



CEU DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HISTORY

The Doctoral Thesis in Comparative History

by

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on

**Accounting for the “Social” in State Socialist Romania,  
1960s–1980s: Context and Genealogies**

will be held on

**Friday, April 26, 2019, at 13:00**

in

**Nador 9, Senate room  
Central European University (CEU)  
Budapest—1051**

Examination Committee

Mária Kovács – Chair (Nationalism Studies, CEU)

Balázs Trencsényi – supervisor (Department of History, CEU)

Constantin Iordachi – CEU internal member (Department of History)

István Rév – CEU internal member (Department of History)

Katherine Lebow – external member (Faculty of History, University of Oxford)

Johan Heilbron – external reader (Department of Sociology, University of Rotterdam)

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation reconstructs the contexts and genealogies of scientific thought on the “social” in state socialist Romania in the 1960s–1980s. New ideas and practices of observing, analyzing, and intervening in the social realities of socialist society emerged beginning in the early 1960s, originally in debates over the canonical disciplines of Marxist-Leninist social science (historical materialism, scientific socialism, and Marxist sociology). These were further developed by Marxist revisionist and humanist Marxist thought on the relationship between individuals and society in socialism, which decentered the collectivist ethos characteristic of “dogmatic” Marxism-Leninist philosophy for most of the 1950s.

Made possible by the Marxist humanist breakthrough of the early 1960s, Marxist-Leninist sociology was subsequently established as a separate discipline at the Academy of Social and Political Sciences and at the University of Bucharest. Institutional and intellectual constraints and possibilities were differently configured in these two contexts. For the case of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, the dissertation emphasizes the dynamic between local, transnational, and global frameworks of knowledge production, and the role of Eastern bloc cooperation in the field of sociology in particular. In the Romanian context, the interplay between local and transnational frames of reference resulted in studies of the social structure of socialist society that sought to rework concepts of everyday Marxism-Leninism. The most notable among these was the concept of “social homogenization.”

Several student cohorts were trained at the University of Bucharest between 1965, when the sociology department was first established, through to 1977, when the department was disbanded, and in a very restricted sense until the end of the 1980s. As taught at the university, sociology drew on Marxist, interwar, and Western sociological sources. This idiosyncratic intellectual blend underpinned large-scale empirical research on the two main sociological issues of social development (especially in relation to industrialization and urbanization) and scientific management (in relation to social planning). By outlining the context of sociology as practiced at the university alongside oral history accounts by sociology students trained at the time,

generational, intellectual, and existential fault lines come to the fore beneath a commonly shared understanding of sociology as an apolitical science of “social engineering” with roots in the interwar period.

The second part of the dissertation proposes a “reverse genealogical” analysis of three themes which became part of the imaginary of postsocialist intellectual thought on the social: participation, equality, and welfare. It explores how the three intellectual, institutional, and generational contexts identified in the first part of the dissertation played out in sociological research on mass culture, women’s emancipation, and the quality of life in the 1960s–80s. The reverse genealogical method allows to map a fuller range of strands of intellectual thought than has been made possible by the strong anti-communist turn of the 1990s, most notably among them Marxist revisionist thought developed into the late 1980s. It also recovers for the history of intellectual thought strands which have been not just abruptly abandoned, but also forgotten to the point of no longer being recognized as intellectual thought in the postsocialist period to begin with, such as the literature on women’s emancipation. Finally, the method of reverse genealogy showcases unacknowledged continuities in terms of scientific practice and ideas about the social between the state socialist and postsocialist periods, as in the case of quality of life research.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### EDUCATION

2011–2013 M.A. in Comparative History of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Central European University, Department of History

2007–2010 B.A. in World and Comparative Literature (major) and German Language and Literature (minor), University of Bucharest, Faculty of Letters

### WORK EXPERIENCE

October 2016–February 2018 Assistant editor, *Journal of East Central Europe*

March 2017– June 2017 Assistant, Institute of Advanced Studies, Budapest

October 2016–February 2017 Recruitment assistant, Department of History, Central European University

2014–2016 Copy editor, Central European University Press

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

2016–2019 Participation at the research project “Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women’s Rights in East Central Europe,” initiated by Zsófia Lóránd and supported by Pasts Inc., Center for Historical Studies, Central European University; the Max Weber Program, European University Institute; and Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena

February 2016 - Convener and organizer of the workshop “Cold War Epistemics, Revisited: Resistance and Legitimation in the Social Sciences,” Pasts Inc., Center for Historical Studies, Central European University

### CONFERENCES

**June 2018** “Future Studies in Socialist Romania: Sketch for an Intellectual History,” paper presented at the Society for Romanian Studies Conference, Bucharest

**November 2017** “Socialist Mass Culture and Expert Knowledge in the Long 1960s: A Comparison of Poland and Romania” (with Agata Zysiak), paper presented at the ASEEEES Convention, Chicago

**November 2016** Paper presented at the workshop “From Technocratic Socialism to Neoliberal Rule: Expert Cultures, Technocracy, and Governance in East Central Europe, 1960s–1990s,” Institute for Contemporary History and Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague

**May 2016** Paper presented at the workshop “The Many Faces of Late Socialism: The Individual in the ‘Eastern Bloc,’ 1953–1988,” Department for Eastern European History, University of Cologne

**November 2015** “The Office for Studies and Polls of the Romanian Radiotelevision and the Sociology of Mass Communications in Socialist Romania, 1960–80,” paper presented at the National Conference of the Romanian Sociologists’ Society, Braşov

**June 2015** “A ‘Common Front’?: Social Structure Research in 1970s Socialist Romania,” paper presented at the Fourth Annual Europe and the World Conference, European University Institute, Florence

**May 2015** “Managing Culture, Locating Consent: The Sociology of Mass Culture in Socialist Romania, 1960s–1970s,” paper presented at the Second Annual Conference of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies, Regensburg

**May 2014** “Sociologists and the State: Negotiating Interwar Expert Knowledge in Communist Romania,” paper presented at the 8th Gradual Conference in European History, European University Institute, Florence

## **GRANTS AND AWARDS**

February– April 2018 Visiting fellow, Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna

2017 CEU Award for Advanced Doctoral Students

2013–2016 Doctoral Fellowship, History Department, Central European University

2013 Péter Hanák Prize for best MA thesis

2013 CEU Outstanding Academic Achievement Award

## **LANGUAGES**

Romanian: Native speaker

English: Proficient user, C2

German: Independent user, B2

Hungarian: Independent user, B1

**LIST OF PUBLICATIONS**

“Introduction: “Peripheral Observations” and Their Observers.” In *Social Sciences in the “Other Europe” since 1945*, edited by Adela Hîncu and Victor Karady, 1–25. Budapest: Pasts, Inc., Central European University, 2018.

““A Common Front?”: Social Structure Research in 1970s Socialist Romania.” In *Social Sciences in the “Other Europe” since 1945*, edited by Adela Hîncu and Victor Karady, 209–23. Budapest: Pasts, Inc., Central European University, 2018.

“Managing Culture, Locating Consent: The Sociology of Mass Culture in Socialist Romania, 1960s–1970s.” *Revista română de sociologie* 28, nos. 1–2 (2017): 3–14.