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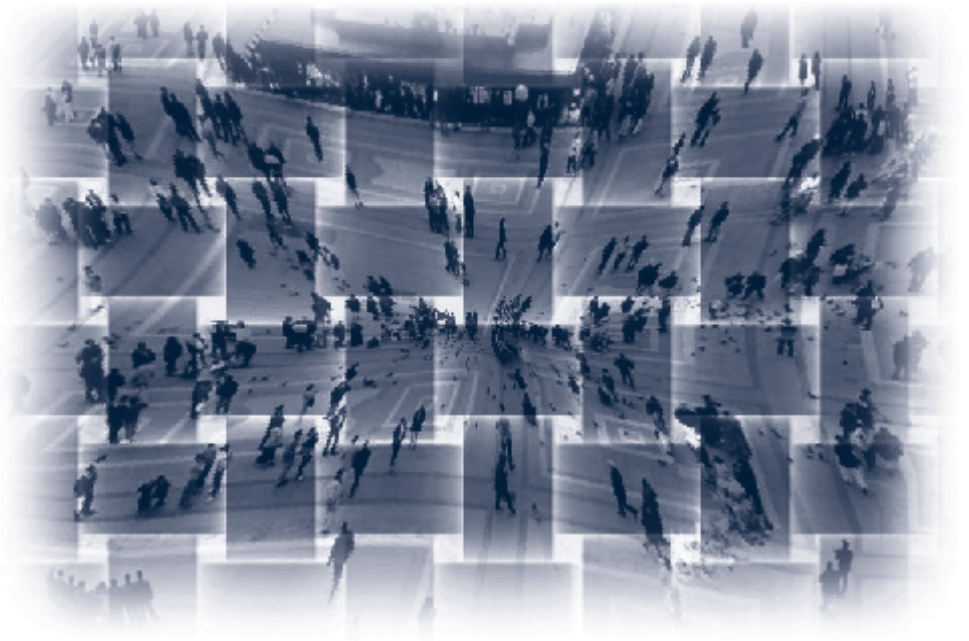

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Academic papers grounded in empirical research or focused on the social realities of Central and Eastern Europe are particularly welcomed.

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CYCLES OF CHANGE: INDUSTRIAL DYNAMICS AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF ROMA IN ROMANIA

Special Issue. Guest Editors: Neda Deneva and Manuel Mireanu

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BOOK REVIEW

STUDIA UBB SOCIOLOGIA, 68 (LXVIII), 2, 2023, pp. 5-16
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INDUSTRIAL SHIFTS AND SOCIAL RIFTS: EXAMINING THE LAYERS OF ROMA MARGINALIZATION ACROSS INDUSTRIALIZATION CYCLES IN ROMANIA

Guest Editors' Foreword

Neda DENEVA[1], Manuel MIREANU[2], Jon FRIBERG[3]

This special issue delves into the transformative processes of de-industrialization and re-industrialization in the Maramureș region of Romania, with a nuanced examination of its impacts on housing, labour, and migration, particularly among the Roma community. Anchored by the research project *Precarious labor and peripheral housing. The socio-economic practices of Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development* (PRECWORK), this collection of articles provides critical insights into the socio-economic shifts driven by these industrial changes. Through comprehensive analyses rooted in political economy, anthropology, history, and sociology, this issue seeks to reframe our understanding of the complexities surrounding the Roma's experience in a changing economic and political landscape. This introduction sets the stage for exploring these themes deeply, revealing how historical and contemporary forces shape the lives and labour of marginalized communities.

PRECWORK explored the dynamics of Roma social marginalization in the nexus of industrial investment and public policy. By reassessing Roma marginalization during industrialization, deindustrialization and reindustrialization on the backbone of a weak Romanian state, as well as the political, economic and social challenges of inadequate housing and labour transformations and mass migration from Eastern Europe, the PRECWORK project contributes to several strands of literature in political economy, anthropology, history and sociology.

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This special issue aims to provide a new, more comprehensive understanding of the living and working conditions of Romanian Roma in a period of economic and political transformations, by analysing their position form a historical comparative and intersectional perspective, taking into account gender, class, ethnicity and race, as well as spatial and scalar differences. To this end, our research traced Roma marginalization in Romania over three economic cycles: industrialization, deindustrialization and reindustrialization, and explores in-depth three major problems: housing, labour and migration. Analysing the socio-economic practices of the Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development, we show that deindustrialization and reindustrialization brought significant changes in the domains of labour, housing and migration. Rather than simply point to the manifestations of supposed cultural features of 'Roma ethnicity', the analyses show how the socio-economic livelihood practices of impoverished Romanian Roma should be understood as responses to social marginalization or strategies to deal with their material and symbolic subjugation under changing historical conditions.

Standing at the intersection of political economy, sociology, history and anthropology, the main theoretical objective of our project is to advance a novel theorization of how CEE's shifting modes of industrial insertion into the global economy have generated different patterns of social marginality and how marginalized and racialised people are dealing with them. By doing this, we aim to provide an understanding of the socio-economic practices of the Romanian Roma, which goes beyond the existing particularistic theoretical frames favouring either cultural specificity, found in the majority of Romani Studies, or class-based approaches to industrial relations and development.

Methodologically, the project zooms in on a single geographical case – namely the town of Baia Mare, in Maramureș County, in the North-West Development Region of Romania – and combines historical, statistical and ethnographic analysis, using diverse research methods, such as oral history, in-depth interviews, participant observation, survey, policy analysis, as well as analysing secondary statistical data.

The case study – Baia Mare

The overall project has been inspired by the extended case study method as defined and deployed by the sociologist Michael Burawoy (2009). Starting from this, we use our micro-analysis in the town of Baia Mare to illustrate the great transformations that occurred during the last seven decades. These include socialist industrialization, post-socialist de-industrialization and re-industrialization under neoliberal capitalism.

The case under analysis is the region of Baia Mare, the administrative and industrial centre of the Maramureș region. This town and surrounding area have benefited from EU and Romanian government grants and its municipality has managed to reinvent itself as a 'civilized' and 'European' city.[4] Simultaneously, the town witnessed a sharp degradation of it labour force and the formation of large Roma slums at its edges. This is not a unique development, as similar processes could be observed in other Romanian mid-size cities.

The research found that during deindustrialization hundreds of thousands of workers have sought employment in Western Europe (Ban 2012) and elsewhere in Romania and no less than four highly impoverishes, unregulated neighbourhoods populated predominantly by Roma have sprung up in Baia Mare during the same period. The peripheral lives and daily struggles of people living in the ghettos, their housing condition, their struggles to find work are in dire need for explanations and solutions. We argue that the fragmentation of the working class and the marginalization of the Roma are by no means fortuitous, nor were these all-encompassing processes. While some faced destitution, others thrived, and when work was scarce in the area, Europe became a tempting alternative, as crumbling plants increasingly stand aside newly built industrial parks and roads.

What makes this case particularly compelling is that, in theory, Baia Mare should be a success story. Its industrial firms are inserted in global supply chains, and it has little in the way of the precarious tertiary sector development that one sees in larger cities in the region, in general, and Romania, in particular. Yet when looked at closer, this reindustrialization success appears to have depended largely on the Roma citizens and other impoverished Romanians. They are reduced to destitution and segregated living by the political economy of the deindustrialization period, a traumatic event from which they never recovered. These marginalized people's current employment opportunities in the local industry attest to their extreme deprivation and routinized social crisis. They live in liminal spaces on the minimum wage, under the structural pressures of a highly unequal workfare state and dependent market economy. Moreover, they are deprived of the buffer represented by home ownership and formally universal (if residual) public services (Ban 2019, Emigh et al. 2018). As such, the project compared the mechanisms of racialised poverty, combined with the territorial stigmatization characterizing the deindustrialization and reindustrialization periods.

[4] https://www.criticatac.ro/sesizare-in-legtur-cu-aciunile-recente-din-baia-mare-administrate-de-primarul-municipiului/

Reindustrialization and Its Discontents: Corporate Strategies, Social Marginalization, and Racialized Poverty

The special issue is situated within the overall analytical framework of the PRECWORK project. We argue project stands as the first comprehensive effort to explore Roma social marginalization across the three pivotal industrial phases: industrialization, deindustrialization, and reindustrialization. It draws inspiration from seminal works like those by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison on the (de)industrialization of the United States (1982), and extends to analyze the interconnectedness of corporate macro-strategies and the consequent racialized poverty and "territorial stigmatization" (Wacquant 2007) that affect urban landscapes through mass incarceration, violent policing, labor market deregulation, and race-based urban planning. The subsequent literature, post-2008 austerity measures, explores these dynamics further, delving into how precarious labor markets in low-skill manufacturing and service sectors drive high rates of emigration and create a 'new austeriat' (Powell and Lever 2017; Allen 2018).

The main gap in this literature is twofold. First, this literature has a strong high-income country bias and may be of limited use in contexts such as Romania: increasing industrial investment as part of the globalization of supply chains, a state with weak tax collection and redistribution capacity, poor coordination between capital and labour and weak rule of law. As for the rich literature on deindustrialization in Romania, its focus is less on the production of new forms of marginalization, such as the ones studied here, and more on urban shrinkage, urban space ruralisation, brownfields, urban dereliction, core-periphery inequalities and the emergence of new creative industries. Second, this scholarship has not studied the linkage between corporate restructuring strategies and racialized poverty in a reindustrialization context. Therefore, the project aimed to explore what is analytically distinct about reindustrialization's effects on racialized poverty vis-à-vis its mirror image: deindustrialization. Specifically, we wanted to find out if the mechanisms of amplification of the social precariat across generations in reindustrialization cycles are different from those of deindustrialization cycles for all ethnic groups and, if so, how and why.

The socialist era industrialisation and the firm-centred housing paradigm of that policy regime transformed peasants into urban workers, with their own working routines, status markers and disciplines, specialisation skills, long-term employment rewards, work-related identity, collective sense of belonging and intergenerational professional reproduction. Additionally, it reduced the historical marginalisation of the Roma relative to Romanians and Hungarians in the region. However, these improvements were gradually eroded by managerial

authoritarianism, the resilience of status categories and ethnic stereotypes among managers, planners and non-Roma workers. Once the socialist regime ended and, with it, its claims to universalism, these contradictions ripped through the social fabric, with mass unemployment, the shrinking of wages and the thinness of safety nets heightening social and ethnic conflict between winners and losers as well as within the marginalised groups themselves.

Both the post-communist developmental state (1990-1996) and the early neoliberal policy regime (1997-2007) have reorganised the workplace with the intention of achieving internal devaluation or the reduction of prices relative to other countries. This has been achieved by cutting employment and wages and by introducing structural policies (especially labour market and welfare state liberalisation) aimed at increasing wage and price flexibility. The consequence of these policies has been the termination of social dialogue, the dismissal of a significant proportion of the workforce, the erosion of purchasing power for industrial workers, and the deterioration of income levels for those employed in the service sector. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the prevalence of unpaid overtime, delays in wage payments, and the creation of more poorly qualified positions.

The process of European integration served to stabilise the decline in work and safety standards, while simultaneously creating new employment opportunities in the industrial sector. This was achieved by facilitating the integration of local firms into global supply chains and the advent of multinational 'greenfield' investments. Concurrently, the 2007-2017 period coincided with heightened pressures to compete as a dependent market economy, leading to the enactment of more pro-employer labour regulations, the undermining of trade unions, and the proliferation of non-standard forms of employment (such as part-time, paid per-piece, irregular, and the reshuffling of social prestige markers in ways that reward migration). These developments were reinforced by the lack of adequate mass transit, inclusive housing, education, and health policies. Consequently, the reindustrialisation of Baia Mare and its region through investments in wood processing, textiles and small-scale metalworking merely reproduced the racialised social marginalisation outcomes generated by the deindustrialisation of the 1990s. In this regard, reindustrialisation had positive results only insofar as the central government mandated minimum wage increases, an expectation that makes the state a critical variable in the nexus between industrial investment and social marginalisation.

The EU integration put a floor under the continuing degradation of work and safety standards and increased industrial employment opportunities by facilitating the insertion of local firms into global supply chains and the advent of multinational 'greenfield' investments. At the same time, the 2007-2017 period

coincided with heightened pressures to compete as a dependent market economy, leading to more pro-employer labour rules, union busting, the multiplication of non-standard forms of employment (part-time, paid per-piece, irregular and the reshuffling of social prestige markers in ways that reward migration, reinforced by the lack of adequate mass transit, inclusive housing, education and health policies. As a result, the reindustrialization of Baia Mare and its region via investments in wood processing, textiles and small-scale metalworking merely reproduced the racialized social marginalization outcomes generated by the deindustrialization of the 1990s. In this regard, reindustrialization had positive results only insofar as the central government mandated minimum wage increases, an expectation that makes the state a critical variable in the nexus between industrial investment and social marginalization.

Our project also contributes to the literature on migration and social marginalization following deindustrialization. The accession of CEE countries to the European single market triggered the largest population movements on the European continent in the form of economic migration to countries such as Italy, and Spain, the UK and Ireland, and Germany and the Scandinavian countries, where many migrants have found work in sectors such as construction, agriculture and services. Research has shown that CEE workers are strongly over-represented in the lower tiers of West European labour markets and that the large-scale labour migration has not just provided access to much needed labour and powered sustained economic growth in the host countries, but at the same time also placed collective bargaining institutions and systems of labour market regulation under considerable pressure (Friberg 2016, Friberg et al. 2014, Haakestad and Friberg 2017). The types of employment that these migrants have been able to access thus varies, from high-paying jobs in the primary sector, to highly precarious and exploitative ones in the peripheral sectors of the economy. In addition to the flows of regular labour migration, a smaller but highly visible flow outside the formal labour market has emerged, of people who live under harsh conditions in West European urban centres, often without access to regular housing, pursuing various forms of informal "street work" to generate a relatively meagre income, and whose presence and activities in the public realm has largely been met with hostility and criminalization (Djuve et al. 2015).

Although overlapping, the migration patterns of Roma and non-Roma differ in the sense that Roma migrants are more often found in the informal economy of the host countries, and that they to a larger extent than non-Roma rely on kinship and community-based networks of social support. Research has shown how this type of Roma migration outside formal structures can be understood as an economic adaptation, embedded in the social and economic processes of marginalization of Roma communities in post-socialist Romania,

as well as the structure of social capital within Roma households and communities, which can work as a form of capital that enables migration despite lacking formal resources (Tyldum & Friberg 2023).

Migration has become an integral part of the household livelihood strategies among many Romanian Roma, and remittances are often spent on daily expenses, paying down depts, children's schooling and house improvements (Djuve et al. 2015). However, we know little about how the various forms of mobility shape the structural factors that make migration necessary in the first place. For some, migration may constitute a way out of poverty, but it can also contribute to the stagnation of existing social structures, with limited room for escaping poverty and exploitation. To what extent migration is merely a means of survival or a route for social mobility, depends not just on their financial success abroad, but also on opportunities for productive investment at home. There is limited knowledge, however, about the relationship between different forms of migration and the social transformations of migrant sending communities.

This project addresses this gap by dwelling on consequences of migration for the migrants, their families and communities in Romania, and more specifically, on whether migration constitutes a pathway out of poverty or yet another 'marginalization trap.'

Finally, the issue critically examines the narratives of global industrial development, portraying industrial work as a superior and stable employment form, culminating in the formal sector. Contrary to these linear narratives, this collection of articles argues that extreme poverty not only coexists with but is also exacerbated by reindustrialization processes. Recent anthropological insights into labor extend beyond traditional factory settings to include broader socioeconomic contexts, underscoring the significance of social reproduction in understanding industrial labor. This shift in focus reflects a recognition that workers' lives, shaped by kinship, personhood, politics, and sociality, are integral to capitalist value creation (Hann and Parry, 2018; Harvey and Krohn-Hansen, 2018). Scholars argue that job stability does not guarantee financial stability, pointing to the precariousness that workers face, which is influenced by both formal and informal labor markets, as well as by broader social welfare systems (Deneva, 2024; Kofti, 2023; Mollona, 2009). This perspective is reinforced by feminist political economy, which links the production of goods directly with the reproduction of labor power, emphasizing the role of education, healthcare, and community care in sustaining labor forces (Bhattacharya, 2017). In this context, what is observed in the case of the Romanian Roma workers in the industries of Baia Mare, can only be fully grasped if the lens is open to include social reproduction obligations that workers have, commuting patterns, and housing realities

The contributions to this volume

The first theme of this special issue is **labour**. The first article, by Raluca Perneș, sets out to sketch a history of Baia Mare from the perspective of its industry. Thus, the text provides an excellent starting point for our volume, in that it lays out the historical materialist context of the processes we analyse. Starting from 1950, and relying on life-stories gathered through interviews, Perneș shows how the socialist governments turned the town into a prosperous industrial city. Baia Mare had a variety of factories, infrastructure and housing facilities. The population grew steadily, having good incomes, job security and overall stability. Things turned to the worse after 1990, when privatisation and deindustrialisation brought a period of fluctuating fortunes, lack of social security and, in the case of Roma people, extreme poverty and marginalisation. The text then proceeds to analyse current conditions in Baia Mare's factories, showing, again through interview analysis, how workers' conditions worsened in the past years.

This downward trend is analysed and explained by Földes, Mihály and Pop, who use the concept of labour fragmentation. One manifestation of this fragmentation is labour shortage. The authors use governmental datasets, online data sources as well as interviews in order to explain the sources of this labour shortage. They focus on two neighbouring Romanian counties – Maramureș and Sălaj – arguing that Romania's export-led growth model relies on low-cost labour and, particularly in these two counties, on slow or no technological upgrading. The article argues that the labour force composition in the two counties is defined by low knowledge intensity in services, as well as low technology activities in manufacturing. This leads to job vulnerability, lack of investment in research and development, as well as low wages. The author's data shows that these trends are opposed to the national-level propensity towards knowledge intensive services.

Moving further, the volume then takes on this labour precarisation and offers various avenues for interpreting it. As mentioned, the reindustrialization of the Maramureș region facilitated the reproduction of existing inequalities, rather than alleviating them. The text by Mihály and Földes looks at the region's labour regimes in relation to the former mining sector, as well as the present furniture industry. Their contribution presents research gathered through interviews and policy analyses. They argue that the regional labour regime shifted from conservative politics that aimed to safeguard industrial assets, towards a liberal model or privatization. The text focuses on Aramis, which is the region's most consistent employer, and which 'taps into the deregulated, low-cost and vocationally skilled workforce'. The authors bring into discussion the labour shortage that hampers Baia Mare and the region's economy. The strategies

employed by companies to handle this issue range from using commuter networks from the rural environment, to using immigrant work power. Both these strategies are further analysed by this special issue's contributors.

The article by Dana Solonean addresses full-on the paradox of Baia Mare's declining labour pool. She starts from noticing that, despite the high rate of immigrants coming to the city, the population rate is decreasing. The text focuses on the ways in which deindustrialization and reindustrialization trigger various paths for international migration to and from Baia Mare. By and large, the town became a supplier of cheap labour force to Western Europe, as well as a prime location for what Solonean calls 'low added value industries'. Drawing on extensive interview work, Solonean's contribution provides fascinating stories of people who migrated from Baia Mare during the post-socialist years, in order to improve their living standards. The text also touches upon the newly arrived workers from South-East Asian countries such as Nepal or India, in showing how they, together with the precarious Roma population of the town, are being used to replenish the dwindling labour pool.

In an effort to understand the trajectories of workers who choose to stay in Baia Mare, Andreea Ferenț looks at patterns of labour commuting. The text starts from the following puzzle: why does it make sense for commuters to continue living in the area? Ferenț investigates the patterns of labour commuting, the strategies and motivations of individuals, as well as their social and family relationships that facilitate and support their work. Her article looks at two major industrial hubs from the Northwestern region of Romania – two companies with foreign-owned capital, which employ a significant part of the region's workforce. Making extensive use of interviews, the text tells a number of stories that lead the author to stress the following argument: short term labour mobility is at once a survival strategy for workers from rural areas, and at the same time an intentional tactic of employers that seek cost-effective labour practices.

Shifting the focus towards the second theme, **migration**, Hestia Delibas describes and compares migration strategies of Roma and non-Roma people, while inquiring on the roles played by class and race in migration patterns. Whereas Romanian Roma have been said to provide affordable and abundant labour within the internal market, Delibas moves the discussion towards the international market, and shows how racial hierarchies extend beyond national borders. Using a ethnographical mix that includes interviews in Baia Mare's marginalized territories of Pirita and Craica, the text argues that the racially motivated dispossession to which Roma people are being subjected to maintains them in a 'cycle of debt they cannot escape'. Roma migration is characterized by shorter stays, job volatility and informal employment. A subsequent focus of the text is on the housing realities of Roma people. For many, the main purpose of

migration is acquiring enough money to have a decent home and to help their households. Conversely, Roma migrants rely heavily on their families at home and migrant networks abroad.

Delibas' text also opens the discussion on **housing** policies in Baia Mare. The two contributions on housing set up a historical perspective of the marginalisation of the Roma people of Baia Mare. The first such contribution looks at practices of evictions and relocations between 1975 and 1989. George Zamfir uses both interviews and archival work in order to focus on the urban spatial politics that sought to manage and contain Roma communities within Baia Mare. The epistemological mechanisms through which Zamfir does this are the debates and decisions of the local administration during the aforementioned period. By looking at these mechanisms, the article highlights the Baia Mare neighbourhood of Hatvan, where a part of the marginalized Roma population had been contained and relocated. On the heels of the final socialist urban development plans, this neighbourhood became systematized, and a number of Roma people were relocated from their huts and informal settlements to newly built panel buildings. However, the administration cut these buildings from central heating, as a coercive measure against Roma people who would not pay their bills.

The second contribution of the housing working group takes a look at the intersection between urban space and security. Manuel Mireanu uses archival material from the period of 1950 – 1989 in order to flesh out an analysis of how urban planning enforced the marginalization of Roma people under the socialist regime. The text focuses on the same neighbourhood, Hatvan, and it shows how in the first years of socialism, this was an urban space that the local administration regarded as a social problem. Within two decades, however, this view changed, and the neighbourhood, along with its inhabitants started to be seen as dangerous, rowdy and prone to illegal behaviours. The Roma people were discursively constructed as an obstacle to the urban comfort that the socialist regime was building in Baia Mare. In order to alleviate these problems, the local administration chose to systematize Hatvan, while enacting policies of repression against the Roma people there. They were systematically evicted and their informal homes destroyed.

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PRECARIOUS INDUSTRIAL LABOUR AT THE EDGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE CASE OF BAIA MARE

Raluca PERNEŞ[1]

ABSTRACT: Tens of thousands of labourers work in the factories in and around Baia Mare, a city that is being reindustrialized after an initial industrialization under state socialism. In 2021, most workers were being paid about 280 euro a month, as companies were aiming to achieve the lowest possible production costs while remaining within the European Union. Workers and their families, unable to make do on their low wages alone, constantly scramble for means to supplement their income. Many work overtime systematically; some choose to migrate for work abroad for a few months every year; yet others quit their factory jobs for more lucrative opportunities during the summers, only to return to the factories in the autumn. In this paper, I look at the industrial history of Baia Mare and the work lives of labourers to understand how the workers in the region were impacted by the politics of dispossession. I use two complementary lenses: on the one hand, I understand their position at the junction of global, national, and local forces; on the other hand, I underline the ways in which this specific case speaks to the workings of global capital, not as an exception, but as one of many interconnected stories of human experience.

Keywords*:* labour, dispossession, capitalism, Romania

On a hot summer day, Lia is waiting at the railway station for her partner, who has been away for work for three weeks. She is 32, Roma, pregnant with her fourth child, and holding the hand of her youngest, a feisty six-year-old with a hip dysplasia. Lia is a full-time upholsterer at a furniture factory in Baia Mare. She lives with her son and her partner in a shack with no running water on the outskirts of the city. Her previous partner, the father of her three children, has passed away and her eldest two are with foster families in a nearby village.

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Lia has bad teeth and a sharp tongue and tells us[2] she also grew up in care, as did her youngest until recently. It might have seemed she was doing well for herself – she graduated high school with a diploma and a trade (unlike many of her now colleagues), was always in employment, loves upholstering and is good at it. Yet, she made so little money she was unable to provide an adequate home for her children and they were removed by the state. With her most recent job, she finally managed to work overtime so much that she was adding another 65% to her base minimum wage, thus qualifying to take one of her children back. She dreams of one day moving to a village nearby, in a house with a proper toilet, from where she would commute to work and where she would raise all her children. Now, she calls her eldest two every day, but only gets to see them on Sundays.

From 2020 to 2023, but mainly in 2021, I conducted field research about work in the factories in and around Baia Mare, doing interviews on my own or in a pair with one of several colleagues in the same project. We interviewed workers, contacting them in the public spaces where they take buses or minibuses to and from work, in the neighbourhoods, settlements or villages where they live, as well as through friends and acquaintances in Baia Mare who knew them directly. We also interviewed middle managers from several factories, most of whom we approached through mutual acquaintances, including other managers. Efforts to speak to top managers, to whom I reached out repeatedly through emails and phone calls at the factories, proved less successful. Finally, we interviewed representatives of the local administration and one of the journalists who is most familiar with the topic of factories and work in the factories in Baia Mare. I base my analysis and arguments below on information collected from these interviews. As an auctorial voice, I use "we" to acknowledge work conducted with colleagues and "I" where I am solely responsible for data collection and analysis.

Baia Mare, a city of about 110,000 in the north-west of Romania and the seat of the county Maramureș, is home to the second largest single-platform employer in Romania, the furniture producer Aramis. Baia Mare and its metropolitan area are also host to several medium-sized factories and workshops, employing approximately 20,000 workers, many on minimum wage, to produce furniture, mattresses, electrical parts, aerospace products, shoes and clothing.

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For most of the counties in the region, the proportion of employees on the minimum wage is about 10% (Guga, 2021). In 2021, more than one third of the employees in Romania were earning only the minimum wage of 2300 lei (about 470 euro) gross, 1386 lei (about 283 euro) net (Reştea 2023) – the second lowest minimum salary in the European Union. This jumped to more than two thirds of all employees in Maramureş, the county of Baia Mare (Şomănescu, 2018), the largest proportion in the country. Adding to this, the purchasing power of the minimum wage in Romania is about half the minimum wages in Western Europe (Guga, 2021).

Baia Mare, thus, is at once the site of several prosperous factories and workshops and one of the poorest urban contexts in the European Union, with many people barely scraping a living, despite working full time on the factory shopfloor. Under state socialism, the city provided a relatively good standard of living for most. In the 1990s, in the context of a hesitant state unable to adapt to the new economic context, Baia Mare underwent deindustrialization and a considerable share of its population slipped into poverty. Romania's economy has picked up considerably in the meanwhile, but this has not been reflected in welfare for most. A large share of Baia Mare's population is still poor, a result of being placed in an unfortunate configuration in relation to global capital and of insufficient social protection from the state.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the continual erosion of living standards over decades and the concerted move of capital to coopt – that is to say, to manufacture consent (Burawoy, 1982) – and disorganise factory workers has left little space for political action from the working class. Carbonella and Kasmir begin their 2014 "Introduction to Blood and Fire" by pointing out that recent mass demonstrations and protests in many parts of the world had brought attention to the social precariousness and political exclusion at work in the underbelly of neoliberal globalization (Carbonella and Kasmir, 2014). By contrast, this article will try to shed light on the very salient lack of manifest resistance surrounding the same phenomena in this part of Romania.

At its core, Baia Mare illustrates dependent development under neoliberalism – most citizens remain precarious, and the state focuses on stimulating foreign investment based on cheap and flexible work, as well as fiscal facilities. It is a condition whereby society at large does not benefit from the redistribution of wealth produced in the country (Ban, 2014). It is an instance of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003), to use the concept coined by Harvey to mark the ongoing nature of capital accumulation, beyond the primitive or original capital accumulation. And while analysing capital accumulation involves looking at a range of large-scale economic processes (Harvey, 2003), these are, of course, always embedded in a social context (Polanyi, 2013).

To provide focus in this very type of analysis, Carbonella and Kasmir (2014) propose the concept of "the politics of dispossession", mapping the way capital and the state repeatedly undermine the power of the working classes – a process understood as social and cultural, as well as economic. To understand how the politics of dispossession are enacted and what their impact is on the lives of individuals, I focus the lens on the shopfloor and the everyday lives of labourers in and around Baia Mare to ask, as Burawoy (1982) did: why do workers work as hard as they do?

In what follows, then, I look at the workers in the Baia Mare factories to understand how they became a poster child for the politics of dispossession in the semi-periphery of the European Union and, moreover, how they came to embrace their position with very little political resistance. I use two complementary lenses: on the one hand, I explore their position at the junction of global, national, and local forces; on the other hand, I underline the ways in which this specific case speaks to the workings of global capital, not as an exception, but as one of many interconnected stories of human experience.

I look at the historical, social, and economic processes that led to the development of the industrial site that is contemporary Baia Mare. I begin with the first wave of industrialization and urbanization since the 1950s, bringing decent quality of life and social status to most inhabitants of the city. Then, I look at deindustrialization and precarization in the 1990s. Finally, I focus on the reindustrialization that started around 2000 and the transformations it underwent once Romania joined the EU in 2007 and factories in and around Baia Mare became convenient labour providers for multinationals. Across this period, I show how a population of workers was drawn to the region and then stayed on, through an economic and social climate that gradually narrowed their opportunities. I point out how, as the site of several factories, Baia Mare becomes entangled in the workings of global capital and I also touch upon the role of the state, facilitating foreign investments and providing little protection for workers.

The new industrial, urban life: 1950s to 1989

In choosing a place for research, one commits to looking at it as "formed and transformed by the articulated forces of capital, labour, and the state in the *longue durée* […] but also by the forces of local responsibilities, meanings, and expectations that are part of the historical entanglements of the place" (Narotzky, 2018). In this spirit, I look at the history of Baia Mare since the 1950s to grasp the processes and transformations that laid the groundwork for the contemporary context.

Starting with the 1950s and until 1989, Baia Mare was one of the relatively prosperous industrial cities in Romania, a growing, bustling city attracting labour force from the nearby villages and providing them with a steady, decent income, as well as secure accommodation and a comparatively good living standard. The main industries – mining and metalwork – were soon complemented by those providing jobs for women, mainly in the textile factories. By 1977, the population of the city had already reached 100,000, up from 14,000 in 1930 (Vischi, 2020). The factories and mines in and around Baia Mare provided work for tens of thousands of labourers. Most of them had immigrated from the rural areas – pushed, among others, by the collectivization of agricultural lands, completed in the early 1960s. They were provided with accommodation in the newly built blocks of flats. Some were commuting by public transport from the nearby villages. All were provided with decent incomes and job security. Today, many in Baia Mare are nostalgic of the socialist period, as experienced by themselves or narrated by their parents; this was a recurrent topic with our interviewees. For those who were working under state socialism and their children there is a distinct feeling that the grass was greener, as it were, even though Baia Mare was in fact a hugely polluted city, and work in the mines and metal plant has had a dramatic impact on the health of many.

Under state socialism, the relatively weak, overambitious Romanian state depended on workers to fulfil its agenda (Cucu, 2019; Grama, 2018). And the agenda, as pointed out by Cucu (2019), was consistent with a process of primitive accumulation. The aim of the planned socialist economy was to constantly overfulfill the plan, which in turn led to ever-increasing new targets. The private sector was squeezed in relation to the state sector, and the self-exploitation of the workers was expected to feed the accumulation of resources by the state. Nonetheless, for the precarious, impoverished rural population, the brutal start of industrialization and urbanization was followed by a period of relative stability, and not even the hard work conditions, nor the austerity of the 1980s managed to remove the rose-tinted glasses through which that period is perceived by the next generation of Baia Mare workers.

This was also the period that founded the workforce available in the area. Left without the option of returning to the countryside, the new inhabitants of the city and, later on, their children, stayed on.

Deindustrialization and insecurity: After 1989

After 1989, having rid themselves of socialism, Romanians found themselves open to the possibilities and promises of the free market. The state, however, lacked expertise and was unable to break away immediately from

previous policies. Instead, it opted for a hybrid neo-developmentalist model, whereby the state still aimed to closely control the relationship with global capital. It was a period of rampant inflation and increasing popular frustration. From 1996, pressure from the International Monetary Fund and later on from the European Union led to the full adoption of neoliberal principles (Ban, 2014).

For Baia Mare, this was not the happiest of times. Major factories and plants were privatized and then were mismanaged or proved unable to survive in the new context. Several were sold on to foreign investors, who also failed in keeping them afloat. The city was mired in unemployment and poverty (Deacu, 2016). The life trajectories of our interlocutors and their families took a variety of turns afterwards. For some, the restitution of agricultural lands provided the opportunity to return to the villages and supplement their income by subsistence agriculture. The very resourceful were able to emigrate for work. Those who had no access to land – many of them Roma – and in the absence of any effective social security, were forced to sell their only property, the apartments they had been provided with by the socialist regime. Within a few short years, they had returned to a state of precarity from which few were able to remove themselves in the following decades.

From the 1990s, the Roma informal settlements began to grow and expand in the interstices of the city – nearby the now deserted industrial spaces, in the vicinity of the railroad, or just across the socialist neighbourhoods. Those who had immigrated to the city to work in socialist factories stayed put; they had nothing to return to and, in living in Baia Mare, they still had access to irregular work, if not to full time employment. For the Roma who have fallen through the cracks of the troublesome 1990s, facing abrupt downward mobility, state socialism remains the golden era (Szabó, 2018).

Labouring in/for the EU: After 2007

In 2007, Romania joined the EU. However, as one of the least wealthy nations in the union, it has remained a source of labour migration. A country of 19 million at the latest census (data for 2021), it has close to 6 million migrants, the great majority to countries in Western Europe. While differences in income between Romania and the other countries in the EU have reduced consistently over the last 15 years, they are still enormous for those on the smallest incomes. The purchasing power parity for foodstuffs for those on minimum wage in Romania is about one third that of employees on minimum wage in countries in Western Europe (Guga, 2021). Romania also has the highest rate of in-work at risk of poverty rate – 14.3%, as compared to the EU average of 8.5% (Eurostat).

Working abroad for short or long periods of time is, then, still an attractive option for many. Since 2010, there has been a steady wave of returning migrants as well, but it never outnumbered the new migrants (Sandu and Popa, 2023).

Labour migration has been an important strategy to evade poverty for many in Maramureș county and in Baia Mare, as pointed out by our interlocutors about themselves, as well as their families and colleagues. This has been compounded by the internal migration of the highly skilled, who left the region for higher income cities in Romania and whose absence was deplored in interviews with the management of the factories seeking more complex labour.

Many of those that are left behind are the most vulnerable – people who did not have the connections to migrate or the skills to hold down permanent jobs abroad. Those who feel there are no alternatives for themselves. The poorest of the Roma we spoke to were the most likely to fall into this category.

In Baia Mare, the vulnerability of the poor Roma has been compounded by actions of the local administration. Cătălin Chereches, the mayor of Baia Mare between 2011 and 2023, is openly discriminatory against the Roma and actively contributed to their spatial segregation (Apador-CH, 2012). For years, the racist discourse and practices of the mayor has kept the focus on the "acceptability" of the Roma – even though civil society has always reacted promptly to his position.

Since the early 2000s, reindustrialization began in earnest in Baia Mare and tens of thousands of workers were available to take up its challenges. Branches of multinationals, as well as Romanian-owned businesses, operate in the area and provide jobs for most of the workforce, fostered by the good will of the state, as well as the local administration. How this has worked for the local population is the focus of the analysis below.

Industrial labour in the semiperiphery

When documenting industrial labour in Baia Mare in 2021, it made little sense to separate the statistics for the city from those for the Maramureș county. On the one hand, some of the major factories are located in the villages nearby Baia Mare; on the other, many workers commute from the villages to work at factories in the city. I therefore concentrated the research on the area delineated by the lives and the work trajectories of the people working in factories and workshops in and around Baia Mare.

Oversimplifying, one could place the factories in the area in two major categories. Some require mainly unqualified or semi-qualified work, for which they pay the minimum wage. They have – and expect – a high turnover of employees

and recruit throughout the year. It is not unusual for them to lose an employee, only for them to return later – sometimes several times over. Other factories – and they are careful to distinguish themselves from the first category – aim for a more qualified workforce and are willing to further invest in training, as well as learning on the job. They pay better salaries and focus on retaining their workforce in the long run. While usually on the lookout for new hires, their employee turnover is a lot lower. In what follows, I will focus on the former type of factory, because this is where ongoing precarity for thousands is generated and reproduced throughout the years.

Out of the major employers in and around Baia Mare, some are Romanian-owned factories and produce mainly furniture, but also clothing and shoes for foreign brands. Others are branches of multinationals, with the largest ones producing electrical parts, aerospace products, luxury furniture, and shoes (Vischi, 2022, and data from listafirme.ro).

Over the last years, multinationals have persistently petitioned the local administration for industrial parks, a theme that came up in interviews with both members of the local administration and with managers from the companies. These parks would provide factories with infrastructure, at no cost to them, plus fiscal facilities and opportunities for non-refundable development grants. The first such industrial park is finally planned to be developed near Baia Sprie, not far from Baia Mare. The greenfield factories built in and around Baia Mare, meanwhile, chose their location contingent on the availability of land, access to and by workers (including reasonable commuting routes for the company minibuses) and, significantly, mutually helpful alliances forged with the local administration, either in Baia Mare or in one of the villages in the area. Infrastructure is also crucial for factories – the new branch of Universal Alloy Corporation, for instance, is being built right next to the location of the future new runway at the Baia Mare airport.

We need to zoom out to make sense, yet again, of how this came to be. Global capital is, of course, mired in inequality, produced, and reproduced over centuries. Having joined the neoliberal world in its new status from the 1990s, Romania became dependent on the international financial institutions and bound to their conditionalities. Once incorporated in the EU, it did so in the position of a semi-peripheral economy, inserting itself in the global production and investment chains as an industrialized producer of goods and relying on a constant influx of direct foreign investment (Ban, 2014). As Cornel Ban convincingly shows – and illustrates when comparing the trajectories of various dependent economies – there is, in fact, a generous space for agency from this position, depending on the capacity of the state to establish and implement a development plan. It is also up to the state to put into place mechanisms for the

redistribution of the wealth produced within the country (Ban, 2014). The Romanian state has not managed very well on either front, thus ending up with an ostensibly well to do dependent economy, which, by virtue of its status, is subject to the vagaries of global capital. Moreover, inequalities within the working class are large and expanding.

The Romanian economy, therefore, is intensively invested in continuing to attract foreign investment and relies on exports, most of which are conducted mainly through branches of multinationals. The country is attractive to foreign investors by virtue of having the second lowest wages in the European Union, and incomparably lower than Western Europe (Guga, 2021), while still offering the benefits of a well-regulated market. After the Covid 19 pandemic, physical proximity to Western European countries has become relevant once again.

Within Romania, Baia Mare is particularly attractive to industries and companies looking for the lowest possible costs, which almost invariably involves paying the lowest possible wages. This is precisely because of the considerable workforce in the area that, left in a state of economic vulnerability, are likely to accept the wages and work conditions offered by the factories.

Many of the Romanian-owned factories have a sole customer – or at the most a handful of recurrent customers – thus effectively operating as outsourcing outlets for foreign brands. To look at the most striking example, about 7,000 workers in Maramureş county spend their workday producing Ikea furniture in three of the factories we looked at during our research. Due to these arrangements, as well as the more insidious "lohn" arrangements providing nothing but work – as was the case for two of the smaller factories we researched –, foreign companies manage to use the labour force in Romania without even needing to deal with the difficult work of recruiting, disciplining, and exploiting the labourers – not to mention avoiding to directly face any ethical dilemmas. Moreover, companies that have established production in Romania have made substantial investments in their production sites, even with all the fiscal facilities provided by the state. Recuperating their investment would weigh in their possible decision to move production to a different site in the world. It is not so for companies effectively only purchasing workforce from the factories in the Baia Mare area: they take no risks. If Ikea was to move production to factories elsewhere, it would face no financial losses. The Maramureş factories would however risk everything, losing their entire customer base overnight. Their employees would also face losing their jobs.

The factories are therefore placed in a vulnerable position in relation to capital. Pay might still be too small for workers to be able to make a decent living, but it has increased steadily over the last years. For the multinationals pushing for the lowest possible cost, rising expenses are a trigger to put pressure

on the management of the factories to keep to the lowest pay feasible. This is not in any way in the best interest of the management of the factories. As we learned from interviews with HR managers at the factories, low pay translates into huge personnel turnover, which in turn involves an enormous and ongoing recruitment exercise. The stakes are high; while for workers striving for social reproduction the situation is multifaceted (Deneva, 2024), in their negotiation with the management of Romanian factories multinationals focus on wages and threaten to move production elsewhere in the world, where production costs are cheaper.

In practice, the only external force intervening in this negotiation is the state, through the meek mechanism that is the minimum wage. Over the last years, the proportion of those on minimum wage in Romania has increased constantly (Guga, 2021), which means slightly better protection for those at the bottom of the wage ladder, but an ever-expanding population that is in work and at risk of poverty.

The Romanian state also has very modest policies for wealth redistribution. As shown by Cristina Raț (2019), social assistance policies, based on the recommendations of the EU, express the need to tackle the issue of social inclusion, rather than aim for social justice. This serves to obscure the fact that the main issue of the poor is systematic economic deprivation, rather than simply social marginalization. Overall, the state provides restrictive and ungenerous social assistance benefits and subsidized services, which fail to offer sufficient protection to the most vulnerable but contribute adequately enough to the reproduction of the working class, thus serving the interests of capital. Favouring capital over the needs of the population is the position the state has taken consistently over the last years. Recent changes in the law have also relieved capital of the responsibility to contribute to the social security system, asking instead for the income taxes needed to subsidize labour (Raț, 2019). Problematically, these types of measures facilitate capital being further removed from any direct responsibility to the workers. This is taken on by the state, who is as good a guard of the interests of capital as capital itself would be. In the politics of dispossession mobilized by the state and capital in relation to the workers, the state volunteers to do most of the job. Workers are left with no one in their corner.

On the shopfloor

Aramis is the largest factory in the area, is Romanian-owned and had around 5,000 employees in 2021. It produces furniture exclusively for Ikea but is not formally affiliated with the Swedish giant. Aramis is well-known for

always hiring and giving employment to all those looking for a job, including the Roma – and it is the only factory with a reputation of not hesitating to work with the Roma. Even though most of its workers are employed on the minimum wage, Aramis has developed a sophisticated system of work and benefits that means those who are able and willing can work more to earn more. Workers can take on extra shifts, or even the coveted night shifts or weekend shifts, for which they are paid a better rate. The factory has come up with an extra-benefit in the form of food vouchers, which is paid to those showing up for work without interruption over a month. Work is gamified (Burawoy, 1982), and the young and able-bodied challenge themselves to earn as much as possible under this system, even though that still amounts to very little.

Aramis and the factories with the same profile reinvent the system of pay and benefits repeatedly to achieve their aims. Some benefits are conditioned by working predictably and continuously – no leave, no medical leave, no missing workdays – because hitting the factory targets depends on having complete teams of people working every shift. In a context where they are competing over the workers willing to do this work, factories – paying the minimum wage for most positions – manage to stand out to their potential employees through their list of extra-benefits.

These factories are the preferred employer for those who want and can put in extra-work. Some of those we interviewed had worked at other factories for a better salary, but decided they could still earn more at the end of the month by working overtime for a lower-paying employer, rather than being tied to a fixed income. Even so, to make do over the year, many workers quit their factory jobs over the summer, either for gigs picking wild mushrooms, berries and medicinal herbs in the nearby villages, or for seasonal work in agriculture abroad. So widespread is the practice that the HR departments of factories have come to know and anticipate the phenomenon as part of their yearly planning. This set-up allows workers to live at home, with their families, for most of the year, as opposed to long-term migration to other countries, while also giving them some extra cash to cover heating for the winter and other expenses for their families. At the end of the summer, they return and take a job at a factory once again. In fact, so large is the need for labour in the factories, that many leave their jobs without even formally quitting, secure in the knowledge there will be no hard feelings – a state of affairs acknowledged by both workers and HR employees. The temporary migration of Baia Mare workers effectively means they subsidize through their own effort and at great personal costs the too low minimum wage in Romania. By earning the minimum wage of Western European countries for three of four months a year, they increase their average income to a level that makes life more bearable. It is a perverse effect that their drive and ingenuity make it possible for the state in alliance with capital to keep wages down.

The actual work was often described by the workers we spoke to as challenging – manipulating extremely voluminous objects, operating heavy machinery, performing very repetitive tasks, working in unbearable heat, being exposed to possibly harmful substances. Nonetheless, these accounts were always matter-of-factly, as if work was supposed to be hard. They placed little value explicitly in learning a new trade, a new skill, or finding variety in one's work.

Many of those working at the factories live precariously. Some of our interviewees pay more than half of their salary on rent alone, barely making do with the rest for the entire month. Some are forced to live with extended families, never able to save any money to get their own accommodation. Life is marginally better for those commuting from the villages, even though they must put in the hours for commuting as well. They have access to better housing and are usually able to grow some of their own food as well. For the relatively poor rural population, the factories provide an opportunity for salaried income, which makes the difference between subsisting and a relatively comfortable life.

The most vulnerable are the Roma, many of whom live in segregated settlements, in makeshift accommodation lacking basic amenities, in pockets of poverty spread throughout the city. In the Roma households, it is rare that all adults have full time jobs at the same time. For households with two adults and three or more children, which was the typical arrangement for Roma families in segregated informal settlements, this translates into living in poverty (Rat, 2019). The situation was even more precarious for the households where only one of the adults was in full time employment. A lot of people overwork themselves when they are young and are unable to continue doing so in the long run, their health affected by brutal work and poor living conditions. Still, having companies that employ them is perceived with gratitude and, for fear of rejection, the Roma usually search jobs with those they know are likely to hire them.

The condition of workers in the factories in Baia Mare is in some respects similar to that in socialism. Workers are drawn to compete against themselves, outwork themselves, self-exploit themselves (Cucu, 2019). But there are major differences as well. The number of hours one works over a month, for once, is considerably higher, taking self-exploitation many steps forward. Another major difference is that under socialism workers were likely to work for the same factory, sometimes over decades. Under the current arrangement, however, they shift from one employer to another. They are not – and are not invited to be – loyal to any one factory. In fact, I would argue that their space of reference in terms of work is the factories in the area, rather than any one particular factory.

The criteria on which one selects one company over another are therefore contingent on seemingly idiosyncratic details. One interviewee told us she wanted to commute with her husband, thus snatching back some time each day to spend in his company. Another went for the factory that provided her easy opportunities to work overtime, as already certified by two cousins. Many followed friends, acquaintances, or family members to a new employer. Spouses or siblings working in the same workplace is a common arrangement.

Factories try to stand apart by advertising their various benefits. However, as many workers have pointed out to us, they have learned from experience that, in practice, the various lists of perks end up amounting to approximately the same monthly income. As such, when not constrained by other criteria, they make their choices for an employer based on the connections to networks of kin, friendship, and sociability. For most people, work does not provide opportunities for socializing. It does, however, provide a mutual space of reference, a collective experience that is part and parcel of sharing an important part of life with their most significant people. One mother-daughter pair we interviewed, who typically work different shifts in the same factory, swap pictures of their cafeteria meal, so that whoever works the first shift of the day can let the other know if there is something to look forward to. Those growing vegetables in the village often find customers for their produce among their colleagues. The cafeteria and commuting bring people together and anchor them, even for a short while. Still, making a living comes first, so people change jobs relatively often to follow new opportunities.

When leaving their factory jobs over the summer, many of the workers did not make their decisions in advance about choosing a new employer or returning to an old one. In providing very similar work conditions and pay, the factories make themselves replaceable. In providing so little to their employees that they are always on the search for workforce, they make themselves disposable. In fact, when fluctuations in demand for their products push factories to let go of part of their workers, it was often the case their initial employer found them new positions – sometimes as soon as the next day.

We asked workers about opportunities to be promoted and it became clear that they perceived their jobs as work only and did not envision a career for themselves. Even when made aware there was a possibility of being promoted in their factory, or when familiar with the stories of others who had been promoted, most of our respondents – and the Roma in particular – felt it was not for them to aim for these positions. When asked about the future, they did not imagine change except within the very limited confines of their own previous experiences or experiences of their close ones. Perhaps one of the most disheartening effects of living in precarity for long periods of time is the belief and expectation this will continue to go on.

Just like the workers themselves, factories relate to the pool of workers available in the area, rather than to their own employees only. Employees come and go, but, as a group, factories need to manage their relationship to the workforce to make sure it will continue to be available year after year. In their exercise of manufacturing consent, factories described by Burawoy (1982) created the illusion that workers had choice by increasing job mobility within the factory. In the case of Baia Mare, factories, collectively, generate the same effect, by making it easy for workers to switch jobs from on factory to another and indeed informally facilitating these moves when they need to let go of part of their employees. This is not a strategy mobilized by capital as such, but rather by the local management of factories, who need to consolidate their position to secure the ongoing presence of foreign capital.

In making decisions for themselves or comparing themselves to others, most interviewees were speaking first and foremost of their monthly income. In fact, hanging out with workers in and around the railway station – a space of socializing for commuters from several factories –, eavesdropping on their conversations in front of blocks of flats in the evenings, or having lunch with them at the factory cafeteria, it was frequent for them to discuss money – making more or less than the previous month, comparing their incomes to their interlocutors or to that of third parties not present in the conversation. Needing to go into so many details suggested to me that their basic wage was not a good enough indicator for their income at the end of the month. Most significantly, it became even more obvious in such circumstances that the only explicit focus and the end result of work is money. Factory work has become more and more deskilled for most workers, due to the use of technology. With less expertise needed, work becomes routine, based mainly on physical effort, and people grow increasingly detached from it (Braverman, 1998). This is even more so in situations of serious economic deprivation, where work provides the means of surviving, however precariously, from one month to another. Its substance and its meaning become secondary.

Looking at how global capital works and at the positioning of the Romanian state in relation to capital and its citizens, one cannot fail to identify the inequality and injustice done to the workers in Baia Mare. People, however, live within the confines of their own lives and their hopes and imagination are shaped by their own experiences. Being coopted by factories and the state into unquestionably accepting the workings of the current economic system, with a lot of work, little pay and very little safety net in hard times, does not mean people become unable to take pride and joy in their lives or the outcome of their work. Their agency might be limited, but small accomplishments are valued and can feel life changing. Being able to rent an apartment of one's own, making

enough money working abroad to renovate the house in the village, getting the first job in one's thirties, when employment did not feel like an option anymore, or earning enough to get one's child back from care, as was the case of Lia, make people feel like they still hold some form of control over their lives. Work relations can also have a big impact on the dignity and self-worth of people. An employee remembered fondly that the owner of a workshop bought and wrapped herself individual Christmas gifts for all her workers. Several workers remarked on being received kindly by HR employees after they had left the factory without notice, only to return a few months later.

The future of work in the factories

What does the future hold for the factories in Baia Mare? It is estimated that at the end of 2023 there will be 340,000 immigrants from outside the EU working in Romania (Dincă, 2023), up from 11,000 in 2013, 63,000 in 2021 and 94,000 in 2022 (Grigorescu, 2023). Most of them get employment in construction, factories, or deliveries. They provide exactly what migrant Romanian workers in the early 2000s provided to their employers: they cope with modest living conditions, have impeccable work ethic, are available to work overtime and, because they migrate alone, are not likely to be distracted by their families.

In 2021, the influx of refugees facilitated the decision of the Baia Mare factories to recruit new employees that were likely to expect and accept lower wages. By the next year, there was already a change of scale in the process of recruiting labourers from outside the EU: in the first six months of 2022, Aramis increased their workforce by 1.000 people, most of them from Sri Lanka. One of the productions halls has been reconverted to house the new arrivals (Vischi, 2022). New arrivals are likely to fall to the bottom of the ethnic employment hierarchy (Friberg and Midtbøen, 2018). Cultural proximity to the locals – by virtue of at least sharing a language and a wealth of cultural references – are likely to place the Roma in a relatively better position to ethnic Romanians.

Conclusion

Why, then, do workers in Baia Mare factories work this hard and resist so (seemingly) little? Placed at the intersection of several sources of vulnerability – impoverishment after the deindustrialization of the 1990s, living in a dependent economy at the edge of the EU, receiving little support from either state or local administration – people make the best of their circumstances. In their particular

context, the only opportunity is work, and a lot of it. Working overtime, changing jobs to make the most of new opportunities, combining work in the factory with work in agriculture at home or abroad are strategies that make the difference between living in poverty and living just above the poverty line. The sum of this effort translates into workers effectively subsidizing the insufficient minimum wage in Romania. They also make it possible for factories in the area to continue paying minimum wage, and for them to continue to operate at a low cost in this part of the world.

Workers find themselves too caught up in the process of working day in, day out, to even consider organized resistance to their position, or even envision themselves as part of a working class. Their trajectory and their struggle are perceived as individual, never collective. Factories create the illusion of labour as a game (Burawoy, 1982) through an intricate system of planning work, paying for overtime, and granting benefits. Job mobility also gives workers the illusion of choice. In the case of Burawoy's workers, mobility happened within the company. For workers in Baia Mare, it takes place between the factories in the region, thus supporting their economic success and facilitating their continued exploitation for profit.

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LABOUR FORCE COMPOSITION AND LABOUR SHORTAGE IN NORTH-WESTERN ROMANIA: A CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON[1]

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ABSTRACT: The paper analyses the labour force composition of two adjacent counties in north-west Romania: Maramureș and Sălaj. Regionally, employers stress the lack of available labour force and resort to commuter networks from nearby rural areas and immigrant labour. Why labour shortage? It is argued that Romania's FDI-reliant export-led growth model factors in. Namely, the growth model's reliance on low-cost labour that reduces employment incentives to a minimum (often minimum wage) and employment in repetitive labour-intensive activities make the prospect less attractive. If technological upgrading – requiring skilled employees – is absent, regional labour availability tends to be an issue. Alternative subsistence methods are favoured: seasonal transnational migration, household agricultural subsistence and remittances from relatives. Tying livelihood to families and households, these methods pool resources to replace (even if in part) wage labour under global market-dependency conditions.

Keywords: labour force; labour shortage; FDI; export-led growth model; Romania

Introduction

Extensive research has been devoted to Central and Eastern Europe's (CEE) reliance on foreign direct investments (FDIs) (Ban, 2016; Brenner et al., 2010; Bruszt and Langbein, 2020; Éltető et al., 2023; Nölke, 2022; Misztal, 2010; Pelinescu

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and Rădulescu, 2009). Following the collapse of socialist regimes, these countries embraced different forms of economic liberalization, leveraging their former socialist industrial infrastructure. Initially, Romania took a conservative stance with protectionist policies, but its national political economy underwent inevitable transformation during pre- and post-EU integration procedures (Medve-Bálint and Šćepanović, 2020; Tache and Neesham, 2009; Vukov, 2020). The liberal government soon instilled labour market deregulation as a strategy to enhance competitiveness for FDIs, which played a crucial role in driving Romania's current dependent market economy (Ban, 2019) and export-led growth regime (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022).

As working conditions and labour control are deeply ingrained in national political economies, social relations in production are shaped by existing policies and politics. Therefore, pursuing EU prescribed domestic-transnational alignment came at a cost as existing industrial assets were compromised, resulting in significant consequences for regional workforces (Mihály, 2022). Labour market deregulation and flexibilization measures are also documented to have "fragmentation" effects on regional workforces embedded in global commodity chains (Komlosy and Musić, 2021). Labour fragmentation refers to the disaggregation of a workforce and the cessation of full-time employment[5]. Numerous writings have explored capitalist dynamics in CEE (Drahokoupil, 2009; Myant and Drahokoupil, 2011; Bohle and Greskovits, 2012), but comparatively less focus has been given to the role of labour in these processes. Currently, concerted efforts are being made to reevaluate the significance of labour relations in contemporary commodity chains (Baglioni et al., 2022; Palpaucer and Smith, 2021; Komlosy and Musić, 2021). This take is particularly relevant for underlining current labour trends, especially in peripheral regions. Our paper contributes to this framework. First, we define the labour force composition of two counties from north-west Romania – Maramureș and Sălaj – as a precursor for labour fragmentation. How is the labour force structured in the studied counties? Second, we argue that regional labour shortage is a manifestation of labour fragmentation. What are the causes behind the regional labour shortage?

The region is enmeshed in Romania's economic trajectory most notably via labour-intensive, low complexity production that confers a peripheral position in global commodity chains. Furniture and automobile components production are noteworthy industrial sectors. While Maramureș is dominated by furniture manufacturers embedded in IKEA's supplier network, Sălaj's largest employers are a rubber tire and pipe manufacturer. Our data shed light on the region's economic realities, symptomatic of Romania's export-led growth model –

[5] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/fragmentation-of-the-labour-force

categorized as less knowledge-intensive services and low-complexity production. Consequently, the workforce in question adapted to unattractive employment possibilities with seasonal immigration and alternative employment practices. In this context, labour shortage is therefore the subsequent outcome of unfavourable labour market conditions.

The paper is structured as follows. After lacing the relevant literature on global commodity chains with Romania's socio-economic context, we present the methodology used to define Maramureş and Sălaj's economic landscape. By using categories of technological complexity – knowledge-intensive and less knowledge-intensive for services and high, medium-high, medium-low, and low technology for manufacturing – we set the premises for the labour force composition. We present the results in the fourth section. It is split into two subsections, the first maps regional labour force composition in Maramureş and Sălaj, while the second describes the repercussions of low-cost and low value-added activities.

Romania's labour fragmentation and its culprits

The paper's conceptual framing combines global commodity chains literature (Palpaucer and Smith, 2021; Komlosy and Musić, 2021) – uneven development and low-road production (Gerőcs et al., 2021; Mihály, 2022) – with the growth models perspective (Baccaro et al., 2022; Baccaro and Hadziabdic; 2023) – more specifically, the export-led growth model (Ban and Adăscăliţei, 2022) – in arguing that Romania's economic landscape determined the labour fragmentation and the consequent labour shortage seen in the studied region. Namely, regional labour shortage is a symptom of Romania's export-led growth model alongside the low-complexity production and inferior commodity chain position endemic to it.

Labour fragmentation is generally caused by contextual factors: low unionization rates, low wages, and labour-intensive activities (Durand, 2007). These circumstances can lead regional workforces to seek alternative means of income, thus creating labour shortage. Tapping into the global commodity chain literature, Gerőcs et al. (2021) discuss how the Hungarian automotive sector's position determines labour fragmentation. Categorizing work models into high and road-low road variants (Jürgens and Krzywdzinski's, 2009), they emphasize the country's skilled labour shortage, attributing it to the low-road work model. Along MNC commodity chains, high road models are present in core countries while low road in CEE subsidiaries or suppliers. While the high-road model offers substantial job security and invests in long-term employee training to

develop job competencies, the low-road model focuses on employer cost-reduction both in terms of labour and technology. The low-road model also favours employer empowerment via labour market deregulation.

In Hungary, much like in neighbouring Romania, low value-added production is perpetuated by low-cost labour and deregulated employment relations as opposed to the high-road model's long-term investments into sustainable employment both financially and skill-wise. These circumstances lead to widespread labour fragmentation. As Romania's evolving economic model placed a growing emphasis on FDIs, the influence of labour unions diminished, leading to the emergence of various cost-cutting measures. One of these, the combined-income strategy (Petrovici, 2013), became prevalent in Romania's numerous manufacturing hubs embedded in global production networks. In the past, it was designed to attract the commuter workforce from rural areas. More specifically, the combined-income strategy involving both minimum wage and rural household resources served as an accumulation strategy, guaranteeing a source of low-cost labour, primarily via minimum wage earners. This strategy also ensured a steady labour supply, particularly in a region grappling with labour shortages. However, the perpetual low-wage strategies gradually eroded the willingness of the regional workforces to comply. Therefore, unlike in Hungary, Romania's regional workforce fragmentation goes a step further: it manifests itself via seasonal immigration (typically westward for seasonal jobs in agriculture) or other alternative employment arrangements, exacerbating the regional labour shortage.

The circumstances of labour fragmentation are also attributable to the mechanisms of surplus value capture within global commodity chains. Value creation and extraction is realized along the chain – from raw materials to sub-assemblages and consumable products – each actor (company) acquiring a portion of the produced value. Intra- and inter-company relations are structured hierarchically, lead and parent-companies accumulating value disproportionately compared to lower-tier suppliers and subsidiaries, often located in peripheral countries and regions. Uneven development or global inequality chains (Campling and Quentin, 2021) account for these dynamics. Intra-firm adaptation practices from the parent company can diverge among subsidiaries, primarily due to local disparities. As argued by Ferner et al. (2006), these discrepancies are the outcomes of interactions between the national business systems in the parent and host countries. This notion can be further clarified by considering the insights provided by Boyer and Freyssenet (2002), who argue that corporate profit strategies tend to evolve into productive models encompassing distinctive product strategies, methods of production organization, and national labour relations. The selection of product strategies is contingent upon the viability of products

across various markets, while the structuring of production encompasses the specific approaches employed in the manufacturing process. Both elements are moulded by the host country's labour market characteristics.

Typically, corporate culture and work organization are uniform across home and host countries, but adjustments are made to accumulation strategies according to specific regulatory frameworks. As is often the case, regulations in the home country are often stringent, while subsidiaries operate in more deregulated settings, a pattern frequently observed in CEE countries. Consequently, multinational corporations (MNCs) adapt their management and production methods to accommodate the need for flexibility, often transferring labour-intensive operations to host country facilities.

At a broader level, the export-led growth model (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022) defines Romania's socio-economic context. Moulded on the remnants of its dependent market economy (Ban, 2019), the export-led growth model defines the character of Romania's global commodity chain embeddedness. Exports are a key requirement as MNCs operate predominantly as intermediaries producing various components within larger global commodity chains. These dynamics make the country's economy particularly vulnerable to unequal appropriation of surplus value within global commodity chains. Furthermore, the perpetuation of low-complexity manufacturing with low-cost labour exposes various regions to acute stagnation, a possible symptom of the middle-income trap (Myant, 2018; Ban and Mihály, 2023) resulting from the country's low spending on R&D[6]. Therefore, labour shortage is an outcome of these circumstances, and alternative employment practices are societal responses to the structural shortcomings of Romania's export-led growth model.

Methodology

The empirical data utilised in our study is derived from multiple governmental datasets, online sources and 19 interviews with former or current employees from Maramureș and Sălaj counties. The primary data source comes from the Romanian Institute of Statistics, which offers comprehensive data on workforce structure and salary by economic activity sectors. Additionally, the open data platform "DataGov" was employed to acquire information pertaining to the number of enterprises and their respective economic activity sectors. By incorporating the aforementioned dataset into the Eurostat classification pertaining to the High-tech industry and knowledge-intensive services (2016,

[6] https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm

2020), we present a descriptive analysis of the makeup of the labour force in two geographically nearby counties located in north-west Romania, namely Maramureș and Sălaj.

Eurostat (2016, 2020) deploys a complete framework for defining the High-tech industry and knowledge-intensive services. The primary objective of this framework is to analyse and examine data related to economic indicators, employment statistics, and science, technology, and innovation (STI) metrics. Its purpose is to offer valuable insights into the manufacturing and service sectors, namely by classifying them based on their level of technical sophistication. Within this paradigm, there are two primary approaches used to characterise technical intensity: the sectoral approach and the product approach which is related to high-tech products trade data.

The sectoral approach used in our paper categorises manufacturing industries according to their level of technical intensity, principally by evaluating the ratio of research and development (R&D) investment to value added. The categorization utilised in this context conforms to the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE) at the 2-digit level. This leads to the classification of industries into four distinct strata, namely high-technology, medium high-technology, medium low-technology, and low-technology sectors. Simultaneously, services can be classified into two categories: knowledge-intensive services (KIS) and less knowledge-intensive services (LKIS), based on the proportion of individuals with higher education at the NACE 2-digit level. The utilisation of a sectoral method forms the fundamental basis for most statistical indicators, except for high-tech trade and patent data, where this technique is not employed.

We take advantage of these manufacturing categorizations to define Maramureș and Sălaj's labour force composition. As the following sections will depict, the level of technological complexity is an indicator of labour specialization and income levels. Namely, low specialization and low-income levels are preconditions for labour shortage and migration. Furthermore, by extrapolating to the national level, the labour composition of the two counties serves as typical examples of Romania's low-complexity, low-cost, export-driven growth model.

Results

Comparing the labour force composition in Maramureș and Sălaj

The labour force composition in the two counties is defined by low-knowledge intensity in services and medium-low and low technology activities in manufacturing. The number of companies, alongside the proportion of the

labour force, also reflects this trend, with most employers and employees categorized in these segments. In terms of intra-county employer positioning, Maramureș presents more diversity: while a few large employers are concentrated around the largest city, Baia Mare, noteworthy companies are also in the north near Sighetu Marmației and the east near Borșa (see figure 1). Sălaj's largest employers are more centralized in Zalău, where most of county's economic activity is located, with few larger employers located in the western regions of county (see figure 2).

Table 1 provides a comprehensive analysis of the distribution of enterprises in the year 2021 across several sectors, with a specific emphasis on high-tech industries and knowledge-intensive services, as per the classification established by Eurostat. The provided data present a comparative examination of three distinct geographical entities, namely Maramureș County, Sălaj County and, for comparison purpose, Romania in its entirety. The following statistics offer significant insights into the economic structure and technological focus of these geographical areas.

Within the services sector, it is evident that Romania exhibits the biggest proportion of enterprises engaged in this particular category, amounting to 76.2%. Maramureș and Sălaj counties have similar percentages, with Maramureș at 67.8% and Sălaj at 67%, but lower than the country's proportion. These findings suggest that a considerable proportion of enterprises in all three regions are involved in service-oriented endeavours.

Table 1. Percent of active companies per economic sectors in 2021

	Maramureș	**Sălaj**	**Romania**
Services	**67.78%**	**67.05%**	**76.15%**
Knowledge-intensive services	26.22%	26.48%	66.38%
Less Knowledge-intensive services	73.78%	73.52%	33.62%
Manufacturing industry	**12.43%**	**12.73%**	**8.49%**
High technology	0.77%	4.02%	1.60%
Medium-high technology	5.60%	3.49%	6.56%
Medium-low technology	27.81%	30.87%	27.49%
Low technology	65.82%	61.63%	64.36%
All other industries	**16.54%**	**15.79%**	**11.98%**
Energy industry	3.41%	4.17%	6.24%

	Maramureș	Sălaj	Romania
Extractive industry	3.37%	2.90%	1.50%
Construction	93.22%	92.93%	92.25%
Agriculture	**3.25%**	**4.43%**	**3.38%**
Agri-Business	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Total	**100.00% (n= 13,653)**	**100.00% (n= 7,433)**	**100.00% (n= 788,838)**

Data source: DataGov.ro – list of active firms and financial sheets, Eurostat classification based on NACE.

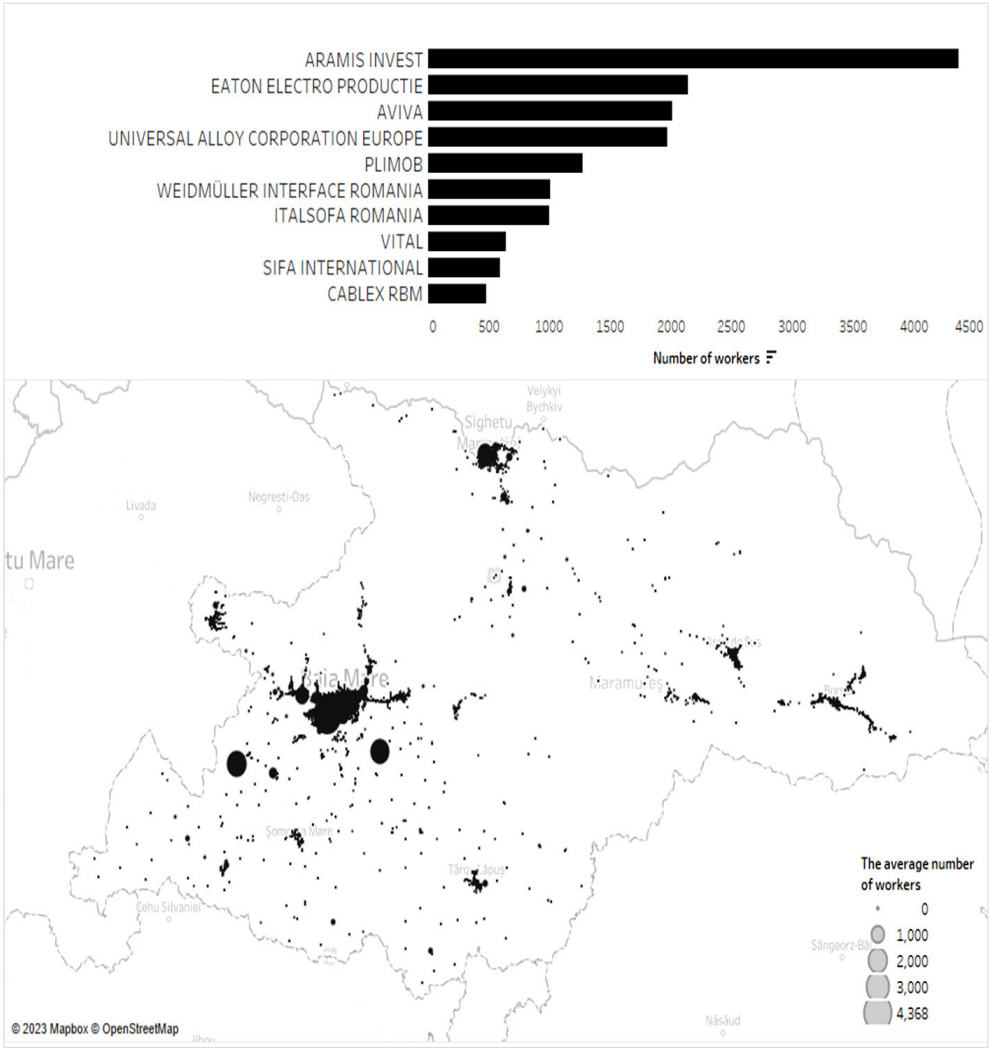
In the context of Romania, a significant proportion of firms, amounting to 66.4%, primarily engage in knowledge-intensive services. According to Eurostat (2016), these sectors exhibit a notable emphasis on research and innovation. In comparison, the counties of Maramureș and Sălaj demonstrate significantly lower percentages, specifically 26.2% and 26.5% respectively. This disparity highlights the more limited status of Maramureș and Sălaj counties in relation to the overall national level with regards to their participation in knowledge-intensive services.

Romania demonstrates a notable dedication to fostering innovative industries, as evidenced by its significant involvement in these sectors. However, it is observed that the Maramureș and Sălaj areas exhibit a comparatively limited presence in this particular industry. As expected, there is a significant discrepancy observed in the less knowledge-intensive services sector when comparing Romania to the two counties, namely 33.6% of enterprises may be classified under this category. However, it is noteworthy that the regions of Maramureș and Sălaj exhibit a comparatively greater proportion, with percentages of 73.8% and 73.5% respectively. This observation implies that the regions in question host firms that engage in traditional or non-technology-dependent services. This underscores the precarious situation of Maramureș and Sălaj in terms of job vulnerability, as the low-intensity service industries in these regions lack high-value employment opportunities, impeding investments in research and development and rendering them less resilient to economic changes and crises.

In Romania, the number of enterprises in the manufacturing industry is significantly lower compared to the services sector. This phenomenon can be attributed to the disparity in company sizes, since we assume that the manufacturing sector will have a greater proportion of larger employers in

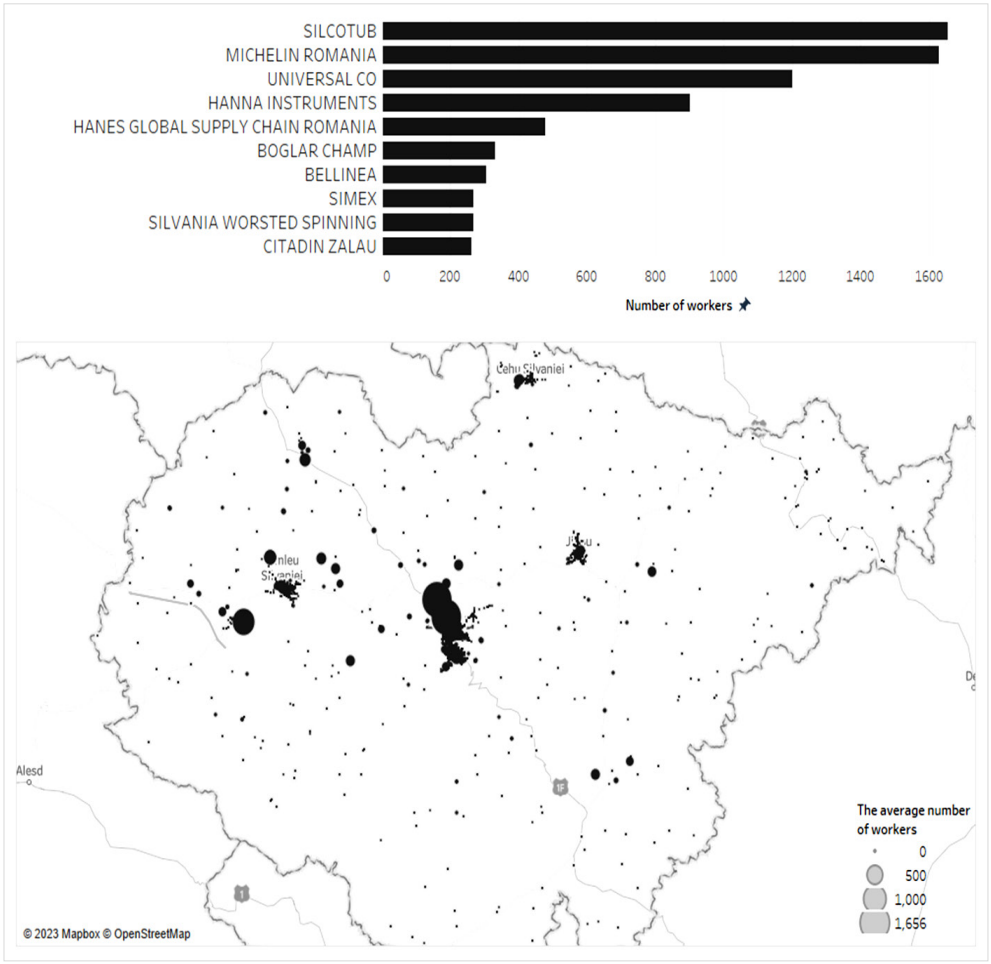
comparison to the service sector. The regions of Maramureș and Sălaj demonstrate a notably greater level of engagement in the manufacturing business, with percentages of 12.4% and 12.7% respectively, in contrast to the overall proportion of 8.5% for Romania.

Figure 1. Maramureș's largest employers by number of employees in 2021



Source: DataGov.ro – list of active firms and financial sheets. Authors computation.

Figure 2. Sălaj's largest employers by number of employees in 2021



Source: DataGov.ro – list of active firms and financial sheets. Authors' computation. Methodological note: Discrepancies were observed between the employee figures provided in official data and those reported by the respective businesses and mass-media sources. In the case of the major employers, we substituted the data from financial statements with information obtained from other sources. These disparities could potentially be attributable to recruitment companies.

The differentiation among various technology categories serves to underscore the complexity of the technological environment. In Romania, the proportion of enterprises classified as high-tech, distinguished by their emphasis on innovation and utilisation of modern technology, amounts to 1.6% of the total number of companies but in Maramureș, this proportion is below one percent.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Sălaj County exhibits a far higher percentage of 4%, suggesting a more pronounced focus on companies related to advanced technology. There are slight variations observed in the medium-high technology and medium-low technology sectors across different regions, although the low-technology sector is dominant in all locations. The relatively larger proportion of low-tech manufacturing firms in Maramureș, in comparison to Romania and Sălaj, may be attributed to the presence of small-scale wood processing enterprises scattered over the county.

The construction industry exhibits a prominent presence throughout all regions, encompassing a significant majority of enterprises, exceeding 92% in participation. This result suggests that the construction industry is a significant driver of economic activity within the region. Both the region of Salaj and, to a larger extent, Maramureș underwent a transition away from extractive sector operations in reaction to the process of deindustrialization.

Table 2 offers an extensive analysis of the labour composition in 2022. As expected, among all industries, the service sector exhibits the most substantial proportion of employees, amounting to 64% in Romania, 52% in Sălaj and 57% in Maramureș. This statistic underscores the notable prevalence of service-oriented occupations among the country's overall labour force. The distribution of employees in the knowledge-intensive services is relatively balanced across the regions. Specifically, Romania accounts for 47.4% of these services, Maramureș for 49.1%, and Sălaj for 46.9%. The data presented suggest that a significant segment of the labour force in every region is involved in knowledge-intensive positions, which demonstrates a dedication to technical advancements and inventive endeavours. However, there is a greater representation of industries that consist of jobs that do not strongly rely on advanced technology and innovation. Specifically, more than half of the employed workers are found in the service sector, which is characterised by a lower level of knowledge intensity.

The manufacturing sector holds considerable importance in Romania, representing a substantial portion of the country's workforce, with employees in this area accounting for 21.4% of the total. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Maramureș and Sălaj exhibit comparatively greater proportions, specifically 36.3% and 26.4% respectively. The counties under consideration have a higher degree of personnel presence in the manufacturing sector, suggesting a comparatively robust manufacturing industry in relation to the national average. Maramureș stands out with a lower proportion of the labour force in the service sector and a higher proportion in the manufacturing industry, particularly in low technology industries. This deviation from the national level underscores the distinct features of the county's reindustrialisation policy, which relies on cheap and low-skilled labour.

Table 2. Distribution of employees (%) by economic sectors in 2022

	Maramureș	Sălaj	Romania
Services	**51.63%**	**56.92%**	**64.05%**
Knowledge-intensive services	49.10%	46.90%	47.37%
Less Knowledge-intensive services	50.90%	53.10%	52.63%
Manufacturing industry	**36.33%**	**26.41%**	**21.38%**
High technology	0.62%	3.76%	4.02%
Medium-high technology	14.08%	3.85%	25.16%
Medium-low technology	22.07%	43.21%	22.35%
Low technology	63.23%	49.17%	48.47%
All other industries	**9.94%**	**13.38%**	**12.16%**
Energy industry	20.15%	17.50%	24.42%
Extractive industry	6.14%	4.56%	7.02%
Construction	73.71%	77.94%	68.56%
Agriculture	**2.09%**	**3.28%**	**2.41%**
Agri-Business	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Total	**100.00% (N=107,324)**	**100.00% (N=49,529)**	**100.00% (N=5,209,493)**

Data source: Romanian Institute of Statistics, Eurostat classification based on NACE.

At the national level, the presence of high-technology positions constitutes approximately 4% of the overall workforce employed in manufacturing. Sălaj County, with a notable proportion of 3.8%, exhibits a similar emphasis on high-tech jobs. On the other hand, Maramureș has a comparatively smaller percentage, specifically 0.6%. In Romania, there is a notable prevalence of medium-high technology positions, accounting for 25.2% of the workforce. In contrast, the regions of Maramureș and Sălaj have much smaller proportions of employees, standing at 14.1% and 3.9% respectively. In Romania, as well as in Maramureș and Sălaj, a substantial percentage of the workforce in the manufacturing sector is employed in industries characterised by medium-low and low levels of technological advancement. Nevertheless, the disparity between the national

and county levels cannot be disregarded. In Romania, 71% of employment in the manufacturing sector is concentrated in enterprises with lower levels of technological development. This trend is particularly pronounced in the regions of Maramureş and Sălaj, where the percentages rise to 85% and 92% respectively.

The construction industry serves as a substantial contributor to employment throughout all areas, employing almost two-thirds of the workforce in this sector. Despite the comparable proportion of active construction enterprises between the two counties and Romania as a whole, Sălaj and Maramureş exhibit a higher number of employees in relation to the national level. Regardless of its relatively small share of the general workforce, agriculture remains a significant contributor to all areas, particularly in Sălaj, where the proportion of employees is comparatively greater than in Maramureş and Romania in its entirety.

Table 3. Average net salary (€) by economic activity sectors in 2021

	Maramureş	Sălaj	Romania
Services	**655.2**	**612.1**	**915.5**
Knowledge-intensive services	764.2	695.7	1092.9
Less Knowledge-intensive services	478.1	486.6	604.9
Manufacturing industry	**574.3**	**587.8**	**786.5**
High technology	646.2	673.5	921.3
Medium-high technology	629.6	497.4	837.2
Medium-low technology	611.6	825.2	958.9
Low technology	517.1	472.9	661.0
All other industries	**640.1**	**806.2**	**948.6**
Energy industry	729.0	697.7	795.8
Extractive industry	570.9	1129.3	1118.4
Construction	561.4	594.2	710.4
Agriculture	**579.4**	**685.9**	**673.0**
Agri-Business	579.4	685.9	673.0
Total	**622.2**	**635.8**	**770.8**

Data source: Romanian Institute of Statistics, Eurostat classification based on NACE. Methodological note: The conversion from RON to € was conducted using the average exchange rate observed in the year 2022.

Table 3 provides an overview of the mean net income among the analysed industries for the year 2022 in Romania and specifically compares Maramureș and Sălaj County. The presented data provide significant insights into the inequalities in income and the economic performance across various regions. In Romania, the average net income within the services sector amounts to approximately €900. On the other pole, Maramureș County exhibits an average net income of €655.2, and Sălaj County exhibits an average income of €612.1. The significant difference might be ascribed to the impact of Bucharest and other magnet cities and poles of growth (Cristea et al. 2017) such as Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Iași, which are known for their tendency to provide employment opportunities in the service sector with higher remuneration.

Services that need a high level of knowledge and are characterised by professions that heavily rely on high-skilled labour, tend to provide the greatest earnings. Once again, Romania exhibits a prominent position in terms of average net income, amounting to €1093, compared with the two counties. Maramureș County exhibits a mean income of €764 and Sălaj County exhibits a somewhat lower average income of €696. This result shows high income disparities within the same economic sector. On the other hand, services that require less knowledge tend to lead to lower average wages. Romania currently holds higher average salaries than Sălaj or Maramureș. Nevertheless, differences between the national average and the regional average are less salient across the less knowledge-intensive services compared to knowledge-intensive services.

In the case of Maramureș and Sălaj, the manufacturing sector exhibits marginally lower mean values than the total averages, standing at €574 and €588 correspondingly. Among all industries, manufacturing highlights the lowest average net salaries for the two analysed counties. High-technology occupations tend to provide higher average wages, but only for Maramureș County. Surprisingly, the mean net salary in Sălaj and Romania exhibits a greater value within medium-low technology sectors in comparison to medium-high technology or high technology sectors. The average values of wages in manufacturing are pulled down by the very low salaries in low technology industries, which are the lowest across the entire classification of the economic sectors. As we saw in table 2, low-technology manufacturing is the dominant category in both counties, thus the approximately €500 average salaries are a symptom of the low-value added production endemic to Romania's export-led growth model (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022).

Energy industry in Maramureș and Extractive industry in Sălaj and Romania boast the highest average salary among all types of industries. In Romania, the construction sector presents a noteworthy level of remuneration, with an average income of €710. Maramureș and Sălaj County have relatively

lower income levels, with mean values of €561 and €594, correspondingly. In both counties, the wages earned by workers in the construction industry are comparable to those in the manufacturing sector. This finding, in conjunction with our previous discussion on the poor wages of individuals working in low-tech manufacturing sectors, underscores the disparity between skilled and unskilled labour and the precariousness faced by workers engaged in physically demanding or repetitive occupations. Within the realm of agriculture, it is seen that Romania, Maramureş County, and Sălaj County exhibit comparable average wages. This pattern can be attributed to the prevailing traditional practices and the inherent tendency for agricultural occupations to offer remuneration at a comparatively lower scale.

As shown throughout the section, less knowledge intensive services and low technology sectors are predominant in both counties. These circumstances are preconditions for less attractive employment possibilities which, in turn, cause regional labour shortage. As the following section will show, regional labour forces skirt unfavourable conditions by seeking alternative income opportunities. Emigration for seasonal jobs in agriculture and the combined income strategy – combining household income with seasonal and part-time employment – are the most common options.

Labour shortage, migration, and labour fragmentation

Labour shortage, hence labour fragmentation as described by Komlosy and Musić (2021), is a widespread phenomenon in the two counties. The adversity caused by the low technological complexity courtesy of low-cost, labour-intensive activities is the primary reason. Namely, the inferior positions of foreign and domestic companies in global supply chains as part of Romania's export-led growth model (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022) contributes to labour's unfavourable position in the region. Difficulties in engaging regional labour is a recurring complaint of employers in Maramureș and Sălaj. Seasonal westward migration and various informal employment arrangement are often sought as wage labour alternatives.

A survey[7] conducted by an online marketing platform highlighted the general labour deficit of Romania and the growing number of immigrant labour in 2022. Of the 50 thousand foreign employees, approximately 10 thousand originated from Nepal and more than 7 thousand from Sri Lanka. Outward migration is listed as the reason behind the labour shortage. While this is a

[7] https://business.olx.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/OLX-Jobs-Index-2023_online.pdf

reductionist assumption – as it omits unfavourable employment conditions and seasonal westward migration as the main culprit, in the studied region at least – it roughly points to the adequate reason.

In Maramureș, Sri Lankan employees are depicted as the primary solution for the county's largest employer and Romania's largest furniture exporter, Aramis. Considering that the previous survey listed furniture manufacturing as one of lowest paid sectors – with approximately €400, only above the apparel and hospitality sectors – supplementing the labour pool with foreign employees can also be considered a solution to unattractive employment opportunities for the domestic labour force. An online outlet, while emphasizing the increased employee count of Aramis, also states (as a sidenote) that the personnel increase is attributable to the approximately one thousand Sri Lankan employees:

> In the first 6 months [of 2022], Aramis hired more than one thousand, but because of labour shortages in the internal labour market, they were hired externally from non-EU countries, namely Sri Lanka (Știri din Maramureș, 2022).

In addition to its reliance on immigrant labour, Aramis serves as a prominent employer within Baia Mare and its vicinity, specifically engaging a considerable number of Roma individuals, a disadvantaged social group. All interview participants indicated that either themselves or at least one other family member have been employed or are presently employed at Aramis. Due to the unavailability of official data regarding the ethnic composition of workers engaged in furniture upholstery tasks at Aramis, a pertinent interview statement serves as an apt description:

> Out of a hundred workers, about 80-85 are only of Romani ethnicity, as a Romanian does not go to work, does not work as much as a gypsy can. I will tell you this for sure (man, 40 years, married with children, employed at Aramis).

The differentiation between Romani and Romanian ethnicities stems from the respondent's interpretation of low wage employment perspectives. His statement corresponds to the different values Romani and Romanian employees attribute to employment at Aramis: a Romani employee is more predisposed to work (although still seasonally or temporarily) for a wage a Romanian employee will not. The company capitalizes on these ethnic divides, as the following quote shows:

> At Aramis, 80% of the workforce is unskilled. If 20 workers don't come to work anymore, they send someone to the poorer areas and bring in 20 more (man, 35 years, journalist).

In Sălaj, waged labour alternatives abound mainly in rural areas. Interviewees highlighted seasonal migration to Italy, Spain, and Germany for employment in agriculture. These alternatives are popular due to the low-income jobs available on the local labour market. For instance, a county representative stated that the local administration attempted to attract employers, but the minimum waged remuneration failed to attract the necessary labour force. Similarly, as the county is highly centralized in terms of its economic activities, commuting to Zalău is the norm:

> I told you that in Sălaj, the salaries are very low, and well... Let's say you're employed in Zalău, you earn around 1400 lei (approximately €300), you need money for commuting, you need food, and you don't have much left. That's the problem, not that I'm afraid of work or anything, no (man, 42 years, rural inhabitant).

If commuting is not acceptable, westward migration for seasonal jobs is a common alternative:

> From here [village in Sălaj], people leave for work in agriculture in Germany via various agencies, and this can be everyone, Romanians, Hungarians, Roma; they emigrate for two months, and come back with how much they earn. They start in February or March, work in shifts for two months, then return home. If they want to go again, they can do so later, but the initial contract is for two months (woman, 50 years, rural inhabitant).

The combined income strategy is a common employer cost-reduction measure: rural household resources are typically supplemented by (often minimum waged) salaries, predominantly in part-time or temporary employment schemes as evidenced by Petrovici (2013). As numerous respondents stated, the region's primary job opportunities are guaranteed by the commuter networks – stretching beyond Sălaj county – linked to Zalău's tire manufacturer and pipes producer. The overall penury of the region's employment possibilities causes the labour fragmentation attributable to the low-cost, low technological complexity economic circumstances both nationally and regionally (see Ferenț, this issue).

Conclusions

Our study presents Maramureș and Sălaj county's labour force composition. Departing from a conceptual framework combining global commodity chains literature (Baglioni et al., 2022; Komlosy and Musić, 2021) with growth models (Baccaro et al., 2022), we argue that Romania's export-led growth model (Ban

and Adăscăliței, 2022) based on low-complexity economic activities is responsible for regional labour fragmentation. Methodologically, we constructed indicators to reveal the two counties' economic complexity. For services sectors, these are knowledge-intensive and less knowledge-intensive services. For manufacturing, we included high, medium-high, medium-low, and low technology activities.

The data show an overwhelming tendency toward less knowledge-intensive services and medium-low and low technology manufacturing. In Maramureș, less-knowledge intensive services are prevalent – as opposed to Romania's increasing tendency toward knowledge intensive services. Manufacturing has a similar propensity toward medium-low and low technological complexity. Sălaj mirrors Maramureș's trend, except a slight increase in medium-low complexity manufacturing. In terms of employees, the main difference between the two counties is represented by Maramureș's predilection toward low-complexity activities while Sălaj is more evenly split between knowledge-intensive and less knowledge-intensive services and medium-low and low technology manufacturing.

Labour fragmentation is shown via online sources and various interviewee statements. As a result of low wages, employment prospects are deemed unattractive. Employment alternatives range from seasonal westward migration to combining household resources with part-time or temporary employment. Companies in Maramureș and Sălaj respond to labour fragmentation via immigrant labour or by hiring disadvantaged social groups. Labour force fluctuation is a typical side-effect in such circumstances. Nonetheless, Romania's inferior position in global commodity chains, manifested in its export-led growth model, creates these adverse conditions for regional labour forces.

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Cel mai mare angajator din Maramureş, producătorul de mobilă Aramis Invest a depăşit 6000 de angajaţi şi se situează pe locul 18 în topul naţional [Maramureş largest employer, Aramis Invest, surpassed 6000 employees and is 18th in the national ranking]. Ştiri din Maramureş, September 11th, 2022. https://2mnews.ro/analiza-2mnews-cel-mai-mare-angajator-din-maramures-producatorul-de-mobila-aramis-invest-a-depasit-6-000-de-angajati-si-se-situeaza-pe-locul-18-in-topul-national/ [Last accessed: 02.11.2023]

Producătorul Silcotub din Zalău, parte a grupului italian Tenaris, a finalizat anul 2022 cu afaceri de 4 miliarde de lei, plus 54%. Compania avea anul trecut 1.791 de angajaţi [Silcotub from Zalău, part of the italian Tenaris group, had a 4 billion lei business turnover, 54% higher. The company had 1791 employees]. Ziarul Fianaciar, May 5th, 2023. https://www.zf.ro/companii/producatorul-silcotub-din-zalau-parte-a-grupului-italian-tenaris-a-21904614 [Last accessed: 02.11.2023]

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REINDUSTRIALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR REGIMES IN MARAMUREŞ COUNTY: BETWEEN NATIONAL DEREGULATION AND EXPORT-DEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT: The paper examines Maramureş County's labour regime and describes its transformation from a heavily unionized formation under socialism to today's deregulated, transnational condition. The region's former mining cluster and current furniture production hub are posited as sectoral focal points. Union militantism prevented the mining sector's accelerated decline in the 1990s, but liberalisation and conformity with the European Union's regulatory frameworks gradually eroded labour rights and shifted the region's economic profile to export-oriented sectors. Among these, domestic and foreign furniture manufacturers emerged as dominant economic actors in the early 2000s. While the county is well-known for its wood processing, the companies in question tap into IKEA's global production network and employ low-cost, flexible labour in just-in-time supply schedules. Recent developments include the use of immigrant agency workers as a solution to the county's skilled and unskilled labour shortage.

Keywords: labour regimes; industrialization; FDI; export-led growth model; Romania

Introduction

The prevalence of foreign direct investments (FDIs) in Central and Eastern Europe's (CEE) economic landscape is well-documented (Drahokoupil, 2009; Myant and Drahokoupil, 2011; Bohle and Greskovits, 2012; Bruszt and Langbein, 2020). Since the collapse of socialist regimes, various forms of economic liberalization have been pursued, primarily on the backbone of former socialist industrial infrastructure. Romania's trajectory initially followed a conservative

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path, with protectionist politics at the forefront. However, the national political economy was inevitably transformed by pre- and post-EU integration procedures (Medve-Bálint & Šćepanović, 2020; Vukov, 2020). Domestic-transnational alignment was hastily pursued at the expense of existing industrial assets, with substantial consequences for regional workforces (Hamm, et al., 2012; Hunya, 2019).

Although previous studies have outlined CEE's capitalist dynamics, less attention has been paid to the role of labour within these processes. Recently, strides have been made to refocus attention on labour through the lens of labour regimes (Li, 2017; Pattenden, 2018; Bair, 2019; Baglioni et al., 2022). Defined as "a societal framework through which capitalist accumulation at a world scale becomes possible" (2022:1), labour regimes depict the forms of subordination that enable capitalist accumulation strategies. They take place at multiple scales – local, regional, and macro-regional – and are intertwined with global production networks. Moreover, working conditions and labour control are embedded in national political economies that shape social relations in production following existing policies and politics.

In Romania, labour market deregulation was pursued to increase competitiveness for FDIs, the driver of the export-led growth regime (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022). Within this context, studies on labour regimes in Romania are largely absent, with a notable exception: Jipa-Mușat and Prevezer (2023). Analysing three sectors on a national level, the depiction paves the way for Romanian labour regime studies. Complementing Jipa-Mușat and Prevezer (2023), our research shifts labour regime analysis to a regional scale and engages with growth regimes literature (Baccaro and Pontusson, 2016; Baccaro et al., 2022) by describing labour dynamics in Maramureș County. Namely: how was the regional labour regime reconfigured via reindustrialization?: how is the regional labour force engaged in the current political-economic context? The mining and furniture sectors serve as focal points, as they are both key industries that clearly depict the county's labour transformation. Our argument is that the region underwent a process of reindustrialization from a mining hub, mainly via furniture production. Domestic capital and FDIs tapping into IKEA's production network enabled the shift.

Under socialism, Maramureș had a resource-based economy. Its industrial landscape centred around the mining and wood processing sectors, with its highly unionized labour regime at the forefront. The remnants of socialist unions played key roles in the region's labour force management in the post-socialist period. Local unions were integrated in national confederations, an organizational structure that spearheaded labour struggles throughout Romania's uneven, yet firm marketization drive during the 1990s and early 2000s. Nonetheless, consecutive waves of dismissals eroded the mining sector's labour force. The

dismissed labour force was soon absorbed into the transnational labour regime it is today. Mirroring Petrovici's (2013) proletarization thesis in various Romanian cities, Maramureş also became a manufacturing hub in global production networks that attracts commuters from rural areas. This economic conjuncture also shifted labour to capital relations. As opposed to socialist accumulation strategies relying on rural to urban relocation (Szelényi, 1996), contemporary employment arrangements entail a more dynamic and parasitic balance between labour reproduction and labour supply. Namely, the combined income-strategy encompassing minimum wage and rural household resources is an accumulation strategy which ensures low-cost (predominantly minimum waged) labour as well as labour supply, especially in a region facing labour shortage. As Romania's economic model increasingly prioritized FDIs, unions were left powerless, and unionization levels dwindled. The transformation into the present transnational labour regime is concentrated around furniture production. Consolidated on the county's vast timber resources and wood processing infrastructure, furniture manufacturers emerged as the dominant sector in the region. As we shall see in the fourth section, even this arrangement reached its limits and is adjusted to accommodate immigrant labour.

The paper is divided into six sections. In the following section we discuss the key concept, namely labour regimes, and we place it within Romania's past and present political economy. In the second section we present the methodological aspects, while in the third we describe Maramureş's surroundings and overall economic profile before diving into the main facets of the study: mining and furniture production. The mining sector's former labour regime is outlined in the fourth section, and the current transnational labour regime coalescing around furniture production is depicted in the fifth section. In the conclusion, we discuss how transnational labour regimes are articulated in Maramureş.

Labour regimes in Romania' political economy

Burawoy's (1985) politics of production is the foundational concept for labour regimes. His core idea, the extension of workplace struggles to national political and economic spheres, outlined how labour can be studied at various scales while remaining aware of the synergy between global and local contexts. A plethora of studies soon emerged (Burawoy and Lukács, 1992; Burawoy et al., 2000; Haney; 2000; Blum, 2000), a trend that presently continues (Brenner et al., 2010; Aranea et al., 2018; Dörflinger et al., 2020; Hürtgen, 2022) following capitalism's constant transformation. Broadly defined, labour regimes scrutinize capital-labour relations in various socio-economic arrangements and institutional frameworks (Pattenden, 2018; Bair, 2019).

Labour regimes "coalesce in sociologically well-defined clusters" (Bernstein, 2007:7). On a regional scale, this translates into specific sectors, each with its own labour to capital relations. The regional level is defined as "the regional political economy of labour control, involving the dynamics of the social reproduction of the labour force and how labour supply and demand are articulated at regional scales via local and regional labour markets" (Campling et al., 2023:251). Nonetheless, national, and macro-regional scales interact with the regional setting: GPNs and state policies influence capital accumulation tendencies in the region, while, at the same time, regional labour regime specificities enable and define GPN dynamics.

Unlike Korea's case, where domestically owned firms control labour regimes via union suppression (Campling et al., 2023), in CEE, FDI lobbying led to labour deregulation, widespread informal employment arrangements and low union representation rates, all under the guise of increasing labour market flexibility (Varga and Freyberg-Inan, 2014). European Union (EU) integration and subsequent trade liberalization increased the control of large companies over suppliers, primarily based in CEE. Stricter supervision imposed just-in-time production demands upon labour regimes. Given its geographic proximity, similar trends occurred in Romania in the early 2010s.

Regional labour regimes are embedded in the national political economy and in global production networks. In the political sphere, Romania went through a series of political upheavals that affected its industry and workforce. During the early 1990s, conservative politics aimed to preserve former socialist infrastructure in the face of marketization. Steady privatization procedures were introduced to avoid large-scale labour shedding, while large enterprises deemed key employers remained solely under state ownership. However, numerous enterprises operated at a loss due to outdated technologies. Reliance on state aid created uncertainty on shop floors. As depicted in the chemical sector (Mihály, 2022), salary payments and production volumes fluctuated, while the much-needed industrial policies were absent. By the end of the 1990s, the political context reversed into Romanian shock therapy (Ban, 2012). Marketization was pursued with full force, accelerated privatization measures were implemented, and numerous enterprises were shuttered.

Romania's economic trajectory is adequately defined by the growth regimes literature. The framework seeks to typify economic development with diversity and variation in mind (Baccaro et al., 2022). Acknowledging Fordist wage-led growth as a defunct system, growth regimes define debt financed consumption, export-led growth or varying niche models supplying specialty parts in global supply networks. Romania could arguably be considered part of the latter, however, focusing only on one sector (i.e., automotives) would over-simplify

its economic conjuncture. Therefore, according to Ban (2019), Romania is a dependent market economy that later became a dependent export-led economic growth model (Ban and Adăscăliței, 2022). Romania was included in West European production networks, with numerous examples of FDI nearshoring and just-in-time supply schemes. These companies relocated their low- to medium-complexity operations to engage vocationally skilled (Šćepanović, 2012) and low-cost workforces. The model is also facilitated by Romania's deregulated labour market and low corporate tax rates, while certain key sectors benefit from additional tax cuts (i.e., IT and construction).

Methodology

The empirical data was collected via interviews, development policy documents and online sources. A total of 18 interviews were conducted: 10 respondents were associated with mining activities, 3 with furniture production and 5 were public administration officials. The mining sector respondents were former miners or drivers of mining vehicles in the numerous mines spread throughout Maramureş County: Baia Mare, Baia Borşa, Baia Sprie, etc. Interviewees from the furniture sector were former skilled workers employed in socialist wood processing factories and later in private enterprises. In terms of public officials, we interviewed the executive director of the Baia Mare Metropolitan Area Association and the executive director of the Investment and Development Branch of Maramureş county, among others. Most respondents were retirees aged 50 to 75 years, thus interviews (except the ones with public officials) focused on recollections of their former career paths. We conducted the fieldwork over a 20-month period, from March 2021 until December 2022. The interview guide included questions about past and present employment, the local labour market, new employers, and overall opinion about livelihood possibilities in the region.

Development policy reports (available on local government outlets) provided economic indicators for Maramureş and helped in understanding the county's position within the national economy. Online sources consisted of local news outlets. News articles containing the following keywords were selected: Maramureş's economy, development, mining and furniture production. They were then screened and shortlisted, revealing numerous details about local employers. Articles about the mining sector proved to be especially valuable, one of them containing a transcribed interview with a union leader.

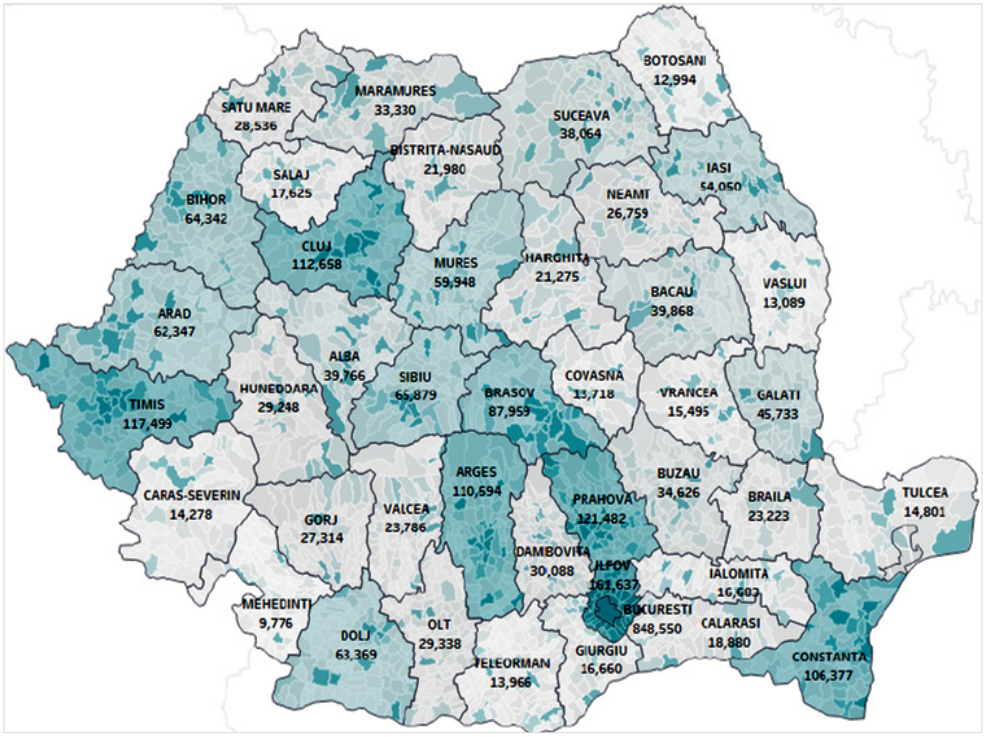
Overview of Maramureș county and its surroundings

Maramureș has a long-standing mining heritage specializing on non-ferrous metals: gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc. The oldest deposits are in Baia Mare, Baia Borșa and Lăpuș. The area is part of Transylvania's mining belt that includes Bistrița-Năsăud's deposits to the east and Satu Mare's to the west. In terms of its infrastructure, Romania inherited Transylvanian metallurgical plants from the Austro-Hungarian empire. During the 1920s state investments, they were equipped with cutting-edge technologies that consolidated mining as the region's primary economic branch. During socialism, the mines were nationalized and entered the tutelage of the Regional Direction of Gold and Silver Baia Mare. Mining activities flourished via the socialist state's support when numerous mining enterprises were founded and remained the county's key economic players until the fall of socialism in 1989. The mining sector's downfall started in the mid-1990s when numerous sites were shut down. Significant labour shedding accompanied these events. Eventually, all mines in Maramureș were shuttered in the late-2000s, sparking the current transnational phase.

Currently, the county assumes the role of an exporter, in tune with Romania's economic profile. Judging from the per country business turnover rate (figure 1), Maramureș slightly overtakes neighbouring counties, however it is almost 50% smaller than the second largest economy (Bihor) and more than three times smaller than Cluj, the largest economy in North-Western Romania. Within the national economic model, Maramureș stands out as a dedicated furniture production hub, a low complexity sector according to Eurostat. Even considering the North-West region, furniture production holds the second place (roughly 22 thousand) in employee count after the automotive sector (roughly 24 thousand) (The 2021-2027 North-West Region's Intelligent Specialization Strategy).

Maramureș has 11 towns and 2 municipalities – Baia Mare (circa 120 thousand inhabitants) and Sighetu Marmației (circa 38 thousand inhabitants) – that host most of the county's economic infrastructure. The region's population is in decline, a contributing factor in its labour shortage (figure 3) and the region's commuter workforce. As deindustrialization occurred steadily in the 1990s and accelerated prior to the EU integration in the early 2000s, migration became a coping strategy with an uncertain economic context: county residents migrated to western European countries with help from relatives. According to the Romanian Institute of Statistics, in 2023, approximately 119 thousand are employed in Maramureș, with 75 thousand in the private sector. Industrial sectors account for approximately 46%, while services for 51%.

Figure 1. Per county business turnover rate (RON) in Romania, 2018



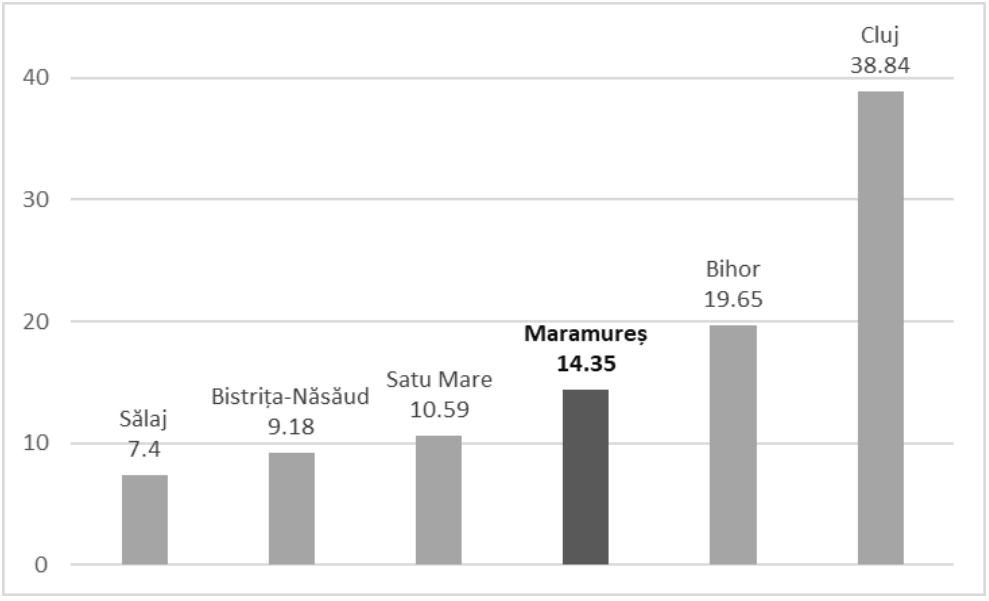
Source: The 2021-2027 Bistrița-Năsăud Development Strategy.

The county follows the trend of neighbouring regions (except Cluj) in terms of low R&D capabilities (2021-2027 North-West Regional Development Plan), a fact evidencing its low and medium complexity production profile. When it comes to imports and exports, Maramureş is also in the middle of the pack. The region's top ten employers include five furniture manufacturers located in Baia Mare (the county's largest city), Sighetu Marmaţiei (the second largest city near the Ukrainian border) and Târgu Lăpuş (located in the county's southern extremity).

Initiatives to increase workforce availability and specialization are in the planning stages. Most notably, Maramureş's first training campus (named Integrated Vocational Campus) is in development. The initiative was designed as a public-private partnership financed via EU funds that intents to provide vocational education suited for the needs of regional employers. Namely, various

noteworthy employers teamed up with local vocational schools to coalesce the region's workforce skills (Ziar MM, 2023). In addition, industrial parks are being built across the county. As part of the regional competitiveness narrative, these sites are viewed as the locus of FDIs, and hence economic growth. In the words of the County Council's President: "Maramureș needs these industrial parks to encourage investments in specific sectors and ensure economic development in these sectors. The construction of industrial parks construction is a predicated element of my term that is required for the region's economic calibration..." (Administrație.ro, 2022). The statement demonstrates the region's and the country's reliance on FDIs, while the focus on vocational training highlights the predilection for medium- to low-value added production schemes destined mainly for exports.

Figure 2. Per county contribution (%) to the GDP in North-Western Romania (2012-2018)

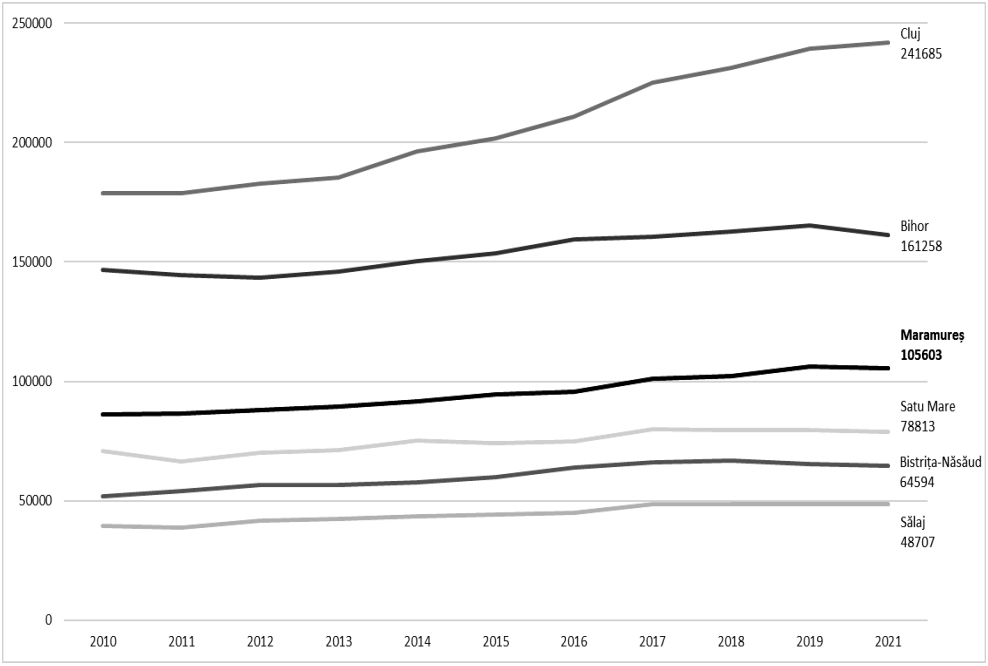


Source: 2021-2027 North-West Regional Development Plan.

Presently, other noteworthy employers are comprised of an Irish electrical component manufacturer (the county's second largest employer with over 2 thousand employees), a Swiss-Austrian aeronautical component producer and a German industrial component manufacturer. Apart from the aeronautical

sector, these multinationals operate according to the same business strategy: low complexity production using semi-skilled and low-cost labour. For instance, the electrical components producer (partly for electric vehicles) is a second-tier supplier that provides a €350 average wage for assembly line operators, the largest employee group in the factory. This sum was marginally below the average salary (€400) in Maramureş's industrial sectors in 2018. The automotive sector is also present with two foreign companies, one of which produces vehicle drive belts, while the other automation solutions for vehicle assembly operations. As important as this sector is for Transylvania (Mihály, 2021) and Romania (Adăscăliței and Guga, 2020), the size of these two companies pales in comparison to furniture producers in Maramureş.

Figure 3. Average employee number in the North-West Region



Source: National Institute of Statistics – Tempo Online table FOM104D.

Labour solidarity in Maramureș's socialist and post-socialist mining sector

After the consolidation of the mining sector in the late 1940s, Remin Baia Mare became the county's main economic pillar. During the early 1980s, it employed approximately 40 thousand employees. Under the administration of the Direction for Mining and State Plants, the enterprises garnered state support, producing large quantities of gold ingots (reportedly 10 tons per year according to Gazeta de Maramureș, 2022) for the national reserve (evaluated at 105 tons) and covering approximately 75% of Romania's copper and led supply. Remin's annual output consisted of 6 million tons of ore, processed into 25 thousand tons of lead, 44 thousand zinc and 19.5 thousand copper (Gazeta de Maramureș, 2022). The enterprise was aided by the Baia Mare Institute for Geological Exploration. Acting as the R&D branch of Remin, the institute led the foray for new mining sites and assisted in mining machinery maintenance and development. The region's mining sector operated without hinderances until 1989.

Figure 4. Mine entrance in Maramureș

Source: Gazeta de Maramureș, 2022.

In 1990, Remin had 30 thousand employees with another 6 thousand under the Geological Explorations Enterprise (GEE, the successor of the Baia Mare Institute for Geological Exploration). During post-socialist uncertainties, numerous avenues were pursued to expand the mining sector via foreign investments. Among these, two companies stand out, namely Aurul and Cuarţ. Aurul was a joint venture: 50% owned by an Australian firm and 50% by Remin. It was founded for geological residue refining, a process that increases rare metal and mineral extraction from mined ores. The scheduled operating period was 10-12 years, until 2010. Cuarţ was intended for geological surveying and collaborated with numerous mining companies in the late 1990s. However, an environmental accident that occurred at Aurul proved to be a turning point for the future of Maramureş's mining sector. Cyanide was spilled from Aurul's refinement facility in 2000, polluting waterways all the way to the Black Sea. In the aftermath, the Australian partners withdrew and Cuarţ's mostly engineer workforce soon joined Aurul. However, lacking the financial backing of its foreign partner, the company significantly downsized its activities in the early 2000s and is currently closed.

The region's labour force was already facing difficulties even before the turning point in 2000. In 1997, circa 26 thousand miners were dismissed by a government decree (ruling 22/1997)[3]. They received compensation, a significant sum for the period's income levels. However, considering the enterprise also had roughly €20 million-worth of debt, the remaining 11 thousand employees were targeted by future downsizing measures. Furthermore, as non-ferrous metal production decreased by 30% in 1999 compared to 1990 levels, it was clear that a new strategy was required to possibly revitalize the mining sector, or at least keep it afloat. Government officials proposed three strategies. The first and most optimistic one sought to maintain already existing state support and extend it until 2005. The second emphasized a more hands-off approach, where the enterprises were free to manage their state-provided finances if an adequate efficiency level was kept. The third option, outlined by the World Bank, involved immediate budget cuts: 25% in the first year (2000) followed by 20% cuts per year until funding would cease in the fifth year (2005). The third option was chosen and put into effect as prescribed. Following the downsizing plan, labour shedding occurred each year, but the deadline was surpassed in the end: miners were still labouring in 2005. It was only in 2007 when Remin ceased mining activities entirely and all the 11 thousand employees were dismissed.

[3] https://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?idt=10064

As the union leader of GEE noted, unions were opposed to mine closures, lobbying government officials and warning of the potential societal impact this decision might have in Maramureș. Although far from the violence of the "Mineriade" (Gledhill, 2005), local protests started as early as 1992, when union-staged demonstrations gathered 1500-2000 miners in Baia Mare. It was a period when "no one thought [mine] closures were possible," but nonetheless, rumours of "restructuring" and shuttering of the GEE circulated. After a few days of hesitation, the head of the Local Council invited a 15-person delegation to City Hall for negotiations. Representatives requested the issue be brought to government officials, as mining enterprises relied on state support. The initiative's magnitude soon increased and involved the National Federation of Mining Unions, the sector's largest. In 1994, union representatives sat down with the State Secretary who informed them that there are no future plans for Romania's mining sector. Apart from two sites – one of them reserved for Aurul – every mine would be shuttered as they were unprofitable (Gazeta de Maramureș, 2021).

In the aftermath of negotiations, the local unions, united under the League of Maramureș Unions, understood that their livelihoods depended on delaying the inevitable. Therefore, numerous official requests were sent to the government and pressure was exerted on enterprise management to prolong mining activities. Other strikes and protests were also staged to maximize miners' career length and thus facilitate early retirement where possible: "we wanted employees to retire within the legal timeline (20 years), the majority of them needed a few more years to retire [...] so we had to act, pressure the Bucharest headquarters to not close geological branches, and implicitly, mining" (GEE union leader, Gazeta de Maramureș, 2021). As a counterargument, government officials invoked the insolvency of numerous mining enterprises that relied either on state funding (which was usually 3-6 months late), or bank loans, if the former was not available. As a result, by delaying funds, the government could hasten mine closures on insolvency grounds.

For GEE, 1996 was the epitome of labour struggles. As severance payout was available, certain enterprise managers pressured employees to take the payout and leave without being eligible for retirement. On the flipside, labour unions urged employees to resist the temptation of an easy payout and continue supporting militant actions that would ensure a full pension plan in the future. Of the 6 thousand employees in 1989, approximately a thousand held out, trying to obtain further extensions, at least for an early retirement. However, in 1997, prolonging GEE activities was no longer possible. In hopes of increasing payouts, union leaders switched to negotiating with the government to obtain higher compensation. Although, due to infighting, the settlement was not concluded:

various groups insisted on even higher sums. Negotiations broke down soon after. A few months later, the government announced the final payout amount, 50% less than what was initially on the table.

The making of a transnational labour regime

The 2021-2027 North-West Regional Development Plan lists Maramureş as a top employer in furniture production with roughly 10 thousand employees in this sector out of the county-wide total of 41 thousand. Furthermore, considering that 22 thousand employees are listed in furniture production in North-West Romania, Maramureş hosts close to 50% of them. However, the region's widespread labour shortage is acknowledged (Ştiri de Maramureş, 2022). Apart from establishing intricate commuter networks from rural areas, Maramureş's employers make use of immigrant labour as well.

Aramis, Maramureş's largest employer, is also Romania's largest furniture exporter. Valued at approximately €200 million, the company's business strategy is based 98-99% on exports, focusing exclusively on its largest client, IKEA. Although not part of the IKEA family, Aramis is integrated in IKEA's global production network. It produces mattresses and particle board furniture components designed for IKEA product assemblages. The company's market competitiveness – apart from contextual factors like low-cost labour and low corporate tax rates – consists of input material cost-cutting measures and employment strategies. By navigating second- and first-tier supplier boundaries, Aramis cuts material supply costs. For instance, instead of importing foam for mattresses, management invested in their in-house foam production facility. Likewise, a €4 million investment established their internal mattress spring manufacturing branch.

When the latest IKEA store opened in Bucharest, Romania's trade minister recognized the furniture production network's importance for the national economy:

> Today we are witnessing more than a store opening. I say this because IKEA is an ecosystem, a business model that requires innovation and simplification... and involvement of Romanian suppliers in this innovation chain. For example, the largest Romanian exporter, domestically owned, Aramis from Baia Mare, developed around IKEA collaboration. We thank them for choosing our market, including the creation of a small and medium enterprise supply nexus in Romania for their supply chain. Aramis, only by itself employs over 4200 people. I congratulate IKEA for opening this store, but I invite them to expand more and remind them of our continuous support to ensure their presence in other Romanian cities as well (Economica.net, 2019).

Likewise, IKEA representatives acknowledged their production network in Transylvania, with two of the aforementioned suppliers from Maramureş county:

> Romania is important for us, we have numerous valued suppliers there. Aramis from Baia Mare, Aviva from Sighetul Marmaţiei or Apulum from Alba Iulia are all among the best global suppliers that IKEA currently has (Ziarul Financiar, 2019).

To our knowledge, it was the first public acknowledgment of IKEA's supply chain in Romania. IKEA purchases furniture components from approximately 20 local manufacturers, comprising more than 3% of IKEA's global acquisitions. These figures place Romania among the top 10 global suppliers of IKEA, the top 3 being comprised of China (25%), Poland (19%), and Italy (8%) (Ziarul Financiar, 2019). This market position is facilitated by the region's capital to labour relations.

Aramis taps into the regional labour force and offers a €400 average wage (approximately 1,950 RON, when the minimum wage in Romania is 1,900 RON) for production operators (the largest employee group). The company employs approximately 6 thousand and provides transportation for commuters. Aramis also accommodates roughly a thousand Sri Lankan employees to cope with the region's labour shortage (Ştiri de Maramureş, 2022). The workforce is split into three shifts, producing approximately 8 million units per year (two per minute) in a continuous manufacturing cycle (Ştiri de Maramureş, 2023). This accumulation strategy is typical for Romania's economic landscape that accommodates export-focused operations via low-cost labour.

Furthermore, flaunting its dominance on the region's labour market, the company also sought to expand its production capacity via state subsidies. After establishing a new production branch, Aramis's management, while also self-financing the project, requested the allocation of approximately €5 million (the remainder of the investment) by the state. Management espoused a job creation pitch, stating that at least 100 new jobs would be created. However, the request was rejected allegedly due to the limited local impact the investment would have: 100 new jobs is not "worth" the requested sum (Ştiri de Maramureş, 2022; Ziarul Financiar, 2022).

Taparo is the second largest furniture exporter in Romania. With three locations in Maramureş, the company is the fifth largest by business turnover according to Ziarul Financiar (2020). In terms of employment, Taparo employs less than one thousand compared to Aramis's several thousand. However, like Aramis, Taparo is domestically owned and was built in 2005 on a brownfield site formerly occupied by a cotton mill in Borcuţ – bordering Sălaj County to the

south. Also listed as "one of the most important local suppliers of IKEA" (Ziarul Financiar, 2020), Taparo is exceptional due to its R&D facility developing composite materials to replace existing wood particle boards. The company also invested €1 million in advanced fabrics research.

Other noteworthy furniture producers include Baia Mare's Aviva and Italsofa, alongside Sighetul Marmaţiei's Plimob. Aviva is an English-Isralian floorboards producer with 2 thousand employees. While initially specialized in hardwood flooring, the company shifted to wood composites like medium-density fibreboards and other laminates. Italsofa, as the name suggests, is a subsidiary of Italy's largest furniture manufacturer producing sofas and mattresses with about a thousand employees. Lastly, Plimob is a domestically owned chair manufacturer that also supplies IKEA. It is the successor of Sighetul Marmaţiei's former socialist wood processing enterprise and employs another thousand.

Commuting networks are a widespread labour supply strategy used by numerous companies in the county. On the backbone of Romania's deregulated labour relations, combined income strategies and immigrant employment arrangements are defining factors of the region's transnational labour regime. In other words, these are primary cost-reduction measures in the low-complexity and labour-intensive fringes of MNCs global production networks situated within the export-dependent national economic model.

Conclusions

The study analyses Maramureş county's labour regime in its former mining sector and its current furniture production hub. Engaging primarily with the labour regimes literature (Burawoy et al., 2000; Baglioni et al., 2022), the data enriches the fledgling Romanian labour regime study (Jipa-Muşat and Prevezer, 2023). Maramureş's labour regime is anchored within Romania's political-economic context. While initially dominated by conservative politics and industrial asset safeguarding, it soon morphed into liberal politics. The country's export-led growth model (Ban and Adăscăliţei, 2022) characterized by FDI-reliance and a deregulated labour market soon took shape. The region's labour force followed suit, from a highly unionized labour regime in the mining sector transforming into a transnational workforce suited for medium- to low-value added production schemes in the furniture industry's global production network.

The region's mining sector was consolidated on Transylvania's pre-war infrastructure that survived and developed during the socialist period. Numerous enterprises were constructed to extract and refine non-ferrous metals. In the

post-socialist period, these companies struggled to maintain solvency, relying on state funds. The predicament became financially and politically untenable during the late 1990s. Government officials soon began mine closures and mass layoffs ensued. Labour unrest erupted via numerous union-staged protests in Maramureș that led to negotiations with government officials. In the aftermath, union officials realized that mine closures are inevitable. As a result, delaying actions were pursued to increase miner retirement eligibility. Maramureș's mining sector contracted significantly until the mid-2000s.

Furniture production developed via the region's wood processing infrastructure with domestic companies and FDIs alike. Aramis, the county's largest employer, is a domestically owned manufacturer embedded in IKEA's global production network. The region's transnational labour regime is defined by company labour supply and cost-cutting strategies. Tapping into the deregulated, low-cost, and vocationally skilled workforce, the region's employers pursue export-oriented production strategies. While Aramis spearheads the strategy, it is a widespread conjuncture, with other employers also applying similar procedures. As labour shortage is a widespread issue, these companies not only make use of intricate commuter networks from rural areas but have also resorted to immigrant labour power. Nevertheless, the current status quo is vulnerable to market fluctuations, a predicament that exposes the region's labour regime as well.

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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FROM A SEMI-PERIPHERY CITY: THE CASE OF BAIA MARE

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ABSTRACT: Many post-socialist cities in Romania experience population decline caused by both negative natural growth and large-scale international migration. This study seeks to advance an understanding of post-socialist migratory flows from the city of Baia Mare to Western labour markets in terms of its mode of incorporation into the global economy. Using a historical structural lens, the study traces the critical economic transformations, political moments or institutions that influenced migratory flows from Baia Mare. It argues that from its semi-peripheral position, the city's role, after the regime change, became that of a supplier of cheap labour to Western Europe and a location for low added value industries. Despite its rapid economic growth due to reindustrialisation and its success in attracting relatively large shares of immigrants, its native urban population continues to decrease. The developing manufacturing industry specialised in intensive, low-paid, manual labour automatically excludes more educated and qualified labourers who continue to resort to international migration in order to survive or to improve the quality of their lives.

Keywords: international migration, post-socialism, deindustrialisation, reindustrialisation, Baia Mare, Romania

In 2022, Baia Mare had 141,704 inhabitants, approximately the same population it had at the end of 1986 (National Institute of Statistics). The statistical data shows that after a slight increase in population numbers between 1990 and 2000, the number of residents continued to drop. The decrease in the population itself is a worrying phenomenon, more so if we take into consideration that this evolution is associated with a continuous degradation of the structure by age due to population ageing and the external migration of young persons.

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This means that the active population is diminishing, a process that might affect the economy of Baia Mare in the long term. The largest cause of population loss is internal and external migration which affects young people with a higher degree of professionalisation. The city's migration index is 88, a number far above the country's average value.[2] The survey conducted inside the PRECWORK project confirms this statistic: one in four respondents had an international migration experience.[3] Internally, the young, active population is moving towards more economically developed and multi-specialized cities, such as Cluj-Napoca, for both education and work purposes. Externally, they join the shares of Eastern emigrants in a Western dual labour market, filling in the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy.

Meanwhile, in keeping with Romania's rise as a "new immigrant destination" (Winders 2014), Baia Mare began drawing labour from South-Asian nations. In one year alone, over 1,600 permits for foreign workers were issued at the county level.[4] In terms of internal migration, Baia Mare is among the cities with the largest share of urban immigrants in Romania, alongside Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, and Târgu Mureș. Between 2001 and 2011, the city managed to attract over 6,000 migrants from nearby localities (Cristea et al., 2017). Despite these recent inflows, the overall population is still decreasing. The recent immigrants are not only insufficient in number to replace the ones who left externally, but they are also less qualified. Consequently, the city faces an increasingly significant labour shortage.

The present study aims to provide some insights into this apparent contradiction and explores how capitalist expansion after the fall of communism and the particular variants of capitalism tested in Romania affected population mobility. Since the period covers mainly the post-socialist period, the focal point is on how deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation generated different paths and rationales for external migration. More specifically, it addresses the following questions: How did the deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation cycles shape migratory flows from and to Baia Mare in post-communism? How did the local

[2] The migration index realized by the sociologist Dumitru Sandu indicates the locality's dependence on international migration: https://panorama.ro/obsesie/alta-harta-romania-diaspora-europa/ (accessed: 12/11/2023)

[3] This study is part of the 'Precarious labour and peripheral housing. The socio-economic practices of Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development' research project (PRECWORK). The quantitative research conducted inside the project shows that almost a quarter of all respondents (23%) went to work abroad. Based on ethnicity, the situation of external migrants is as follows: 24% Roma, 23% Romanians and 22% Hungarians.

[4] http://www.graiul.ro/2023/04/01/maramuresul-trambulina-muncitorilor-asiatici-spre-alte-tari/ (accessed 12/11/2023)

population experience the economic changes in terms of their labour situation at home and abroad? Although the study is strongly focused on economy and labour, it does not take a purely economic angle. As Hollifield (2004:885) states, "economic and sociological forces are the necessary conditions for migration to occur, but the sufficient conditions are legal and political." As the case of Baia Mare shows, despite the demand for cheap labour in Western markets and the surplus labour age population of Romania in the deindustrialisation period, migration flows exploded only once EU border control decreased. Therefore, this historical analysis points to crucial economic transformations, political moments or institutions that influenced migratory flows from Baia Mare.

The city's out-migration and, more recently, its in-migration must be understood as emerging from its historical industrial trajectory, a specific location within Romania and the European economic system, and its respective demographic composition. During communism, Baia Mare experienced an accelerated rate of growth, as the industry was dominated by the mining and metallurgy sectors. The town had clear strategic value for the country, as it was one of the most important suppliers of non-ferrous metals for the national economy and a booming urban centre. At the end of socialism, Romania's entire electrolytic copper production was realised here, 75% of its converter copper production, plus important gold, silver, lead quantities, and 43 other chemical-metallurgical products (Pantea, 2015).

As the industry grew and became more complex, the town attracted an important rural population from the surrounding regions, which were turned into factory workers and city dwellers in a rather short period. At the same time, strong restrictions regarding external migration and abortion and birth control prohibition further augmented the number of inhabitants. The population increased from 36,000 in 1956 to 149,000 in 1992.

Industrial development needed more skilled workers, so the education system expanded, and by 1985, the town counted: 1 university, 4 schools for foremen, 9 technical high schools, and 8 vocational schools. The housing sector grew in order to accommodate industrial workers (Vincze, 2023), health and transportation investments followed accordingly. In fact, except for its neighbouring Baia Sprie, the town was the only urban settlement in the region that had urban features (Filip & Gavra, 2006).

After the 1989 regime change, Romania first experimented with neo-developmentalist policies as the state maintained ownership of the largest parts of the industry and tried to re-launch investments in strategic sectors. However, many of these enterprises were dependent on state support, especially for salary payments, in order to function. Starting from the late '90s, the mines in the region gradually closed, and soon the complementary urban industries

were either privatised or were shut down. The deindustrialisation generated long-time unemployment, especially among men. Once the European borders opened, the new "urban poor" in Baia Mare resorted to migration as a survival strategy.

After a period of economic stagnation caused by deindustrialisation, Baia Mare became integrated into the European production networks, its medium complexity companies producing mainly furniture. Many Western companies moving away from the massive, vertically integrated, Fordist organisational principles "downsized" to exploit semi-periphery economies, forming network corporations (Knox & Taylor, 1995). Transnational corporations were encouraged by the local and national governments to invest directly by promoting policies aimed at financial deregulation, trade reforms, less restrictive labour markets, and even subsidies for certain economic fields. The export-led economic growth model implemented in Romania and illustrated by the Baia Mare case relied on low and medium-skilled labour, whose wages are below or at least in sync with productivity (Ban & Adăscăliței, 2022). Low-qualified workers, mostly from rural areas (Cristea et al., 2017), Roma residing on the outskirts of cities (Perneș, 2022), or, more recently, immigrants from South Asian nations, were drawn into flexible labour arrangements by the corporations.

Educated and qualified urban residents resisted these labour arrangements. The solid communist education infrastructure continued to produce effects in terms of human capital. In 2011, Baia Mare occupied the 16th position in the country in terms of the number of people with higher education (Cristea et al., 2017). The relatively high level of educational development in some parts of the population drove skilled workers away from the manufacturing sector toward the service sector or to Western labour markets. Increasingly attuned to the consumption values of the Western world, they became more aware of the economic imbalances and, in consequence, decided to migrate (Anghel & Horvath, 2009). As more young people opted for external migration, the inequality between migrant and non-migrant households increased in time which further augmented the numbers of those who decided to leave, causing the city to specialise in migration. Migration thus became a self-perpetuating phenomenon (Massey, 2001).

Contrary to the neoliberal narrative promoted by the World Bank, the case of Baia Mare shows that a city's economic success should not be measured based only on its capacity to attract migrants and commuters but also on its ability to retain the native population. In fact, the extraordinarily high levels of internal and external mobility the town has recently experienced testify to the precariousness of the local labour market based on low-skill manufacturing and services sectors.

The case I investigated is of qualified young individuals who migrated from Baia Mare to capital-intensive countries (Western Europe and the USA) between 2002 and 2020. The study analyses a category of "successful" migrants born in the urban environment in a heavily industrialised town. I employ the term "successful migrants" to refer to those persons who have engaged in migration, thrived in the destination and chose to return to the country of origin, where they make long-term use of the resources that resulted from migration. The most important marker of success in this case is acquiring a house in Baia Mare.

Conceptual framework

The focus of this study is the relation between different economic development regimes and international labour mobility in the city of Baia Mare. This study emerges, therefore, at the intersection between political economy and urban sociology/human geography. Concepts and frames for interpreting migration were drawn from all these disciplines and are discussed below.

From a political economy perspective, international labour migration is one component of the interdependent, asymmetrical core-periphery connections, which also include capital, commodities, and knowledge. For this paper, an adequate and useful approach to understand migration in these terms is the World System Theory (Wallerstein, 1974, 2004). The theory emphasises the unequal distribution and exchange of resources, including labour force, between the developed world and the less developed countries and regions. Capitalist accumulation in the developed world is predicated on the incorporation and exploitation of developing economies. In this dialectical relation, migrant-receiving countries represent the core, while emigration areas are associated with the periphery. International labour migration reinforces the unequal distribution of resources. Those who leave generally have a higher level of skills and motivation for success, which is used to generate higher levels of productivity and, thus, capital accumulation in core countries. Consequently, peripheral countries lose an important share of the population and thus experience a decrease in productivity, labour and skill shortages, accompanied by a deterioration of working-class cohesion. Cultural globalisation also plays a part in developing migration flows from the periphery to the centre, as "mediascapes" (Appadurai, 1990) affect people's perception of economic imbalances and shape consumption expectations, which in turn lead to migration.

Although there is serious disagreement between scholars as to where do countries precisely fit into the core-periphery categories (or even if a classification of this sort is useful), as a former socialist, industrialised country and a new EU

member, Romania is considered a semi-periphery, i.e. it functions as a specific connection node between the global centre and the periphery. This status is reflected in its capital and commodities, labour and technology, discourse and knowledge exchanges. In the field of economy, the European-centred transnational capital has imposed its dominance over large sectors of CEE's productive, consumer and financial sectors (Shields 2009, Rae 2011, Nagy & Timár 2017). Low- and medium-skilled industrial operations produce manufactured goods designed mainly for export in Romania. Reduced labour costs are used, therefore, to increase the competitiveness of West European firms in global value chains (Ban & Adăscăliței, 2022). In migration, similar to other CEE countries, its large outflows to Western Europe and its recent inflows from further Eastern areas might signal its intermediate role in global migrations (Stola 2001, Horváth & Kiss 2015, Török 2017, Żołędowski 2020). Yet, as Horváth & Kiss (2015) show, not all semi-peripheries will follow similar developmental patterns and the fact that Romania did not manage to attract large amounts of immigrants from further Eastern European regions, such as Moldova or Ukraine, points to the fact that Romania remains, at least partially, the symbol of periphery.

Although the merits of the world system theory are multiple, it leaves out questions related to agency, contingency and local context. More relevant to our case, the approach has little to say about the roles of cities in global production, consumption and labour chains or how unequal economic relations are reproduced, transformed, resisted, or accommodated by various agents. In an attempt to overcome this homogenous totality, Knox and Taylor (1995) focus on "world cities". This framework helps us locate "city-ness" at several different scales, from the global urban system to the social worlds of their inhabitants. Cities are seen as "centres through which flow money, workers, information, commodities, and other economically relevant variables. As centres, they extend their influence into a surrounding 'field' or region whose economic relations they 'articulate' into the global economy or space of global accumulation." (Knox & Taylor, 1995:22).

From this perspective, Baia Mare is a global city. It has active relations with global production, which generates both capital and labour mobility. Its space includes specific production sites (e.g. wood processing and furniture manufacturing), service markets and, of course, spatial concentrations of labourers and consumers.

The "city" and its development, including population mobility, under different economic cycles, is the main focus of various urban sociology and human geography studies. We are witnessing today an emerging body of research into urban shrinkage as a problem of post-socialist transformation (Rink et al., 2014).

Romania is in the top tier of countries with the highest number of declining cities and is predicted to lose about a quarter of its current population by 2050 (Constantinescu, 2012). This unfortunate scenario has impelled Romanian scholars to investigate the relation between deindustrialisation and urban decline (Constantinescu 2012, Schoenberg & Constantin 2014, Popescu 2014, Dumitrache et al., 2016, Mihail, Cehan & Lazăr 2021, Petrovici & Bejinariu 2021). Generally, these studies look at international migration as just one of the demographic changes which affected post-socialist, post-industrial Romanian cities. Population decline is understood as a combination of extremely low birth rates, internal migration due to suburbanisation, external labour migration losses, high or moderate mortality, and a rapidly ageing population (Rink et al., 2014).

However, the process of urban shrinkage is a complex one, having a multitude of causes that determine peculiar trajectories. The way Romanian cities experienced post-socialist shrinkages depended on several factors, including their historical legacies, their recent reindustrialisation around manufacture or logistics, human development level, and political decisions at the national and European level (Petrovici & Bejinariu 2021). Baia Mare experienced a medium-term urban depopulation as the city was slowly integrated into the EU economy, increasing again the number of industrial workers.

Methodology

This study is based on data collected from the PRECWORK research project, which aimed to investigate the socio-economic practices of the Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development in the city of Baia Mare. It uses a mixed methodology, as it combines qualitative and quantitative data from various sources.

In order to map the migration patterns of the Roma and non-Roma and their perception of the labour market at home and abroad, we used data from a survey conducted in 2020. The survey interviewees were recruited from three groups of labour migrants: Romanians, Roma and Hungarians. There were 800 responses in the sample, which is indicative of Baia Mare's population. The statistical data was mainly used to supplement or reinforce the observations and conclusions drawn from the primary type of research design, which was on-site ethnography.

I conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with current or former migrants from the city of Baia Mare to Western labour markets. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face during 2021-2022, with a few being held online. In terms of the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, most of them

are young people of Romanian ethnicity born in the 1980s, with a medium or university level of education, coming from working-class or middle-class families. Therefore, it is a category of educated and qualified people who mastered the host country's language and came from an industrialised urban environment. In terms of gender representation, 11 interviews were conducted with women and 17 with men. The questions concerned the professional and personal path before, during, and after migration (if applicable). The interview transcripts, together with the field observations, were coded in MAXQDA with descriptive labels, which were further organised into themes and larger concepts drawn from theory. Finally, a third cycle of coding was applied in which the initial codes were refined and further analysed. I used in vivo coding (creating codes using direct quotes and phrases from informants) as titles for different sections of this paper in order to define and delimit critical historical junctures that influenced migration.

For triangulation purposes, other data sources, such as local archives, newspaper articles, economic reports, and urban policies, were analysed and introduced in the present study.

Deindustrialisation and international migration in Baia Mare

"Those were the hardest years. With Constantinescu in the lead"

Numerous studies have documented the different waves of Romanian migration after 1990, taking into consideration the volume of migration, the types of migration, the destinations reached or the social categories involved (Sandu et al., 2006; Diminescu, 2009; Sandu, 2010, 2018; Anghel et al., 2016, Horvath & Kiss, 2015). For the scope of this article, it is sufficient to review the most critical periods and key junctures to understand better the current situation and see what the case of Baia Mare can add to the overall picture. Since each one of these stages has the meaning of a "social world" (Sandu, 2010), a temporal perspective allows, by comparison, to understand the contemporary social world of migration.

The first significant waves of mass international migration emerged shortly after communism fell. The Hungarians and Germans from Baia Mare responded to the political imperatives of national unity elaborated by the elites in their "mother countries" but also reacted to the economic pressures faced by society in post-communism (Fox, 2009) and decided to migrate. Statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics record this ethnic migration. Censuses show that 25,944 Hungarians lived in Baia Mare in 1992, which

accounted for 17.4% of the total population. However, their number decreased constantly to 21,128 (14.8% of the total population) in 2002 and 12,750 (11.32%) in 2011. Practically, the Hungarian population of Baia Mare halved in just two decades.

The ethnic Roma, on the other hand, applied for political asylum in countries such as Germany or Great Britain (Diminescu, 2009) as a result of the inter-ethnic conflicts that arose in the first part of the '90s, but they also practised international trade and some seasonal activities.[5] The ones who were successful later acted as migration brokers for Romanians and Roma alike.

Romanians were not so fast to migrate on a large scale, at least not in the first post-communist decade. As in other parts of the country, economic restructuring through the privatisation of state-owned companies was taking place in stages, depending on the political-economic agendas of those in power. The Văcăroiu Cabinet (1992-1996) showed an explicit concern for saving the industrial workforce through public investments in industry, the purchase of internal industrial goods, price control considered strategic for industrial policy such as energy, and automatic indexation of the minimum wage (Ban, 2015). For example, from 1990 to 1995, investments were systematically made in the modernisation of the Cuprom factory, which became Societatea Comercială Phoenix SA (Csoma, 2001): the modernisation of the dosing and batch formation installation for smelting in suspension (1990), the completion of the gas purification system (1990), the modernisation of the sewage treatment plant (1991), the modernisation of the liquefied sulphur dioxide factory (1991), the commissioning of a new fuel and liquid storage facility (1992), the commissioning of a new rectifier (1992), the construction of a station for checking and repairing sulphur dioxide cylinders (1992), putting into operation a new technological gas filtration installation by installing indigenous production filters (1993), attempts to recover copper from diluted solutions and from the spent electrolyte, together with IMNR Bucharest (1993), the installation of fog filters at the sulfuric acid factory (1994). All these efforts culminated in 1995 with the commissioning of a new dispersion chimney, the highest in the country, to reduce urban pollution.

[5] At the beginning of the 1990s, a series of conflicts took place in Romania between the most representative ethnic groups in the country. The most violent and, at the same time, the most publicized inter-ethnic conflict was in Târgu Mures, between Romanians and Hungarians. However, the violence cases against the Roma were more significant in number. In total, 36 violent attacks against the Roma were documented, resulting in burned houses and human victims. In the context of the collapse of communism and the Yugoslav War, several Western countries offered political asylum to Romanian citizens. Many who applied for political asylum during that period were ethnic Roma. Diminescu (2009) states that these waves of refugees have alarmed Western governments and have provided arguments for a very restrictive policy regarding the free movement of Romanians.

However, most of the region's mines and their complementary urban factories operated on loss. Numerous causes contributed to the decline in production capacity, including obsolete technology, rising production costs, the closure of low-quality ore mines (e.g. Băiuț and Borșa-Măgura), modifications to the labour laws, and a reduction in the labour force. The Baia Mare Lead and Zinc Autonomous Authority-RAPZ, in charge of supervising the activity of 18 mines and ore processing plants, reported the following indicators of economic efficiency for the first years after the change of regime:

Table 1. Economic efficiency indicators reported by Regia Autonomă a Plumbului și Zincului Baia Mare. Value: thousands of lei

	1992	1993
Production value	14.190.000	15.885.000
Total costs	43.141.000	45.635.000
Total state subsidy	28.551.000	29.750.000

Source: Bălănescu et al. (2002)

Labour was restructured in order to increase returns by cutting down costs. There were several strategies to reduce the existing labour force: labour rationing, layoffs, and redistribution. The miners were the first affected. Between 1990 and 1992, the mines in the region lost 3.9% of their workforce (Bălănescu et al., 2002). The underground working regime changed, and the extraction time was shortened. [6] Mine production output decreased and consequently, so did the activity of ore processing and extraction plants. At the same time, following union demands, the retirement age in heavy industry was reduced. At the national level, this governmental measure led to doubling the number of retirees in just a few years (Iliescu, 1994). This measure backlashed, in some cases, as too many employees decided to retire. Consequently, many young people who migrated to the city for professionalisation were employed

[6] During communism, the underground work regime was: 8 hours per day, 3 shifts a day, and 6 days a week. Starting from 1990 miners worked 6 hours underground, in 4 shifts, 5 days a week and had from a short Friday.

in the early '90s at non-ferrous processing plants. One of the respondents, who joined the Cuprom factory immediately after graduating from the technical school in 1995, explains:

> A law was passed that if you were 45 years old and you had, I don't know how many years of working experience, of the 1st working group, you could retire. […] And they [the workers] retired in mass. (48, M, Baia Mare 2021)

Despite these early signs of deindustrialisation, as result of the neo-developmentalist (Ban, 2015) policies adopted, both the rate of natural increase and the rate of migration remained positive, leading to a slight increase in the population residing in Baia Mare. In 1992, the city's total population was 152.953 and grew steadily, reaching 156.870 in 2000.

Table 2. The ethnic composition of Baia Mare municipality

Ethnicity	1992		2002		2011		2021	
Romanians	119,713	80,2%	118,357	82,8%	96,105	85,4%	77,785	87,6%
Hungarians	25,940	17,4%	21,128	14,8%	12,750	11,3%	8,713	9,8%
Roma	1,969	1,3%	2,142	1,6%	3,107	2,7%	1,772	1,9%

Data source: Institute of National Statistics, census years 1992, 2002, 2011, 2021.

Whereas heavy industry benefited from a slow pace of restructuring and privatisation, the manufacturing industries that employed the city's female population, such as the textile and food industries, did not. For example, Maratex, the textile factory which employed over 7,000 people during communism, 90% of which were women, dismissed more than half of its workforce in just three years after the regime changed (Bălănescu et al., 2002). In 1999, the factory was privatised and, just four years later, was shut down. Many women were laid off and became (often informal) employees of the newly developing service sector, or they returned to their villages of origin and worked the land in order to supplement the family income. For example, one woman describes her experience in the emerging urban economy:

> I went to a pastry, but we were just two women employed, we were making 700 pieces of everything! Two women in one night! It wasn't easy to make 700 pieces! Kneaded, made, baked, removed! […] I worked there for a year for 100.000 lei. (61, F, Baia Mare 2021)

In the second half of the 90s, the Romanian version of the neoliberal "shock therapy" characterized by the dramatic restriction of credit to state companies, fiscal austerity measures, and neoliberal tax reforms began. Much of the industrial base in Baia Mare was privatised or liquidated in this second wave of neo-liberalization. The economic restructuring created real tragedies in the social field: high unemployment rates, high poverty rates, and urban ghettos. Between 1997 and 2000, Remin (the National Company of Precious and Non-ferrous Metals REMIN, previously RAPZ) cut down more than half of the mining and industrial labour force, the numbers going down from 34,713 employers in 1990 to 12,128 in 2000 (Bălănescu et al., 2002). In 2004, only 7,173 persons were still Remin employees. Consequently, the urban population started to decrease; the critical drops coincided with changes in the external migratory flows in 2004, 2008, and 2011.

City dwellers migrated from the urban area to the countryside, where they practised subsistence agriculture. At the beginning of the 2000s, around 2,000 people from Baia Mare changed their address annually (in 2002: 2,242, in 2004: 2,416, in 2005: 1,926), and around 1,000 people changed their residence (in 2002: 1,198, in 2004:1816, in 2005: 1183). Some people, especially those previously employed in industry, moved to neighbouring communes. The 2002 census shows that the population of the nearby communes such as Groşi, Recea, Tăuţii Măgherăuş, Săcălăşeni, Satulung, Ardusat had increased compared to the data from the 1992 census. Despite the poor infrastructure and public transport connections, these internal population movements were the early signs of suburbanisation in Baia Mare. The development of the town's surrounding region would later favour the establishment of new companies in search of available and cost-accessible workforce. For example, the county's most profitable companies and important regional employers, Eaton and Optibelt, were opened in the 2000s in the neighbouring communes of Fărcaşa and Tăuţii Măgherăuş.

Others chose to migrate outside Romania's borders. However, because Europe was increasingly a fortress (Anghel & Horvath, 2009), legal migration for work was hardly possible. The data provided by the Maramureş Passport Office clearly show that the lowest number of passports issued coincided, in fact, with the most brutal years of transition (between 1999-2001, around 17,000 passports were issued annually compared to double that amount after 2002,

when visas for Romanian citizens were eliminated). This fact demonstrates that deindustrialisation, which generated masses of disposed people, does not automatically lead to external migration. The migratory regime (Anghel & Horvath, 2009) and the demand for labour force in countries with advanced capitalism (Piore, 1979) are the remaining essential elements in explaining how large migration flows develop. Furthermore, as long as the migration costs are high, only those with resources can resort to legal or clandestine migratory strategies. For example, at the beginning of the 2000s, only the cost of the passport equated to almost half of the minimum wage.[7] The stories that my respondents shared are populated with individuals who fled the country in the late '90s using a bureaucratic niche (such as applying for political asylum), bribing customs officials, or hiding in trucks, all these strategies implying significant costs. One respondent who migrated to the UK in the early 2000s explains how he entered the country:

> My girlfriend's brother-in-law had been there for a long time, and he was a heavy guy […] I gave him a thousand pounds, and everything was settled at the embassy. I was on a business visa, and I worked as self-employed […]. I went into the catering field. I got my qualification at Spiru Haret, here, in our city, during one afternoon. […] I was working using fake papers. G. C. A gipsy who had migrated to England a long time ago. Until the 2000s, if you were a gipsy, you received political asylum in England. (38, M, Baia Mare 2021).

Some locals from Baia Mare, especially women with access to consumer goods from factories, practised "suitcase trade". The city's geographical positioning near the border with Hungary and Ukraine facilitated this survival practice. One of the respondents, forced by his father's illness, contributed to the family earnings, starting from a young age, by selling abroad ceramic products from the Faimar factory:

> It was organised; at that time, there were two or three people in the city who transported people, and they had manoeuvres at customs. I remember I only went when a certain customs officer was on duty that didn't control me. […]In Hungary, you could travel with a passport. [...] One weekend, that's all. At Miskolc market, in Debrecen. In Miskolc [I went] more often, there was the Saturday market, and in Debrecen on Sundays or vice versa. You would go, sell the products, go to the other market, get what you needed, and come back [...] palinka, Rama margarine, toilet paper, chestnut puree, only fine things!"(38, M, Baia Mare 2021)

[7] In 2002, the new type of passport cost 800,000 lei, while the minimum wage was 1,750,000 lei.

Massive deindustrialisation and bankruptcies lead to record-high unemployment and underemployment rates. Due to inflation, prices were skyrocketing. Wages were not keeping up, leading to a state of widespread scarcity. Many young people born during the demographic boom of the '80s finished compulsory education (minimum ten grades) during this period and were about to enter the workforce. Some were employed while still in school or college, forced to support their families financially or at least not to burden them. Their work, mostly informal, becomes crucial in supplementing the family income or in supporting themselves financially during their studies. Such early and harsh labour experiences partially explain why they were willing to work in DDD (difficult, dirty, and dangerous) sectors on Western markets, such as construction in the case of men and cleaning and caring in the case of women, despite their often medium or high-level education. The excerpts below illustrate how common this practice was, in fact, especially among young men:

> I was 16 and a half years old, I went to school, and I went to work. I was a waiter, and I opened the first jazz pub in Baia Mare […] I was a waiter until I was 19 years old. After that, I said to myself that I need to draw a line, so I went to Spain with all the pennies I had saved. (36, M, Baia Mare 2021)

> When I finished high school, I went to college in Cluj, and somehow, I was on my own. In my second year of college, I went to the States. […] I worked on construction sites all my student years. I also worked at the Cluj airport when it was under construction. (36, M, Baia Mare 2021)

> At 14 [I started working], but ok! At the age of 12, I was carrying sacks of potatoes on my back after picking them. Or I was logging wood at 13. So, it wasn't bad, it was ok. It was acceptable; it was achievable. That was my first job [on a construction site in Baia Mare]. (37, M, Baia Mare 2022)

At the same time, health, education, and social protection were seriously underfunded and partially privatised. Instead of following more socially embedded neo-developmentalist policies where the state is a buffer zone that protects "against the dislocations produced by market competition and its associated structures of power and privilege" (Ban 2016, p. 4), Romania followed the neoliberal economic path. This meant that healthcare, education, and various other forms of social protection lost their universal character and became less accessible to the larger population. In Baia Mare, at the municipal level, there was a decrease in the number of doctors active in the public sector, from 358 in 2000 to 285 in 2005 (Starea Socială a Municipiului Baia Mare, 2007). Meanwhile, the number of doctors from the private sector increased by

a shocking 373% during the same period. Given the large number of studies that demonstrate that post-socialist deindustrialisation was a major burden on workers' health (Scheiring & King, 2022), the neoliberal attack on the medical sector had particularly negative effects on the local working class. Statistical data show that, until recently, the highest number of deaths in Baia Mare was registered between 1996 and 2003 (according to INS, the number of deaths increased from 1072 in 1990 to 1265 in 1996 and 1258 in 2003). One can infer that, like elsewhere in the post-socialist space, these excess deaths were "deaths by despair" (Scheiring & King, 2022).

Many social protection services were felt primarily on the shoulders of NGOs because specialised state institutions only covered urgent needs. Some of these organisations, such as Somaschi, Sacro Cuore, and YMCA, were charitable missions associated with the Catholic Church. A former employer describes the context in which his organisation developed as follows:

> The Somaschi organisation has been here since 1997. From my point of view, those were the hardest years, with Constantinescu in the lead. The highest inflation; it was hard and nasty. They [the catholic priests] came and saw what the needs were [...] We met needs specific to social work. (38, M, Baia Mare 2021)

What is interesting for this study is the fact that, in time, these missionary and humanitarian exchanges functioning under the patronage of the Catholic Church become one of the avenues for international migration for a segment of Baia Mare's population. In the decades following the fall of communism, goods, money, and people travelled between Baia Mare and Italy via religious networks.

"When the road was clear, I was the first to migrate"

In the context of Romania's accession to the European Union, two political-economical actions taken by the Western European states influenced decisively the migratory flows. Firstly, starting from 2002, Romanian citizens could travel through Europe without needing a visa for three months, a fact that determined the emergence of "work tourists". Basically, migrants went and worked for three months abroad and then returned for a while in the country, after which they went back to work abroad. However, there was a process of selecting migrants according to economic reasons. Romanians had to prove, at the border, that they had a certain amount of money, medical insurance, and a round-trip ticket.

At the national level, the 2002 and 2003 INS records show the lowest number of immigrants since the change of regime in 1989.[8] In Maramureş and Baia Mare, however, the situation was very different. Based on the data provided by the Passport Office, the demand for travel papers significantly dropped only for the first two to three months of 2002. Later that year, it basically exploded, and by summer, more than 4000 passports were issued monthly (in January 2002, 934 passports were issued; the number rose to 3907 in July, 3853 in August and 4282 in September 2002). A possible explanation for the rapidity with which the citizens of Baia Mare adapted to this change is the existence of already well-established migration networks, which offered much-needed financial and integration support to the new migrants. The high number of passports issued for children (1130 in July 2002, for e.g.) points to the fact that eliminating visas was also an opportunity for family reunification for those workers already integrated into Western markets.

Secondly, Romania signed a series of collaboration agreements regarding the employment of seasonal labour with countries such as Spain, Germany, Portugal, and Italy. Romanian migrants worked in agriculture, construction, and the hospitality industry, but also in sectors that hired highly qualified personnel, such as medicine and IT. For example, in 2005, over 42,000 people emigrated temporarily from Romania to work in the EU through the Workforce Migration Office.[9]

Although migration is still costly and full of risks, for many Baia Mare inhabitants, it was the only viable alternative to survive or, in fortunate cases, to increase the quality of their lives. Those who migrated starting from 2002 were young men (18-35 years old), with an average level of training, most of them being qualified workers. The PRECWORK survey confirmed that few of those who worked under socialism (now +50 years old) chose international migration. Those who became adults between deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation, the 30-49 age group, were initially more prone to migrate externally. This situation can be interpreted as a shift in expectations among the younger, urban-born generation. Unlike their parents and grandparents, who measured their well-being against the backdrop of Romania's rural hardships, these younger individuals aspired to the lifestyles prevalent in Western industrialized nations. One informant explicitly articulates this aspiration.

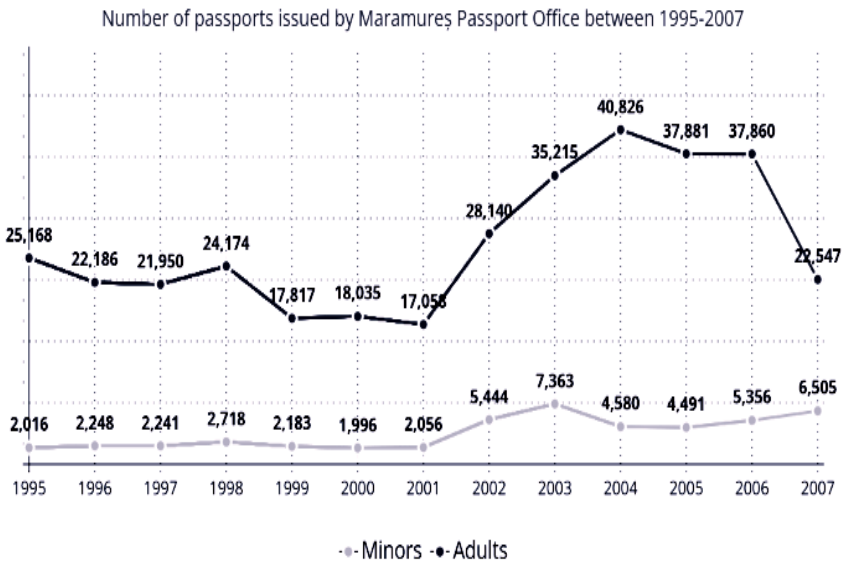
[8] According to INS the total number of emigrants for 2002 was 8,154, while in 2003 it was 10,673. By comparison in 2000 the number was 14,753.

[9] Data source: Liberalization of the labour market in Romania. Opportunities and risks (2006). Impact study carried out by the Department for Labour Abroad, Office for Labour Migration and the Faculty of Political and Communication Sciences, University of Oradea: https://www.e-migration.ro/Publications/301106studiu.pdf

> Starting from the 11th grade, I felt the acute need to become independent. I only dreamed of having my money, of having a car. I only had cars on my mind. I only dreamed of migrating. […] I went to Italy. That was probably when the three-month permits were released. When the road was clear, I was the first to migrate. [...]. I know that I went in April. To be legal, you had to have a visa on your passport every three months. And so it happened that I came home in December, and I stayed for about two or three days, and I went back before the holidays, and I did another three-month work session elsewhere, at a furniture-making workshop. (38, M, Baia Mare 2021)

Although entry into an EU country and the three-month stay was legal, many migrants exceeded this period and became irregular migrants. These institutional restrictions favour, paradoxically, their settlement in the host societies. The existence of a large informal economy sector and the development of networks that organise the migrant's life, often using illegal means, facilitate their illegal stay. The preferred destination countries were Italy and Spain, which concentrated almost 60% of Romanian migration during that period.

Graph 1. Number of passports issued between 1995-2007



Data Source: Maramureș Passport Office

Despite the rapid economic growth in the pre-accession period, Baia Mare's labour market could not absorb the extra workforce due to economic restructuring and the cohorts of young people who finished compulsory education. The number of employees decreased from 57,553 in 2003 to 52,889 in 2005, the most affected areas being the extractive industry and medical services. Baia Mare found itself in a situation where a large proportion of adults were of working age and could not be employed. The effects were felt especially among young people: unemployment (11,213 unemployed at the municipality level in 2003, 9,643 in 2004, 9,449 unemployed in 2005, and 8,153 unemployed in 2006), informal work, and international migration.

In 2006, the town hall received over 900 applications per month for minimum income, about 700 applications for winter heating aid, and nearly 5,000 applications for complementary and single-parent support allowances (Starea Socială a municipiului Baia Mare, 2007). These categories of people were, at that moment, unable to leave the country. Only since 2007—when Romania's EU membership resulted in a major decrease in migration costs—have the most vulnerable residents, including Roma women, started engaging in various seasonal labour activities in the West.

The closing of mining and its complementary industry also meant a change in the city's economic profile. The service sector was growing. In 2007, 8,396 enterprises were registered in the municipality, of which over 71.92% were active in the service sector, especially in trade. Most of these private companies were small, with low added value. The share of employees in the service sector increased during 2004-2007 from 49% to over 56%, while the share of employees in industry decreased from 45% to around 38% (Strategia de Dezvoltare Durabilă a municipiului Baia Mare, 2009).

However, some companies established in the first post-socialist decade started to grow and generate significant revenues. Aramis, currently the largest employer in town, increased its profits six times in just eight years, right before the financial recession (their surplus went from 557,591 lei in 2000 to 12.336.128 in 2008). Other companies, such as Italsofa, Aviva, and PGA Electric, although operating only since the 2000s, managed to achieve fast economic success. These companies, characterized by low to medium production complexity and by their export orientation became the new economic engine of the city. Put simply, Baia Mare's political leaders recognized that its low labour costs gave it a comparative advantage in the European economic system and encouraged foreign direct investments by providing low labour costs. Yet, these companies were not only insufficiently covering the local labour demand, but their operations required mostly manual work, which only a segment of the population was willing to do. A large amount of the labour force, especially the more educated segment, was, thus, still un-employable.

"I had no other solution, and I had to leave"

The EU accession marked the beginning of a new migration stage that differed from the previous ones, both in scope and complexity. The Baltic, Nordic, and CEE countries offered Romanian citizens unrestricted access to the labour market. Most governments in Western Europe, though, postponed granting them full rights, invoking the right to favour their internal labour force or the need to absorb the migrant populations already present on their territory. However, after the accession, the procedures for registering and regulating migrants' work were simplified. Romania recorded the highest increase in its migration stock during that period. OECD data show a 50% increase in the number of Romanian emigrants in Italy and 51% in Spain compared to 2000/01. For many, the EU accession meant not only lower financial costs but also fewer risks associated with migration because of already established family networks, as the next testimony exemplifies:

> In 2007 [I left]. I had a brother there, in Spain; he left long ago; he kept calling me. I told him that I was not leaving, that I should stay here, I was living with my mother, she was alone, I didn't want to leave her... but I saw that I had no other solution and I had to leave. (40, M, Baia Mare 2022)

In the context of reducing the costs, time, and risks involved in moving abroad, migration became less selective compared to previous stages. Poorer, less educated people left for work, often using kin and neighbourhood networks, without securing a job contract first. The likelihood of social security payments associated with "informal" employment is inversely correlated with the likelihood of abuse and exploitation experienced by migrants. A report published by the National Agency against Human Trafficking showed that in 2009, Maramureş occupied the first place in the country (next to Botoşani) in terms of the number of victims of trafficking for labour exploitation.[10] Most of them were men working in agriculture and construction.

Along with the increase in the number of emigrants, the dependence on migration in Baia Mare and all the problems it entails also increased. When economic activity decreased abroad, remittances were curtailed because workers were fired and sent home. Not only did families become dependent on migration to survive, but the local economy also relied heavily on remittances sent by those who left. Instead of investment, remittances were mainly used for

[10] The full report can be found here: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---lab_admin/documents/presentation/wcms_124537.pdf

consumption purposes. The PRECWORK survey showed, for example, that for a large proportion of the population, migration is a form of livelihood, as 78% of remittances are used for daily living.

Except for goods and money, the migrants transfer "social remittances" to their places of origin (Levitt, 1998). For example, in Baia Mare, Alessia, a modern first name of Italian origin, is the third most common name among female newborns in 2005, while Antonio, another Italian loanword, was the third most used name among boys in 2007 (Felecan, 2011). Because Italian names can be easily adapted to the Romanian language, many of those who migrate decide to baptise their children using Italian names to give them better chances to leave the country, find a job, and integrate into the host society. This suggests that for many, the separation from Baia Mare was rather definitive.

"It was the economic crisis [...]. I lost that job"

The 2009 economic crisis led to a decrease in domestic production, negatively affecting wage incomes and jobs. The economic output fell, exports dropped sharply, and the large capital inflows that financed the economic boom dwindled. Romania adopted the most radical form of neoliberalism and eliminated the last universalist social services while attacking the power of unions (Ban, 2015). Romanian employers responded to changes in demand by forcing their workforce to exit the labour market and cutting labour costs for the remaining employees by lowering the wages, reducing the number of hours worked per week, and officially employing part-time while the actual job was full-time. The educated young professionals in Baia Mare were not spared, as the informant below recalls:

> In the fifth year of college, I found a job in Cluj, and I stayed in Cluj. I did junior project management in construction. After that, the market started to fall; it was the economic crisis […]. I lost that job." (36, F, online 2021)

The crisis did not affect everyone in the same way and to the same extent. Baluță et al. (2011) show how the 2008 economic recession and the related government measures had a different impact on women vs. men. While traditionally male fields were affected by decreased production (e.g., construction), the austerity measures implemented by the Boc Government (2008-2012) mainly affected women. Since women were present in positions of execution in the sectors that experienced staff reductions or substantial salary cuts, such as health, education, and public administration, they fully felt the effects of the crisis. Also, the massive restriction of public social care services (nurseries,

kindergartens, and care institutions for the elderly) meant that women were more closely tied to the domestic space. Statistical data from Baia Mare confirm that women were the first to bear the crisis's costs. Between 2010 and 2013, the most dramatic decreases in the number of employees were experienced in the following sectors: education (10% loss of the total number of employees), construction (7%), trade (6%), health and social assistance (4%) (Baia Mare. Strategia Integrată de Dezvoltare Urbană, 2015). Three out of these four sectors employ mostly women.

As the economic crisis hit, informality grew, and, as a result, the local labour force moved into the service sector, where they worked for minimum wages. Some young people decided to extend the schooling period. Yet, even those who managed to keep their jobs during this period were at risk of poverty, as the testimony below illustrates:

> I worked in Polus exactly when it opened […] I think it was 2008. [...] The minimum salary was 5 million; I will keep this with me all my life, I will never forget it. [...] I never forget traumas. That salary was traumatic. (34, M, Baia Mare 2022)

At the same time, for much of the 2000s, Romania was adopting a consumption-led growth model based on debt that partially compensated for the lack of wage growth in the region (Ban &Adăscăliței, 2022). The crisis caused significant repayment problems, especially for households and small companies that had loans in foreign currencies. Over half of the domestic private credit was, at the time of the crisis, in foreign currency (Franks, 2009). Because the leu to euro exchange rate had depreciated by more than 15% in just a few months in 2008-2009, a weaker leu simply meant a higher financial burden for the consumers.[11] As a result, a lot of people from Baia Mare migrated simply because they couldn't afford to pay their bank debts. Migration was the only solution to avoid the impossibility of repaying bank instalments, as stated by various informants:

> When I left for England, we also had some debts; at the time, we were renting from F.' aunt [his wife], we didn't have a refrigerator, and we borrowed some money to buy a refrigerator. I said to myself that if we pay our debts, get an apartment and something else, we would come home, and we'll see what next. And that's pretty much what we did. (36, M, Baia Mare 2021)

[11] https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/soint050409a

> What is certain is that the euro had risen very, very strongly. At one point, the rate had reached 4000, and […] that was the most critical point [when we decided to leave]. (38, F, Baia Mare 2021)

The economic crisis generated other changes in the international mobility of Romanian citizens. Many Romanians in Southern European countries heavily affected by the economic recession, such as Italy and Spain, decided to relocate. Because of their precarious position in the labour market, they lost their jobs and left in large numbers to countries where the economic situation appeared more stable. Thus, the Romanian diaspora expanded in this period, mainly to Great Britain and Germany.

On the other hand, others who could not afford the luxury of moving remained in their initial host countries and went through periods of maximum precariousness and vulnerability. A respondent who had worked in the construction sector but also in various factories, both in Spain and Italy, describes how he survived the crisis:

> I went back to Madrid in the same apartment; my friends let us stay in the living room until we found some work. We found work in construction; we worked, but then broke and worked again, and again, there was no work. [...] Yes, there was a crisis. The first crisis in Spain came, and it was crazy. […] There was a time when I opened the refrigerator, and it was empty […] At one point, there were 40 euros in the whole house. An Indian guy from the store knew us so well that it was like in Romania: give us, bro, some things, and we'll pay for them later. Write it down in your notebook. (36, M, Baia Mare 2021)

In the public speech, international migration was increasingly seen as a pride-worthy strategy for social mobility. External migration was promoted by the local elites as a solution both in times of economic growth and in times of crisis. Prior to the recession, the spectacular flow of remittances (the volume of remittances for 2007 accounted for approximately 6% of Romania's GDP) was seen as a contributing factor to the country's development (Anghel & Horvath, 2009:15). During the crisis, a high emigration rate meant lower unemployment, reduction of poverty, and less pressure on the Romanian welfare system.[12]

[12] In 2010 president Traian Băsescu used national television to thank Romanians for choosing to work abroad instead of staying in the country and benefiting from unemployment benefits: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-diaspora-7667381-presa-britanica-critica-traian-basescu-dupa-acesta-multumit-romanilor-care-muncesc-strainatate-nu-cer-ajutor-somaj.htm (accessed 10/11/2023)

"It's a multinational, with factories all over the globe; we're strictly on production"

The reindustrialisation possibilities of any region depend on the level of development of that particular region, its economic structure, access to resources, infrastructural facilities, and the size and composition of its labour market. In Baia Mare, at the level of investments, the reindustrialisation process became noticeable starting from the early 2000s. In 2006, the manufacturing industry was already placed at the top of investments, with 40.0% of the total investments, an increase of 33.4% compared to 2005 (Strategia de Dezvoltare Durabilă a municipiului Baia Mare, 2009). Yet, foreign investments were rather modest (4,25% of the companies were based on foreign capital) and went into medium or small-size companies. Despite this, the city experienced an economic boom. GDP per capita registered a spectacular increase of 82.2% between 2003 and 2006, placing Baia Mare in the 9th place in the country in terms of urban economic development. As stated before, this positive evolution came to a halt during the economic crisis but soon took off in a quite remarkable manner.

Nowadays, the most relevant sectors of the economy are the manufacturing industry (especially furniture production) and trade, which together generate almost 70% of the city's total GDP. In 2019, 42% of Baia Mare employees were active in the manufacturing industry, while the rest were employed in the trade sector, construction, transport, and hospitality. Although the industry grew in size and specialisation, this growth was reflected in the increase in profit but not necessarily in an increase in wages. The cumulative net profit registered by the companies active in Baia Mare quadrupled in the last 10 years, from 37.5 million Euros at the end of 2010 to 171.7 million Euros in 2019 (Strategia Integrată de Dezvoltare Zona Urbană Funcțională Baia Mare, 2020). However, the average net monthly salary in Maramureș county for 2019 was 2,500 RON, which is way below both the regional and national values (3,000 RON in 2019). In fact, the highest-paid jobs in Baia Mare are in public administration: water distribution, waste management, and education, not in the private sector. This situation explains the current paradox that I laid out at the beginning of this paper: What drives international migration from a city that experiences a dynamic reindustrialisation process?

Looking back, the reindustrialization of Baia Mare was achieved using two key resources existent in the region: wood (natural resources) and people (human resources). The use of both resources is evident when analysing the profile of the largest companies in town. Firstly, the top companies, both in terms of profit and employees, are furniture manufacturers: Aramis, Italsofa, and Aviva. The concentration and specialization of low-added-value manufacturing centred on wood processing has generated an entirely new production complex in Baia Mare.

Secondly, the export-led economic growth model implemented in Baia Mare case relies on low and medium-skilled labour, whose wages are below or at least in sync with productivity (Ban & Adăscăliței, 2022). Educated and qualified urban residents resist these new labour arrangements and choose to migrate to Western labour markets. A lot of young, qualified people are dislocated from their hometowns because they don't meet the labour market requirements. The PRECWORK survey confirms that migration is not a significant phenomenon at the level of those who have a job; it is a solution for those who are not in the local labour market, as only 5% of the migrants left their old jobs to work abroad. The in-depth interviews show that the "successful" migrants who chose to return aim for employment in the public sector. A part of them go through re-qualification and get hired in the state forces (police or prison administration) or in the education system, where the wages are higher. A few of them make use of their experience abroad and get employed in medium management positions. The informant below describes his experience regarding the insertion into the local labour market after returning from a long period of migration in the UK:

> I also left my CV at two factories in Baia Mare. I left it at the gate. And they called me from a factory. I work for them now. At Eaton. [...] They called me a week later to say that they needed a team leader and called me to discuss. […] It's a multinational, with factories all over the globe, we're strictly on production. We make the cabinets, they go to a warehouse in the Czech Republic, and then they are sold. (42, M, Baia Mare 2021)

The extraordinarily high levels of internal and external mobility the town has experienced testify to the precariousness of the local labour market based on low-skill manufacturing and services sectors. The companies attract into flexible labour arrangements low-qualified workers consisting primarily of the rural population and Roma living on the outskirts of the city. Still, even this pool of cheap and flexible labour has diminished over time as even the more precarious strata of the population opted for external migration, leaving both policymakers and employers to ponder in front of labour shortages. Sadly, the solution found is to go further east to recruit the labour force instead of increasing the wages. The migration of foreign workers from numerous South-Asian countries into the city may be regarded as a typical case of how labour forces on the global market move regionally from the periphery toward the semi-periphery, reproducing an unequal global economic system.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between different economic development regimes and international labour mobility in the city of Baia Mare, Romania. Looking at the post-socialist period it aimed to understand how deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation generated different paths and rationales for external migration. Various sources of data analysed indicate that, in post-socialism, Baia Mare specialized in migration. This phenomenon was progressively disadvantageous for the local economy, as young, skilled workers decided to leave to work abroad. The lack of jobs, poverty at work, and the fragility of safety nets in financial crises were the leading causes of migration. As shown, all major recessions that affected the city have been followed, with a lag, by migrations of some segments of the local population abroad. As a result, the inequality between migrant and non-migrant households also increased, which further augmented the number of leavers.

Although the city's economic situation has improved over time, emigration continues to be an active trend. Baia Mare's labour market in terms of income earned, the stability of employment and social security is not attractive to its educated and skilled native population, yet it manages to engage the most precarious segments of the urban population: the Roma, the regional rural population (the new commuters) or even the international migrant population from more far away peripheries (mostly formed by Indian and Nepalese workers). All in all, as the world system theorists argue, far from leading to equilibrium, international migration only aggravates the existing economic disparities between the European core and its Eastern semi-periphery and between migrant and non-migrant households. Developments in the labour market (and consequently in international migration) might be largely dictated by a change in the economic growth model adopted by Romania, from an FDI export-orientated model to wage-based growth (Ban &Adăscăliței 2022). Baia Mare may be able to hold onto its native population and slow the rate of emigration if local wages and overall working conditions improve.

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AIRPLANE PARTS AND COVID MASKS: LABOUR COMMUTERS OF NORTH-WESTERN ROMANIA BETWEEN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN "RE-INDUSTRIALISATION" AND THE GLOBAL MARKET

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to uncover two main features of 're-industrialisation' in Central and Eastern Europe: the reconfiguration of the economic geography in Northwest Romania and the multiple ways in which the Romanian working class is being integrated into the new economy. Post-socialist shifts towards a low-skilled, flexible, and generally insecure economy have underlined the need for cheap, easily disposable labour, and the emergence of the new economic geography has changed the accumulation of capital in the region and the patterns of labour mobility. Despite massive migration, many have continued to work in the region or have combined migration periods with work close to home. This study explores the different mobilities individuals engage in and seeks to understand why some workers choose to stay and live in the region and how the available opportunities for workers aiming to stay in the region influence their prospects. This study traces the patterns of labour commuting and how this is structured by individuals' strategies and motivations, as well as the social relationships that support this work. The article analyses labour commuting to two major industrial hubs in the region: one which manufactures aerospace components, and one that produces medical textiles. Both companies are foreign-owned and concentrate a significant proportion of the region's workforce. The micro-dynamics revealed will contribute to understanding the patterns of work in the specific form of re-industrialisation in contemporary Romania.

Keywords: commuters, re-industrialisation, economic geography, regional development

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Introduction

Material Infrastructures and the Human Capital of Re-Industrialisation

During the socialist period, the North-West region in Romania was a pivotal industrial hub that revolved around mining extraction and industrial processing activities, concentrating the labour force of the region and some neighbouring areas. Today, despite the massive trend of national and transnational labour migration, many individuals still work in the region or have opted for a combination of migration and employment close to home. Studies have documented migration processes, as well as macro narratives concerning capitalist transformations in the Central and Eastern European region. But more empirically focused analyses of local phenomena are needed to understand what the current phase of capitalist re-industrialisation brings about in terms of infrastructure and prospects for labour for those workers who seek to stay and make a living in the region.

My research investigates re-industrialisation in Northwest Romania, where a new economic geography has emerged from the previous mining and metallurgy-dominated regime. Since 1989, Baia Mare has undergone a transformation that includes investments in new industries while keeping some traditional industries that are now less active, or even in decline. The economic geography of the region, along with prospects for labour in the current phase of capitalist re-industrialisation, cannot be interpreted only by looking at de-industrialisation and post-industrialisation, as prevalent narratives on the shift to capitalism in CEE. Although images and stories of industrial decline are undeniably commonplace in the region, these overlook the complexities of the emerging economic system. While criticized for its inability to create widespread prosperity and for driving massive migration, CEE capitalism has also set in motion a set of material and human processes leading to a novel and unpredictable economic geography and (Adăscăliței & Guga, 2020; Miszczynski). Industrial workers, most of whom are employed by foreign companies, are susceptible to underqualification even in the long run. Specifically in this area, capital prefers the least expensive labour to the best qualified. Meanwhile, the state lacks the means to invest in skilled labour because the budgetary policies are geared at luring foreign capital (Adăscăliței & Guga, 2020; Ban, 2019). Thus, the conventional emphasis on infrastructure development and industrial zones requires a complementary lens looking at regions as shaped by both previous economic regimes and the realities of the newly formed working class. To address this, my research looks at the two dimensions of economic geography and the new patterns

of commuting, presenting the family relations that sustain work in a difficult economic environment, and grasping the strategies deployed by individuals and communities to safeguard their livelihoods.

In addition to using the economic geography dimension, this study adds a commuter perspective, explicitly focusing on why it makes sense for commuters to remain in the area. By employing qualitative modes of enquiry, I attempt to illuminate their motivations, the social relations developed at work and the family dynamics resulted. My research involves engaging with individuals who are directly impacted by these processes, instead of analysing overarching processes from a distance. By delving into the intricacies of everyday life, I aim to understand their nuanced experiences and narratives. My approach prioritizes first-hand narratives and perspectives, rather than relying solely on a macroscopic lens.

The following questions are raised by this research: why do workers choose to live and work in the area, and what kind of employment prospects are there for those who do? I explore this specifically through the case of labour commuters in the North-Western region of Romania by investigating the patterns of labour commuting, the strategies, and motivations of individuals related to their work and the social and family relationships that facilitate and support this work. The study is focused on two major industrial hubs in the region. These hubs are Universal Alloy Corporation Europe (UACE), which produces aerospace components, and Techtex, which manufactures medical textiles. Both companies are foreign-owned and employ a significant portion of the region's workforce. Various forms of qualitative inquiry form the backbone of my research, including interviews and discussions with workers and commuters, as part of a larger project entitled 'Precarious labour and peripheral housing. The socio-economic practices of Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development' developed by Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

My argument is that the adoption of short-term labour mobility is revealed as a crucial strategy for subsistence in the rural areas of Maramureș. It becomes evident that both employees actively seek, and employers endorse these flexible approaches as mechanisms to sustain low-cost labour. The narratives of the respondents, which I will elaborate on below, serve as concrete examples illustrating this dynamic. These stories underscore the significance of short-term labour mobility not only as a survival strategy for individuals in rural areas but also as a deliberate choice supported by employers seeking to maintain cost-effective labour practices.

This paper begins by discussing the context and historical developments of Romanian re-industrialization and the dynamics specific to the North-Western region. It will then go on to lay out the theoretical dimensions of the research.

The next section is concerned with the fieldwork approach and methodology. I then describe the general industrial profile of the businesses in the area and the ones where most of my respondents are employed. The remaining part presents the findings of the research, focusing on the three aforementioned key themes: the new realities of commuting, family relations that sustain commuting and individual strategies and motivations.

Capitalist Re-Industrialisation and Prospects for Labour

In order to better grasp the drivers of economic processes it is important to understand the past socialist geography of industrial development and the way in which industrial socialism shaped cities, regions, and their respective economies. In the Romanian socialist economy, competition between regions and enterprises was crucial for the accumulation of capital and labour. This resulted in the establishment of formal regulations at intermediate levels to facilitate interactions among workers, company managers, and planners. Additionally, informal networks of workers coexisted with formal structures (Petrovici & Faje, 2019). The increased empowerment and influence of workers can be attributed to the combination of a fragile and overly ambitious Romanian socialist state and the delayed modernization of the economy, which relied heavily on workers to achieve its goals. This phenomenon, as discussed in the works of Cucu (2019) and Grama (2018) highlights how the confluence of an insufficiently strong socialist state and a delayed economic modernization process inadvertently gave workers greater power and agency in shaping the socio-economic landscape.

Furthermore, in order to understand the current re-industrialization and its social consequences, I will first look at the preceding period, characterized by what literature has called 'premature' de-industrialization (Chivu et al., 2017). During the post-socialist period, Eastern Europe experienced a steady decline in population (Neyer et al., 2013) and an aggregate employment, which started in the last years of socialism and continued into the post-socialist period (Mickiewicz, 2013). Migration became more common during this time period. The literature underscores the intricate interplay between industrial transformations, labour migration, demographic changes, and economic challenges within Romania (Chivu et al. 2017, Ban 2014).

In regard to regional development, the decline in overall employment in Romania exhibited regional disparities. Some urban centres and economically advanced counties witnessed higher levels of employment and others experienced significant population and job reductions. The variation was influenced by historical socialist investment strategies. Counties that had received industrial and service investments maintained a larger workforce post-socialism (Bănică et al.,

2017; Chelcea & Druță, 2016; Petrovici et al., 2023). The counties that experienced the most pronounced decline in employment were not those with the highest number of employees during socialism, specifically urban industrial workers. Instead, the most substantial job losses were observed in agricultural-specialized counties, even though they had a smaller labour force (Chivu et al. 2017).

As shown in this section, Romania's transition from socialism to a market-driven economy entails intricate economic and spatial repercussions, which have profound and region-specific implications on individuals' employment strategies.

The Integration of the Maramureș Region into the Global Market

In this section, I will analyse the specific dynamics of the project's case study, Baia Mare, the county capital of Maramureș, in northern-western Romania. The city underwent a notable de-industrialisation phase in the 1990s, followed by a re-industrialisation-driven revival during the 2000s. This region features industrial enterprises that have been seamlessly integrated into global supply networks. It also has a comparatively diminished presence of the precarious tertiary sector found in larger cities across the region, including Romania at large (Földes & Mihaly, current issue). However, despite being considered a success story (Corodescu-Roșca et al., 2023), the industrial labour within the region is characterized by instability, insecure employment, and a dependence on a substantial pool of easily replaceable workers with minimal education and skills, coupled with limited alternative options (as shown by the conclusions of the PRECWORK project). This makes Baia Mare a particularly interesting case to explore.

The former socialist geography of industrial development remains relevant in understanding the processes that unfolded in the next period. An important factor was the erosion of the previously coordinated production envisioned during socialism, connecting interdependent units for tasks like ore movement, metal extraction, and metal processing (Stahl, 1969; Poenaru, 2020). Industrial units were often grouped together or located near suppliers. Post-socialist reforms disrupted this integrated structure, as each unit sought independent operations in the emerging national capitalist market. This transition from integrated autonomy to unit independence was facilitated by governments and it reflected the workers' and managers' desires for autonomy. Privatization further solidified this shift, with companies often welcoming it for worker ownership and capital infusion. However, this segmentation led to economic changes and a prolonged raw materials crisis. The autonomous units prioritized profit, sought high-priced international partners and aimed to secure foreign currency (Földes & Mihaly, current issue).

As a result, in Baia Mare, like in other regions, a large part of the industrial base has been privatized or sold off in this second wave of neo-liberalization. Moreover, economic restructuring is creating real social tragedies: large numbers of unemployment, high poverty rates and urban deprived areas.

Conceptualization: Economic Geography and Commuting Labour

This section situates the two main concepts of this research, namely economic geography and communing labour, inside the broader debates in the anthropological literature, by exploring how material infrastructures shape regions and the literature regarding workers' motivations for commuting. The economic geography of Romanian 're-industrialisation' is one in which abandoned factories sit alongside new industrial hubs, where old and new roads carry loads of goods and people that used to be carried by rail, and where local authorities are generous in their support for investment but cut back on social services (Baccaro et al., 2022; Jipa-Mușat et al., 2023; Petrovici & Faje, 2019). Anthropological research has long been concerned with the ways in which material infrastructures such as roads, industrial investment, entrepreneurial initiatives, and technology parks, as attempts to 'improve' regions, can foster concentrations of poverty, immobility or marginalisation, and shape local labour needs and the work-related behaviour of the population (Allen et al., 2012). Studies have revealed the enduring influence of material infrastructures, such as electricity grids, heating systems, and roads, alongside Western economic concepts, in shaping novel forms of socio-economic organization within the Russian Federation (Collier, 2011). In Eastern Europe, literature has highlighted the significant transformative power of roadbuilding according to state and societal dynamics (Dalakoglou, 2012, 2017). While exploring critical examinations of the concept of region, these studies challenge conventional ideas of regions as static, bounded entities and propose a more dynamic perspective that considers that regions are socially constructed and shaped by various economic, political, and cultural forces (Boschma, 2004).

As economic landscapes change, so do the opportunities for local communities. In the aftermath of Romania's economic downturn in the 1990s, there was a documented increase in transnational labour migration (Anghel et al., 2017; Anghel & Horváth, 2009; Diminescu, 2009; Sandu et al., 2004; Sandu, 2010; Troc, 2016). Research has already explored the process of migration using the Maramureș region as a case study and observed how migration shaped spaces as well as the life narratives of people (Boar, 2005; Ferenț, 2020; Iuga, 2020; Mihali, 2019; Vasilescu, 2012). Among the factors that influenced

significantly work-related behaviours as well as the massive migration during the 'transitional' years (approximately 1990-2009) were poor working conditions, exploitative work programs, delayed payments, and unstable employment (Troc, 2019). However, re-industrialisation is a powerful catalyst capable of transforming regions and revolutionising people's work patterns in a variety of ways. Thus, the multifaceted nature of the process remains underexplored, with most studies focusing solely on labour migration.

This article contributes to the literature on regional developments by inserting the commuting perspective. Throughout this paper, the term 'commuting' will refer to regular travel outside the village anywhere from 6 to 24 hours, as defined by Hugo (1982). Commuting is defined in opposition to circular migration, which involves continuous but temporary absences of more than one day (Hugo, 1982). From a purely economic perspective, commuting and migration are crucial components for establishing a labour market that operates effectively, considering the workers' need to seek out and relocate to regions where relevant job opportunities are available for them (Haas & Osland, 2014).

The decision-making process concerning where to live and what job to take can be interconnected (Haas & Osland, 2014). When commuting is cost-effective, it may encourage people to opt for longer commutes instead of migrating, leading to a situation where decisions about where to live become less intertwined with decisions about where to work (Muellbauer & Cameron, 1998). The feasibility of commuting versus relocating and migrating is contingent upon various factors, such as the costs of commuting, or proximity to home (Haas & Osland, 2014).

The literature around commuting stress (Koslowsky et al., 1995) and its relationship with family dynamics as dimensions of personal well-being points to important factors such as marital status, the presence of children, and family size. Gender differences in motivations for commuting and commuting behaviour are also highlighted in the literature (Albert et al., 2019; Gimenez-Nadal & Molina, 2016; Ignacio Gimenez-Nadal et al., 2018). Considering differentiated household chores and responsibilities, as well as the presence of children, some researchers find a negative relationship between having children and commuting, particularly among women (Gimenez-Nadal and Molina 2016).

The particular context of rural commuters in Maramureș addresses all the dimensions mentioned in the literature. In also enriches the literature on commuting motivations by showing the links between family relations and the way in which the factories in the region shape their working regime. By using various programs such as nurseries or professional schools at the factory, companies employ a strategy of 'familiarism'. The concept originated from what Kalb (1997) termed as 'flexible' familism, a custom initially embraced by worker-peasant

families seeking additional income. This practice was later adopted by nearby factories, involving the availability of 'disciplined' daughters to work alongside male family members as required (Kalb, 1997). In the case of Maramureş commuters, they also state their motivations for bringing their family to work at the same factories as them.

Methodology and Fieldwork Approach

The study was undertaken as a component of the broader PRECWORK project at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The primary aim of the project was to explore the marginalization of the Roma community in Romania, particularly focusing on the Baia Mare region, throughout three economic phases: industrialization, deindustrialization, and reindustrialization. Starting in 2020, the project specifically focused on the Baia Mare region due to its significance in illustrating the challenges encountered by Romanian Roma communities amidst the neoliberal transformation in industry and urban development.

Inside the work package focused on the transformations of labour in re-industrialization, we conducted interviews with workers from Baia Mare, analysing the dimensions of racialized labour during re-industrialization, as well as the emergence of the re-proletarization of Roma workers. While conducting interviews with workers, the theme of commuting workers became recurrent and important in the bigger context of our working package. As a member of the work package, I conducted a total of 25 interviews with factory workers in Baia Mare, including both Roma and non-Roma workers, out of which five were in-depth interviews with commuters from the rural areas of Maramureş, during the period of June to September 2021. During the second period of fieldwork, from March to April 2022, I conducted more informal interviews and discussions with commuters. The study recruited respondents through snowball sampling methods, which allowed access to people from marginalized and rural communities.

As ethnographers conducting fieldwork, we were often seen as outsiders to the communities being investigated. We acknowledge that this outsider status had implications for the dynamics of information sharing, potentially affecting the depth and nature of information shared by the respondents. Although the study has limitations due to the small sample size, it remains valuable as it sheds light on the experiences of workers in the area. It highlights the impact of economic and social processes on individuals, which is often overlooked in the literature. Despite the difficulty in gaining access to populations, the study provides original and valuable insights.

Main Industrial Hubs in the Region and Foreign Capital

The New Economic Geography of North-West Romania

This section unpacks the findings in our work package, illustrating the nature of factory work in the region. Employment varies considerably from one factory to another and, to some extent, from one industry to another. This results in different categories of workers, each characterised by their skill level and role within the production process. The example of Aramis, the largest factory in the region, is important. Aramis has a large and diverse workforce of around 5000 workers. It employs workers with different levels of education and skills, including uneducated or poorly educated Roma, people with disabilities, refugees, and minors aged 16-18 on shorter shifts. The workforce ranges from completely unskilled workers to highly skilled engineers. The company offers predominantly low skilled work and offers extremely strenuous working conditions, which results in a younger workforce. Aramis stands out as the only factory that employs large numbers of un- or low educated Roma workers, performing unskilled labour. The hiring and firing culture in this kind of factory, which employs unskilled labour, is a propensity of the precariousness of this kind of industrial activity.

The results of the working package also show that there is a tendency toward gender segregation deepening on the sector. For example, factories that specialize mainly in textile work or garments employ a more feminised workforce. Furthermore, within this industrial landscape, the network that has formed between factories operates in both formal and informal ways. Formally, there is little cooperation between factories unless they belong to the same group, as they compete for highly skilled workers. Informally, however, the fluid exchange of labour between factories is mediated by human resources and a network of mutual favours between managers. The notion of tacit knowledge which is passed between firms at the regional level has been explored previously in the literature (Boschma, 2017; Boschma et al., 2013). In the Maramureș context, factories in different industries cooperate based on labour complementarity, relying on a flexible workforce, trust-based relationships between managers and workers, and efficient commuting systems created for this purpose.

In this context, industrial work features precariousness and insecurity, relying mainly on a large pool of easily replaceable workers with limited education and skills, often with no alternatives. Workers have low wages and do strenuous physical labour, including night shifts and weekend work. Stability is maintained through bonuses for continued employment. In particular, the

company offers little to no social and job security. In essence, the nature of industrial work reveals an economic landscape rife with insecurity and exploitation that shapes work dynamics and influences individual strategies for survival and advancement.

In what follows, I first describe the two companies where most of the commuters in my research were employed. Then I will bring forward the narratives of the workers concerning their labour conditions and commuting.

Case: Techtex; Semi-Skilled, Semi-Feminized Labour

The Techtex Company belongs to the former Taparo[2] group. Techtex controls the first medical textile factory with Romanian capital, built in less than 10 months in Cicârlău, a small village 15 km away from the county centre, after an investment of about 25 million euros. It is an interesting case because it completely changed its production profile during the COVID pandemic, specialising in producing COVID-19 masks and concentrating its workforce on producing a record number of sanitary products during the pandemic. The factory started its production process (surgical and protective masks, disposable gowns and overalls, caps and muffs, disposable bed linen, surgical masks, etc.) in March 2021. In 2020, when the company was producing anti-pandemic equipment in a hall in Borcut owned by Taparo, it reported a turnover of more than 109 million lei and a net profit of more than 25 million lei, achieved with 214 employees. So, while production figures soared during the pandemic, the number of employees remained the same.

On the one hand, Techtex is a large factory that concentrates the workforce in and around the small village where it is located. In 2022, the Taparo Group sold several warehouses in Maramureș to the Belgian company WDP and continues to produce there as a tenant. Besides this group, WDP owns another 60 rental properties in Romania, valued at €936 million, according to the group's latest report. Taparo and Techtex, owned three production sites - in Cicârlău (near Baia Mare), in Oșorhei (near Oradea) and in Târgu Lăpuș (in Maramureș county). The Belgian property developer WDP has bought several buildings in Targu Lăpuș and Baia Mare from the furniture manufacturer Taparo and the sanitary textiles supplier Techtex, part of the same group. The space is valued at €16 million and covers more than 32,000 square meters, according to the most recent data released by WDP. Through a sale-and-leaseback agreement, WDP has also leased the purchased premises to Taparo and Techtex for 15-20

[2] Taparo is a top furniture exporter in Romania, with 3 locations in Maramureș. It's domestically owned and recognized as a major supplier to IKEA. They invest in R&D, developing composite materials to replace traditional wood particle boards (Mihaly & Foeldes, this issue).

years, and the Belgians are planning an expansion on the purchased land (TechTex.ro, 2019). On the other hand, the factory is located in Cicârlău, a small village with a tradition of agricultural activity, 15 km away from Baia Mare, the county capital. As shown in previous sections, the findings of our work package show that the labour force in the region is characterized by different types and categories of workers depending on the industry they work in and depending on the specific factory. While companies such as Aramis or Karelia hire low-skilled labour, and Italsofa or Weidmullen hire more skilled labour, factories such as Techtex concentrate on semi-skilled and feminized labour, with mostly middle-aged women having a medium education level, high school degree at least, and professional qualifications that can be obtained on-site (Precwork, Work Package 4).

Case: UAC; More Skilled-Labour

Universal Alloy Corporation (UAC) is a global aerospace and defence manufacturing company that specializes in the production of advanced aluminium and other structural materials for various industries, with a primary focus on aerospace and defence (Universalalloy.com, 2021). It is a privately held company headquartered in Canton, Georgia, USA and it operates as a subsidiary of Montana Aerospace AG, which is a leading global supplier of highly engineered components for the aerospace and defence industries. It has warehouse facilities in Canton, Anaheim, Romania and Vietnam. The Romanian-based UAC manufactures high-strength, hard alloy extrusions for aircraft structures and precision-engineered products. UAC represents an interesting case of analysis here because of a series of aspects: it is a large American company with one European headquarters in Romania with huge profits, and gains; the big number of employers; the training they provide to high school students that want to work there after graduation and how it transforms family relations in the region.

Located in the small village of Dumbrăviţa, UAC brings together workers from nearby villages and the city of Baia Mare. UAC outperformed Aramis, the biggest firm in the county, by over four times in 2018, marking the largest profit ever recorded in the Maramureş economy. Despite having a fiscal value almost four times smaller than Aramis, UAC earned over 17.8 million euros in 2018 from the Dumbrăviţa facility, nearly one-third more than the previous year. It achieved this turnover with only about 200 more employees than the previous year's workforce of approximately 1450 employees. In 2016, a second facility was established in Tăuţii-Măgherăuş, due to its proximity to the airport and to the town of Baia Mare, to provide aerospace components to major industry

players like Airbus, Boeing, and Bombardier. The company is strategically located near the Maramureş International Airport, allowing for easy transportation of their products with direct access to the airport. The profile of the workforce is different from Taparo, the workforce here is more diverse (not feminized) and they hire younger and more skilled workers.

Integration of the Working Class in the New Economy

As I have shown in the previous sections, the factories encompass a workforce characterized by its multidimensionality, comprising individuals from diverse origins including Baia Mare locals, Roma people living in deprived areas of the city and rural commuters. This workforce makes up for at least two big dichotomies: the rural-urban divide and those situated amidst the Roma-non-Roma divide. Each of these groups exhibit different motivations for working in these factories, thereby giving rise to distinct categories of justifications they deploy and different types of experiences. In the following sections, I specifically inquire about the reasons commuters perceive it is more convenient to remain in the region. I explore their motivations, the circumstances in the rural areas of their residence, the absence of opportunities there, and the social relations and family dynamics that arise from their work.

Working Conditions in the Factory

This section reviews the working conditions in the factories, illuminating the character of this work as physically strenuous and oftentimes, combined with flexibility. In the case of rural areas in Maramureş, flexibility, associated with short-term labour mobility, can emerge as a key strategy for subsistence. I argue that these approaches are sought after by employees and endorsed by employers as mechanisms to maintain inexpensive labour. This is shown in respondents' stories illustrated below.

In the interviews the employees reveal a pattern in both the Techtex and UAC cases, since they all mentioned that they learned about the positions from friends or other employees. Both factories are presented as good options for finding work close to home. Given the conditions, finding work in the villages is nearly impossible and migration does not represent an option viable for everyone. Therefore, these companies remain the main hubs for all those who seek to make their living close to home. In the case of UAC, people who work there recommend the factory based on the upsides it has in comparison to the other factories operating in the region. In the interviews, workers considered

the following as work advantages: a good wage, the seriousness of the employers, (which for them means having their wages paid on time), feeling respected by their managers and employers, and receiving the benefits listed in the contract.

UAC workers describe their first experiences with the factory by comparing them with previous experiences, or with experiences of people they know who worked in the other factories in the area:

> There are many people from Aramis who have moved from there to airplanes [to the airplane parts factory], it's the same commute, but the conditions are different, (…) before I started working here, I was unemployed, and they called me to interview for Taparo and someone (a friend) told me in advance that you have to have good nerves to work there. Someone explains [the job] to you once and then you're done, if you know, good, if you don't, they move you somewhere else. When I went there [at UAC], and I saw how nicely I was received... I really didn't expect it. I work as a quality inspector, I have to see that there are no defects in the products... but in the beginning, I didn't even know how to hold the machine in my hand (...) and he actually explained to me what I have to do from the beginning, in detail. Three months you have the yellow helmet, you have no responsibility, you just learn and the other employees who are old have to teach you… everyone is nice to you, especially if they see you with the yellow helmet, they try to help you. I've seen that from the first one since I went to the interview that that's how they treat you, nicely, and explain to you in a nice manner (female respondent, 45).

All the respondents from UAC say that it is very different from working at other factories in the area, meaning Aramis and Taparo, because at UAC they have more safety and do not experience the mistreatments they report for the other companies, which is late pay, precarious working conditions, few benefits, adding to the heavy commute.

Qualifying people directly at the workplace is a common approach in this type of factories, as other researchers have demonstrated (Foldes & Mihaly, current issue). The selection process at UAC is described as consisting of an interview, followed by a short mathematics and logic test. After that, one will get a call to confirm the hiring. Workers describe the cleanliness and seeming order in the factory, in terms that would indicate shock:

> The first time I was taken on a factory tour I had the impression that I was in another country... very efficient... like in the movies (male respondent, 30).

One worker described in detail how the factory looks like, emphasizing how organized and clean everything is, and comparing it to how one would imagine a factory in Western countries, but not in Romania. At the UAC, respondents

stress the importance of receiving solid training before starting to work. In the case of both firms, employees are qualified in the workplace. Considering the nature of the job and the need to qualify people at the workplace involves intense training before starting to work:

> The first time I was hired as a CNC operator, the first 6 months, and right after 2 weeks I started a course: 3 days I was at school, 3 days at work… it felt as kind of a practical training. And after 6 months I took another exam. And if they saw that you could do it, they let you continue (male respondent, 50).

Regarding working conditions, the two factories seem to differ in some significant features, such as pay, benefits, general working conditions and the profile of the workers. At UAC, the workforce is more highly skilled, as opposed to the low-skilled and feminized character of the workforce at TechTex. Due to the profile of the factory, making aeroplane parts requires a sterile environment and strict equipment regulations for the employers. While some workers claim they are always provided with appropriate equipment, others point out that some of the equipment does not meet regulations. These include protection goggles made of a weaker but seemingly good material, which caused many people to have serious eyesight problems after wearing them during work.

After describing such situations, when I asked whether they have a union, some workers say this is not the case:

> No...it would be ok if we had… you know how it is… they are ok, but they are still employers. I'm firmly convinced that the American doesn't know what's going on here... or the one from IKEA. They don't know what's going on at Taparo or Aramis... and they don't even care (male respondent, 30).

The nature of the factory's manufacturing process requires high quality to ensure precision in the production of airplane parts, as a worker emphasized '*we're not making tractor parts here' (same respondent)*. The substances used sometimes can be toxic, and the labour processes can involve contact with toxic materials and therefore, some people are reluctant to take up those jobs. Discussions with people working in different industries capture this. UAC workers also talk about incidents where the contact with toxic materials resulted in injury for the employees:

> Look for example there was a person who got some allergy from aluminium dust and needed hospitalization and they didn't kick her out... they put her on another job after she recovered where she didn't have contact with the dust (female respondent, 45).

The New Realities of Commuting

The respondents mentioned that their commute requires them to work extra hours to match the bus schedule. The bus operates on a fixed schedule, leaving people who work certain shifts with two hours of idle time which they fill by working. At TechTex, employees undertake a significant daily commute, which involves two hours of travel both to and from work. Furthermore, for the day shift, due to the necessity of transportation, the bus is scheduled at a certain hour, and employees are thus 'obligated' to work an additional 2 hours beyond their regular 8-hour workday, resulting in 10-hour workdays. This means that employees are dedicating a total of 4 hours each day to commuting, which is a significant portion of their daily schedule, leaving them with little time to do any house chores or any work after returning home:

> Commuting is hard, but if you want to sleep on the road in the morning you can, and when you get back home at maximum you can still cook a meal and the day is done (female respondent, 50).

Numerous employees have reported that they often resort to sleeping during their commute in order to maximize their rest. As a result, when they arrive home, there is limited time left to cook a meal or engage in other personal tasks. The long work hours and demanding commutes have a significant impact on the daily lives of workers. Several employees have said that the commute is both physically and mentally draining, leaving them with little time for personal activities.

Some of the workers who have a car prefer driving to work instead of commuting by bus:

> I go by car... I went by minibus too before... by car, it takes almost an hour. I didn't mind the minibus ride but now I go by car because I'm safer. I'm thinking about the pandemic. I don't have much contact with people at work... with the boss and a few colleagues... and it's better that way... that's how I thought about it after the pandemic, now I don't know… (male respondent, 30).

One worker states that the pandemic conditions scared him and that he prefers commuting by personal car. Even though it is an additional expense, some workers prefer to commute using their own car. For this respondent, the commute feels less tiring when he uses his own car, invoking reasons such as not having to interact with people when tired after the workday, and not having to comply with the bus schedule.

Exploring the personal motivations around commuting, workers talk about the possibility of taking unpaid leaves, which allow them to earn extra money by working in construction, woodwork or migrating seasonally. These arrangements result from informal agreements with managers that make use of informal rules to allow workers to work on the side. Although commuting may seem to make it harder to work on the side, in these cases, respondents explain that managers sometimes allow workers to take a longer unpaid leave to work different jobs, in order to retain the factory's workforce.

Other motivations revolve around family relations, the possibility of working at the same place as the spouse and later the possibility of bringing the children to study at the professional school of the factory, as well as the hope that they would/might work in better-paid positions there in the future. The women interviewed emphasized the importance of remaining close to home, close to the children, and not having to migrate.

Family Relations Sustaining Commuting Labour

In the context of rural commuters in Maramureș, there are important links between family relations and the ways in which factories attract workers. I argue companies in Maramureș employ a strategy of 'familiarism' (Kalb, 1997) by attracting the families of the workers to the factory. This is obtained through various programs such as nurseries and professional schools at the factory where employees can enroll their children. Workers develop personal motivations for bringing the children to work at the same place, and the companies capitalize on people' incentive to keep family closer. Families are hired together, which keeps them also more docile (Kalb, 1997) but encourages sustaining social relations as well. In addition, employers encourage social reproduction near the factory by supporting the building of professional schools. In this way, family relations are commuted as a whole.

Various respondents talked about the perceived safety they feel associated with working at the same place with one's spouse: *'I said to myself, if my husband works there, I'll go too, even if we might not end up on the same shift'.* For the employers, various advantages resulting from hiring entire families, such as employing people vetted through personal recommendations, increased the chances of staying longer to work for the factory, and the possibility of enrolling their children in the factory's professional school.

In 2017, UAC partnered with the municipality of Dumbrăvița village to build a professional school in the village, 'where the students can get a professional qualification that UAC needs and have a sure job at UAC after graduating' (Gazeta de Maramureș, 2018). The company offers the students a monthly scholarship, and

the Romanian state offers them another scholarship, which is an economic aspect most parents consider and talk about in the interviews. Workers are keen on enrolling their children in the professional schools, to have them close and to commute together, but mostly for them to have the safety of a well-paid job right after school:

> Our son is enrolled in the vocational school at UAC. He wanted to be a mechanic and before 8th grade, he went to the factory to see exactly what his dad does. After he saw it, he liked it a lot and he liked the teachers at school. For example, after finishing vocational school they can work in the factory in any job they want... they don't specifically ask you to work in a specific job, whatever you want.

While the students are enrolled in the professional school, they combine studying with practical work, which means working in the factory under the supervision of prepared workers/teachers. Over the years, the study becomes less intensive, and the practical participation increases to 70% work and 30% study in the last year. Besides gaining labour force, the factory turns also students into commuters, thus shaping family dynamics at the workplace and household as well.

One worker from TechTex stated she encouraged her son to work there also, and the motivations were for him to have a steady job until he can find something he might enjoy more:

> One of my sons already works at the factory (in the quality control section) and nah, he likes more or less... He has a higher salary than me because he does also night shifts... it's hard for him too but for now, he stays there until he finds somewhere else.

Strategies Deployed by Individuals and Communities

In the case of the rural commuters in Maramureș, motivations about commuting for work and not migrating permanently are strongly linked to the goal of trying to make a living in the region and remain close to home. The respondents claim to love their home villages and take on these types of jobs to remain close to home, but they are also aware that in their home villages there are no jobs. Their future plans include continuing to work for these factories, as they perceive there are no options for them now in the region. Furthermore, they want to have a secure job for their children, one that pays well and, preferably, allows them to remain close to home. During my interviews, I was struck by the story of a female worker who explained that if you live in any of the villages

around Baia Mare, your options for making a living are limited to either migrating or working in a factory. She described how migration is not a viable option for everyone, as it means being away from family except for holidays, and the work is demanding. On the other hand, working in a factory might allow you to return home to your family at the end of the day but often leaves you too exhausted to even converse with them. In some cases, you may even try to bring your family to work in the same factory to gain more connections with them.

Conclusions

The process of re-industrialisation in Romania does not directly match the expectations of politicians and planners, nor of the population. Literature shows us that incoherences, crises and convulsions marked the Romanian state's inability to re-scale from its semi-peripheral place in the world economy. In Maramureș, a common labour supply strategy employed by many companies in the region involves commuting networks. This approach takes advantage of Romania's deregulated labour relations and relies on workers combining different strategies to derive income, commuting and seasonal migration in some cases. Inside this context, the opportunities of those who have sought to make a living in their home region are limited to employing the strategies of commuting work, or a combination of commuting work and migration or other jobs.

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DEBT DEPENDENCY AND THE COST OF MIGRATION: THE CASE OF ROMA AND NON-ROMA MIGRANTS FROM BAIA MARE

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ABSTRACT: The Baia Mare region was once one of Romania's main mining centres, with a significant proportion of the local population engaged in industry jobs. However, the extensive economic restructuring that followed the collapse of the old communist regime and the emergence of capitalist development was characterized by brutal privatization measures and great economic instability. While the transition years brought new opportunities for some, for most they meant unstable housing and employment, debt, and a declining social status. Thus, many workers quickly became 'surplus populations' (Li 2017) and were forced into patterns of circular migration abroad. Employing a qualitative research methodology, analysing both interviews and secondary data, this paper will focus on the adaptive responses of workers from Baia Mare to the changes in the socio-economic landscape after the collapse of the communist regime and the advance of neoliberal policies in Romania. In particular, the paper looks at Roma and non-Roma migrants from Baia Mare, attempting to compare their strategies and work histories in the context of migration, to see the extent to which class and race differences play a role in creating specific migration patterns in the post-socialist context. The comparison between racialized people living in improvised shelters on the periphery of Baia Mare and those who are working class but not living in a situation of destitution will show us the role that dispossession plays in creating certain conditions that lead to debt dependency and specific migration patterns.

Keywords: post-socialism, migration, debt, dependency, Roma, racialised dispossession.

Introduction

Roma migration is the subject of numerous political debates and academic studies, being framed in the public discourse as a problem to be solved (De Genova et al. 2016). The European Union, which works to socially integrate the Roma

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population without addressing the institutional and structural racialization that it faces, broadly embraces this viewpoint. Oftentimes, the issue of Roma migration is framed from a perspective of Roma exceptionalism, arguing from a culturalist point of view for the need of integration, obscuring structural processes of racialisation. This paper aims to scrutinize how racialization influences Roma migration, establishing a link between the racialization of the vulnerable labour force and the uneven migration patterns that ensue. These patterns make the Roma experience of migration particularly grim, as they remain caught in a brutal cycle of debt and dependency on informal and exploitative labour markets abroad and at home.

The research questions that this paper is aiming to respond to is how the experience of migration differs for Roma migrants when going abroad and how this difference is related to racialized dispossession. The study draws upon theories of Roma migration, racial marginalisation, and transnationalism to understand the migratory patterns and livelihood strategies adopted by the research participants in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

This article places the issue of Roma migration in the context of the economic restructuring processes of a Romanian post-industrial city. The transition period in Romania and the neoliberal governance that characterized it led to the precarisation of people's lives. This paper will make use of ethnographic research methods and secondary data to study the lives of migrants from Baia Mare. One of Romania's largest cities and a former industrial centre, Baia Mare makes an interesting case study for Roma migration not only due to the dynamics of deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation that have marked the transition period, but also for the city's particularity of ethnic segregation in terms of housing and racial ghettoization.

The aim of this paper is to link the racialisation of housing and ghettoization, or what can be referred to as racialised dispossession (McElroy 2018), to the racialisation of migrant labour. The process of dispossession of Roma people serves the neoliberal system by providing a cheap and ever-abundant source of labour to cover the needs of irregulated work sectors (Petrovici et al. 2019). I intend to extend this view to also include in the discussion international labour trajectories, seeing how racial hierarchies at home extend outside national borders.

I start from a very simple observation: compared to non-Roma people, Roma migrants seem to have less success in their migration. By looking comparatively at Roma and non-Roma migration patterns I do not mean to suggest a deterministic approach to race and ethnicity, nor to essentialise migration patterns across race lines. Contrary, what I hope to uncover are the indirect consequences of the racialisation of poverty in post-socialist countries and the effects it has on the migration trajectories of Romani people.

The argument of this paper centres around the idea that the racialised dispossession inflicted upon the Roma ultimately impacts the outcome of their migration, keeping them in a cycle of debt they cannot seem to escape. The reason is two folded: firstly, it regards the state of employment abroad, and how the racialisation of Roma impacts the type of jobs they have access to as migrants, and consequently their migratory path. The second issue is related to housing. Thus, this paper will address the impact housing marginalisation has on Roma migration trajectories, as they have little resources to finance their migration. Ultimately, this paper connects racial dispossession at home with deregulation of migrant labour in the case of Roma.

Methodological considerations

The research for this paper is based on multiple data sources and methods: in-depth interviews with migrants from Baia Mare, official statistics on labour and migration trends, policy analysis of government reports, archival records, and data from the quantitative survey conducted within the framework of the PRECWORK project. The survey tracked aspects related to housing, work and migration in the disadvantaged areas of the city of Baia Mare and was applied to 800 respondents, 45% male, 55 % female.

As a member of the research team, I conducted fieldwork in Baia Mare during two periods: June to September 2021 and March to April 2022. The chosen periods allowed for capturing seasonal variations in the respondents' experiences. The data collection involved conducting a total of 25 in-depth interviews with migrants from Baia Mare. Among the respondents, 15 were Roma migrants, 8 were Romanians, and 2 were Hungarians. Including multiple ethnic groups allowed me to have a comparative perspective and to understand potential differences in their experiences. The gender representation within the sample was carefully considered, with 13 female and 12 male respondents, ensuring gender parity in the data collection process. The age of the respondents was mostly between 25-55. The interview guide was developed to touch on issues regarding housing, income, labour conditions, internal or international mobilities for work, the risk of exploitation, and remittances.

Snowball sampling methods were used to recruit respondents for this study. This approach allowed me to access and engage with respondents from marginalised Roma communities (Pirita, Craica) in the Baia Mare region. A noteworthy aspect regarding the sampling strategy was initiating the first contact through established connections with non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives who were actively involved in supporting and providing

various mediation and social services within these communities. This allowed me, an outsider, to gain access to these communities. At the same time, the outsider status had implications on the dynamics of information sharing, potentially impacting the depth and nature of information shared by the respondents.

Irregularisation of Roma migration

The main objective of this section is to address the position of Roma migrants when going abroad. From the interviews it is evident that compared to non-Roma migrants from Baia Mare, Roma migrants have very different histories of migration. Their stays are shorter, they are changing jobs or countries often and, most important, they are more likely to be employed informally. While non-Roma migrants gained access to formalised employment and other social benefits after the accession of Romania to the European union in 2007, most Roma are still experiencing irregular migration in Europe. This irregularisation of Roma migration is strongly related to the perceived inherent trait of Roma as (neo)nomadic, a view that legitimizes European governments' response to Roma migration as a security concern (De Genova 2019)

Roma migration has been extensively problematized ever since former socialist countries in Eastern Europe started the process of integration into the European Union. After the fall of the Eastern Bloc, and the beginning of discussions regarding EU enlargement, the Western Countries focused their attention on the `Roma question`, given the fact that former-socialist countries that were on their path of EU integration had 5-10% Roma population and a large migration to the West was feared (Liégeois 2007). Thus, through the Copenhagen criteria, the issue of Roma integration was explicitly set as a condition for accession for candidate countries.

The integration approach helps to invisibilize the structural aspects of race and the mechanism of power behind racism, centring the focus on the ethnically marked, who have to show a willingness to integrate and who are thus to blame for their own marginalisation, due to the fact that every aspect of racism is depoliticized, and ethnicity is only viewed from the perspective of culture (Maeso 2015). Thus, this approach, both in policy and in research, obscures the larger processes of racialization of poverty and labour, present in post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe. This results in obscuring the larger structural conditions that shape the neoliberal political economy, characterized by the deregulation of markets, state withdrawal from public services and privatisations, as well as racial marginalization and segregation in labour and housing.

The phenomenon of migration from Romania to EU member states witnessed a surge, following Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007. However, migration was not absent before 2007; rather, distinct migratory regimes can be discerned over time, with periods of more or less regularization. The year 2007 brought about the legalization of previously undocumented migrants living abroad and established a regulatory framework for employment and residence, especially for certain groups of Romanian emigrants (Horváth and Kiss 2016). However, as I will explore in the subsequent analysis, certain groups, such as the disadvantaged Roma, continued to experience migration marked by brief, irregular stays, illegal employment, and exploitation even after 2007.

Certainly, for a considerable segment of migrants who departed after 2007, the EU accession brought job security, legal work opportunities, access to social security benefits, and the option for permanent residency. Migration regimes shape migration patterns significantly; during periods with less regularization, migrants adopt specific migration behaviours, influenced by their irregular immigrant status, affecting the type of jobs available, social benefits accessible, and prospects for a successful migration. Before 2007, many migrants were compelled to work without formal contracts and faced unstable working conditions due to their irregular status. Additionally, they were at risk of deportation, which hindered their ability to settle in the destination countries permanently. Following 2007, this situation changed, as evidenced in the interviews conducted. However, it is important to acknowledge that some Roma individuals continued to experience irregularity even after the EU accession. In this paper I argue that it is precisely this irregular status that keeps Roma migrants in a cycle of deprivation, being constricted to mostly informal employment abroad that leads to shorter stays, unreliable employment and, as a result, the inability of saving money and overcoming financial difficulties as a result of their migration.

The term 'irregularization' refers to 'practices and discourses of orientalization, securitization and nomadization' (Kóczé 2018:461). This irregularization of Roma migrants is a direct consequence of their status in their home country as semi-citizens, referring to the fact that many do not have in fact access to all their rights as citizens (van Baar 2018). Thus, they already start from a disadvantaged position, which reflects in their trajectories of migration. Neoliberal ideologies effectively obscure racial hierarchies through meritocratic discourses, that blame those who are marginalised, the Roma in this case, for their own marginalisation (Kóczé 2018).

Securitization discourses in Europe create a rhetoric that distinguishes between the unwanted Roma migrants and the wanted white migrants (Yıldız and De Genova 2018), resulting in the establishment of a state of exception (van Baar 2011; Clough, Marinaro 2009) when it comes to Roma migrants, that

facilitates the denial of their rights as citizens, all in the name of security. Of course, these discourses obscure the role they play on labour markets, as the Roma migrant occupies a highly racialised labour sector abroad. The framing of Roma migration as a security concern legitimizes state de-regularization of Roma migration even when it should be regularized. Thus, neoliberal governance effectively manages to create a very flexible and easily exploitative workforce (Bauman 2017).

Roma migration is always assumed to be related to poverty, or to a culture of nomadism (Pantea 2013). The identity of Roma as nomads was used by governments many times to justify the understanding of Roma as not belonging to the nation (Sigona 2005), the nomadic lifestyle being the proof of their status as aliens. Moreover, the interest in the nomadic and the portrayal of Roma as nomadic does not occur as a neutral academic curiosity, but rather it was used by governments to discriminate against and legitimate different acts of violence towards the Roma, justified by their status of outsiders which reinforced suspicion towards them, leading to policies of non-intervention and securitization (van Baar 2018).

While the Roma population does not officially report a higher rate of international migration than other ethnic groups, there is a blatantly racist stigma associated with Roma mobility within Europe. Roma migrants are facing a surge of anti-Gypsyism sentiment and rhetoric in countries such as Italy, France, or Germany, where governments took discriminatory measures against Roma migrants, measures that can be considered human rights violations (Clough, Marinaro 2009): collecting personal data, even some Roma migrants with identification documents were forced to evict or their personal property was destroyed, without being offered any alternative for housing, thus leaving them in an even more precarious position, or they were expulsed and repatriated etc. (Sigona 2011). These illegitimate actions are showcasing the position of Roma migrants in Europe, as their mobility rights are being limited despite their status as EU citizens, with a direct impact on the outcome of their migration.

Segregation and racial dispossession – The Case of Baia Mare

This paper investigates the lives of Roma migrants from Baia Mare, attempting to understand what causes them to be stuck in a cycle of debt, with very little upward social mobility, especially when compared to non-Roma migrants. So far, I addressed the issue of Roma migration in Europe and how the position they occupy in foreign labour markets is contributing to the outcome

of their migration. In what follows, I discuss the issue of racial dispossession, showing how limited financial resources impact the outcome of migration, as many experience a `relative immobility` (Szabó 2018).

Accumulation by dispossession, a concept introduced by David Harvey, explains the changers of the neoliberal era, in which capital manages to effectively centralise wealth on a global scale through increasing privatisation, financialisaton and commodification (Harvey 2005). Tania Li pushes this discussion further to show that dispossession is not always purposely creating labour for capital to use, but it also creates `surplus populations` who have virtually no place in the capitalist system of production and thus no means of subsistence (Li 2017). Yet, when discussing the precariat (Standing 2011), the class of labourers considered outside capitalism, often engaged in insecure or informal work, it becomes apparent that their marginalization serves as a fundamental condition for sustaining a consumption-oriented neoliberal system. Even from the outside of formalised economy, they serve as the bloodstream of the neoliberal system of production (Beluschi-Fabeni, Leggio, and Matras 2019). Far from it being an unfortunate accident, dispossession is a feature of the capitalist system, meant to create an easily accessible workforce. In this paper I will further build on this idea, connecting dispossession with the Roma racialisation, looking at how it directly affects migration patterns, as Roma migrants remain dependent on informal labour markets abroad.

Dispossession is the primary reason Roma migrants from Baia Mare are stuck at the bottom, even when engaging in international migration, as the conditions at home will be reflected in the work and mobility possibilities abroad. When discussing Roma migration, recognizing the foundational role of racial segregation and marginalization is crucial as they fundamentally shape migration patterns. Precarious work cannot be understood without addressing dispossession, or rather `double dispossession` (Kasmir and Carbonella 2014), which is the exclusion of workers from formalised employment and their exclusion from the city and how the two are interconnected.

We can see double dispossession at play in the case of Roma migrants from Baia Mare, as they have been pushed slowly out of the city into slums and out of employment during the deindustrialisation period in the 1990s. As a frame of reference, the city of Baia Mare experienced an industrial boom with substantial investments in industrial infrastructure during the 1960s and 1970s, which was also reflected in the rapid increase of population. Baia Mare attracted workers from neighbouring regions. However, starting from the 1990s, Baia Mare faced a downturn trend in population growth, triggered by the collapse of existing industries in the region after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, when the main extractive industries were shut down. This process did not

happen immediately after 1989 but it unfolded until the beginning of the 2000s. Still, the wave of layoffs affected the Roma first, as they were most likely to be employed as unqualified personnel in these industries. As a result, Romani workers were among the first to engage in international migration.

The closing of the mines gave way for new industries to emerge in the city, more precisely manufacturing industries, linked with international supply chains that took advantage of the semi-peripherical position of Romania and the asymmetrical power relations that transformed the country into a low-cost labour provider for global manufacturing production. These new industries did offer Roma workers the security of formal employment, but even so, this did very little to change their precarious position, as many, even though employed, are still living in improvised settlements at the periphery of Baia Mare. This constitutes the other type of dispossession the Baia Mare Roma have to face, namely the issue of housing.

There are multiple studies tackling the issue of spatial marginalisation of Roma and racial segregation in Romanian cities (Chelcea 2006; Lancione 2022; Mireanu 2019; Teodorescu 2019; Vincze and Zamfir 2019), especially connecting this phenomenon with post-socialist transformations and the penetration of a new neoliberal order that brought massive privatization and a retreat of the state from public service. The process of ghettoization, or the expulsion of Roma to the city margins, in precarious housing conditions is linked to larger processes of dispossession of the working class in the world (Kasmir and Carbonella 2014). Far from being a consequence of the failure of integration projects, ghettoization is a feature of the post-socialist neoliberal urban landscape, that is dependent on the extraction of value from highly marginalised and racialised individuals (Vincze 2019).

Of course, it is important to note that the marginalisation of Roma is not simply a consequence of the invisible hand of the market, but it is a direct consequence of the actions and policies taken by a state that reinforces both a neoliberal order and a racial system of power: this happens through evictions, displacements without adequate housing alternatives, discriminatory state housing management and redistribution, privatization of social housing, or uneven development etc. (Vincze 2019). The racial state, as theorized by Goldberg (2018) has the power to obscure race hierarchy and discrimination by naturalizing it, making it invisible to those who have internalized the racist order of the state (Goldberg 2018). What defines the racial state is the fact that it produces and reproduces racial spaces, with access and limitations, it also ascribes racial representation and dictates the formation of the self and the understanding of racial relations. Thus, the inferiorization of Roma and their portrayal as the racial `other`, serves as a justification for their placement in improper and dehumanizing housing conditions (Vincze 2019).

Baia Mare offers a compelling context for examining ethnic segregation in housing and racial ghettoization. This social segregation was symbolically made visible by the infamous case of the wall erected by the City Administration in front of a social housing apartment block on Horea Street[2]. In fact, the history of Roma housing in the city of Baia Mare is marked by deprivation. Although the Roma population accounts for only 1.9% of the total population, none the less they are represented in overwhelming numbers in the marginalized areas of the city (see Fig. 1).

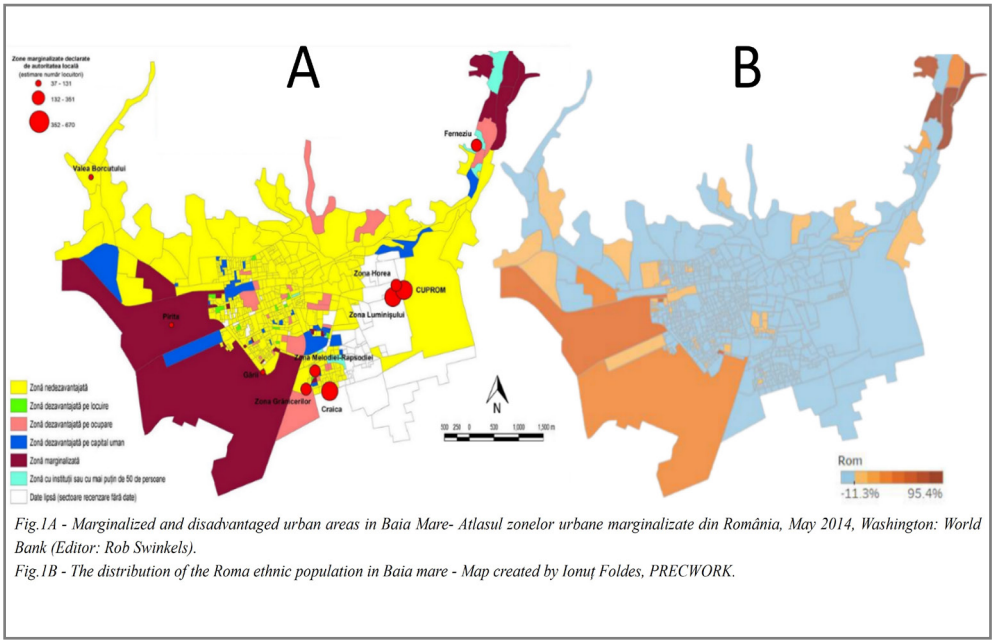

Fig.1A - Marginalized and disadvantaged urban areas in Baia Mare- Atlasul zonelor urbane marginalizate din România, May 2014, Washington: World Bank (Editor: Rob Swinkels).
Fig.1B - The distribution of the Roma ethnic population in Baia mare - Map created by Ionuț Foldes, PRECWORK.

In Baia Mare there are several informal settlements that were mostly established by Roma populations: Pirita, Craica, Ferneziu, Gării, to name a few. The two main informal Roma communities I engaged with during my fieldwork are Pirita and Craica, two informal settlements occupied by Roma people who have built informal housing on unused land at the periphery of Baia Mare. One of the biggest threats the people living there are facing is the danger of expropriation. Pirita is situated in the western region of the city, proximate to the water treatment plant. Despite accommodating an approximate population of 250 individuals, the municipal authorities do not officially recognize the existence of this community, consequently curtailing their access to essential social services. The Craica

[2] https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/baia-mare/zidul-tiganesc-din-baia-mare-un-subiect-1494258.html

community is situated in the southern part of the city, specifically within the former Hatvan neighbourhood. In this area, residents have constructed improvised houses along the train line, occupying land that is owned by CFR (the Romanian National Railway Company). Due to the informal nature of these settlements, there is a constant risk of expropriation, as it happened in 2012 when the municipality carried out evictions, relocating them to buildings in the former Phoenix/Cuprom complex and demolishing their barracks.

It is also important to mentioned that Pirita is much more marginalised, as it is further away from the city, so the access to schools, jobs or other means of survival is restricted. Compared to Pirita, in Craica it is much more common for people to engage in circular transnational migration, which is paired with periods of time of formal employment in the factories from Baia Mare.

The collapse of local industries and the ongoing restructuring of the regional economy within the framework of capitalism have marginalized Roma workers, leaving them with access only to low paid formal or informal jobs. The motivations that push Roma to seek opportunities in foreign labour markets are the same circumstances that bind the family to a state of destitution at home, as they have little choice but to depend on the earnings of the migrant for the social provision and social reproduction of the household. That is why I am looking at families and households, as migration is rarely an individual endeavour, especially if we consider that migration is part of a larger strategy for covering the family social reproduction need (Kilkey, Merla, and Baldassar 2018).

Comparing histories of migration

This section will take a closer look at the experiences of migrants from Baia Mare, trying to uncover the effects racialised dispossession has on migration. In addressing Roma migration, I start from a very simple observation: there is a striking difference between Roma and non-Roma migrants from Baia Mare, both in terms of patterns of migration and outcome of migration. The reason for this difference is the material deprivation in relation to housing that forces Roma into debt, which they cannot overcome through migration alone, as they are constricted to low-paid, informal jobs when going abroad.

Let's take for example Gabriela[3], a Romanian woman, from a neighbouring village of Baia Mare. She went to Spain in 2005 during the summer vacation, working as a cleaner, after her first year of college. Arriving there and seeing that she was able to earn a good salary, she decided to freeze her year at university

[3] Fictional name to insure annonymity.

and remain there to work. There, she met her current husband, also Romanian. After her maternity leave, Gabriela started working in the kitchen of a private Hospital in Madrid, rising in ranks from dishwasher, to waiter, to manager. In addition to this work, she also helps at the husband's family restaurant during the weekend. The money they earned were sent to Romania, to be invested in the construction of their house. They also bought an apartment in Madrid. They had another child after which they returned to Romania, where Gabriela finished her studies and is currently working as a teacher in the local school.

Now let's look at another case: Bogdan[4] is a Roma man from Baia Mare in his 40s. His father worked in the mine and after it was closed, they lost their apartment and ended up in Craica. He worked at Aramis[5] in Baia Mare for 3 years, describing his experience there in negative terms. He first emigrated in '98 - '99 to Italy. He lived there alone for a year, living in an abandoned car for the first few months until he made connections to help him find work. He was in various parts of Italy working as a construction worker, while his wife worked as a carer for the elderly. He also went to UK, Island, and Germany to work, staying there for a relatively short time, only a few months. When the interview was taken, he was back in Craica, waiting for a next working gig abroad.

As we can see from the examples above, the life-histories differ quite greatly between different ethnicities from Baia Mare engaged in international migration. During my research, there were many examples of Roma experiencing hypermobility, as compared to non-Roma who had a more linear trajectory of migration. The survey data[6] is also confirming the trends observed in the interviews. For example, non-Roma tend to stay abroad 4,1 years on average, in the case of Romanians and 3,2 years in the case of Hungarian- ethnics. Comparing this with just 1,6 years for Roma migrants, we can see how migration patterns differ across ethnic lines (See Fig. 2). This difference in turn influences the kind of life and opportunities they can build abroad, resulting in different outcomes of migration.

The most notable difference between Roma and non-Roma individuals from Baia Mare in terms of their migration experiences is that Roma migrants appear to have less successful migrations. They are at a higher risk of being unable to save money while living as migrants, potentially leading to a cycle of debt, dependence and low-paying or informal employment. This situation is made even more evident when compared to non-Roma migrants from Baia Mare, who are more likely to save the remittances and return home, afford to buy property, and have a better financial situation due to their migration. The notable

4 Fictional name to insure annonymity
5 Furniture factory in Baia Mare
6 2021 Survey produced by PrecWork Project

difference can be mainly ascribed to the systemic dispossession that the Roma face in their home countries and their irregularized status as Roma migrants abroad. Roma's long-lasting marginalization in housing in the city of Baia Mare pushed many into debt, which created an uneven starting point for migration. The money borrowed is often used to finance the migration, with an expectation of greater returns. However, given the conditions imposed by money lenders and the instability of their jobs, many remain caught in a cycle of debt. Additionally, most of the remittances are used for the social reproduction of the household at home, making it impossible to save money from migration.

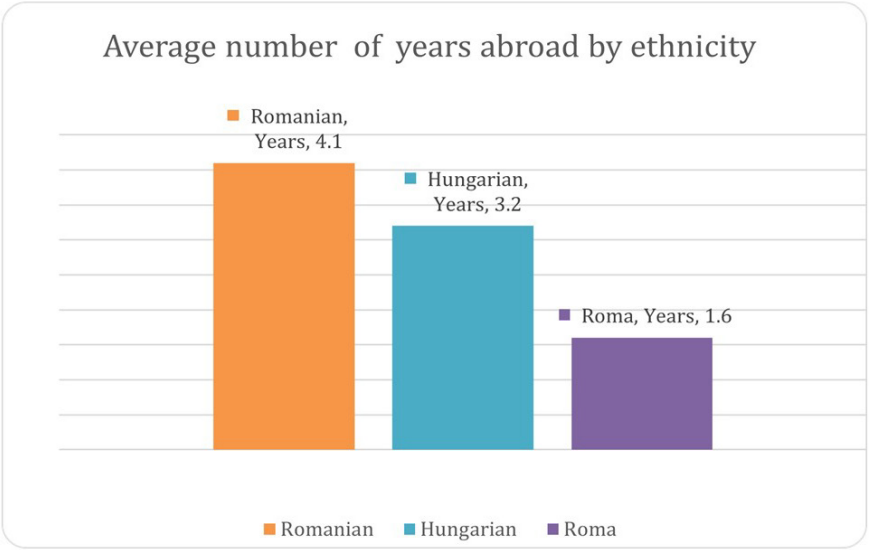

Figure 2 – Based on 2021 Survey produced by PrecWork Project

Furthermore, their racial marginalization at home extends to their position as migrants abroad. Their trajectory of migration is marked by irregularity, having access to mostly informal jobs when migrating abroad, which results in shorter and unpredictable stays abroad, with periods of return in Baia Mare and the constant risk of mistreatment or going without pay after months of working, again due to not having a formal contract of employment. In what follows, I will take a closer look at the causes that make Roma migration from Baia Mare unsuccessful, looking at the issue of debt, the issue of housing and job insecurity abroad.

The cost of migration and job insecurity

For many, the outcome of migration hinders on the labour opportunities they have. The collapse of local industries and the ongoing reorganization of the economy within the framework of capitalism have resulted in Roma individuals finding themselves in a marginalized position on the labour market. These circumstances limit their access to a narrow range of low-paying formal or informal jobs. More so, as we previously discussed, Roma migration is oftentimes irregularised and securitized as a result of the neoliberal governance ideology which merges with right-wing rhetoric to further racialize Roma and create a cheap and flexible source of labour force in Europe. In what follows I will discuss what are the work conditions for Roma migrants from Baia Mare when they engage in transnational migration.

While migrants generally tend to become more self-sufficient overtime, this progression is less evident among the Roma migrants I interviewed, who have a notably precarious position within the foreign labour market. From our survey it appears that 41% of Roma from Baia Mare are working without a contract, comparing with 13% in the case of Romanians and 29% in the case of Hungarians. Another aspect that makes them vulnerable on the labour market is the low level of qualification, as 82% of the Roma respondents declared that they are employed as unqualified workers. Low qualification makes them easily replaceable and keeps them in a low pay range.

As Roma migrants from Baia Mare seek work abroad, they typically find jobs in construction, agriculture, and manufacturing, with a notable presence in slaughterhouses. Their migration pattern involves a continuous back-and-forth movement between Romania and various European countries such as Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Spain. Importantly, this movement is not always a matter of choice; it often stems from practical considerations related to available job opportunities. The work secured by the Roma is typically informal, often tied to specific seasons, and it involves low-skilled labour, unfortunately leaving them vulnerable to exploitative conditions. This migration, therefore, is not just a journey but a complex response to economic realities and the challenges of securing sustainable employment.

The initial departure is the most vulnerable phase, requiring them to risk funds to afford the travel and accommodation during the first month(s), with no guarantees, relying entirely on migrant networks (Pantea 2013). Following this first step, a significant number have established their own support systems, ensuring future employment, and have learned to navigate their circumstances, reducing their vulnerability. Depending on family members to access foreign labour markets results in a form of social obligation that extends beyond just financial transactions (Beluschi-Fabeni et al. 2019). The act of migration itself

comes with substantial financial burdens borne by their households, with the expectation of greater returns (Friberg 2020). In certain cases, these costs are so steep that they hinder migration and the opportunities it offers. This highlights that while for many the act of migration means a cycle of debt and constant movement between home and abroad, it is nevertheless a path that partially alleviates the conditions of complete destitution.

> But we couldn't go because I was sick, and we didn't even have the strength to pay for the trip. You need money, you need food, you need to deal with children on the road, kind of nasty. No, that's life, so we didn't even think about going abroad. That I didn't have the strength, no. I heard people are making money over there. (56, F, Pirita, Roma, no external migration interview)

For the individuals interviewed, the decision to seek work abroad marks a pivotal moment, as it alters their life course, propelling them into a migration cycle where they inhabit two distinct spaces simultaneously–they are both "present" at home, participating in the development of their households and contributing with their income, and abroad, living in the countries where they work. During periods when they cannot find work abroad, they return to the job market at home, considering it a transitional phase until the next job opportunity arises. Their dual existence is also reinforced by their living conditions abroad: often residing in shared accommodations provided by their employers. The migrant workers are not expected to build a life there, but only to provide their labour. Right from the beginning, the interviewees embark upon a migration cycle driven by the inability of securing a viable job at home, along with the struggle to save money from their earnings.

It is the instability of the jobs, which are usually low-skilled temporary jobs, that makes the Roma migrants from Baia Mare highly replaceable and therefore exceptionally vulnerable. As a result, many of them find themselves repeatedly in the position of starting from scratch, moving across borders depending on where the opportunity presents itself, or returning home to await the next potential gig. This return is not by choice and serves as a setback for many, diminishing their ability to save their earnings. They are forced into accepting low paid positions in Baia Mare, only to leave as soon as a better chance arises.

Since they only have access to mostly informal jobs when going abroad, Roma migrants are at high risk of being mistreated by their employers and are repeatedly going without pay. From the conversations we had, it appears that many experience this phenomenon or at least know that it is a real possibility.

> He had problems, yes (the husband). When he was working at home, he was called by a recruiting agency and was told that he must pay 5 million (500 RON), I don't know how much, for some documents so he can leave for work in a week.

> He sent them the money and was scammed. It's hard, especially if you don't have any money, it's hard. (Roma, F, 40, Cuprom, housewife, migrant husband)

> Two months. He (the interviewee's husband) worked for them for two months, with a work contract and didn't receive anything, it was a fake contract, and he didn't give her the money.
> What was he doing?
> Fruit picking, I think, or whatever it was. But I'm not sure to say. (28, F, Rome, Craica, migrant)

The accounts of scams are numerous: some went on working a few months only to realise at the end they are never going to be paid, some reported receiving less pay than what they were promised or went on to discover the intermediary was withholding a part of the pay they should have received. Even when there is no obvious abuse from the part of the employer, not having a formal contract can lead to losing one's job with no alternative form of protection and being forced to return home with no compensation.

The interviews with Roma migrants consistently bring to light the theme of initial and ongoing costs associated with transitioning from their home country to the host country. This theme is less frequently discussed in interviews with non-Roma migrants. For those outside the Roma community, the initial migration has a more permanent character even though the path of migration is still seen as a temporary stage in their life course. Nonetheless, a distinct difference exists between these two groups: Roma migration is marked by hypermobility, with a continuous cycle of movements between their home country and abroad, frequently changing jobs and also countries or industries. On the other hand, non-Roma are more likely to stay and build a life abroad for longer, build relationships and advance in their careers, because they are more likely to have access to formal employment opportunities. There is no back and forth movement with periods of unemployment and job insecurity, which saves non-Roma from having to bear the cost and risk of migration repeatedly.

The nature of the jobs that Roma migrants from Baia Mare have access to when they migrate abroad to work, coupled with the instability of jobs and the risk of informal contracts, means that the migrants cannot be on their own, but must always rely on the household, which in turn relies on them. This can occur even if the migrants have already experienced migration, as they oftentimes struggle to retain their earnings. The inability to accumulate their income earned abroad stands out as a significant distinction between the Roma and non-Roma individuals in the life stories I encountered.

Debt and racial dispossession

As explored in the theoretical segment of this paper, it is imperative to consider the issue of precarious labour, particularly migrant labour, in relation to marginalisation, or how the experience of migration is shaped by racial dispossession. In what follows I will explore deeper how the issue of housing impacts the migrants' path of migration, connecting it with the issue of debt and social reproduction.

The interviews with Roma people reveal a disparity between their expectations regarding the outcome of migration and the reality they face. This is especially true when considering the paradox of imagined paths of social mobility through migration envisioned as a form of escape from a deprived social position, and the actual realities of migration that offers no such escape, but another way of being stuck at the bottom of social hierarchies (Grill 2012). Virtually all interviewees concur that the primary objective of migration is to accumulate money to purchase a house or a piece of land. This is one of their biggest concerns and struggles and it is linked to the process of dispossession that began after the collapse of the mining industry in the region. This means that many of them lost their parental homes during the transition. Some were evicted from their rented homes due to the high cost of living and moved to the ghettos in Baia Mare, Pirita or Craica to secure rent-free housing. The data from our survey shows that 63% of Roma have experienced evictions, in striking difference with 22% of Romanians or 16% of Hungarians, showcasing how the process of dispossession is impacting Roma at a much higher rate. Some of the people interviewed account situations where they were forced out of their rented apartments due to the escalating cost of living, leading them to relocate in Baia Mare, in Pirita, Gării or Craica shantytowns to secure cost-free renting. Furthermore, due to racial discrimination they are kept from returning to formal housing, even when they could afford it. In other instances, family properties had to be sold off to settle the debts they had acquired.

> We stayed with his father, after 7 years we moved here. We stayed in a rented apartment for a year, but they kicked us out. It was hard, we had to pay the electricity and the heating, and we couldn't manage. I was with the kid at home, and he had his salary, but the food and clothes and what else we needed, we didn't have enough. And here in Craica it is also difficult with the electricity, but we still manage because there is no rent to pay. And we built this little house, I went to England with him (partner), the child was with my mother.
> (26, F, Craica, Rome, UK immigrant)

While most of the Roma individuals interviewed view migration as a potential path towards obtaining homeownership and increasing their income to improve their vulnerable circumstances, their daily lives are haunted by the fear of becoming homeless. Unfortunately, migration seldom presents them with a genuine opportunity to achieve these aspirations. On the rare occasions when it does, it tends to be for those who already had a relatively stable footing at the beginning. An example from the interviews highlights this: one Roma woman managed to fund her migration through a small family venture in fruit wholesaling, which offered her an initial economic stability to rely upon, which proved beneficial, as she managed to use the earnings to fund a loan for a house in Baia Mare. Still, it should be noted that from the stories I encountered, this was rather an exception. In most cases, the accumulation of money remains only a distant dream, and many remain in the same position even after years of working abroad. In the discussions we had, many of the migrants from these marginalised communities were engaged in international migration for many years, yet they were still living in virtually the same conditions. As one of the interviewees testified, he started migrating in the '90s as a construction worker in Israel, and three decades later he was still going every few months to work in Italy, helping with moving furniture, even though he was long in his retirement years.

For the Roma community, the burdens of migration can be quite overwhelming, often pushing them into debt as they seek to gather at least a minimal amount of capital to fund their journey. More so, many are forced into debt even before engaging in transnational migration, and more particularly into agreements with informal moneylenders. The conditions for borrowing money this way are harsh, with high interest rates and fraudulent conditions. Yet for many, more legal options are out of reach.

> I arrived in Baia Mare because I lost my house, I had a house in Jibău, I borrowed money with interest from moneylenders I ended up not being able to pay and he was waiting. If he saw that on the due day I didn't give them, he still doubled it, he still doubled it. Neither I nor my husband were employed, we worked occasionally, in the countryside, what we could find. Sometimes we couldn't find any work...so, we collected an amount of debt that we couldn't get out of so we lost the house. (50, F, Gării, Roma ,migrant)

A distinctive form of indebtedness that I encountered during my fieldwork is the selling of future incomes. What that means is that for a sum of money a person would sell the future income for a year or more, which included various social benefits the family was entitled to. In practicality it means that all

forms of social benefits or other sources of income are given to the moneylenders until the debt is paid. So is the case of Alina[7], who lives in Craica with her 3 children and her husband who works abroad. She borrowed money by selling her household income, for a sum of money needed for preparing their house for winter – as many of the improvised houses require constant maintenance.

> I sold my income, the children allowance, and the maternity benefits as well. I gave it for 5000 lei, to the people who do business (referring to money lenders). My income is 2000 lei a month, with maternity allowance. No, and I sold it for a year. When I receive my money, they always come and leave me 500 – 600 to have for food. So, they are not taking anything, and as long as I pay my electric bill, its ok. Now that I don't have a job (...) we have a harder time. (28, F, Craica, Roma, migrant)

A critical factor hindering their capacity to save earnings towards property ownership is their connection to their household. Social reproduction in relation to migration is more often discussed in terms of the work migrants provide in assisting for the social reproduction of families abroad. Less often it is discussed in relation to their own family, and how migration restructures the social relations in the extended families at home (Locke, Seeley, and Rao 2013). Most of the Roma migrants I interviewed, passed on the money earned from working abroad directly to their extended family, who utilize it for daily subsistence. Between personal survival needs abroad and the family's necessities at home, the earnings—though substantially higher than what they could procure in Baia Mare—get allocated to everyday expenditures, which includes settling past debts. The relationship with their household is one of mutual dependence. Unlike non-Roma individuals, Roma migrants are oftentimes the primary or sole provider for the household at home.

> Yes, so the money I earned I always sent home. I was leaving money for cigarettes, because I also smoke, I drink coffee, maybe I also have a cup of tea, you understand. So, I received 1500 euros per month. I kept 200-300 euros for myself, I sent the rest to my family. My mother does not speak, she is mute, deaf from birth. We are 14 brothers. (39 years old, F, Craica, Rome, migrant)

The migrant is the main line of support for the family social reproduction at home, providing the necessary resources for maintaining the household. What makes this social obligation even stronger is the need for financial support from the family as well, to afford access to jobs abroad. Migration is not a solitary

[7]Fictional name to ensure anonimity

endeavour; rather, it hinges on the initial support of the family in the home country. For instance, families might provide the necessary capital for travel expenses, in addition to facilitating connections with migrant networks abroad. These networks offer accommodation, job opportunities, and valuable insights for new employment, essentially furnishing the essential knowledge for success overseas. Consequently, Roma migrants are unable to strike out on their own, leading them to perpetually navigate between these two worlds.

Conclusions

This paper compared the strategies and work histories of Roma and non-Roma migrants from Baia Mare in the context of migration, in an effort to determine the degree to which racial and class disparities influence life histories in the post-socialist context. The profound decline of the regional industry during the 1990s had a strong impact on a significant portion of the population, driving many to seek opportunities in foreign labour markets as a last resort. While circular migration is a prevalent phenomenon, the life-histories of Roma and non-Roma individuals differ significantly. Roma migrants from Baia Mare have distinct migration histories characterized by shorter stays, frequent job or country changes, and a higher likelihood of informal employment. In contrast, non-Roma individuals gained access to formalized employment and other social benefits after 2007, while a significant number of Roma continue to experience irregular migration in Europe.

Employing ethnographic research, the paper established a link between racialized dispossession—particularly evident in housing and employment—and the exploitation of Roma labour in the context of transnational migration. The central thesis of this paper is that this dispossession perpetuates a cycle of debt for Roma migrants, influencing the trajectory and outcomes of their migration. This impact manifests on two fronts: firstly, in terms of employment opportunities abroad, where the racialization of Roma individuals significantly shapes the types of jobs accessible to them as migrants, consequently influencing their migratory paths. The second dimension is tied to housing, addressing the consequential impact of marginalization on Roma migration trajectories, exacerbated by limited resources for financing their migration. In essence, this paper established a critical link between racial dispossession at home and the deregulation of migrant labour, particularly in the case of the Roma population.

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RACIALIZED HOUSING AND PROLETARIZATION POLICIES AS INTERNAL SOCIALIST CONTRADICTIONS: ROMA RELOCATIONS BETWEEN 1975-1989 IN BAIA MARE, ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT: The emergence of the ghetto as an urban social formation is regularly conveyed as a specific neoliberal capitalist product. Based on interviews with inhabitants and policymakers and archival data covering more than two decades, this article brings another dimension to the debates on ghetto formation. It traces the urban spatial politics of managing and containing Roma communities in the Romanian NW city of Baia Mare from the late 1970s until 1989. To this aim, it uncovers the debates and decisions regarding the last stages of socialist urban systematization focused on Hatvan, a Roma neighbourhood, and the subsequent relocation projects. Initially, the socialist administration aimed to assimilate the Roma population into the working class. However, a peculiar segregationist policy followed the failed experiment of expropriation and rehousing into low-quality apartments. In the early 1980s, authorities relocated most Roma in the newly built Vasile Alecsandri district to four new specifically designed apartment buildings nearby. The four blocks on Arieşului Street lacked central heating to prevent the accumulation of arrears – a materialization of the decade-long austerity policies. Other urban Roma were funnelled there as well, thus revealing the racialization policies assembled at the local level. . Just before 1990, Arieşului was abandoned, and many people decided to relocate in what became Craica, a ghetto that is still in existence today.

Keywords: socialist Roma policies, socialist urbanization, housing, racialization.

Introduction

Starting with the early 1990s, some of the Roma inhabitants of Baia Mare suffered multiple evictions and relocations to uninhabitable spaces. An internationally infamous episode took place in 2012. The municipality moved

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500 people from the informal settlement of Craica, to the Cuprom office buildings, a metallurgical company (Amnesty International 2013). Half of the residents remained in Craica. Additionally, several other Roma informal settlements surround the city. The Pirita community is located on the Western side, on top of a land where pyrites, a remnant of mining, had been deposited. Another settlement lies on the North-Eastern side, on the hill right next to the former led factory Romplumb.

In an attempt to solve the issue, the Municipal Social Assistance Department provided a map (Image 1) in 2013. It contains potential locations for social housing projects based on a thorough analysis of poverty areas around the city. As the map shows, the areas span from Dura, located at the tip of the airport, to Postfunduș, roughly translated as Beyondend. According to more recent local council decisions[2], Pintea Viteazul might be one of the chosen sites. The map accurately conveys how the municipality worked on finding possible permutations for the Roma population. Ethnicity is not mentioned in the presentation, yet all seven "poverty pockets" are inhabited by Roma.

A rich body of literature on ghettoization practices describes how the process was enacted through various scales in postsocialist spaces starting with the 1990s (see Vincze et al., 2019). With few exceptions (Lancione 2022; Plainer 2018), with regards to the state-socialist policies on the matter, research undertaken so far focuses on broader scales such as state or geopolitical block. Urbanization and industrialization were symbiotic policies in socialist Romania. Ensuring access to housing was a critical target reached mainly by 1989. For most Roma, social and housing mobility witnessed rapid increases. Better housing conditions were attained through migration in conjunction with expropriation and relocation. Sedentarization and labour migration as state policies were the central outlooks in the space offered by the state. Sometimes, relocation to apartment blocks proved unsuitable for Roma. Local authorities had to devise a solution for the new issue, which made sense in the current urbanization-industrialization process. Explanations of the enduring Roma housing situation in Romania appeal to a "long dispossession" (used by Vincze 2019) and "foundational dispossession" (used by Lancione, 2022 after Roy, 2017:9). Racialization is more than discrimination and exclusion, "it is about foundational dispossession – the subject whose claims to property are thus always a lived experience of loss" (id.)

By subscribing to the long durée approach, this article addresses the following questions: under what circumstances was the impoverished Roma population of Baia Mare transformed into a subject whose forced mobility is a recurrent episode? Precisely, which factors contributed to the entrenched

[2] Local Council Decision 320/2022.

neoliberal racialization of the Roma? In order to answer these questions, this article describes the urbanization and housing policies implemented by the local administration in Baia Mare, a Romanian north-western city, together with data regarding the proletarianization of Roma during the late 1970s and 1980s, with a focus on the emerging racial project. It uses archival data and interviews to outline and contextualize several episodes of resettlement. Thus, by illustrating the intersection of proletariat urbanization and assimilation occurring during the 1980s austerity policies, it contributes to the literature documenting state-socialist policies towards Roma and their implications for the complete destitution following the political change. Additionally, it emphasizes how certain levels of autonomy for local administrations were necessary for territorially based racialization practices

Socialist traits of postsocialist ghetto formation

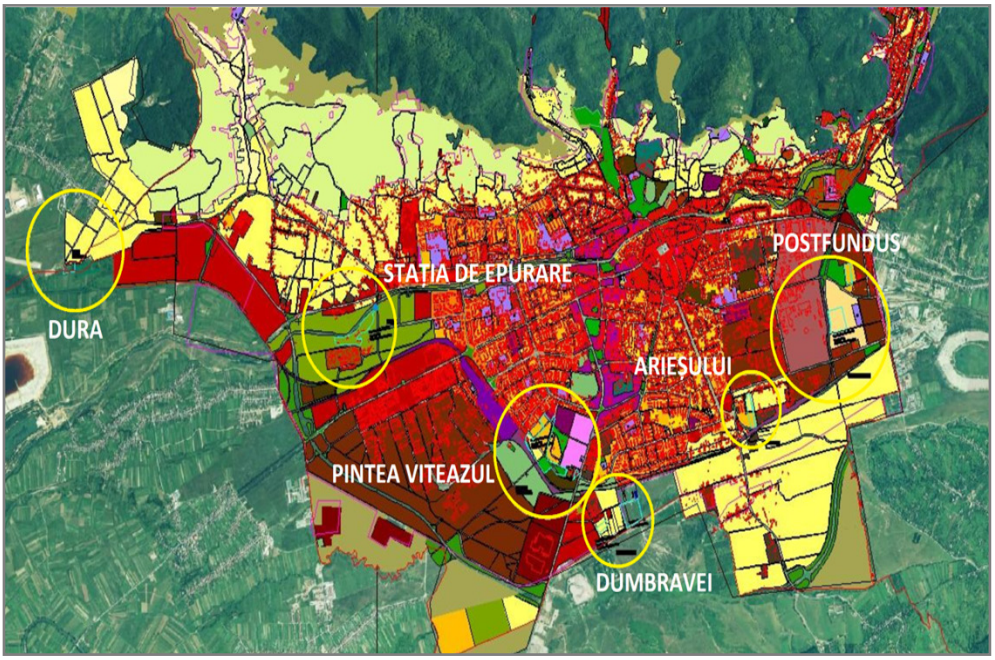
The emergence of Roma ghettoes during postsocialist Romania has been extensively researched and tied with uneven development, spatial stigmatization, and population racialization (see Vincze 2013; Vincze and Zamfir 2019; Popovici 2020). Beginning with the 1990s, amidst the socio-political transformations taking place in CEE, Roma had been turned into evictable populations (van Baar 2016). New social geographies with deeply unequal formats took shape. Racial categories played a consistent role in the new urban arrangements. These results were significantly impacted by housing privatization. Restitution and the right to buy, as primary forms of housing privatization, directly impacted the processes.

In a recent article (Zamfir 2022) conveying the extent of evictions in Romania, drawn from various figures, testimonies, and policy documents, I implied that the manner in which local municipalities acted during the first years of postsocialism concerning Roma populations suggested that the advent of the housing regime based on private property was marked by Roma displacement. However, some data, mainly interviews in Cluj-Napoca, pointed out that the origins of the displacements in the early 1990s took shape in the earlier decades.

Several key texts point towards various aspects of the socialist policy regarding Roma. Lancione (2022) analyses the emergence of Roma dispossessions in Ferentari, a Bucharest district. Based on archival data on centralized planning, he points to the embedded racialized framing of the district's production as a socialist planning output. Vincze (2013: 221) provides accounts of the lives of Roma people in Cluj-Napoca in the 1980s before they were forcibly removed and relocated by the municipality in 2010 next to a landfill. In his book on the

history of Roma in Romania, Achim (1998) devotes a short and substantial chapter to the socialist period. He underlines the scarcity of official documents issued by the socialist administration, admitting that future archival work will uncover usable data. A study undertaken in 1977 by the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, which assessed the situation of the Roma, is another source of valuable data. The presented picture is bleak: a considerable part of the Roma population lives in dire conditions, is uneducated, some are unwilling to work, and women are unemployed. As for the culprits, local administrations are admonished for their implicit support of the status quo, including lax mobility controls. The report presents six categories of proposed measures, starting with "measures regarding the liquidation of the nomad and semi-nomad phenomenon among the gypsies."

Image 1. Map made by the Social Assistance Department of Baia Mare (2013) locating potential sites for social housing projects. The author added names of the areas provided in the documents.



Socialist Romanian authorities were not alone in their efforts to settle and assimilate Roma populations. According to Law (2012: 22), by outlawing the nomadic Roma way of life in 1956, Khrushchev laid the foundation for anti-

Roma racism. Hungarian governments implemented measures in a similar vein (Majteny and Majteny, 2016). For a brief period between 1957 and 1961, the existence of a Cultural Association of Hungarian Gypsies was the closest to an ethnic-cultural acknowledgment by the state (id, p. 34). According to Romanian authorities, the Roma did not fulfil the conditions required to be denominated as a national minority (Anghel 2022: 5).

This article acknowledges recent literature which historicizes housing policies a la longue durée. Andreea Gibbons (2018) describes the conditions in Los Angeles. White (2023) presents the situation in Boise. Both monographs trace connections and relations taking shape in the last century. If socialist policies stressed that nomadism was a problem, the issue of the Hatvan Roma was different: they were settled, not nomadic Roma. Beck (1984:32) explained how the umbrella of Roma did not capture the diversity of languages, occupations, settlement patterns, and historic-cultural trajectories, an obfuscation that excluded professionalized Roma in fields such as medicine, scholarship, and administration.

In fact, authors describing the communist regime approach to Roma in Romania conclude that policies aimed primarily at social integration. Generally, authorities treated Roma as a social problem that needed to be solved with social instruments, particularly employment and housing (see Matei 2016 and Achim 2004). In this regard, the 1977 research and the 1983 response report are instructive, with the latter highlighting the fact that the outcomes did not meet expectations. Amid the national economic difficulties of the early 1980s, "the integration measures had been abandoned" (Matei 2016, 701-2). In the 1980s, Roma ethnic identity manifestations, particularly music festivals, were contained or even banned (Matei 2016, 701). Overall, central authorities did not coordinate policy measures at the national level.

Socialist policies from the 1980s are relevant for creating ghettoization circumstances due to two additional contextual factors in addition to ethno-racial minority policies. The 1968 national territorial administrative reform triggered various systematization and urbanization plans at county and local level. By the late 1970s, significant advances had already been achieved. Thus, the new urbanization policy gradually turned from a plan to a material reality to be managed. Secondly, national economic development plans underwent significant changes following the 1979 oil crisis (Ban, 2014). In an attempt to curve international financial dependence, the government imposed a draconic set of austerity measures throughout the decade. Steering all economic productive efforts towards exports directly hit household consumption and, implicitly, housing management policies.

The literature conveys that governmental decisions were crucial drivers of proletarianization attempts, yet, as we shall see, municipalities play similarly essential roles in the outcome. The literature does not cover how those attempts

have been implemented and what resulted. If Eastern European communist regimes attempted to assimilate the Roma into their national proletarian body, what is the nature of this specific classificatory system? Specifically, as assimilation policies had been their primary goal (Barany 2000, 424), how did housing policies contribute to a socialist racialization, and how did the Roma react?

This article provides data produced in the "Precarious labour and peripheral housing" project framework. It started with a series of interviews taken by the author together with Enikő Vincze. We interviewed architects, planners, constructors, and Romanian, Roma, and Hungarian city residents through life story approaches. Practically, we followed their housing and employment histories in conjunction with specific familial arrangements. Archival research came next, with the primary source being the Local Council Archive Department, followed by the Maramureş County Council and National Archives – Maramureş. Local Council archival sources offered diverse sets of documents, ranging from decisions to resolutions, activity or financial reports, social investigations, plans, meeting notes, and regulations. The archival work initially focused on the period 1980-1989, with some exploration of the early and mid-1970s. Primarily, it aimed to identify relevant decisions of the executive committee of the local council. However, many of the files contained various documents from different years.

The contribution of this article to the literature consists of aspects and processes regarding socialist urban planning and racialization mechanisms. It presents the urbanization process, data regarding attempts at Roma proletarianization, housing policies regarding Roma, and the main problems of urban administration. It brings new empirical data from archives and interviews laying out local processes involving Roma, particularly the 1980s racial project specific to Baia Mare.

Socialist urbanization in Baia Mare

According to the last significant socialist housing legislation, Law 4/1973 and Law 5/1973, there were four funding sources for housing construction, which thus defined the housing property regime. State-owned housing was aimed at low-wage employees, young married couples, newly employed youth, and transferred staff – the latter a central instrument in conjunction with economic development plans. Housing was produced either with centralized state investment funds and managed by local councils through their enterprises or with enterprises' funds and in their direct management. A vital aspect of the housing regime, housing as personal property, meant a decommodification of

housing: a family could own only one housing unit. In the case of extra inherited housing, they had to be relinquished, and it was against the law to build or sell them. Housing as personal property was produced directly by the population through personal funds - the case of single-family housing or produced by state enterprises and institutions at the request of the population, usually through state-backed credit by the Savings and Credit Bank (CEC) - the case of apartments in blocks. The third category, cooperative housing, was far less common and not even a part of the available statistical data. Personal property represented 70 percent of housing at the national level (Vincze 2017, 32). Their majority was represented by urban and rural single-family houses, followed by block apartments.

As a primary political aim during Romanian socialism, urbanization was directly tied to economic development (Vincze, 2023). With ample underground reserves, Baia Mare became one of Romania's major mining cities. Polymetallic ore had been historically extracted and processed in the area. Due to vast gold deposits, coin minting goes back to the Austro-Hungarian empire. Moreover, as part of industrialization, lead, zinc, and copper became significant commodities. Tunnels pierced nearby mountains with entrances from inside or in its proximity, and ore was processed in the city. In the eastern part, the remnants of the Cuprom factory and its decantation pools still take over vast amounts of urban space. At the same time, the lead production unit, Romplumb, was positioned in the northeast, and other mining operations took place on the city's western side. Until mining production ceased in the late 2000s, toxicity deeply affected urban public health, while cyanide spillovers impacted environments hundreds of kilometres away. An auxiliary industry developed alongside, ranging from geological exploration and manufacturing of mining equipment, complementary to other sectors such as textiles and tiles.

In just 45 years, the city population grew from 21 thousand to 149 thousand inhabitants. In parallel, housing the working class, attracted by the lucrative industry, required considerable investments in housing projects. Because Baia Mare was considerably smaller when socialist urbanization started, the land was more readily available for new infrastructural works, particularly well-suited for industrial needs. After the administrative-territorial reform of 1968, the city's new systematization and urbanization plan was publicly presented at the end of 1971[3]. The municipality implemented most of the plan until 1989 in various stages. However, it was preceded by a small-scale neighbourhood with Soviet-style architecture built in the 1950s in a semi-central area. According to the interviewed planners, the Săsar neighbourhood took shape in the sixties in

[3] Baia Mare Local Council Decision 671/1971.

a northern area with less valuable constructions and a marshy flat terrain. The Gării neighbourhood and the new civic centre were constructed entirely in the 1970s and 1980s. The parallel works unfolding in various areas complicate the chronology of socialist districts. However, V. Alecsandri is the last neighbourhood built under the initial plan in the southern area, over the former neighbourhood Hatvan, inhabited by Roma. Expropriation was a key planning instrument that supported the whole housing production apparatus, even in the 1980s, in V. Alecsandri and other more centrally located districts such as Traian.

In the early 60s, authorities geared housing provision towards efficiently supporting industrial development. That meant increasing the number of apartments at the expense of lower-quality housing. In the 1980s, the Central Planning Committee mandated the Maramureș Construction Trust to deliver up to 3000 units per year, according to a former director of a construction enterprise. The significant number, coupled with the insufficient availability of construction materials, translated into pressure on the Constructions Trust to focus on erecting blocks with smaller apartments if they foresaw a failure to achieve the quota. Generally, however, the quality of blocks gradually increased, with the more spacious and better-equipped apartments generally built in the 1980s, particularly in the central area. Some of the architectural projects surrounding Mara Park received national awards. In V. Alecsandri, production ramped up as prefabricated construction elements were efficiently delivered on site.

As the housing fund expanded, most inhabitants moved up their housing careers. Upon arrival in Baia Mare, some lived in worker hostels (ro. *blocuri de nefamiliști*), usually belonging to enterprises or state-owned small apartments. Worker hostels were positioned near production units and scattered around the city, even in central areas such as str. Hortensiei and Expoziției. They were designed as rapid solutions to house incoming workers required to ramp up industrial production. Next, residents moved into more spacious apartments as the Constructions Trust delivered them to enterprises that allocated them to employees.

Some enterprises decided to provide housing for their employees by directly commissioning projects to the Maramureș Constructions Trust out of their funds, particularly in the 1980s. They first searched for potentially available plots for new blocks and approached the Institute for Design. Taking granular control of housing provision meant not only a faster solution but also a matter of pride: managers felt that the socio-economic relevance of their units was greater than that of local authorities. Thus, they deserved greater autonomy. As the competition between production units for workers was increasing, it was also a means of increasing their pool of potential employees. Competition extended at broader scales. Intercity competitions placed urban administrations in a direct

comparison between various indicators, particularly production output and surpassing the yearly plan quotas. In 1980, the Local Council of Tecuci challenged its Baia Mare counterpart to a socialist race. According to the document [4] describing the process, Baia Mare's council proposed six competition categories, starting with the domain of investment and housing construction – mainly the delivery of new housing a month earlier than the assumed deadline and ending with the "reduction of fuel and electricity, recovery of raw materials, and materials."

Besides apartments in buildings owned by the enterprise or the state, another category appeared in the 1970s. People interested in owning their apartment now could place their order at The Office for the Construction of Personal Housing (ro. *Oficiul de Construcții Locuințe Proprietate Personală*). Buyers had to take out low-interest credit from the state bank with a repayment period of around 25 years. However, monthly payments were significantly higher than the average rent in a state or enterprise-owned apartment. Thus, only those employees with better wages could afford an acquisition. Higher expertise, an essential asset in economic development, was thus pushed towards an equivalence with personal property, similar to what Lancione (2020) discovered in the Bucharest archives. Higher quality construction, surface, and better positioning were the main reasons for buying instead of renting. The population bought around 14,000 apartments out of 42,000 in Baia Mare in 1990 through this office. In 1965, municipal statistics [5] registered 36,519 employees. The number grew to 72,655 in 1982 and remained roughly constant until 1985, while in the same four years, 8,233 housing units were delivered (Ib., p. 111). An urban planner claimed that better building methods and administration enabled the housing supply to keep up with population demands. "In the 1980s, we almost openly called them, we invited them 'Come on because we have available housing,' and they moved from a comfort at the city peripheries in the centre or wherever […] and at the periphery we gave to those rather unqualified workers or to a gypsy who was a bit more civilized… because we had those as well, as driver, tractor operator, with family and children." (former urban planner)

Although even territorial development principles undergirded governmental policies, the spatial positioning of new blocks was relevant to incoming tenants. According to non-Roma interviewees, Vasile Alecsandri district was not usually the first choice. Moreover, state enterprises aimed to mediate state housing allocations for their employees in central rather than peripheral areas. The Construction Trust leveraged its crucial position in the housing

[4] The Answer of the Popular Council of the Municipality of Baia Mare to the call addressed by the Popular Council of the Municipality of Tecuci, regarding the conduct of the socialist competition for the year 1980.

[5] County archives consulted by project colleague Dana Solonean, p. 13.

production apparatus to obtain the allocation of the highest quality apartments built in the 1980s around the centrally located Mara Park for its employees. In the late 1980s[6] and early 1990s[7], allocation policies clearly outlined the interest.

Neighbouring villages constituted an extended pool of potential employees. In 1985, more than 12,000 workers commuted to workplaces in Baia Mare, according to local council documents. Most lived in the adjacent villages, yet others travelled longer distances of up to 30 kilometres. Economically, subsistence agriculture as a complementary activity was the main reason for choosing commuting. These figures indicate that, while some rural inhabitants were directly attracted by modern urban amenities, other factors strongly structured migration decisions.

Roma as proletarianization subjects

As a general category, Roma encompassed groups with linguistic diversity, a wide range of occupations, different settlement patterns, and historic-cultural trajectories (Beck 1984, 32). The 1977 national report on Roma focused on mobility when rendering populations legible for intervention: settled, semi-nomadic, and nomadic. The Roma population of Baia Mare exhibits diversity, which, similarly, has mattered less and less for local authorities. As part of the working-class migration wave to Baia Mare, some moved in from neighbouring villages, and others from the neighbouring counties Sălaj and Satu Mare, according to interviewees. Many were native Hungarian speakers, similar to some of Baia Mare's older Roma population, while others were native Romanian speakers. A family of Hungarian Roma mentioned that they specifically chose Jupiter Street where colinguals lived, instead of areas inhabited by Romanian Roma when they moved into the city from the outskirts next to the brick factory,

Relevant decisions issued by the municipal and county councils on labour and housing identified in the archives rarely mention Roma as a distinct category. However, meeting minutes from various administrative levels, or internal reports, exhibit more clearly how authorities perceived them as policy subjects: a social problem and potentially criminal population to be contained. An explanation of the duality could be the presumption that policymakers perceived minutes as a private and secured internal means of institutional memory. In contrast, decisions represented the public end result of administrative work. A 1986 report issued by the county-level Securitate to its headquarters

[6] Decision of the Executive Committee of the Municipality of Baia Mare no. 179/1989.
[7] Decision of the Executive Committee of the Municipality of Baia Mare no. 27/1990.

(Marin 2017, 333-34) describes that Roma in Baia Mare are "agglomerated with families in different districts" and that "most are employed in various domains of activity," information obtained through the police action titled "The Nomad," which aimed at "tracing the gypsies who break our state's laws."

Two main paths stand out regarding formal labour: formal employment and self-employment. Both are relevant to housing allocation and management policies. On one hand, interviewees pointed out that numerous Roma were employed in industrial productive units at the Construction Trust or mining companies as lathe operators, locksmiths, and low-level support for labour teams. Vocational schools were vital to upward mobility, granting scholarships, meals, and accommodation. While Roma employment remained focused on blue-collar positions, few managed to rise as team leaders in industrial units, and it happened due to educational opportunities. Another option for formal employment was public sanitation.

On the other hand, self-employment was a legal category based on Law 13/1968, which regulated handcrafting. According to the law rationale, this formal category aimed to satisfy the population's demands, particularly in rural areas, and generally where "they are not entirely covered by socialist units." Local councils analysed the individual permit requests and granted them on a case-by-case basis. Scattered examples of council decisions during the 1970s and 1980s convey that the administration granted, rejected, and revoked permits without a clear pattern. In the 1980s, some rejected applications included explanations such as "the applicant is fit for integration in a socialist unit" or "the city-wide popular demand had already been satisfied." Roma and non-Roma applied for a wide variety of activities. In corroboration with interview data, we can infer that, within this framework, some of the traditional Roma crafters in the city practiced basket weaving, brickmaking, music making, goldsmithing, flower selling, street-food vending, and horse and cart transporting (Ro. cărăușie). The latter occupation was quite significant, as the next section will show. Whereas brickmaking was inherently susceptible to redundancy once industrial production ramped up, merchandise transportation from warehouses to households filled significant economic gaps determined by availability and cost. Thus, while through their various occupations as self-employed, Roma played significant roles in the local economy, the policy aim was to have these roles superseded by socialist units. Practically, a conflation between seemingly retrograde occupations and the right to housing directly fed the municipal adverse policies towards Roma.

From Hatvan to Vasile Alecsandri to Arieşului – the making of a neighbourhood through Roma relocations

Hatvan is the original Hungarian name of the southern area of Baia Mare. Its residents were primarily Roma. In 1975, the Construction Trust built the first blocks in the southern part of Baia Mare. Documents show that the initial name of the neighbourhood was Brickmakers, which was later changed to Vasile Alecsandri. Few direct information on how institutions planned the first blocks came up during archival digging. The first Roma families living in Hatvan were expropriated and resettled in these blocks located on the street later renamed Melodiei. Compared with the district's later-stage developments in the 1980s, these blocks had lower comfort, ranking based primarily on the available floor space. According to one account, residents did not welcome expropriation.

> Forced, yes. The police came with batons and beat the poor gypsies. When they demolished the Romanians, they gave them downtown. Among us, Hungarians and Romanians lived as well, all kinds, but you never saw the police asking them who stole or who got into fights or to turn down the music; there were no problems. When a policeman came, all the gypsies ran to see him because we really missed the police… (Roma woman).

All available data indicates that residents "devastated" the new apartments and accumulated arrears. Attempts to pressure them into paying did not work. During County Council meeting in January 1982[8], the county council president admonished the housing manager for irresponsible management and lack of containment of the debt problems around the city and V. Alecsandri in particular. The manager explained that the centralized nature of heating infrastructure prevents individual accountability for the 2,235 debtors spread across the city, with most employed at IMMUM enterprise. Moreover, the manager detailed that according to the president of the city court, arrears cannot constitute a reason for eviction, as bad faith cannot be established. The discussion during the same meeting touches on the topic of "devastated apartments," where the council president again admonishes the manager, asking, "Why did you put all the gypsies in a single block and not one per stairway so that other tenants will discipline them?" While the manager did not directly respond, he proposed that directors of enterprises should be summoned on the issue, to which the council president attempted to wrap the discussion: "Directors should be left to focus on production." However, later, the

[8] Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Maramureș Popular County Council meeting on January 18, 1983, Document No. 660/1983.

vice-president mentions two issues. One concerns the increased deficiencies of boilers and substantial heating network losses. The second regards the debtors, for which the council took measures, starting with the cessation of thermal energy and hot water, continuing with payroll deductions, and lastly, detailing that "we built blocks where we will move those with arrears."

An example from the local newspaper For Socialism (Petrehuş, 1982) describes an episode in 1982 entailing how public shaming was used as a means of discipline. One article briefly presents a report on Melodiei Street no 2 and 4: a team of one journalist, two electricians, and one police officer discovered tampered electricity meters and morally assessed how inhabitants responded to journalistic inquiries. A tenant who presented a payment commitment both to the utility company and the newspaper desk had its name specifically redacted. Another article presents how tenants destroyed state-owned apartments. Again, with precise names and addresses, the reportage starts with cases from Hatvan: "Currently, we work in complex teams to evict recalcitrant tenants on Melodiei, Rapsodiei, and Vasile Alecsandri streets."

Local authorities deemed the respective illegal activities a significant problem requiring a specific solution. As the present-day map shows, most of the systematization plan of Vasile Alecsandri had been implemented, with the notable exception of its marginal eastern side. The solution came in 1982 and consisted of a special project of four blocks with 227 apartments on Arieşului Street, separated from the rest of the neighbourhood by a significant boulevard. Presumably, the new constructions were erected rapidly, as by the end of 1983, the municipality issued dozens of evictions for Roma residents of Vasile Alecsandri. These blocks contained spacious apartments with 3-4 rooms and lacked central heating. Instead, the housing company provided stoves to decrease heating costs and avoid the provision of unpaid natural gas.

Later, the administration probably relocated other Roma to Arieşului from other parts of the city. In one interinstitutional communication from 1989[9], the urban management enterprise proposes to the local council the rehousing of 20 residents from the block located on Jupiter 20, "where they have arrears or deteriorated the apartments, to the blocks on Arieşului." The housing management company handled the precise allocation of apartments in the four blocks. Another inscription[10], this time dated 1990, contains the request of an Arieşului resident for an apartment on a different street in V. Alecsandri district. Written over what amounts to a para-formal racial inquiry is "Postponed to verify

[9] List of proposed decisions issued by the Sector of Systematization for the Executive Committee of the Popular Council of Baia Mare in 1989.

[10] List of proposed decisions issued by the Sector of Systematization for the Executive Committee of the Popular Council of Baia Mare in 1990.

nationality. (Is he Roma or not?)". Both documents indicate that the area was an administrative racial project. Moreover, the decision in the mid-1980s to repair blocks on streets predominantly inhabited by Roma conveys the practice.

However, Arieşului proved inadequate for Roma needs. As one Roma woman described it, although the apartments were spacious and well equipped, residents were breeding pigs and horses, the latter instrumental in their work, particularly for collecting and selling scrap jars and plastics. After just a few years, they abandoned the blocks in Arieşului. According to an urban planner, the movement occurred two years after their resettlement. Next, according to the same planner, they moved to Craica at the end of the 1980s, and others followed. Other Roma from rural parts of the county arrived in Craica as well.

Moreover, blocks from different locations in the city, which Roma previously inhabited, were "recovered" through reparations in a project where state enterprises were attracted by the city housing company as principal financial backers in return for allocations for their workforce. Seeing that the project was stalling, in 1988, the municipality approved a 14 measures plan[11]. The plan laid out details regarding funding requirements and concrete phases of repairment. The last point reiterated a previous provision stating that buildings will be secured with metal sheets to prevent abusive entry.

The data exhibits several aspects, of which two are at the forefront: the accumulation of arrears and the apparent misuse of apartments. Nationally, utility prices increased with the 1982 decree, compounding a substantial local problem in Baia Mare: accumulation of debts. This was a key issue for the whole city, as debates in the local administration show. The county ranked first at the national level on the matter. Although numerous tenant associations across the city were indebted, authorities pointed out Roma as the main culprits. A 1985 financial report on the reasons for dissolving the Melodiei 2 tenant association provides a clear example: Roma were unemployed and did not pay. Later, solutions devised for this problem led to cutting access to gas for whole blocks as pressure to pay debts.

Most Roma living in Hatvan in the 1970s practiced subsistence agriculture, were legally self-employed as brickmakers, transporters, tinsmiths, etc., or low-waged employees in public sanitation. Relocation to apartments deprived them of their primary means of livelihood, as the Roma interviewee pointed out. Subsistence agriculture was further criminalized in the 1980s, with numerous documents aiming at eliminating unauthorized constructions of animal pens and coops. In 1985, during one large-scale planned action[12] aiming at stopping

[11] Decision of the Executive Committee of the Popular Council of Baia Mare no. 179/March 24, 1989.

[12] Program of measures regarding grazing on the landfill of the Municipality of Baia Mare. Annex to Decision 288/1985, May 27.

inhabitants of V. Alecsandri from breeding pigs in the neighbouring landfill area, the local council required the presence of 50 people to load up confiscated animals. Hatvan-cum-V. Alecsandri was just one of the urban areas where these constructions were erected, with others discovered in the western area next to another new district.

However, the council also noticed that informal housing had been erected in the area. A 1980 report by the Sector of systematization, architecture, and control of discipline in construction offers insightful details. It starts by presenting the rationale: "Considering the indications of the superior party leadership regarding integration in the labour field, education through labour as well as the settlement of gypsy families, the sector of systematization proposes the urgent demolition of the following constructions occupied and constructed abusively by gypsies outside the construction perimeter of the city of Baia Mare, which constitute points of localization of some families from other localities, simultaneously being infection outbreaks."

The report continues by describing each situation for 39 constructions-cum-families. According to the introduction, authorities deemed all inhabitants to be Roma. Notes include names, nicknames, number of children, and parents' occupations, as well as judgments on parenting and labour integration and criminal records. More than half of the constructions were made of adobe, one of fibreboards, while no materials were mentioned for the rest. Concerning occupation, the inventory exhibits a variety: a farm worker and a pensioner, two convicts to labour, eight employed and eight unemployed. In several cases, the report underlines released convicts and their crimes. After listing the details of the 30 families, the report's authors mentioned other buildings located in the area and included in the expropriation plans. The buildings are "occupied by owners **or** gypsies for circa 1-15 years, with stable domicile in Baia Mare, proven through identity papers" (personal emphasis).

The report ends by adding information regarding their origins, "localities such as Zalău, Moftinu Mare, Băița de sub Codru, Asuajul de Sus, Ferneziu, etc." and that urgent demolition should be followed by "sending the gypsies to the localities where they came from." However, only 22 listed families were mentioned as not being domiciled in Baia Mare, and some of the rest are noted as explicitly being domiciled in the city. While we have no information on if and what actions followed after, this exposition is in line with the 1977 state directives related to Roma population management. The reasons behind the informal migration of Roma families to Hatvan can only be speculated, as they pertain to the conditions left behind and the opportunities and intentions of obtaining state-owned housing through existing formal employment channels. As mentioned in a previous section, Hungarian-speaking Roma from the neighbouring county of

Satu Mare obtained state-owned apartments in the Jupiter area. Going by Dehaan's description of the late 1930s urban planning of Nizhnii Novgorod, where "local industry also undermined city council authority by encouraging workers to ignore decrees forbidding the illegal construction and occupation of homes" (Dehaan 2013, 141) – unauthorized housing construction was present. According to the author, effective control of the phenomenon was complicated by the competing interests of state factories – workforce attraction and local councils – planning principles, in conjunction with the right to housing promoted by the state and claimed by the people.

As the nationally imposed austerity measures started in the early 1980s (Ban, 2014) and were heavily intensified throughout the decade, they are relevant in the analysis of the measures above. To attain financial independence from external creditors, the government enacted wartime restrictions related to household consumption of basic goods such as natural gas and electricity to ramp up export-oriented industrial production. Decree 240/1982 raised prices for electricity and gas for households, although it contained subsidy schemes for low-income families. At city level, electricity consumption for industrial production in 1976-1981 ranged between 303.000-357.000 kWh, after which it jumped to 518.895 kWh in 1982[13]. In this context, cost-cutting-oriented measures directly fed the perception that Roma housing "inadequacies" - in relation to the proletarianization project - were systemic costs that appeared as results of improper management by local administrators.

Most Roma interviewed in Baia Mare attest that their quality of life was higher during socialism than in postsocialism. According to Beck (1984:31), this perception was also exhibited in the second half of the 1970s compared to earlier conditions. However, Beck adds another aspect reported by the Roma: that in the same period, verbal abuse and mistreatment towards them increased.

Conclusions

This article presented the intersection of socialist urbanization processes and the proletarianization of the Roma, providing empirical data from the city of Baia Mare in Romania, to show how three conditions collided and supported ghettoization. First, national policies on Roma population management rendered them a social problem, not an ethnic category. Nomadic and semi-nomadic groups, while small in numbers, were presented as concerning and requiring intervention. Settled Roma populations were meant to be socially uplifted through proletarianization.

[13] County archives consulted by project colleague Dana Solonean, p. 34.

Second, the socialist urbanization process and industrialization policies were directly connected. This modernization project aimed at increasing economic outputs and providing the required workforce with urban amenities. New socialist districts rose through a key instrument: expropriation and relocation of former house residents in apartments. Urban space was thus deemed a resource to be assembled in conjunction with industrialization. Such is the case of Hatvan, the neighbourhood where local Roma resided, which was transformed into Vasile Alecsandri.

Moreover, the territorial assimilation of Hatvan into the socialist assemblage was a double instrument, as it was also meant to control a criminalized population. Hatvan encompassed two preconditions: land to be incorporated as an asset in the economic growth machine through housing provision for workers and the population to be socially uplifted. However, while housing policies succeeded at reducing rampant inequalities, some were reiterated. The urban spatial planning of quality housing was apparent, as the first blocks designed for expropriated Roma were lower comfort designs.

Third, the 1980s national draconic austerity measures were imposed when the urbanization process was quite advanced. Hatvan was in the conversion process. Some of the Roma who had already relocated to the new blocks expressed spatial agency: deprived of their previous conditions, which allowed them to practice legal self-employment as craftworkers and subsistence agriculture, they accumulated arrears and devastated the apartments. The Roma households' social reproduction territory had been drastically mutated through relocation from houses and yards to small apartments. The movement from ground-level houses and yards to small apartments translated into a volumetric containment that cut access to subsistence practices. Food crops, animal husbandry, and hosting horses and carts for transportation were unfeasible – although some attempted to keep horses in apartments. Moreover, numerous unauthorized animal coops appeared in the neighbouring Craica area as forms of enacted spatial agency (Gotham, 2003).

In 1982, the city of Baia Mare ranked first in the country in arrears by tenant associations. The problem was widespread, although associations in V. Alecsandri fared the worst. Economic costs to a perceived cultural adjustment of Roma had been deemed unfeasible. To provide a solution through which to salvage the district, in a context where payroll deductions were impossible in the case of self-employed populations, county and city-level decision-makers came up with a plan: four new blocks with three or four-room apartments erected in the vicinity of, yet completely separated from V. Alecsandri district. These blocks were specifically designed to be heated with stoves to prevent accumulation or arrears. Authorities funnelled Roma residents from other areas of

the city to Arieşului. Unsatisfied with the new relocations, residents moved out in the late 1980s and settled in informal housing in Craica, a ghettoized area maintained to this day.

Finally, this article contributes new insights into how late socialist policies targeting Roma have been adapted both temporally and spatially by local administrations. Thus, it sheds light on the conditions under which neoliberal ghettoization processes unfolded. In this vein, the case of Baia Mare stands as a pivotal addition to the literature on postsocialist urbanization, as it demonstrates that post-1989 urban policies of Roma segregation are drawn on the contradictory approaches exhibited in late socialism: an ethnic group, a racial category, or a potential addition to the proletarian body. Expulsion was the postsocialist municipal authorities' primary response to this contradiction.

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PLANNING HATVAN: URBAN PLANNING AND REPRESSION IN ONE OF BAIA MARE'S ROMA NEIGHBOURHOODS (1950-1989)

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ABSTRACT: This paper starts from the premise that social space, the state space, is a socially productive territory characterized, among other things, by hierarchical social, economic and political relations. This hierarchical dimension of space comes to the fore when researching the urban marginalization of Roma people in Romania. The mechanisms of exclusion employed by the state against Roma groups are situated in a wide range of other policies, among which uneven territorial development ranks chief. As such, this paper seeks to analyse the junction between these processes. It asks the question: how did the process of urban planning reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during socialism in Baia Mare? In order to address this question, I mobilize the results of two years of archival research in the city of Baia Mare, coupled with the discursive analysis of this archival material. I perform a diachronic analysis of how Roma people were targeted by state practices of urban marginalization, such as stigmatization, criminalization and repression. I show how the policies of systematisation of Baia Mare shaped the territory of a particular neighbourhood – Hatvan, attempting to manage and control the Roma population there. Throughout the 1960s, Hatvan was considered a focal point for crime. This led to a large-scale plan to completely transform the area through evictions, demolitions and the displacement of Roma people. The result was a place that was seen as clean, ordered and lawful social space, which became what is currently known as the Vasile Alecsandri neighbourhood. However, this space continues to this day to be one of social marginalisation, economic deprivation and institutionalised racism.

Keywords: urban planning; socialist Romania; Roma people; criminalisation; archives

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Introduction

This paper[2] starts from the premise that social space, particularly state space, is a socially productive territory characterized, among other things, by hierarchical social, economic, and political relations (Lefebvre, 2009 [1978]: 243-4). This hierarchical dimension of space comes to the fore when researching the urban marginalization of Roma people in Romania. The mechanisms of exclusion employed by the state against Roma groups are situated in a wide range of other policies, among which uneven territorial development ranks chief. As such, this paper seeks to analyse the junction between these processes. It asks the question: *how did the process of urban planning reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during socialism in Baia Mare*?

In order to address this question, I mobilize the results of two years of archival research in the city of Baia Mare, coupled with the discursive analysis of this archival material. The documents analysed were produced roughly between 1950 and 1989. They are in large part minutes recorded from the official meetings of the local administration. These meetings discussed various issues concerning the township, usually in the form of reports from local or national institutions. The voices recorded by these minutes articulate discourses that are at the same time less formal than the official *langue du bois* of the Party, and less casual than everyday informal bureaucrats' talk. As such, they provide a fascinating window into the ways in which Baia Mare officials approached the city's problems.

What follows is a diachronic analysis of how Roma people were targeted by state practices of urban marginalization, such as stigmatization, criminalization, and repression. I show how the policies of systematisation in Baia Mare shaped the territory of a particular neighbourhood – Hatvan, attempting to manage and control the Roma population there. Throughout the 1960s, Hatvan was considered a focal point for crime, where riots and fights were common. This led to a large-scale plan to completely transform the area through evictions, demolitions, and the displacement of Roma people. The result was a place that was seen as clean, ordered, and lawful social space, which is currently known as the Vasile Alecsandri neighbourhood. However, to this day, this space continues to be one of social marginalisation, economic deprivation, and institutionalised racism.

The text begins with a general analysis of how the concept of urban planning – *sistematizare* – has been applied in socialist Romania, arguing for a stance that views the social aspects of this process, rather than its descriptive

[2] The research leading to these results has received funding from the NO Grants 2014-2021, under Project contract no. 22/2020 - Precarious labor and peripheral housing. The socio-economic practices of Romanian Roma in the context of changing industrial relations and uneven territorial development.

or architectural facets. Subsequently, I begin the historical analysis by highlighting the 1950's housing crisis in Baia Mare, and how the urban planning policies sought to alleviate it. I then show how the hierarchisation of the urban space has been implemented through what the authorities called 'construction discipline'. This initiated a first wave of repression against Roma people in Baia Mare, especially in Hatvan, which had beforehand been seen as a space in need of social welfare. This repression dovetailed with a national concern for criminalizing Roma people. Finally, I show how in Hatvan, the process of criminalization was intertwined in the 1980's with the re-drawing of the neighbourhood and the eviction and relocation of the Roma people living there.

Urban Planning in Early Socialist Romania: sistematizarea

The Romanian word '*sistematizare*' can be translated as the process whereby state authorities employ processes of knowledge gathering, problem solving, rational planning and administration in relation to a geographical and social space. Such practices have long been recognized as forming the repertoire of the modern state's project to govern and control its territory and population. As John Ruggie argues, '*the chief characteristic of the modern system of territorial rule is the consolidation of all parcelized and personalized authority into one public realm*'. In other words, modern territoriality is characterized by the differentiation between public and private, on the one hand, and between internal and external, on the other hand (Ruggie, 1993: 151).

In modernity, state power is fixated in territorially distinct and mutually exclusive areas of authority. This power is productive, it is 'governmentality', in the sense that it is constantly concerned with creating the parameters, infrastructure, discourses and institutions, whereby its rule can be perpetually reinforced (Foucault, 1978 [2004]). To 'systematize' a territory implies an effort to ensure that the geopolitical and social conditions are met for the state to function, both in its repressive and control aspects, but also for its welfare and life – fostering projects. The management of territories is, for the modern state, intimately intertwined in its *raison d'être* – it is, indeed, '*raison d'état*'.

Returning to '*sistematizare*', the Romanian state-led project of modernization has had a chronic obsession with managing territories. The official 'birth' of modern Romania is tied to a successful project of territorial annexation, which after the First World War meant a considerable increase in the country's size and population. The subsequent interwar years saw consistent efforts to define, manage, control, and plan this territory in accordance with the hegemonic

nationalist ideology of the state. Romania was to be a unified and centralized state, where there was no ambiguity regarding the authority/territory nexus: one state, one state-space. This nationalist project left little space for social improvement. It was concerned mostly with repression and policing any challenge to this unity between state and territory. However, by the end of the 1930's, this project had failed dramatically, and Romania was plunged into a decade of radical shifts in its authority: loss of territories, war, territorial gains, invading armies, various political regime changes etc. By 1950, Romania was a workers' republic, its territory had been altered, there were Soviet troops inside its borders and the economic and social decline were at their highest.

It was in this context that the Workers 'Party (and later the Communist Party) launched its highly ambitious project to resume and complete the modernisation of Romania. Once again, the state space was the battleground and one of the main stakes of this project: the transformation of the territory into economically efficient, sanitised, liveable areas. In an ongoing (and at times imagined) electoral battle with their political opponents, the Romanian Communists sought to legitimise themselves as the new rulers by ensuring that this project succeeded. At the heart of their discourse was the promise that their policies would bring the prosperity and development that the *ancien régime* had been unwilling to deliver.

From the outset, the Party's modernization project was based on two main pillars: housing and industrialization. On the one hand, the reconstruction of the state and of its relationship with the society after the Second World War required an urgent improvement in the workers 'standards of living, and housing was a primordial concern (Mărginean, 2017: 83). In 1950, the state planned 4.3 billion lei towards building homes for the workers. These houses were planned in 'crowded' industrialized cities.[3] On the other hand, industrialization was also crucial for the Party, since it secured a mass of workers that could be controlled (Culiciu, 2016: 16), and it also upgraded the economic profile of the country. The process of nationalizing and renewing Romania's industries was meant to transform it from an agrarian to a modern and industrial nation: the keystone of the modernization project.

These two processes – housing for the proletariat and industry for the economy – converged in an idealized image of the city as the territory of state productive power at its maximum potential. Urbanization thus became the main thrust of the Party's efforts to achieve and showcase its version of modernity: cities were to become spaces incarnated with the communist ideology, where the

[3] *Scânteia*, 1 mai 1950, p. 3

population could live and work in prosperity and where the state could freely exercise its control. Cities were also to become the homes of the new proletariat. In contrast to Capitalist visions of urbanity, where workers were dispersed towards the city fringes, the socialist plan was to build urban spaces that the workers could use, live, and celebrate in (Molnár, 2013: 35). This twofold emphasis on housing and industry in the cities implied the sharpening of the rural-urban divide: '*the state encouraged the development of cities economy by redistribution of central investments in urban areas and increasing the rural-urban dichotomy* (Dumitrache et al., 2016: 43)'.

Building houses and urban infrastructure also allowed for '*the emergence of a complex internal economy*', involving factories for construction materials, labour supplies and consumption chains connecting the rural environment with the cities (Petrovici, 2017: 34).

One can also see here the typically modern phenomenon that Ruggie referred to as territorial differentiation. Romanian socialists could not and would not wrap up the modernization project without enacting such differentiations. The rural-urban divide was one among many such boundary-making operations. As Petrovici insists, the Romanian urban areas became 'containment structures' for a number of tensions and conflicts (Petrovici, 2017: 38; 188). Limits and boundaries had to be put into place, in order to manage urban sprawl (Dumitrache et al., 2016: 42). The modernized territory had to be charted, split, and divided according to various functions and rationalities. Within the process of urbanization, the mechanism that was put in place to plan and enforce these differentiations was urban planning, namely *sistematizarea.*

The body of literature that focuses on urban planning in socialist Romania usually draws a grim picture of these processes. Studies focus predominantly on architectural aspects, emphasizing the un-aestheticism of the newly built urban infrastructure. Some authors point out that the incessant drive towards cutting the costs of building new neighbourhoods resulted in a flagrant disregard for their 'aesthetic value' (Mărginean, 2017: 82 – 3). The urbanization plans made way for chaotic territorialities, in which '*the façade of the new neighbourhoods and the style of blocks was the reflection of the authoritarian system*', in other words, bleak, grey 'uniform' buildings situated in densely populated spaces (Pasztor and Peter, 2009: 83). Other authors lament the ideological vector of the planning process, which shifted from the interwar concept of 'garden city' to 'silly building assemblies' (Culicu, 2016: 19). Part of this consensus on grim cities is also the widely discussed argument that 'mass housing' was of 'poor quality' and thus the entire project of urbanization can be regarded as a failure (Turcu, 2017: 55).

Even the nitty-gritty details of these buildings, such as the flooring and the doors are seen to be of 'low quality' (Mărginean, 2023: 78). In the words of two authors, a large proportion of the urban housing fabric was made up of '*small, overcrowded, low comfort flats with inefficient infrastructure*' (Pasztor and Peter, 2009: 90)

This paper challenges this view, not by claiming the superior quality and value of the housing stock built during socialism, but by shifting the focus altogether. Spotlighting architectural and quality aspects gives a one-sided and quite dull overview of a multi-faceted process. The planning of new urban areas during the rule of the Communist Party was a complex endeavour that involved calculations regarding social, economic, environmental, and geographical aspects. The interest here is therefore on the social aspects of *sistematizare*, on its underlying mechanisms and functionalities. Moreover, I pay attention to how various actors, discourses and practices came to shape these processes, and how their effects were incomplete and influenced by unintended consequences. One such unintended consequence refers to the array of practices of repression directed against Roma people. During the various stages of planning urban territories, the Romanian authorities displaced, evicted, and moved Roma people from one place to another.

I will therefore ask: how did the process of urban planning in socialist Baia Mare – the *sistematizare* plans – reinforce the urban marginalization of Roma people during that period?

For the Romanian communist regime, urban planning implied regulating, bordering, and limiting territories and populations. It was a process that sought a particular engagement with the space. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej stated publicly in 1962 that the new urban spaces were supposed to combat '*the anarchical sprawl that happened during the previous regime*' and also '*the contrast between centre and periphery*' (quoted in Stroe, 2015: 97). This meant that the plans had to tame and manage the building practices of the population. Limits had to be put in place, so that cities would not grow past a certain point (Stroe, 2015: 97). Moreover, there was a coordinated top-down effort to distribute various economic functions in different areas of the city. Urban space was divided between residential areas, industrial zones, roads, parks, social and cultural infrastructure and so on.

By referencing the 'bourgeois regime' and its 'anarchy' in terms of built space, the communist planners regarded themselves as heralds of order and cleanliness. However, this view contained an ingrained element of conservatism, despite its visionary and progressive idealism: urban order needed disciplining practices and repressive interventions to impose and preserve the desired regulations.

As quite a few contemporary historians of architecture are at pains to demonstrate, the Romanian Workers' Party did not 'invent' urban planning as a social and political tool: the previous regime was also aware of the need to reshape urban spaces and to integrate housing and industry in the city's fabric. For example, several social housing projects that had been initiated in the Interwar period were picked up and implemented by the socialist planners (Tulbure, 2016: 148 – 149). It is entirely conceivable that such continuations could also apply to the conservatism mentioned earlier. Between 1919 and 1921, the systematization plan for Bucharest was intended 'to prevent the chaotic sprawl' of the capital. The plan was seen as an urgent necessity to prevent illegal buildings and uncontrolled urban development (Voinea et al., 2022: 51 – 3).

Baia Mare: a town in crisis

The modern territorialisation of Baia Mare began in 1950. The country's regions were redrawn after the national administrative reform. At that time, the small mining town of Baia Mare became the capital of the Maramureș region. As a result of its importance as a mining centre, it was the target of numerous policies and investments from Bucharest. The aim of these policies was to reconstruct Baia Mare and to transform it into an industrial centre in northern Transylvania. The main industry was mining, with four mines in the city. The town also had a large chemical factory, the Phoenix factory, which was responsible for processing materials from the mines. One architect declared in 1951 that '*Baia Mare is an industrial town, after the re-drawing it became an administrative town, and it will become an industrial education centre*'.[4] However, from the outset, the socialist authorities made it clear that they wanted a town that would welcome workers. The planners were therefore to concentrate on the urban fringes, where the workers lived. Baia Mare would become a thriving urban space, with all the facilities that the working class needed.

By far the most important of these needs was housing. According to the 1950s authorities, the city suffered from a housing crisis dating back to the previous regime.[5] A number of factories were renovated or built after Baia Mare became an administrative centre. Their workers, however, had to commute from neighbouring villages and towns and did not live in Baia Mare.[6]

4 Proces Verbal, 12 octombrie 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 3, file 4

5 Issues of systematisation and future development of Baia Mare, 2 March 1957, in 3/1957/735, p. 1, file 53

6 Report on the need to build housing for workers, 2 December 1965, in 6/1965/735, p. 1, file 257.

This created a housing shortage throughout the decade. The socialist authorities were struggling to build more and more homes. The city began to be considered too large to build housing for the working class. This led to the authorities deciding to create new districts.[7] Despite several researchers arguing that the 1950's saw no visible concern for housing[8], the archives show that in Baia Mare, the state's main priority was building housing for workers.[9] By 1956 there were already 37 housing units for workers, with a total of 587 newly built flats.[10] The workers' demands were usually channelled through their respective workplaces, as the factories could manage their own housing units and distribute the apartments according to their own criteria.

Simultaneously, there was a persistent shortage of funds and materials, which could be explained by the postwar recession. It was also reported that some workers took materials from the workplace for their own private use.[11] Therefore, the local administration in Baia Mare initially preferred to delegate home construction to private beneficiaries. The authorities granted numerous land parcels throughout the city's territory, in desperate attempts to satisfy the ever-growing need for workers' accommodation.[12] This, in turn, generated another dramatic situation: on the one hand people built private houses in a chaotic manner, or in areas that were too close to the factories; and on the other hand they often built without having the necessary permits.

In 1953, the state established the institution that oversaw this situation, the Section for Architecture and Systematization. It was mainly in charge of giving or refusing building permits to citizens who wanted to construct or extend their buildings. As the years passed and the city was expanding, it became increasingly obvious that this institution could not function properly in the absence of wider directives. Baia Mare needed a systematization plan to regulate the administration of its built territory and its infrastructure. This was not only a problem in Baia Mare. In 1959, the national Architects' Commission stated that '*most cities do not yet have approved systematisation plans*'.[13]

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7 Raport privind problema sistematizării oraşului, not dated, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 2, file 301

8 For example, Mărginean (2023: 72) claims that in the first years of the decade, the regime '*intentionally ignored the visible degradation of the housing situation of the population*'.

9 Proces Verbal, 12 octombrie 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 4, file 5

10 Proces Verbal, 7 martie 1956, in 2/1956/929, p. 1, file 133

11 Proces Verbal, 22 martie 1954, in 1/1954/929, pp. 2 – 3, files 91 – 2

12 Issues of systematisation..., p. 1

13 Conclusions of the 5th Assembly, 10 February 1959, in 1/1959/735, p. 5, file 59

Several requests were made to Bucharest, and they were followed by several rounds of measurements, surveys, questionnaires, and discussions with the municipality. A draft of the plan had already been prepared in 1951, but it had not been approved for various bureaucratic reasons.[14] The draft included a provisional division of the urban space into functional areas for housing, industry, commerce, sport, health, transport, the military, cemeteries and so on. The local administration signed a 'Convention' with the Bucharest authorities in 1951, whereby the latter undertook to draw up the general urban plan of the town.[15] However, the central authorities were slow to deliver. The archives of the time illustrate this concern, namely that the plan was always absent, delayed and eagerly awaited by the Baia Mare administration. There were building permits that were being refused because the requested area was 'included in the systematization plan', yet the plan was only provisional. There were industrial projects and housing projects that were put on hold because there was no general urban plan to follow.

The Plan

The resulting plan was delivered in two stages, the first of which was drafted between 1957 and 1959. This initial set of documents drew a highly ambitious vision of Baia Mare. This was a plan for a city that would reach 70.000 people. Baia Mare was to be divided into functional territories.[16] There was an industrial area in the east, where the old heavy industry had been active for decades. In addition, there was a newly projected industrial area in the west, close to the airport, destined for 'light industry'. There was also a project for a 'green area' – an uninhabited area of vegetation that was meant to reduce the pollution generated by the industries.

Inside this protected space, the territory of the city was quartered between new residential areas. At the time the plan was drafted, some of them were in the process of being built, while others were merely projects. There were also administrative and public buildings, as well as areas reserved for old single-storied housing. The subsequent changes to the plan, from the beginning of the 1960's, kept the functional zoning, but added more provisions regarding housing areas: certain territories were meant for intensive neighbourhood

[14] Ministerul Gospodăriei Comunale și Industriei Locale, 6 December 1952, in 1/1951/735, p. 1, file 1
[15] Convenţiunea nr. 98, ND, in 1/1951/735, files 14 – 17
[16] Notice regarding the systematisation plan, 9 December 1960, in 9/1964/735, pp. 1 – 3, files 178 – 180

building, with panel houses exceeding two stories, while other areas were to be maintained with single-storied houses. Usually, these latter areas would be in the peripheries of the city's expanded limits.[17]

Nevertheless, the socialist government prioritized urban peripheries over the centres because that is where the workers resided, and this was one of the guiding principles of these systematization schemes.[18] And the workers kept moving to Baia Mare and demanding homes. By 1965, the authorities were planning to build 4700 new apartments.[19] This was a frenzy of rational planning, taming the territory, getting rid of the old, and building a new world.

Disciplining the urban space

However, there was a side effect to this rationality. Along with the very first implementations of the systematisation plans, there were concerns from all corners of the governance regarding the so-called 'construction discipline' ('*disciplina în construcții*').[20]As well as managing and building new infrastructure and housing, the division of territory meant that government had to keep a close eye on all civil works to ensure that they did not deviate from its overall urban vision.[21] Special control units were set in place, and their role was to inspect construction sites to make sure that the private buildings were legal and in accordance with the systematisation plan.[22] This meant that any private constructor would face penalties if they build an extra room, a garage or an extra floor above their house. Additionally, there was an increased emphasis on preserving the newly built housing stock in good condition. Thus, the 'discipline' also meant that citizens were required to keep their apartments clean and integral. This was a concern at the national level, and it was reinforced through campaigns meant to influence public opinion.[23]

The focus on building discipline can be seen as part of a wider struggle of the Baia Mare authorities to deal with residents who were not respecting regulations. In terms of built space, this emphasis on legality was particularly drastic. The archives reflect the authorities' interest towards '*tenants who*

[17] Report regarding zoning based on building types, 28 September 1964, in 4/1964/735, pp. 1 – 5, files 23 – 7
[18] Minute, 12 October 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 3
[19] Observations regarding the systematisation plan, 9 December 1960, in 9/1964/735, p. 2, file 103
[20] Report regarding Regularisation, 1956, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 6, file 305
[21] Report regarding Urban Regularisation, 29 iulie 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 15 (file 59)
[22] Measures Plan, 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 3 (file 43)
[23] See for example in Scînteia, 7 august 1968, p. 2

willingly destroy the property of the state'.[24] A Report of the 'Popular Tribunal' from 1956 cautioned that '*the matter of housing in the city is difficult,* [as] *there are cases in which* [people] *break in houses abusively and are not being prosecuted*'.[25] It is important to point out that at that time the culprits for such trespassing activities – the criminals – were seen to be '*evil elements, enemies of the regime, thieves and remnants of the former exploiting classes, who try to earn a living by not working*.'[26]

Several years later, however, the discourse was altered, and most of the people liable for breaking the construction discipline were seen to be Roma people. It is here that the repression against these people begins in Baia Mare. The discourse constructed them initially as being guilty of this 'construction indiscipline'. Their first 'criminal acts' were directed against the systematisation of the city, against the rationality and planning of Baia Mare's territory. This took place at two levels: on the one hand, the Roma people built houses without having the necessary permits, or they occupied various buildings; and on the other hand, they were seen as damaging and destroying the newly built apartments that they received from the state. One local administrator reported in 1963 that one Roma person '*chops wood in his flat and causes brawls with his family*'.[27]

Hatvan – social policies in a marginal space

The hotspot for these illegal activities and the area that has been historically seen as most problematic for the city was a territory situated south of the centre, which the locals referred to as Hatvan.

It is difficult to determine how and when Hatvan became part of Baia Mare. We know, for example, that at the start of the 20th century painters from the famous Baia Mare Artists 'colony, such as Károly Ferenczy, used Roma people from Hatvan as inexpensive models.[28] However, for the various town authorities, Hatvan did not officially exist. A Romanian map from 1936 showed a blank space in the south of the city, where the neighbourhood is currently located.

[24] Proces Verbal, 14 December 1956, in 4/1956/929, p. 7, file 202.
[25] Proces Verbal, 10 September 1956, in 4/1956/929, p. 1, file 1
[26] Raport privind respectarea legalităţii populare, 7 September 1956, in in 4/1956/929, p. 1, file 9.
[27] Minute, 23 April 1963, in 3/1963/929, p. 3 (file 80)
[28] http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/cigany-a-kepen; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferenczy,_K%C3%A1roly_-_Gipsies_%281901%29.jpg

There, the two main streets stretch blindly towards the south end of the map. Six years later, the new Hungarian administration also mapped the city. The south part is shown in more detail, all the way to the Craica Creek. There is a pattern of streets just north of the river, approximately where Hatvan is now. However, in contrast to the rest of the city, these streets have no name.

Hatvan earned its name and right to existence with difficulty. In 1951, answering a questionnaire regarding the existence of pits caused by people burning bricks, the scribe of the local administration jotted on the draft reply the pejorative word for territories inhabited by Roma people: *ț****ie.*[29] The final typewritten version replies to the same question by claiming that such pits only exist in Hatvan.[30] This substitution – from pejorative to Hatvan – marks the territory's stigma from the very start: Hatvan is the space of the Roma people. Not yet present on maps, the territory is finally named, along with its designated label. Indeed, Hatvan truly enters into existence in the 1950's. Yet this is an entry through the back door. The area is a 'problem' from the outset. There is no electricity, no water, and no cultural infrastructure.[31] Doctors refuse to practice there, the only school is too small for the neighbourhood's children[32] and the water sources are not functioning properly.[33]

In a series of maps from 1958, the streets north of Craica are finally named. The same street pattern found in the 1940 map is now included in the city. However, this was a problematic juncture: the streets were marked as being not paved, they were 'impracticable'. Hatvan is a liminal space from the start. Throughout the 1950's the neighbourhood emerged as a space riddled with social issues: poverty, lack of infrastructure, housing stock in bad conditions etc. In that decade, Hatvan was a marginal space that the city could not yet contain. However, Hatvan was a problem that the authorities had to deal with urgently because, as I have shown, systematisation implied an emphasis on the peripheries.

The crucial point is that this was a social problem. The neighbourhood was a space that embodied the troubling 'legacy of the past' that the new regime sought to regenerate.[34] The local administration planned to uplift the social and economic level of its inhabitants. This was done through investment in various works of infrastructure, such as paving roads or introducing electricity. The

[29] Survey for the Plan of Baia Mare, 18 June 1951, in 1/1951/735, p. 4 (file 75)
[30] Answers to the Survey, 16 July 1951, 1/1951/735, p. 3 (file 56)
[31] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, files 138 – 9
[32] Proces Verbal, 20 May 1956, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 2, file 87
[33] Proces Verbal, 5 September 1957, in 4/1956/secretariat, p. 3, file 293
[34] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, file 139

quality of life for the people living there was raised through 'culturalisation'.[35] New schools and urban infrastructure were being planned.

At the national level, these policies were congruent with the regime's approach towards Roma people. During the first years of the 1950's, the Workers' Party took an interest in the Roma population in the direction of 'integrating' it in the system, primarily as labour force. The central authorities were aware of the racism that was pervasive throughout the state apparatus (Marin, 2017: 129), and regarded this as a problem, a hurdle in the way of co-opting the Roma into the socialist regime. One report stated: '*it is necessary to fight the prejudices against the Roma population, which often take the form of explicit chauvinism*' (Marin, 2017: 118). The authorities were also aware that the recent history of the Roma slavery, their deportation to Transnistria during the early 1940's and the high level of poverty were all factors that prevented easy solutions.

Remarkably, during this period there were no references to Roma as inherently 'criminal'. Any conflicts between Roma people and the authorities were blamed on the latter's inability or unwillingness to deal with problematic situations and on the long-term discrimination to which Roma people had been subjected. (Marin, 2017: 140; 154).

In the first years of the 1960's, the Baia Mare municipality did not yet have a concrete plan for its southern territory. The systematisation suggestions did not include Hatvan, and it was only mentioned as a workers 'neighbourhood, with 'mediocre' single-storied houses.[36]

At the same time, the local government's relationship with the area underwent a fundamental change. From the mid-1960s, with the implementation of the systematisation plan, Hatvan was no longer seen as a social problem. It was now seen as a legal one. Its inhabitants were seen as culprits of destructive and illegal behaviour, rather than as poor people in need of social assistance.

This was largely due to the new emphasis on the 'construction discipline' that I mentioned earlier. With the new systematisation plan almost in place, Hatvan was increasingly seen as an outlier area. It was, at the same time, Roma territory. Generally poorer than the rest of the local population, the Roma living there built shacks without permission, from whatever materials they could find. They also squatted in various empty buildings that they found in the area. The Roma were constantly blamed for damaging the state-owned flats that they

[35] Minute, 7 March 1956, in 2/1956/929, file 140

[36] Report regarding the city's territorial distribution, 28 September 1964, in 4/1964/735, p. 2, file 24

lived in. The more the authorities focused on 'construction discipline', the more they pointed the finger at Roma people from Hatvan (and elsewhere), who were allegedly destroying the state's (i.e. the people's) wealth.

In 1970, a number of Roma people from the neighbouring villages were displaced by floods and started to build illegal shacks in the south of Baia Mare. At this point, the need to thoroughly systematize the neighbourhood became stringent for the authorities.[37] This implied evicting and destroying all illegal buildings and gaining a firm legal hand on the activities there. Throughout the 1970's, this idea developed into a comprehensive plan for regularizing and systematizing the neighbourhood of Hatvan. However, this plan soon dovetailed with another discursive shift that emerged after 1970: the criminalization of Roma people.

Discourses and practices of repression at the national level

During the 1970's, twenty years after the initial reports on the 'Roma situation 'in Romania, the discourse underwent a fundamental change at national level. At the end of 1972, the central authorities reported that '*a good part of the Roma population does not contribute to the economic and social efforts towards the progress of the country, and* [moreover] *they perpetuate an uncivilised and parasitical lifestyle*' (Marin, 2017: 158). Among various issues, the report mentions that '*through their disorganised lifestyle, through their vulgar and uncivilised behaviour, the Roma stir the citizens* '*disapproval*' (Marin, 2017: 160). From here there was only a small step to declare that '*for many Roma, the basis of their material existence is crime*' (Marin, 2017: 161).

The party's approach towards the Roma shifted greatly, compared to the 1950s attitudes. It placed a lot less emphasis on the state's responsibility to provide social welfare, and it began focusing more on the perceived incompatibilities between Roma and the rest of the population. Roma were now seen as not fully citizens and not fully 'civilised'. This incompleteness is undoubtedly a failure, but it is a failure for which the authorities now blamed the Roma themselves. It is their own 'lifestyle' that stands in the way of their 'integration' into the socialist economy and society.

[37] '*We must not legalise these situations* [i.e. the shacks], *rather to systematise this neighbourhood, to force them* [i.e. the displaced people] *to move out, and following the systematisation, to make them abide by the law*.' Minute, 31 October 1970, 2/1970/930, p. 14, file 180

The Communist Party initiated a wave of repressive acts against Roma people. In the words of one researcher, this was an 'ethnic model of repression', targeting various aspects of Romani lifestyle and cultural practices (Fosztó, 2018: 136). This ethnic component could not have been present during the internationalist period of the first years of socialism. Nicolae Gheorghe spoke about the constant police harassment against Roma people in Romania, which started from 1976 – 1977: '*Roma neighbourhoods are often raided in the small morning hours by police troops, accompanied by their dogs, under the pretext of uncovering potential criminals that the Roma are hiding. They break into homes, hit women and children, and take away young and adult men. These are led to the police station, where they are beaten and threaten into confessing actions that are not their own*' (Gheorghe in Marin, 2017 II: 23). Some historians consider these militia raids in Roma-inhabited villages to have been motivated solely by the desire to 'intimidate locals '(Bottoni, 2017: 121).

As early as 1977, Romania's President Nicolae Ceauşescu issued directives to address the 'inadequacy 'of the social and economic integration of the Roma. This process had failed in several ways: Roma were not fully employed, but they did receive social benefits and allowances; they lived in unhygienic conditions; Roma children were not attending school and their families were instable and disorganised; and, last but not least, the crime rate was high. (National Demographic Commission, 1977: 6).

This focus on Roma people suggests a broader shift in the Romanian authorities' discourse at the time. Since the mid-1960s – roughly since Ceauşescu came into office – there was increased fixation on order, justice, tranquillity, and cleanliness, and also on family values. Nor were these entirely new themes, as the government had previously enforced its vision of socialist legality with a heavy hand. However, the Ceauşescu regime shifted the focus of repression from the political to the social. In other words, if the enemies of the people had previously been ideologically incompatible with the socialist regime, in the 1970s the enemy became a threat to the already established social order. It was no longer an enemy planning subversive actions against the state, but one that was lazily free riding on the state's resources. With most of the population already incorporated into the socialist system, being marginal would no longer bring state aid, but state repression. Thus, marginal groups such as ethnic minorities, religious groups, 'dissident youth 'and even yoga practitioners were suspected of sabotaging the regime by refusing to be fully integrated and lacking social discipline (Bottoni, 2017: 122). Notwithstanding the state's actions against such other groups, the repression against Roma people was the

only one that took the form of systematic evictions, displacements, and territorial rearrangements in the name of their social inclusion.

'**Defending**' **Hatvan from the Roma people**

I found evidence in the archives that the Baia Mare authorities had been dealing with this national issue as early as 1979. The city was at the height of its urban development. In addition to the many mines and factories built or rebuilt by the communists, it had grown in terms of neighbourhoods. The population had surpassed 100,000 and the local authorities were constantly preoccupied with managing public spaces, buildings, commercial areas, and green spaces. There was a growing concern to improve the quality of life, not only in terms of basic needs, but also to achieve a high level of urban comfort.[38]

At the end of the 1970's the Roma in Baia Mare suddenly appeared as an obstacle to this comfort. The archives abound in discussions, reports, and decisions about the various difficulties these people posed to the people of Baia Mare. By and large, the Roma were seen and treated as a social category that threatened the 'conquests of socialism' in the city. This was the case whether there were neighbourhoods, blocks, schools, but also the general health, well-being, and safety of the inhabitants.

The municipality's main concern at the time was widespread crime in the city. Reading minutes from the early 1980's, one gets the impression that the Baia Mare authorities were having an exceptionally hard time enforcing the law in the city, with issues ranging from 'hooliganism 'and 'disturbing the peace' to theft and murder. Time and again, the Roma people appear in the minutes as the main culprits for this state of affairs.

The municipality wanted to solve '*the problem of civic conduct and social integration of* [Roma] *families, aiming to combat some of their characteristic aspects such as: hooliganism, parasitism, consumption of alcoholic beverages, disturbing public order and peace, vagrancy, prostitution, begging, burglary, theft, robbery, etc*.'[39] After a visit to the Furniture Factory in 1980, a secretary of the Municipal Party Committee stated that '*the people there say that they are terrorized because of the inhabitants of this area - namely* [Roma]*. A more dramatic case - a*

[38] Probleme pentru instruirea activului de partid pe linia gospodăririi orașului, undated, 2/1976/931, p. 3, file 61; Informare privind preocuparea miliției pe linia respectării legalității socialiste, august 1979, 5/1979/931, p. 3, file 46

[39] Raportul autorității tutelare privind ocrotirea unor categorii de minori si asistență socială, ND, in 7/1983/secretariat, p. 1, file 7

janitor had his ear cut off by a [Roma]. [Roma] *enter the factory, jump the fence, steal, and nobody has the courage to do anything. Even the police are not able to act*.'[40]

There was a state of anxiety and panic regarding the activities of Roma people in the city, and this situation was considered to be alarming. It demanded urgent and firm action, particularly in Hatvan. The authorities called for more 'special measures' to be taken in this neighbourhood. There, residents had been complaining about their Roma neighbours: '*Some issues were raised at the hearings in the Hatvan neighbourhood, where on Melodiei Street there are only six Romanian families on one staircase, and the rest are* [Roma]; *living with them is impossible, impossible. We have to take measures in this respect*.'[41] Another complaint that went along these lines is: '*comrades from Hatvan complain that there is no way to live together, they are beaten, insulted, militiamen are servile with* [Roma], *we must take urgent measures*'.[42]

Amidst this 'urban panic', the police forces felt powerless: '*the existing law enforcement agencies can no longer cope with this state of affairs, as there is only one militiaman, who in all his goodwill and dedication cannot cope with the multitude of problems in* [Hatvan]'.[43] A 1982 report on the enforcement of law and order states that '*the militia bodies have been operative and correct in dealing with the hooliganism in Hatvan, with* [the Roma], *with the support of the county militia bodies. There have been many convictions, yet we still face difficulties*'.[44]

The Roma were seen as foreign elements of Baia Mare, as people who did not belong to the city, but who nevertheless endangered the safety of its citizens. The local administration demanded 'more raid' in Hatvan, because it was a hotbed for people without 'entry permits'. As a result, in 1981 the local administration decided to take '*special order and security measures in order to clear the area of criminal elements from other localities*'.[45] In 1983, the authorities employed the same discourse of 'clearing the area', but went in more detail: '*the militia must be more alert, more firm, we must sanitize the municipality and regardless of nationality, all those who do not work, who do not live in Baia Mare must be expelled. We have to give every citizen the right to move peacefully and without fear on the territory of the municipality of Baia Mare*.'[46]

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40 Nota, 22 November 1980, in 4/1980/931, pp. 1 – 2, file 185
41 Nota, 8 September, in 4/1980/931, p. 3, file 79
42 Nota, 20 September 1980, in 4/1980/931, p. 7, file 151
43 Concluzii, organizatia de partid din Vasile Alecsandri, in 77/1980/931, p. 4, file 39
44 Proces Verbal discussing Police Report, 28 September 1982, in 17/1982/secretariat, p. 11, file 191
45 Hotărâre, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 2, file 26
46 Proces Verbal, ND, in 12/1983/secretariat, p. 15, file 78

During the 1970's and particularly in the 1980's, the Baia Mare authorities devoted considerable energy to eliminate the phenomenon of informal housing among the Roma people. In 1980, the local authorities were discussing '*the action being taken in relation to* [the Roma]*, initiated by the county party committee. Our task is to make an inventory of the dwellings that could be inhabited by* [Roma]*, generally unhealthy places, shacks that will be demolished, also houses owned by the owners that could still be inhabited*'.[47] One report from the following year mentions the '*abusive occupation of apartments by* [Roma] *and other citizens*'.[48]

The authorities chose to address this issue through repressive measures, such as forced evictions. A report from 1980 stated that '*in the course of the action against* [the Roma]*, four evictions were carried out during one week*'.[49] The police also insisted on the '*immediate eviction of those who abusively enter buildings*'.[50] Two years later, the situation persisted, as one member of the local administration put it, while discussing a police report: '*We still have problems in Hatvan and we ask the Minister of Justice to take resolute action to put an end to sources of disorder here. Work is currently being done on two blocks in this neighbourhood and we will remove the* [Roma] *families from the other blocks, hopefully by October*.'[51]

A renamed and reclaimed neighbourhood

After this array of repressive actions, grounded in the discourse of criminalization, by the mid-1980s, Hatvan's territory was radically transformed. The various systematization plans that subsequently came into effect meant that people there were evicted, and their dwellings were destroyed. In their place, scores of new panel buildings were erected. The neighbourhood had been redrawn, as old streets were gone, and a new street pattern took their place. The catalyst of this dramatic change was the need for security: the new neighbourhood had to be a rationally built space, where law was to be respected.

At the end of this process, Hatvan was no longer there. Hatvan had been the problem and now, the problem was partially solved through various policies of systematization and repression. It is telling that some of the systematization

[47] Nota, 17 May 1980, in 1/1980/931, p. 1, file 61
[48] Proces Verbal, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 15, file 8
[49] Nota, 12 July 1980, in 4/1980/931, p. 3, file 12
[50] Proces Verbal, 27 March 1981, in 19/1981/secretariat, p. 15, file 8
[51] Proces Verbal, 28 September 1982, in 17/1982/secretariat, p. 11, file 191

plans mention intermediary names for the new neighbourhood. At no point was the old name still considered suitable. Eventually, Baia Mare's southern neighbourhood was renamed after a 19th century Romanian poet, Vasile Alecsandri.[52] The city's maps finally started to include this area in its perimeter, which was the newest and largest neighbourhood in Baia Mare.

Starting from 1983, the local authorities built special housing for the Roma evicted from Alecsandri; these were low quality flats, built outside the neighbourhood; they were cut off from heating and warm water infrastructure, so that there would be no situations of further evicting people due to owing debts to the municipality.[53] The former Hatvan remained a marginal space, with low quality buildings, inhabited by a precarious population. In 1988, one member of the local administration reported that the citizens of Baia Mare systematically refused to accept flats in Alecsandri.[54] Throughout the decade, the authorities kept evicting 'undisciplined' people from these flats. They also kept demolishing the informal settlements built on the edge of the area, on Craica Creek.

The new Hatvan – Alecsandri – continued to be perceived as the city's most dangerous area. Due to insufficient funding, the new buildings lacked quality and comfort. The Roma people continued to resist the authorities 'effort to settle and 'civilize' them in the new flats. As one member of the local administration put it in 1982, '*we still have a lot to do in Alecsandri and I think that this name has not been properly given to this neighbourhood, where everything we build is destroyed by* [Roma].[55]' The Roma people that were found to have illegally built shacks continued to be fined and evicted from the neighbourhood throughout the remaining of the socialist regime.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown an instance where urban space and social hierarchies are co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing. I have shown how in Baia Mare, the policies of socialist urban planning and the criminalization of Roma people became interdependent processes that ultimately led to the urban marginalization of Roma people, which continues to this day. The criminalization

[52] Alecsandri has nothing to do with the city of Baia Mare. However, he is one of the first Romanian significant authors to write a lamentation for a Roma person, a childhood friend named Vasile Porojan, in which he describes the unfair and inhuman treatments of Roma people in Moldova at the beginning of the 19th century.

[53] Zamfir, this issue

[54] Minute, 28 September 1988, in 4/1988/secretariat, p. 5, file 98

[55] Minute, 24 February 1982, in archive folder 15/1982/Secretariat, file 53.

of Roma created marginal spaces. It transformed the territory according to criteria that were not architectural, but social. Through policies against Roma people, the authorities actively intervened in the urban fabric to create and enforce territorial differentiations. The process of *sistematizare* was thus seen as having a civilizing effect. It pacified disorder, instituted legality and facilitated social control. It also cleaned and ordered the urban space. At the same time, the same process experienced failures and unintended consequences. It led to what is still one of Romania's most marginalized metropolitan areas today.

These settlements persisted in the Craica area throughout the post socialist years. To this day, the area is one of the extremely precarious territories in Baia Mare. During the 2010s, several families from Craica were moved to the social housing buildings on Horea Street, where the current mayor notoriously built a wall, allegedly to separate the Roma people from the rest of the city. Recently, the Alecsandri neighbourhood was voted, in a poll made by a real estate company, as one of the most dangerous places to live in Romania. In this list it was called again by its old name, Hatvan.[56]

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Critical Reviews

Editorial Note:

This section provides reviews and critical reflections upon recent evolutions in social research, with focus on changing societies and current dilemmas.

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BOOK REVIEW

Limitele supraviețuirii. Sociologia maghiară din Transilvania după 1945, Székedi Levente, Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2021

Sorin GOG[1]

In his study on the Hungarian Autonomous Region in Romania between 1952-1960, the Italian-Hungarian historian, Stefano Bottoni, documents the impact the development of national-communism and implementation of nationalist Romanian cultural policies had on Hungarian communities in Transylvania (Bottoni 2021). During the late 50's these policies aimed also at cancelling Hungarian intellectual life and limit education taught in the Hungarian language with the general aim to assimilate the Hungarian population from Transylvania. It also restricted institutional autonomy of the educational system by merging Hungarian with Romanian schools. The apex of this nationalist culturalization process was the trial of Transylvanian-Hungarian intellectuals that were preparing a handbook of Hungarian literature for students in Romania and the merging in 1959 of the Hungarian Bolyai University with the Romanian Victor-Babeș University (Botoni 2021).

In spite of this traumatic event for the Hungarian intellectual life in Transylvania we have very few studies that document the way the intellectual Hungarian field reproduced itself during the communist period and the role the new Babes-Bolyai University played in this. Székedi Levente's book brings an important contribution in understanding the intellectual life in Transylvania during the Communist period and focuses on the reconstruction of how sociology survived as both within and outside academia. By including in this analysis the cultural production of the intellectuals around the periodicals Korunk and Utunk, Székedi manages to reconstruct the activity of one of the most important cultural centre of Transylvania during the communist period. This book follows another important study written by Martin Ladislau Salamon - *Un aliat uitat. Relațiile româno-maghiare în sociologia interbelică* (Tractus-Arte, 2013) that

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focused on development of Hungarian sociology during the interwar period and the intellectual exchanges between the young Transylvanian sociologists (*Erdélyi Fiatalok*) and Gusi's monography school.

The interwar period has received considerable attention in the Romanian historiography and history of sociology. What followed next and the role played by sociologists in shaping intellectual life and the production of social and political knowledge during real-existing socialism has been little researched. Székedi Levente picks up the research from the immediate period after the Second World War and explores in-depth the development of Hungarian intellectual life in Transylvania and the significant role played by sociologists. This study is one of the best documented research available in the Romanian language about the history of Hungarian sociology in Transylvania during the first part of the communist period. Unlike many other attempts to analyse the history of sociology in Romania which focus on generic institutional aspects or biographical elements, this study has an in-depth focus on the specific research topics, sociological ideas and paradigmatic mutations that took place in the Transylvanian Hungarian sociological field. The author analyses a tremendous number of books and articles written in Transylvania in the last 80 years. The book contains as well a vast number of annexes with summaries and translations of articles from Hungarian to Romanian that otherwise would be hardly accessible to Romanian readers. The entire bibliographic apparatus is impressive - starting with the review of the scientific production of that period an ending with the manuscripts that remained unpublished after the completion of important research. This is an outstanding book that reconstructs an important part of Transylvanian history. It is remarkable that the author published this volume in the Romanian language and made a substantial effort to familiarize the readers with the development of Hungarian intellectual life in Transylvania. In the context of re-emerging nationalism on both sides in the region and worrying growth of right-wing Romanian political parties in the Parliament, this book brings an important contribution to inter-ethnic dialogue. The Romanian educational system has been marked in the past century by the reproduction of a nationalist culture that prevented many Romanian intellectuals to get in contact with the rich social, cultural and religious diversity of Transylvanian history. Hungarian sociology from this region played a fundamental role in researching and generating knowledge about Transylvania. A Romanian book about the ways in which this sociological knowledge was produced in this region should be appreciated as an important endeavour.

The book impresses not only with its clear presentation of how sociology developed as a discipline but also because it carefully elaborates a sociology of sociological thought and it analyses the political and social context, outlines the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania after the unification 1918 and explores the international networks in which the local production of sociological

knowledge was embedded. In this way the book constitutes also a useful resource in understanding the genealogy of intellectual fields and the dynamic of cultural formation in multi-ethnic spaces.

What is a bit problematic in the book is the liberal tone of the way in which Transylvanian sociology is reconstructed. It is clear that there was an ideologized language of the time with multiple problematic references to the revolutionary role of the proletariat, the genius of communist leaders and several dogmatic rewritings of the history of Transylvania. Nevertheless, this is not as this does not happen today when many of the research and expertise narrate the sociological and economic capitalist reality in pre-established frameworks that constantly highlight the need of resilience, entrepreneurialism and the messianic role of attracting capital investments in order to generate a neo-liberal management of communities and encouragement to develop themselves in accordance with the opportunity structures that the market offers. The important question has to be the following: can we identify behind this ideologized idiom the existence of substantial sociological studies that couple with the important problems that the socialist society was facing? Is sociology producing relevant knowledge for understanding the economic and social dynamics of that period? And in this sense, it is hard to oversee the fact that during the communist period sociological studies are increasingly being interested in class-formation processes, social inequalities, rural-urban divides which have been amplified by the capitalist transformations during the interwar period and which have generated significant changes in the economic and social structure of Transylvania which the socialist policies seek to address. We have for example studies related to how capitalist industrial development was achieved with precarious rural workers that had to supplement their insufficient wages with agricultural work, or we encounter studies that focus on the proletarization of women in rural areas and the existing precarious living conditions.

In terms of educational policies this 'bleak' socialist period played an important role in the dislocation of the reproduction of middle and higher classes that were excluding children with a rural and proletariat background from attaining higher degrees. It is very hard to miss not only the tremendous economic growth achieved during the socialist industrialization period, but also the social mobility which this society enabled. Sociology during this period played a substantial role in generating the research for such transformations to take place. For sure a problematic bureaucratic ideological language was employed by sociologists and by the party members in order to implement such policies, but the research from that period cannot be seen solely through its political rhetoric - it has also to be analyzed in its substance and in the way it managed to change the research and educational spaces for such social and economic changes to be implemented. This, I think, is a limit of this wonderful study: it

tackles only in a limited way the role sociology played during the socialist period in mediating the knowledge formation processes needed for vital and economic transformations to be implemented. A liberal reconstruction of sociology captures generally the dogmatic and ideological aspects of Marxist sociology showing its irrationalities and bureaucratic idiosyncrasies and gives a limited attention to the role it played in generating social change. The liberal de-politicization of sociology is producing today a reverse agenda of research - one in which the capitalist transformations, unequal development and forms of exploitation of cheap labor are only rarely questioned while they celebrate market freedom.

But this is rather a critique of perspective. The book is excellent and extremely well documented and constitutes a mandatory sociological reading for everyone interested in the local production of social knowledge in Transylvania. Unfortunately, the research stops in 1964 when the political rehabilitation of sociology in Romania has been to a great extend completed. This is due to the extensive and thorough analysis the author devotes to the topic of the subject and its attempt to cover the distinct period in great detail. More promising studies are to be expected from this author as he talks also about the important period of 1965-1976 when sociology underwent a re-institutionalization process and the last part of communism when sociology was again marginalized. The author hints to extensive data, archival material and interviews his research already produced on these periods.

One of the wonderful aspects of the book is that it aims explicitly to generate an important space of discussion between the present-day Romanian and Hungarian scientific communities that are becoming more and more enclaved. The author shows at great length, just like Martin Ladislau Salamon showed in his book about the interwar period, the collaborations, exchanges and reciprocal influences between Romanian and Hungarian-Transylvanian sociology that existed during the communist period. The post-communist period generated a dislocation of these forms of intellectual partnerships and the author, rightly so, sees this as a problematic abandonment of a local tradition that has played an important role in the formation of Transylvanian sociology.

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