquainted with similar practices in the Soviet Union, either through training in one of the two countries or, more frequently, through lectures at Party Schools. The Party leaders considered that "the importance of documenting production processes comes from the idea that there cannot be fair government without knowing the

state of affairs on the ground. Life confirms at every step that not knowing the pulse in the field makes leadership formal, lacking foundation, and unconnected with real life."[17] Consequently, between May and November of 1954, the Documentary Section of the Cluj Region produced no less than 24 informative notes about factories and villages in the region. They were called "field notes" and were written as ethnographic accounts in the first person.

The field notes documented the problems of the factories and of the collective farms, with an emphasis on how people worked and lived. The factory, as object of inquiry, was reconstituted within a broad set of relevant relations. The instructions that accompanied the Party documentarists in their investigations stated that the final reports should contain information about workers' home conditions, their health problems and their expressions of discontent during production meetings. Accounts about people's reactions and opinions related to any new governmental measure were especially valued. If problematic interactions were observed between Hungarians and Romanians, or between the foremen, the technical staff and the workers, they had to be described accurately, with as much detail as possible. An interpretation of the factory situation as a whole was requested from all activists, alongside comparisons with other industrial units and an account of the explanations offered by the actors themselves to certain sensitive issues.

In 1951, a member of The Agitation and Propaganda Section of the City Committee of the Romanian Workers Party took the floor in a plenary meeting. He presented the results of an ethnographic enquiry articulated in the "Report on our findings from the field about the unhealthy atmosphere now prevailing at Armătura factory and which prevents the implementation of the plan for 1951."[18] The report showed that "a complete disorder dominated Armătura," as "comrade director Rakoczi Ladislau [wa]s not capable of keeping things under control." His lack of popularity among the workers, his lack of authority, and his incapacity to find good methods to lead the factory were reminded to the audience.

Reports following this investigation confirmed the chaos in the industrial unit:

> Because there is no strict control, the workers are allowed by their foremen to leave their work or even the factory. Even worse, they are considered "present" although they are not there. The work cards are distributed only after a task was executed and not before, as directives, so the workers get to choose their preferred tasks and not take the plan into account. The production costs were exceeded because of the high percentage of rejected components.[19]

Another "field note" from *János Herbák* reveals the most important issues confronted by the foremen in the 1950s, when trying to organize socialist competitions: the formal character of the more than 5,200 contracts for socialist competitions, although their signing by workers had been proudly reported by the managers only few days before.[20] The interviewed foremen underlined repeatedly that socialist competitions "are not for everyone" and showed that *actually*, the factory had not ever produced more than 430 leaders in production (compared to the almost 1,000 officially reported). Moreover, even key-workers lacked socialist discipline, skipping workdays whenever they wanted, "like the rest of the workers." They tried to report those who were late or were missing work to the Party organization and to the upper echelons of the factory management but nothing happened except for the noisy inauguration of a notice board in some sections, where those who were late were written down with the respective delay under their name. Some workers even broke the equipment intentionally, especially after new norms had been implemented and their income dropped. The walls of the factory were full of inscriptions – political, religious, and chauvinistic – but "nobody ever found out who the authors were."

A special methodological report complemented these impressive small monographs. It extensively shows how the state not only produced ethnographic knowledge but also surrounded this process with some of the worries that any anthropologist carries in the field.

> I will show concretely how I proceeded to prepare the informative notes. Before I left for the field I *studied* in detail the Decisions of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party about the repartition of individual plots and … about the creation of the zones destined for the cultivation of vegetables around the cities and industrial centres for an improved supply of the city with fruits and vegetables. Following their lead, I have prepared my work plan and I have decided to ask the factories which had repartition for individual plots and annex farms to provide informative notes on their working. … After I got the notes from the factories, I studied them in detail. I contacted the Agricultural Division from the city Committee and asked them to come with me in the field to study the annex farms and the allotments ourselves. … For writing the notes I constantly consulted *informers* from the Party Committees although they ultimately gave me little help. They did not have the data required by the Regional Committee which provided a full list of orientation points. … Because it was impossible *to generalize* for all the industrial units, as the Documentary Sections asks from me, I took in my work plan two factories, where I

studied in depth the activity of the Party organization and of the enterprises themselves.[21]

Although the Party documentarists accompanied their endeavours with obvious methodological worries related to sampling, generalization power and good reporting on data, their presence in the factories was regarded in a purely interventionist way. There was a general awareness that factory managers correctly perceived the presence of these activists as a form of control. Many of the new economic executives took immediate measures to solve the problems of their factories before the Party ethnographers went back to write their "field notes." The fact that those who documented factory life acted as a form of pressure on factory employees was never considered a problem. Moreover, there was no dream of neutrality or detached observation from the Party activists who were observing factory life. On the contrary, their ideological commitment as well as their potential for action was the mandatory lenses through which reality was filtered.

There were many actors involved in this type of knowledge production at the factory level: Party activists, external observers and Party documentarists. This reconstruction of the factory as a research object from various accounts coming from multiple perspectives is indicative of the way the Party understood the positionality of these accounts and the necessity that they be cross-referenced. Different relationships produced different accounts of the same problems. The external observers were generally university professors or lower officials from the County Party Committee who had long-term involvement with certain factories. The Party documentarist replicated the same studies, sometimes year after year, being essential for monitoring subtle changes in the production process and in the people's mood. The Party activists who were also employees of the factory were actually doing "ethnography at home." Only they had the privilege of intimately knowing their colleagues and developing the long-term, deep and sometimes mutually advantageous relationships with their informants, as described by anthropologists who spend years in the same community.

Following the social life of a plan, one can easily argue that the suppression of indispensable local knowledge, informal processes, improvisation and practices was not accomplished or even intended in socialist Romania. Not only were state officials highly conscious of the role of local knowledge (in this case workers' knowledge about the best way to get things done), but they also did all they could to harvest it and to use it. The awareness that "any production process depends on a host of informal practices and improvisations that could never be codified" (Scott 1998: 6) competed with and ultimately surpassed both the

fascination for numbers and the admiration for Taylorist inspired management.

My findings also go against Hayek's classical critique of centrally planned economies. His argument in the socialist calculation debate was that central planning was based on statistical information which could not capture specific "circumstances of time and place" (Hayek 1945, p. 524) and made accurate prediction impossible. My paper shows that the Romanian state officials did perceive the limitations of the statistics they produced. Therefore, the techniques of making the world readable, as essential features of being modern, involved not only simplification and standardization, but also many different types of knowledge: managerial, statistical and ethnographic.

At least in its initial phase, the reliance of socialist planning on people's knowledge was not merely a problem of translating universal scientific ideas into practice, but rather was a fundamental resource the state was prepared to extract and use in its planning activity. There was, of course, an ideological drive for one centre to control everything, including information and its standardization. However, there was also a full awareness of what Hayek called "the economic problem of society," as "a problem of the utilization of knowledge not given to anyone in its totality" (1945: 520). The state had to rely a great deal on "knowledge of the kind which by its nature cannot enter into statistics and therefore cannot be conveyed to any central authority in statistical form" (1945: 524). The image of how knowledge emerged in centrally planned economies appears to depend more upon the scale used in the analysis than on anything else, and its liberal critique seems to be less sensitive to an anthropological perspective than the socialist state ever was.

Notes

[1] The establishment of the State Planning Commission: B.O. 45 / 46, M.O. 171 / 1949.

[2] The Decree 69 / 1950.

[3] National Archives Cluj (henceforth ANDC), Romanian Communist Party (hence- 815 forth PCR) Fond 55, Romanian Workers Party (henceforth RWP) city Committee, File 1 / 1951, December 26, 1950.

[4] ANDC, PCR Fond 55, RWP city Committee, File 1 / 1950, 26–28.10.1950.

[5] ANDC, PCR Fond 13, file 25 / 1950, Regional Committee of RWP Cluj.

[6] ANDC, Clujana, file 33 / 41 / 1949, Instructions from the Leather Industrial 820 Office.

[7] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare Instructiuni nr. 6, 7 Februarie 1949, p. 64, emphasis in original.

[8] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33 / 105 / 1949, Instructiuni provizorii catre directorii intreprinderilor nationalizate, p. 2

[9] ANDC, Clujana, File 33 / 41 / 1949, February 6 / 7, Instructions from the Leather Industrial Office, p. 64, my emphasis.

[10] ANDC, Clujana, File 24 / 23 / 1950, Minutes of the November meeting of the Janos Herbak Administration Council, p. 117.

[11] ANDC, Clujana, File 24 / 23 / 1950, Minutes of the November meeting of the Janos Herbak Administration Council, p. 43.

[12] ANDC, Clujana, File 16 / 30 / 1951, Instructions 1951, Annual Report of the Labour and Wages Office, Cluj, December 29, pp. 22–4.

[13] Kecskes, I., and E. Kerekes. A method of discovery for the hidden reserves of the 830 working-time in the industrial units. Economic Problems, March 1955.

[14] Kecskes, I., and E. Kerekes. A method of discovery for the hidden reserves of the 830 working-time in the industrial units. Economic Problems, March 1955.

[15] Kecskes, I., and E. Kerekes. A method of discovery for the hidden reserves of the 830 working-time in the industrial units. Economic Problems, March 1955.

[16] Kecskes, I., and E. Kerekes. A method of discovery for the hidden reserves of the 830 working-time in the industrial units. Economic Problems, March 1955.

[17] ANDC, PCR 55, RWP city Committee, File 2 / 1954, Report on the documentary work of the city Committee, pp. 151–3.

[18] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Referat asupra constatarilor noastre facute pe teren in legatura cu atmosfera nesanatoasa ce predomina la intreprinderea Armatura si care impiedica realizarea planului de stat pe anul 1951 (266)

[19] Comitetul Regional PMR Cluj, Fond 13, Dosar 9/87, Sectia economica, Referat asupra felului cum unele intreprinderi se preocupa de indeplinirea angajamentelor de a da acumulari socialiste peste plan (203 - 208)

[20] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 37 / 1951, Proces verbal n. 17., 29 Februarie 1951 (181)

[21] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 37 / 1951, Proces verbal n. 17., 29 Februarie 1951 (181), my emphasis.

Chapter 7: The impossibility of being planned

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
T. S. Eliot

On October 12, 1951, the workers from *János Herbák* received the first issue of their factory newspaper for free. From the pages of "The Life of Our Factory" the workers could learn something about over-fulfilling the plan and the fight for quality in production, and something about carrying the international struggle for peace "with the help of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapon." But the workers heading to the leather and footwear workshops in the autumn morning quickly realized that most pages were covered with the familiar faces of their colleagues. On the first page, three leaders in production were given full name and a

detailed account of their accomplishments. On the next one, the round face of a young woman stood next to a column titled "Work discipline." The picture was accompanied by a letter addressed to "comrade Hegyi Luiza from the sewing workshop no. 1" by Sárkádi Ludovic, member of the same sewing workshop.

> Comrade,
> You committed to strengthen your work discipline for honouring the 7th of November. You did not carry out this commitment and you have been late repeatedly.
> Comrade, did you think what a delay of few minutes means for the workshop, for the factory, and for our country? Did you think that being a bad example can induce others to be late and the minutes can become hours? Did you think that a pair of boots could come out our factory's doors during those minutes? So the natural consequence of your being late is that we give our country one pair of boots less?
> Think how much the class enemy rejoices seeing your behaviour! And not without a reason, because he knows what you should know, too: that giving more pairs of shoes means we are stronger. Each missing pair of shoes weakens us and strengthens him!
> Comrade, I am convinced you consider yourself among those who struggle for peace. Prove this by facts, strengthen the commitment you made for honouring the 7th of November by working. Don't be late anymore so others cannot say: if Hégyi Luiza may be late, so may I.
> We trust you, comrade![1]

The letter articulated much of the propaganda around the problem of factory discipline and its relationship with socialist accumulation. A specific notion of „loyalty" discursively related the workers to the state and to its pedagogical concerns. Because honour was considered an important dimension of any act of work, discipline was summoned for glorifying a historical event, the October Revolution. Larger consequences for misconduct in the factory were foretold as any worker could become a bad example for the others. The factory newspaper tried to show concretely how failing to generate surplus weakened not only the factory but also the polity. The lesson was clear: work had to be understood as ae political act, with broader (even world-wide) consequences. The workers were taught that their practices mattered, for both the economic and the political dimension of socialist construction. Production appeared to be simultaneously a source of material accumulation, a form of

creating a global Other, and a promise of political subjecthood.

A December issue of the same newspaper contrasted the bright present of the young Gădălean Vasile with his past as "the son of poor peasants, a youngster who could not learn and who could not get on into the world":

> He is now free and uses every second to the full for personal development. He is never discouraged but always cheerful and waggish. He has already finished the qualification course but now, after his daily shift, he learns how to work on a special machine from the gallantry section. He is a member of the factory choir. He livens us with his youthful impetuosity. Our work goes better like this: singing, joking, and learning.[2]

The December portrait emphasized the embodied qualities of the ideal worker: young, skilled, with „healthy social origins", aware of his newly gained freedom, willing to stay in the factory after his working hours, continuously learning and investing in his personal development, mastering time by being capable to use „every second," passionate, enthusiastic and able to mobilize others through his cheerfulness and artistic nature. This bright image of the young man captured the two most important and most problematic sides of the self-transformation of the workers in the socialist period: *becoming* and *participating*.

Together, the two portraits illustrate the conceptual space in which the worker had to emerge in the 1950s as a producer and as a political subject. They reveal the „dos and don'ts" of the early socialist factory and the drive behind the state's exercise in pedagogy, ethics, and legitimation. They also draw attention to the fact that, because of its productivist and managerial core, the pedagogic project of the socialist state was in fact directed towards the individual labourer rather than towards workers as a class. Or, from a different angle, the discursive emphasis on class-making through personal transformation was the expression of an encounter between the class rhetoric of a workers' state with the assumption of the manager state that a planned economy is in the last instance the sum of millions of everyday individual actions (see Pittaway 2012 for a similar interpretation).

In the early years of socialist industrialization, continuously increasing labour productivity was seen as the cornerstone of growth. Since many industries in Europe were still labour intensive in the 1950s, Romania was not necessarily an exception, but rather an extreme case of a broader pattern of evolution. However, the postwar Romanian emphasis on

labour had its local roots, too. First, capital was scarce in a backward country devastated by war and deprived of its interwar neocolonial investors and trading partners. Second, paying war damages and the participation in Sovroms were exhausting most of the Romanian economic resources, especially oil and timber, the core of the Romanian export in the interwar period. Third, like in the Soviet 1930s, or in the Hungarian and Polish 1950s, priority was given to large construction projects like national electrification, gas pipelines for industrial centres, and railroads to link these centres. There was an almost one to one imitation of the Stalinist initial projects brought to scale, but these infrastructural projects were indeed necessary for sustaining the development of socialist industry in an agrarian country.

Fourth, although labour productivity was imagined as the result of the organization of the labour process like in any Taylor-inspired system of management, the "labour for growth" impetus was also the outcome of a developmental vision which had the transformation of the person at its core. Personal development, skilling, and the formation of a new mentality were its main dimensions. Alongside productive reasoning, personal trajectories were redrawn as historical outcomes of a civilizing process, not very different from the Western modernist projects which attempted to tame the peasants into urban workers and to produce modern citizens out of "barbarians." As top officials often complained,

> new people are entering the gates of the factories everyday. Most of them are coming from the countryside. These new elements do not have an already formed working-class mentality and often bring with them a disorganized spirit, the tendency to get from the state as much money as possible and as many advantages as possible in exchange for as little work as possible.[3]

Thus, the incomplete transformation of the peasants into workers was considered the cause underlying indiscipline acts like truancies, delays, leaving the workplace without permission, stalling, and wasting time in any way. Socialist construction as a pedagogical project was discursively built against "backwardness," understood both as rural habitus, and as dubious morality in general.

The struggle against moral decay was impeded by a continuous and accute need for workers. Moreover, although socialism as a political project was centred around class,

increasing labour productivity and economic efficiency required a managerial vision focused on the individual, or on shop floor interactions between individuals. From the perspective of socialist accumulation, the most successful transformations in the organization of work, like the gradual introduction of piecework and an increasing reliance on individual material incentives, are telling examples of this tension (see also Lampland 1995). As my thesis shows, it would be a mistake to equate state socialism to a simple form of collectivism. It was actually the tension between individual and collective and the complicated ways in which the socialist state and the socialist factory needed to address them simultaneously that defined the unfolding of really existing socialism as a historical process.

Since discipline was understood not only as an administrative problem, but also as a political one, "proletarian ethics" and "proletarian morals" had to spring from the "patriotic education of the youth, entangled with a certain intellectual attitude towards the collective."[4] The workers became the bearers of certain "definitions and pronouncements about morality" (Rogers 2009), which, ideally, had to be acquired within the factory. But the difficulty of transforming a "moralizing discourse" as "an explicit set of instructions about how human choices and practices should be organized" (Rogers 2009: 15) into a material "ethical regime" (ibid.: 17) depended more on the practical concerns of factory managers like employment regulations or discontinuities in production than on the tropes of socialist personhood vehiculated by the Party officials in their plenary meetings.

Labour mobilization, on which growth and accumulation depended – especially in this early stage of socialist construction – entailed not only workers' participation but also their *becoming*. The political project underlying this becoming was meant to be a dialectical move between the necessity to have workers capable and willing to be mobilized and the further profound self-transformation undertaken by these workers in the process of production itself. Stakhanovites as positive "socialist exemplaries" (Rogers 2009) were their imagined synthesis, but their actualization depended not only on the very problematic assumptions of the socialist project, but also on myriads of practical issues brought forward by each of the two dialectical moments. The moral fibre required for workers' willingness to enrol in a process of self-transformation generally came from sources the communists wanted to dismantle. In the cities, the entanglement between religion and nationalism was one of the first fields of battle for communists, even before officially governing the country. More importantly, as we have seen in the first section, the peasant-worker, with his attachment to land and his working rhythms related to household economy was a central figure of early socialist accumulation. For both Party activists and scholars of the region, the peasant-worker

represented not only an essential category of labour, but also an image of the Eastern and Central European semi-proletarianization as a "failed" civilizing process (Szelenyi 1996). He (almost always "he" for the postwar generation) was very far from the desired zero point of socialist construction or from the empty space on which the making of the socialist worker was projected. The state did not deal with empty individual containers. It also did not deal with networks or with Latourian actor-networks but with fecund constellations of social relations, born from the structured contingencies mapped in the first section of my thesis, and further giving birth to a space where life strategies produced fragmented forms of historical consciousness that the state seemed unable to inhabit.

Thus, the capacity of the state to colonize the everyday life of its subjects depended not only on their submission but also on their mobilization. The need to ensure workers' participation did not mean that the state could actually control the forms taken by this participation (Kenney 1997). Revolutionary change required the worker to be freed from its rural and capitalist roots, but its proceedings entailed a struggle field born between his objectification as the raw material of policies, management structures and discoursive practices, and his subjectification as the responsible, pro-active, and enthusiastic person who can produce more and more everyday. This new worker would have become a mirror for the historical transfiguration of the entire society.

Slackers, Stakhanovites, and the time of politics

The Stakhanovites emerged as embodiments of good practices and as a moral standard to be reached by all the others and as moving targets for the young, inexperienced, and hard to control labourers who worked next to them. As Browning and Siegelbaum (2009: 249-250) show for the Soviet Union, "Stakhanovite status was articulated less in terms of class than as exemplary of the emergence of the "new Soviet person," confident in his/her skills and "cultured" – or at least interested in becoming so – in other facets of daily life." The Stakhanovites as leaders in production and norm busters were the materialized images of what was possible for the New Man to achieve. Collectively, they were an "imagined working class" (Pittaway 2012: 14), another space where the socialist state in its formative years could plan and act *as if* these figures were representative for labour as a whole. Even more important, the Stakhanovites represented triumphant self-transformations which

brought future into the present. They were key to the state's obsession with backwardness as they could be pointed to as the men (and sometimes women) who made the "temporal leap from deficient modernity to modernity consummated" (Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2009: 303). This individual embodiment in the present of a *collective future* had to be made visible and celebrated.

And the celebrations indeed started, accompanying the launching and the unfolding of the first five-year plan in 1951. The Party members responsible for agitation and propaganda in collaboration with the unions started to organize various events for glorifying the Stackhanovites and the leaders in production, mostly through artistic programs, which were presented in the factory or at workers' home. At the *Railways Workshops* in Cluj, the first brigades to fulfil their June 1952 monthly plan were expected with flowers and congratulations et the end of the day.[5] One evening caught two Stakhanovites, Irina Erdös and Iuliana Deák from *János Herbák*, visiting each other. They did not expect the factory choir entering the door and starting to sing. The president of the factory committee addressed the warm salute of the workers for the two women and encouraged them to keep up their work and "raise more Stakhanovites" by teaching the youngsters "what good work means."[6] In 1953, these activities gained momentum as part of the state effort to improve productivity and prevent dissent in the factory through the use of moral and financial incentives rather than through disciplinary practices that proved useless over the years. An informative note from the Light Ministry Industry suggested that the organization of small entertaining programs in which a cultural group sang or danced for the best workers should be extended in every factory.[7] Shaming slackers with music was briefly adopted as a practice in 1952, as a mirror of the celebration of Stakhanovites, but it was rapidly dropped as it creating only anger among the workers, including among the leaders in production who thought that this manifestation of public opprobrium was "too much."[8]

The Stakhanovite as socialist exemplary not only produced more but also improved the process of production and helped others to achieve higher standards in their own work. She or he innovated, introduced new methods of production, learned continuously, saved raw material, improved quality, produced no waste, and left their work station clean and tidy. Their enthusiasm was supposed to radiate around and to inspire their co-workers. They were also the first to introduce Soviet Methods in the factory. Organizing work according to the famous Soviet Methods had the declared purpose to enhance socialist accumulation through various techniques designed to save time and to shorten the production process. Many of them were used (or at least reported to be used) in the factories from Cluj: "Ciutchin" – for

increasing quality, "Corabelnicova" – for saving raw material, "Cotlear" – for skilling the workers at their own workplace, "Nazarova" – for taking over the industrial equipment from the previous shift without stopping production, or "Silaier," "Balasov," and "Klewsky" – for shortening the fabrication cycle.[9] [10]

In a mobilizing piece of propaganda appeared in the factory newspaper under the motto "Go ahead for the development of the Stakhanovite movement in our factory!", the young Stakhanovite Lörincz Ilona described how her work and life dramatically changed after implementing one of the most popular Soviet methods in the Leather and Footwear Factory:

> For the last two years I have worked according to the method of Lidia Korabelnicova, the Soviet Stakhanovite. In the afternoon, I prepare my tools in such a way that the next morning I can begin work exactly at 7 o'clock, using all the 480 minutes as a whole. When I follow the stencil, I use all the small pieces of leather. This way, I can over-fulfil my plan with 35%, my work norm with 80%, and my products have a quality of 95%. Today [28 Octombrie 1951], I give products for April 1952. Since I use the method of the Stakhanovite Lidia Korabelnicova, my earnings have increased. Before that, I barely did my work norm and I was earning an average of 6,000 lei per month. Today, using this approach, I earn more than 10,000 lei each month.[11]

The letter was meant to show how good money was supposed to flow from higher production and how a better management of the self according to methods already implemented in the Soviet factories would help the workers achieve them both. However, the situation on the ground was quite different.

Although propaganda declared that Soviet methods were generalized in the Romanian factories around 1953, my interviews with factory managers and workers reveal the fact that they were actually rarely implemented. Many times, both the workers and the factory management resisted the implementation of these Soviet translations of the Taylorist management as much as possible. For management, Soviet methods were expensive, required new technology, destabilized production in other sectors, needed a long-time to be mastered, and were ultimately "not that useful." Implementing Soviet methods meant costs they could not afford and industrial equipment they did not possess. The workers recognized them as just another attempt of the state to squeeze as much as possible from their work. As figures of

the plan were negotiated all the time by the factory, the workers knew very well that any over-fulfilment of the plan brought with it higher requirements for the next year and any personal achievement in production made their work norms raise and their incomes fall.

Samuel, now in his 90s, who worked as a skilled sewer at *János Herbák* for 45 years, described to me how making Stakhanovites always required more than ordinary measures in production. They needed to work with the best available material, with the best tools and industrial equipment. Shortages and bottlenecks were out of the question when it came to assessing someone's work as a socialist exemplary. Other workers were often placed around, just to help them with supplemental operations like moving piles of raw material, cleaning their work station, or supplying their workplace with everything necessary for achieving their production targets. While the productivity of the Stakhanovites sky rocketed and their incomes increased correspondingly due to the piecework system, many others around them produced nothing or very little. This was less than a happy outcome for the factory plan and was especially true when the Party organization in the factory needed to prove that young communists without work experience or a high level of skilling could become Stakhanovites, or when an important amount of resources was used to push slackers to improve until their faces could appear in the factory newspaper among other leaders of production. In many cases, work norms were raised immediately after such an "achievement," after a meeting where the workers could listen to a Party official telling them that the slacker transformed into a Stakhanovite is the living proof that anybody can become a true socialist worker. Sometimes, these meetings ended abruptly because of the skilled workers' anger against the practices used to make unworthy Stakhanovites.

Since Samuel was a Stakhanovite himself and was also holding a low position in the Party hierarchy, his story was full of moral judgements of other workers who became leaders in production but who were actually "good for nothing." His experience was quite different. He entered in the factory as a 19 years old Hungarian youngster, also holding a high level of education for a worker at the time – eight years of school. Because his dexterity proved to be quite exceptional, he was quickly assigned to the sewery, where he became the first man to work together with several tens of women, generally older and more experienced than him. He remained the only man around for decades, benefiting from a generalized maternal feeling of his women colleagues. As he got older, the emotions surrounded him faded away but were replaced by respect for seniority and for his seemingly extraordinary qualitative work.

While in the beginning he disliked the idea to work together with women in a feminized job, Samuel – a highly intelligent and reflexive man – quickly realized that his

position was a fortunate one. Being a young man, his colleagues offered him care, protection, and professional advice, and never contested his phenomenal results. "We were like a family," he said to me, "I respected them like they were all my mothers, they cared for me like I was their son. They never envied me for my savings. I built this house from material saving bonuses. With my wife. [he pauses and looks at the walls and at the ceiling for a long time and when he continues talking, he has tears in his eyes and a trembling voice]. My friends [male workers from different workshops] were envied and even threatened. They [his friends' colleagues] didn't like when somebody had results, because the foreman always came to say: 'if Gergö can do this work in one day, why can't you?'"

Other interviews confirmed the fact that the "real" Stakhanovites also faced their colleagues' dislike when their example endangered the fragile shop floor order and the bitter negotiation of the work norms. Another worker recounted the story of a young friend coming from the same village, who moved to Cluj, got employed to *Tehnofrig* and soon became a celebrated Stakhanovite. He got skilled as a lathe operator and proved to be so good that directors from other factories wanted to "steal" him from *Tehnofrig* by offering him better work conditions and a house in Cluj. He negotiated his staying at *Tehnofrig* fiercely and got a housing lot, a credit, and the promise that his co-workers would help him with "volunteer work" while the factory would provide him with building materials for his house. He was also persuaded to join the Party. However, later in the year when he bragged in front of the foreman that he could execute 40 percent more pieces daily than his current record – already better than anyone's on the shop floor – his co-workers told him to slow down if he doesn't want to have his arms broken one day. When the norm-setters were around, he actually did so, but these actions brought him negative attention from the Party secretary who threatened him that he would be purged if he continued on the same line. The help of his co-workers and the building materials from the factory never came.

Various ways of participating in socialist construction metamorphosed in as many categories of rule with a social life of their own (Karlsson 2013). All these categories bore benefits and limitations advanced through processes of inclusion, exclusion, and subject transformation. Most of these benefits were further connected to the celebration of manual labour in industry as a "gateway to full citizenship" (Pittaway 2012: 7), an ideal productive citizenship. Being a Stakhanovite did not matter only or mainly because of the questionable prestige attached to it, but because of the advantages it brought. Bonuses, free subscriptions to books and magazines, discounts of 15-75 percent for workers' vacations, priority to factory housing and credits, as well as scholarships for their children, free and discounted tickets at

theatres, sporting events, cinema, and the opera, and tax exemptions.[12] Most part of these expenses was supported from the Director's Fund. Since this money was one of the few resources the managers had at their disposal and which allowed them some flexibility to employ temporary labour or to pay overtime, paying the advantages of the Stakhanovites must have been a serious inconvenience for the factory management.

As we have seen, Stakhanovism was not unambigously productive for the socialist factories in Cluj. It was expensive for the management and it endangered the free use of the Director's Fund, which was one the few financial resources the factory managers had at their disposal for compensating the severe labour shortage of the 1950s. Most probable, the peasant-workers, the commuters, and the unskilled workers did not care about the Stakhanovite movement at all, as many of the advantages held by the heroes of labour did not concern them. Sometimes, it was simply resented by workers who failed to see the leaders in production as embodiments of a certain work ethics and perceived them as a menace to the fragile balance maintained on the shop floor. Due to its inefficacy, the movement would be aborted at the end of the 1950s, together with other instruments coming from the Soviet school of management.

For the early years of really existing socialism, the real value of Stakhanovites was their exemplary position in relation with socialist accumulation as expressed in planning. Starting with the first five-year plan, being ahead of time became the corner stone of economic growth, the key feature of the Party's political vision, and the underpinning of the new social order. Most importantly, "being ahead" referred to all these dimensions of socialist construction *simultaneously*. Stakhanovism (and slacking as its mirror) makes visible a special kind of problematic simultaneity: the encounter in the present of the needs of socialist accumulation as time/time compression and escape from backwardness with the hopes and vision of the socialist civilizing process. The "five-year plan realized in four years" was exactly this: time/time compression, or the vision of a time swallowed in the process of production and the possibility to arrive in advance at a specific point in history.

It is no wonder that in the factory documents, socialist accumulation was expressed as future work brought in the present. Although quality and quantity were important indices of the plan, when figures needed to be a direct expression of accumulation they were always articulated around the idea of time. When production was scheduled for the next year, the indication was not to manufacture 10,000 more pairs of shoes than the requested 100,000, but to execute the 100,000 pairs of shoes in eleven months. Thus, the language of planning was not articulated around quantity. When factory managers reported the over-fulfilling of the

plan, they reported that the plan was fulfilled *earlier*. For instance, already in 1951, the *János Herbák* factory documents were reporting not only figures of production but also the following "socialist realities": the plan for 1950 was fulfilled before the deadline at the Rubber Factory (September 28), the Soles Factory (November 9), the Footwear Factory (December 15).

Of course, these happy outcomes were possible only if the leap in time was also realized at the individual level. Workers themselves needed to envision their work in time and to finish it in advance. Sometimes, this happened in spectacular ways. At the same leather and footwear factory, on the 7th of November 1951, the Stakhanovite Vasa Axente, representative at the Party Regional Conference, was already working for 1953, while Ciupea Ion was working for 1952 since the 16th of June 1951.[13] [14] In October 1951, 21 people were already working for 1953, 11 of them being communists.[15]

Nonetheless, the possibility to conquer time was not equally distributed. While Stakhanovites and good communists were always supposed to be ahead of their time, slackers in production, semi-proletarians, rural and seasonal workers were not working at the same pace or with the same capacity to manage themselves while manufacturing a shoe or a nail. This way, production directly constituted categories of rule and legitimated claims,[16] and was immediately translated into the language of class.

The state agents in the factory – new executives, Party organization, and Union's leaders – held a contradictory vision regarding shop floor politics, which was founded on the already explored tension between the simultaneous functioning of the state as a workers' state and as a manager state. On one hand, they continuously aimed to weaken the ties that kept a part of the workers together. The ethic they tried to infuse into the shop floor was surprisingly utilitarianist in terms of incentives and highly individualist in terms of achievements. On the other hand, they called for work based on class solidarity and loyalty to the socialist project. Although it is hard to support this claim here, it is very probable that the organization of production according to the Soviet-Taylorist model indeed debilitated old solidarities, especially of the experienced, urban workers, by fragmenting and individualizing their interests. Nevertheless, although utilitarianist and individualist attitudes can be easily found in the abundant complaints about unfair payments, wrong placements in a certain wage category, and less inspired distribution of bonuses, the workers did not unite against slackers. On the contrary, like previous chapter showed, "minding one's business" and "not being responsible" became dominant life strategies in the socialist factories, endangering the formation of socialism as a disciplinary regime.

As my interviews show, the shaming of the slackers did became reason for gossip among the workers themselves, but their reaction was very different, with gender playing a pivotal role in this difference. Women told me that seeing their face and their name on the notice board under the "bad examples" rubric was one of their most dreadful fears. When one of their colleagues ended up in this situation, women were ashamed for her and hardly discussed the matter, except for manifesting their pity. When the same thing happened to men, they seemed to be happy to make fun of one another. Nevertheless, their gossips and laughter can be hardly read as the Party organization's success in creating a current of public opinion against slackers. Making fun of a bad worker did not mean that he was going to be reported by his colleagues for missing work, for being late, for executing poor quality goods. One male worker from a younger generation – who was employed only at the beginning of the 1960s at the *Railways Workshops* – was still angry when he thought about the snitches who "were running quickly to tell everything to the foreman." In his opinion, they were "nothing. To tell something about your colleagues to your foreman . . . you were nothing."

Thus, laughter and jokes can be read more as a form of stratifying male sociality *within* groups than an expression of internalizing the aims and values of the socialist project. Good work did matter for workers. Being a good worker meant one was also a respected worker, especially if he was not "one of them" – a "fake" Stakhanovite, a snitch, or a Party leader. Being a bad worker or being less dependable was surely laughable but it did not mean that the respective worker was marginalized or that the other workers acted in any way as disciplinary agents. In interactionist language, as order-takers, the workers were alienated from the symbols and values vehiculated within the factory space, and backstage they manifested cynically about them (Collins 2004: 114). Jokes and laughter were nonetheless very serious, because even when the addressed values that the workers shared themselves – like respect for good work – they did not reflect *the same* logic as public exposure. In other words, the workers sanctioned their irony and laughter sanctioned bad workers, but in a markedly parallel universe, one that was theirs, and not the state's, and refused to take part in the appropriation of their own hierarchies.

In the actualization of the socialist project, accumulation as *being ahead of time* deeply threatened the articulation of socialism as *structure across practices* because, at the limit, each factory, each workshop, each team, and even each worker found themselves in a different point in time. Working in the account of the next month or in the account of the next year put people and the state in a special relationship with time. While one of the central dimensions of the socialist accumulation process was that people had to work simultaneously

in the present and in the future, many times they had to work in the past as well. Every now and then, people had to catch up with work undone in due time, but what they really had to catch up was not only production, but time itself. At the same moment, they had to manufacture both the objects that belonged to the past and the ones that belonged to the future. The act of work connected the recent past and the near future in a present which was never valuable for itself. *Now* had no political or economic meaning as it was always reduced to a mere vehicle for solving unfulfillments of the past and projects of the future.

Party propaganda at the factory level made it clear that today's work load was actually the production of tomorrow and their failure to do so contributes to continuing a situation of backwardness and delaying a form of progress beneficial for all. The smooth realization of the plan required that the future was always brought into now, making the present virtually disappear. But when production turned out to be merely a sequence of broken tempos and rhythms, problems occurred, unrealized goods remained to be manufactured, and the past also crept into the present's economic and political requirements. In its struggle with a backward history, in its desperate attempts to catch up, socialism placed work in the future and produced a *melting present*, one that was difficult to control and impossible to plan. The tension was permanently there, as the encounter between life, production, and the actual took place in a time which had no political value. Everything happened in a present that did not exist.

A 480 minutes workday

While the Stakhanovist movement was an expression of the struggle to fight backwardness by bringing the future into the present, another fierce battle was unfolding in the factories around the use of the working time itself. The 480 minutes of a workday became the most precious resource for growth, the resource the communists were counting on, but continuously escaped them nonetheless. These 480 minutes were a permanent measure of the transformative power of the state, which had to prove able to transmute them into *living* time and to eliminate any idle time – any time whose content was not ennobled by work. The obsession with using the whole working time was a synthetic expression of productivity as compressed time, which was from the start a fundamental dimension of industrial socialism and capitalism alike. But using the whole productive time was not imagined as just another

political trope. It was supposed to produce material effects in the workshop relations and in the production process. In short, it was supposed to produce disciplinary effects.

The five-year plan in four years as the temporal expression socialist accumulation was crucial in the passage to modern time. As E.P. Thompson shows in his 1967 celebrated article *Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism*, the path from "natural" rhythms to modern capitalist time needed first of all a divorce from task-oriented time. The danger of task-oriented time for industrial discipline stood in the fact that it was "more humanly comprehensible than timed labour," more social, less clearly separated from "life," and had a "wasteful and lacking in urgency" appearance "to men accustomed to labour timed by the clock" (Thompson 1967: 60). Most importantly, time in the factory makes people experience "a distinction between their employer's time and their 'own' time", while "the employer must *use* the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the tasks but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent" (Thompson 1967: 61). As industrial sociologists suggested, since the use of time in pre- or non-industrial societies is basically always task-oriented, an industrialization project of developing areas must tie wages to tasks, not to working hours.

The appropriation of people's time was part of the global "transition" to "industrialism," not as a series of transformations in manufacturing technique and in technology, asking for synchronization of labour and, consequently, in the culture of time everywhere (as seen by the sociology of industrialization in the 1960s and in the 1970s), but as an experience specific to nascent capitalist industry, which – as we established in the Introduction – was presupposed in the initial stages of socialist construction. Thus, I am concerned here more with "time-measurement as a means of labour exploitation" (Thompson 1967: 81), the instrument that accompanied the global multiple variations of capitalist industrialization around the world, reached the Romanian factories in the interwar period, and gained full momentum in socialism.

From the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, wasting time and idleness were prevented by keeping wages low.[17] At the foundations of capitalism, profit came entangled with Puritan ethos (Thompson 1967; Weber [1905] 2002). The machine, the money incentives, the time-sheet, the horrific fine that left families barely surviving, the time-keeper and the clock encountered the priest's vengeful sermon to discipline labour in the early cotton mills in England. People's tea-tables, late rising, weddings and funerals attending, drinking, shopping, sports, and holidays came under the scrutiny of secular and religious moralists alike. The manufacture and the Church shared the man's day and distributed it with equal

generosity to the employer and to God (Thompson 1967). In school, the child was subjected to disciplinary practices meant to imbue them with "time-thrift" as an early habituation, if not even naturalization to the toils of labour and exhaustion.

With the spreading of wrist-watches, knowledge of time itself became dangerous in the hands of the workers, and "some of the worst masters attempted to expropriate the workers of all knowledge of time" by confiscating their watched at the start of the day, in order to prevent them tell the time to their colleagues. Although regular hours were theoretically required from workers, in the absence of time knowledge, masters and managers extended the working hours as much as they pleased. Moreover, "[t]he clocks at the factories were often put forward in the morning and back at night, and instead of being instruments for the measurement of time, they were used as cloaks for cheatery and oppression. Though this was known amongst the hands, all were afraid to speak, and a workman then was afraid to carry a watch, as it was no uncommon event to dismiss any one who presumed to know too much about the science of horology" (Thompson 1967: 85-86).

Looking back, keeping workers away from their watches might be regarded as a futile and extreme action in the broader process of industrialization. However, their masters knew better, as time-discipline became the cornerstone of factory discipline, controlling the clock evolved into a crucial source of social power, and time/time compression constituted the conflictual core of industrial capitalism. Again in Thompson's words,

> The first generation of factory workers were taught by their masters the importance of time; the second generation formed their short-time committees in the ten-hour movement; the third generation struck for overtime or time-and-a-half. They had accepted the categories of their employers and learned to fight back within them. They had learned their lesson, that time is money, only too well" (Thompson 1967: 86).

Thus, time-discipline was never going to become fully successful. Different rhythms were going to be informally accepted and even institutionalized in the emerging industry.[18]

Similar problems were encountered wherever the mercantilist model of time-discipline was exported together with "modernization" and "development" until the current days. The problematic relationship with time and work was used against the Mexican peons transformed into miners at the beginning of the 20th century who were described as lacking

initiative, being unable to save time and money, having too many holidays, indolent, infantile, subsuming industrial work to agriculture-based subsistence (Thompson 1967). It was linked to complex accounting systems in the Spanish royal monopoly on tobacco production (Carmona, Ezzamel, and Gutierrez 1994). It was employed for moralizing workers in colonial Nigeria and Cameroon (Wells and Warmington 1962), to help the colonizers prove the "natural inferiority" of the natives in Latin America, to calculate the distance from standard expectations of modernity as metanarrative in Zambia (Ferguson 1999), or to silence workers in Bombay cotton-mills (Thompson 1967). Time-discipline has travelled across centuries in the Malaysian feminized factories of late capitalism, where "spirits" resisted it by taking control over women who were undertaking their own transition from peasant life to factory constraints (Ong 1987), or in the postsocialist enterprises in Poland or in Romania to dislocate workers' old solidarities (Dunn 2004). Most importantly for my analysis of the Romanian factories in early socialism, time-discipline was central to the Bolshevik vision as it was supposed to mark the passage to a New World and to a New Man on the post-revolutionary shop floors of the Soviet NEP (Siegelbaum and Suny 1994), in the Stalinist industrial plants of Magnitogorsk (Kotkin 1997), Budapest, Tatabanya, and Zala (Pittaway 2012), Nowa Huta (Lebow 2013), Wroclaw (Kenney 1997), or Lodz (Poblocki 2010). Time-discipline seems simply inevitable wherever capitalist industrialism in all its shapes takes over, and where "the insistent energies of industrial man" (Thompson 1967: 93) need to be released.

The documents from the factories and from the Regional Party Committee in Cluj are full of endless complaints about workers skipping work days without reporting to their foremen or about them being late.[19] Factory managers often complained that the workers were tired because they were working under pressure, especially in the last week of the month and in the last month of the year.[20] The production tempos also depended on the specific needs of the workers, on their skills – which generally did not allow them to be moved around to execute different tasks, and on their power to negotiate their physical presence in the factory.[21] This was evident especially during the summer months, when the semi-proletarian labour force preferred to stay home, in the villages around Cluj, to work their gardens and the plot their parents or themselves had in the collective farms.

These complaints intensified already in 1950, when the calculations of the government resulted in the requirement that the workers had to use at least 83% of the working time every month.

> For the second trimester, you have to take action to use at least 83% of the working-time, to reduce the justified and unjustified absences from work, the stagnations in the production process, the percentage of the illness situation through preventive and curative measures, and to spread the vacation leaves throughout the year in such a way that they will not hamper the production. You will also extend the piece work within the factory, so the ratio of the piece work labourers to the total becomes 77%.[22]

The state also decided that the factory managers were to be held responsible for taking all the necessary measures to reduce the absences from work, the stagnations in production, the accidents and the cases of real or faked illness. They had to eliminate all pauses in the production process and to raise productivity by enforcing a more disciplined way of working. However, the problems were there to stay.

The Party leaders, the youth mass organizations and the unions were blamed for their incapacity to show "comradely warmth" to the newcomers and for their inability to communicate the advantages of constancy and rhythmicity. As the directors reported tens of workers missing for several days or others being late for almost an hour in the morning, it was not the workers, but the hierarchies of the Party and the factory management to be blamed for these situations:

> Regarding the attitude towards work, because the Regional, the County and the City Committees and the local Party organizations did not show sufficient preoccupation for their activity, many problems persist, especially those related to the workers not fully using their working time and skipping work when they want. Counting only the days they skipped in October at *Industria Sârmei*, we find out that these amount to 2,356 working days, which represent one's worker's eight years of work. And this happens because neither the Party organizations nor the unions took this problem in their hands. They failed to educate the workers politically and they do not liquidate this problem even today.[23]

The Party organizations discursively assumed this blame and started to enrich and intensify their agitprop activity.

In the official discourse, missing work was immediately metaphorically transformed

in "hundreds of tons of fabric," or in "tens of thousands of shoe pairs" that did not enter the economic circuit.[24] Most often, though, absences from illness, absences on leave, and truancies were not calculated in days off, but as an ideal working-time for an abstract worker. At one factory, the 2,356 days missed from work without a legitimate reason in October 1951 were equated by the local Party organization with eight years of work for one labourer.[25] At another factory, the foremen reported around 30-50 daily truancies. An extra of 800 minutes were lost daily because of the workers being tardy. They were equated to two days of work or 700 lost days in one year and further with the yearly work load of two workers.[26] The official account over the activity of the City Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in 1954 reproduced the same logic of calculation, stating that the incapacity of some industrial units to fulfil their plan and to keep production costs low had its roots in workers' lack of discipline.[27] The Party officials reported that more than 170,000 workdays were lost in Cluj in one year because of the workers' truancies, equating them to the one-year production of a factory with 620 workers. The expression condensed the main concerns of the Party in the 1950s: the disastrous effects of rowdiness over production and its consequences in terms of losing time, all being the result of the distance between the actual worker and the abstract bearer of socialist construction. For the Party, it was a way to underline the gravity of the lack of discipline among the workers but it was also an expression which intimately connected ideal work to an ideal time flow and to an ideal labourer, the subject of the emerging political project. Truancies, delays, stalling, and wasting time in any way became the object of a political struggle. As the managers would recollect in their interviews, this was going to be a task for generations, never fully accomplished and contingent upon future transformations of the regime.

Small issues related to the efficiency of a certain workplaces were often contested by the workers. In 1950, a foreman was complaining to the factory managers that he could not "imprint the sense of cleanliness" in his people and that "a young comrade, when asked to deposit his dirt in a different part of the workshop refused bluntly by saying he wanted to earn money, not to carry garbage from one place to another and waste time."[28] Thus, the logic of the 480 minutes workday was turned in its head by the workers themselves when they refused extra tasks or when asked to organize their work differently.

The alliance between the foremen and the workers was under attack immediately after planning was introduced. An official notice from the director of *Dermata*, read as usually during the workers' lunch, announced them that any leave permit from the foreman had to be cross-signed by people from the Personnel Office:

> The working-time is shortened by many comrades who leave the precinct of the factory under various pretexts and having permits from the foremen. Taking into account the fact that fulfilling the State plan depends upon fulfilling the job tasks in time and the fact that the control at the factory gate is made difficult by the increased traffic, we introduce a new system for checking the personnel who leave their job during the working hours.
>
> In the future, all those who want to leave their job during the working-hours, after getting the consent of their foremen, have to come to the Personnel Office where they will get the final approval or rejection of their leaving request.[29]

Letting the bureaucrats have the last say on workers' possibility of moving around and solving their problems during their working hours was received with hostility by people who started to boo the announcement and to throw with bread towards the loudspeakers. It was not long until undercutting the authority of the foremen had consequences in the disciplinary regime of the factories and new legislation for "repairing" the authority of the foremen was needed.[30] Even worse, the unions and the Party organizations themselves were found guilty of collaborating with the workers and of preventing the factory managers to fire the slackers and the ones who were disorganizing production.

A continuous effort was made to replace archaic rhythms of the seasonal passing, religious holidays, or personal celebrations with a continuous, uniform, homogenous use of time throughout the year. The whole notion of "break" or "vacation" received a new meaning and was made fully dependent upon the necessities of production. Theoretically, workers' vacations were spread according to the rhythm of production, to the flows of raw materials, and to the rapidly changing requirements of *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear*.[31] They were to be distributed along the whole year, as a substitute for the summer breaks[32] when people used to work their gardens or their plots outside the city. However, every summer of the first five-year plan was a painful proof of the impossibility to control labour. Not only the commuters but also the urban workers left the factory during the summer for work in the countryside. In the rare occasions when the peasant-workers were threatened with firing, they simply stayed home for the summer and look for employment in a different factory in winter.

Asking people to work during a religious holiday had a double function: it kept the

production going and it marked a passage to a "modern time", a secular one. Nonetheless, people found ways to undercut the strategies of the factory management during religious holidays. For instance, a 1951 production report from *János Herbak* showed that during the week when the Hungarians celebrated Easter, production figures fell dramatically. The workshops with a dominantly womanised workforce basically stopped when women announced *en masse* that they were sick. A quick check at their homes found them cleaning their houses and baking for Easter. Some of them were found cleaning other people's houses for extra money. Women were summoned to come back to work but they simply refused and promised to make up for their absence next week. They did, so no sanctions were issued.[33]

At the same factory, religious celebrations became an issue of ethnic conflict. Rumours appeared that the government would allow the workers to take free days only during the Orthodox Easter. As the Romanians were Orthodox and the Hungarians were Catholics, Unitarians, and Calvinists, the Hungarian workers cornered the director (Hungarian himself) on the corridors and threatened they would all leave if they were not allowed to celebrate Easter "in peace." They did miss work the next day after Easter Sunday. No sanctions were issued but "the bad situation at *János Herbák*" became the topic of some very heated debates between members of the Regional Party Committee and the factory managers themselves. The proposed solution for "the Easter problem" was to unify the two dates when the Catholics and the Orthodox celebrated it. Of course, the solution was totally unrealistic and made the Hungarian workers furious when announced to them. They were immediately sure this would only mean that "Hungarian Easter would be cancelled."[34] The leaders of the factory Party organization panicked and advised their superiors to let people have their religious holidays celebrated the way they were used to. They expressively showed that workers could not be convinced that "celebrating Easter meant not accomplishing the Plan" and that the problem became not only "a planning issue" but also a political one as it was immediately translated using an ethnic key. The reports on the workers' mood warned the higher Party officials that the situation in the factory could escalate quickly if any attempt to stop people celebrate Easter would be made.

Party's obsession with labour's "hidden reserves" on which socialist accumulation and planning were founded were brought forward every time when disciplinary issues were discussed. In 1953, a representative of the Consumer Goods Industry was bragging that his Department realized their 1952 plan in 11 months and 11 days. He further insisted that all factories should fulfil the yearly plans in eleven months, and the five-year plan in four years.

> All factories should reassess their possibilities of production and use at the maximum all their existing reserves. They have to give special importance to the industrial equipment, which must be maintained in a good functioning state through daily care and through the 100% fulfilment of the repairing plan.
>
> The organization of the workplace is also very important, its cleanliness and order make the worker connect more strongly to the factory, giving a better productivity, which leads further to fulfilling the plan ahead of time.
>
> You have to mobilize the workers against the truancies which decelerate production and represent a setback for the fulfilment of the plan.[35]

And further

> You have to fight to discover and mobilize the internal reserves of the factories, to use at the maximum the capacity of the machines, to organize your work better, in such a way that not a single hour, not a single minute to be wasted away.[36]

But hours and minutes continued to be wasted away by workers' drinking, sleeping during the night shifts, spontaneous gathering to discuss issues related to work or to manifest their discontent, or simply prolonging their smoking breaks or recipes exchanges.[37]

From the very beginning, the complementary requirement for the full usage of the working-time was to cut overtime completely or at least reduce it as much as possible. Immediately after the nationalization, necessary overtime was a question of guessing and approximation by experience. The tendency was to reduce it continuously by pushing the workers and the managers to find ways to use less and less hours for production. For instance, in June 1948, a factory got the authorization to use 15% overtime every month. In December, the factory used only 12% of the authorized overtime. In January 1949, the new target was immediately changed to 12%, although theoretically its 15% overtime was authorized for the whole year, until June 1949.[38] During the first one-year plan, in 1949, overtime was set to a maximum of 3% of the baseline wage.

Forcing the factory managers to drop overtime as a strategy for fulfilling the plan was a central preoccupation for the Party immediately after the nationalization. It became the subject of some of the first instructions given by the communist government to the newly appointed factory managers, who were asked to "pay attention to the overtime regime and to

use it only if it is mandatory to fulfil the production program," because "overtime is not profitable and it increases the costs of production of the factory."[39] The decision to employ overtime respected a hierarchical chain which went up to the Ministers Council. It was presented in this form to the factory managers:

> You are not allowed to exceed 5% overtime. Up to 3%, the overtime must be approved by the Director of *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear*. The overtime between 3-5% will be approved by the Adjunct Minister. Anything above 5% must be agreed upon with the Ministers Council. The overtime will be calculated taking the total number of the employees as the base and then multiplying that by 8.[40]

Thus, in 1949, the first year of planning, the amount of overtime approved by the government in leather and footwear industry was 5 percent of the wage fund at factory level and a maximum of 25 percent of a worker's salary. However, some workers at *János Herbák* earned an extra of 60-70 percent of their wage by adding working hours to their daily activity.[41] The only "sanction" for the management was an ironic note from the Light Industry Ministry, offering some loose guidance for the future.

Lack of direct consequences was neither universal, nor permanent. Officially, labour shortage was rarely accepted as a reason for overtime by the higher echelons of the Party. Poor organization of production and unconvincing persuasion work were generally considered the main problems underlying overtime in the factory. The workers were never to be blamed and the Party organizations, the Unions, and the factory management were made culpable for not being successful enough in demonstrating to their fellow workers that employing overtime led to a chronic lack of efficiency at the shop floor level.

The relationship between production cost and overtime had to be made transparent to the workers through a variety of means: lectures, banners, posters, newspapers, production meetings, face-to-face conversations, brochures and, most of all, through the popularization of their collective contracts with the factory, as recommended in 1951 by the officials from the City County Committee: "A better organization of the production process must be introduced in the Collective Contract. Cutting overtime must be included as well, stating that overtime can be used only in exceptional situations, because it contributes to the increase of the production cost."[42] In April 1950, the use of the overtime had been completely banned through official dispositions from Bucharest. As a consequence, the plan for the second

semester of 1950 was not fulfilled at several factories in Cluj. The production had to be re-planned and the work load divided again among the workers.[43] Nonetheless, overtime remained the most widespread strategy for fulfilling the plan. Sometimes, it was paid directly through the wage fund, sometimes through the Director's Fund, and sometimes through governmental funds after heated negotiations with the Ministry. It increased the costs of production, which had to be balanced further by lowering quality standards and using different raw materials.

Detailed instructions for how the factories could do "everything possible to eliminate overtime"[44] were issued by the *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear*[45] as part of the 1949 effort to regulate the space of the factory. An example reads as follows:

> We indicate the following means to eliminate the overtime:
>
> a. The revision of the machines and of the installations has to be done necessarily after work or on Sunday. For this type of operations, you can institute a different work schedule and another rest day than for the ones who work in the productive workshops.
> b. The overtime needed for unpredicted work, like accidental repairing, unloading wagons which come too late and others, must be compensated in such a way that the total number of the hours worked in a month equals 8 hours multiplied by the number of the working days and by the number of workers.
> c. For every piece of work that needs continuity in the production process, ..., the factory is allowed to employ one worker at every six others. He will replace the other six in their rest days, which will be spread over the week.
> d. To prevent the necessity to use overtime because of the inherent moments when the workers miss work for health reasons or for rare accidental reasons, the factory will hire a number of 2-3% extra workers, over the theoretical necessities of the plan. You will use them for maintenance when there are no missing productive workers.
> e. To compensate for the lack of skilled workers, you will pay attention to the professional schools from your industrial units. This way, you will create your own skilled workers.

Nevertheless, the need for overtime was growing. In January 1950, the Footwear Factory reported a 0.03% over-fulfilment of the plan. The small achievement suggested that the factory was reaching its limits; the fact that it was possible only with the help of many overtime hours showed that the figures of the plan could not have been met at that point without more workers. Since hiring new labour force, buying new industrial equipment, and finding raw materials on the market was strictly prohibited, the factory managers tried to use unpaid overtime to compensate for the lack of productive resources. In the factory committee meetings, the chief engineer, comrade Rado, underlined the problems in production: many sick workers, many leaves of absence, the huge labour turnout and the discontinuities in production made overtime necessary. In fact, he declared firmly that the fulfilment of the plan was impossible without asking people to work more, sometimes even without paying them.

Not paying the workers for their extra hours proved to be a bad idea. Few months later, the *Leather and Footwear Central Office* tried to enforce its regulations on the matter but they hit a wall. From a report on the activity of *János Herbák* for the third trimester of 1950 we learn that in February, the workers executed 30.000 hours overtime, compared to a monthly average of 23.000 hours.[46] The factory management could not make any decision with regard to the payment of these hours and had to wait for a solutioning of the case by the Light Industry Ministry, whose executives considered that "the plan must be executed without overtime, because it makes workmanship expensive and it reduces the outturn of labour."[47] After one month, the executives were allowed to pay only for 34 percent of the overtime while the rest of the money was imputed to the director and to the chief accountant. Besides the political mistake of making the workers angry, the factory managers committed the error of not informing *The Central Office of Leather and Footwear* that the plan was realized by using overtime. Therefore, the plan for the following months was increased and even more overtime was needed for its fulfilment.[48]

Meanwhile, the workers grew impatient about their money and manifested their discontent in a more and more noisy fashion, loudly complaining to the Union and to the Party Organization of the factory. The Party Organization in the factory and the Union reacted instantaneously by asking the management to cover all the overtime and pay the workers immediately. In their Report presented at meeting for analysing the work of the factory in November, the representative of the Party Organization furiously attacked the management: "Not paying the overtime created a bad political atmosphere within the enterprise. In a word, it reversed all the work done by the Party until now. These practices

were habits for capitalists, not for us."[49] They reproached the economic executives that they executed the instructions of the Ministry "in a mechanical way", not taking into account the discontent of the workers created by such a measure.[50] Comrade Turos, the leader of the Party organization of the factory, put things in order:

> According to the Party organization, our superiors execute the instructions in a mechanical manner. Overtime must be paid. Unpaid overtime has created a bad political atmosphere within the factory and it has overturned the whole political work of the Party. This type of procedures were only practiced in capitalist times. The comrades from the factory management must present the real situation to the Leather and Footwear Direction and they must insist for a favourable solution without fearing their jobs.[51]

The factory management was authorized to use the director's fund for covering the extra hours, but was threatened that next time they were going to pay it from their own pocket. This was going to become a common sequence in the negotiation of overtime. The accusation of mechanical application of orders was also quite spread in the factory meetings when a problem remained unsolved for a long time. "Formalism" and "mechanicism" were opposed to a creative style of management and an intuitive interpretation of the hierarchical directives. But the ambiguity created was used not only by the local Party activists or by the governmental officials but also by the factory managers themselves who invoked both "creativity" and "following orders" to justify their actions.

The quick and firm political response proved that the Party was determined to protect its workers by using not only legal leverages but also the process of production itself. Making people use their entire working day was the direct responsibility of the factory but it made sense only if the factory could be understood also as an important space where moral regulation (Corrigan and Sayer 1985) was accomplished. Thus, factory was defined as a political space *par excellence*, a site for exercising state power and for producing it. Ruling over productive time was central for the state both in its pursuit of accumulation and in its political project. It also offered good momentary opportunities for creating a negotiated order between the local Party leaders, the new economic executives, and the workers.

Working in the future? Socialist *Ungleichzeitigkeit*

In the last chapter of my thesis, the Stakhanovist movement and the issue of transforming the 480 minutes in living-working time were employed as windows into one of the most challenging aspects of socialist construction in conditions of backwardness: the battle with time. These two aspects revealed socialism – both as project, and as historical unfolding – as a conflicting temporal regime. They show how the temporalities of socialism were rooted in the tense but mutually feeding relationship between disciplinary procedures and the ontological fracture presupposed by the emerging new world. Making "new" workers could not be separated from managing the "actually existing" ones and the creation of the New Man could not be separated from the mundane concerns related to labour control. Production management in socialism was not firmly placed into the disciplinary realm, but rather at the intersection between disciplining in order to transform and purifying in order to transcend. The impossibility to separate these processes was situated at the intersection between a "deficient modernity" and a "modernity consummated" (Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2009), between the backwardness of the semi-proletarian and the advanced historical consciousness of the Stakhanovite.

With these insights into the conflicting temporalities of socialism, my incursion in the contradictory universe of really existing socialism ends. We looked into the difficulty to translate nationalism into the language of class struggle in Transylvania. We have explored the fragility of the socialist state as it had to function simultaneously as a workers' state and as a manager state. We have seen how mimicry came into play when the state acted as if both its collective and its individual subject was already there. We dived into the contradictory workings of a proletarian regime without proletarians and into the paradoxical ways in which socialist accumulation was supported by a non-socialist exterior. We glimpsed into the emergence of a chaotic unofficial labour market and into the life strategies of the mid-20th century workers, many of them caught in the centre of socialist primitive accumulation, somewhere in-between the city and the countryside, trying to survive and to make sense of a changing world. We got a deeper understanding of the issue of knowledge in central planning and we got some insights into the prerequisites of planning beyond those offered by the socialist calculation debate or by the issue of legibility. We witnessed the problematic functioning of the socialist factory as a disciplinary regime and we observed the 1950s shop floors as dry wombs, incapable to bear the new hegemony and send it into the world at large.

But the struggle around time was not simply adding to the struggles and contradictions analysed in the previous chapters of my thesis, it was a generative one. First, because in conditions of backwardness, labour productivity was most of the time the only resource the state had at its disposal for the accumulation of capital. Second, because labour productivity itself had to spring from workers' progressive historical consciousness, which emerged at best as problematic in the early years of socialism. So, what remains to be done in this section is to understand more clearly the encounter between the temporal horizons which collided in the socialist civilizing process and in production itself. In other words, to anatomize socialist construction as nonsynchronicity.

If we cannot understand the contradictions of really existing socialism simply as contradictions of capitalism (Harvey 2014), it is because the impossibility to erect socialism in historical simultaneity was constitutive to the Bolshevik project and to its Eastern and Central European variants. Ernst Bloch's concept of "nonsynchronicity" [*Ungleichzeitigkeit*] was coined as a tool to open the puzzle of the temporal confusion behind the right leaning sympathies and loyalties of different social categories in the 1930s Germany – especially of the petty bourgeoisie and of the peasantry. Bloch argues that the existence of pre-capitalist economic structures and their accompanying (i)rational expressions and the economic, political, and ideological backwardness of the German bourgeoisie constituted the ground, „the moist hummus" on which Right radicalism of the middle-classes in Germany grew. The return to the past became appealing as an expression of „homesickness", an idealization of „home" as an undefined place in the past – security, peace, quietness, freshness (Bloch and Ritter 1977).

As a political project, Bolshevism was more than anything a living radical negation of the past. The idealized "home" of early socialist construction was always in the future. The fulfilment of the five-year plan in four years, the fulfilment of the 1952 plan in November, the Stakhanovist Marian Vasile working in June 1953 for October 1954, or *Tehnofrig* working in August 1954 in the account of April 1955 are all expressions that link accumulation directly to historical advancement. Moreover, slackers (as individual embodiments of backwardness) and non-proletarians (as its class incarnations) worked not in the future, but in the past. Since not all workers were capable of working in the future, the calculation of the precise point in time when a specific worker produced was a painful mirror of all the different temporal horizons people brought with them in the factory. At the limit, within this space, planning as the bearer of labour intensive accumulation and as a path out of backwardness became a hopeless vision. At the extreme, it became impossible.

Thus, instead of being simply a coordinating mechanism and a foundation for calculating needs and means, planning in socialism was the ultimate articulation of accumulating in order to transcend and the first means to assess the successes and the failures in the making of the socialist worker. But projects that dwell in the future put no less pressure on the present than those who linger in the past. They also devoid the Now of substance and reality, by making it into a mere vehicle for a future instantiation of a bright vision. At the limit, not only the past but also the Now is dismissed as a second-hand historical time. Nonetheless, as we have seen throughout this thesis, since production happened in the present, since the battle for the 480 minutes workday was fought in the present, the Now always came back with a vengeance.

Thus, in planning, "different years resound in the one that has just been recorded and prevails" (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 22). As my thesis made clear, not only the skilled, experienced workers, but also the not-fully-proletarian labourers were "more precious than gold" for the socialist state, although they constantly failed to centre their existence around factory life. This was the contradictory element that drove the productive needs of the factories in the 1950s: socialism needed workers, but the practices and mentality of the actually existing ones had to be relegated to an "absolute past" (Bloch and Ritter 1977). Thus, the unskilled, rowdy, and truant peasant-worker synthesised the nonsynchronicity of the plan, both at a personal and at class level. In other words, "a person who is simply awkward and who for that reason is not up to the demands of his position, is only personally unable to keep up. But what if there are other reasons why he does not fit into a very modern organization, such as the after-effects of peasant descent, what if he is *an earlier type*?" (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 22, my emphasis). Since these "earlier types" were fundamental for early socialist industrialization, the communists could do nothing to stop the "past" entering the factory gates. Moreover, socialist construction as a class making project was simultaneously endangered since it was in production first of all that class had to become the bearer of socialist ethos. As we have seen, it was going to be a task for generations, never accomplished, and always putting pressure on the state's technologies of government and political rationalities.

For an industrial regime, this fundamental nonsynchronicity could have been deadly. The categories of rule with which the state operated in the early phase of socialism represented precisely the encounter between primitive accumulation and a very specific vision of the future. As my discussion about the Romanian proletarianization showed, the factory walls were porous, and people's life strategies crept in, in many instances simply

debilitating production. Thus, although the peasant-workers were key figures of early socialist accumulation, they were also seen as "earlier bodies [that] emerge in the Now and send a bit of prehistoric life into it" (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 23), penetrating the factory with their primitive practices, beliefs, allegiances, and rhythms.

The communist leaders, then, became painfully aware of the fact that "backwardness" was not a homogeneous realm from which they could escape. It was fluid, resistant, and contagious, thus it could not be simply left behind. Appealing again to Bloch's analysis,

> If misery only afflicted synchronous people, even though of different positions, origins, and consciousness, it could not make them march in such different direction, especially not so far backwards. They would not have such difficulty "understanding" the communist language which is quite completely synchronous and precisely oriented to the most advanced economy. Synchronous people could not permit themselves to be so largely brutalized and romanticized, in spite of their mediate position, which keeps them economically stupid, in spite of all the semblance that has a place there (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 28).

This is why nationalization understood as change in property relations was never enough for taking control over the factories and the "rationalization" of production became the main trope of the Romanian industrialization during the first five-year plan. This is also why Stakhanovism was aborted after a relatively short while, and socialist competitions became more and more an honorary enterprise.

While the revolutionary class-conscious proletarian was supposed to be the historical conclusion of the *synchronous* contradictions of capitalism, within the factory walls the communists battled with contradictory factors "*alien* to the Now" (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 31, emphasis in original), which were both subjectively nonsynchronous – "simply torpid not wanting of the Now" and objectively nonsynchronous – "an existing remnant of earlier times in the present" (ibid.). When workers made cruel jokes to former capitalists, clerks, artisans, kulaks, or lawyers and handed them hot tools (see Chapter 4), it was not simply revenge. It was the reflection of their empowerment, which came from the acute feeling that they were in the Now and the others were in the past. When peasants from the state farms or from the collective farms stopped working after eight hours and invoked their rights *as workers*, they appealed at the same Now. When the Party secretaries in the countryside rapidly put things in

order and denied their claims because they were peasants, they were simply expressing the fact that in socialism not everybody was entitled to be in the Now. Since socialist accumulation was first of all primitive accumulation, the collectivized peasants might have seen themselves as workers (although this was rarely the case) but they could not become"real" workers *just yet*.

By welcoming peasants into the factory, the communists also allowed their rationalities, corresponding to old relations and forces of production to enter the gates. Moreover, as the state externalized part of their reproduction to subsistence economy in the countryside, these "old" forms were actually extremely concrete and continued to structure people's experience and visions of the future, expecting the workers to come *home* to them after work, or even to abandon the factory. The hailing of these proto-capitalist forms structured all those capitalist contradictions that were magnified by the socialist project in its initial phase.

The revolutionary chronology of the Bolsheviks, whose abstraction became the blueprint of Eastern and Central European socialism, was founded on the "objectively nonsynchronous" - not only as the after-effect of some "declining remnants", residuals of previous eras, but also on an "uncompleted *past*, which has not yet been 'sublated' by capitalism" (Bloch and Ritter 1977: 32). As discussed in the Introduction, in the Bolshevik case, the radical fight against backwardness and isolation, and the specific way in which it was envisioned became a source of separation between workers' politics and production politics, much debated at the time by the revolutionary leaders. The seed of this split between the Party, the workers, and the "objective" necessities of development was a particular and narrow reading of Marx, regarding especially the determination of superstructure by the base, and the abstract chronology of revolution (Corrigan, Ramsey, and Sayer 1978). With the main goal of creating an advanced industrial regime, the Bolsheviks built their project upon an impoverished notion of "production" which reproduced and expanded capitalist social relations and uncritically surrendered to the metanarrative of "modernization," which required *first of all* the development of the "economic" infrastructure, with the change of property relations. This vision reduced production to technique and social relations to ownership and "state capture" was the unique strategy meant to materialize the new world (Corrigan, Ramsey, and Sayer 1978).

This project, adopted by or forced upon Eastern and Central European governments after World War II, was centred not only around the same conceptual lines, but also around the same ideal historical sequence. Thus, production must (chrono)logically *precede* the

political and the social. In practice, however, this precedence had to be permanently negotiated, which made the Now a time of "concessions" and "delays." In short, a disappointing time. The communists leaders had to permanently situate themselves on the path to modernity, with its abstract, post-historical end, and its rigid stages, by comparing their mastery of reality on the ground with an ideal flow of history. Most importantly, producing was always about placing oneself – but also the economy, the country, the society, and the state – in time.

Notes

[1] *The Life of Our Factory* (Viaţa Uzinei Noastre), 12 Octombrie 1951

[2] *The Life of Our Factory* (Viata Uzinei Noastre), 18 Decembrie 1951

[3] Conferinta Vasile Luca

[4] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 322 / 1952, Proces verbal, 11.01.1952, p. 127

[5] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 322 / 1952, Raport de activitate al Comitetului Orasenesc de Partid pe trimestrul II 1952 (36 – 47), p. 40

[6] Viaţa Uzinei Noastre, Document: 1 Mai 1952

[7] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Comitetul de Partid: Uzinele de Piele si Incaptaminte si C.F.R., Dosar 10 / 1953, Planuri de munca, rapoarte, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, Nota informativa, p. 203

[8] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Comitetul de Partid: Uzinele de Piele si Incaptaminte si C.F.R., Dosar 10 / 1953, Planuri de munca, rapoarte, dari de seama, hotarari, procese verbale, Nota informativa, p. 214

[9] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951,Proces verbal, 28.04.1951

[10] I preserved here the sometimes funny spelling of the names used by the Party organizations for the Soviet methods' inventors.

[11] Viata Uzinei Noastre, 28 Octombrie 1951

[12] The Decree of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party and of the Council of Ministers of the R.P.R. with regard to Stakhanovites and leaders in production and their moral and material stimulations, 1951; and Decree no 153 with regard of income taxes, BO no 22, May 11, 1954.

[13] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 34/ 1951, Darea de seama a Comitetului Regional de Partid Cluj pentru Conferinta Regionala

[14] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele

Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951, Proces verbal, 2 Ianuarie 1951, ora 6 dimineata

[15] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 322 / 1952, Darea de seama pe anul 1951 a Comitetului Orasenesc de Partid Cluj (73 – 98), p. 81

[16] As the evolution of employment biographies showed, it became more and more independent from social origin and more related to work performance.

[17] See the informative example of the Law Book of the Crowley Iron Works, with its sections Warden at the Mill and the Monitor in Thompson's article.

[18] See also Pollard 1965 for a synthetic – although less sensitive to historical specificity and trends – view on the issue of factory discipline and irregularity of working rhythms.

[19] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 6 / 1950, Darea de seama asupra activitatii depuse de Comitetul Regional P.M.R. in perioada 1 Octombrie – 31 Decembrie 1950

[20] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 269 / 1953, Material in legatura cu analiza muncii facuta de Comitetul de Partid de la Uzinele Janos Herbak, in special felul in care ajuta organizatiile de partid si de masa in realizarea planului de productie, Referat, 4 Iulie 1953, p. 5

[21] Fond Clujana, Dosar 14-28 / 1955, Instructiuni, memorii, situatii

[22] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, Sarcini de plan pe trim. III, 4 Iulie 1950, p. 108

[23] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 34/ 1951, Darea de seama a Comitetului Regional de Partid Cluj pentru Conferinta Regionala, p. 93.

[24] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak Janos, Dosar 253 / 64, Plan de munca, procese verbale si rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Herbak Janos, Raport, p. 3

[25] P.C.R. Fond 13, Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj, Dosar 34 / 1951, Dari de seama si rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Regional de Partid, rapoarte, referate, informari pentru CC al PMR, p. 93

[26] Viata Uzinei Noastre, 15 Iunie 1953

[27] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materiale prezentate in sedinte de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, Dosar 2 / 1955, Darea de seama asupra activitatii comitetului orasenesc de partid, p. 236 (228 – 272)

[28] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei Janos Herbak, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie, 9 Decembrie 1950, p. 8.

[29] Fond Clujana, Dosar 0 / 1949, Circulari si Publicatiuni, Circulara 172, 17 Octombrie 1949

[30] Legislation here.

[31] Fond Clujana, Dosar 28 / 135 / 1950, Instructiuni D.G.I.P.C.

[32] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare, Instructiuni nr. 7, 14 Februarie 1949, Decizia Ministerului Industriei nr. 664 – concedii in 1949

[33] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak, Dosar 248 / 73, Plan de munca, procese verbale de birou si Comitet si rapoarte ale secretarului politic al Sectorului Herbak Janos, p.65.

[34] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak, Dosar 248 / 73, Plan de munca, procese verbale de birou si Comitet si rapoarte ale secretarului politic al Sectorului Herbak Janos, p.65.

[35] Fond Clujana, Dosar 29-23 / 1952, Instructiuni si adrese M.I.U., Directiunea Herbak catre MIU, 5 Iunie 1952, p. 93

[36] Fond Clujana, Dosar 29-23 / 1952, Instructiuni si adrese M.I.U., Directiunea Herbak catre MIU, 5 Iunie 1952, p. 107

[37] P.C.R. Fond 55, Comitetul Orasenesc P.M.R. Cluj, Materialele sedintelor de birou si plenare, materialele Conferintei orasenesti de partid, materialele sectiilor: organizatorica, agitatie si propaganda, economica, Dosar 1 / 1951. Nota despre prelucrarea Planului Cincinal in intreprinderi pana in ziua de 14.01.1951, Cluj, 15 Ianuarie 1951 (280-281).

[38] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare,Instructiuni nr. 7, 14 Februarie 1949, p. 74

[39] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33 / 105 / 1949, Instructiuni provizorii catre directorii intreprinderilor nationalizate, p. 2

[40] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare, Circulara nr. 440, p. 47

[41] Fond Clujana, Dosar 0 / 1949, Circulari si Publicatiuni, Circulara 185, 27 Octombrie 1949

[42] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak Janos, Dosar 253 / 64, Plan de munca, procese verbale si rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Herbak Janos. Raport

[43] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak Janos, Dosar 253 / 64, Plan de munca, procese verbale si rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Herbak Janos, Raport

[44] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare, Instructiuni nr. 7, 14 Februarie 1949, p. 74

[45] Fond Clujana, Dosar 33/ 41 / 1949, Instructiuni primite de la Centrala Industriala a Pielariei si diferite circulare Instructiuni nr. 7, 14 Februarie 1949

[46] P.C.R. fond 3, Comitetul Judetean P.M.R. Cluj, Sectorul Herbak Janos, Dosar 253 / 64, Plan de munca, procese verbale si rapoarte de activitate ale Comitetului Herbak Janos. Raport

[47] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, 15 Martie 1950, p. 76

[48] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, 15 Martie 1950, p. 77

[49] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 / 23 / 1950, Procese verbale adresate de Consiliul Uzinei Janos Herbak, cu ocazia sedintei de analiza muncii pe luna noiembrie. Raport despre activitatea intreprinderii pe trimestrul III, anul 1950 (p. 80)

[50] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, 15 Martie 1950, p. 76

[51] Fond Clujana, Dosar 24 -76 / 1950, Realizarea planului de stat, 15 Martie 1950, p. 80

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