

# INTRODUCTION

How can you take as a whole a thing whose essence consists in a split?  
—Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*

## Tensions and Contradictions of Industrial Socialism

In June 1949, only a few months after the implementation of the first central economic plan, an article from the programmatic journal of the Romanian Workers' Party – *Class Struggle* – opened with a special quote from Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*.

It would be foolish to believe that the production plan can be reduced to a mere sequence of figures and tasks. In fact, the production plan is the *living and practical activity* of millions of people. The reality of our production plan lies in the millions of working people, who are building a new life. The reality of our program is constituted by living people, it is us together with you, it is our will to work, our readiness to work in a new way, our determination to accomplish the plan. Do we have that determination? Yes, we do. Well then, our production program can and must be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Originally, the quote was part of a speech addressed to the Soviet's new economic executives at the end of the first Soviet Five-Year Plan. At the end of the 1940s, Stalin's words were acquiring a new life in the context of the East Central European transition to central planning. For the next few years, the quote circulated widely among the Romanian party activists and factory managers through countless articles, lectures and reports.<sup>2</sup> It was going to accompany their efforts to establish control over the factories, the cities and the countryside, as well as the struggles of millions with the new realities of work and everyday life.

In the broadest sense, the 'living and practical activity' that sustained the Romanian planned economy in its formative years is the subject of this book, which illuminates how the plan's 'mere sequence of figures and

tasks' came to embody the contradictions of primitive socialist accumulation deriving from the multivocal nature of labour: as creator of value, as living labour and as bearer of emancipatory politics. I explore the limits and possibilities of a political imaginary that fetishized planning as instrumental in resolving these contradictions through elaborated mechanisms of knowledge production and disciplining practices. More concretely, I examine how the postwar expansion of a cheap and flexible workforce set the constraints for the emergence of a historically specific shop floor regime, predicated on an uneasy synthesis between Taylorist politics of productivity and heroic mobilization. I read these transformations in a temporal key, as an encounter between the different horizons of a civilizing process, of capital accumulation and of everyday life, as they materialized in the plan figures and in the shop floor practices that sustained them.

In order to understand how the contradictory nature of labour – as labour power, as living labour and as political subjecthood – was reflected in the ordinary operations of planning, the book attempts to answer several interrelated questions. Who were the workers of early socialist factories? How did the socialist state keep the cost of labour low? How did the relationship between the city and the countryside play out in labour's reproduction, expansion and control? How were the new labour regulations translated into local realities? How did the workers respond to these societal changes with their own classed, ethnicized and gendered strategies of reproduction? And finally, how were the daily struggles to (re)produce a cheap labour force reflected in the possibility of controlling workers, mobilizing them and unearthing their practical knowledge on the shop floor?

To answer these questions, the book explores the day-to-day practicalities of introducing Soviet-style economic planning and its functioning as an essential instrument of capital accumulation in the factories of Cluj (Kolozsvár in Hungarian), between 1944 and 1955.<sup>3</sup> Functioning for centuries as the administrative, symbolic and cultural capital of the region, Cluj was an ethnically mixed city with a complicated history of belonging in between Hungary and Romania, and with a central role in the negotiation of the 'Transylvanian question'.<sup>4</sup> Both the interwar economic policy of investment and the first decades of socialist industrialization left the city mostly bereft of large-scale manufacturing, making it into a good case for analysing socialist accumulation at the margins, where its contradictions were harder to tame, and where ethnic lines of fracture between the Hungarian and the Romanian population magnified the class ones.

The investigation starts from the struggles for control over the factories at the end of the Second World War, it continues through the

implementation of the One-Year Plan in 1949, and it concludes with the successes and failures of the First Five-Year Plan in 1955. During the postwar reconstruction years, the negotiation of industrial peace involved a constant struggle to contain labour unrest against the background of ever-intensifying inflation, the fall of workers' real wages and the precariousness of everyday life. In 1949, the implementation of planning marked a turn to a logic of productivity and rationalization of the production process that mirrored, with variations and with different ideological justifications, the Western social contract of the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> On a larger historical scale, this period represented a foundational moment in the Romanian transition to industrialism – a transition that had already started in the interwar period but condensed much of its depth in the first decade after the Second World War, when it became strong enough to radically transform social life.

In the short term, the 1945–1955 decade articulated the generalized effort for the normalization of life in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the longer run, it laid down the foundations of industrial socialism by grounding the economic mechanisms and the social arrangements that constituted its spine for more than forty years. The achievements and failures of these years represented an Eastern European reinterpretation of the Stalinist answer to long-term backwardness and economic isolation. The Soviet response was itself a peripheral variation of an essentially Western modern project, which equated progress with industrialization. Socialist industrialization was not politically neutral. It prompted the emergence of an industry that simultaneously reflected the logic of capital accumulation and a logic of historical advancement with progressive aims. Planning was the ultimate expression of this contradictory simultaneity and its critical solution.

During this decade, 'really existing socialism' was articulated as a bureaucratically managed accumulation regime, which depended on a particular combination of surplus extraction mechanisms. As primitive socialist accumulation, it relied on the direct dispossession of the capitalist class and of a part of the peasantry through the nationalization of the means of production and through the collectivization of land; on the exploitation of the countryside as a pool of cheap raw materials, food and manpower; and on the externalization of costs for the reproduction of a cheap and flexible labour force. As expanded reproduction proper, it directly hinged on a restrictive wage policy and centrally planned politics of productivity of a Taylorist inspiration.

Based on the investigation of the formative years of industrial socialism in Romania, I advance a three-step argument about the historical stakes played out in the apparently banal act of planning labour. First, the plan

functioned as the direct unifier of the sphere of production, reproduction and exchange, and as such, it was constitutive for the ways in which social relationships became objectified in state socialism. Second, the implementation of central planning generated a tension between the worker as the creator of capital accumulation and the worker as the ideal subject/object of an emancipatory political project. Deeply rooted in the local practices and relations that made surplus extraction possible, this tension went beyond the daily struggles around legitimacy on the shop floor.<sup>6</sup> It was a class tension that further effected the Romanian 'workers' state' as a fragile state, caught between a historically progressive mission and the practical task of creating and managing social production processes. Third, amidst these tensions, state socialism emerged as a conflicting temporal regime marked by the state's efforts of keeping together the temporal horizons of accumulation on the shop floor, of workers' everyday life, and of the Bolshevik civilizing mission. Controlling, instrumentalizing and working through multiple temporalities became essential aspects of governance, and found their expression in the very act of planning.

The book embraces a materialist bottom-up epistemological perspective on planning, which makes the specificity of labour as resource transparent. It shows how plan figures and tasks embodied the polyphonic nature of socialist labour as value producing, as living labour and as political undertaking. Unlike in market societies, in centrally planned economies, living labour acquired its character of commodity, and thus of social labour, within exchange relations that were not only anticipated but also secured.<sup>7</sup> Far from simply imposing the plan as a bureaucratic instrument upon an amorphous population and territory, the economic executives of the 1950s had to articulate an entire field of politics in which the calculation of wages or the anticipation of investments were never taken for granted as simple technicalities. Most importantly, the efforts of the socialist planners revolved around the difficulties of generalizing industrial employment as a source of livelihood, the practical universe of the reproduction and expansion of labour, as well as the incorporation or workers' nonsynchronous horizon of expectations into life on the shop floor.

Hence, the book analyses how the tasks of the plan had to be juggled against the multiple temporalities of primitive socialist accumulation: the historical 'leap forward' of early socialist industrialization as a solution to backwardness and economic isolation; the chronology of investment, which privileged heavy industry over consumer goods and agriculture, previously industrialized areas over the underdeveloped ones, and the city over the village; the different rhythms set by the new economic executives for the nationalization of the factories and for the collectivization of

land; the pace at which the workforce was released from the countryside; the tempo at which people's bare necessities were met; and the pulse of workers' attempts to reproduce their experience of being in the world in terms of class, ethnicity and gender.

On the shop floor, these temporalities of primitive socialist accumulation produced the regime's own version of 'nonsynchronicity'<sup>8</sup> – an amalgam of archaic, contemporary, and future-oriented forms of living and working – that constrained the possibility to discipline and mobilize labour. These conflicting temporal horizons would haunt planners and factory managers when trying to articulate the mixture between Taylorism and labour heroism, which marked the politics of productivity of early socialism.

The book draws on Martha Lampland's analysis of the commodification of labour in Eastern and Central Europe. Following a Postonian line of critique, Lampland argues that 'the process of commodifying labor has been fully realized under socialism in conditions thought to be inimical to capitalist development generally, and to commodification in particular'.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on village life in Hungary, she reveals how 'the final blossoming of commodity fetishism' was carried forward by state policies and local managers' practices, which further produced a social fabric dominated by individualist and utilitarianist values. She moves the focus from the centrality of markets in the commodification of labour to the expanding field of possibilities to sell one's labour power that emerged with the socialist industrialization. While in *The Object of Labor* she convincingly shows how commodification could be 'bred and fostered' in a planned economy, Martha Lampland's subsequent work is essential for understanding how calculating the value of labour stood under the sign of modernist rationalization that traversed the interwar period, the Second World War and early socialism. This was the period when the concerted efforts of scientists and bureaucrats materialized the 'substantial infrastructure' that made the functioning of markets and planning possible.<sup>10</sup>

My analysis goes one step further to show how a Soviet-inspired form of primitive accumulation and the operations of central planning came about not only through the conjugated efforts and negotiations of socialist planners, managers and scientists, but also through the rearticulation of the production/life nexus. I read plan figures as being simultaneously an expression of objectified labour-power, whose price could be calculated and included in the production cost of any manufactured good, and as the end result of the complex dynamics in which labour and the state came to be entangled in the first decade after the Second World War. Understanding how labour appeared in the plan figures cannot be separated from the 'definite historical conditions' under which it became

a commodity or from workers' living selves. The plan, too, should 'bear the stamp of history'.<sup>11</sup>

The remainder of the Introduction takes a closer look at the central notions of the book: socialist accumulation and planning. The second and third sections place the mechanisms of surplus extraction and the class relations they produced on the ground into a broader conversation regarding primitive socialist accumulation in the region. The fourth section lays down the foundation for an epistemological rethinking of central planning. It makes the point that the top-down, idealist perspectives prevailing in the scholarly literature have missed out the granular realities of socialist economies when taking labour for granted, as simply another 'resource' to be planned and calculated. The last section explores the analytical opportunities opened by industrial Cluj as a case, and by the factory as a site of accumulation and governmentality.

## **Primitive Socialist Accumulation in the Romanian Context**

Forcefully imposed in the aftermath of the Second World War as a prize for the crucial role played by the Soviet Union in the Allied victory, the 'really existing socialism' of Eastern and Central Europe represented the embodiment of a political project of fighting against long-established forms of backwardness and uneven development through a vast programme of industrialization. In its initial stage, it unfolded as a class war against privately owned capital, better-off categories of the peasantry, clergy, and conservative intellectuals. The top-down 'class struggle' was the stepping stone for a governing minority, who came to rule the countries in the region for almost half a century, and whose modernizing ethos went hand in hand with the privatization of power.

Scholars of Eastern and Central Europe have long debated the essence of 'really existing socialism' in the countries of the region. In the attempt to classify these historical configurations as state capitalist, transitional or socialist, researchers used diverse criteria such as the nature of property relations; the absence of markets; the endemic shortages, bargaining, and hoarding along the production chains; the (im)possibility of economic calculation without freely fluctuating prices; the emergence of the state bureaucracy as a 'new class'; and the continuing alienation and exploitation of industrial workers on the shop floor.<sup>12</sup> As Michael Burawoy points out, what these perspectives had in common was the fact that socialism became in the scholarly imagination everything capitalism was not.<sup>13</sup> Naturally, the concrete functioning of state socialism did not accommodate too well the assumptions of this comparison, especially

when articulated in an ahistorical critique that unproblematically opposed dictatorship to freedom, illegitimacy to democracy, violence to consent, ideology to facts, planning to market, or waste to efficiency.

Since the very beginning, the Marxist tradition itself was split by heated arguments around the nature of the Soviet regime and its European satellites, with scholars debating if the historical embodiment of socialist ideas should be labelled as 'state capitalism', 'state monopoly capitalism', 'bureaucratic state capitalism', or 'degenerated workers' state'.<sup>14</sup> For Trotskyists in the revolutionary heat of the 1920s, and for Western Marxists like Ernest Mandel and Paul Sweezy, who were still holding hopes of a world revolution in the mid twentieth century, the Bolshevik trajectory was simply a transitional regime.<sup>15</sup> They brought into the conversation the lack of spontaneous exchange, the central setting of prices, the more equal forms of redistribution, and the reinvestment of surplus 'for the good of all' to argue that Soviet and Soviet-inspired socialism represented a historical bridge between capitalism and communism, necessarily containing elements of both. This historical passage was unavoidably violent, but it would lead to a better, fundamentally different world.

For other leftist thinkers, any similarity of really existing socialism with the capitalist system came to be considered as a sign of malfunctioning and as a historical failure of the initial revolutionary project.<sup>16</sup> They argued that socialist modernization in the Soviet Union and its satellites epitomized a combination of exploitative practices and scientific ethos that stood under the same sign as the capitalist one. The developmental projects in the region might have had equalitarian aims but they were inherently harmful to workers, since the resources for sustaining these projects came from wage labour and from the appropriation of surplus. In a devastating critique, Moishe Postone went on to claim that these regimes were simply new forms of 'political administration and economic distribution of the *same* mode of production' like the capitalist ones.<sup>17</sup>

In relation to these debates, my analysis starts from some basic assumptions. As this book will show, if we refocus our inquiry on production rather than redistribution, exchange, or political arrangements, the postwar East Central European regimes appear as contradictory social formations, subjected to regionally specific alignments of constraints, but set out to transcend these constraints through productive arrangements very similar to the Western ones. For the period analysed here, these productive arrangements were articulated around the logic and mechanisms of primitive accumulation.

To support the reading of early socialism as a historical configuration primarily centred on a logic of accumulation, one only needs to notice that the aim of economic activity was always *overfulfilling* the plan, and

that the rise in production thus obtained was used to further increase future targets. 'Socialist accumulation' also occupied a central place in the political imaginary of the 1950s, when socialist planners and other economic executives were heavily debating terms like 'value', 'surplus', 'productivity', 'return rate', and 'profitability of investments' in their endeavour of establishing the new categories of political economy.

As an 'ideal type', early socialist accumulation combined two elements: the squeezing of the private sector (primarily agricultural) in relation to the state sector (largely industrial) on the one hand, and workers' 'self-exploitation' on the other. 'Primitive socialist accumulation' was defined by Yevgeni Preobrazhensky as 'the accumulation in the hands of the state of material resources obtained chiefly from sources lying outside the state economic system',<sup>18</sup> and it came to be postulated as the central axis of development in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It was a response to the fundamental problems posed by the transition to socialism in a backward, primarily agrarian society, and in the absence of the much-expected socialist revolutions elsewhere: the need of an absolute and constant increase of capital, and the more rapid expansion of the state sector compared to the private one.<sup>19</sup>

For Preobrazhensky – as well as for Marx – primitive accumulation referred both to expropriation in its material sense, and to a fundamental change in social relations, expressed chiefly as class displacement.<sup>20</sup> And it was constitutive of capitalism and socialism alike. Preobrazhensky used the concept of primitive accumulation not in the classical liberal sense of 'previous accumulation' – as Adam Smith called it – but as an answer to two entangled questions. First, where should resources for growth come from during the transition period to socialism? Second, how should the relations of production transform, in order to allow socialism to become self-sustainable? The answer to these questions was that the 'process of extending and consolidating the state economy' was meant to proceed 'both at the expense of its own forces and resources – that is, the surplus product of the workers in state industry – and at the expense of private, including peasant ... economy'.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, primitive socialist accumulation relied on small agricultural production for provisioning the rapidly developing industrial centres and for ensuring an important part of the Soviet international grain trade. It revolved around the idea of replacing forced deliveries – which had proved catastrophic for the Soviet space – with financial techniques of squeezing the peasants. Generally, these techniques involved introducing unequal terms of exchange between industry and agriculture – price scissors – in favour of the former.<sup>22</sup> Preobrazhensky's unequal exchange solution was completely rejected in the beginnings of the Soviet industrialization



debate and labelled as a form of exploitation of the peasantry by the working class, only to be later adopted and transposed in a violent key by Stalin during the collectivization.<sup>23</sup> It was in this later version that the unequal reliance of the city on the countryside was transferred as a developmental option in East Central Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Drawing the lines of the British particular experience onto the canvas of a country 'privileged by its backwardness' profoundly affected the making of the Soviet working class in the first decades of the twentieth century. In England, this process started with the enclosure movement as a precondition for the progressive transformation of agriculture according to the laws of capitalist production. In the classical account of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the role of the state was to hasten the process by supporting the landlords against the rural population, by expanding territorially and economically in colonies, and by creating the modern system of taxation. In the transition to socialism, the state relied on differential taxation, manipulation of prices, and land appropriation proper. Although the Soviet state had the resources of monopoly capital at its disposal, it was not this 'extraordinary power' of the state but rather an acute sense of its fragility that convinced Preobrazhensky of the historical necessity and urgency of his solution.<sup>25</sup> The vulnerability of the Bolshevik state came not only from the social and economic devastation of the interwar period or from the class war raged against the peasantry and formerly better-offs, but also from its direct involvement in industrial production. Revisionist historians of Soviet industrialization have convincingly shown how, as 'the surplus product of the workers in state industry' became the second pillar of primitive socialist accumulation, it brought forward an exploitative wage policy, the prevalence of shock work, impossible production targets and appalling living conditions. These developments combined with the intense politicization of the shop floor to produce a factory regime dominated by absenteeism, fluctuations and shortages, and permanently threatened by riots and strikes.<sup>26</sup>

These unfoldings also proved crucial for Eastern and Central Europe in the first decade after the Second World War. As the book will show, the early Romanian socialist accumulation was articulated around the double mechanism highlighted by Preobrazhensky for the Soviet case. First, it rested on the possibility of surplus extraction through politics of productivity that combined a Taylorist system of targets and incentives with workers' heroic mobilization on the shop floor. Second, it relied on preserving a non-socialist exterior that would function as a source of goods and raw materials, and as a reservoir of cheap labour for the expanding factories.

In a labour-intensive regime, which had little to count on except for making people work more, faster and better, the socialist planners imagined the factory as the depository of ‘hidden reserves’ of productivity that had to be revealed in the act of work through learning, discipline and technologies of the self. The combination of planned heroism – manifested through practices like shock brigades, socialist competitions and the Stakhanovite movement – and a hyper-rationalization drive were characteristic for the First Five-Year Plan. As a result, the shop floor became the space of encounter between the efforts to ensure the ‘scientific organization of the production process’ and the hope to achieve workers’ enthusiastic consent to managerial (thus state) authority.

The rationalization impulse and the search for the ‘hidden reserves’ of the shop floor in workers’ mobilization and practical knowledge was not simply a faithful imitation of the Soviet blueprint. It was also dictated by the severe lack of capital and by the destabilizing war reparations Romania had to pay to the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first wave of socialist investment privileged pre-existing industrial agglomerations and was directed towards industries producing export commodities like oil, cement and lumber, which took priority even over heavy industry branches like metallurgy or industrial equipment building.<sup>27</sup> In the early phase of planning, after the countries in the Eastern bloc refused the extension of the Marshall Plan in the region, limited access to credit for buying the necessary industrial equipment came only from the Soviet Union and from Czechoslovakia. The chronic lack of capital drew the main lines of the early socialist industrialization: high intensity of labour and associated politics of austerity, which translated into an oversized accumulation fund in comparison to the consumption fund, and touched every aspect of workers’ lives: rationing of food and other consumer goods; lack of housing, heating or sanitation; and wages that did not allow workers’ survival on industrial employment alone. All these were played out against the dynamics of the two central acts of primitive socialist accumulation: the nationalization of industry and the collectivization of land.

The nationalization of the means of production and of the financial sector took place as early as June 1948, less than one year after the communists were officially installed as the sole government party. After the nationalization had been announced in the communist press as being ‘the first act of socialist accumulation’, the most important industrial, commercial and financial units became state owned in only one day, while the remainder of local industry and services would not be incorporated in the state sector until 1952. Nevertheless, things went differently for agriculture, with collectivization proceeding at a considerably slower pace.

Following the Soviet historical path, the collectivization of land in East Central Europe was supposed to constitute a solid starting point for the socialist project. While Western capital instituted the colonies and invented the Third World as a reservoir for continuous primitive accumulation, the not-yet-socialist village represented the state economy's Other for the communist governments of the 1950s. Whether through price scissors, coerced deliveries, appropriation of liquidities, or forced collectivization, the peasant's surplus was extracted and redirected towards industrialization and towards the growing needs of the urban population. The expropriation of the agricultural population had to ensure the needed increase in the agricultural output, the release of the labour force for the rapidly growing industry, and the internal market for industrial products. The brute force of the state was the instrument of this accumulation form, in itself an economic power – 'the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one', as Marx would have put it.<sup>28</sup> A significant part of the peasantry witnessed the dissolution of the old society as a history of expropriation. It was going to be 'written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire',<sup>29</sup> while the rural population was to be progressively reduced to a number that matched the requirements of the labour force in the countryside. Ideally, at the end of collectivization, it was not land anymore but employment that was going to decide the possibility to survive, both in the city and in the village.

Agricultural policy was crucial in the context of the struggles for taking over the political power immediately after the war. In 1945, hoping that it could count on the votes of the poor and middle peasantry, the Romanian Communist Party initiated an agrarian reform to redistribute land confiscated from Nazi sympathizers and German citizens. But the fragmentation of land that followed in its trail was soon to become a problem, especially since Romania was an important exporter of agricultural products and raw materials. The issue was compounded by the severe drought following the end of the Second World War, which also produced a massive wave of internal migration.

Between 1948 and 1952, the agricultural policy of the communist government revolved around promoting the establishment of voluntary cooperatives and investing in their gradual mechanization. Ana Pauker – the Romanian Workers' Party's secretary for agriculture – and Vasile Luca – the head of the finance ministry – endorsed a policy of equitable exchanges between the city and the countryside, as well as a balanced development of heavy and light industry.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Stalin's pressures for forced collectivization in the socialist bloc, the impossibility of controlling the deliveries of the mid-size peasant households, the impact of agricultural prices and the effects of peasants' cash reserves on the

growing state economy pushed the Romanian state towards a new stance regarding the dynamics between economic sectors. Thus, the initial strategy of primitive socialist accumulation shifted towards rapid industrialization, price scissors favouring the urban over the countryside, and a new push towards the expropriation of land.<sup>31</sup> The offensive of 1952 was followed by concessions in 1953, under the threat of protests like elsewhere in Eastern Europe. In 1955, at the end of the First Five-Year Plan, the socialist sector in agriculture covered only one-quarter of the total cultivable land.<sup>32</sup> The last (and most violent) wave of collectivization started in the late 1950s and ended in 1962, when the state declared that the formation of cooperatives had been concluded and most of the agricultural land was now part of the socialist economy.

Nationalization and collectivization were indeed powerful processes meant to solve a fundamental contradiction of capitalism: the one between private appropriation of surplus and the social character of production. Not far from Preobrazhensky's initial vision, their unfolding created a new social fabric, which was fundamentally classed, gendered and ethnicized. In this book, I explore these forms taken by primitive socialist accumulation from a processual angle, and I show how their different progressions in time mattered no less than the change in property relations they brought forward. More concretely, I argue that the slower rhythm of collectivization compared to the nationalization of industry proved essential for the socialist labour regime. Especially in the first decades of socialism, maintaining a (mainly rural) non-socialist exterior, which could be used as a resource for food, raw materials and manpower, was a crucial condition for rapid industrialization. The different rhythms of the nationalization of the means of production and of the collectivization of land represented integral parts of how dispossession and displacement shaped the structure of possibility for the reproduction, expansion and control of labour.

## **Postponed Proletarianization and the Workings of Class**

In the logic of early socialist accumulation, postponed proletarianization was the direct consequence of the slower rhythm of the collectivization of agriculture. It was coupled with a systematic effort to keep workers' real wages down,<sup>33</sup> and to ensure that the population, especially the rural one, would partly bear the social reproduction costs of the labour force. In this sense, time functioned as a top-down, purposeful instrument of class formation that impacted people's lives for several generations. On the ground, the tension between bringing manpower into the factories and preventing people from flooding the cities was going to encounter

workers' and peasants' own strategies for reproducing the lives they once knew, or for making industrial wages into an opportunity to escape those lives.

Early socialist Romania was an emerging industrial regime where workers were difficult to find and then to keep in the factory. In an agrarian country with a low level of urbanization, the growth of industry had to rely on categories of labourers who were anything but the ideal revolutionary proletarians. Factories functioned and expanded not only with the help of their core urban labourers but with the help of a largely unskilled workforce made up of soldiers, prison mates, women, temporary labourers and young professional trainees. For these factories, the peasant worker (not the proletarian) was the central figure of early Romanian industrialization. The antagonisms of socialist construction in conditions of backwardness were inscribed onto his body. As a commuter or as a young migrant living in the factory barracks, he (mainly 'he' for the first working generation after the war) brought 'barbaric' rhythms and routines into the city, sanctioned by old urbanites with contempt. Making Stakhanovites out of these peasants became the ultimate transformative victory of the state over a reluctant population.

By exploring the reproduction of a heterogeneous labour force in Cluj factories, the first part of this book reveals the emptiness of the central category of the socialist project – 'the worker' – and unpacks the employment regime that emerged in the late 1940s and the early 1950s in cities that were peripheral to socialist accumulation. The first three chapters show that the early socialist labour regime was non-homogeneous and volatile, and was shaped not only by the instrumental logic of the new economic executives but also by local configurations of livelihood. In order to capture the entanglement between production and life as the crux of socialist accumulation, a deeper understanding of the workings of class in socialism is needed.

By 'class', I understand the field of forces that embeds people in historically specific mechanisms of surplus extraction, appropriation and distribution, and in the power relations that enforce them, (re)produce them and legitimize them. These fields of forces structure people's possibilities of survival, and affect their moral economies and political imaginaries. My understanding of class is meant to capture not only mechanisms of exploitation and domination, but also people's positioning in relation to these mechanisms, to their corresponding institutional arrangements, and to each other.

Although from a Marxist perspective the extraction of surplus is always at the root of class as an analytical category, the processes that make this extraction possible are never purely economic. Processes of economic

valuation resort to people's experience as a whole, as constituted by technological advancement and corresponding transformations in the production process. They are mediated through various forms of oppression, and are reproduced through complex narratives, which are fed no less by the experience of work than they are by structures of feelings in which love, friendship, religious ardour and ethnic belonging are central.<sup>34</sup> From this angle, far from being merely empty nominal categories, 'classes' appear to be imbued with life. They are seen here as experiential realities, continuously shaped by the changing power relations they are part of, and in return permanently transforming these relations through people's specific knowledges and practices. For me, class becomes a modest instrument of discovery,<sup>35</sup> a project for local-national-global explorations, a tool for understanding how people in their daily struggles 'make history in the factories, in the barracks, in the villages and on the streets'.<sup>36</sup>

In recent decades, the emergence of a scholarship focused on localized practices and relations, as they were lived in factories, in agricultural fields in people's homes, has illuminated the contested terrain of state socialism. This growing literature embodied the hope that the stereotypical way of seeing state socialist regimes as homogenous, grey and lifeless entanglements of populations and territories that were fully subjected to the Soviet rule would be dismantled forever. The scholarship was going to be salutary, and the stereotypical views would be replaced with in-depth explorations of shop floor politics,<sup>37</sup> emerging urban identities,<sup>38</sup> radically transforming generational experiences,<sup>39</sup> counterintuitive conceptions of work and personhood,<sup>40</sup> specific notions of 'solidarity' and 'efficiency',<sup>41</sup> complex forms of controlling time and bodies,<sup>42</sup> material and emotional forms of dispossession,<sup>43</sup> patterns of consumption,<sup>44</sup> or participation in extensive transnational networks of economic knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

This literature has accomplished many of the hopes it was initially invested with, and has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of forty-five years of European history. Nevertheless, it has also revealed that, on the ground, the experience of socialism was indeed remarkably structured. In Hungary, Poland and Romania, workers used the same tactics to escape the control of their foremen; managers negotiated plan figures and resources in the same way; and during the collectivization, peasants everywhere cried more when the party activists took their animals than when they confiscated their inanimate tools. Even jokes and moralizing stories circulated in the same form in various countries. But if these similarities are not simply to be explained through the ordinary appeals to 'the Soviet model', top-down decisional flows, or sheer violence, how can they be accounted for? In this book, I emphasize the need for a return to class as a compelling strategy to think through the striking similarities

between the postwar East and Central European regimes, without falling back into the trap of homogenizing their histories.

The programme for class analysis in socialism that underlies my research can be summarized in three points. First, there is a wider recognition of the contingency of class relationships and a strong argument against the teleological understanding of class formation processes. Second, I move from the traditional understanding of 'class structure' towards an exploration of the mutually constitutive relationship between the state and the workers, which connects 'the local' with broader historical processes and political power to social production. Third, the image of a monolithic state needs to be replaced by an exploration of socialist governmentality, which allows a rethinking of the exercise of power as part and parcel of ordinary productive practices.

Together with the previously unthinkable historical possibility of socialism in a backward country, the new party leaders in East Central Europe inherited from the Bolsheviks an 'economistic view of production and a voluntaristic view of politics'<sup>46</sup> that produced a rather impoverished notion of class. This view of politics was a continuation of the belief in the fracture between base and superstructure, as well as in the primacy of the productive forces as the engine of history, which pervaded leftist debates after the Second International. These debates established a chronology of societal transformation that started with (capitalist) industrial modernization, which was then subjected to the whip of planning and state rationality. Technological progress and ever-higher productivity came first, followed by improvements in workers' living standards and a heightened sense of being on the good side of history.

Relegating the political to matters of the state and reducing production to technological advancement according to ineluctable laws of progress were two sides of the attempt to drive class struggle out of the factory, into a purely discursive realm. The shop floor was imagined as a pre-political space, which the party could mould into the desired shape. But because of its productive core, power in socialism could never be separated from the workings of class, on whose lines of tension the boundary between state, society and economy were negotiated. Although the socialist project was supposed to linearly produce a working class to match a specific vision of historical advancement, on the ground it encountered real people with their own life strategies, dreams and desires. The dominant narrative on East Central European regimes assumes that these strategies, dreams and desires were simply smashed by the socialist states in their drive to encompass life and to mute struggles. However, the book shows that far from disappearing, people's everyday strategies for reproducing their lives imposed themselves on the new regime, leaving

the state with no choice but to use them as a problematic – though often fertile – ground for socialist accumulation and politics.

As a result, the socialist state was a fragile one, fractured between opposite roles: a workers' state guiding an emancipatory project for an emergent class, and a manager state creating and running social production processes. In other words, the fragility of the socialist state resided in the contradiction between its functioning as a manager of an accumulation regime and its needs to imagine an emancipatory project, not only *for* the workers but also *together with* them. This tension was the result of a specific articulation of class in history, and the consequence of its placement under incongruous temporal horizons.

This fragility has been partially captured in the revisionist historians' accounts of how the Soviet workers were dealt with after the October Revolution.<sup>47</sup> But their focus on 'the social' – so welcome at the time – almost closed the theoretical possibility of rethinking the notions of 'class' and 'state' in socialism. This discussion was also basically absent from the literature on workers' states focusing on the East Central European regimes, even when rich histories of social change, production politics and shop floor negotiations were produced.

When the nature of the socialist states in Eastern and Central Europe was explicitly addressed, the analysis focused on the shifting nature of the social contract between labour and the party state, and on 'the limits of dictatorship.' Going beyond the usual notions of shortages and bargaining as identifiable limits of state power, Mark Pittaway returns to the idea that the relationship between the workers and the state was definitory for the socialist configuration.<sup>48</sup> He shows how the Stalinist-type forced industrialization of Hungary had in fact many limitations, since informal wage bargaining, labour indiscipline and managers' lack of authority over the workers were common occurrences. One of the end results of Mark Pittaway's comparative analysis of factory regimes in postwar Hungary is the reconceptualization of the exercise of state socialist power as always constrained and limited in its daily encounters with the working class.

Pittaway's work is essential for understanding how the day-to-day practicalities of state functioning in the factory impacted its struggle for legitimacy. He proposes 'a historically contingent definition' of legitimacy, which in Hungary was established and eroded several times between 1944 and 1958, and it remained partial and uneven, fluid and contested for decades after. Instead of the total power presupposed by a 'dictatorship', in the daily operations of the Hungarian factories Pittaway observes a modest project of state functioning, 'a state of affairs in which a given regime's claim to rule met with a sufficient degree of acceptance to ensure that it was able to acquire the necessary degree of 'infrastructural' power



to rule on a day-to-day basis, and thus appear as a coherent, unified actor ruling above the rest of society'.<sup>49</sup> From this perspective, repression itself appears as an epiphenomenon, which was rooted in the fight against the growing perception of the socialist state's political illegitimacy.

While my book can definitely be read as an argument about the fragility of the socialist state, this argument is related neither to its political legitimacy, nor to the unexpected effects of its ideology. My view on the fragility of the socialist state is rooted in the Marxist tradition of conceptualizing the state itself as a relation of production, this time both as institutionalized capital and as the single guardian of capital formation.<sup>50</sup> Scholars of socialism often read the historical configurations in the region as status hierarchies due to the absence of private property over the means of production. Nevertheless, this reading leaves out the ways in which the state acted *as capital*, with accumulation as its explicit goal. Here, I take the position that postwar countries were class societies simply because they were structured around mechanisms of capital accumulation, articulated directly by the state. From this it follows that in its capacity of creator and manager of social production processes, the socialist state became highly sensitive not only to workers' capacity to mobilize politically but also to the everyday workings of class on the shop floor, and beyond.

The fragility of the state was compounded by the problems of safeguarding capital accumulation in a mainly agrarian country, where the 'proletarians' were still in project, and 'socialist workers' were problematic both as a category of rule and as a much-needed economic resource. This understanding of the state is related to planning and to the regimes of knowledge, discipline and temporality it entailed, and it leads us to the factory as the space where the 'everyday forms of state formation'<sup>51</sup> in socialism unfolded.

Understanding the state itself as a relation of production also suggests that the boundaries between 'the state', 'economy' and 'society' might not be so different from the ones between 'production' and 'life'. Although the aim of planning was the making of socialist economy as a whole, it also required the weaving of a specific social fabric made of structured and structuring relations, practices and subjectivities. Unsurprisingly, an identifiable tendency towards what I could call 'programmatic embeddedness' was manifest in the early years of planning in the practical drive towards a societal project founded on the explicit recognition of the production's characteristic of being immediately social. In this project, economy, society and the state were constituting each other in a dialectical relationship that embraced the plan as its ultimate expression. Nevertheless, as modern states, socialist states needed to appear as 'ideological projects of cohesion and unity'.<sup>52</sup> As such, they were continuous exercises in institutionalizing

political and economic power as ‘at once integrated and isolated’ narrative structures that gave ‘an account of political institutions in terms of cohesion, purpose, independence, common interest and morality’.<sup>53</sup> The crux of this account was the intersection between production and life.

Thus, the investigation of socialist accumulation and planning proceeds through an effort to understand the stakes of real workers trying to live their lives and make sense of them in the tumultuous and uncertain historical present of the 1950s. Following the trajectory of the relationship between labour and the state during the period when central economic planning was implemented, I examine the material roots of the worker’s transformation into the subject/object of a particular mission that came with a promise of freedom, equality and emancipation for all. Recounting the stories of the women and men who became both the targets of the socialist construction project and its bearers allows glimpses into how the fundamental stickiness of everyday life combined the modernizing ethos of planning with a set of modest local negotiations around the lines of labour control, maintenance and expansion. Following Alf Lütke’s understanding of *Alltagsgeschichte*, the book reveals the fundamental category of rule in socialism – the ‘worker’ – as a problematic category. Its content uncomfortably glided between contradictory political signifiers, which emerged as locally mediated expressions of the instrumental logics of the state. The next section turns to the ways in which the plan itself captured these logics, and to the social fabric they sought to reproduce.

## Planning Labour on and beyond the Shop Floor

Scholarship on centrally planned economies has been organized around several tenets regarding the nature of the plan as a bureaucratic instrument of coordination: the plan replaced the market as a mechanism for synchronizing supply and demand; it functioned in a top-down manner, although the power of the socialist managers depended on their ability to attract resources from the government; labour was just another economic resource to be planned; and economic activity followed a temporal organization according to the party directives.<sup>54</sup> As the main pillars on which the analysis of socialist regimes rested, these ideas had important analytical consequences for how we understand the political economy of East Central Europe in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. I discuss them one by one in what follows.

First, the academic obsession with state socialism as a system articulated around coordinated redistribution has obscured the role of planning in securing the conditions for the accumulation of capital – that is, the

creation and realization of value.<sup>55</sup> Socialist economies came to be conceptualized as allocative mechanisms without the possibility of exchange through the markets, whose absence or limited role has been taken for granted.<sup>56</sup> Especially for the early socialist decades, the plan has been understood as taking over the allocation function of the capitalist market, and came to be unambiguously conceptualized as its opposite.

The exploration into the struggles to reproduce labour and the managerial efforts required to make the shop floor function is taken here as an investigation of the issues faced by the socialist economic executives to ensure the creation and extraction of surplus, once its capitalization had already been secured at the moment of planning. While there is no question about the fact that the nationalized factories of the Eastern bloc aimed at creating surplus product, no consensus related to the possibility of equating this surplus product with value has been reached. While some authors considered that valorization continued to be a reality for the socialist regimes, others assumed the suspension of the law of value after the nationalization of the means of production, in the absence of free markets, and in the context of a generalized impossibility to use the rate of profit as a meaningful economic category.<sup>57</sup> This lack of consensus was not only a feature of Western Marxism but also a painful spot for the economists of Eastern Europe, whose debates about the continuing operation of the law of value in socialism had concrete consequences for the activity of planning.<sup>58</sup>

I start from the observation that East Central European communists in the 1950s explicitly saw planning as a condition of possibility for safeguarding socialist accumulation.<sup>59</sup> The plan itself functioned as a matrix which made both the operation of the law of value *and* its violations possible. These violations were not more definitory for socialism than they have been for capitalism – they were just more transparent, and assumed integral dimensions of a societal project.

More concretely, the plan represented an attempt to (chrono)logically collapse the creation of value and its realization, as well as the spheres of production and exchange. At the moment of planning, a certain good was assigned a price, which was based on the production cost and acquired a monetary expression. Planning the production cost started from the calculation of the necessary expenditure of labour time, and it concluded through a financialized synthesis of productive and unproductive wages, raw materials, the required intermediate goods, fuels and electricity, the transportation costs, the amortization rate of investment in fixed capital, and the benefit of every industrial unit at each stage of the production chain.<sup>60</sup> From here, manufactured goods had two possible routes. On the one hand, consumer goods were sold to the population, and their prices

were centrally set by the government, based on a combination of their actual production cost and the reaction of the population (taken as proxy for the market) to their usefulness and quality. The means of production, on the other hand, were incorporated in the pool of fixed capital owned by the state. As scholars of socialism have argued, the accumulation of fixed capital represented the central mechanism of creating an internal market for the production chains functioning at national and regional level.<sup>61</sup> The models of growth through the development of heavy industry and constructions produced a logic of investment that operated as a powerful maker of the territory/population nexus, and according to which places and regions competed against each other for the resources allocated by the socialist state.

In the last instance, socialist planners aimed towards an economy where the realization of value was not only possible but also secured in advance, not left to the whims of the market. They calculated production costs based on the expenditure of abstract labour, harmonized prices between goods, and ensured that surplus was further capitalized through safeguarding exchanges and investments that could further expand the economy. The new economic executives of the 1950s might not have reached a consensus around the categories of political economy and their specificity in socialism, but they certainly acted *as if* the law of value had to operate in the newly emerging world as a foundation for socialist accumulation.

Second, literature on state socialism tended to hypostatize the political as an autonomous sphere, having a unidirectional, top-down impact on the 'economy'. This meant an assessment of the 'successes' and 'failures' in terms of the collision between the plan as an idea and what happened when things were actually getting done in production. However, academic idealism goes against the logic of the socialist planners.

The political economy of planned economies was intentionally performative, in the crudest sense of being a discourse acting upon and producing its object.<sup>62</sup> In the historical configuration of really existing socialism, economic categories were explicitly employed with the aim of changing reality on the ground. I claim that fetishizing 'the plan' as a bureaucratic instrument obscures the set of activities, practices and relations that actually accounted for much of its performative power. The book considers planning as the daily weaving of material webs of practices and relations within which the socialist factory emerged as an object of governmentality, with its own conflicting regimes of knowledge, discipline and time. It re-establishes a materialist perspective on socialist planning, deeply embedded in the local context of the 1950s factories in Cluj, to show that the plan was actively produced not only in the offices of the new economic executives but also on the shop floor.

Consequently, the starting point of my investigation was to unpack the very notion of a ‘centrally planned economy’. Instead of starting from a top-down image of a ‘planned’ and ‘centralized’ socialist economy and assessing its functioning parameters in terms of success and failure, I realized an in-depth exploration of planning and centralization as scaled processes and relations, focusing on the way the plan was transformed into economic, political and everyday practices within productive spaces, and on how, in return, these practices were both enabling and constraining for the exercise of state power. Thus, the book is not set to explore how the plan was envisioned and implemented by the state, but how ‘the economy’ and ‘the state’ – understood here in its double determination as ‘state-system’ and ‘state-idea’ – were produced in the factory, within a bundle of practices and evermore structured interactions.<sup>63</sup>

Third, and most importantly, scholars of socialism have been inclined to equate labour with any other economic resource that could be calculated, allocated or hoarded. Most of the time, previous analyses painted state socialism as a historical configuration dominated by the bureaucratic fetish of the plan, which laid down the foundation of exclusive managerial prerogatives. Bureaucratic coordination of redistribution was thus considered the central function of the plan, which translated into an obvious lack of interest in its role in the transformation of the production/life nexus.

Academic conversations on central planning have been grounded in the 1970s–1980s economic debates, when the winds of economic restructuring, the opening towards Western markets and a strong technocratic reformist ethos were infusing the question of the specificity of socialist systems with a new life. János Kornai’s neo-institutionalist analyses continue to stand out in the dialogues about the functioning principles of centrally planned economies. The core of Kornai’s work opposed the ‘soft budget constraints’ of socialist units facing no possibility of bankruptcy to the ‘hard budget constraints’ of the capitalist companies.<sup>64</sup> The Hungarian economist convincingly showed that since the allocation of investments, raw materials and labour was decided through arbitrary political decisions, the control over resources was unstable. This generalized uncertainty pushed the factory managers to counteract the central planners by employing a widespread strategy of hoarding. Since the activity of the economic units was interconnected, the misallocation of resources and the resultant forms of hoarding made the production chains of socialist economies be plagued by shortages, including by a pervasive shortage of labour.

For scholars who have followed Kornai’s lead, the ‘endemic shortage economies’ of socialism appear as redistributive systems functioning in

a property vacuum, where the utility maximization logic of the socialist managers competing for state investments stood in stark contrast with the rationality of the capitalist ones, who needed to compete for demand on the free market. From this angle, power in socialism was simply a function of the actors' allocative capacity, while the aggregate effect of local actors trying to get by within the institutional frame of 'deficient' property relations and diffuse responsibility was a gradual paralysis of the socialist economy as a whole. This made socialism function in a perpetual – if hidden – crisis, in which resources were limited and the requests for investments were always inflated. Consequently, scholarship on state socialism and postsocialism focused on the chronic shortages that plagued socialist economies and on their immediate consequences: the hoarding of raw materials and labour; the practice of fake reporting, which made an accurate estimation of the economic situation difficult; the relentless competition for investments and allocation of resources, which gave rise to intricated economies of favours; the identity between consumer/provider and surveiller/surveilled types of relationship; and the pervasive personalization of relations between factory managers and state executives at different levels of hierarchy, which sometimes came to be equated with the feudalization of the socialist systems.<sup>65</sup>

This book will show that planning labour meant dealing with a very different type of 'resource', not only for the obvious reason that workers had their own voice and rationality, but also (and crucially) because the mechanisms of surplus extraction that made socialist accumulation possible depended on *if* and *how* labour was reproduced, expanded and controlled. In other words, it depended on localized class relations and experiential realities, which meant not only consuming living labour in the production process but also creating it.

Harnessing labour power meant unearthing workers' resilience to hardship, their willingness to commit to shop floor hierarchies and their practical knowledge. As this book will show, socialist planners and factory managers led a continuous fight for reorganizing the process of production in the direction of increased efficiency and managerial control, as well as for materializing Taylorist-oriented politics of productivity on the shop floor. In effect, although hailing the workers as political subjects, the mechanisms of socialist accumulation bore an uncanny resemblance to the ones emerging on the peripheries of the capitalist system.<sup>66</sup>

And finally, I will show that the unfolding of economic activity according to the plan was not the only way in which time mattered. At the most basic level, like in other Taylorist-inspired and labour-intensive industrial regimes, time discipline was supposed to constitute the foundation of an early socialist system of efficiency, which was predicated on the necessity

of eliminating waste and on a historically specific form of expanded rationality. A continuous tendency towards what we can call time–time compression was essential to the materialization of socialist accumulation in a historical moment dominated by hunger for capital, scarce resources, and technological backwardness.

As politics of anticipation and calculation, plan indices stood at the core of the socialist modernization project and functioned as the bearers of a concrete historical possibility to catch up, whose objectives were ideally measurable. Planning as working ahead time functioned as a measure of the radical nonsynchronicity the socialist project met on the ground, understood here as the uneasy coexistence on the shop floor of ideas and practices belonging to different historical epochs. Labour heroes and slackers stood at the ends of a quantifiable continuum that opposed the hope for a bright future to the fear that past ways-of-doing would penetrate the factory walls. People themselves were placed not only on a quantifiable spectrum of successes and failures in fulfilling the plan indices, but also in relation with the horizon of communism as an ethical ideal. Plan figures could then become concrete and immediate expressions of workers' historical consciousness, and the party could entertain the old belief that workers' political subjectivity could be rooted directly in production.

The socialist plan can be understood as the expression of a never resolved synthesis of conflicting temporalities: the time of production colliding with the time of politics. 'Time of production' refers to the state's managerial strategies for compressing as much work in as little time as possible, and to their practical requirements and consequences for the factory life. 'Time of politics' was the other side of the temporal logic of socialism, which related individual workers to a civilizing project meant to transform them from 'simple-minded peasants' to proletarians. Since productivity came to be expressed in a temporal language and the plan figures ultimately connected it to the performance of the individual worker, it was not long before time itself became essential for deciding upon who could become a comrade and who was meant to remain 'just workforce'.

The relationship between time and planning stood both as the foundation of socialist accumulation and as the neuralgic point of socialist politics of development that vitally effected people's lives and work. In order to control the planning process, the state had to learn how to master different and often conflicting temporal horizons. The bright future of socialism required not only a sacrificial and rhythmic present, but also a segmentation of all futures in manageable pieces, in fragments of history yet to be foreseen, and which were then adjusted according to the real

unfolding of the plan. Juggling time is a crucial dimension of any act of governance. But the totalizing capacity of this exercise made socialist central planning unique, and placed its contradictions at the very heart of Romanian industrial modernization.

### **Industrial Cluj as a Case**

To follow these lines of inquiry, I carried an exploration from below of production politics in Cluj/Kolozsvár, a city in Transylvania that was culturally and economically contested along ethnicized class lines. At the end of the Second World War, Cluj was not what we would call an industrial city. The few factories that had developed in the interwar period employed a core of skilled urban workers, both men and women, who worked especially in leather, textiles, and metallurgical manufacturing. The largest factories in the city had paternalist features and carried their social infrastructure into the 1950s. There were many artisans and craftsmen in the city, but in most cases their production was small-scale and family based, maybe with one or two apprentices around the workshop, while their distribution networks were restricted to their own neighbourhoods. The imposing cultural and religious centre was surrounded by neighbourhoods in which people combined small-scale industry with agriculture, while the suburbs preserved their rural aspect and supported the provisioning of the city.

If Cluj was not an interwar industrial hub like Reșița, Łódź or Petrograd, it was even less a classical 'socialist' city emerging from nothingness like Magnitogorsk or Nowa Huta. In the period explored in this book, Cluj did not feature modernist architecture or huge industrial plants and it did not foster long-distance migration to produce young autonomous workers like those descending from the Soviet-inspired posters in other European regions. The city hardly featured as an industrial hub on the economic map of early socialism. And although its industry did grow in the postwar years, Cluj did not benefit from the first two waves of investment that changed the landscape of other Romanian regions in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, Cluj becomes a case for understanding socialist planning at the margins of postwar economic life. It is precisely its relatively marginal position that reveals the contradictory nature of labour in Romania, a space where 'proletarians' were generally absent and where socialist industry often needed to rely on a non-socialist, non-industrial and non-urban exterior.

While industrial Cluj went almost unnoticed by scholars of labour, it featured prominently in the social sciences as a terrain for ethnic struggles



and as an important cultural and educational heart, central both for the Romanian and the Hungarian nation-building projects.<sup>67</sup> Located in the centre of Transylvania, the city shared the history of contested belonging of the whole region and it had its own special place in modernization processes and in the national imaginary of two different states. But as the book will show, the battle for Cluj was also a battle for its productive resources, which makes class crucial for the understanding of local relations. Although systematically hidden under ethnicized processes of identification, class actually featured as importantly in the history of Cluj as ethnicity and regional belonging. There is a different story to be told about the profound transformations of the city, one that cannot be grasped without accounting for people's mundane concerns in the factories and beyond.

Because of the way political and economic rights have been historically fragmented in Transylvania, assuming an ethnic identity or a class identity have never been separated processes in Cluj. Like the rest of East Central Europe, Transylvania lived through centuries of economic and political dependency. As a region, it shared most of its history with the Hungarian Kingdom and with the Habsburg Imperial space. At the turn of the twentieth century it was incorporated in Romania, one of the poorest agrarian countries in Europe at the time. The complex history of the region also shaped the city's occupational structure and its ethnically segregated nature was a salient characteristic until recently. Integrated for centuries into the economic circuits of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Cluj became one of the relatively industrialized cities of Greater Romania after 1918.

Before the Second World War, a quarter of the city's population were workers, and most of them lived in the northern part, combining their time in the factory with independent work for others and with gardening. For centuries, most labourers, craftsmen and tradesmen in the city were Hungarian and Jewish. The same goes for the industrial workforce, which was also predominantly Hungarian, especially its core of highly skilled male workers. Romanians, although a majority in Transylvania, lived mostly in the countryside and so constituted a minority in urban areas. Nevertheless, the interwar period saw the rudiments of a collaboration between Hungarian capital and a thin layer of the Romanian bourgeoisie in the upper echelons of factory administration and management.

The two neighbourhoods of the city where industry was concentrated had started to develop in the nineteenth century as part of the commercial circuit of the former Habsburg Empire. A railway connected the north-western neighbourhood, where the Railways Workshops' labourers worked and lived, with the north-eastern one, well known for its Hungarian and Jewish craftsmen, artisans and vendors. At the beginning

of the twentieth century, some of the best artisans in the north-eastern part of the city had been employed at Renner Brothers, a leather and footwear manufacturer owned by a Jewish Hungarian family. In the following years, the male workers brought their wives and daughters along, making the footwear factory one of the most feminized workforces in the city. The small family business constituted the core of the Dermata industrial complex, a factory I focus on in-depth in this book. For a short period after the nationalization, the factory was going to be named after the communist illegalist János Herbák.

In 1930, over six thousand enterprises had been registered by the *Industrial Record* in Cluj, most of them functioning in these districts. Of these enterprises, 116 had been categorized as ‘medium’ or ‘large’, but only two of them actually employed more than a thousand workers: Dermata and the Railways Workshops. Several other factories were employing 250 to 500 workers in various branches: metallurgy, electricity, textiles, leather, paper, printing, and chemical production. The leather and textile industries employed most skilled workers in the city, many of them Hungarian and Jewish. Many of these enterprises had disappeared by 1938 as a direct consequence of the economic crisis, which slowed down the industrial development of the city. In the late 1930s, unemployment and poverty accompanied the high number of bankruptcies and affected more than one-fifth of the working-class families in Cluj. It proved catastrophic for the Jewish population, which heavily relied on industrial employment and trade.

Between the wars, life was bustling in the working-class neighbourhoods. Four permanent markets and two fairs took place in this part of the town. They were ‘at least as good as the ones in the city centre, if not better’, as the former workers are still fondly remembering them today. Around the neighbourhood’s churches, people built networks of support for old people and orphans, and helped the opening of several confessional schools. Around the most important factories in the city, Dermata and the Railways Workshops, the unions supported mutual aid societies, choirs, orchestras, and sporting teams. In the cosmopolitan sporting scene of the city, Hungarian workers’ clubs and associations were the oldest in the city. The railroad workers, the butchers, and the commercial employees had their own clubs. Another workers’ club was founded to accommodate all those who wanted to manifest their love for sport but could not find a place in the factory or guild teams. They often played against the other teams in the city, teams built around notions of belonging that had as much to do with class as with ethnic divisions: the City Athletic Club – the team of the Hungarian middle class; Universitatea – the club of the Romanian students; Haggibor – the Jewish merchants’ team.<sup>68</sup>

Small but relatively strong communist cells had also been organized in the Dermata factory and the Railways Workshops – and acted illegally during the two successive fascisized regimes – the Romanian one in the late 1930s and the Hungarian one during the Second World War. A small but active cell had also been organized by the women at the textile factory, which was soon to be renamed Varga Katalin, after the leader of the Transylvanian miners' movement in the 1840s. The Tobacco Factory – the only factory that employed mainly unskilled Romanian women – had the weakest union and no known connection to any leftist movement in Transylvania.

The 1920s and 1930s strikes by the Dermata labourers were also decided in the north-eastern side of the city. Probably the male workers discussed their claims at the tables of the small pubs scattered around the workshops and warehouses. And maybe the vines in the neighbourhood's gardens stood witness when the women from the footwear factory had convinced each other to join the protests under the lead of their social democrat unions. From these neighbourhoods, in 1933, the workers from Dermata started their solidarity march with the Railways Workshops employees, only to face prison and death together. Anger and despair must have haunted the streets when tens of workers were fired, beaten and arrested during the events.

The city's economy between the wars had also been part of an ethnic theatre where belonging and possession could not be separated. The interwar politics of 'nostrification' of the Romanian state had been strongly felt in the city's financial sector, which had become dominated by the largest Romanian banks. Romanian capital had penetrated industry to a lesser extent, focusing on those sectors that could sustain infrastructural development. For instance, the Brick Factory, founded by a group of Jewish owners, had been transformed into 'an economic unit with exclusively Romanian interests' in 1923, when the city of Cluj, the Transylvanian Bank and the Agricultural Bank – all Romanian – had become its shareholders. The share of the Romanian capital in the city's industry was going to increase in the late 1920s, when the Romanian Central Bank for Industry and Trade became the main shareholder at Dermata.

The interests of Romanian capital often collided with the manifestations of Hungarian and Jewish economic nationalism in banking, trade and industry. These local forms of economic nationalism weaved together the reproduction of the labour force with the reproduction of Hungarianness and Jewishness. Many Hungarian and Jewish banks and factories organized or financially supported orphanages, schools and apprenticeship centres, all of them constituting an important infrastructure for professional and

religious education, which became central in the identification processes within the city.

The start of the Second World War reversed the effect of these politics. A process of re-Hungarianization of the economic life started in the autumn of 1940, when the Second Vienna Arbitration decided that Northern Transylvania was going to return to Hungary, while the southern part of the region was to remain part of Romania. Who owned what became more important than ever, not only as a means of economic domination but also as a way to demonstrate better managerial competences and to assert the superiority of Hungarianness in terms of industriousness. Nevertheless, some Romanian banks kept their branches in the biggest Transylvanian cities by reorienting their loans towards Hungarian enterprises.

Jewish economic activity was restricted, and most of the time controlled by the Hungarian authorities through appointed managers and endless inspections. Although the Hungarian government adopted a gradual approach towards the dispossession of the Jews in order not to destabilize trade and industry, the expropriations of Jewish property became a daily occurrence towards the end of the war. All Jewish property came to be considered *de jure* Hungarian in 1944, when the Final Solution was applied to the Northern Transylvanian territories.

The local elites, however, sought to sustain a political vision that would have preserved the Transylvanian specificity in relation to the Hungarian motherland: more populist, with a more favourable ear to the labour question, and more inclined to a social contract between labour, the state and capital, which was also supposed to make workers less vulnerable to the Bolshevik wind of change. Communist allegiances remained stronger in Transylvania when compared to Hungary, where the Communist Party had been outlawed immediately after Bela Kun's revolution in 1919. However, during the war, the hunting down of the communist leaders extended to the Transylvanian territories, which soon came under the spell of the populist discourse of the Arrow Cross – the extreme right party in Hungary.

As the issue of Transylvania as a contested territory became central for the negotiations of the German military alliances with both Romania and Hungary, ethnic conflict became more and more expressed in racialized terms, with politicians and researchers on both sides arguing for the existence of biological differences between the Hungarians and the Romanians, and for the superiority of their nation.<sup>69</sup> Notions of 'civilization' and 'progress' became intertwined with the concept of 'cleanliness', with roots in an ethnicized class structure and in the rural/urban division between Romanians, Hungarians and Jews.

Since the Second Vienna Arbitration had allowed individuals to opt for the state where they were ethnically majoritarian, thousands of refugees fled from and to the city. As Holly Case shows, the refugees' situation was complicated. Many of them came to Kolozsvár without having a support network in the city. Between 1940 and 1943, Hungary spent around 36 million pengő on aid for more than two hundred thousand refugees. They received a daily allowance of two pengő forty fillér from the Hungarian government, and were sheltered in refugee camps, which were soon to be dismantled only to give way to the expansion of the city's slums due to the severe housing shortage and to the swelling of the local population.

As Kolozsvár became the second most important city in Hungary, its industry got absorbed into the German war effort. From the nearly five thousand refugees who were seeking jobs in September 1940, almost fifteen hundred were still unemployed one year later. Due to the material shortages caused by the war, the presence of the refugees was contributing to the narrowing down of employment in the largest factories of the city. The ethnic structure of the labour force changed, not only because many Hungarian workers arrived in the city but also because the unskilled Romanian workers preferred to leave the factories soon after the Vienna Arbitration. At Dermata, almost all of the seven hundred Romanian workers either opted for Romania or were dismissed by the Hungarian management of the factory.

At the end of the war, Cluj once again became the symbolic and administrative capital of a Romanian region. The historically conflictual relations between the Romanians and the Hungarians represented a significant source of fragmentation of workers' moral economies in Transylvania. The Romanian workers could hardly identify with the prewar labour struggle, and perceived it as alien and belonging to the Hungarians. The postwar waves of rural–urban migration further created a fragmented understanding of what it meant to be a 'Romanian', a 'Hungarian' or a 'Clujean'. The association between 'newcomer', 'peasant' and 'worker', and the distinction between this clusters of markers and the one comprising 'real' Clujean, 'intellectual' and 'Hungarian' were permanently enforced within the political negotiation for what the place should stand for. The fact that the working class in a Romanian workers' state was Hungarian opened a broad space for the hopes that the Hungarians would continue to dominate the urban space. In this symbolic field, the celebration of manual work came to be translated as a celebration of Hungarianness. Because in Transylvania class interests and class consciousness could not be separated from the lived definitions of citizenship, the articulation of ethnic belonging became more and more salient in the first years after the war,

complicating working-class identities and narratives, muddling labour's interests, and making the political project of building a society for all workers difficult.

Although it started as a peripheral site in the emerging postwar Romanian economy, during the next twenty years Cluj was going to develop a flourishing industry and attract enough people from rural areas to change the ethnic balance in the city. From a Hungarian city of learning and culture in which the Romanian intellectuals played their own card in articulating the right to the city, in the mid-1960s Cluj became a Romanian-dominated city concentrating more than two-thirds of its population in the industrial areas. The face of the city changed forever due to an intensive wave of industrialization – the third one in the territorial logic of socialist construction – which brought Romanian peasants into the newly built working-class neighbourhoods. Rural/urban and unskilled/skilled cleavages continued to reproduce hierarchies historically constituted along class and ethnic lines after centuries of domination and marginality. For Clujeni, the complex play with nationalism of the socialist governments has always represented more than just 'discourse'. It appealed to long-lasting resentments and bitterness, partially responsible both for the fragmentation of working-class identity and for the creation of a powerful ideological interplay between the 'Party-state' and the 'nation',<sup>70</sup> with the complex relationship between class and ethnicity as one of the fundamental mediators through which political subjectivities were produced.

The factory becomes the ultimate site where the core contradictions of socialist accumulation were enacted and mediated, not only because heavy industrialization was a central feature of the socialist developmental project, but also because in a socialist regime production management was imagined as a fundamental part of the 'problematics of government'.<sup>71</sup> What was spectacular about the socialist factories was the double permeability of their boundaries: on the one hand, the factories' care and control of their workers extended outside their walls; on the other hand, workers' lives and worries penetrated the factory space, transforming it in unexpected ways. This intersection made the factory a crucial object of governance and governmentality, a contested space for the encounter of specific 'political rationalities' and 'governmental technologies', between concepts of government, their moral justifications, and the totality of techniques and procedures that supported the exercise of power.

Grounded in a relational, processual, and critical realist epistemological stance, my exploration made use of a diversity of sources, which reflect the rarely heard voices of ordinary labourers and local managers. These voices can shed plausible light on what was hidden in the plain in the early

years of the Romanian socialist accumulation: its contradictory unfolding and the problematic nature of the plan as its key solution. In order to illuminate industrial planning from below, my investigation led me to the archives in Cluj, Bucharest and Budapest where I studied production minutes, economic reports, proceedings of the county and city committees of the Romanian Workers' Party meetings, instructions from the ministries to the factories, along with local newspapers and legislation. Life histories of the workers from Cluj, memoirs, newspaper interviews, and countless informal conversations with old inhabitants of the city rounded the picture of the formative years of the Romanian socialism. Although my findings are based on archival sources or oral testimonies about the past, my treatment of the case was ethnographic. My hope was to capture the vivid, complex, and contradictory substance of 'everyday life in its extra local and historical context'<sup>72</sup> through a 'virtual participation' in the 1950s factories in Cluj.

While industrial Cluj as a whole constitutes the object of inquiry, a bottom-up perspective on planning required an understanding of the variations in the labour process and in the positioning of different factories in the developmental logic of the state. Thus, in addition to the paper trails of the city and county party committees, governmental documents and local newspapers, I focused more in-depth on the archives of two factories: János Herbák, a leather and footwear factory, founded at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Armătura, a producer of domestic and industrial faucets and fittings, which emerged in 1949 through the nationalization and the unification of three formerly private workshops. The twelve hundred people working at Armătura in 1949 were mainly former craftsmen in the nationalized workshops. János Herbák was one of the largest factories in the city, employing over four thousand workers in 1948, a largely feminized workforce around a core of skilled male workers. Due to the nature of the labour process in leather manufacturing and to its rapid growth, János Herbák was more vulnerable to labour turnover, and more dependent upon a semi-proletarian workforce living in the countryside and commuting to town for work. Like most industrial units in the country in the first years of planning, both factories had to contend with absenteeism, stealing and other disciplinary problems. Factory managers had very limited possibilities to fire workers, since they were faced with endemic labour shortages, permissive legislation regarding workers' behaviour, constraining employment regulations, and fierce unofficial competition for labour. Following the hard postwar years, both factories enjoyed a peak of commercial success during the socialist period. Until 1960, Armătura enjoyed a monopoly position, being the only factory of its kind in Romania. János Herbák would eventually

become the city's export jewel. In the 1970s, under the name of Clujana, its products were going to carry the rediscovered Romanian nationalist ethos of the late socialist regime into the world, and were going to be equally cherished at home, where being in possession of a Clujana pair of shoes became a sign of distinction among the city dwellers.

## Notes

1. Stalin, 'New Conditions – New Tasks', 559. Speech delivered at a Conference of Economic Executives, 23 June 1931 (originally published in *Pravda*, No. 183, 5 July 1931). Author's translation from Romanian.
2. 'The party' always refers to the Romanian Workers' Party (later the Romanian Communist Party). Full names will be used for all the other political parties in existence in Romania until 1947.
3. I will switch between the two names according to the rapidly shifting political situation of the city in the twentieth century.
4. Case, *Between States*.
5. Maier, 'The Postwar Social Contract'.
6. Pittaway, *The Workers' State*.
7. Baronian, *Marx and Living Labour*.
8. Bloch and Ritter, 'Nonsynchronism'.
9. Lampland, *The Object of Labor*, 1.
10. Lampland, *The Value of Labor*.
11. Marx, *Capital*.
12. Djilas, *The New Class*; Konrád and Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals*; Kornai, *The Socialist System*; Kornai, 'Resource-Constrained'; Kornai, 'The Soft Budget Constraint'.
13. Burawoy, *Politics of Production*.
14. The idea that socialism would degenerate into a dictatorial regime that would oppress workers rather than genuinely attempt to emancipate them is as old as the struggles between various factions of the Left. Its roots are to be found in Bakunin's anarchist critique against Marx's theory of the state, and in his prediction that 'the true despotic and brutal nature of all states, regardless of their form of government', would prevail in a dictatorship of proletariat (see Bakunin, 'The International and Karl Marx', 319). Bakunin's prophecy was that new elites would 'corrupt' socialism by monopolizing scientific knowledge and expertise, and by dominating workers in their own interest. Fears of excessive centralization and concerns with the transformation of the party and its relationship with the masses in a proletarian state were expressed by people coming from very different leftist traditions, from social democrats like Karl Kautsky, to anarcho-communists like Emma Goldman, or revolutionary socialists like Rosa Luxemburg. For a synthesis of these critiques, see Howard and King, 'State Capitalism'.
15. Mandel, 'Theory of State Capitalism'; Sweezy, *Post-Revolutionary Society*.
16. See Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia*. The tendency to consider both really existing capitalism and really existing socialism as (equally) exploitative and unjust regimes was advanced more and more after the Fourth International, when the Trotskyist tradition split into several groups like Johnson-Forest Tendency and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. See van der Linden, 'Socialisme ou Barbarie'.
17. Postone, 'Necessity, Labor, and Time', 741; Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*.
18. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*.
19. Ibid. See also Millar, 'A Note'; and Day, 'On "Primitive" and Other Forms'.



20. Glassman, 'Primitive Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession'.
21. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, 226.
22. Price scissors were not a Soviet phenomenon. In interwar Romania, they were supported, opposed and implemented in various forms. See Madgearu, *Agrarianism, Capitalism, and Imperialism*.
23. Erlich, 'Preobrazhensky'; Nove, *Economic History of the USSR*.
24. The adoption of collectivization was a response to the 1920s fierce struggles encountered by the unfolding of the Bolshevik politics on the ground. Although predicated upon the alliance between peasants and workers (*smychka*), Soviet industrialization was cornered by peasants' resistance at every step. 'Secure the Harvest!' was the mid-1920s motto that reflected a practical need and the seed of a vision in which the 'countryside' was conceived as a homogeneous supporting bloc *against* the needs of the towns; see Corrigan, Ramsey and Sayer, *Socialist Construction*; Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia*; and Binns, 'State Capitalism'. According to this version of the narrative, as trade rapidly declined, radical solutions were adopted to support the rapid tempo of industrialization in the Soviet Union: the peasants were expropriated and forced onto large farms to increase agricultural production and make people in the countryside available for industry. For a well-taken point against this version of the Soviet industrialization, the reader might refer to Millar, 'Soviet Rapid Development'; Millar, 'Mass Collectivization'; and Ellman, 'Did the Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources'.
25. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*.
26. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization*; Siegelbaum and Suny, *Making Workers Soviet*.
27. Montias, *Economic Development*.
28. Marx, *Capital*, 916.
29. Marx, *Capital*, 875.
30. Levy, *Ana Pauker*; Verdery and Kligman, *Peasants under Siege*; Iordachi and Dobrinca, *Transforming Peasants*.
31. Levy, *Ana Pauker*.
32. Montias, *Economic Development*, 88–91.
33. Through what Adrian Grama calls 'politics of austerity'; see Grama, 'Laboring Along'.
34. Steinberg, 'The Great End of All Government'.
35. Kalb, 'Bare Legs Like Ice'.
36. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, xvi.
37. Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State*; Burawoy and Lukács, *Radiant Past*; Pittaway, *From the Vanguard*; Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*.
38. Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*; Poblocki, 'The Cunning of Class'.
39. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*.
40. Lampland, *The Object of Labor*.
41. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*.
42. Verdery, *What Was Socialism*.
43. Verdery and Kligman, *Peasants Under Siege*.
44. Fulbrook, *Power and Society*.
45. Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism*; Bockman and Eyal, 'Eastern Europe'.
46. Corrigan, Ramsey and Sayer, *Socialist Construction*, 43.
47. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*; Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.
48. Pittaway, *The Workers' State*; Pittaway, *From the Vanguard*.
49. Pittaway, *The Workers' State*, 5.
50. Corrigan, Ramsey and Sayer, *Socialist Construction*.
51. Painter, 'Prosaic Geographies'.
52. Abrams, 'Notes', 122.
53. Abrams, 'Notes', 117.

54. Ellman, *Socialist Planning*. For a critique of how the definition of socialism as ‘shortage economies’, with corresponding behavioural patterns and rationality, has been unproblematically employed in the anthropology of postsocialism; see Thelen, ‘Shortage, Fuzzy Property’.
55. The problem of equating capitalism itself with the functioning of markets, and the markets with an abstract space of free exchanges, would deserve a special discussion, but it goes beyond the scope of this Introduction.
56. In Kornai’s words, “[t]he overwhelming role of the market is replaced by the predominance of central management. The usual name given to this form of coordination is “central planning”. A more appropriate characterization is one of bureaucratic coordination, central control, a system of enforced instructions. This is a “command economy”’. Kornai, ‘Socialism and the Market’.
57. For the position that the law of value was still operating in state socialism, and for a review of the debates in Romania, see Petrovici, *Zona urbană*. For the opposite claim, that the law of value was actually suspended in socialism, see Clarke, ‘The Contradictions’.
58. Petrovici, *Zona urbană*.
59. For the idea of primitive socialist accumulation in the Soviet Union, see Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*; Erlich, ‘Preobrazhensky’; and Millar, ‘A Note’. The core discussion of uneven and combined development appears in the same context. See Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*. For recent reinterpretations of the concept of uneven development, see Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*; Allinson and Anievas, ‘Uses and Misuses’; Anievas and Matin, *Historical Sociology*; Dunn and Radice, *100 Years*.
60. During the first years of planning, the state produced an impressive number of publications to help the planners, the factory managers and the accountants with the calculative technologies involved in the production cost.
61. Petrovici, *Zona urbană*.
62. MacKenzie, Muniesa and Siu, *Do Economists Make Markets?*
63. Abrams, ‘Notes’.
64. Kornai, *The Socialist System*.
65. Verdery, *What Was Socialism?* The negotiation power of the industrial labourers was also seen as an important consequence of the labour shortage; see Burawoy, *Politics of Production*.
66. There are scholars who, at least in principle, have tried to move beyond the socialist/capitalist divide and have highlighted the similarities of industrial production in socialist and capitalist countries. See Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*.
67. Case, *Between States*; Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics*.
68. Faje, ‘Playing to Win’.
69. Case, *Between States*.
70. For the most comprehensive analysis of national ideology in the socialist period to date, see Verdery, *National Ideology*.
71. Rose and Miller, ‘Political Power’.
72. Burawoy, *The Extended Case Method*, 1.