To Karen Horney (1885-1952)

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Preface

Six years ago I wrote *The cultural fundaments of the American model* (2000), the first book of critical geography to be published in Romania. It has had a significant impact in stimulating Romanian geographers to open themselves to broader questions coming from social theory, political economy, and continental philosophy. After that book, I run away for a while from empirical analysis and focused my attention on geographical metatheory and the more general relation between epistemology, ontology, and politics. That break from empiricism has been fertile in several respects. First of all, it taught me how to be critical about being critical. I addressed this problem in *The truth regimes of the past* (2002), *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge* (2005), and *New Ways in Geography* (2006). In addition, it helped me approach fieldwork in a more mature manner: with fewer epistemological illusions, less theoretical rigidity, and some new habits such as the systematic concern for placing myself into the picture of what I was researching at that particular time.

For a long while I have been very sceptical about what I felt to be theoretical promiscuity. By this phrase I have been thinking about those scholars who combine too many schools of thought in the same paper, with no apparent interest into whether those theories are really compatible with one another. In my doctoral work I was even speaking about the closure of theory – the inherent tendency of any theoretical system towards presuppositional self-sufficiency. The closure of theory means that it is no easy task to ensure the compatibility of any two given theories. By writing this

book, I became much more relaxed about this metatheoretical problem. The major factor inducive of this relaxation has been the loss of my belief in the theoretical superiority of poststructuralisms, post-Marxist political economy, and non-representational theory. They have all taught me to hunt the sins of essentialism and functionalism in other scholars' writings and thus diverted my reflection away from discourses that are essentialist and functionalist, but nevertheless, still relevant to our understanding of social space. I adopted the pragmatic sceptical stance that any given discourse is a constellation of epistemic gains and epistemic losses and that therefore essentialist and functionalist discourses have their own worth, in spite of their sins.

It is this philosophical position that allowed me to add psychoanalysis as a new ingredient to my theoretical apparatuses. New discoveries from neuroscience prove beyond doubt that indeed we are driven by our unconscious. Freud's major insight will emerge with renewed force in the years to come, backed up with new empirical evidence from the sciences of the mind. It risks causing some major earthquakes in social theory and critical geography. It will force us to become very critical of the brand of critical geography practised in the last three decades.

This book renders visible the shift in my own thinking, from the early dogmatism of my anti-essentialism and anti-functionalism, to the late incorporation of psychoanalytical insights. It is therefore theoretically promiscuous. It is a reflection of what I understand as pragmatic scepticism. My chief goal was to create powerful narratives that help us understand in a deeper way a certain portion of the social reality. In order to achieve that goal I left aside the worries over the closure of theories and I combined them in all sorts

of epistemic cocktails, some more robust, some more fragile. I hope that the overall result does indeed help the reader grasp the substantive empirical focus of the book in a more profound way. Some notes on this empirical focus are necessary indeed.

I called the book *Marginally modern. Psychoanalysis and the deconstruction of inadequate communities* for a number of intertwined reasons. The book aims to present the history of the process of modernisation in the margins of Europe, more specifically in Romania and – to a lesser extent – in Norway. To be sure, by modernisation I mean the assemblage of theories and practices produced by the European Enlightenment and concerned with how to develop rather primitive cultures into civilized cultures (industrialised, urbanised, educated, and so on). This broad definition *includes* neoliberalism and communism as particular ways in which modernisation can proceed. Throughout the book, I analyse modernity in its various guises: Ceausescu's communist regime, Norway's welfare capitalism, or the neoliberal revolutions taking place in both Norway and Romania since the early 1990s.

Until 2002, my empirical focus was on Romania alone. A visit in Norway in the summer of the same year made me aware of some intriguing similarities between the Romanian brand and the Norwegian brand of modernity. Since then, I researched this unexpected resemblance in more detail, to realize that the feeling of inadequacy resulting from the marginal condition of both countries has been crucial in producing that resemblance. In other words, one can be modern in a number of ways. What Romania and Norway have in common is that they are *marginally modern*. The signifier 'marginally' produces many slippages of meaning, but they all tend to suggest a negative register. I am too

much of a cultural relativist to believe that modernity is superior to what we label 'primitivism' or 'traditional communities'. I never operate on the assumption that modernity is the thing to go for and the reader can note the way I theorise 'corruption' as an example of my subscription to cultural relativism. I also do not argue that modernity is something bad. What I do try to show is that a psychoanalytical reading of the history of modernisation in the two countries is very fruitful for deconstructing current hegemonic discourses in both Norway and Romania. There are still many politicians and intellectuals in the two countries who recite the tropes of inadequacy, and their recitations serve the political purposes of neoliberalism and neo-imperialism. I have tried to show that there is nothing inherently wrong with being Romanian and Norwegian and that the very obsession that something is fundamentally wrong indicates a cultural neurosis of marginality that does not help the two countries in any way.

Time is money. And science is money as well. The latter equation explains the imbalance between the number of chapters focusing on Romania and the number of chapters focusing on Norway. In the last years the funds I secured for fieldwork allowed me to do most of my intended fieldwork, but some segments of my research plans have not been achieved. Had I been able to achieve them all, I would have chosen the initial title I had in mind for this book: *Geographies of utopian engineering: a comparative study of modernisation in Norway and Romania*. Because the empirical material I had on Norway has been much less than its Romanian counter-part, I could not claim that what I was doing was a truly symmetric comparison and gave up that title. As it stands, the present volume comprises seven chapters, logically ordered to capture the dynamic of my

own theoretical shifts: the beginning of the book is more indebted to deconstruction and non-representational theory, whereas the end of the book signals the increasing influence of psychoanalytical theories on my empirical encounters.

When I first started to read psychoanalysis I had a hard time understanding it. Freud is not the easiest writer to read. I gave it up for a while. Years later, on Canadian soil, I came across the work of Karen Horney, whose writings forced me to rethink what I have been researching and myself. She also stirred my interest in going back to reading Freud, as well as the forgotten work of Freudo-Marxists. I noticed her name mentioned in all dictionaries of psychoanalysis, but none of them considers her to be a figure of the same level as Lacan, Klein, or Winnicott. I found this situation unfair to her contribution to the redefinition of psychoanalytical theory and to help remedy this injustice I dedicate this book to her memory.

Paris, August the 21st, 2005

1. Economic determinism, cultural determinism, and the promise of the cocktail metaphor

1. Economic determinism, cultural determinism, and the promise of the cocktail metaphor

> If someone in an ice cream shop asked: "Can I have a large ice cream cone?" most of us would be surprised if the person took the cone, said, "Thank you", and walked away.' (A.Klamer, 1987)

This introductory chapter discusses a series of epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin the current discourses of economic geography and cultural geography. I use as entry-point for this discussion the problem of gendered phenomena, or, more exactly, Bradley and Fenton's claim (1999) that we need to combine 'cultural and economic analyses for a complete understanding of gendered phenomena'. By means of a deconstruction of this claim, the chapter problematises the concepts of 'culture' and 'economy' and proposes an alternative model for understanding the discursive formation of the domains of the social. The alternative model outlined here will then act as the epistemological and ontological backcloth of the subsequent chapters.

I am fascinated by the ways in which people – and more specifically, geographers- simplify the Reality 'out-there' in order to invest it with meaning and to make possible any scientific endeavour. Although we need simplification, I

want to plead[1] for the idea that in order to have a real 'progress' in the field of geography, we must acknowledge these simplifications, and start problematising the process of simplification in itself. Which are, ultimately, the best ways of simplifying? Are perspectival realism and neopragmatic 'rational' negotiation effective tools for (partly) overcoming the biased dimension of any 'situated knowledge'?

In what follows I sketch a possible model of analysis in ontological geography, taking as object of enquiry a statement by Bradley and Fenton (1999) of recent concern for human geographers:

> We need to combine cultural and economic analyses for a complete understanding of gendered phenomena…cultural phenomena need to be "read" in their economic and political context (and) economic and political processes develop within particular frameworks of symbol and meaning.

Since Derrida, we can say that a critical text discussion presupposes some form of deconstruction. Often, the epistemological realm is seen as derivative (secondary) of the ontological realm, and deconstruction is successful if it manages to reveal the metaphysical commitments involved by the textual presence of some big signifiers. In our case (the above quote), the three big signifiers would be 'the economic', 'the cultural', and 'gender(ed phenomena)', each of them complex enough to send the reader into the endless intertextual chains of signification. Definitions of the first two terms are particularly confusing, making the very

[1] Not only here: this concern was part of a larger doctoral project in favour of a metatheoretical and ontological geography, pursued by the author whilst at the University of Bristol.

theorisation that employs them problematic, as there is no clear-cut correspondence between the signifiers and the referents[2]. This intellectual trap – the focus on the genealogy of various definitions of the big signifiers - is well suggested by the following anecdote (in Clarke, D., Doel, M., 2000, p. 214):

> On finding themselves hopelessly lost, a couple stop to ask directions: "Say! How do we get to Leatherhead?" After lengthy consideration, the stranger replies: "Well, if I were you, I wouldn't start from here."

The argument I have tried to support is not only that a classic deconstructionist approach of the three big signifiers is ultimately trivial and unfruitful[3], but also that it is not sufficient. Curiously, Bradley and Fenton's phrase leads one in the temptation to deconstruct the big 'ontological' signifiers, which usually are the most difficult to identify, whereas another line of signifiers tends to be overlooked. In the particular case of the aforementioned quote, the 'deep' level of analysis would be the deconstruction of the line of 'epistemological' concepts, and not of the 'ontological' concepts. Five are particularly salient: 'We need (1) to combine (2) cultural and economic analyses (3) for a complete (4) understanding (5) of …'.

It has already been proposed that a classic analysis of the various definitions of gender, culture and economy,

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[2] Various definitions are discussed in Baldwin, E. et all, eds., 1999, Barker, C., 2000, Eagleton, T., 2000, Cook, I et all, eds., 2000, Crang, Ph., 1997, etc; provocative definitions of gender are analysed in Grosz, E.,1995.

[3] They will be 'deconstructed' in what follows, but through an alternative strategy.

meant to unravel the problems raised by Bradley and Fenton's statement is likely to be uninspiring. Given the endless intertextual realm involved in this particular case, as an alternative deconstructionist strategy, I will attack the same issues inspired (i) partly by Max Weber's method of ideal types (which allows for the identification of the standard approaches to gender, culture and economy, without a focus on all sorts of in-between positions, which are seen as derivative from the major ideal types), (ii) partly by what could be named *translatio* - a means of overcoming the inherent predicament of intertextuality by working at the intersection of words with their (imagined) graphical representation. Whereas normally all attempts to translate are understood as diminishing the richness of the original[4], it is methodologically valuable to exploit the potential of referring to the same aspects through two different languages: words and graphics. In what follows, the reader is invited to think of the relation between 'culture' and 'economy' not in terms of (overlapping or not) definitions, but as images, as circles -for instance- that, according to the paradigms underpinning various views, might be completely distinct or might overlap. Imagine also the arrows that suggest the direction of the flows of influence and determination between the 'circles' (one-sided determination, co-determination, overdetermination, etc.).

The main schools of thought within social science would unpack Bradley and Fenton's claim in different respects. It is not enough to ask how culture relates with economy in their account. Centrality must be given to the way they understand the most specific signifier within their statement, notably gender.

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[4] The famous Italian saying is 'Tradutore traditore!', i.e. 'the translator is a traitor'.

Naïve Realism

The most primitive view, which is more frequent in less educated groups, does not distinguish between sex and gender, and understands them as natural, as given. Since gender is seen as natural and biological, it is clear that those who share this belief would not agree with the idea that simply combining cultural and economic analyses suffices for a complete understanding of gender. As far as they are concerned, the main issue -'the naturalness' of gender- cannot be omitted from analysis.

This first attitude notwithstanding, there is an almost general agreement that gender is a matter of 'culture'. The agreed model is to sustain the sex / gender binary: sex (male / female) is 'natural'; gender (men / women & In-between anti-normative positions) is 'culturally' produced. Two observations are to be made at this point. First, there are recent powerful arguments[5] that 'sex' also is a cultural construct. Putting the problem this way gives satisfaction to those (Haraway, 1996) who criticised the sex / gender binary for reinforcing the Nature / Culture binary, and, together with it, the phallogocentric way of thinking of Western culture. Second, even if 'gender' is a cultural construct, its 'consequences'- gendered phenomena - can have (and do have) non-cultural dimensions- such as, for example, economic dimensions. Apparently, the fact that gender is, above all, a matter of 'culture', gives most of the answer to Bradley and Fenton: yes, we need to combine the cultural and economic analyses for a complete understanding, but this should not obscure the fact that the 'cultural' is, in this respect, the prioritised realm. At this point, a complication of

[5] See especially Butler, J., 1990, 1993, 1997a-b, 2000.

the discussion is much required, and it will be pursued by letting 'in' the question of causality & determination between the two major domains of the social: 'culture' and 'economy'.

Economic Determinism

The Marxist paradigm operates with the distinction between 'base' (economy) and 'superstructure' (which includes 'culture'), the driving force of the social life being the logic of economy. Ultimately, everything has an economic explanation and in Marxism, even the so-called 'cultural analysis' is yet another brand of economic analysis. Putting things differently, 'economy' and 'culture' are two distinct systems (I use 'system', 'realm', 'domain', and 'world' interchangeably, to suggest the metaphysical imaginaries by means of which 'functionalism' and 'essentialism' are recited in social theory), but they are not 'equal'.
The cultural system is the emanation of the economic 'base', its 'Other', functioning within the only logic out-there: that of the economy. This school of thought has been highly influential, Marx's insights being furthered in various directions. Thus, a reductionist reading of Marx is that of Engels and Lenin; whilst a more reasonable position is that of Gramsci, who emphasised the role of culture through his concept of 'hegemony'. A reworked Marxism also characterises the early writings of the Frankfurt School - e.g. - the concept of 'culture industry' developed by Adorno, cf. du Gay, ed., 1997, p.105-111. Note also the more recent reductionist theories that explain postmodern culture as the effect of a new phase in the evolution of capitalist economy (Harvey, 1989, Jameson, 1991, Featherstone, 1996).

Regardless of the fact that Marxism is detrimental to the study of gendered phenomena, as it privileges class over gender[6], Bradley and Fenton's statement (1999) means little to Marxists, since for them 'cultural analysis' is a special type of 'economic analysis'.

Cultural Determinism

Cultural determinism is the mirror image of the Marxist paradigm: the 'cultural' and the 'economic' are conceived as distinct spheres (do imagine them!), but there is still a single logic which operates: in this case the cultural logic. The history of this approach is closely related with the idealist view (from Plato, to Hegel and to some postmodernist positions) of the world, the same way economic determinism (whose most convincing defender was Marx) has gone hand in hand with a materialist perspective.

Cultural determinism is associated with various thinkers, among whom one would note Georg Simmel, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. When its evolution is followed up to the present, there appears a need to distinguish between two cultural approaches: the first approach is concerned with the understanding of 'economy' as 'involving the production, circulation and consumption of "materials" that are cultural in character' (Crang, Ph., 1997, p.13). In this vein, any economic analysis is a special type of cultural analysis[7] and the work of Scott Lash and John Urry partially endorses this view.

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[6] See the feminist critiques of Harvey's work: Massey, 1991, Deutsche, 1991, Morris, 1992.

[7] One more ground for not necessarily agreeing with Bradley and Fenton.

The second cultural approach is interested not so much in the cultural determination of the real economy, as it is in the discursive practices of 'the economic', in the ways in which a cultural construct - the idea of an economic sphere or system - is transposed in reality and analysed as if it were 'real'. In geography, this approach has been followed most vigorously by Barnes (1992, 1996). In economics it has taken the form of a distinctive tradition of rhetorical analyses (cf. Klamer, 1987; also the volume 'The Consequences of Economic Rhetoric', 1988, edited by Klamer, McCloskey and Solow - see especially 'The Rhetoric of self-interest: Ideology of gender in economic theory', by Folbre and Hartmann, who are critical of the feminist discourse of gender interest; Sachs, 1992, etc).

Co-determination

Co-determination is one of the most popular schools of thought, its adherents seeing it as a move beyond the reductionist ideas of one-sided determinisms. 'Culture' and 'Economy' are still conceived as different domains, but each of them has its own logic, non-reducible to the logic of the other. In a sense, they are equal, 'culture' being influenced by 'economy' and, conversely, 'economy' being embedded in 'culture'. Sometimes these two realms are portrayed as completely separate, sometimes as overlapping. Much of what has been called 'the cultural turn' in political economy draws on this social ontology of mutual determination. Significant theoretical contributions are those of Laclau and

Mouffe, Bourdieu, Raymond Williams, Hoggart, Lane, Painter, etc[8].

It is easily noticeable that Bradley and Fenton do share the belief in this ontology of mutual determination. To be sure, they say: 'Cultural phenomena need to be "read" in their economic and political context (and) economic and political processes develop within particular frameworks of symbol and meaning' (1999). In other words, they seem to be saying that there are two major systems. Indeed, the 'political' system is not given a clear status in the statement as a whole. It is seen rather as derivative or associated with 'economy'. The claim by Bradley and Fenton is to combine only cultural and economic analyses and not political analyses as well. As it were, there is place for cultural analysis, for economic analysis, as well as for the analysis of how they might shed light upon each other. Good research of one sphere needs to combine the analysis 'typical' of that sphere, with the insights offered by the other analysis. This

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[8] See also 'Production of culture/cultures of production', 1997, edited by du Gay; 'Culture and Economy after the Cultural Turn', edited by Ray and Sayer, 1999; Crang 1997; a detailed presentation of the hybrid cultural and economic analyses in geography is in McDowell, 2000; for pro-cultural turn positions see Barnes, 1995, for critical attitudes see Barnett, 1998a, 1998b and Sayer 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000; the need to combine cultural and economic analyses for understanding gendered phenomena is demonstrated in the recent volumes by McDowell, 'Capital Culture: gender at work in the city', 1997, which draws on Judith Butler's work, and by Erica Schoenberger, 'The Cultural Crisis of the Firm', 1996, which offers insights on how identities are not only performed and reinforced, but also partly constituted at the workplace; see also Robin Bartlett, 'Introducing race and gender into economics', 1997.

need does not refer only to gendered phenomena, but to the whole of these systems. Bradley and Fenton do not say that gendered phenomena belong to a third system, constituted by the overlapping of the 'cultural' and the 'economic'. Even if gendered phenomena were fully belonging to the cultural system, they would still require economic analysis, given the fact that the cultural system is an open system and as such is subject to significant influences from the economic system.

Overdetermination

Overdetermination is yet another way of handling the question of causation between culture and economy. This thesis was provocatively defended in Gibson-Graham's 'The End of Capitalism (as we knew it). A Feminist Critique of Political Economy' (1996), which is not only a plea for the need to combine cultural and economic analyses for understanding gender, but also an illustration of how feminist analyses can enrich economic approaches. Drawing on Resnick, Wolff, Laclau and Mouffe, Althusser, Foucault, and Derrida, Gibson-Graham advance a position between modernism (they hold to the meta-narrative of emancipation and to a conception of totality) and postmodernism (they reject functionalism, essentialism, one-sided determinism, the language of the Master, etc.). The existence of an economic realm is not denied. However the standard conceptions of totality are strongly attacked, by drawing on Laclau and Mouffe (quoted in Gibson-Graham, pp. 221-222):

> Our vision is to a large extent holistic, since it presupposes that any identity is differential...and that the systems of differences are articulated in totalities

> which are "historical blocs" of "hegemonic formations". But unlike classical sociological holism…we do not feel these configurations or social totalities to be self-regulating totalities but precarious articulations that are always threatened by a "constitutive outside".

To complete the foundation of Gibson-Graham's model, this primordial ontological proposition is followed by a second proposition – the thesis of overdetermination. In their words:

> In an "interreflective social totality" each economic process might be understood as overdetermined by all non-economic processes, and as participating in their overdetermination (p. 116).

There is no room here for a detailed analysis of this thesis. What I wanted to suggest is that those theorists who believe in overdetermination would reply to Bradley and Fenton that we need indeed to combine cultural and economic analyses when researching gender, but that this is far from enough. For a complete understanding, *everything* should be considered. And it is here the methodological predicament of overdetermination becomes apparent. Although theoretically seducing, the vision of overdetermination raises a whole series of stubborn difficulties for concrete research: how can one consider the influence of everything? How is theory possible if overdetermination is the only (anti-)logic of social relations? Can we do science without hierarchising the factors that contribute to an event or process? How does the search for *driving* factors dovetail with the epistemological sensitivity required in the consideration of everything?

The Cocktail Metaphor: strong ontology, weak epistemology

> Often one cannot refrain from saying what one thinks, and one excuses oneself on the ground that one is not giving it out for more than it is worth. (Freud, 1927/1989: 68)

'Strong ontology, weak epistemology' would be the name of the model I propose. To begin with, I reject the logic of 'majoritarian' truth that underlies the previous models (ideal types) analysed. A person is educated to divide things in 'cultural' and 'economic' in an abusive way. For the sake of this demonstration, let us say that all things in the social sphere are simultaneously cultural and economic, but in various degrees: a theatre is, trivially speaking, more culture than economy, whilst a factory is more economy than culture. How do we proceed? We look at the 'majoritarian' influence, and, accordingly, we place that object in that specific domain: the theatre is taken to belong to the cultural domain or layer, the factory to the economic domain. Each of these domains or worlds operates with a distinct logic and, consequently, allows for distinct epistemologies and methodologies[9]. The objects within each world are to be researched through that particular form of analysis: the theatre through cultural analysis, the factory through economic analysis.

Instead of seeing reality as composed of domains / layers / realms such as the economic or the cultural, I see it as profusion / messiness in which each entity is actually:

(i) A *fluidentity* (Doel, 1999) in that the outside / inside divide is much more problematic than we assume) and

[9] This is yet another largely shared unwarranted assumption.

(ii) A *polyvalent* actor, in that one thing has more than one 'function': it is crossed by relations that interfere in contingent configurations. To capture this imbroglio, I use the Cocktail Metaphor. There is no such thing as a cultural or economic layer / realm / world / domain, but a single 'sphere' in which various relations and mechanisms co-exist and interfere. To be sure, there is a set of relations that we use to call 'economy' (and the same goes about culture), but by no means should we forget that this 'economy' is our approximation of something which exists out-there and which cannot be completely known. Perhaps we include / omit from this set of relations things that also actually belong / do not belong to it. We can never know for sure (faillibilist, weak epistemology[10]). My point here is that both the theatre and the factory are simultaneously crossed by and act in the networks that we commonly call 'economy' and 'culture'.

With these things in mind, reference and criticism need to be made with regard to the second logic that underpins both economic and cultural determinisms: the logic of the ultimate foundation. We tend to abusively simplify the complexity of Reality, as we need to have a view of the world as something that is knowable and capable of providing meanings. Both Marxists and cultural determinists (I simplify here) believe in the mirage of an ultimate foundation, of a driving force of social reality. In the first case, this force is 'economy'; in the second case it is 'culture'. Although Bradley and Fenton's assumed ontology implies co-determination, their model remains simplistic, partly because of this logic of the ultimate foundation (there are only two determinants in their account), partly because it

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[10] See my book *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge* (2005).

is built on the already discussed logic of the majoritarian regime of truth. As it was shown, I do not find the thesis of overdetermination a good solution either, for it is methodologically impossible to consider everything as influencing everything. We need simplification and we need a hierarchy of the determinant factors.

My departure from narrow (cultural or economic) determinism is grounded in the denial of the existence of an ultimate foundation or driving force of the social reality, and its replacement with the cocktail metaphor. In each specific situation, there is a combination of determinant factors, some being more important than the others: the ideal 'trajectory' in time-space of a theatre may be the result of a specific combination (cocktail) of 'cultural' processes, 'political' decisions and 'economic' constraints, but their influence within the same thing (the theatre) varies over time. In other words, there are no universal, trans-historical social laws. In reality, we do not see but the production of difference (negentropy), assuming that the laws of that production are the same. I want to clearly point out my belief that the very rules / laws of producing difference change in time and across space. This theoretical radicalism provides a better way for explaining, for example, the increased interference of the 'cultural' with the 'economic' in the last decades (the whole debate about post-Fordism, the cultural economy, etc.).

Gendered phenomena are 'cultural', 'economic' and more than this. Although I am seduced by recent work (particularly Butler, 1990, 1993) suggesting that the key-ingredient of the gender 'cocktail' is 'culture', I can agree to an extent with Bradley and Fenton, in that we need to combine the cultural and the economic for a better ('complete' is impossible) understanding of them. This is what I call *the need to saturate an explanation*. Here the

cocktail metaphor reveals its strength. Even though the main ingredient of a cocktail is researched (cultural analysis of gender in our case) we will know little about how the cocktail (the reality of gendered phenomena) really is, given the fact that the 'minor' (2nd, 3rd, 4th etc.) ingredients are decisive in providing the 'taste', in making the cocktail a 'non-pure' drink, in configuring the distinctive 'signature' of each cup. Economists researching the economic dimensions of gender need to saturate their explanation by acknowledging the fact that gender is especially a matter of culture, and accordingly, by considering cultural analyses in their accounts. Conversely, specialists in culture researching gender need to saturate their explanation by taking a look at the 'minor' ingredients of gender- they need to seize the economic logic / dimensions of (a basically cultural phenomenon) gender.

Final thoughts

One should not accept too readily Bradley and Fenton's simplistic ontology and the naïve attitude concerning the deep epistemological assumptions on which it relies[11].
Bradley and Fenton's statement (1999) can be deconstructed following two possible lines of enquiry: the first line is 'ontological' (centred on unpacking the performative signifiers 'culture', 'economy' and 'gender'), the second line is 'epistemological' and somehow more difficult to detect (centred on excavating the signifiers 'need', 'combine', 'analyses', 'complete' and 'understanding').

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[11] See, in this respect, Kuhn, 1976, Rorty, 1979, Thrift, 1996, Miller, 2000, Haslanger, 2000, Langton, 2000.

The deconstructive methodology deployed in this chapter did not focus on simply comparing competing definitions of culture and economy, but on *translatio* (the readers were invited to imagine the 'worlds/domains' of the social and the arrows symbolising the sense of determination between them), through Weber's 'ideal type' method. Six possible positions with regard to the statement discussed were identified: naïve realism, economic determinism, cultural determinism, co-determination, overdetermination, and 'the cocktail metaphor' (the strong ontology and weak epistemology of pragmatic scepticism). These are all theoretical simplifications, ideal types that suggest the major battlefields in the ongoing debate taking place in the social sciences with respect to the ontological commitments of contemporary social research.

There is a need to combine cultural and economic analyses of gender, but this need would be better resolved if social scientists were more vigilant about the ways in which their recitation of signifiers such as 'culture' and 'economy' create the discursive *fantasy* of the existence of several domains of the social.

The pragmatic scepticism of the cocktail metaphor stands for an alternative imagination of the social, premised on a strong ontology and weak epistemology. It destabilises the epistemic universality of 'economy' and 'culture', by recasting them as mere signifiers that help us *approximate* how the world works. The more we forget that they are just signifiers, the less they help us understand the world. The case study presented in the next chapter takes this observation further and insists precisely on the epistemic significance of choosing the right signifiers.

2. The question of economic victimhood

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> We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men (sic). The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere. (Freud, 1930/1989: 26)

We have insisted so far that 'economy' and 'culture' are not objective realities out-there, but mere signifiers, the universal recitation of which creates the illusion of their objective reality. The case study that follows illustrates the empirical difficulty of separating 'culture' from 'economy', as well as the theoretical necessity of forging new signifiers that better approximate the particular 'cocktail' of a particular case study.

More specifically, we introduce several theoretical tools for the analysis of the geographies of institutional transformation and inter-institutional competition under neoliberalism, through the story of a peripheral trade union from Western Romania to which the author has had a privileged epistemic access. The first part of the story discusses the truth-effects arising out of this access, the second summarises the theoretical background of the research by means of the signifier 'polymorphous

chorologies', the third excavates the history of the trade union through a five-fold grid of concern (including money and material resources, emotions, political networking, scale performance, and know-how), and the final, concluding part, theorises the victimhood of this trade union, and pleads for a form of active reflexivity in the practice of research.

Truth effects

It has been unusual and somehow awkward for me to research and write this case study. The topic – the history of a local union from Western Romania – is much more personal than it seems, because one of the key actors (actants) in this parochial saga has been my mother, who has worked all her professional life in trade unionism[12]. It is also personal because I was myself involved in what has been going on in the life of the city of Arad, the centre and main arena of this union. I left the city in 1996, to study for four years for my first degree in geography, at Cluj-Napoca, and then left Romania altogether, in 2000, to do a PhD in the UK. Nevertheless, the story of this trade union has often 'haunted' me, feeling that I have -one day- to write about it. When I say 'I have to', an entanglement of ethical issues and opportunities for a 'hot' research agenda lurk in my mind. I feel that the study of trade unionism in post-communist Romania has a lot to offer for understanding postsocialist transformations, the specificity of Romania's transition, the power constellations imbued in place formations and scale performance (Simandan, 2001), as well as for enlarging and qualifying the theoretical and methodological agenda of the

[12] In 2001, she managed to obtain an early retirement.

economic geographies of labour, in general (Martin, 2000), and of unionism, in particular (Herod, 1998, 2000).

From a methodological point of view, I have to say from the onset that I am much more interested in the intensive-like approach of labour geography, rather than the 'extensive' geography of labour. Instead of offering a view from 'above' of the whole polymorphous chorology of Romanian unionism, I chose to narrow down to a tiny bit of it and to situate my knowledge claims, both in terms of immersion in the story re-told here, and in terms of restricting my intervention to the tools of intensive, qualitative methodologies. Among these, I would begin by mentioning my 'observant participation' (Thrift, 2000) as: a) inhabitant of the city where the manifest effects of this trade union have unfolded; b) member of the family of one of its key actors (my mother), status which has offered me the chance to 'grow up' with the multiple (biased, but / therefore 'authentic') stories of the multiple episodes of the union, as lived and perceived by my mother; and c) occasional visitor of the 'headquarter' of the union, a large room with tables, chairs, a telephone, and an old-style mechanical typing machine.

This aside, to enrich my understanding of the multifarious dimensions of this research cocktail, I also used oral histories, in depth interviews and focus groups (done in August 2001), and a large amount of archival work. The latter has been possible because the union has been so small, with few power positions, my mother's included. To be sure, in Romania access to information is particularly difficult, as institutions still assume the lack of transparency to be 'normal'. Furthermore, the legislation defends their tendencies to hide information away from the intruding eye of the researcher.

The logic of the story is quite straightforward. These introductory notes concerned with situating my knowledge claims and specifying the methodological take, are followed by a sketchy account of my theoretical (ontological and epistemological-cum-political) position, which explains why I melt the normally-expected paragraph setting the background of my research within the Romanian context, with the bits of that 'narrow' research of the Organisation of the Free Trade Unions[13].

Indeed, the depiction of what has happened in Romania since the fall of the communist regime in 1989, and of the cultural and economic profile of the city and county of Arad – the arena where this labour union has enacted, more or less conspicuously, its performances- penetrate the main segment of the chapter, which is about the birth and becoming of the OFTU, Arad. This becoming is analysed from a critical geographical perspective, as enmeshed in place formation, scale performance, network (re)building, and the reproduction of fragile political-cum-economic regimes of transition. The account allows for opening some lines of dialogue with the literatures of economic geographies of labour and trade unionism, urban social geographies, geographies of power and resistance (Sharp, Routledge, Philo, and Paddison, 2000), embodiment and performativity (Thrift, 2000a-d, Gregson and Rose, 2000, Dewsbury, 2000, Harrison, 2000), legal geography (Blomley, 1994), as well as with the East European theorists of postsocialist transformations (Mungiu, 1995, Barbu, 1998, Tismaneanu, 1992, Pasti, Miroiu, Codita, 1997, Daianu, 2000, Sava, 2000, Kolodko, 2000). Some conclusions will follow.

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[13] From now on OFTU.

Polymorphous chorologies

It is just for theoretical clarifications that the chapter includes this paragraph, as I believe that the inside /outside, text / context divide is more of our own making rather than real, 'out there'. Therefore, I prefer to use the concept of (operational) scale[14], understood as 'contexts' collapsed within a given unit of analysis (Simandan, 2005). Romania and the county of Arad have shaped and have been shaped[15] by OFTU, and in analysing it I am analysing the alleged 'contexts'. The aforementioned 'unit of analysis' is in fact the epistemological language for speaking of what constitutes a 'polymorphous chorology', signifier by which I try to capture the interplay between epistemology, ontology, and politics, moving beyond the representationalist / mimetic manoeuvre that separates us, the knowing subjects, from the objects of enquiry, from the reality 'out there'. Polymorphous chorology is also a convenient trope for encompassing the recent critiques of actor-network theory, and for doing away with a mode of thinking that still separates between things and processes, stasis and change, (Cartesian) subject and object, agency and structure.

Polymorphous chorology is an ontology and a way of seeing which maintains that:
a) Power is everywhere, but not everything is power;

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[14] The adjective 'operational' helps avoiding confusions with the traditional classifications of scale in methodological scale, geographical scale, and cartographic scale.
[15] Not to a significant extent, but an overdeterminist perspective, e.g. Gibson-Graham, 1996, would not put too much weight on the hierarchy of influences!

b) There is overdetermination, but only some determinants are significant in a given constellation (cocktail) of interactions. The stake of overdetermination lies not so much in understanding or accounting for what has happened so far, but in the inherent impossibility to rigorously anticipate what is 'around the corner' (Thrift, 2001);
c) Events and happenings cannot be divorced from routines and everyday practices. They do not bring only radical novelty and Otherness, but also the 'old', the heritage, cumulative causation, and path dependency. They are both inputs to flows of change / networks, and outputs of those very same flows / networks;
d) Agency is not separable from structure: structure makes agency and agency (i.e. the capacity to have effects) makes structures;
e) Social reproduction is not stasis, or something opposed to revolutionary change. Social reproduction is itself change, a change that occurs at the intersection of events and creativity with heritage, with what was before[16]. It is only the *trompe l'oeil* of transitional models (i.e. dividing the historical time in different 'periods' separated by thresholds that mark a shift from one historical regime / 'order of things' to a novel regime that has little in common with what was before) that leads us take unquestioned the idea that there is such thing as relatively homogenous, 'static' historical periods;
f) Time is space is difference. Rather then looking at how these three assumed ontologically distinct things interact, we would do better by looking at how they equate with each other (e.g. how space is difference, how difference is space, the difference that space makes, the space that makes a difference, etc);

[16] May the past be burden or asset.

g) The grids of regulation are not inescapable and are heterogeneously performed by humans, offering sites of resistance, windows of opportunity, enabling potentials for undermining other grids of regulation. Capitalism itself is not something 'universal'. In Thrift's words (2001, p. 378):

> …the new political economy is being constructed through new spatial forms that are not just incidental to some supposed overlaying capitalist dynamic, but are what capitalism is.

In the same spirit one has to rethink neoliberalism, and my empirical investigations in its 'cultural circuit' in Romania are convergent with Peck and Tickell's attempt to re-theorize it (2002, p. 126):

> Neoliberalism's potency stems from its character as an institutionally - reproduced rule regime: perplexingly, neoliberalism is neither an extraterrestrial force nor is it conveniently bounded in institutional terms; it is a complex combination of, inter alia, structural power, normalized rule regimes, discursive practices, codified norms and policy conventions, and hegemonic (North Atlantic) geopolitical and geoeconomic interests… Neoliberalism's contradictory (sic) political-economic nature is mediated by its demonstrated capacity to morph into different institutional forms, across space and scale as well as through time…neoliberalism's capacity for internal transformation and political reproduction may have previously been underestimated.

h) Reality is not completely transparent: we cannot get to know it by just conscientiously following prescribed rules of the right scientific method. Our knowledge is inescapably

situated and is a matter of power and constellations of gains and losses. In order to know something, we necessarily restrict our spatial-temporal diagram, through being immersed in the opening of one project, opening predicated upon the closure of other virtually possible cognitive projects[17];

I) Our knowledge endeavours are largely infected with the vicious assumption that as scientists what we have to do is to mirror the world. We pay far less attention to the fascinating perspectives of materialist semiotics and virtualism (Miller, 2000). As performers of stabilised truth regimes, we are not only knowledge seekers, but also knowledge effectors: we generate truth-effects, as Foucault would have put it. And truth-effects generate us (see also Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997a-b);

j) Polymorphous chorologies are anything but neat ontological constituencies. The lubricating function of networks is troubled by their intransitivities (Law, 2000), blanks and heritage functions, which all make the 'network' (or rather polymorphous chorology) a rough constituency;

k) Everything is context-sensitive, including the immutable mobiles (Latour, 1999). Contexts are always already within and the concept of operational scale is intended to capture the inside-ness of the outside, as necessary step for subsequent political undertakings;

l) Everything (including discourses and representations) is performance and performance is everything. Scale is also performed (Simandan, 2001), and makes the subject formations to be spatial. Instead of Cartesian subjects, we are archipelagos of dividual actants, fluidentities (Doel, 1999);

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[17] See also Hetherington's and Lee's, 2000, use of the 'blank figure'.

m) 'The nonhuman' is more of an analytical category, which makes social science possible. Understanding /explanation that ignores it is anything but geography (see also Whatmore, 1999, 2002).

What difference would the above theoretical lens produce when deployed in an empirical analysis? I will experiment with this question in the following paragraph, where the context is seen as *within* my unit of analysis - the historical geography of OFTU's victimhood.

Power-geometries of inter-unionist competition

Under the communist system, labour unionism was reduced to a monolithic, obedient, and politically-naïve organisation: 'The General Union of Trade Unions of Romania' (GUTUR, in Romanian UGSR). All people who were working were its members, and it was politically instrumentalised as a tool of control and propaganda of the unique party: the PCR (i.e. The Romanian Communist Party). In the wake of the Revolution of 1989 (when dictator Ceausescu and the communist system were violently removed), GUTUR was dismantled and a myriad of small trade unions, located at the level of each economic unit (factory, agricultural associations, etc.), emerged and started to forge alliances and mobilise power, in their search for institutional consolidation.

To be sure, the social order of the *Ancient Regime* has been disrupted by an event – the Revolution - that brought about novelty, but this is not to say that events are nothing more or less than 'radical Otherness' (Hetherington, Law, 2000). This event did not emerge out of nothing, but was the outcome of a particular configuration of causal relations, of

a cocktail that resulted from the failure of the communist social order[18]. Furthermore, the profusion of trade unions and their conflicts over power, unionizable workers, and legitimacy, were performed by (Freudian) people with their own interests, seeking positions of leadership and monopolies over more or less peripheral crossroads of the fast-changing social network. I say 'fast-changing' and not 'new' because in the postcommunist assemblages of social reproduction a lot of what was before 1989 remained unchanged, or suffered just rearrangements. Novelty in this case is a synonym for 're-arranged', which in turn, is not necessarily synonym with 'dislocated'.

The inter-unionist competition unfolded at different levels of intensity and within specific power-geometries (Massey, 1993), but there are, I suspect, five main threads that have woven its fabric (figure 1): money and material resources in general[19], knowledge (in the form of specific know-how about unionism and legal matters), emotions (and the early 1990s have repeatedly displayed the visceral at the heart of the public space), political networking (the establishing of privileged relations with certain political parties), and scale performance (referring to both the geographical scale of inter-union alliances – e.g. local-horizontal, or national-vertical- *and* to the 'maximising scale effects' strategies, such as intense propaganda, or violent strikes).

The Organisation of Free Trade Unions, Arad was born on 19th of June 1990 (the achievement of legal status), having as founding members fifteen small unions. The date of birth is

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[18] See also Smith and Swain, 1998.

[19] The general agreement was that the assets of the former GUTUR were to be distributed to the new unions in direct proportion with their number of members.

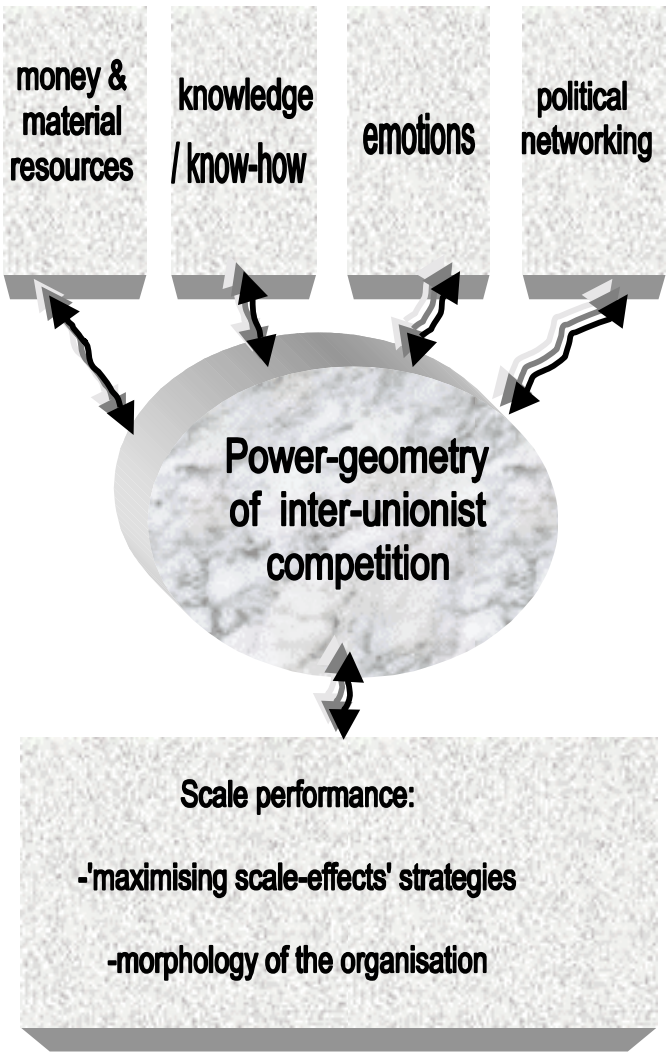

Figure 1: Power-geometries of inter-unionist competition

not without symbolism, as a few days before, the whole country was on the political edge because of the violent miners' 'strike' from the Jiu Valley and their devastation of numerous public institutions in Bucharest. The trajectories of these two unionist groups (the first – OFTU, the second- The League of Miners' Unions from the Jiu Valley) ever since the early 1990s might represent the two ends of the broad spectrum of unionisation in post-Communist Romania. The first has chosen to play according to the rules and without 'maximising scale effects' strategies. The second has chosen the much more successful path of playing against the rules and for the imposition of new rules, and has done so through the practice of 'illegal violence' (Campeanu, 2001) and through cleverly challenging scale relations by defying in practice the alleged spatial 'fixity' of labour (Simandan, 2001).

The OFTU was a means of survival for the former staff of the GUTUR, the 'giant' union dismantled after the Revolution. The shift from one regime of work –safe, routinised, predictable- to a new regime – unsafe, unpredictable, requiring proactive behaviour and rapid reactions- was not easy task for them, and the emotions embodied in these transformations (fear, anxiety, the boldness of the desperate) had been witnessed by me on a daily basis, by discussing the agitated contours of change with my mother, one of the 'brains' in the materialisation of OFTU. And this latter remark brings about another thread in the fabric of postcommunist unionisation: the power of expert-knowledge in the dynamic of the early 1990s. The GUTUR staff survived the transformation in virtue of having the necessary expertise in important matters such as the legal regime of unionisation, labour organisation (e.g. collective bargaining), and social protests, the working of the

administration in this field, the bureaucratic details that lubricate an efficient unionist network, etc.
Immediately after the Revolution, each plant had a distinct union, and sometimes within the same plant there were several unions, especially as a result of embodied and emotional conflicts between too many would-be leaders. This process of emergence of a considerable number of very small unions induced the formation of an *ad-hoc* group of unionist leaders who did not have any experience or previous preparation in this area. They needed the expert knowledge of the not too numerous GUTUR staff. To a large extent, the formation of alliances among small unions has been the result of this need. In those early years, the GUTUR staff was the driving force in the process of unionist alliance building, as they sold their own expertise for the price of securing a job in the harsh post-communist economic landscape.

My mother had been in this position: by using the rhetoric of 'the larger the union, the more successful its efforts' and by putting a lot of energy and insight in a sustained campaign of propaganda, she managed to increase the initial number of unions allied in OFTU, from 15 (founding members), to 63 in 1993. If one external observer imagined this desperate attempt to escape economic victimhood from above / nowhere (or solely from the cold inscriptions making an archive), that external observer would take the process of unionist alliance building to be very normal: the result of the institutional quest for larger influence. However, by grasping the aforementioned attempt from within / below, the things reveal to be more messy, mundane, and emotional[20]. In sum, that marginal story appears as the embodied performance of

[20] See also Halford and Savage, 1997.

a 'cultural circuit' (Thrift, 2001) of unionism that tries to reproduce itself with minimal damage, from one 'rule regime' (Peck, Tickell, 2002) to another (the postcommunist regime).

With regard to political networking and scale performance, OFTU has adopted the self-defeating strategy of neat discontent. Its official documents stated from the very beginning the total political independence of the organisation, this attitude being grounded in idealist principles of unionism in general. Though politically independent (i.e. not supporting a certain political party), OFTU was involved in the business of politics, trying to interact with the political class at two levels and for two main purposes. The first and most prominent level was the local - regional level. Organised at regional scale and incorporating many, but not the majority of the small unions within the county of Arad, the power of the union and its weakness depended on the power of the local and regional level of regulation within the national grid of regulatory rules and practices. And their power has been quite weak ever since the Revolution, although the general trend has been towards increasing their attributes. However, OFTU was involved in negotiating with local and regional authorities specific problems such as food provision, housing, fuel provision, fighting criminality, better local and regional protection for disadvantaged social groups, etc. Furthermore, the local and regional authorities also serve as representatives of the central government in the territory. Because of this role, they were approached for issues pertaining to the negotiation of workplace guaranteeing, of the minimum income level, for establishing central periodical adjustments of workers' income (to make up for the high inflation) etc.

At this point, it has to be said that at least in the period 1990-1996, the Romanian transition was quite different from what had happened in other East European countries. The latter witnessed a first shift from communism to a period of neoliberal shock therapy, and then a second shift from aggressive neoliberalism to a regime of leftist concerns, elected with the hopes to re-equilibrate the social cleavages and injustices created during and after the shock therapy. In Romania it was a shift directly from communism to a leftist government, composed mainly of former communists[21] disguised as social democrats and lacking any sincere political will to radically reform the system. Analysts (e.g. Daianu, 2000) have in general agreed that the very timid reforms undertaken in those six years had been the result of globalising forces, which imposed their agendas in the governmental strategies of the former communists. That imperialist imposition has been the price to be paid for accepting the country in the European Union and the NATO. For trade unionism, the significance of this specific mode of transition has been multifarious. Nevertheless, the first thing to signal is that this very mode of transition was itself largely influenced by the strong unionist movements and their strive to create political alliances.

Driven by the desire to maintain its power positions unthreatened and fearing the revolt of the people[22], the political class adopted a 'two steps forward, one step back' policy, the steps forward (forward the implementation of neoliberalism and the opening of the economy to the global

[21] Some of them came back to power between 2000-2004.

[22] The revolt could have taken two forms: first, public violent outbursts; second, electoral punishment of the governing parties.

economic actants) being imposed by external pressures, the step back being the necessary compromise with the internal social movements fearful of the consequences of the shift to neoliberal capitalism.

We have said that throughout the 1990s, the political power of the central government had been particularly high, and, consequently, the solution to most of the problems raised by unions was to be found at the central level, rather than the local and regional level. OFTU had been disadvantaged from the onset by its horizontal structure, but was attempting to play its agenda at the national level also, by becoming member of broader alliances of unions, with national influence. The first sought-off of these broader alliances was CNSRL. However, CNSRL had a dubious involvement at central level in deep political entanglements and merged with FRATIA, without prior consultation with the local levels. This abusive behaviour led the OFTU to leave it in September 1993. At the end of the same year, the OFTU became founding member of another large unionist confederation, CCSN, which eventually proved to be strategically misguided and politically ineffective. Meanwhile, other vertically-structured unions, with direct representatives at the central level, and who had chosen to be politically involved, were performing more effectively for the protection of the interests of their members and for the mobilisation of the vectors of unionist power when disadvantageous decisions were taken.

The inherent tensions of OFTU appear in a sharper profile when we take into account the fact that this organisation was into the business of politics not only at two main levels (local-regional and central, with the focus on the former), but also with two main purposes.

The first purpose was 'substantive': to defend the interests of its members at various levels of governance. Partly for reasons already discussed[23], partly for reasons to be debated later on in this chapter, the organisation failed to defend the most important things: the jobs and the income of its members. The second purpose was apparently 'superficial', propagandistic: to make sure that the OFTU was very visible in the media and among politicians and entrepreneurs. From the point of view of the OFTU staff, this second goal was as substantial for ensuring the future existence of the organisation (and of their own jobs) as the first purpose.

In order to better understand the substantive nature of this second, apparently superficial goal, let me draw here a parallel with what political theorist Barry Hindess (1996; see also Clegg, 2000) considers two opposed conceptions of power. The first of these is the simple capacity concept of power, rooted in the work of Hobbes. In this view, power is the capability to act. The second of these is the legitimate capacity concept of power, rooted in the work of John Locke. In this latter view, power is about having the legitimate right to act. For the case of OFTU, the two purposes of vigorous public interventions interacted in curious constellations: the search for institutional power had mainly been based on maintaining legitimacy and advertising it in the media, with the cost of a diminished capacity to defend effectively the interests of their members. To be more specific, the OFTU staff perceived the political independence of their organisation as the most influential source of legitimacy. Whereas this independence was undoubtedly providing legitimacy by favourable comparison with other, politically affiliated unions, it was also

[23] E.g. lack of effective alliances at the national level.

contributing to undermine its simple capacity power. Indeed, the felt and perceived lack of capacity power is, in the long run, the most influential undermining factor of legitimacy and overall power altogether.

The propagandistic activities of the OFTU are worth insisting on, for they give a sense of the helplessness its staff was experiencing, and capture well the embodied performance of intra- and inter-institutional relations, of place formations, as well as the coping with the steep slope of decline in the second half of the 1990s. Through propaganda, the OFTU acquired at the local level discursive power and legitimacy. Whenever an important meeting was taking place at the level of the local and regional administration, the OFTU asked to be invited and tried to impose on the agenda the most pressing aspects its members were confronted with. When the senators of the county were visiting Arad, they were invited to the OFTU office for debates. Local and national elections were also good opportunities for making the organisation conspicuous for the public opinion. Although declared politically neutral, the union invited the candidates to explain to its members how they would solve their problems in case they were elected.

Place formations include networks of organised celebration of the main symbols and past events that have decisively shaped that place. In the wake of the Revolution of 1989, Romanian public life had as a distinct mark the blossoming of public celebratory events, as places were trying to rebuild their identities after half of century of uniform, strictly regulated (and almost exclusive) celebration of communism. The union was involved in these sorts of events, as they were excellent opportunities for establishing a presence, forging networks, being advertised by the media, passing as

important in virtue of being around with important people and institutions.
There are some spicy details, which give a solid sense of the ways in which this propaganda was actually an embodied performance reflecting micro-geometries of power - knowledge within the OFTU. Thus, it was the union's leader who had always represented the organisation at public meetings and always signed the official documents stating the position of the organisation, but as he did not have higher education, all these documents and public participations were actually prepared and/or written by my mother, who was working full time as principal counsellor and secretary of the OFTU. Reading the official documents of the organisation, and knowing the other, 'messy' side of the story, one cannot but smile at the careful fabrication of these papers.

Coming back to the problem of power raised in the previous pages, it is of significance to reflect upon two vectors that played the key-role in the reproduction of the organisation: one vector is money; the other is the distribution and performance of roles within the OFTU. In the first years of activity, there had not been substantive financial problems, as membership was at high levels, people's trust in unionism had not yet diminished significantly, and the extent of economic restructuring and the unemployment associated with it was still very limited[24]. Funding became a major problem towards 1995, when the number of members who were not regularly paying their fees amounted to nineteen out of forty-six unions. This state of affairs became much

[24] As we said, until 1996, the country was under a rather leftist regime, undertaking some neoliberal reforms only because of external pressures from the IMF, World Bank, NATO, and the UE.

worse in the second half of the 1990s, and constituted both a major cause and a major effect of the diminishing power of the OFTU. The union's staff was reduced by the end of the 1990s to a single person, whose income was shrinking as it exclusively depended on the fees paid by the union's members. The accountant and the legal consultant of the OFTU left their jobs because of the organisation's impossibility to provide them with a decent income. The OFTU had to abandon some of the more expensive means of propaganda. As early as of June 1995, its official 'Report regarding OFTU's activity between June 1991- June 1995' included a note about the impossibility of the staff to participate at important unionist meetings in Bucharest, because of lack of sufficient money for transportation.

The second vector of power outlined above refers to the performance of roles within the organisation and to the regime of institutional functioning that shaped its power-geometry. The Founding Act of the OFTU stipulates three structures of decision: the Assembly of Representatives, which was the supreme forum, meeting only once every four years, the Managerial Council[25], meeting once every month, and the Operative Bureau, meeting weekly. This structure of power created the appearance of democracy and of effective means of internal control, but in reality it was a convenient way for the concentration of power and for favouring the reproduction of the same power relations. The structure that really mattered was the Operative Bureau, composed of seven members: the president, five vice-presidents, and the secretary. They used to meet every Thursday at 12 o'clock in order to debate the events of the week and to approve the

[25] It was composed of all the leaders of the unions that were part of the OFTU.

official documents of the organisation prepared by its secretary.

But there is more to the story than this dry depiction offered by the archives. To begin with, the already mentioned shadow role my mother played within the OFTU reflected the general state of affairs in the Romanian society: the promotion of women into 'active life' put forward by the communist regime had not largely dislocated the patriarchal values of the traditional Romanian way of being. Women may be active, but for the benefit of men, who happen to hold most of the significant positions of decision. The way her work was counted and transferred into her boss' portfolio, who was just signing documents crafted by her, is illustrative for a mechanism of organisational survival in which the price of keeping one's job was conscious self-erasure. To give just one example, in 1997 the OFTU launched its own small journal for propaganda, and although my mother was behind most contributions, her name did not even figure in the editorial board.

A further detail that gives colour to the story refers to what was actually happening at the usual meetings held on Thursdays. After some preliminary professional-like debates, the formal 'meeting' was slowly morphing into a very friendly gathering, which included food and alcoholic beverages. This weekly metamorphosis was not without significance in the reproduction of the organisation. As the organisation was confronted with the bleak reality of its diminishing power towards the end of the 1990s, that meeting was almost everything that was left behind the label OFTU. Some parochial and picturesque leaders happy to be leaders and to enjoy their (fantasised) power were still giving life to a body called OFTU by performing the ritual

that was symbolising (and was) its existence: the Thursday lunchtime meeting.

A final detail about performance and emotions refers to the role of the visceral in the shaping of alliances between OFTU and other confederations of unions. In a series of in-depth interviews taken in August 2001, it emerged that in actuality the future of the organisation was not necessarily bleak. The OFTU could have joined a larger union, with connections and influence at the national level. It had not done so, because the OFTU leader would have lost his power, and he definitely did not want to lose it.

At first glance, the story of the OFTU is *the story of economic victimhood* heard so often in various guises from the critics of neoliberalism. At a deeper level of analysis, however, the metanarrative of neoliberal victimhood collapses under the weight of the psychoanalytical reading of particular individuals caught in their blind desire for power and the 'narcissism of small differences' (Freud, 1930/1989).

Theorising failure / the failure of theorising

> Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures… There are perhaps three such measures: powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substitutive satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it. Something of the kind is indispensable. (Freud, 1930/1989: 24-25)

I mentioned in the brief theory of 'polymorphous chorologies' that indeed everything is influencing everything

(overdetermination), but also that not all influences are equally important. There are always driving factors, but the driving factors are not always the same. The cocktail metaphor helped us capture precisely this radical contingency of social causation.

In what follows, I attempt to systematise the most significant factors that led to the decline of OFTU in the late 1990s, bearing, however, in mind another observation done in the second paragraph: things are not transparent, waiting there to be discovered and arranged in our grids of epistemic vision. Blanks, shadows, imbricate flows, our situatedness, and the continually changing nature of things prevent us from actualising the fiction of a representationalist regime of truth (Simandan, 2005). To give an example, I have already pointed to the ambiguous and ambivalent role money has played in the chains of causation: the failure to obtain money in enough amounts was both cause and effect of OFTU's decline. As more than one factor has contributed to the decline, the way we prioritise one's influence over the others is both the cause and the effect of …truth-effects.

The observation I tried to make in the above lines is that the awareness of the unavoidability[26] of the failure of theorising has to be introduced as first step when theorising something (in our case, failure). Too much self-reflexivity does not necessarily paralyse research and theorisation. I rather believe that it is of help for the act of (substantive) theorising.

The analysis of the birth, growth, and decline of the OFTU has revealed some important causes of the decline:

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[26] By the unavoidable failure of theorising I refer to the epistemological impossibility of checking to the last detail whether our descriptions of reality are correct or flawed.

a) The horizontal (local-regional) structure of the union, in a context in which the real centres of power were still held at the national governmental level. The unions with a vertical organisation, focused on struggle and negotiation at the highest political level, have been much more successful;
b) The political neutrality of the OFTU, which, although provider of legitimacy, jeopardised the possibility for shameful, but 'healthy' arrangements with segments of the political class;
c) The personal neuroses of the organisation's leaders, unwilling to sacrifice their self-interests for the sake of placing the organisation in a much more effective network of unionist alliances.

These aside, the decline took a steeper slope between 1996 and 2000, when the hitherto leftist government was replaced by a right-oriented government, which undertook more radical reforms, without however reaching the intensity of 'shock therapies'. This lack of neoliberal aggressiveness might have resulted from the fact that the new Prime Minister, Victor Ciorbea, was before 1996 a prominent union leader, who only subsequently became involved in the political competition. Once in power, he managed to diminish the potential threat of social disorder that could have been caused by unions outraged by the too intense rhythms of structural adjustment. The mechanism created for taming trade unions was the so-called 'Commission for the social dialogue between government and trade unions'. It was organised at both the central level and the local level. The unions had monthly meetings with the representatives of the government in each county. With that occasion, they advanced their requests, which were then passed to the central level with the promise and the hope of figuring out a

compromise acceptable for both the government and the unions. In retrospect, this was a brilliant mechanism for slowing down the rhythm and vigour of working-class protests: the whole process of dialogue, negotiation, transmission, and re-negotiation was time-consuming and allowed the government to secure social order in a period when the chief political objective was to accelerate the country's integration in the NATO.

The new government undermined unionism in an indirect way as well, through the outcomes of structural adjustment. These included the downsizing or even closing off of some giant plants, which made the rate of unemployment to go up. To be sure, the governments from the very early 1990s also undertook reforms, to the extent that by 1994 the unemployment rate had already reached 10.9%. However, after 1994, during the second half of the leadership of Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu, the populist manoeuvres intended to ensure further electoral support led to an unemployment rate of only 6.6% in 1996.

Ciorbea's government, which began its mandate in the autumn of 1996, abandoned Vacaroiu's populist strategies: in 1999 the unemployment reached 10.4%. The most affected sector was the industry: the active population of the country per branches of economic activity encompassed 29.2% in industry in 1996, but only 24.4% in 1999 (with a corresponding increase in agriculture).

In the case of the county of Arad, where the OFTU had been based, most of the giant plants underwent major negative transformations, with a substantive share of their workers losing their jobs. In 1990 there were a total of 172,600 workers, whilst by 1999 there were only 106,000 left. Among the most prominent giant plants of the communist era one could mention UTA (textiles), which was downsized

from 5,000 employees, to only cca. 100 nowadays, ASTRA (railway cars), which was downsized from 10,000 employees to less than 4000, ARIS (machine-tool building), which remained with only cca 500 of its initial 7,000 employees, IMAR (wood processing), which fired half of its initial[27] 5,000 workers, etc.
Those left without a job 'chose' (or rather the 'situation' has chosen for them) one of the following paths and projects (Hagerstrand, 1982): early retirement, emigration in Western countries, illegal work in the 'black / grey' economy, small commerce (favoured by the very short distance to the Romanian / Hungarian border), migration back to the countryside to work the land, etc.

However, two processes had been particularly relevant for understanding the decline of the OFTU: first, the fact that many plants maintained a large number of employees without paying them accordingly. This structure of complicity resulted from a tacit social agreement: 'we won't fire you, so you won't have to bear the psychological pressure of being unemployed; nevertheless, as the economy is down, we won't pay you properly either'. This dubious strategy accelerated the OFTU's decline: although there were still enough workers and union members left, they were not really paid, and – therefore - they were not paying their union fees either.
The second process with a major impact upon the decline of unionisation had been the emergence of anti-legal, wild capitalist relations between the bourgeois and the proletariat within the newly created small and medium size companies. Foreign investors, who exploit the very cheap workforce for

[27] 'Initial' means here the starting point of transition: 1990; Arad is a rather old industrial city- and see Sadler and Thompson, 2001.

the manufacturing of textiles, shoes, etc, own most of these sweatshops. Although the laws stipulate the right to unionise for all workers, many of those employed in these new companies fear they might loose their job if they attempt to unionise[28]. In other words, for the OFTU the problem was not so much the diminution of the number of workers, but, on one side, the existence of a large group of pseudo-workers (employed just formally, without a proper income), and, on the other side, the emergence of a new bourgeoisie who created new companies centred on the brutal exploitation of the proletariat. Among the means of this exploitation the discouragement of unionisation in the context of *the general disrespect of the law* occupied (and still does) a central place.

The next chapter will further elaborate on this latter point; suffice to say here that post-revolutionary Romania should best be understood as the formation and reproduction of what I call the 'anti-legal society'. In other words, a survival society in which one chief mechanism for making things happen (or keeping the social networks functional) is the disrespect of the law, at all levels. Law is broken not only by villains, but also by the police and the judges; not only by companies, but also by lay people in their everyday business of life. A CURS survey from October-November 2001, revealed that 64% of the population believed that Romania did not have good laws, 73% agreed with the fact that in Romania not all citizens were equal in legal matters, and 84% endorsed the view that laws, may them be good or bad, were not really applied! This tacitly shared mechanism works because the structures supposed to implement and

[28] This fear is fully rational: the media reported numerous cases of workers thretened to be fired in case they dare to unionize.

control the legal system and to punish those who ignore or break the law, are themselves loci that work *in virtue of*, and *through* this mechanism. The causes of this apparent[29] social pathology are dubious, and entangled in promiscuous combinations such as that between:

a) The pervasive remnants of the practices of traditional, pre-modern social groups (based on personal relations and informal, tacit rules);
b) The survival strategies developed by people under the communist regime (underground tactics to make life liveable);
c) The inherent windows of anti-legal opportunity that inform the muddy spaces of transition almost everywhere in Eastern Europe[30].

For the fate of the OFTU, the anti-legal society has meant much more than the hydra of neoliberalism. It was not so much privatisation (and structural adjustment) that undermined its power, as there had been: a) its self-defeating commitment to (legal) practices of 'neat discontent', by which I refer to traditional ways of unionist activity, as opposed to the other, more successful unions, which owed

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[29] In the subsequent chapters, I argue that this alleged 'social pathology', manifested especially through deeply entrenched 'corruption', is a discursive weapon used by the neoliberal monster to convince Romanians about their basic inadequacy, and hence, about their need to commit to disadvantageous neoliberal reforms in order to become truly modern. The present book is a series of steps intended to deconstruct this diabolical strategy.

[30] Whenever there is a transition from an old regime to a new regime, the fast-changing legal system generates opportunities for becoming rich by discovering holes in the newly created legal fabric and exploiting them accordingly.

their triumph to the (illegal) practices[31] of 'scale-maximising strategies'; and b) the downsizing and even erasure of union activities by the new bourgeoisie who has exploited the unpunished possibility to break the laws which stipulate rights for the workforce. Without knowing my above thoughts about the most important causes of the OFTU decline and without having too much time to think for an elaborate answer, its leader told me in an interview:

> Darling, we lost because of two things: first, because we have been too kind, second, because in this country there is no respect for law.

Building on the earlier remarks about the cocktail metaphor, this chapter attempted to present the gendered history of a small, marginal trade union, history immersed in the broader saga of postsocialist transformation of Romania in general and of the city and county of Arad in particular. The theoretical framework underwriting my account has been dubbed 'polymorphous chorology', a figure of vision that tries to capture the interplay between epistemology, ontology, and politics, the situated and incomplete character of our knowledge, and the processual and performative nature of things. It also tries to qualify Actor-Network Theory, by incorporating both some of its recent criticisms, and some qualifications[32] of these very criticisms. At the intersection of theory, methodology, and style of presentation, I proposed a narrative informed by the

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[31] The most illustrative case is that of the miners' strikes, who went several times to Bucharest and practised 'illegal violence' to impose their point of view.

[32] E.g. I distanced myself from the thesis of the alleged 'radical Otherness of the event'.

rethinking of scale as contexts (e.g. Romania, Arad, trade unionism in general) collapsed within the unit of analysis (the OFTU), manoeuvre which could undermine some recent criticisms and reluctances (e.g. Martin, Sunley, 2001) towards the apparent political impotence and theoretical irrelevance of studying not what is structural or at the centre, but the 'marginal, sensational, transitory, obscure, and symbolic' (Martin, Sunley, 2001, p. 156).

To be sure, I do not deny the importance of what is at the centre. The next chapter will focus precisely on this bigger picture. I am just saying that the study of local cocktails of social relations remains an indispensable endeavour for the social scientist. To the extent that these cocktails create what we call geography, the geographers might want to rediscover how to learn from them.

3. The cultural circuit of poverty

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> I read that every known superstition of the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool.
> (Bram Stoker- Dracula, 1897)

> We work, we don't think!
> (slogan launched during
> the Jiu Valley miners' strikes of 1990)

> There is still too much nature in Romania.
> (philosopher Constantin Noica,
> cited in Antohi, 1999, page 298)

> What happens when terrifically imaginative, highly adaptable Evil –some recycled, revamped Evil- has overnight spawned an even fiercer society than that which played dead in order to survive? When the whole communist nomenklatura has turned into the nouveaux riches? When the mafia replaces the party? When the losers of yesteryear are turned into the programmed apes of today? When there is no more resistance –when there is nothing but exile? When it's all too late.
> (film director Lucian Pintilie,
> cited in Fainaru, 2001)

> In Foucault country, it always seems to be raining.
> (Nigel Thrift, 2000a, p 269)

This chapter takes further the work of rethinking the relation between 'culture' and the 'economy' undertaken in the previous two essays by analysing the enactment of

communist and neoliberal governmental technologies in the Romanian Carpathians. The main object of interest is to explain why the communist regime lasted in Romania for more than four decades and how this regime created a distinctly Romanian brand of marginal modernity. This book provides a set of complementary answers to these issues. In what follows, by looking at what happened in the Romanian Carpathians, I try to give a first answer, revolving around a particular way of linking the politics of culture and the politics of the economy. The cultural circuit of poverty is the name found to designate that way. Our story dwells in a large space of encounter between theorizing poverty and the poverty of theorizing, through operating with 'theory' as means for [and end of] activating tropes as, and for, political interventions.

In the first part I explain how the chapter weaves that space of encounter (the theoretical tools), why it weaves it on (and for) a vigorously located empirical background (The Romanian Carpathians), and what are the stakes of the whole enterprise. Then, the second part unpacks the cultural circuit of poverty in the Romanian Carpathians along three relations (development and poverty, justice and poverty, patriotism and poverty) creatively activated by the communist practices of governmentality, so as to make scarcity more bearable. The rather optimistic conclusion signals the need to consider the body an effective site of resistance to the practices of governmentality, and alternative directions of thinking scales and regions, and insists on the politics and potentialities of critical theorizing.

Activating tropes for political interventions

The theme of the poverty of theorizing enrols the theorizing of poverty along at least two energizing chains. The first of these may be introduced through Thrift's observation, prompted by the work of Norretranders (Thrift, 2000b, p. 53):

> We do not consider the fact that there is more information in an experience than in an account of it. It is the account that we consider to be information. But the whole basis of such an account is information that is discarded. Only after information has been discarded can a situation become an event people can talk about. The total situation we find ourselves in at any given time is precisely one we cannot provide an account of: we can give an account of it only when it has 'collapsed' into an event through the discarding of information.

It allows me to account for my positionality, to express some dissatisfaction with existing literature about Eastern Europe, to explain how and why the empirical background has been chosen, and to signal from the outset the story's narrative mode, one which is committed and commits to (the signifiers of) performativity, embodiment, and (more-than-phenomenological) relational thinking. I was born in 1978 in Bucharest, Romania, just at the end of what Romanians often call 'Ceausescu's good period'. In 1979, my family moved to the west of the country, in Transylvania, and it is there that I lived until 2000, when going to England for postgraduate studies. The South-East Carpathians (synonymous with the Romanian Carpathians) are, in a number of ways, the axis of Romania and have a surface of 66000 esqkm., which means 27.8% of the whole country. Two of their branches distinguish Transylvania from the rest

of the territory, and this 'natural' border has always fuelled the geopolitical imagination of and about a contested historical region. And poverty comes in here, in that the average gross product of Transylvania is double to the rest of the country, the Carpathians being the imbricate upland of passage where this disparity negotiates its hybridity.

My first memories as a child come from the 'dark period of Ceausescu'-the 1980s- when its project of total utopian engineering had been both highly accelerated and brought to a level of detail that went well into the defensible frontiers of 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998). I spent most of my vacations in a provincial town called Orastie, in the county of Hunedoara, which encompasses the lands where the Meridional Carpathians (or the Alps of Transylvania) meet the Occidental Carpathians[33], lands rich in resources that range from coal to gold. My relatives there have lived the typical life of average Romanians, as they had not been involved in 'grand' politics during communism (whereas my parents were involved), and they are not involved now, after the 1989 Revolution, either.

This initial experiential baggage has then been enriched during my undergraduate studies in geography, as the curricula stipulated a lot of fieldwork, and as fieldwork was almost always synonym with fieldwork in the Carpathians. 'Carpathian' experiences are still being added to my be(come)ing, as most of my research interests intersect the environmental (see Herrschel, Forsyth, 2001), economic, and resource geographies of postsocialist transformations (Simandan, 2001a-d, 2002a-l, 2003a-I, 2004a-b), and most

[33] The South-East Carpathians are disposed at the centre of Romania, in the shape of a triangle the three branches of which are the Oriental Carpathians, the Meridional Carpathians, and the Occidental Carpathians.

of my work involves getting down to specifics, doing intensive research attuned to particular locations (see also Agnew, 2000, Mitchell, 2001), especially those of my past exfoliations (Gil, 1998). The inevitable failure to fully translate the richness of situations / experiences onto 'scientific' accounts is nevertheless sweetened by comparing these undertakings of intense personal-cum-political commitment with the all-too-frequent studies about Eastern Europe in general, seen from somewhere 'above', usually through the comfortable, impoverished lens of analysing statistics, and for the neutral purpose of seeing how this or that theory works 'there' (e.g. Ibrahim, Galt, 2002). That intense personal-cum-political commitment, which has colored my recent becoming as a critical geographer (after some years of wanderings in the marshes of objectivity and neutrality) has a trivially simple story, consisting of having been raised by parents who were members of the Communist Party, having seen for so many years on the TV not cartoons, but Ceausescu's propaganda, having lived after 1989 in a whirlpool of political transformations that were more exciting than any other pastime, and that eventually led myself to become, in 1996, a member of a political party-important at that time, but swept away from the political foreground after the elections of 2000.

The second energizing chain that produces the space of encounter between theorizing poverty / the poverty of theorizing might be summed up in the observation that the poverty of theorizing poverty is at the very heart of what constitutes poverty. This implies a postmodern account of poverty, as summarized by Yapa (1997, p. 719; see also Yapa, 1996, Shrestha, 1997):

> The concept of poverty is an abstract discursive convention that aggregates a large number of states

> of material deprivation related to food, clothing, shelter, health care, transportation, and so on. This taken-for-granted aggregation has permitted us to present poverty as an economic problem arising from lack of income. That economism in turn has allowed us to equate poverty with underdevelopment, making economic development the unquestioned and obvious solution to the problem…instead of asking the abstract question – why are poor people poor?- it is better to ask substantive questions as to why some people in particular places do not have adequate access to basic goods…the scarcity of these basic goods is socially constructed at each node of a nexus of production relations…even the categories describing the nodes of the nexus…are not concrete sectors in the world; they too are discursive entities constructed to enable a conversation about poverty. Each so-called node of the nexus is completely determined by, and constituted from, the other nodes. The 'real' world of poverty cannot provide answers as to which of these nodes is most important…the belief is…that if we uncover the 'true' causes of poverty, then we can adopt the right course of action. But there are no such things called the 'true' causes of poverty, and therefore, there is no single right course of action, certainly not one that is amenable to poverty policy.

It alerts us of the danger of big categories (state, science, economy, capitalism; and see Walters, 1999, Sayer, 2001) and grand narratives (development, emancipation), which make the fight against poverty seems to have little chances of success, as it would require the overthrow of (apparently) robust, almost invincible systems (e.g. capitalism). In our case, both the socialist and the postsocialist state are approached as fallible, contingent networks of practices of

governmentality (Hannah, 1997, Levy, 1999), incapable of erasing the powerful sites of resistance inhabiting each of us ('bare life') and the associative tactics of the everyday. In turn, these sites can mobilize the subjects to actively challenge a given constellation of governmental practices, to fight for a better life.

This postmodern view of poverty also signals the difference place makes in what counts as scarcity, signal assumed in this paper by refusing the multinational or national levels of analysis and by focusing instead in the unfolding of poverty within the Carpathian area only, area individualized by its topological, climatic, biogeographic, and human dimensions (Pop, 2000).

Another point Yapa makes is the aggregate nature of poverty, constituted and reproduced in more than a single node of the nexus of social relations. One could embrace this perspective by using the verb 'to deal with' environmental and economic change, a verb which invites a relational thinking of poverty, as forming a cultural circuit performed with material effects and affects. In this light, the questions 'Who deals with poverty?', 'Why poverty is dealt with?', and 'How poverty is dealt with?' (see Kharkhordin, 1995, 2001, Jowitt, 1992) have more than an answer and those answers are necessarily time-specific and place-specific (Rotariu, Popescu, 1999, Sandu, 1999).

This essay does not go in depth with a cartography of possible answers, but just hopes to unsettle ways of thinking of and about poverty in the Southeast Carpathians, unsettling necessitated by a responsible aesthetics of 'becoming' (Butler, 1997), and by the hope of enhancing further political manoeuvres.

Poverty has led to freedom, but is freedom leading to poverty? Some incongruities of sorts in the Romanian Carpathians

The first quotation that opened this chapter shed some light on the role The Carpathians have played at least since Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' (1897) in the cultural circuit of European imaginative geographies, as a space of fugitive incarceration where Otherness is produced, but never fully mobilized.
In what follows, I am interested in another cultural circuit, that of poverty, acknowledging, however, its intersections with the first mentioned. Dracula's figure allows me also to introduce in the account a much-needed character, notably the last devilish ruler of Romania – the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (1964 – 1989), not rarely associated with Dracula for his cynicism. And they are both woven into the imaginative geographies of the Southeast Carpathians, for their castles built there, for their deeds exfoliated there, and for the empowering symbolism, so well exploited by writers and novelists. To be sure, writer Octavian Paler launched a very popular expression for ridiculing Ceausescu, calling him the 'genius of the Carpathians'. Whereas people from these upland areas surely did not regret him in the optimistic days of late December, 1989, when his regime was overthrown through a revolution / coup d'Etat, in the subsequent years of postsocialist transformations many of them[34] begun to see, in retrospect, his times as a Golden Age. His philosophy of practices of governmentality was based on giving people 'circus' (propaganda) rather than 'bread' (basic needs – food, light, warmth), for 'bread' was consumption and his desire was to maximize investments by

[34] The OFTU employees, described in the previous chapter, can be included here.

all means, may them be cynical, so as to put the country on a trajectory of unprecedented development and to launch it as an important independent actor in the international arena.

Lay people generally liked his grand dreams, got used to not having freedom, and had he decided to secure enough 'bread' for them, they would not have overthrown his regime. But in the last four years of his government (1985 – 1989), the obsession with saving the money from 'bread' for investments and for paying the country's external debt reached the absurd. The scarcity of basic needs became so pervasive that chronic poverty eventually led people to change a set of practices of government that revealed to be so contingent in a moment (1989) when almost everybody thought of them as being powerful and very much resilient. Unbearable poverty led to freedom in the late 1980s, but people found out soon that for most of them the freedom of the 1990s meant a way back, to an even more difficult-to-bear poverty, more difficult because this time the lack of bread has not been accompanied by the circus so well practiced by Ceausescu's regime (see Phinnemore, 2001).

There were many actants enrolled in the heterogeneous and ever-changing practices of quasi-materialized mythologies constituting this circus, but people have been most receptive to three of them.

Political scientist Alina Mungiu (1995), after broad qualitative research undertaken in the mid-1990s, found that lay people had a good memory of Ceausescu, deploring as the only (!) bad thing of his era the lack of basic needs, whilst admiring him for having been: a) a big builder (i.e. imposing high rates of development / growth, 'constructions'); b) concerned with justice for the many, not for the few; and c) a patriot, who made Romania respected in the world at that time. These three more-than-myths built

around his name are heterogeneous objects made of (and making) discourses, materialities, imaginative geographies, tactics of survival, and networks of territorial mobilization.

In what follows, I take a glance at each of these more-than-myths within the Carpathian area, seeing them as part of the cultural circuit of poverty, before and after 1989. The interest will be directed to their material effects on the environment and the economy, on the way they have been mobilized as parts of the circuit of poverty, and on the way they have been resisted by people, despite (or because of) being involved in their subject formations.

Development and poverty

> The super-ego of an epoch of civilization has an origin similar to that of an individual. It is based on the impression left behind by the personalities of great leaders…another point of agreement between the cultural and the individual super-ego is that the former, just like the latter, sets up strict ideal demands, disobedience to which is visited with 'fear of conscience'…some of the manifestations and properties of the super-ego can be more easily detected in its behaviour in the cultural community than in the separate individual. (Freud, 1930/1989: 106-107)

Before the advent of communism, in 1947, Romania was starting its process of modernization and industrialization, but its pace was well below the one imposed by communists. Many Romanian intellectuals, attuned to the *Zeitgeist* of those times, which included an understanding of the nation as 'organic community' (following Herder), and a desire for speeding the processes of modernization, adopted a radical

political position that consisted of both expressing a dissatisfaction with the too conservative and parochial essence of 'Romanianness' and an urge for mobilizing all energies in order to overcome this condition and to change the destiny of the country.

For example, philosopher Emil Cioran (born at Rasinari, in the Meridional Carpathians) wrote the influential book 'Romania's transfiguration', Constantin Noica[35] expressed these ideas and desires in his 'Philosophical Journal', and both of them in their youth applauded the extreme right party (The Legion Movement), which was pleading for a radical transformation of the country. These feelings of being *marginal*, *backward*, and *inadequate* have haunted Romanian culture and politics ever since, and Ceausescu's commitment to putting into practice the grand dreams of national metamorphosis brought him the admiration of the people, both during and after his regime.

In times when Western economies were shifting from Fordism to Post-Fordism and the knowledge economy was emerging as successor to the traditional economy based on heavy industry, the Romanian communist regime inadequately prioritised in its plans of development the amazing growth of heavy (and polluting) industry. To give just two examples, whereas in 1938 the production of steel was 280,000 tones and of sulphuric acid 440,000 tones, in 1985 production raised to 13,790,000 tones of steel and 1,830,000 tones of sulphuric acid (Turnock, 1993). Crucial to this development was activating all the internal resources of the country, so as to avoid too many importations of raw resources (coal, iron, energy, sulph, etc.). This last matter also explains why the Carpathians had been at the very centre of mobilizing people, materials, and other non-

[35] See the quotation at the beginning of the chapter.

humans in the fast-growing and totalling network of development.

To be exact, there were already some resource exploitations and some industries in the Carpathians, before the advent of the communists, but their size was small, and they had a very localized impact, whereas the key aspect brought about by the communist strategy had been the activation of the whole landscape for, and through, development: geologists were investigating in detail and mapping all possible resources, engineers and economists were projecting integrated strategies of growth, engaging all actants in 'national systems' ('the national transportation system', etc.). The national system of energy, for example, with many nodes in the Carpathians, linked all cities and almost all villages of the country[36].
Each branch of the industry was guided, surveyed, and linked with the others through so-called 'centrals' – centres of calculation situated in Bucharest, the place where the practices of governmentality had their headquarters. Note that (Whatmore, 1999, p. 32; see also Barry, 2001, Di Chiro, 1996, Vira, 2001):

> Just as nature tends to be mapped onto spaces designated 'rural' so wildlife, the embodiment of a purified nature, is associated with those most rarefied of spaces designated 'wilderness'…

In the 1970s, the regime (and see Gibbs, Jonas, 2000) was very keen to show its concern for environmental issues, and a significant number of protected areas were created in the Carpathians. That was real 'nature', and by implication, all the rest had to bear the signs of (socialist) culture. One of

[36] See also chapter 7.

them included the radical transformation of the upland countryside, by trying to erase many 'unviable' small villages (Dumistracel, 1995). Their population was brought into larger, 'viable', villages, which were modernized by replacing many traditional houses with blocks of flats made of concrete. Peasants were forced, in some parts, to put their lands together and to work them collectively. As a gift for obeyance, the regime was helping them with the fruits of science so as to make intensive (and environmentally unsustainable) agriculture: chemical fertilizers, mechanization, genetically modified seeds, new races of domestic animals, and the expertise of agricultural engineers, their role being to make sure that all the 'natural' potential was fully exploited, that the 'waste of nature' had been turn into 'fertile gardens' (J. Locke).

By the late 1980s, Ceausescu became keen to show the superiority of communist agriculture (and see Boia, 1999) and its huge rate of growth, and he did so by lying to the people and the international community with the help of statistics, for he knew how widely assumed it is that 'figures don't lie'. The newspapers were full of tables called 'The results of socialist competition' which showed the (fictional) increase in productivity per hectare for cereals, vegetables, etc. In 1989, the official information was that the country's total agricultural production was 60 million tones, whereas it was later revealed that it was of only approx. 18 million tones. The simulacra of agricultural development hit people badly, because exports were prioritised, so we were left with the missing 42 million tones, rather than with the real 18 millions.

There was no unemployment at that time. People had incomes, but poverty was still everywhere and was induced *by* this accelerated development: firstly, this development

had impoverished the 'environment', by both a) separating wilderness from 'culture' and destroying part of the rural cultural practices (see also Ingold, 2000) through the quasi-urbanization of some settlements, and b) by wide-spread pollution caused by heavy industry. The fight against pollution was not prioritised on the government's agenda, because it was considered an 'unproductive' issue: almost all resources were allotted for fuelling further industrial growth. Two of the three most polluted Romanian cities (Baia Mare and Zlatna) belong to the Carpathians, not to mention all the other non-spectacular forms and sites of pollution (see also Bytnerowicz et al, 2002).

Secondly, it has impoverished people, for 'despite' economic growth (this is an incongruity of sorts), basic needs (food, clothes, electricity) were far from sufficient and of low quality[37], not to mention other dimensions of impoverishment pertaining to the quality of life, in general. Thus, people were often asked to work during weekends to realize the goals set by the five-year plans of development. The single television channel stopped broadcasting at 11pm, to make sure people would sleep enough to be productive the next day, etc.

Thirdly, it impoverished the economic viability of the country, by concentrating all resources for the development of heavy industry, neglecting hi-tech and other 'post-Fordist' industries. After 1989, this industrial heritage has been a burden rather than an asset for the neoliberal governments trying to connect Romanian economic practices with the Western ones. As the story of the OFTU illustrated, neoliberal deindustrialization occurred at a large scale

[37] The stores were often selling products that were not accepted for export because of too low quality.

(Dobrescu, 2000; for Eastern Europe in general, see Smith, 2000, Smith, Swain, 1998, Sokol, 2001).

But people, instead of seeing the inadequate strategy of Ceausescu's regime as the root-cause of this process, idealize his times, for what they remember is that *then* the word of the day was construction (positive associations with the myth of progress, and with leaving behind the parochial, marginal, rural, 'too natural', Romania of the pre-communist era), whereas *nowadays* what they see around is the material and economic dismantling of the socialist landscape (of concrete, steel, giant plants, and so on), to the construction of which they had in so many ways been a part.

But apart from having been left without a positive metanarrative of growth and development ('Romania's transfiguration'), many people in the Carpathians today feel poverty more acutely than hitherto, because then all were poor, whereas nowadays some have and most people do not have. Which brings us to the second 'more-than-myth' mobilized in the cultural circuit of poverty, namely justice.

Justice and poverty

> I have no concern with any economic criticisms of the communist system; I cannot enquire into whether the abolition of private property is expedient or advantageous. But I am able to recognize that the psychological premises on which the system is based are an untenable illusion. In abolishing private property we deprive the human love of aggression of one of its instruments, certainly a strong one, though certainly not the strongest; but we have in no way altered the differences in power and influence which are misused by aggressiveness, nor have we altered

> anything in its nature. Aggressiveness was not created by propriety. (Freud, 1930/1989: 71)

The idea of equality (and see Verdery, 2001, for a useful theorisation of inequality) was the very centre of the communist discourse and its material effects ranged from the common ownership of land by local rural communities, and the ownership of almost all industries by the state[38], to the symbolic wearing of the same uniforms by pupils and students, so as to hide all signs of difference in wealth.
After the revolution of 1989, given the institutional vacuum inherent in transitional periods, what emerged was what I called elsewhere (Simandan, 2002) and in the previous chapter as 'the anti-legal' society. The latter is characterized by people's loss of faith in the act of justice and its institutions (politicians, judges, and policemen are believed, not without reason, to be amongst the most corrupted), by the general disrespect for the law, by the ease with which those who break the law manage to remain unpunished, and by the unfair distribution of wealth not towards those who work hard and legally, but to those who are cunning and courageous enough to break the laws for their own profit.

To give an example, the trade union of the miners from Jiu Valley (Meridional Carpathians) chose to fight for the security of the workplace and for increased incomes not by legal means, but by practicing what Campeanu (2001) has called the exercise of 'illegal violence': they jumped the local scale of protest (but see Simandan, 2001a) and went to Bucharest imposing their will by violent means. Workers in other areas who chose the legal ways of union protest were much less successful in their collective bargaining.

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[38] The state was understood as delegate of the whole people; see also O'Neill, 2001.

But the marshland of transition - so well depicted in the quote from film director Lucian Pintilie, at the beginning of the chapter - has given people an acute sentiment of injustice. This bitter sentiment emerges not only because those who deserve the least (law-breakers, mafias) obtain the most wealth, but also because an older scar hiding deep histories of poverty and injustice has been reactivated. It is the problem of giving back to the initial owners the properties confiscated[39] by the communists to create collective property (see also Blomley, 1998).

It is a delicate issue, for at its heart lies a whole philosophy of justice: to privilege the 'sacredness' of property, and to restitute everything despite the newly emerging severe unequal relations, or to favour the ideal of an equal society and to give back to the initial owners only a part of what they (or rather their parents and grandparents) had? Until late in the 1990s, the second approach prevailed in Romania, but recently a series of laws put forward by the Tariceanu government have explicitly endorsed the first perspective. The Carpathians enter this discussion to the extent that many of the largest private properties of pre-communist Romania are there; and now – shocking many Romanians who have always been poor- they are reclaimed by their former owners. These include, among others, the former king Michael, who wants back his castles and forests, and a lady who brought papers to prove that her ancestors owned a whole mountain[40], and now is asking the mountain back.

To be sure, the communist era was anything but perfectly just. Firstly, the common ownership of land and industries

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[39] See also Rizov et al, 2001, Schrieder et al, 2000, Suli-Zakar, 1999.

[40] The Parang Mountains, a group of the Meridional Carpathians.

was largely the outcome of stealing the hitherto private properties, theft well hidden by the propaganda. Secondly, the regime privileged the proletariat, by investing in industrialization and urbanization, whereas other categories were disadvantaged. The peasants saw their lands taken. The intellectuals who opposed the regime were imprisoned and 're-educated'/ tortured in the famous prison of Sighet (the Oriental Carpathians). Access to good jobs and to higher education was very difficult for those who did not have 'healthy origins', i.e. proletarian origins, etc. Thirdly, the so-called equality between men and women consisted in asking the latter to work both at 'work' and at home, whereas men did not work at home given the patriarchal character of Romanian culture. Fourthly, the members of the nomenklatura enjoyed many privileges and Ceausescu himself owned many residences and was building a $ ten billion palace in Bucharest, called –cynically, but illustrative of the effectiveness of the practices of propaganda – the 'House of the People'.

Though unjust, the communist regime excelled in deploying strategies for hiding this injustice. They included the strict control of the media[41], the manufacturing of a positive history of the unique party, and the stigmatisation of those reluctant of communism as 'enemies of the people', 'reactionary forces', 'agents of imperialism', etc.
By and large, the injustices of communism were much less conspicuous to people than the 'just' sides of the regime. Among them, equality was crucial in making poverty bearable in all those years of deprivation. Conversely, the

[41] Only the good things were told. On the contrary, after 1989, media is focused on the bad things, contributing to the general feeling of injustice, corruption, and lack of morality.

marshland of neoliberal transition has broken this chief dimension of justice alongside two processes: the emergence of a new bourgeoisie by illegal means, in the context of an anti-legal society; and, second, the undoing of the scar that was hiding unequal relations in pre-communist Romania, by returning properties to their initial owners. This two-fold transformation has made dealing with poverty much more painful than before. Equality - one of the three 'more-than-myths' lubricating the cultural circuit of poverty and explaining the maintenance of the communist practices of governmentality for half-century - has gone. Freedom has led to conspicuous poverty for many.

With these thoughts in mind, we can now move to see how the Carpathians have been interpellated (L. Althusser) through the third more-than-myth, that of patriotism, and how the latter has performed its promiscuous encounters with poverty.

Patriotism and poverty

> It is clearly not easy for men to give up the satisfaction of this inclination to aggression. They do not feel comfortable without it. The advantage which a comparatively small cultural group offers of allowing this instinct an outlet in the form of hostility against intruders is not to be despised. It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. (Freud, 1930/1989: 72)

The patriotic rhetoric made poverty bearable through two distinct, but related registers of argument. Firstly, accepting scarcity was seen as an essentially patriotic attitude, in the

sense that the government was trying hard[42] to secure a better future for the country, future built alongside ideals of total independence, development through massive industrialization, territorial integrity, the shift from socialism to pure communism, and the enactment of an important role on the global arena ('the big destiny of a small country').

Each citizen had to contribute to these cherished goals by working hard, diminishing personal consumption[43], and accepting the rationalizations imposed from above. Thus, each day, electricity was cut off for several hours. I remember my childhood: hurrying to finish my homework for school in the afternoon, to avoid working in the evening by the light of the candle. When a good movie was on the TV, people prayed that electricity would not be cut off just then.

The regime enrolled each and every resource of the Carpathians in the national economic calculation, regardless of their quality and economic profitability. This typically modern greed had two rationales. Firstly, to avoid imports, as the country's rulers wanted to completely eliminate the external debt, which was rightly seen as a means for subjection to external capitalist interests. Secondly, because for them independence was synonymous with being autarchic: even in the case of a boycott by the international community, the country would have managed on its own, by exploiting its internal resources and by having developed all the possible branches of an economy.

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[42] By minimizing consumption and expenses with 'unproductive' areas (e.g. pollution) and maximizing investments; by minimizing importations and maximizing exportations, etc.

[43] It is interesting to note how the twin ideals of puritanism - hard work and frugality – were central not only to the spirit of classic capitalism (Weber), but also to the spirit of national communism.

Geologists were assessing in detail the underground and cartographers were mapping the area at very large scales, so that the mountains could be vigorously enlisted into the economic networks of accelerated growth. After the revolution, the neoliberal imperatives for efficiency put the government into a difficult position, as it was revealed that most of the mines in the Carpathians are not viable (Flonta, 2001). This is not so much because of poor technologies, as it is because the quality /concentration of mineral deposits is well below the international average. In other words, although these mountains contain very diverse minerals, they are rich in rather poor mineral deposits, with some notable exceptions[44].

Offsprings of communist economic planning, the miners' communities and the regional economies brought about by mining, now face deindustrialization, economic decline, and acute social tensions. Not surprisingly, they feel abandoned. Whereas in Ceausescu's time they were praised as 'the spear peak of the working class' and were told that the whole economy rests on their shoulders, nowadays they are told they are a big burden for the economy, as instead of contributing to wealth creation they contribute to poverty perpetuation.

The second register of rhetorical intercourse between patriotism and poverty was even more radical and intense and could be summarized by the urge 'Forget poverty, the country is in danger!'. This is another way of speaking of the myth of the besieged city / the myth of conspiracy, so often encountered in the political saga of modernity, not least

[44] Very recently the village Rosia Montana has become famous for the discovery in its underground of the largest deposit of gold and silver in Europe.

because of its efficiency in mobilizing people and centralizing power. The myth of the Saviour – might the saviour be Ceausescu, Milosevic, or Hitler - goes hand in hand with the myth of the besieged city / country. In Romania's case, the myth was organized (and see Hakli, 2001) around the alleged danger of losing Transylvania again, due to the revisionist politics of Hungary.

The Carpathians represent the limit between Transylvania and the rest of the country (also called the 'Old Kingdom'). They have been seen as a big problem because they constitute a natural limit, which could be so easily (rhetorically) enrolled in the arguments of revisionist politics. Transylvania became a part of Romania in 1918, but in 1940 its northwestern area was taken back by Hungary, until 1944. This fact has substantially fuelled the general feeling that Transylvania still represents a threatened land and that one of the chief concerns of any Romanian government should be to minimize that threat. Ceausescu's practices of governmentality have been unanimously acknowledged for being very creative, sustained, and effective in this respect (and see Boia 1997). As I will address the issue in more detail elsewhere, suffice to say that the (alleged)[45] threat was minimized by two related strategies.

The first was a reinscription (see also Seymour, 2000) of both the Carpathian landscape and the imaginative geographies of the Carpathians. This strategy was undertaken in order to achieve the historical legitimacy conferred by proving that in ancient times Transylvania was inhabited by the forerunners of Romanians (the Daces and

[45] In actuality, it was a 'circus' to make people forget the lack of 'bread'.

the Romans), and that when the Hungarians arrived there (in the Middle Ages) they found the land of Transylvania inhabited by Romanians (see also Surd, Turnock, 2000). The reinscription included, among other things, the renaming of cities with their ancient, Dace-Roman names (e.g. Cluj became Cluj-Napoca), and huge investments in archaeological works (not limited to 'discovering' proofs: there was also the manufacturing of favourable historical evidence, which then was 'discovered'). It also included fabrication of new 'adequate' historical, cultural, and geographical theories.
Thus, despite being mountains and an obvious natural barrier, the Carpathians have been theorized by Romanian scientists as having favoured the unity of Romania and the preservation of Romanianness. Another theory, launched in 1974, argues that in pre-Ancient times, the Carpathians were the cultural heart of the European civilization, etc.; see Pavel, 2000.

The second strategy aimed at materially increasing the unity of the country (transitivity of the network), by making it a coherent, organic whole, with no internal intransitivities. This utopian project was about heavy investments in tunnels, railways and motorways that cross[46] the Carpathians. It was also about basing vital nodes of the 'national systems' in the Carpathians (e.g. electricity networks). Not surprisingly, the national defence strategy has also been based on the Carpathians as 'the ultimate fortress'.

[46] The mountains were literally engineered and transformed so as to fit the myth that they are not a barrier.

Interstices of hope

In the final part of the story, I would like to pay attention to two epistemological-cum-political aspects that have given substance and rationale to the whole undertaking. The first of them is about scale and regions. Instead of operating with an analysis at the national level, or following the established regional divisions of the country, I chose the Carpathians as unit of analysis and applied my understanding of scale (Simandan, 2001b, 2005) as contexts collapsed within the unit of analysis. In other words, there were no introductory paragraphs about Romania in general, but the country's story unfolded along the specific discussion concerning the Carpathians, and this narrative style was adopted in order to make obvious the interplay between 'epistemology', 'ontology' and 'politics', the fact that the 'outside' (non-Carpathian areas) is always already within the 'inside' (in our case the Carpathians).
This aside, the Carpathians were chosen for they constitute what could be called a 'subaltern region': they are not a 'normal' (historical, administrative) region to which geographical theorizing about regions[47] could apply, but a heterogeneous assemblage that has 'natural' (physical geographical) contours, being nevertheless both 'cultural' and 'natural', and being mobilized in a host of discursive practices, including those of governmentality.

The second aspect refers to the role performed by the Carpathians in this story, as space of encounter between theorizing poverty and the poverty of theorizing. Poor

[47] E.g. Newman, Paasi, 1998, MacLeod, Jones, 2001, Terlouw, 2001.

accounts of, or about, poverty largely determine the reproduction of poverty. In this regard, a first danger is to operate with too narrow an understanding of poverty, as related to lack of income and to underdevelopment. Instead, this story has attempted to unpack *a cultural circuit of poverty* in which so many unexpected, apparently unimportant, things were revealed to play for high stakes. A second danger, this time referring to (Romanian) intellectuals (and see Antohi, 1996), is to practice the moralist neoliberal discourse that blames lay people for lacking entrepreneurial spirit, moral sense, and commitment to hard work, seeing them as monsters created through the technologies of the self that made (the Romanian version of) communism so 'reputed'.

This moralist discourse, which so many academics could not so far dared to unmask, mystifies the complex reality of the communist era and of neoliberalism. It perversely underestimates the possibility that lay people are nowadays in the above-depicted ways not because they have been transformed and re-configured by the all-pervasive forces of the communist regime, but because they developed effective strategies of resistance, of accommodating their archipelago of dividual selves to the performance of communism, whilst still maintaining their humanness and freedom through those things recently theorized as 'the visceral' (Connolly, 1999), or 'bare life'. In Thrift's words (2000b, page 39), the latter is:

> …that little space of time that is much of what we are, a space not so much at the edge of action as lighting the world. Of course, it is not really bare; bare life pulses with action. And it is not simple…this little space of time is a vast biopolitical domain, that blink between action and performance in which the world is pre-set by biological and

> cultural instincts which bear both extraordinary genealogical freight – and a potential for potentiality.

And the third danger in theorizing poverty concerns jeopardizing the potentiality for political action, by divorcing too much theory from practice, social science from politics and policies, our personal lives from our professional roles, and so on. In this book, I approach the act of theorizing as an activating of tropes for political intervention, and hence as a political undertaking in itself. Instead of blaming the Romanians (or other post-communist 'mutants') for what they arrived to be, like in the moralist discourses of neoliberalism mentioned above, academics should rather focus their energies on changing the state of affairs *with* 'common' people, and not *in spite of* them. Gibson's recent action research (2001, p. 664) in a declining regional economy suggests interstices of hope for favourable transformation, ways out of the 'countries' (of theory) where it is 'always raining':

> An entity such as a regional economy can be seen as performed in and by technical, material, and discursive devices that constitute its relations? What, however, if there is a break in the network of relations constituting this performance? What might this mean for the durability of economic subjection and the potentiality of new becomings?…What might this mean for the subject now deprived of economic citizenship? Might this interruption caused by exclusion from a dominant economic calculus liberate new subjectivities and alternative forms of economic citizenship?…this break in the performativity of established regional economic relations does not destroy the legacy of a collective experience and the constitutive desire for a new kind of regional 'being'.

4. Ontopolitical therapies and the logic of inadequacy

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> Ethics is to be regarded as a therapeutic attempt – as an endeavour to achieve, by means of a command of the super-ego, something which has so far not been achieved by means of any other cultural activities. (Freud, 1930/1989: 108)

My investigation into new ways of thinking the process of modernisation sent me in the direction of forging several conceptual tools that try to avoid routine understandings of social life.
The first chapter proposed the cocktail metaphor, the second chapter complexified Actor-Network Theory with the help of the signifier 'polymorphous chorologies', and the third chapter shed a new light on the history of Romanian modernity by developing a narrative around what was called the cultural circuit of poverty.

The following chapter chooses as entry point for the rethinking of the political in geography the concept of 'ontopolitical therapy', empirically illustrated by considering two drastic political reorientations that have refigured their very own spaces of performance.
The first of these is the neoliberal turn of the Romanian economy, scrutinized this time in the light of Foucault's understanding of culture as technology of governmentality, whilst the second is about the stratified ontology that has done politically viable a violent program for containing the proliferation of hybrids in the modern urban environment of Bucharest. The massacre of stray dogs - for these are the

aforementioned hybrids - raises political questions framed by drawing on Agamben's theorization of the biopolitical paradigm of the modern. Some conclusions will follow.

Introducing ontopolitical therapies

We felt the need to craft the concept ontopolitical therapy because of dissatisfaction with several other attempts at complicating the nature of the political analysis of modernity in human geography.

1. One of the most vigorous lines of flight in this regard has been the last decade's concern with broadening the definition of political agency and the boundaries of political subjecthood so as to include other forms of life (in particular animals; Wolch and Emel, 1998, Wolch, 2002, Whatmore, 2002). We add to this body of literature through a discussion, in the last part of the chapter, of the political geography of dogs in Bucharest inspired by Giorgio Agamben's philosophy (Agamben, 1998, 1999, 2000).

2. Another direction for enriching the meanings of the political in geography has resulted from an engagement with postcolonial theory (Gregory, 1994, 1998, Barnett, 1997), in an attempt to recover what Derek Gregory (1998) called 'the historical depth of the geographies that we inhere'. This focus has melted historical geographies into political geographies and has alerted us to the stringent contemporary relevance of long-lived intellectual histories. This work consists in excavating the production of problematic intellectual representations and their slow but pervasive translations into the public consciousness through a range of 'ideological state apparatuses'.

The study of the role of spatial imaginaries and 'imaginative geographies' in the reproduction of the colonial presents has substantively enlightened our critical negotiations with the liberal democratic project (Slater, 2002) and is taken further in this chapter by pointing to the *horizontal* spatial imaginaries that underpin the discursive strength of the European project, and to the '*stratified* ontologies' of a modern urban environment responsible for the 'stratified ethics' towards different forms of life (humans versus animals).

3. Finally, a third project that has added to the diversification of political analysis in geography is Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory (Thrift, 1999; Thrift, 2002). His writing is deliberately provocative in that it stages a definite dissatisfaction with the traditional business of theoretical work while advocating a modest understanding of theory as a 'way of going along' (Thrift, 1996), as a 'modest supplement to practice'. To the charges of political quietism raised in respect to non-representational theory, Thrift replies by admitting his lack of interest in traditional politics and his desire to broaden the sphere of the political, so as to include his favoured three-fold politics. We learn that the latter are 'affective, experimental, [and] plural' (Thrift, 2002, page 31) and include the politics of witnessing, the politics of readiness, and the politics of intercession. Thrift contends that 'we need to be more political' (op. cit., page 33) but what he actually means by this is that we should do away with traditional politics and re-learn how to be political in novel ways. And there are some dangers in this kind of thinking. And some missed opportunities as well. Is it not the case that by broadening the sphere of the political we

might loose the focus, we might miss a sense and need of prioritising[48] our theoretical interventions?

At stake here is our attitude toward the traditional domain of the political. It is unfortunate to conceive the latter as a 'prison', as a 'dead end', as a set of dis-abling constraints. Instead, we might see it as an enabling framework within which proper political struggle could lead to substantive results that include an agreement to enlarge the very boundaries of that framework. Traditional representative democracy is predicated on an assemblage of rules but we are wrong if we move away from them by creating alternative definitions of the political and play thereafter the political in our alternative fictional political world. Meanwhile, political action and political change would still occur through the old frameworks we had turned our back to.

The type of political enquiry with which I am concerned is – from a non-representational theory lens – conservative. Through the concept of 'ontopolitical therapy' and the two case studies discussed in what follows, I try to capture the operation of traditional public policy. More specifically, I am interested in the distinctiveness of those public policies that attempt a major, 'structural' change in the everyday business of national / urban life. I argue that they are distinct from 'normal' political decisions by their imbrications with improvised ontological reworkings and that these reworkings are done by politicians themselves as they go about to create public support for their actions.

To be sure, these ontological reworkings are authored by politicians (the subjects) and are concerned with the beneficiaries of that particular political change (the objects

[48] Cf. Barnett, 1998, Squires, 2002.

of political action). In the first case study at the end of this chapter, the objects are the Romanians as a nation benefiting from the neoliberalisation of the economy; in the second case study the objects are the citizens of Bucharest, benefiting from clearing the city of its non-citizens: stray dogs, homeless people, prostitutes.
I call 'ontopolitical therapies' these ambitious public policies that require improvisational ontological redefinitions of the objects of political change, reworkings operated by politicians in the Foucauldian space where two distinct social formations – 'the cultural' and 'the political' – overlap.

I have signaled three recent directions for complicating political analysis in geography. I then showed my dissatisfaction with non-representational theory's move away from traditional politics and placed my contribution firmly within the analysis of traditional political business. Now it is time to acknowledge my satisfaction with non-representational theory's insistence on the crucial importance of play, improvisation, and imitation in social life. Politicians usually have little training in metaphysics, yet, when required, they are improvising ontological accounts that then constitute the backbone of their drastic public policies. In order to make the Romanians tolerate the devastating effects of the neoliberal economic turn / therapy, the politicians had first to convince them of their *inadequacy*, of their deep – rooted[49] collective illness. In order to make people accept the massacre of stray dogs in Bucharest, the political discourse staged a conflict between

[49] With various hypotheses as to how deep those roots are: going back to the communist regime, or, more dramatically, to the low quality ethnic essence of Romanian-ness.

humans and dogs, associating the latter with the metaphors of 'threat' and of the 'dirty city' that needs to be civilised through the systematic erasure of dirtiness. The concept of ontopolitical therapy, then, acknowledges the intercourse between cultural formations and political formations in a different way to that of geographers focusing on representation (Gregory, 1994, 1998).

There are insights to gain from alerting us to the 'historical depth of the geographies that we inhere' (Gregory, 1998), but there are also risks to inadvertently subscribe to a problematic theoretical model whereby the cultural (and the ontological) stands in relation to the political like Marx' economic base in relation to superstructure[50].
Within this (Derek Gregory-style[51]) theoretical framework preference is given to the excavation of the works of influential philosophers (Hegel – and see Gregory, 1998; Kant - and see Spivak, 1999) or writers (Flaubert – and see Gregory, 1995, Conrad – and see Barnett, 1996) from past centuries and, sometimes, to the networks through which these masterpieces have been translated 'down' to lay people. The assumption is that, somehow, we are all mentally polluted with these vicious imaginative geographies and we act as disciplined through their ethical and political messages. By revealing the 'historical depth' of our everyday geographies – the argument goes - we could clear our minds[52] of these residuals and learn a code of ethics more in pace with the contemporary sensibilities.

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[50] Cf. chapter 1.
[51] In more recent work, Gregory himself has incorporated non-representational insights into his theoretical strategy.
[52] But recent research in cognitive science insists on the enormous difficulty of unlearning. Awareness that one was indoctrinated does not mean in any way freedom from the multifarious effects of

I do not want, however, to deny the relevance of this theoretical framework. I just want to challenge its assumptions by turning it upside down.

Indeed, through the concept of ontopolitical therapy I try to alert geographers to the fact that it is often the case that the ontological stands in relation to the political as superstructure to base, and not the other way around. Politicians are not necessarily prisoners of a certain mindset historically transmitted from past centuries through a range of cultural mediators. They are much more versatile than this model implies and they improvise political ontologies for current political (ab)use. The ontological becomes for them a tool for making political change happen. It is their desired political change that is 'the boss' and not the ontologies and ethics we would otherwise assume to guide and limit their political attitude. To impose a drastic public policy they draw on a range of ontologies available in the cultural domain[53], but they pay little respect to the theoretical integrity of any given ontological discourse. They are mere raw materials from which politically effective ontologies are improvised. The massacre of stray dogs in Bucharest has largely been underpinned by certain assumptions about what constitutes a civilised urban landscape in Europe, but also by an active forgetting of the fact that a code of European civility would not allow a total overlooking of the ethical considerability of animals.

The turnover of ontological theorising –we contend- is higher within the political sphere than within academia, partly because it subscribes to no scholastic rules, partly

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that indoctrination. This observation appears with increased emphasis in Judith Butler's books as well (1990, 2000).

[53] For example the negative discourses of Romanianness, the discourse of European civility, the discourse of the social contract, the discourse of Christian morality, the discourse of neoliberalism.

because it takes improvisation seriously, and partly because it is one of the most peculiar manifestations of the politicians' practice of what Thrift has called the 'politics of readiness' (Thrift, 2002). By studying *empirically* specific political practices, we can learn in more substantive ways how the logic of inadequacy always lies at the heart of the ontopolitical therapies of modernity. It is for these reasons that I turn now to two case studies of political practice.

Case Study 1: Unhealthy Economies

This first case study explores the ways in which Romanian intelligentsia has theorised the country's backward position among the other Central and East European countries with respect to the transition to a capitalist and democratic order. I argue that the cultural and political elite of the country has mobilised three main discourses (with a multitude of hybrids).

The first of these discourses is the short-term, 'non-cultural' perspective, consisting of analyses of the lack of sufficient political will for change, and of the strategic mistakes of macroeconomic policies.

The second is the aggressive anticommunist and moralist perspective, which has entertained the discourse of social pathology. According to this view, the half-century period of communist utopian engineering has altered the nature of human nature and the social relations to such an extent that capitalist relations cannot emerge, but in highly 'distorted' ways.

Finally, the third is the 'deep-cultural' perspective, which tries to rediscover the works of intellectuals from pre-

communist Romania[54], and to excavate the presumed essence of Romanianness (and see Anderson, 1991), in order to maintain that anti-capitalist conceptions and behaviours have characterised the people well before the advent of the communist regime.

The first of these discourses is rather straightforward in its associations with the *global neoliberal logic*[55], or more exactly, with the cultural circuit that underwrites and fuels the neoliberal 'revolution' (Peck, 2000, Peck & Tickell, 2002). Most voices that articulate this discourse are those of economists trained within the paradigm of orthodox economics, which has quickly replaced Marxian political economy in the wake of the Romanian Anticommunist Revolution of 1989. Things become more complicated within the registers of the second and third discourses.

The cultural right: constructing the 'negative', electing the 'positive'

To begin with, these rhetorics are performed by the so-called humanist intellectuals, people who know rather little about the intricacies of economic analysis, but who have adopted after 1989 the views of the Western Europe's cultural right. Their discourse explicitly or *implicitly* supports the neoliberal impetus of the Romanian reforms, by its radical dismissal of the ethical values of the cultural left, and by constructing the people in negative terms, as lacking desirable habits, or certain moral values. In other words, both the discourse that portrays the Romanians as ill after

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[54] Especially the dubious right-wing intellectuals from the inter-war period.

[55] And see Dunkley, 1997, Harrisson, 1997, Jessop, 1997, Storper and Salais, 1997.

the communist disease, and the discourse that sees the Romanians as a low quality ethnic group, build the political space of the country as 'the negative'[56] in need of its 'positive'. And the 'positive' is unproblematically taken to be representative democracy and neoliberal capitalism, both items theorised in a Hayekian fashion as indestructibly linked, if the society is to be put on solid foundations. Why is it always this particular politic-economic package that is taken as the 'positive', as the unique medicine for saving the country's soul? The answer lies in two related aspects.

The first is about the deficit of political utopian imagination after the fall of communism in 1989, when the very temptation of *the utopian enterprise* was unmasked as irrational, irresponsible, a-moral, and ultimately crypto-communist.

The second relates to the always *marginal status* of Romania within Europe, status that has fuelled (for two centuries now) an obsessive concern[57] with comparing the country with the other European countries. In the wake of this comparison, the neoliberal trend of most Eastern European countries appeared to be the normal answer for Romania as well.

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[56] The logic of inadequacy consists in purifying shades of grey (traditional / modern; communism / neoliberalism; non-human / human) into pure white and pure black. The black (traditional; communist; non-human) is constituted as the evil that has to be erased and replaced with the good/white.

[57] We believe we can speak of a collective obsessional neurosis fueled by marginality. The basic anxiety generated by marginality has taken a number of expressions, such as self-hate, inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, fear of rejection, fear of too much Oriental influence, sensitivity to international criticism, and myriad enactments of everyday narcissisms.

Constitutive fissures: re-staging 'the shapes without content'

What I find to be both spectacular and full of subversive potential are the fissures and internal contradictions that dwell within the third discourse, that of ethnic inadequacy. The explanation advanced within this discursive framework has been unambiguously (!) ambivalent for the possible shaping of political action, hence its plural enrolment into the ontopolitical therapies of the 1990s.

On one hand, some humanist intellectuals[58], disillusioned with the Romanian failure to rapidly implement capitalist relations, have put the blame on the putative essential weaknesses of this particular ethnic group. For example, it has been argued that Romanians put a premium on constancy and stability, and are afraid of mobility, speed, and radical change, the latter deep-seated fears sabotaging the formation of capitalist entrepreneurs. In sum, these right-wing intellectuals have provided thoroughly pessimistic accounts with regard to the future of the country. Their argument has gone like this: because we are Romanians, we are condemned to fail; capitalism will never blossom here. Discussions along these pessimistic, yet subversive lines have been prompted, among other things, by the translation of Max Weber's 'The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism', which has often been read through the lens of the fact that most Romanians are orthodox and not protestant…

On the other hand, there have been prominent intellectuals (H. R. Patapievici being a good example) who, while

[58] Humanist intellectuals have created cultural groups around publishing houses (Humanitas), newspapers (22, Dilema), and civic organisations (the Civic Alliance, the Group for Social Dialogue).

acknowledging the essential inadequacies of Romanian-ness, have remained optimistic because of what they theorised as capitalism's impressive structural potential to morph within / adapt to, different ethnic, religious, and social conditions.

These two opposed readings of the resolution of the alleged ethnic inadequacy of Romanians have re-staged the central debate that has accompanied the modernisation of the country since the middle of the 19th century. The debate is about the so-called theory of 'the shapes without content'. The 'shapes' are things coming from outside, such as democracy and capitalism, while 'the content' refers to the essence of Romanianness. One side of the country's cultural elite (including Eugen Lovinescu) has maintained that certain 'shapes' can be imported in a different context, because those 'shapes' have the capacity to create their own content, or rather to radically alter the pre-existing (inadequate) content. The other side of the elite (including Nicolae Iorga) has argued that only those shapes that match the pre-existing ethnic content can be truly assimilated, that things such as capitalism or representative democracy are not suitable for the Romanian soul.

The political art of enrolling culture

However, what I try to identify are not the archaeological lineages underwriting these discourses and these historical episodes, but the way in which this cultural - ontological discourse has been at the very heart of the neoliberal capitalist transformation in Romania.
If there were something we should learn from Foucault's work, I would point to his observation that culture is not something in *opposition* to politics, an autonomous site of

resistance to administrative power. Instead, culture itself is a technology of governmentality, a means for inducing change in the desired direction, a *means for making people act* the way a certain order wants them to act. This is Foucault's definition of power: making 'independent' subjects internalise certain truths, and acting subsequently -of their own will- according to those cultivated truths. Power necessitates then a form of freedom, it is not the same with coercion (Foucault, 1994, Lemke, 2001).

Taking Foucault's insights further, the thesis I want to defend is twofold. Firstly, I would warn against the danger of hyperfunctionalism when assessing the relation between intersecting social formations (for example, between politics and culture). The cultural production of collective stigma (in our case, I refer to the stigma of the *ethnic inadequacy* of Romanians and to the discourse of postcommunist social pathology) may be seen as a tool of neoliberalism, but I suspect things are much more complicated than this tempting rush for functionalist explanations. We need to be careful to avoid lapsing into too facile causal attributions and explanations. Instead, it seems much more plausible to see this cultural formation (i.e. the collective stigma of ethnic inadequacy) as having *unintended* discursive effects, side effects, and being only *in part* instrumented for direct political purpose, through *improvised* ontopolitical therapies. As social-spatial formations, the discourses of post-communist pathology and that of ethnic inadequacy have set the horizon of political intelligibility in postsocialist Romania, as a country – read NEGATIVE CONTENT - in deep need of neoliberal transformation – read POSITIVE SHAPE.

The implied argument goes as follows: for one reason or another (communism, ethnic deficiencies) we are seriously

ill and the single reasonable solution to this collective illness is the shock therapy of neoliberalism. Foucault's work enlightens this debate through his conceptualisations of culture, government, and power. His theoretical framework allows for an interpretation that sees a substantial link between two social formations (the 'cultural' and the 'political'), without over-estimating that link in the direction of a functionalist explanation. If we are to put this simply, the discourse of ethnic negativity articulated by a certain part of Romanian intelligentsia has not been articulated with the sole purpose of serving the capitalist transformation of the country, following some whole-hearted subscription to neoliberal ideology. Nevertheless, it has been politically enrolled for sustaining this process, and *because* of this political enrolment, its effects have been significantly amplified. It is, if one is to think of a metaphor, as if someone swims not against the current, but in its direction.

The opposite has happened with the already mentioned counter-discourse of Romanian superiority, which rejected the importation of ethnically unsuitable 'shapes' such as capitalism. Because this counter-discourse had been politically endorsed by Ceausescu's regime, it was solidly compromised after the Revolution of 1989. Furthermore, its message is against the interests of the forces of economic globalisation (Hardt and Negri, 2000), and because these forces shape at the present the political agenda of the country, the strength of this 'reactionary' / 'fundamentalist' discourse has been systematically eroded.

The stakes of institutional configurations

For the final part of the first case study, I would insist on the epistemic importance of unraveling the anatomy[59] of the bind between the 'cultural' and the 'political' (and economic) spheres. Put it simply, the crucial issue for my research of the cultural circuit of neoliberalism becomes the identification of the institutional configuration that regulates the link between certain cultural formations and their political and economic enrolment. What exactly does it mean that a cultural discourse is favoured or undermined by a certain political constellation? What are the *specific* institutional means that allow for favouring and / or undermining the recitation of a discourse?

The point here is that we have to turn to the analysis of the network of institutions that mediate[60] the transfers between administrative power, and the cultural technologies of governmentality. If we do so, we can see the contingent cartographies of power underpinning this entangled terrain and the interstices of hope, the 'sites from within' where we can act against the vicious enrolment of the discourses of social pathology and ethnic inadequacy for the mean purposes of neoliberal capitalism.

'Ontopolitical therapy' is in this sense a *tool* for seeing, a *signal* about the stakes of the interplay between culture and politics, a *way* of doing the presuppositional analysis of political (discursive) practices.

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[59] The first chapter put forward the 'cocktail metaphor' as a first approximation of how we might conceive the fluid and hybrid anatomy of social life.

[60] The next chapter takes this challenge further and focuses on the lock-ins involved in the social processes of mediation and translation.

Case Study 2: Dirty Environments

> Places are 'passings' that 'haunt' 'us'…and we haunt them…
>
> (Nigel Thrift, 1999, pages 310 – 311)

Hauntings

I have always been afraid of dogs. In Romania, it is quite frequent for people to have a dog for protection and security reasons rather than for fun. Add to this observation the fact that the legislation with respect to dog ownership has never been too drastic, nor has it been too drastically reinforced. I have found myself often times running away from vagabond dogs, or, even worse, from owned dogs left wandering in the streets by their inattentive, careless, or sadistic owners. Perhaps the peak of these sorts of canine experiences had been reached several years ago, when I had to pass some time in Bucharest preparing for some exams. It was truly scarring to return to the hotel late in the evening because of the packs of stray dogs that were jumping in my way from behind cars, blocks of flats, or gardens. There has not been a single night in that period in which not to be put in a position to find the best walking strategy in order to avoid being bitten.

Meanwhile I moved abroad and I had to reconsider all these past experiences and attitudes because of my encounter with the body of theory that goes under headings such as 'animal geographies', 'animal rights' and 'transspecies urban theory'.

My own theoretical work has been concerned with criticising the ontology of layered worlds that posits humans somewhere above plants, animals, and inorganic things. It has also been concerned with the issue of non-human agency (Haraway, 1991, 1997, 2000), and with rethinking the urban environment as a recursive cartography (see Simandan, 2001c, 2005), whereby the legacy of the past interacts with various rhythms and events to produce the becoming of a place, its practical spatial reproduction. Finally, I become interested in normative political theory, and particularly in the ways in which the boundaries of democracy are traced: usually by erasing the non-human from the sphere of the political (Escobar, 1999).

The scandal

These past experiences in Bucharest and these theoretical passions developed during doctoral work in England came together and melted in my head once with the outburst of the canine scandal in Bucharest, caused by the cynical decision of its (then) newly elected Mayor – Mr Traian Basescu[61] – to kill the 200 000 – 300 000 stray dogs of a city that has gone beyond two million inhabitants.

The official version has not been that blunt, though. Trying to seem humane, the mayor claimed that all the dogs would first be collected from the streets, brought into the shelters of the City Hall, and selected: those old and sick would be euthanasiated, while the healthy dogs would be sterilised and then would wait for well-intended people to come and adopt them. To secure financial resources for this vast operation of public cleaning, he signed several agreements with

[61] In 2004, Traian Basescu was elected president of Romania.

organisations for the protection of animals. The most prestigious of these organisations had been the foundation of French cinema star Brigitte Bardot.

However, several months later, disappointed by the slow rhythm of the 'operation', the mayor declared the agreements null, and proceeded to implement a very straightforward methodology for solving the problem of stray dogs: sooner or later, all the dogs were planned to be killed, so that the urban landscape be clean and safe again in up to two years. The moral justification for this sharp methodology of erasure was that, as elected mayor of Bucharest, he had the duty to defend the security and well being of its citizens. In the light of the invoked public dutifulness, the extermination of dogs was important because in the year 2000 alone Bucharest's stray dogs had bitten 22,000 people.

Global threads

This dramatic turn of events brought the scandal in the international arena, with the significant observation that many international organisations for the protection of animals used the written testimony of lay citizens of Bucharest, to bring authenticity and affective support to their political actions.

Consider the following two sample testimonies. The first is from a woman in Bucharest who was 'desperately' hoping for international support in the struggle to save the stray dogs. She addressed her letter to a global audience and expressed her dissatisfaction with the polite way the butcher-mayor of Bucharest was treated by foreign institutions:

> Our Mayor shakes hands with your representatives every day, as he did in the UK two months ago, when this butcher was invited as an official guest. This example is followed, unfortunately, by the symbol of the fight for animals, the TV channel Animal Planet, which is actually cooperating with Traian Basescu, and whose representatives are not ashamed to appear in public next to this dog killer…I truly hope that you'll find a way to raise your voices against this abuse, because the lack of a strong foreign political reaction has made this atrocity continue…
>
> Anca Hristescu, citizen of Bucharest (http://www.petroglyphsnm.org/)

The second testimony is from a nearly 16-year-old girl, who was resenting the slaughtering of dogs in a deeper way than the average postsocialist citizen, embittered by scarcity, corruption, and the everyday struggle for life in the urban jungle:

> All my friends and even my grand mother said that it's a good thing to kill these animals because they must receive food, and the children from the streets are starving. But they don't realise that these kids are not loved by the government, or by the mayor. In winter, when it's cold outside, and they don't have where to stay, these dogs are helping them. They are the ones who are sitting next to them and give them the love they need. I saw a dog that received food, and he didn't eat it. He took it to a child that was sitting all alone. That child cherished the food with the dog, and this is the way they live. NOT the government, NOT the mayor are the ones that help these poor souls. THEY, THE HOMELESS DOGS

> are these kids' parents. They keep these children alive. They defend them, and most important, they keep them warmed up when it's cold. These dogs are the ones who must be protected by the law.
>
> Alice Petcu, almost 16 (http://www.paw-europe.com/)

This quote helps me bring into the case study a parallel but less spectacular plan implemented by mayor Traian Basescu at that time: it was the 'Home Again' programme, designed to evacuate outside the city the 'disreputable' social groups represented by prostitutes, beggars, and homeless young people (called 'the street children').

It is the temporal and spatial overlapping of these two programmes of urban clearing that open a rich theoretical window for the analysis and interpretation of what had been going on in Bucharest between 2000 and 2002.

Two ontopolitical observations

Many things could be said, but for the limited space of this case study I would insist on two aspects, both thoroughly ontopolitical.

Firstly, this conflict cannot be understood outside the embedded political culture of postsocialist Romania. In the context of neoliberal transformations and of a deeply corrupted political class, there was a widespread disenchantment[62] among Romanians with the traditional political culture of compromise and 'slow moves', now

[62] This widespread disenchantement reached its peak in the fall of 2004, when Traian Basescu and his political alliance of social-democrats and liberals won the national elections and sent the SDP in opposition.

associated with the corruption and intended inefficiency of the SDP.

Instead, what the Romanian electoral body likes is a political culture of 'healthy radicalism', epitomised by political leaders courageous enough to fight on their own the hydra of corruption and inefficiency that has infiltrated all the levels of the state apparatus. The (then) mayor of Bucharest and current president Traian Basescu has been famous precisely for being such a cold-blooded leader, a powerful reincarnation for neoliberal times of Vlad the Impeller. It should come as no surprise that issues pertaining to animal rights did not stay in the way of his firm determination to change in short time the face of Bucharest. For him, proving to be an efficient mayor was crucial in the light of his intentions to compete for the presidential elections of 2004. At the time of the dogs' massacre, he was the third most popular Romanian politician and hence a serious competitor for the forthcoming presidential elections. In sum, the sadistic political radicalism inherent of ontopolitical therapies is something Romanians increasingly wanted as needed antidote[63] to a society deeply enmeshed in the threads of corruption.

The second theoretical aspect I want to hint at was prompted by reading a letter by Michel Thirionet, president of 'Animals without frontiers'. He drew a very suggestive parallel between what Basescu had been doing with the stray dogs in the city hall's shelters of Bucharest, and what had happened in Nazis Germany's concentration camps in the Second World War:

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[63] An alternative reading is psychoanalytical: most people in Bucharest were accepting Basescu's sadistic policies because they were vicariously enjoying a way of discharging their unconscious aggressiveness (cf. Freud, 1930/1989).

> We propose that the names of these public shelters: "Palady", "Baza", Chiajna", "Berceni" and "Mogosoaia" would be renamed "DACHAU", "AUSCHWITZ", "TREBLINKA", "BUCKENWALD", "BIRKENAU".
>
> Michel Thirionet, president of 'Animals Without Frontiers (http://dogs.scripterz.org/)

This parallel sent me to the work of political philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998, 1999, 2000). He introduced the fascinating distinction between *zoe* and *bios*. Zoe is bare life; the simple, 'bare' fact of living common to all living beings. Bios is the manner of life that characterises a certain group or individual. Agamben argues that the whole *modern* political project is the result of bare life entering the space of the political in the form of an 'inclusive exclusion', the sovereign being 'he who decides on the value or nonvalue of life as such' (1998, page 142). For Agamben, the concentration camp represents the biopolitical paradigm of the modern, for it is here that the sovereign decides what counts as life and hence, as political subject (see also Butler, 1997). And it is here that he decides what has to be erased if the political business of the modern state is to function properly, unthreatened by the OTHER, by variants of 'life' (the Jew, the Gypsy) that escape the logic of established political subjecthood.

In Bucharest, mayor Traian Basescu (read the sovereign) acted following the same principle. The dogs, the prostitutes, the homeless are variants of life that have populated the city's porosities, although they do not have political rights: the dogs because they are nonhumans, the prostitutes and the homeless because they came illegally to Bucharest, and

hence do not have the right to participate in the political life of the city.

These forms of life have constituted part of the urban flesh, and the mayor's decision to clean the city acts as a political maneuver to re-establish the isomorphism between the city's contours, and the contours of its political community. *The Other has to be erased if things are to go well*. But going below this observation, one can see how the methodology of erasure has operated in a two-fold logic, reproducing the moral contours of acceptability and ethical considerability so well unpacked by Sarah Whatmore (1997, 2002): while there was no problem in slaughtering dogs[64], the humans (prostitutes, beggars, etc), have [just] been thrown away from the city, always threatening to come back.

Consequences for theory

I would like this case study of the ontopolitical therapy that happened in Bucharest to bring at the heart of the debates concerning the modern urban environment the problem of broadening normative political theory. The slaughtering of stray dogs in Bucharest needs a reading that outlines the differential political figuration of the nonhuman as Other threatening the normal political business of the city, and who, therefore, has to be erased. The forms of erasure may be diverse, and it happened that in Bucharest they reached the peak of cruelty. But my argument, following Agamben's political philosophy, is that erasure of the nonhuman from

[64] My general argument has always been that the ease with which we subordinate the non-human is expressed in, and is the expression of the stratified character of modern ontology: humans above, non-humans below, on a lower plane. Distinct ontological levels justify distinct ethical standards.

political considerability is a process constitutive of modern political life. And then, the question for a transspecies urban theory has to move beyond the mere ontological reappraisal of forgotten agents, and towards a consideration of the political consequences of all these reappraisals.

Conclusions

The two case studies presented used the concept 'ontopolitical therapy' to help us grasp the nature of modern power and modern political change, as well as the imbrications of the cultural with the political. It is an analytical tool that adds to what we have debated in the earlier chapters and that dovetails with Michel Foucault's late theorisation of power, clearly outlined in an interview given in 1984, the year of his premature death:

> …il me semble qu'il faut distinguer les relations de pouvoir comme jeux stratégiques entre des libertés – jeux stratégiques qui font que les uns essaient de déterminer la conduite des autres, a quoi les autres répondent en essayant de ne pas laisser déterminer leur conduite ou en essayant de déterminer en retour la conduite des autres – et les états de domination, qui sont ce qu'on appelle d'ordinaire le pouvoir. Et, entre les deux, entre les jeux de pouvoir et les états de domination, vous avez les technologies gouvernementales, en donnant a ce terme un sens très large – c'est aussi bien la manière dont on gouverne sa femme, ses enfants que la manière dont on gouverne une institution. L'analyse de ces techniques est nécessaire, parce que c'est très souvent a travers ce genre de techniques que s'établissent et se maintiennent les états de

> domination. Dans mon analyse du pouvoir, il y a ces trois niveaux: les relations stratégiques, les techniques de gouvernement et les états de domination. (Foucault[65], 1994, page 728; conversation date: 20 Janvier, 1984)

The secret of a successful analysis, Foucault tells us, resides in the starting point: a bad starting point would be the political institutions, for they will allow for a restrictive conceptualisation of the subject as mere 'juridical subject' with rights and obligations. A good starting point would be the analysis of the working of governmentality, for it would frame the subject not in juridical vocabularies, but in ethical terms:

> …si vous essayez d'analyser le pouvoir non pas a partir de la liberté, des stratégies et de la gouvernementalite, mais a partir de l'institution politique, vous ne pouvez pas envisager le sujet que

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[65] It seems to me that one has to distinguish the relations of power as strategic games between liberties – strategic games that make that ones try to determine the conduct of the others, to which the others answer by trying not to allow for the influencing of their conduct or by trying at their turn to determine the conduct of the others – and the states of domination, which are what on usually call power. And between these two, between the power games and the states of domination you have the technologies of governmentality, giving to this term a very broad meaning – it is as well the way one governs his wife, his children, or the way one governs an institution. The analysis of these techniques is necessary because it is often that through this type of techniques on establish and maintain the states of domination. In my analysis of power, there are these three levels: the strategic relations, the techniques of governmentality and the states of domination.

> comme sujet de droit. On a un sujet qui était dote de droits ou qui ne était pas et qui, par l'institution de la société politique, a reçu ou a perdu des droits: on est par la renvoyé a une conception juridique du sujet. En revanche, la notion de gouvernementalite permet, je crois, de faire valoir la liberté du sujet et le rapport aux autres, c'est a dire ce qui constitue la matière même de l'éthique. (Foucault[66], 1994, page 729; conversation date: 20 Janvier, 1984)

'Ontopolitical therapy' may help us better understand what are the things we should be looking for when analysing drastic political change, or, to put it differently, the specifics of the governmental technologies that allow the revolutionizing of inadequate communities without revolutionizing the states of domination themselves.

From a different perspective, 'ontopolitical therapy' draws on the strengths of two of the most important intellectual games of geography – representational cultural geographies and non-representational theory – retaining from the first an interest in the traditional political business of liberal democracy and in the power of representations, while adopting from the second the analytical respect for the primacy of practice and the art of improvisation.

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[66] If you try to analyse power starting not from liberty, strategies and governmentality, but from the political institution, you cannot otherwise envisage the subject but as subject of law. There is a subject who has or has not rights, and who, by the institution of the political society, has received or has lost rights: by this, one is sent to a juridical conception of the subject. In revenge, the notion of governmentality allows, I believe, to value the liberty of the subject and the relation with the others, which constitute the very matter of ethics.

Yet from another perspective, 'ontopolitical therapy' belongs to the broader intellectual project of a historical geography of modernity concerned with the ontological-cum-political formations of modern public policies. Its chief purpose is to mediate the unfortunate cleavage set through the relevance debate in geography between blue-skies research (the interest in ontological theorising, from its postmodern version to its development in traditional metaphysics) and the critical geographies of public policies (and see Martin, 2001, Dorling and Shaw, 2002, Massey, 2002).

The next chapter further illustrates the ways in which epistemological and ontological theorizing can revitalise radical political economy, by means of a critique of regional evolutionary economic theory, grounded in the sad story of the declining industrial area of Hunedoara County.

5. On getting stuck: epistemic lock-ins, ontological lock-ins, and the reification of the regional

5. On getting stuck: epistemic lock-ins, ontological lock-ins, and the reification of the regional

The several case studies presented so far in this book have introduced the readers to the problem of the massive economic decline of Romania, in the wake of the Anti-Communist Revolution of 1989. My empirical research over the last five years made me struggle with various bodies of theory in search for a convincing account of the inner logic of decline.

One such promising body of theory is regional evolutionary economic theory in general, and the lock-ins literature in particular. This chapter provides a constructive critique of lock-in approaches to regional change within the framework of a non-conventional epistemology that maintains that the production of knowledge necessarily generates, at other levels, lack of knowledge.

The first part of the chapter draws on my empirical work in a declining industrial region in Romania (Hunedoara County) and on recent developments in social and political theory, to argue that Grabher's three-fold classification of lock-ins is misleading. Building on this critique, the second part of the chapter uses again the distinction context/unit of analysis to introduce two types of contextual lock-ins: ontological lock-ins and epistemic lock-ins. The final part of the chapter then shows that lock-in approaches to regional change unproductively recite the mainstream ontological model of modern Western thought and proposes 'recursive cartographies' as an alternative to this model.

Any achievement comes with a loss

> The most important item in the psychical inventory of a civilization…consists…in its illusions. (Freud, 1927/1989: 17)

> What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes. In this respect they come near to psychiatric delusions…Illusions need not necessarily be false – that is to say unrealizable or in contradiction to reality…We call a belief an illusion when a wish fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation. (Freud, 1927/1989: 39-40)

Once with the turn to culture in the Anglo-American human geography of the 1990s, economic geography has witnessed, among other revampings (Barnes, 2001, Scott, 2000, Thrift, 2000a), an orientation towards institutional (Amin, 1999) and evolutionary (Grabher, 1993, Grabher and Stark, 1997, 1998) approaches to the analysis of the spatial dynamics of economies. These new directions have enriched the explanatory power of economic geographies, insofar as they prioritised accounts of how historicity, institutional assemblages, and geographical relations complicate the fabric of pure economic logic. Nevertheless, more quantitatively minded geographers (Martin, 2001) lament the lack of clarity, rigour, and empirical support that the new vocabularies of these recent 'progresses' (Bassett, 1999) brought about.

However, in this chapter the main concern is not with conceptual fuzziness, but with the presuppositions underwritten in some of these developments. More specifically, this contribution focuses on regional

evolutionary economic theory and on how this school of thought purports to explain the negative consequences of industrial clustering. The account that follows aims to add a healthy dose of reflexivity and irony (see McCloskey, 1998) to the practices of economic geographers, without blaming them for 'major misunderstandings', 'fatal flaws', 'conceptual fuzziness', and other similar sins. This attitude is not grounded in needs for collegiality (cf. Hannah and Strohmayer, 2001, Purcell, 2003), but in an understanding of knowledge production as an opening of horizons at the price of closing other horizons. This understanding, indebted to Heidegger (1962), Tanesini (1999), and Haraway (1991, 2000), leaves aside the never ending conflict between the overly optimistic epistemologies (Marxism, critical realism, positivism) that assume the ultimate transparency and out-there-ness of the world, and the overly pessimistic epistemologies (poststructuralism, solipsism, idealism, Rortyan pragmatism) that abandon the promise of science as 'mirroring of the world' (Rorty, 1979), and the subscription to truth-as-representation.

Instead, the contention made here is that knowledge is possible to the extent that it systematically generates lack-of-knowledge (cf. Thrift, 1996, Simandan, 2005). In simple words, as we are within a given horizon of knowledge (may it be regional evolutionary economic theory, Krugman's geographical economics, or mainstream Marxist political economy), labouring for its expansion, we cannot be at the same time in other horizons. Therefore, the truths we produce are necessarily partial and path-dependent. Unlike overly optimistic epistemologies[67], this account emphasizes that the entry point does significantly matter, shaping all the

[67] For a sample see Harvey, 1999.

truths and half truths that animate a given horizon[68]. Each and every horizon generates forms of epistemic neglect. In an ironic sense, the concept of 'lock-in' (first introduced by David, 1985, and further theorised by Arthur, 1989, and Grabher, 1993), used as explanatory tool for the decline of certain regional economies, might as well be deployed to enlighten researchers about how they get locked in a given horizon of knowledge production and to persuade them that self-reflexivity and accounts of positionality (see Harding, 1998, Rose, 1997, Sidaway, 2000) are not a postmodern indulgence, but a required therapeutic moment within the craft of research.

We tend to get locked in within a given horizon, as we focus our energies in the direction pointed by its leading researchers, at the expense of other directions that might fruitfully collide with other horizons (cf. Becher, Trowler, 2001). For example, in the 'lock-ins' literature, the current burning problem is the lack of sufficient case studies and comparative cross-national and cross-sectoral research, making the 'lock-in' concept 'too weakly based to become a sound theoretical concept in economic geography' (Hassink and Dong-Ho, 2003: 1). Slightly against the grain, this chapter makes the case that the burning problem with the 'lock-ins' literature is that its theoretical apparatus is not expanded enough and that *this* theoretical feebleness is making it 'too weakly based'. The current discourse of 'lock-ins' performs through the voices of its various practitioners a number of comfortable recitations of epistemological and ontological claims that no longer hold

[68] A convenient but poor synonym for 'horizon' would be 'school of thought'.

in contemporary social, political, and cultural theory[69]. If we are to make any substantive progress in our horizon, we cannot simply ignore these developments. As theorists of how learning (cf. Hudson, 1999) matters to regional economic development, we should be receptive at the superseding problem of how learning matters to the development of regional evolutionary economic theory in the first place.

In what follows, the examination of the weaknesses of the 'lock-ins' literature will proceed in three steps. The first step will ground the claim that the current distinction between functional lock-ins, political lock-ins, and cognitive lock-ins reproduces ontological and political assumptions that impoverish our understanding of how the social works (see also Joyce, 2002) and, ultimately, leads us away from the respectable desire to contribute to the positive transformation of hitherto declining industrial regions. The second step will build the argument that yet more types of lock-ins have to be theorised and will labour to introduce two subtypes of 'contextual lock-ins': epistemic lock-ins and ontological lock-ins. The final part will use the previous steps to introduce the concept of 'recursive cartographies', with the aim of destabilising the habits of ontological thinking that haunt the texts of regional evolutionary economic theory.

Subverting the trinity of lock-ins

Grabher (1993) separated three types of lock-ins, gaining insight from his empirical research in the Ruhr Area. He argued that it is theoretically useful to disentangle cognitive

[69] And see Gregory, 1998, Allen et al, 1999.

lock-ins, referring to the inappropriate mind sets of regional economic agents, unable to grasp the proper meaning of various economic evolutions; functional lock-ins, referring to vicious hierarchical inter-firm dependencies; and political lock-ins, referring to organisations, laws, norms, and rules imbricate into a thick institutional fabric that opposes dramatic regional economic restructuring and fuels myriad negative feedback loops.

The framework seems clear enough and holds the promise to be an effective theoretical backcloth against which to undertake sound empirical research. Furthermore, it also seems simple enough to connect mere academic discourse with those who could benefit from it in the world out-there, namely policy makers. And this is no little achievement in the current academic context, when so many decry or are utterly furious at the spread of the esoteric jargon of poststructuralisms, which, they suspect, hides its social irrelevance away from public scrutiny (Hamnett, 1998). However, when confronted with field-based research, the initial promise of the framework slowly transmogrifies into yet stronger doubts about its explanatory effectiveness.

In the past years, I have worked on several studies (Simandan, 2001a-d, 2002a-l, 2003a-i) that prepared the ground for an enquiry into a comparative political economy of industrialisation and deindustrialisation in Romania and Norway. In Romania, some of these studies were concerned with Hunedoara County, an area situated in the South- West of Transylvania that fully meets the harshest criteria for defining an old and declining industrial region. Hunedoara County has a surface of sq.km 7.025 and 575.000 inhabitants, 401.000 of whom live in the urban realm. Its industrial development began before the advent of Communism in 1945, but took an unprecedented pace after

this political turn. The main industries are coal mining and steel. Of the fourteen cities of this county, the largest (80.000 inhabitants) is Hunedoara, the centre of the steel industry, whilst the third is Petrosani (51.000 inhabitants), the centre of Romania's most famous coal mining area. These industries have been substantively affected by the shift to neoliberal capitalist relations in the wake of the Anti-Communist Revolution of 1989. To be sure, it has been a shift a contre-coeur, given that since 1990 the political stage has been dominated by former communists[70] who implemented neoliberal reforms because of the pressures from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union. And it is this brand of capitalism à contre-coeur that has made it impossible for me to distinguish empirically between functional lock-ins and political lock-ins in Hunedoara County. Let me elaborate.

The elections of 2000 swept away the more right-wing oriented parties that had formed the government between 1996 and 2000, and resulted in the return of the Social Democratic Party (henceforth the SDP), which dominated the governmental coalitions between 1990 and 1996. The territorial power of the SDP increased systematically, through aggressive campaigns of recruiting key economic actors under the threat of being politically and economically punished if they resist recruitment. Until very recently[71], nearly all economic and administrative structures in Romania were permeated by the SDP, making the country the most corrupt in Europe and one of the most corrupt in

[70] For more details, see chapter 2.

[71] The elections in the fall of 2004 sent the SDP in opposition, even though it remains the party with the highest number of members of the parliament. This change was caused by the maneuvers of the newly elected president Traian Basescu.

the world (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2002). Nevertheless, there was a good chance that they would win the election in 2004, due to their populist discourse, charismatic leaders (particularly president Ion Iliescu), and thriving economic base. Rhetorically, the SDP subscribed to the imperatives of neoliberal reforms, continuously stressed by organisations such as the IMF or the UE in their negotiations with the Romanian government. In practice, something different happened, but not what one would expect from the literature on the restructuring of old industrial regions. The premise in this literature (Grabher, 1993, Grabher and Stark, 1998, Morgan and Nauwelaers, 1999, etc.) is that there are structures and habits in the declining industrial regions that oppose positive change, with the attendant policy challenge of counteracting these resistances. But in Hunedoara County the problem is slightly different: the pressures from international organisations to narrow down the coal and steel industries were so high, that the government had to implement unpopular policies of neoliberalisation, despite its fondest political beliefs. The issue at stake dramatically changed: since resistance to change was no more a viable option (otherwise we would not be accepted in the EU[72] and this is the country's supreme political goal), the question for the SDP was how to change the system in such a way as to ensure the reproduction (and even growth) of its economic power. And there was an amazing commitment to unlearning old habits and learning how to play the new system being implemented. There was indeed a shift from state property to private property, but usually the latter meant the SDP by another name. The important point here is that it is

[72] The EU imposes that the Romanian steel industry reaches the specific rates of consumption and the EU average productivity no later than 2005. Nevertheless, it accepts the idea of state subsidies for the development of the steel industry until 2007.

empirically impossible to separate functional lock-ins from political lock-ins, since in a corrupt socio-economy the former (hierarchical inter-firm dependencies) are political at their very heart. The hierarchy was the SDP and the SDP controlled the play of dependencies to ensure a strong economic base for its political reproduction, usually by an old-fashioned yet so effective mechanism of economic rewards and economic punishments.

Take the case of Siderurgica, the most important steel company of Hunedoara County. At least 80.000 inhabitants depend economically on its success or failure, which means that its regional significance translates on the national political agenda as well. Its current production dropped to 1/6 of the level reached in 1989 (the last year of the 'socialist economic order'), the sharpest decline among Romania's steel companies. Only between 1996 and 1999, its debt level increased from Lei 615.1 billion to Lei 2,190 billion. Yet, the state has subsidised part of its economic inefficiency, given its strategic economic role. It also paid a number of consulting companies (Usinor Consultants, France and Idom, Spain) to assess the current state of this 'black economic hole' and to envisage scenarios for its restructuring. The recommendations of international organisations have been somehow contradictory. For example, the World Bank has recommended either to privatise or to shut down the company, whereas the European Union urged that the first thing to do should be the state-managed restructuring of the company. In this context, the company closed some of its unprofitable capacities of production (two Siemens-Martin facilities) and fired 3,500 of its initial 14,000 employees. The downsized company was further divided into a number of branches and subsequently

the big scandal has been over how the privatisation of these branches could take place[73].

As far as the 'cognitive lock-ins' are concerned, the vision of whole regional communities being 'polluted' with the same vicious mind set and acting as its mere slaves is at unease with both my empirical observations in Hunedoara County and, more worryingly, with how contemporary social and cultural theory understands processes of cognition (Thrift, 1996, 2000b), learning (Butler, 1997; Spivak, 1999), and collective behaviour (Foucault, 1994; Haugaard, 2003). The definition of cognitive lock-ins as a distinctive type of lock-ins reminds one of the assumptions about autonomy, ideology, culture, and subject formation found in the literatures on decision-making (cf. McCloskey, 1998), rational choice theory (Lichbach, 2003), and behavioural geography (Golledge and Stimson, 1997; cf. Johnston, 1997).

Firstly, the separation of cognitive lock-ins as a distinctive type subscribes to a fantasy of the autonomy of culture and cognition, in that cognitive lock-ins are the result of education and culture, which are seen as rather independent

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[73] I studied in some detail the debates of the Romanian Parliament over this scandal. Thus, in the session of the Senate of 14/03/2003 (www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/), Senator Mircea Nedelcu challenged the answer of the government's representative to his initial query about the SDP's involvement in the corrupt privatisation of these branches, by saying: 'These doubts are not my own personal doubts. They are just *simply reflected in the whole mass media* of Hunedoara County'. I emphasised these lines to suggest the power of the SDP: although its corrupt practices were publicly known, nothing really happened during its rule. Its hegemony remained unchallenged. In earlier chapters, I named this overall aberrant state of affairs the 'anti-legal society'.

of 'the political'. This overlooks the basic claim made by Foucault: power-knowledge is an analytically unbreakable binary (Foucault, 1970, 1994). Each and every form of knowledge and cognition is enmeshed in power relations, and whereas for some a 'mindset' is the outcome of mere education and cultural specificity, for Foucault, Althusser, and the like, it is first and foremost a political sedimentation of more or less coherent strategies of normalisation, whereby populations are shaped into docile subjects.

Secondly, it endorses an outdated model of the self, that of the traditional coherent, rational Cartesian subject, thus stepping aside from the de-centred models of the self (Butler, 1997, Butler et al, 2000) that outline what Spivak (1988, 1999) provocatively called our 'irreducible textuality'. This latter phrase does not mean that we are mere texts, but that we are inescapably shaped by broader social vectors of power-knowledge, such as language, cultural norms, etc. Hence, we are conspicuous political makings.

Thirdly, it neglects the progress made in the 'structure versus agency' debate. The vision of regional communities as 'victims' of infelicitous mindsets that hinder regional development and creativity is totalising and epistemically violent in its re-enactment of the primacy of structure over (in)dividual agency. It reminds one of the Gramscian tropes of 'hegemony' and of the broader grand narratives of ideology and false consciousness that have haunted for too long the social sciences at the expense of sheer acknowledgement of our creative metabolisation of received knowledge (Thrift, 1996, 1999, 2000a-d, 2002) and of our potential for unsettling the structures that interpellate us (Butler, 1997, Gibson, 2001, Gibson-Graham, 2002).

My empirical research in Hunedoara County suggests, in line with these latter acknowledgements, that the so-called

cognitive lock-ins are not regional collective mindsets, but unstable constellations of (in)dividualised economic performances shaped by improvisational knowledge gained 'amateuristically' from being in a place, from listening, watching, gossiping, and feeling (through trials and errors) the rules of that particular regional economic game[74]. I name all these 'parochial economic learning' (Simandan, 2003d), and align the concept to the spirit of non-representational theory, for its stress upon embodiment, improvisation, affective specificity, and irrepressible creativity in the making of one's sense of his/her environment. Parochial economic learning also dovetails with Jose Gil's (1998) concept of 'exfoliation': by being in a place, we change with our presence, to variable extents, that place (we 'exfoliate' our lives in that environment); conversely, by being in a place, that particular place is changing us, physically and affectively, we internalise that place into us (or the place 'exfoliates' itself into us). Parochial economic learning, unlike cognitive lock-ins, acknowledges the indelible

[74] This should be understood in the context of a society in transition, where 'all that is solid melts into air': there are big legal and administrative gaps between the hitherto Communist regulatory regime and the (beginning of) the new Capitalist regulatory regime. Economic life under these circumstances becomes conspicuously 'improvisational', as people have to make decisions and adopt behaviours that account for the muddy political and social climate. Significantly, a survey of the Gallup Institute (September 2003) captured the massive role of non-formal processes of economic learning, by outlining the decline of formal social structures: 80% of the interviewees believed that laws are totally inefficient because those in power can do, unpunished, whatever they want; 67% believed that the *only* way to become rich is by using unfair and illegal means; and 67% believed that political parties exist just as a means for politicians to build their fortunes and careers.

metamorphism between political processes and cognitive processes, while at the same time stressing that we should beware of visions of coherent regional collective agencies that occlude the diversity of economic and cultural attitudes within any given region.

So far, our concern has been with excavating the presuppositions about the way the social works that allow regional evolutionary economic theorists to be either happy or reasonably satisfied with Grabher's distinction between functional lock-ins, cognitive lock-ins, and political lock-ins. In what follows, instead of pointing ever more that this holy trinity is conceptually quite sinful, the argument will twist to explain why this holy trinity should be more than a trinity.

Forgotten lock-ins

Consider Hunedoara County. We have the case of a declining old industrial region based on coal and steel industries. Following the wisdom of the lock-ins literature and our commitment to help devise better economic policies, we try to detect what is going wrong with this region, what are the forces that imprison it into stagnation and even decline. We first look at functional lock-ins, trying to map the hierarchical inter-firm dependencies that ossify a certain pattern of production relations. We then move to a consideration of the cognitive lock-ins: what are the wrong beliefs held by economic agents in this area, how they came about, what could be done to unlearn them and be more enlightened? And then we dive into the deep sea of political lock-ins, hoping to unravel the dirty little secrets of how the regional community actually works, below, behind, and beyond formal laws and regulations and official 'clean'

discourses. Eventually, we might even gather our research results into a publishable paper, to strengthen the quality of academic debate. Our unit of analysis – Hunedoara County – has been researched, yet something is missing and unpleasantly haunts our sense of achievement.

The beginning of this chapter made excessive use of the metaphor of 'horizons', to argue that, as researchers, we unavoidably get enmeshed into a path of knowledge-seeking that at the same time reveals some truths and hides some other truths. There is no hope of finding the right path/horizon, which would eventually bring about all the truths, for human knowledge is inescapably situated (see Haraway, 1991, for the thesis of the situatedness of our knowledge claims) and therefore incomplete[75]. The best we can do to cope with these predicaments is to acknowledge from time to time that we are enmeshed in a given horizon and to start an exercise in reflexivity that would alert us to some of the things we were unproblematically assuming in the routine labouring in that horizon of knowledge-making. By looking at the three types of lock-ins in Hunedoara County, our problem has become to find out what are the regional factors that hinder creativity and economic development in that particular region. We became stuck in our unit of analysis (Hunedoara County), without wondering what is left outside that unit of analysis, what is the context surrounding it and how it impacts our research. Might there be *contextual lock-ins*? Might there be factors located outside the unit of analysis that, if considered, would have changed our research?

[75] See Spivak, 1988, 1999, for her concept of 'epistemic violence'.

For the moment, a brief story will suffice (a detailed account is in Simandan, 2001b). The south of Hunedoara County is called the Jiu Valley and concentrates a massive number of mines and mining infrastructure deemed unprofitable after 1990 and exposed to the threat and trauma (Berlant, 2001) of neoliberal dissolution (cf. Peck and Tickell, 2002). Romania's president Ion Iliescu used this threat to mobilise the miners of Jiu Valley into his personal army in the muddy political times of 1990, when his legitimacy as former communist leading a democratic state was thoroughly questioned by intellectuals, the youth, and the educated urban bourgeoisie of Bucharest. He asked the miners several times to come to the capital armed with mining tools to make order in a Bucharest fiercely destabilised in those days by anti-Iliescu street protests and by vociferous humanist intellectuals. And, properly manipulated, the miners did make order and launched slogans that soon reached global expression: 'Death to the intellectuals!', 'We won't sell our country!', 'We work, we don't think!' The collective memory of those events has epitomised this social group as the very expression of Romanian primitivism, cruelty, and *ethnic inadequacy*, this tribal stigma (Gofffman, 1990) being systematically enacted in films, novels, and more broadly in the general media.

Elsewhere (Simandan, 2003b), it has been argued that a core commonality of both communism and neoliberalism is that they assume and discursively construct a benign social pathology. What has been before the advent of either communism or neoliberalism is portrayed in pathological vocabularies: the social body and the economy are sick and

in deep need of either neoliberal or communist therapy[76]. Yet, the crucial point of these rhetorics, is that, although sick, the economy and the social body suffer of a benign, curable disease, which makes it possible for communist or neoliberal policies to impose drastic political-economical therapies in the first place. It is the existence of social hope ('benign disease') that makes these two types of policies discursively possible and politically operational.

It is against these theoretical observations that one can situate the consequences of the stigmatisation of miners as a truly primitive community, for this stigmatisation has fuelled and has been fuelled by an intellectual discourse of malign, incurable social pathology that is not worth spending one's resources on. Hunedoara County and Romania as a country have been locked in this contextual type of lock-ins. The country's reputation among foreign investors as one of the most primitive and violent country in Europe has substantively contributed to its general economic decline and to its backwardness among Eastern European countries since 1990. The case to make here is not that institutional tissues in a particular industrial cluster discourage novel exogenous initiatives, but that those novel exogenous initiatives just do not bother with investing in an area marred by a malign condition. We have here a particular subtype of contextual lock-ins that could be labelled *ontological lock-in*. It is contextual because it was constructed and it acts from outside the unit of analysis (Hunedoara County). It is ontological, because, though outside the unit of analysis, it nevertheless belongs to the object researched, it is a part of

[76] In the previous chapter I called these manoeuvres 'ontopolitical therapies', i.e. governmental technologies for the management of drastic political change.

the world out there (ontology) that we, as presumably objective researchers, try to investigate (epistemology). And from this mentioning of the binary epistemology – ontology, I now turn to argue for a second subtype of contextual lock-ins, namely epistemic lock-ins.

Old habits of making scientific research die hard. Though the fiction of scientific objectivity has been exposed and reworked into a 'robust objectivity' to accommodate claims about the role of researcher's values, beliefs, and interests (Harding, 1998), many economic geographers still try to emulate economics in their pretence of doing objective research (and see McCloskey, 1998, Thrift, 2000a). In researching Hunedoara County, at worst we might ignore its national and international context, at best we might pay attention to the issue, acknowledging its ontological lock-ins. It is very unlikely though, that we would seize the interplay between epistemology, ontology and politics in our research. We always forget to situate ourselves in our object of analysis. One gazes at the map of Hunedoara County, wonders what has been overlooked in research, but refuses to make the mental effort to situate oneself within that very map (Rose, 1997, Sidaway, 2000). As researchers of the social world, we do not pay attention to the ways in which we fabricate and we change our object of research (Foucault, 1970, Derrida, 1997, Hacking, 2002). Why then not attending to our *epistemic lock-ins*? The contention here is that these epistemic lock-ins truly affect the very declining old industrial regions we are researching and not only our capacity to understand them. Though apparently epistemological, they have the same ontological agency as all the other lock-ins we are researching within, or around the map of Hunedoara County. And this occurs for the simple fact that we often find ourselves being both

'objective researchers' and policy –makers' advisors. The knowledge we produce in this subdiscipline is of direct relevance for the world out there and grounds political decisions. If we do not acknowledge our own involvement in the making of 'old industrial regions' and 'lock-ins' as discursive devices that semiotically shape the reality out-there[77], we miss an important dimension of what constitutes proper science: systematic criticism and systematic doubt (Merton, 1973).

Epistemic lock-ins can take various forms, but in this chapter the focus was particularly on the epistemic lock-ins that underwrite Grabher's three-fold classification. It has been suggested that this classification enacts very dubious assumptions about the way the social works and that more attention to the latter would significantly laminate the conceptual difference between a) functional lock-ins and political lock-ins, and b) between cognitive lock-ins and political lock-ins. Having said that, the final part of the chapter will now make an attempt to review the need for ontological lock-ins and epistemic lock-ins by means of a metaphor – that of recursive cartographies (see also Simandan, 2005).

Recursive cartographies of Hunedoara County

Consider the figure below (figure 2). At first glance, it is a mess or a futurist work of art. Yet, it provides a radical alternative to our routine conceptualisations of the world out-there. A careful eye will detect that the figure is made of

[77] And see the work of Miller on virtualism, 2000; cf. Latour and Serres, 1995, Haraway, 1997.

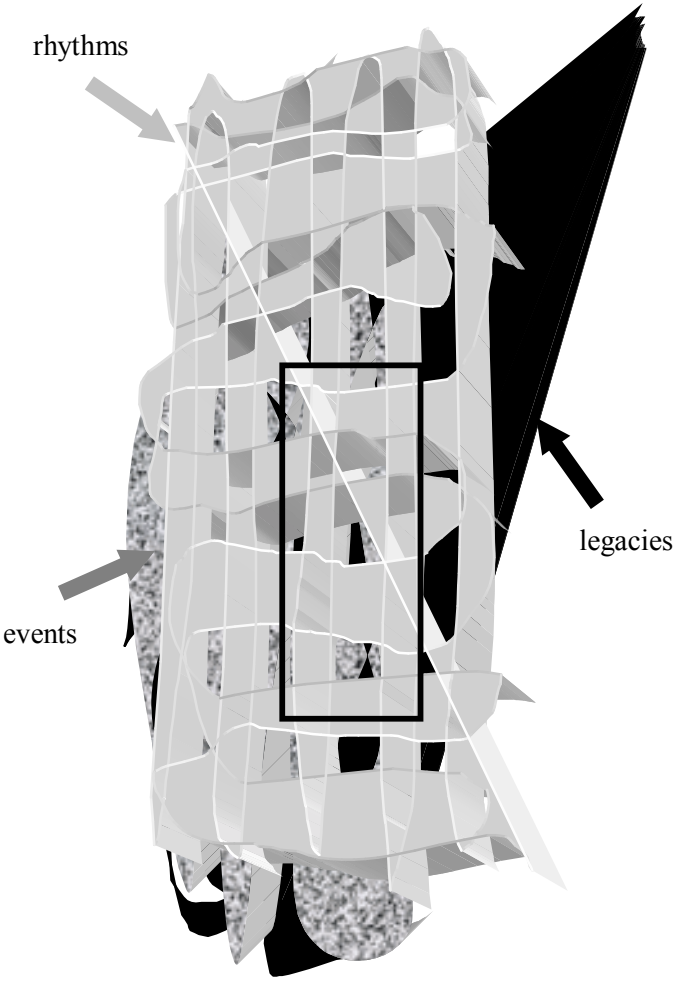

Figure 2: Recursive cartographies

four elements: a black rectangle, a light gray fabric, a black background, and a disordered dark-gray patterned line. Let us analyse them one by one.

The black rectangle in this case is a signifier for Hunedoara County, but it might as well be the Arad County, or the South-East Carpathians. Its exact shape does not seem to be 'natural', and was deliberately chosen to alert the reader to the discursive construction of our unit of analysis. One speaks of the negative consequences of industrial clustering in a regional economy, and is so concerned with the explanation of those consequences that he/she overlooks how 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1999, see also Best, 1999) is committed in the arbitrary act of tracing the contours of that regional economy. In this chapter the focus was on something called Hunedoara County, an administrative division of Romania characterised by heavy concentrations of the mining and steel industries.

But even within this area, there are localities that have other industrial profiles (Orastie, Deva, Simeria), so one might have chosen as 'regional economy' not the whole of Hunedoara, but just parts of it (e.g. the Jiu Valley). Conversely, two neighbouring counties (Gorj and Caras-Severin) also have concentrations of steel and/or mining industries, and one might have traced the contours of the 'regional economy' to include all the three counties. The point here is that the texts of regional evolutionary economic theory tend systematically to *reify* 'the region', instead of attending to its discursive constructions and forgotten first instance of choice of one's unit of analysis. This body of literature does not engage the blossoming debates about rethinking the region in geography (Paasi, 2003, Terlouw, 2001, Macleod and Jones, 2001).

Returning to our figure, one would note that the 'stuff' filling the black rectangle does not end at its borders but massively exceeds them. All the three elements composing the stuff (the light gray fabric, the black background, the disordered dark-gray patterned line) occur within and outside the rectangle, fact which reiterates through a different path an earlier observation of this chapter: that we have to pay attention to 'ontological lock-ins', to processes happening outside our unit of analysis.

But then, how could one classify those very processes (which together constitute the 'ontological', the world out-there)? The answer is painfully difficult, as one has to make educated choices on matters such as simplicity/complexity, elegance, explanatory power, commonsensicality, and so on[78]. The most straightforward choice would be to re-state our received wisdom (cf. Latour, 1993, Haraway, 2000, Whatmore, 2002): the world is divided in 'nature' and 'society', with the further subdivision of the latter in the all too familiar (but see the Butler versus Fraser debate in Social Text, 1997) domains of the 'cultural', the 'political', the 'economic', etc. Yet recursive cartographies purport to be a radical alternative to this mainstream modern 'Western' model (as well as to that of hybridity, Whatmore, 2002) in an attempt to leave behind the habits of thought determined by this model. Some of these habits were exposed in the first part of the chapter, where it has been argued that the trinity of the 'lock-ins' literature rests on crisp assumptions regarding the ways in which the 'cultural', the 'cognitive', the 'economic', and the 'political' relate.

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[78] See Loux, 2002, on the criteria to consider in the analysis of theory building, but also Foucault, 1970, 1994, on the political logic of classifying.

The ontological model of recursive cartographies prioritises simplicity and elegance over complexity and explanatory power, and this choice enrolls it in the necessary trade-off of any horizon of knowledge: in order to know some things, other things cannot be known; i.e. any 'paradigm' is an unstable configuration of epistemic gains and epistemic losses. Put simply, the light gray fabric in the figure is a signifier for 'rhythms', the dark-gray patterned line is a signifier for 'events', and the black background is a signifier for 'legacies'. The world then, as well as our Hunedoara County, is the result of the interplay and mutual metamorphosis of three elements: rhythms, events, and legacies. The types of concerns of regional evolutionary economic theory dovetail with this three fold ontology. Consider for example a random passage from this literature (Hassink and Dong-Ho, 2003: 2-3):

> …the historical process of industrialisation in North America and Europe is marked by stories of *small accidents* leading to the establishments of one or two *persistent centres of production*. Thereafter *cumulative processes* can generate a geographical structure of production which may be stable for long periods of time (italics added).

I emphasized in the text three words. The first is 'small accidents' and in recursive cartographies this would be translated as 'events'. Anything that disrupts the pre-existing order of things, reducing one system's entropy, qualifies as event. The outstanding features of events are that they bring genuine novelty, they perturb the state of affairs, and they are irreducibly traumatic[79], though in largely different

[79] On the latter contention, see also Derrida, 2002. Note that 'traumas' can be sad – a disease – or happy – finding one's soul mate.

extents. Political elections, a bankruptcy, a strike, a merger, an earthquake, an international workshop, a foreign investment, an innovation, are all events.

The second word emphasized is 'persistent centres of production', which in our three-fold ontology would be labelled as 'rhythms'. Anything that regulates a place, bringing constancy, predictability, and structural identity to it, constitutes a rhythm. Four decades of communist rule in Romania, the day/night cycle, the production of chocolate in Birmingham, the four seasons of the temperate climate, the urban timetabling of the transportation network, the legal system of a country, the grammatical rules of a language, are all rhythms. They weave the fabric of a place, while being from time to time wounded by events that challenge their ontological hegemony in processes of place formation. The third word emphasized is 'cumulative processes', which in recursive cartographies would be classified under the heading 'legacies'. Anything left in the world that is not either 'event' or 'rhythm' qualifies as 'legacy'. Put simply, the legacy of a place is the coagulation of its past events and past rhythms, with the critical observation that this does not mean that legacy is 'dead', lacking agency. Quite on the contrary, it extensively contributes to place formation: our actions are often guided by lessons learned from past actions, the stereotypes that produce the 'image' of a place come from past knowledge (and that image significantly influences present decisions – e.g. to invest or not to invest in Hunedoara County); a rhythm (e.g. the tourist industry / coal mining) might rest on regional legacies (architectural heritage / geological layers), etc.

This simple explanatory framework (the trinity of recursive cartographies, if you want) does not hinder further

theoretical sophistication, and this will become apparent whilst explaining the name of the model. Why 'recursive', and why 'cartographies'?

'Recursive' means 'producing each other' and is used here as a signifier for relational (but non-dialectical) thinking. In relational thinking (Latour, 1993, 1999, 2002, Thrift, 2002, Whatmore, 2002) it is the relation that produces the things which apparently create the relation. This approach destabilises modern ontological wisdom and complicates the explanatory apparatus of economic geography. For the specific case of the mutual translatability of events, rhythms, and legacies, one would note, for example, that at its beginning each and every rhythm is first an event. However, not all events become rhythms (e.g. contrast the event of setting a textile plant, which soon after the start of production becomes a rhythm, with a strike, which after its end becomes legacy, inscribed in the documents of the time and in the culture of collective protest of the respective community, e.g. Sadler and Thompson, 2001).

'Cartographies' is the concept that best captures the unbreakable bind between epistemology (we, as subjects of knowledge production), ontology (the world apparently out-there, as object of knowledge production), and politics. To understand this, Derrida's distinction between signifier (the utterance and letters composing the word 'old industrial region'), signified (the image that comes to our mind when we hear/read the signifier 'old industrial region'), and referent (the respective old industrial region 'out there', existing independent of our minds' conceptualisation and discursive inscription of it) is useful (Derrida, 1997, 2002). Its usefulness comes from the fact that it alerts us to the fact that always when we think that we think about the world out-there (the referent), we are actually thinking about the

signified, for thinking occurs through language, which inescapably compartmentalises the world out there into words/concepts – the vehicles of signification. Our ontologies, then, are always infected with the sins of our epistemologies.

The cartographic metaphor is useful, in that it simultaneously points to the fact that:

a) When we read a map, we have mediated access to the world out there, but we should always be aware of the epistemic price paid in the act of mediation;
b) Cartography is a craft with its own rules, conventions, and tips, and knowledge of these rules might reduce the epistemic price of mediation (e.g. in building the model of 'recursive cartographies' I needed to be aware of the weaknesses of other models and of the criteria against which metaphysical research is evaluated, Loux, 2002);
c) Even within the frame of the same map/model, multiple interpretations of what we see are unavoidable. To give an example, a technological system can be read at the same time as 'legacy' (in the sense of Latour's, 1993, 1999, definition of technology as 'society made durable'), 'rhythm' (e.g. an electronic surveillance system that 'regulates' the collective behaviour in a place) or 'quasiobject' (a 'rhythmic legacy'). This openness to interpretation requires then to speak of plural 'cartographies' and not of a single 'cartography'.

Summing up

The aim of this chapter has been to discuss some of the presuppositions enacted in regional evolutionary economic theory in general, and in the lock-ins literature, in particular. This discussion has started with a consideration of how the

nature of scientific knowledge production necessarily generates lack of knowledge alongside new knowledge. Drawing on the work of Heidegger, Tanesini, and Haraway, it has been shown that, as situated epistemic agents, we are involved in particular horizons of research (i.e. schools of thought, sub-disciplines) at the expense of not being involved in other horizons. An unavoidable tendency within the community of researchers labouring in any given horizon is to get locked in a particular set of research problems, with the attendant overlooking of the need for self-reflexivity and for the asking of basic questions regarding one's negotiations between epistemology and ontology. The main body of the chapter has metabolised these thoughts into an analysis of the lock-ins literature that included both a critical and a utopian-constructive moment (Benhabib, 1986).

Thus, the first part has provided a critique of Grabher's classification of lock-ins into functional, cognitive, and political, critique grounded in both my empirical research in a declining industrial region in Romania and in contemporary social and political theory. The empirical research clearly indicated that on the ground the distinction of functional lock-ins from political lock-ins is impossible, as inter-firm hierarchical interdependencies are devastatingly permeated with the logic of political interdependencies in the context of a society enmeshed in the threads of generalised corruption. It also signaled that we are wrong in assuming that local interests always oppose change in a declining industrial region. In this particular case, the pressure towards change coming from international political and financial organisations had been such, that the local elites were focused on how to play the game of the transformation processes to their best benefit, rather then trying to oppose change.

Equally, drawing on several strands of thought in contemporary social and political theory (Foucault, Spivak, Butler, Thrift, etc.), it has been argued that 'cognitive lock-ins' are an inadequate analytical category, in that they reproduce untenable epistemic fantasies about the relative autonomy of the 'cultural', the reification of collective agency, the unbalanced interplay of structure and agency (the latter being neglected), and the autonomy and coherence of the self. At the intersection of theoretical and empirical work, it has then been suggested that the concept of 'parochial economic learning', signifying unstable and situated economic performances shaped by knowledge gained improvisationally and amateuristically from being in a place and feeling the rules of the local economic game, better capture the ways in which processes of cognition and economic learning operate in a regional context.

The second part unfolded alongside the distinction between one's unit of analysis (research focus), and the context (everything left outside the unit of analysis), to argue that we need to supplement the holly trinity of lock-ins with contextual lock-ins. Though epistemically situated outside the unit of analysis (in our case outside the boundaries of the declining regional economy), they have the same level of impact on the regional decline as the traditional types of lock-ins. Contextual lock-ins were further divided into ontological lock-ins (referring to what is left outside the unit of analysis, but is nevertheless part of what we consider 'the world out-there', of 'the ontology' we are trying to know as scientists) and epistemic lock-ins (signifying the negative consequences for regional economies resulting from our poor theorisation of regional economic processes, theorisation that eventually shapes the region through practices such as regional policy advising and education of

regional policy makers). Ontological lock-ins were introduced with the help of the concept 'ontopolitical therapy', which summarises the answer to the question 'What makes major public policies 'major'?, and emphasizes the role of medical discourse in the management of the social body. Drawing on previous analyses of communist and neoliberal policies in Romania, I showed that the discursive prerequisite of major political and economic change is to portray society and economy as being sick but curable. If the portrayal is that of a society/regional economy that is sick but incurable, that portrayal (perpetrated through media, intelligentsias, word-of-mouth, business, and political advising), though untrue, acts as an ontological lock-in: from outside the region, but contributing extensively to the regional economic decline (e.g. investors will not want to go in a 'cancerous' regional economy).

The third part of the analysis encompassed its most radical utopian-constructive moment, in its introduction of an alternative ontological model for regional evolutionary economic theory. We need to operate with this model because it is likely to reduce the weight of our epistemic lock-ins. The latter remain particularly powerful in regional evolutionary economic theory at the moment because we endorse the mainstream ontological model of modern Western culture, premised on the first order distinction between 'society' and 'nature', and on second order divisions of the former into categories such as the 'economic', the 'political', and the 'cultural'. The aforementioned analysis of how this model negatively affected Grabher's three-fold classification of lock-ins backs these later claims.

The new model, labelled 'recursive cartographies', was introduced (cf. Simandan, 2005) in both graphic and textual form, the latter being molded in three steps.

The first step consisted in an analysis of what we mean by 'regional economy' and of how we trace its boundaries, and suggested that, because of the lack of theoretical engagement with the novel conceptualisations of the region in geography, regional evolutionary economic theory operates with an outdated, *reified*, concept of the region, that systematically tends to overlook the weight of the 'outside' in regional formations (and hence the need for introducing in research the examination of 'ontological lock-ins').
The second step explained and illustrated the three components of recursive cartographies: 'events', which disturb a system and reduce its entropy, 'rhythms', which regulate a given place and provide constancy, homogeneity, structural identity, and predictability, and 'legacies', which encompass past events and past rhythms that nevertheless have ontological agency, shaping substantively the processes of place formation. The final step outlined why the model is named 'recursive cartographies', showing that 'recursive' is a needed indicator for relational thinking and that 'cartographies' is the best metaphor that unravels the inescapable bond between epistemology, ontology, and politics.

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The *rhythms* of my theoretical and empirical research into the utopian engineering of Romanian modernity, recollected in the previous chapters and in a number of independent papers, have been massively disturbed by an *event* that took place in the summer of 2002. I visited Norway and I was shocked to find a number of salient similarities between this

country and Romania. They concerned their marginal status in Europe, their genealogy of modernity, and their political economy of neoliberal transformation since the 1990s. The remaining chapters of this book trace the *legacy* of that event.

6. Geographies of utopian engineering in the margins of Europe

6. Geographies of utopian engineering in the margins of Europe

> Masses are lazy and unintelligent; they have no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability; and the individuals composing them support one another in giving free reign to their indiscipline. It is only through the influence of individuals who can set an example and whom masses recognize as their leaders that they can be induced to perform the work and undergo the renunciations on which the existence of civilization depends. (Freud, 1927/1989: 8-9)

Social scientists have become increasingly aware of how many 'real' things are actually problematic intellectual constructions (Hacking, 2002a-b, Smith, 2002). As Arjun Appadurai (2001: 8) observes:

> The large regions that dominate our current maps…are not permanent geographical facts. They are problematic heuristic devices for the study of global processes. Regions are best viewed as initial contexts for themes that generate variable geographies, rather than as fixed geographies marked by pregiven themes. These themes are equally 'real', equally coherent, but are the result of our interests and not their causes. We need to attend to this varied set of public spheres, and the intellectuals who constitute them, so that our picture

> of areas does not stay confined to our first-order, necessarily parochial, world pictures.

A recent annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers (September 2003) included a session – Understanding Globalisation – aimed precisely at undoing the naïve realism of "regional" thinking within economic geography (cf. Smith, 2003, and chapter five in this book). Although the premise of the session was that globalisation is a fruitful conceptual tool for this purpose, the papers presented[80] unraveled the ways in which the theoretical controversies over this concept[81] might hinder its alleged usefulness. While this direction of research is worth pursuing, it is by no means the only direction available for problematising lazy meta-categorisations of people and regions[82].

An alternative direction became apparent to me in 2002, when I undertook training and fieldwork in Norway. Having a record of research on the geographies of communist and neoliberal transformations of Romania, I was surprised by a number of significant similarities between Norway and Romania. Both countries are from a continental perspective "semi-peripheral" (Terlouw, 2001). They are not EU members (Phinnemore, 2001, Emerson et al, 2002) and their geographical location within Europe is not central. Both countries were underdeveloped and were part of other European empires (Sweden, Denmark, Russia, the Ottoman

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[80] E.g. Gilbert, 2003; Simandan, 2003d; cf. Dicken, 2003.

[81] See Low and Barnett, 2000; Nagar et al, 2002, Urry, 2003, Amin, 2004.

[82] See, for example, Rosenau, 2003, Simandan, 2003e, Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003, Gibson-Graham, 2004.

Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire) until the beginning of the 20th century (Boia, 2001, Hult, 2003). For both countries, the 20th century has brought the process of industrialisation[83] which, in both cases has been premised (and see Gunton, 2003, Hayter et al, 2003) on two major natural resources: hydropower (Simandan, 2002g) and oil (Simandan, 2004b). Even today, a large part of their industrial capacities focuses on heavy, energy-intensive industries (Hille, 1995, Hansen et al, 2000, Dobrescu, 2000).

Intriguingly, there are similarities even at the cultural and political levels. Thus, in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a significant proportion of the intellectual and political elites of the two countries was educated in Paris[84] creating at home a discourse of economic and social backwardness (Gerschenkron, 1962) that underpinned the political legitimacy[85] of enrolling these countries on the path of industrialisation and social development.

The Western discourse of development has traveled to these two European semi-peripheries in a very embodied way, by having local elites enacting the role of messengers between the core and the margin of the continent. Whilst there is general scholarship on the 'traveling' of discourses of modernisation to and from the periphery (Watts, 2003, Hart, 2004), on the role of messengers within actor-networks (Callon and Law, 2004), and on the core-periphery relation within Europe (Paasi, 2001, Kuus, 2004), little has been done to make these disconnected bodies of knowledge speak to each other in specific empirical contexts.

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[83] See also Gullestad, 1992, 1996, 2002, Mungiu-Pippidi and Althabe, 2002.
[84] See Dobie, 2001, Heidar, 2001, Boia, 2001, etc.
[85] See also Barry, 2001, Lieberman, 2002, Barnett, 2003.

My current research[86] endeavors to stimulate this conversation, by shedding light not only on the role of France' cultural influence in 19th century peripheral Europe but also on the role of local elites in mediating and transforming the manifestations of this influence. These elites have done more than the mere transportation of French ideas and fashions into the margins of the continent. These elites have themselves created specific discourses in which they deplored the economic and social primitivism of their countries, by contrasting it with the developed parts of Europe in general and with France in particular. This argument builds on the emerging body of literature on French Orientalism (Dobie, 2001) and metonymic Orientalism (Antohi, 1999, Simandan, 2003b, Kuus, 2004) to provide a nuanced understanding of the backcloth against which Romanian and Norwegian elites enrolled their countries on the path of accelerated development. My belief is that this empirically-rich archaeology of national development is fundamental, because, as Bhabha suggested (1990: 294) 'to write the story of the nation demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs modernity'.

Theories and intellectual projects such as the project of modernisation do travel and do change as they are being 'transported' by various messengers (in our case, local elites). But more needs to be done for them to have an actual material impact[87] in the landscape. Specifically, they have to be enrolled into political projects, i.e. they have to be accepted and assumed by politicians and, ideally, by the governed populations. In other words, the script of

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[86] Funded through the BUAF grant *French Discourses of Development and the Constitution of Resource Semi-peripheries in 19th century Europe*

[87] See Rose, 1999, Miller, 2000, and Whatmore, 2002.

modernisation has to be injected with political will and morphed into specific policies of development and specific institutional arrangements that implement and monitor those policies (Barnett, 2003). This political 'in-between' that bridges the realm of the 'ideal' (discourses, visions, *utopias*) with the realm of the 'material' (transformed societies, transformed natures, transformed core-*margin* dynamics) is crucial in several ways. Theorists such as Foucault, Butler, and Latour have provided rich insights into the intimacies of this political 'in-between', introducing compelling conceptual tools such as 'governmentality', 'constitutive outside' and 'actor-networks'. Whilst drawing on these contributions, I have added to the aforementioned conceptual toolbox a new element – 'ontopolitical therapy'. Let me elaborate again on this latter concept, by firstly going back to the political history of Romania and Norway, and, secondly, by explaining why I think that our understanding of modernisation and development in the margins of Europe is enhanced if one conceives political formations such as neoliberalism and communism as ontopolitical therapies.

In the first few decades after the Second World War, both countries evolved under political regimes characterised by a very strong role (Moran, 2002) of the state (Smith, 2000). Indeed, although Norway belongs in general terms to the group of 'advanced capitalist countries', one should not forget that for several decades it has had a very socialist brand of capitalism – the Norwegian welfare state (Edlund, 1999, Andreb and Heien, 2001). A parallel between two regimes (communism and welfare capitalism) characterised by strong state intervention is then epistemologically

legitimate[88]. More significantly, though, is that both countries have witnessed, since the 1990s, the rollback phase (Peck and Tickell, 2002, Peck, 2004) of neoliberalism and increased pressures to align themselves to the juridical and economic logic imposed by the EU enlargement[89].

Throughout the previous chapters of this book, I approached communism and neoliberalism as two regimes of development (Pieterse, 2001, Hart, 2002) defined against the broader backcloth of modernity[90]. Both communism and neoliberalism may be read as ways of organising the development of hitherto parochial, rural, agriculture-based societies[91]. As such, they share a number of ontological assumptions (Sawyer, 2002) regarding time, space, nature, and society.

Consider *time*. Both communism and neoliberalism portray what has been before as 'dark past', explain the radical and painful reforms in terms of a 'present as sacrifice' (violent shock-therapy; Edkins, 2003) and all these are for the sake of building a 'golden future' that never comes[92].

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[88] For the specifics of the epistemology of comparison consult the work of Chilcote, 2000, Kocka, 2003, Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003.

[89] See Holmes, 2000, Rosamond, 2002, Eliassen and Sitter, 2003.

[90] For excellent accounts of the Enlightenment Project and of modernity, see the work of Taylor, 2001, Pemberton, 2001, Israel, 2001, Delacampagne, 2001, Wokler, 2002.

[91] Cf. Stokes, 2001, Basu, 2003, Engerman et al, 2003.

[92] The title of this chapter -'Geographies of utopian engineering'- tries to capture the naïve, dream-like nature of the theoretical projects of both communism and neoliberalism. However, it is important to note that the dream-like nature of the two projects also applies to their common root: The Enlightenment Project (18th century) and the ensuing globalised process of modernisation.

If one considers *space*, both communism and neoliberalism claim that they want to build an open, truly global space[93] beyond the inadequate parochial spaces (cf. Gibson-Graham, 2002) created by ethnicity, religion, or stage of economic development.

With regard to *nature*, it is portrayed as 'resource', as something to be transformed by mankind for the benefit of mankind (Franklin, 2002, Castree, 2003a). This portrayal resonates with the discursive conventions upon which the modern project (Latour, 1993, Haraway, 2000, Whatmore, 2002) has unfolded. They refer to oppositions and differential valuation of society-nature, urban-rural, industry-agriculture, reason-tradition, science-religion, male-female, active-passive, etc.

However, in my work I have been particularly interested in unraveling the ontologies of the *social* (Hakli, 2001, Marston and Mitchell, 2003) implied by neoliberalism and communism. And it is at this point that the concept of ontopolitical therapy was needed. I introduced the concept ontopolitical therapy (see chapter four) to refer to those peculiar governmental technologies (Lemke, 2001, Barnett, 2003) deployed for the management of drastic political and social change (Scott, 1998, Grass and Bourdieu, 2002). The key idea is that, in order to create the social support and political legitimacy for drastic 'utopian' change, a given regime (communist or neoliberal) has to portray (cf. Simons, 2002) the existing society and economy as fundamentally 'ill' (cf. Craddock and Dorn, 2001) and hence in deep need of either communist or neoliberal therapy (Shapiro K, 2003, Schmidt, 2003).

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[93] See Cammack, 2002, Brenner and Theodore, 2002, and Berg, 2003.

My research in the last five years has discursively analysed how communists introduced their idea of forging the so-called 'multilaterally developed new human' by contrasting it with the *inadequate* 'old' human (Boia, 2001, Bonnett, 2002). I have also analysed how, in turn, the advocates of neoliberalism in the 1990s accused communism for producing 'social zombies' (people devoid of initiative, creativity, courage, and responsibility towards themselves) and contrasted it with the (alleged) blossoming of the full potentialities of humans (initiative, creativity, responsibility, courage, etc.) in neoliberal times[94].

The marginality (or peripherality) of Norway and Romania in Europe is *the single most important* discursive construction mobilised by local political regimes to implement the project of modernisation and development.
The underlying rhetoric of this project has reproduced the same tropes in both Norway and Romania: 'We are marginal in Europe, and on top of it, we are backward in all respects: economically, culturally, politically, legally. The only way to overcome this shameful inadequacy is by importing the achievements of the Enlightenment from the cultural heart of Europe'.
The local elites[95] -educated in Paris, and eventually settled back in their countries- played the key role in the creation of this discourse of peripherality and 'backwardness' and in the political manipulation of that discourse throughout the 20th

[94] Cf. Cafruny and Ryner, 2003, Brennan, 2003.
[95] My preliminary investigations have included the study of biographies of intellectuals such as Hans Henrik Jaeger, Edvard Munch, Gustav Vigeland, Niels Henrik Abel, Simion Mehedinti, Nicolae Titulescu, Martha Bibesco, Elena Vacarescu, and Ion Ghica.

century[96] to produce the actual material transformation of these two peripheral spaces. The aforementioned discourse (inadequacy, backwardness, primitivism) is the specific form assumed by the Western project in the margins of Europe. Current political sets of practices such as the EU expansion and the NATO expansion re-enact the collective stigma of marginality and the derived neurotic quest for leaving it behind.

One delineates the production and dissemination of specific discourses of modernisation in the margins of Europe and then captures the governmental technologies through which these discourses have been translated into policies and institutions of/for modernisation. But one also needs to trace the actual material metamorphosis of Romania and Norway as they have undergone development, industrialization, and modernisation.

More specifically, the last chapter of this book captures how 'nature' has been aggressively enrolled into the project of development through political practices, technological devices, and economic calculations. The taming and commodification of nature have entailed the redefinition of Norway and Romania as 'resource' semi-peripheries within Europe, redefinition that paradoxically reinstates their marginal condition. The drive for heavy industrialization and economic diversification that was characteristic of both countries appears in this light as yet another attempt to escape the *curse* of peripherality. I illustrate this process by focusing on energy - a resource crucial for the development of both countries.

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[96] I.e. various regimes such as: welfare capitalism, communist regimes, and neoliberal regimes.

The argument brought forward is that discourses and practices of peripherality cannot be isolated from hierarchical discourses of culture/nature. More often than not, the discourse of development and modernisation has entertained a vicious geographical imagination that links the 'core' with cultural resources and the 'periphery' with natural resources. The entailed international division of labour reproduces the cultural hierarchies between core/periphery into the very heart of the economic sphere, and does take specific economic forms. The critical account of 'nature's economic incorporation in semi-peripheral Europe 'allow[s] us to answer the far richer question -what kinds of 'nature' are subject to what kinds of 'constructions' and with what consequences?- ' (Castree, 2003b: 205).

That very same account also represents a possible answer to Bhabha's challenging question: "How does one write the nation's modernity as the event of the everyday and the advent of the epochal?" (Bhabha, 1990: 293). It adds to the relation between (marginal) nations and narration (Bhabha, 1990) the third term – nature – as continuously reinvented through the cultural performance of technology. The latter maneuver draws on Verstraete (2002: 147) who observes that:

> The social constituted in and through industrial technologies and technology embedded in varying social relations, are structured by the performative logic of Bhabha's nation as 'address'. By considering the strained relation between the technology that is present (as object) and the meaningful but heterogeneous utterances that it is making (as social subject) to and about the citizen-viewer, we [enter] the realm of technology as cultural performance.

In the last chapter then, the creation of the energy industries[97] will be read as political and technological performances constituted by and constitutive of the project of modernisation in semi-peripheral Europe.

Norway *versus* Romania: problems and promises of historical comparison

In the case study concerning the industrial decline of Hunedoara County (chapter 5) 'recursive cartographies' underlined the importance of relational thinking, the inescapable bond between epistemology, ontology, and politics, and the extent to which we are always part of the map we are researching. When applied to the genealogy of modernity in Romania and Norway, one can note that 'recursive cartographies' also captures the relation between discourse, power, materiality, and a particular reading of historicity, indebted to Derrida (2001: 319):

> The concept of historicity will no longer be regulated by the scheme of progression or of regression, thus by a scheme of teleological process, but rather by that of the event, or occurrence, thus by the singularity of the 'one time only'. This value of occurrence links historicity not to time, as is usually thought, nor to the temporal process but…to power, to the language of power, and to language as power. Hence the necessity to take into account performativity, which defines precisely the power of language and power as language, the excess of the language of power or of the power of language over constative or cognitive language.

[97] More specifically hydropower.

Derrida aptly problematises the supremacy of the dominant regime of truth (cognitive language as mirroring of the world out there; cf. Rorty, 1979), by alerting us to the *political* dimensions of our vocabularies and utterances. His re-reading of historicity operates with an understanding of theory as 'space for potential renewal for thought, desire, and action' (Brown, 2002: 574). The historical comparison of the process of development in Norway and Romania remains meaningful to the extent that it dares to *open up* the space of theory, the space of political practice, and the space of reflexivity. The following observations by Kocka[98] delineate precisely the *ways* through which comparison do open up the aforementioned spaces:

> *Heuristically*, the comparative approach allows one to identify questions and problems that one might miss, neglect, or just not invent otherwise. *Descriptively*, historical comparison helps to clarify the profiles of single cases…Comparison does not only help to support notions of particularity, but it is also indispensable for challenging and modifying such notions. *Analytically*, the comparative approach is indispensable for asking and answering causal questions. The *paradigmatic* function of comparison. In this respect, comparison helps to distance oneself a bit from the case one knows best, from 'one's own history'…Frequently historians are relatively concentrated on the history of their country or region. Because of this, comparison can have a de-provincialising, a liberating, an eye-opening effect, with consequences for the

[98] This type of reflections about historical comparison have also been in the attention of many researchers who have successfully used this methodology: Chilcote, 2000, Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003, etc.

> atmosphere and style of the profession. (Kocka, 2003: 41)

Later on in the same paper, Kocka (2003: 43) added: 'comparative approaches only emphasize and make particularly manifest what is implicit in any kind of historical work: a strong selective and constructive component.' My own positionality has placed me in an unusual epistemic situation: although I have done research on Norway, originally I am from Romania and much of my past research focused on that country. This situation has raised the interesting question of what I call 'epistemic asymmetry': being in a kind of 'critical intimacy' (Gilmore, 2001) with one term of the comparison (Romania) and in 'critical distance' with the other (Norway).

The excavation of discourses (cf. Cutting, 2000, Rose, 2001) has helped me unravel the actual material transformation of the two countries. In other words, intellectual and cultural history, as well as the analysis of policy statements, could translate in an account of the environmental and economic history of Romania and Norway (cf. Williams, 2000). This in turn makes necessary a conceptualisation of the relation between discourse and materiality that is well captured by Barad (2003: 822; cf. Harpham, 2002). In her words:

> Materiality is discursive just as discursive practices are always already material…Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other.

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I believe this comparative problematisation of modernity in the margins of Europe to be timely and relevant across the social sciences and the humanities. First of all, it enhances our understanding of semi-peripherality in general, and secondly, it illuminates current processes of European integration in particular. Let me elaborate on how exactly this research contributes to each of these two issues.

Semi-peripherality has been seen in my work as a: 1. discursive practice and 2. political condition. This two-fold understanding thus transcends the intellectual games that prioritise either discourses (poststructuralism) or materialities (Marxist political economy). This research attitude has then been deployed to capture how semi-peripherality is constitutive of and constituted by the discourses and practices of modernisation, and how both of them are constitutive of and constituted by discourses and practices of nature. Surely, in my research I have approached these entanglements in an empirical way, by mapping the role of local elites in simultaneously re-presenting (Castree, Macmillan, 2004) modernisation *and* the semi-peripheral condition, and by following the development of the hydropower industries (see next chapter) to understand the constitutive role of discourses and practices of nature.

This new perspective on the relation between Western modernisation, nature, and peripherality breaks new ground in human geography and the social sciences and forces us to re-define the nature of 'resource peripheries' outside the narrow confines of international political economy (cf. Hodgson, 2001). It also takes the cultural turn seriously in resource geography and opens new ways of doing research in this neglected area of geographical scholarship.

At a more specific level, this research has taken further very recent developments in the theorization of core-periphery relations within Europe and has thus enhanced geography's potential contribution to the analysis of the processes of EU and NATO enlargement.

Merje Kuus recently argued (2004: 472) that European integration is underpinned…

> …by a broadly Orientalist discourse that assumes essential difference between Europe and Eastern Europe and frames difference from Western Europe as a distance from and lack of Europeanness.

My research has brought empirical evidence to suggest that Kuus' vision should be re-directed to consider broader and longer relations. Broader relations to include European semi-peripheries in general (including Norway) and longer relations to include the legacy of the 19th century in the explanation of our present condition.

7. The subjective significance of vindictive triumph: psychoanalysis and modernity

7. The subjective significance of vindictive triumph: psychoanalysis and modernity

> The word 'civilization' describes the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes – namely to protect men (sic) against nature and to adjust their mutual relations. (Freud, 1930/1989: 42)

The overall goal of the program of research outlined in the previous chapter has been to psychoanalyse the specific ways in which the Western project of development and modernisation has been implemented in two European semi-peripheries: Romania and Norway. It builds on previous theoretical contributions from my four books and doctoral dissertation, on my recent empirical investigations (Simandan, 2002a-l, 2003a-I, 2004a-b) regarding the similarities in the history of development in these two countries, on archival and secondary sources, and on a range of very recent conceptual developments in social and political theory. Three specific objectives have derived from this overall goal:

1. To delineate how the discourse of development and modernisation has travelled from the cultural core of 19th century Europe (Paris) to the margins of the continent and how it has been changed by local elites as it encountered these marginal spaces;
2. To trace how the discourse of development and modernisation has been translated into a political

program for the actual material transformation of Romania and Norway;

3. To identify the practices through which the project of development and modernisation has enrolled 'nature' to constitute Romania and Norway as resource semi-peripheries of Europe.

The last chapter of this book consists of two case studies that emerged from this third objective. We have placed them at the very end of this book to signal the slow shift of perspective that has accompanied my empirical research along the years. I undertook my doctoral work at Bristol, in the glorious years when Nigel Thrift and Sarah Whatmore were revamping geographical poststructuralisms and post-marxisms with their non-representational theory. This book bears the mark of all these three perspectives, even though the extent of their metatheoretical compatibility remains a thorny question. After having left Bristol for Brock, I have enriched my theoretical weapons with the insights of psychoanalysis. My earlier contacts with psychoanalytical writings were not rewarding in any substantive way. My later contacts have been of a different kind. First of all, I had a renewed interest in this area because of the work of Judith Butler, who went back to Freud's work to use his writings on mourning and melancholia for the rethinking of the social construction of sex and gender. The second circumstance was that I read the contributions of Karen Horney (1937, 1950) before going to Freud himself.

Karen Horney was a German-born psychoanalyst who moved to the United States and became of the most prominent theorists of psychoanalysis in North America. She was particularly influenced by Freudo-Marxists like Erich Fromm and by cultural anthropologists like Margaret Mead

and Ruth Benedict. As a result, she distanced herself from the biologism of Freud's writing and put forward a new theory of neurosis, which focuses on the role of the broader cultural context in the genesis of neurotic personalities. To be sure, Freud himself thought about this latter aspect and enquired in his famous *Civilization and its discontents* into the possibility that some societies could become neurotic:

> If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization…have become 'neurotic'? An analytic dissection of such neuroses might lead to therapeutic recommendations which could lay claim to great practical interest. (Freud, 1930/1989: 110)

He was keen to insist in his later work on the role of the super-ego. The latter represents a psychic structure partly unconscious, partly conscious, resulting from the internalisation by the individuals of cultural norms and ideals. The super-ego can be sub-divided into three components: the moral conscience, which is responsible for the sense of guilt; the ego-ideal, which generates the feeling of inferiority; and the process of self-observation, which monitors to what extent a given individual obeys the imperatives imposed by their moral conscience and ego-ideal. The super-ego of the individual tames the wild beast[99]

[99] Freud called that wild beast the Id. The Ego of the individual mediates the conflict between the outrageous desires of the Id and the excessive demands of the Super-Ego. It also mediates between the individual as a whole and the surrounding reality. This three

within each of us, by forcing it to refrain from the direct gratification of instincts. Freud speculated on the possibility that societies might develop a cultural super-ego, a set of shared ideals and norms about how they should behave, where they should be going, whom they should emulate. He says:

> The analogy between the process of civilization and the path of individual development may be extended in an important respect. It can be asserted that the community, too, evolves a super-ego under whose influence cultural development proceeds. It would be a tempting task for anyone who has a knowledge of human civilizations to follow out this analogy in detail. (Freud, 1930/1989: 106)

In light of our research project, the cultural super-ego of Romanians and Norwegians in the 19th century and the 20th century could be said to consist in the sense of collective shame for being backward, the envy towards the cultural core of Europe, the desire to put the respective countries on the path of modernisation, and the ambition to transcend their marginal condition. When after the Anti-Communist Revolution of 1989, the humanist intellectuals depicted in chapter four decried the failure of the project of modernisation and put the blame on either the constitutive weakness of the Romanian fiber or on the invasive communist ideology[100], they were trying to avoid their own sense of guilt, their own suspicions of inadequacy. Freud

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fold inner structure of the human psyche makes Freud sceptical about the possibility of human happiness. We have within ourselves the premises of our own unhappiness.

[100] Which allegedly changed normal humans into zombies.

reminds us about the extent to which this sense of guilt signals the progress from the primitive hoard[101] to proper civilization:

> The sense of guilt [is] the most important problem in the development of civilization and…the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt. (Freud, 1930/1989: 97)

The irony associated with the lamentations of the intellectuals comes precisely from the fact that their sense of guilt[102] from having failed at the task of escaping primitivism gives the indication that primitivism had indeed been overcome, albeit not to the extent they would have liked it. And this observation sends me back to Karen Horney. Two years before her death, she published *Neurosis and human growth. The struggle for self-realization*, which represents the culmination of her life-long project of rethinking neuroses away from Freud's biologism. Horney claims that the root of all neuroses is the feeling of *basic anxiety* the child experiences if his parents raise him/her in

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[101] In *Totem and Tabu* (1912-1913), Freud argued that civilization was born when the sons of the primitive Father killed their father and eat him, to gain his power and to have access to women. They felt guilty for their deed, guilt signaled to the present day by the universal tabus on murder, cannibalism, and incest.

[102] To be sure, their guilt was projected into lay people, who were blamed for not having embraced the values of modernity. In psychoanalysis, projection is an archaic defense mechanism of the ego. It consists in attributing to others one's own unacceptable or unwelcome attitudes, qualities, behaviours, or desires. It plays a crucial role in paranoid delusions: delusions of grandeur, delusions of persecution, and delusions of jealousy.

an inappropriate manner. Confronted with this basic anxiety, the child chooses one of the following solutions: she can move *away from people*, by becoming an introvert and aloof individual; she can move *towards people*, by always trying to please others and ignoring her own wishes; or she can move *against people*, by using others for her own goals and proving to them that they are below her level. The first solution signifies the appeal of freedom, the second solution the appeal of love, and the third solution the appeal of mastery. The distinctive feature of the neurotic is that she stubbornly and rigidly privileges only one of these solutions, thus impoverishing her life through a range of affective and experiential deprivations.

Unlike the neurotic, the normal individual has the flexibility to react to life's challenges by combining the three aforementioned pathways. Horney insists on the fact that the solution to childhood disturbances becomes the cause of adult disturbances, in a rather dialectical fashion. She also questions Freud's concept of a super-ego and his pessimistic view of human nature. Her theory of neurosis turns upside down the Freudian model. Freud argues that the newly born individual is a wild beast who cares for nothing but the immediate satisfaction of his instincts[103]. The most

[103] Unfortunately, in English 'instinct' deos not really capture the German concept of 'trieb'. *Trieb* refers to an energetic pulsion, which seeks satisfaction on a range of possible objects. Unlike, *trieb*, 'instinct' is too circumscribed a concept and its use by biologists is different from Freud's use of *trieb*. In his early work, Freud distinguishes the sexual drive and the self-preservation drive. In his late work, he groups these two under *Eros* (the life drive), and opposes Eros to the death drive (later on labelled *Thanatos*). The urge to destroy and human aggressiveness in general are expressions of Thanatos. The history of any given

problematic among them is aggression. It has massive implications for understanding the natural disposition of the human beast:

> Men (sic) are not gently creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness… Their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus*. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? (Freud, 1930/1989: 68-69)

Civilization becomes possible to the extent that it educates the wild beast to delay the gratification of her instincts, to repress them, to supress[104] them, or to sublimate them into socially acceptable activities. In a sense, the work required to forge civilization and to build modernity is the result of forcing the wild human beast to sublimate its instinctual urges into *ambition* (the sublimation of aggressiveness) and *creation* (of buildings, dams, institutions, technological artifacts, literature, etc; creation is the sublimation of sexual

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individual and the history of humankind is the trace of the fight between Eros and Thanatos.

[104] The difference between repression and supression lies in that the former is unconscious, whereas the latter is preconscious or conscious.

urges). The problem for civilization comes from the fact that the human beast prefers the direct gratification of its needs: by forcing it to gratify its needs in indirect ways, the beast will generate an attitude of hostility towards civilization:

> Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic, or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life…Sublimation is a vicissitude which has been forced upon the instincts entirely by civilization…It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This 'cultural frustration'…is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle. (Freud, 1930/1989: 51-52)

To sum up, for Freud the individual is structurally vicious[105] and civilization has the mission to tame her. It is a *zero-sum game* that underwrites the process of growing-up: the price to pay for collective happiness (civilization) is individual unhappiness (forcing the individual to delay or repress direct gratification of instincts). Full individual happiness (direct gratification of all desires) would mean full collective unhappiness (the impossibility of civilization). Freud

[105] One should always pay attention to the fact that Freud was cautious about not assuming some type of ethical stand. His goal was to describe human nature as it is, regardless of any prior moral considerations. He was timely in daring to point to the relativity of moral systems and to the lack of transcendent foundations for the good and the bad. His attitude towards ethics bears the influence of Nietzsche.

however broadens this opposition between the individual and civilization in order to explain why the individual is by necessity condemned to unhappiness. Indeed, even if the individual were free of civilization's constraints, she would still be unhappy because she would be at the mercy of the blind and cruel forces of nature. In the *Future of an Illusion*, Freud meaningfully exclaims:

> But how ungrateful, how short-sighted after all, to strive for the abolition of civilization! What would then remain would be a state of nature, and that would be far harder to bear. It is true that nature would not demand any restrictions of instinct from us, she would let us do as we liked; but she has her own particularly effective method of restricting us. She destroys us – coldly, cruelly, relentlessly, as it seems to us, and possibly through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction. It was precisely because of these dangers with which nature threatens us that we came together and created civilization, which is also, among other things, intended to make our communal life possible. For the principal task of civilization, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature. (Freud, 1927/1989: 18-19)

The implication of this way of portraying human existence consists in the ultimate condemnation to individual misery. The individual is caught between two zero-sum games: one between herself and civilization (conflict over how to deal with instinctuality), the other between herself and Nature (conflict over who controls whom). Her only chance to win the second game resides in her willingness to be defeated in the first game. Through entering civilization, she can hope to be able to tame nature, by means of collective effort (science, technology, plain everyday work).

Karen Horney disagrees with this pessimistic outlook, although one might always suspect that the rational arguments against Freudian pessimism hide the non-rational wish for life to be better[106]. Karen Horney is one of many psychoanalysts who questions the Freudian idea that aggression has a primary nature[107] and is fundamental to understanding human behaviour. Instead, she defends the view that human nature is basically good and aggression has a *reactive* genesis: it is an answer to the frustration of needs. Humankind has witnessed so much aggression not because humans are inherently aggressive, but because civilization has frustrated too much the needs of the individuals. The unfulfilled demands of the child have generated basic anxiety, and aggression is just one of the several ways for expressing this basic anxiety. Horney makes the point that the different ways through which basic anxiety is dealt with are organised into particular *psychic structures*. One cannot cure an individual from her neurosis, if one does not detect the psychic structure that governs her behaviour.

Many decades of clinical experience led Horney to argue that the general practice through which the individual

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[106] Freud was acutely aware of the irrational stubborness with which humans cling and need to cling to positive illusions such as life after death, divine justice, and the goodness of human nature. It is the merit of psychoanalysis to have revealed the extent to which human happiness is premised not on knowing the truth, but on fully believing in positive illusions. The very recent work by Martin Seligman on happiness and several studies in experimental psychology confirm Freud's insights about positive illusions.

[107] On the other hand, Melanie Klein and her followers put the idea of primary human aggression at the heart of their contributions to rethinking orthodox psychoanalysis. Jacques Lacan and his followers also accept the Freudian position.

escapes her basic anxiety is the disavowal of her authentic self and the parallel construction of a substitutive self. The substitutive self is the condensation of the demands society puts on the individual, as well as of the demands the individual puts on herself. At the heart of the structure of the substitutive self lies the thirst for glory[108]: the drive to be great, admired, loved, memorable. Four processes support and translate into action this overall search for glory (figure 3). One of them is self-idealization. It includes daydreaming about how the individual should be and redefining oneself to become that which the individual believes and hopes she should be. The second of them is perfectionism. It refers to the fact that the individual is not happy until she reaches the flawless achievement of all that she wishes for. The third component is neurotic ambition. It points to the motivational power of the substitutive self: the individual wishes so much to get rid of her authentic *inadequate* self and to become her idealized self that she becomes able to delay the gratification of all other needs and to do nothing but work towards this neurotic goal. Finally, the fourth component is vindictive triumph: by becoming her desired self and suppressing her inadequate self the individual wins with some delay the battles that she lost as a child. It is a late but sweet victory, which is always a function of social comparison.

Horney argues that the problems of the neurotic are caused by the very solutions she chooses to overcome her basic anxiety. One can never deny one's authentic self. It will always haunt the neurotic's self-idealizations, to remind her of her weaknesses and inadequacies. Horney speaks of the *central inner conflict*, to capture this relentless battle

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[108] One can detect here the influence of Alfred Adler's ideas about the role of inferiority complexes.

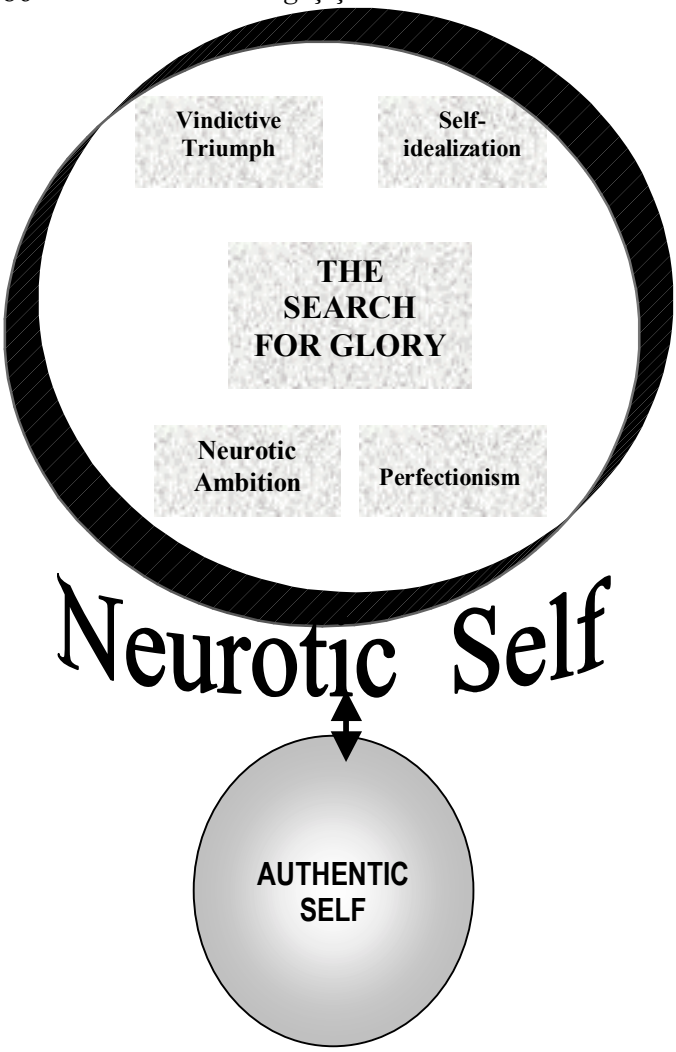

Figure 3: The central inner conflict in neurosis

between the original self and the fake, socially-acceptable self. It is this inner battle that governs the unhappiness of the neurotic. It is a battle similar to that described by Freud between the Id and the Super-Ego. Similar but not identical. Freud's Id is vicious, Horney's 'authentic self' is not. Freud's Super-Ego is a prerequisite for the existence of civilization, Horney's 'fake, socially-desirable self' is not. Horney does not accept a zero-sum game between society and the individual. If we dared to relax the narrowness of social norms, both society and the individual would win. The win-win situation results from the generally good nature of the individuals' authentic selves. By giving up the need to construct a fake self, the individual will not be torn apart by the central inner conflict. Hence her promise to happiness. But Horney tells us that society will also benefit. Indeed, the neurotic is so caught in her neurosis, that she cannot either work well, or love well[109]. Authentic individuals would be able to open up to society and to give to society (or some of its members) love and the fruits of their good work.

I am inclined to suspect some positive illusions in Horney's theory. More recent developments in psychoanalysis – especially Melanie Klein's work - make it difficult to deny the primary nature of human aggression and the implied need to tame the individual by bending her according to cultural imperatives. What I think remains useful from Horney's philosophy is firstly, her five-fold model[110] of the fake self and the thesis of a central inner conflict, and

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[109] Freud defined the capacity to work well and the capacity to love well as the two fundamental indicators of mental health and successful living.

[110] As a reminder the five components are the search for glory, self-idealization, perfectionism, neurotic ambition, and vindictive triumph; for an extensive description see Horney, 1950.

secondly, her earlier (Horney, 1937) courageous development of the Freudian hypothesis that societies themselves can become neurotic.

The thesis I want to put forward is that the process of modernisation in Norway and Romania has subjected these nations to a neurotic condition that explains most of the things I have been writing about throughout this book. This cultural neurosis becomes apparent when we read it through Horney's five-fold model of the fake self.

At the beginning there was *basic anxiety*. Young Romanian and Norwegian elites went to Paris to study and realized there just how inadequate and primitive their nations were when compared with the cultural core of Europe. They felt excluded, ashamed, inferior, marginal, rejected, inadequate. As shown in previous work, their written correspondence with one another and with their relatives remains a testimony of their ethnic *malaise*. This feeling of inadequacy was the psychological fuel that sublimated their aggression into the ambition to transform their countries into respectable modern cultures. The authentic self was to be replaced with the fake self, the self of French Modernity, itself expression of the ideals of the French Enlightenment. The process of modernisation has been for two centuries now Romania's and Norway's ways to *search for glory*. They had to become fully European. They had to give up barbarism. They had to industrialize and urbanize. They had to enlighten their people through education. They had to be proud of themselves[111]. They had to be better than their neighbours. Norwegian and Romanian nationalisms have been nothing but the discursive precipitation of this search for glory. It has

[111] Horney nicely groups all these 'have to' under the phrase 'the tyranny of the shoulds'.

been both *the engine* driving these two nations into the utopia of modernity and the *social glue* that has made class conflict bearable:

> Every culture claims the right to look down on the rest…The narcissistic satisfaction provided by the cultural ideal is also among the forces which are successful in combating the hostility to culture within the cultural unit. This satisfaction can be shared in not only by the favoured classes, which enjoy the benefits of the culture, but also by the suppressed ones, since the right to despise the people outside it compensates them for the wrongs they suffer within their own unit…The identification of the suppressed classes with the class who rules and exploits them is, however, only part of a larger whole. For, on the other hand, the suppressed classes can be emotionally attached to their masters; in spite of their hostility to them they may see in them their ideals. (Freud, 1927/1989: 16-17)

Nationalism has played in the cultural neurosis of modernisation the role that *self-idealization* plays at the level of individual neurosis.

As far as *neurotic perfectionism* is concerned, one can detect it in the continuous dissatisfaction of intellectuals with what has been achieved when compared with what could have been achieved. It constitutes a long series of lamentations about missed opportunities or about how an apparent victory is a failure, because the neighbour has also won.

The level of *neurotic ambition* can be mapped by looking at the political history of these two countries: a long series of

collective sacrifices and tight five-year development plans in order to achieve the promise of European respectability[112].
Last but not least in Horney's model of neurosis is *vindictive triumph*. The hope to be on top one day and to smile back with arrogance at those who have hitherto humiliated you. Norway's refusal to join the EU is vindictive triumph: we are better than you, the one we have copied. President's Basescu advice to French president Jacques Chirac is vindictive triumph[113] as well.

Horney recognized the tremendous subjective significance of vindictive triumph, but at the same time alerted us that the expression of vindictive triumph is predicated on the successful mastery by the fake self of the central inner conflict with the authentic self. One cannot fully enjoy one's glory unless one fully hides from sight any trace of the ugly, authentic self. It haunts the fake self in various ways. In Norway it might take the form of feelings of impotence in the face of the forces of globalisation. The glorious Norwegian welfare state had its delusions of grandeur shattered by the global neoliberal revolution of the 1990s, and the last of the two case studies of this chapter looks at this painful neoliberalization in more detail. As far as Romania is concerned, the severity of its central inner conflict has been depicted throughout this book. The authentic self expresses itself in the form of generalized corruption[114], which makes us not good enough for the

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[112] Chapter three – The cultural circuit of poverty – captures the various facets of neurotic ambition.
[113] He advised him to mind his own business and to understand that Romania will privilege the axis Washington – London - Bucharest.
[114] I mention corruption in a descriptive sense and not with the normative implication that Romanians are corrupt, therefore bad. I

European Union. Politicians work hard to hide that reality or even to challenge it in a more radical way. At the time when I am writing this lines – July 2005 – the main worry remains whether Romania will join the EU in 2007 or not, etc.

With these general psychoanalytical conjectures concerning the genealogy of marginal modernity in Norway and Romania, we are now able to move back to more empirical concerns that give substance to theoretical speculation. The first case study analyses the history of hydropower in Norway and Romania in the years when the former was a proper welfare state, and the latter a proper socialist state. Those *glorious neurotic days* are contrasted, in the second case study, with the *painful redefinitions* of the national ego imposed by the cold shower of global neoliberalism.

Case study 1: Glorious neurotic days: hydropower and the governmentalization of nature in Norway and Romania

We will follow one particular manifestation of the neurotic modern world - namely the governmentalisation of nature - through an analysis of the political ecology of hydropower in two countries sharing their commitment to modernisation, but nevertheless differing to an extent from the point of view of the means for achieving this goal. Norway has been well known for its hydropower resources and for the significance these resources hold for the country's economy. It is less known how much the actual material transformation

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maintain that corruption is a discursive weapon of neoliberalism that helps convince people of their inadequacy and of the superiority of the promise of neoliberal modernisation.

required by hydropower works has been criticised by green nongovernmental organisations and corresponding social movements. Insofar as Romania is concerned, the hydropower works undertaken during the communist period have been uncritically welcome, despite their substantial negative 'side-effects'. By discussing in parallel Norway and Romania, I strive to reframe the dominant narratives of hydropower, especially by positioning them in connection with the neurotic rationalities of marginal modernity. This endeavour is sustained by an antiessentialist political ecology that brings together insights from Foucault, Latour, and Haraway.

I start by discussing the most often held assumption about hydropower – namely that it is a green, sustainable, and essentially beneficial direction for the development of one's country energy system, and place its saga within the broader story of the national development of communist Romania and capitalist Norway. The discursive intercourse with the narratives of development and modernisation, as well as the vindictive taming of wild nature, are hinted at in order to capture the positive scriptural economy of hydropower. I then turn to the arguments against hydropower and to the theoretical – political movements that are bringing them to the forefront, and hence consider the dislocation of local communities, the administrative abuse that has rendered possible too many silent dislocations, and the masculinist fantasies of domination, control, and regulation of nature that can be detected in the apologetic literature of hydropower and in the practices of territorial work underpinning the taming of rivers. The next step in the logic of the account outlines the metanarratives of hydropower, or, to put it more simply, those theories that move beyond a mere ethical consideration of the positive / negative sides of

hydropower, to enquire how the actual material transformation of the landscape has been possible and what have been the political intricacies supported by, and supportive of, that transformation. Three such metanarratives are of concern: first and foremost, the work of Michel Foucault on power and on culture as technology of governmentality, then Bruno Latour's Actor- Network Theory, and to a lesser extent Benedict Anderson' s work on the cultural construction of the nation.

Positive narratives of hydropower: development, mastery and modernisation

> Let me give an express assurance that I have not the least intention of making judgements on the great experiment in civilization that is now in progress in the vast country that stretches between Europe and Asia. I have neither the special knowledge nor the capacity to decide on its practicability, to test the expediency of the methods employed or to measure the width of the inevitable gap between intention and execution. (Freud, 1927/1989: 10-11)

As we have shown at length in chapter three, before the shift to communism, in 1947, Romania was already undergoing the process of modernization, but its intensity was well below the one to be later imposed by the communist regime. Many Romanian intellectuals, influenced by essentialist theories of ethnicity and frustrated with the slow rhythms of the processes of modernization, became ashamed with the 'authentic self' of Romanians and contributed through their writings to the emergence of a more glamorous 'neurotic' ethnic self, premised on becoming fully modern. Ceausescu dedicated a significant part of his attention to the

transformation of Romania into a fully modern country, with big cities, big industries, and international economic weight. At the heart of the economic strategy of the country was the full exploitation of its natural and human resources, so as to avoid unnecessary importations and the ensuing external debt to the imperialistic forces of global capitalism. This ambition to develop oneself in one's own terms explains why the relatively big and cheap hydropower potential had been at the very centre of mobilizing people, materials, and other non-humans in the fast-growing and totaling network of autarchic development. To be exact, there were already some hydroelectric works in the country before the advent of the communists, but their size was small or medium, and they had a limited economic contribution.

The communist strategy of modernisation had been grounded on the *systematic* activation of 'nature' *for*, and *through*, development. Geologists, engineers, and economists were collaborating in well-coordinated teams to elaborate integrated strategies of growth. One such strategy had concerned the national system of energy, connecting all cities and almost all villages of the country, while concentrating many nodes in the Carpathians, where most hydropower works took place (Pop, 1996). Romanians took pride at this overall metamorphosis of their country and secretly admired their dictator, even though few of them would dare nowadays to admit it. The country as a whole was finding neurotic pleasure in what psychoanalyst Ives Hendrick (1943) called the instinct to master[115]. The Romanians were changing the rural and all too natural

[115] In contemporary psychology, the instinct to master is known as effectance motivation: taking satisfaction from being able to do things, and hence to control one's environment.

landscape of inter-war Romania into a fully modern garden, and they were good at it. The taming of rivers has been a powerful icon in this positive metanarrative of growth and development ('Romania's transfiguration').

The same national feeling of backwardness has fuelled the engagement of Norway on the path of industrialisation, although this process has been undertaken under a capitalist regime. For a long while subjected to Sweden, then linked with Denmark, Norway reached independence quite late. The formation of the modern Norwegian identity (and see Gullestad, 1992, 1996) has had at its heart the exploitation and development (in close connection) of its huge hydropower potential, energy-intensive industries, urban life, and a political system marked by the reproduction of the welfare state. During my fieldwork undertaken in the summer of 2002 in the south of Norway, I visited several hydropower plants in the area around the industrial city of Odda, as well as several 'spaces of constructed visibility' (Gregory, 1998) such as museums of national history and exhibitions. I was struck by the similarity between Romania and Norway in matters pertaining to the systematic celebration of the quintessential role hydropower is believed to have held in making industrialisation, urbanisation, progress, and overall development possible. One of the leaflets received while visiting the Norwegian Museum of Hydropower and Industry contains the following text:

> Welcome to the Norwegian Museum of Hydropower and Industry (NVIM)!
>
> The industry came to Odda and Tyssedal early in the 20th century. Small farmer societies were changed into boiling melting pots, and people came from all over Norway, from the Nordic countries and from the rest of Europe.

> Come on in and you will get to know more about the museum and this exciting history. NVIM is one of the largest museums within the theme hydropower- and industrial history in the 20th century. We have exhibitions and audio-visual shows in Tyssedal and Odda. Moreover, we will take you on a guided tour…

The text is representative for the class of positive narratives of hydropower, to the extent that it erases the logic of capital underwritten in that history and attaches to history the signifier 'exciting'.

The museums of national history visited are displaying the 'hydropower momentum' as a critical threshold separating the rooms that exhibit pre-modern Norway from the rooms that exhibit modern Norway. That critical threshold conveys the beginning of the identification with the neurosis of modernity.

To give just a detail of the pride Norwegians invest[116] in the hydropower industry, note that the architecture of one of the first Norwegian hydropower station is very close to that of the Royal Palace in Oslo. This marking of the industrial landscape with royal signifiers betrays the subjective significance Norwegians have attached to hydropower. But the fact that the hydropower industry has become, through the architecture of dams and stations, a *type of art* is not a minor detail. Its psychoanalytical deconstruction unravels

[116] I use the word 'invest' in a psychoanalytical sense, as synonymous with cathexis. It is an economic concept referring to the allocation of psychic energy to a certain representation, or object, in order to fulfill conscious or unconscious wishes. In the case discussed, investment of pride into something might be seen as a way to overcome the unconscious fear of insignificance.

the tremendous implications of this becoming. As the father of psychoanalysis observed:

> Art offers substitutive satisfactions for the oldest and still most deeply felt cultural renunciations, and for that reason it serves as nothing else does to reconcile a man (sic) to the sacrifices he has made on behalf of civilization. On the other hand, the creation of art heightens his feelings of identification, of which every cultural unit stands in so much need, by providing an occasion for sharing highly valued emotional experiences. And when those creations picture the achievements of his particular culture and bring to his mind its ideals in an impressive manner, they also minister to his narcissistic satisfaction. (Freud, 1927/1989: 17)

While the official narratives of hydropower are uncontroversially positive in both Romania and Norway, there have always been lateral voices that have queered this apologetic portrayal, bringing to the public opinion other, gloomier, more situated, and more uncomfortable versions of this saga. It is to these silenced voices that I now turn.

Negative narratives of hydropower: dislocation, abuse and masculinist fantasies

Several Norwegian nongovernmental organisations have focused their activities on the excavation of the hidden negative effects of hydroelectric works, and hence on undoing the myth of the benign character of hydropower. In this brief space I would outline just two negative aspects: firstly, the dislocation of local communities, secondly, the

reproduction of patriarchal values through the practices of 'river taming'.

In order to tame a river for hydroelectric purposes a wide range of operations is required. Most of them involve serious alterations of the material landscape, not least because hydroelectricity production crucially depends on building dams and artificial lakes. Hence the invasion of vast surfaces by water and the need to transfer the local communities unfortunate to have lived in the area. An ethical issue arises: should local communities with all their culture and material traces be forced to relocate for the sake of patriotism? It is well known that in Ceausescu's Romania the answer to this question had always been positive, and that the propaganda system always described the alleged positive change in the life of the re-settled communities. It is much less known that in many of the river works undertaken by the regime, community resettlement had been possible because of the use of the repressive state apparatuses such as the 'Securitate', the 'Militia', the Communist Party, and the Army. Potential oppositional social movements had been crushed from their inception (see Dumistracel, 1995) by stigmatising their leaders as 'enemies of the people' or 'enemies of the working class' and by threatening to bring them to court for 'working against the power of the state': a very feared accusation at the time.

In Norway, the answer to the aforementioned question has been much less important insofar as most hydroelectric works took place in the almost uninhabited highlands, with no communities to be resettled. When, however the question had to be asked, the answer given by the authorities was more humane than in Romania. In almost all such cases first attention has been accorded to the protection of the individual human rights and of the collective rights of the people in the envisaged areas. In short, two ethical

perspectives have been deployed: in the Romanian case the ethics of sacrifice for the national cause, in the Norwegian case, the ethics of respect for those who have dwelled and built their unique culture in the places considered for 'river taming'. But regardless of the final decisions, the very prospect of being under consideration for resettlement is producing anxiety, fear, hatred and collective traumas that irrevocably scar the cultural consciousness of the respective communities.

Secondly, the practices of 'river taming' reproduce patriarchal[117] values through a constellation of discursive associations and structuring fantasies that include, *inter alia*:

a) The fictional separation of the man as rational self-sufficient subject of history from its object, the irrational, ahistorical, 'feminine' world 'out there' in need to be organised, controlled, regulated, rationalised;
b) The 'absolutising of time and space' (Gregory, 1998) whereby the rational civilised man equates time and space with reason, and thus renders accessible to his will-power the local microcosms of situated, pre-modern communities who understand

[117] Freud observed that the distinction masculine-feminine appears rather late in the mental assumptions of the child and is preceded first, by the distinction active-passive, and then by the distinction with penis-castrated. Thus, the dichotomy active-passive is the ontogenetic root of the subsequent allocation of value to the masculine pole and the ensuing withdrawal of value from the feminine pole. For our purposes, the slippages of emotional investment in the following chain of signifiers are of paramount importance to understand the psychoanalytical reading of 'river taming': active-with penis-male-civilization-reason versus passive-castrated-female-nature-emotion.

and perform space in a traditional, affective mode (Ingold, 2000, Escobar, 1999);

c) The vehiculation within the narratives of hydropower works of masculinist virtues and signifiers such as power, heroism, courage, determination, effort, (male) team work, abstract calculation, quantification;

d) Following up from the previous point, the discursive celebration of masculinism has served the redistribution of power and privileges within modernised societies (Romanian, Norwegian) towards male – dominated categories such as engineers, geologists, planners, and the skilled proletariat, all these to the detriment of the 'feminine' peasants, social scientists, etc;

e) The practices of 'river taming' have enacted a symbolic order of violence underwritten by the imperatives of instrumental rationality, anthropocentrism, totalisation, and traumatic modernisation. The utopian engineering of the landscape has altered but not defeated the 'Other' of the rational modern man, and hence the current[118] spectacle of periodic excess (floods, technological collapse) that escapes and haunts the plans, devices, and metrics of river regulations.

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[118] I am writing this text at a time when Romania witnesses the collapse of its hydrological illusions. The system built in the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s in order to prevent floods proves to be less satisfactory than previously assumed. In 2005, the country is confronted with floods at least as massive as those of the early 1970s.

Metanarratives of hydropower: governmentality, actor-networks and the fiction of the nation

> There are two widespread human characteristics which are responsible for the fact that the regulations of civilization can only be maintained by a certain degree of coercion – namely, that men are not spontaneously fond of work and that arguments are of no avail against their passions. (Freud, 1927/1989: 9)

The title given to this case study speaks of 'the governmentalisation of nature…' and it does so to signify the particular brand of antiesssentialist political ecology of hydropower I am interested in: one informed by the work of Michel Foucault. To be more specific, of major import here is his late theorisation of power, outlined in an interview[119] given in 1984. In that interview, Foucault defines three components of power: states of domination, power games (or strategic relations), and technologies of governmentality. So far, I have presented the dominant positive narratives of hydropower associated with the *states of domination* (Foucault, 1994) in either Norway (capitalism, democracy) or Romania (communism, dictatorship), as well as the lateral negative narratives put forward by oppositional environmentalist and feminist movements that have animated the *strategic relations* or *power games* (Foucault, 1994) of 'river taming'. The missing level from Foucault's three-fold analysis of power is that of the *technologies of governmentality*, i.e. of the ways in which the hydroelectric works have served the reproduction of certain power

[119] For the original quote, see the concluding section of chapter 4, in this volume.

structures, and have allowed the emergence of several distributed centres of power.

The limited scope of this case study does not permit but to suggest what could be the lines of flight for such a Foucauldian political ecology of hydropower in Norway and Romania. It strikes me as evident that the following observations touch upon some of the investigative thresholds of this ongoing theoretical project.

Until very recently, in both countries hydropower has been framed in terms of 'public utility', 'strategic infrastructure', and hence has been a privileged site for the exercise of state power. In other words, the positive narratives of hydropower have been conspicuously present in the ideological state apparatuses insofar as they have been enrolled in the construction of the legitimacy of the state, of its *raison d'etre*.

By the very technological specificity of energy systems, this type of networks (including those of hydropower) requires centralisation : the bringing together of all energy providers, all energy consumers, and all distribution networks within a totalised mega-network that organises centres of calculation to coherently stitch and control its elements. To put it differently, in the ideological competition[120] between liberalisation – decentralisation – deregulation and supervision – centralisation – regulation, hydropower and energy more broadly have been enlisted as realms *requiring* state regulation, and hence have been used to support the expansion of state power in virtue of *technological necessity*. This is not the same with the previous observation, where at

[120] Competition the *contingent* results of which secure the level of extension of state intervention and state structures. See the next case study.

stake was *political necessity*: hydropower is a strategic resource, a matter of national security that cannot be let to the mere play of market forces.

'River taming' has been a technology of governmentality in the sense that it has allowed for reaching humanity's 'Other' – 'Nature'- through the production of hybrids (Latour, 1993), or, more specifically, of technology-driven 'culturenatures' (and see Haraway, 1991, 1997, 2000; Whatmore, 2002). To put it simply, 'Nature' has been brought to the domain of the political through its hybridization with technological culture: dams, artificial lakes, ground reservoirs, channels, water management systems, and debit redirection. Technology is – psychoanalytically - the male semen of civilization placed into female nature to appropriate it and to mark the *vindictive triumph* over its blind forces.

Nevertheless, this direction of thought should not occlude a background appropriation: most hydropower works in both Norway and Romania have been undertaken in the upland areas, realms that would have otherwise escaped to the tight control of the central state apparatus. It is especially in these areas that oppositional forces often find refuge[121], and surveilling these spaces is of strategic import for the sphere of centralised political power.

The positive narratives of hydropower works have played a major role in the invention of the modern Norwegian nation and the modern Romanian nation (Anderson, 1991), as an analysis of media and of general education school texts would clearly reveal. They have occupied a privileged position in the 'spaces of constructed visibility' (Gregory,

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[121] E.g. the anti-communist 'Armed Resistence' in the Carpathians in the first decades of communism.

1998) where the imaginative geographies of the nation are fabricated (exhibitions, museums, textbooks, traditional and electronic media, public ceremonies). Nevertheless, and of paramount significance, these narratives have helped fabricating *the modern* fiction of the nation (Horney's neurotic fake self), and not just an unspecified collective identity. The insistence on 'modern' leads further, to enquire the scriptural and imagistic connections between nation building, industrialisation, urbanisation, the technological hybridization of 'nature' and the social status of certain groups (engineers, skilled workers, geologists, planners, statisticians, architects) with vested interest in enhancing the project of hydropower work and reproducing its positive narratives of landscape transfiguration.

After having enquired these lines of flight, we would learn that to hear lateral narratives is not a matter of mere access to information, but, as Foucault would have told us, a 'strategic game' within the analytics of power.

Case study 2: Painful redefinitions: The neoliberal revolution in Norway's energy sector

> Human civilization, by which I mean all those respects in which human life has raised itself above its animal status and differs from the life of the beasts…presents two aspects to the observer. It includes on the one hand all the knowledge and capacity that men have acquired in order to control the forces of nature and extract its wealth for the satisfaction of human needs, and, on the other hand, all the regulations necessary in order to adjust the relations of men to one another and especially the distribution of available wealth. The two trends of civilization are not independent of each other: firstly, because the mutual relations of men are

> profoundly influenced by the amount of instinctual satisfaction which the existing wealth makes possible; secondly, because an individual man can himself come to function as wealth in relation to another one, in so far as the other person makes use of his capacity for work, or chooses him as a sexual object; and thirdly, moreover, because every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization, though civilization is supposed to be an object of universal human interest…civilization has to be defended against the individual. (Freud, 1927/1989: 6-7)

The neoliberal revolution of the 1990s shattered the neurotic delusions of grandeur of the Norwegian welfare state and rendered its impotence painfully visible for whomever wanted to watch. More specifically, the neoliberalisation of the Norwegian energy market in 1991 brought to the forefront of the public debate a dilemma that might be seen as the organising tension of the dubious paradigm of sustainable development[122]: to what extent the goals of environmental improvement are in contradiction with the principles of efficiency that govern economic thinking? Sustainable development is an attempt to minimise this

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[122] The question over the possibility of true sustainable development became acute in Norway, because two major neurotic imperatives collided: the imperative to preserve the image of Norway as environmentally-responsible country and the imperative to preserve the image of Norway as economically-competitive country. *Image-preservation* is a crucial component in neurotic behaviour, as it hides the unconscious fear of being unmasked for what one really is: something vulnerable, fragile, and imperfect (Horney, 1937).

tension by figuring out policies that meet favourably both sides of the equation. The deregulation of the energy market was an opportunity for Norwegian elites and lay people to envisage the shaking conditions of possibility of such an attempt. Indeed, this economic-political maneuver took care of the economic side of the question only, leaving its environmental side out of sight.

In what follows, the externalisation of environmental issues in the discourse and policy of deregulation is excavated by means of Spivak's account of the production of theoretical and political margins and by rendering visible the structures of complicity underwriting the logic of consumerism of contemporary capitalism.

The Norwegian electricity system: to regulate or to deregulate?

Norway is a country worldwide – known for its massive energy resources and electricity industry, as well as for the impressive domination of the energy system by hydropower industries, uncritically taken to be more ecological than other energy sources[123]. It is also a country known for the long lived cohabitation between the logic of capitalism and the logic of socialism, through the compromise-formation of the welfare state (Jessop, 1997, Peck, 2000). The welfare state is a regime of social management based on the ethical prioritising of the virtues of solidarity and equality. In practice, this kind of priority underpins the economic tool of high taxation levels that allow for revenue redistribution, particularly through state expenditures in public utilities such as education, health, and transportation. Even more

[123] But see Simandan, 2002g.

importantly for the context of our study is the traditional high attention paid to environmental issues in Norway, attention that the Norwegian state apparatuses have had to translate into environmental regulations often more demanding than in most other European countries (Hille, 1995).

The development and regulation of the Norwegian energy system before the deregulation of 1991 has to be understood at the intersection of a) the broader project of building the modern Norwegian nation (Gullestad, 1992, 1996), with b) the political domination of public affairs by the Labour Party, the main representative of the Left ideologies and the artisan of the Norwegian brand of the welfare state. During the decades of energy system regulation the foundational assumption concerning energy was that it represents a *strategic infrastructure*, a tool for the development of the country of too much import to be left to the rules of the market. In a country where the whole economic framework was built on the premise of the availability of very cheap and abundant energy resources, the consideration of energy affairs as a matter of public utility / strategic infrastructure has been one of the main discursive sources for the political legitimacy and definition of the state, as actor *obliged* to take care of the good functioning and growth of the energy system. This observation is at the heart of the argument developed in this case study, namely that the deregulation of the Norwegian energy market has been a symbol of the decline of the actual power of the state apparatuses, and hence a threat to the neurotic dream of vindictive triumph. The aforementioned decline needs to be aligned to the broader material effects of the ideology of neoliberalism (Lemke, 2001) that have been documented in various parts

of the world (e.g. Simandan, 2002b, Dunkley, 1997, Hardt and Negri, 2000).

In short, the *regulated* system was characterised by several organisational patterns with controversial ethical, economical, technological, and environmental consequences. To begin with, the energy networks were organised into local and regional monopolies. This regime was beneficial from the point of view of making possible sustainable policies through centralised decisions concerning environmental issues and rewards for energy saving. It was less beneficial from the point of view of neoliberal economists, because it did not allow for competition, the major motivation to increasing efficiency. Monopolies, they argue, necessarily lead to complacency, inefficient resource allocation and even corruption. While their economic argument is debatable, there is no doubt that the capacity of the state to promote environmental concerns within the energy system has been jeopardized by deregulation.

Following on from here, the existence of monopolies perpetuated the weird situation of having differences in the price of energy from one regional monopoly to the other. However, from an economic geography perspective, this might be seen as a *signature of space* within the economic logic, as a normal economic differential residing in the peculiarities of local and regional geographies. Furthermore, price differences were supported by the state at the level of economic sectors as well, and these differences were even more pronounced than the regional ones.

Thus, households and the service sector paid more per energy unit than the manufacturing industries. The neoliberals argue that this has been unethical and that 'the same price for all' policy brought about by deregulation is in a sense more 'socialist' (i.e. equalitarian). But this

disingenuous argument occludes that in a country at once engaged on the path of development through industrialisation, and committed to environmental protection, the aforementioned sectoral differential in energy price was a powerful policy intervention. It was designed to stimulate industrial growth, production, and investments, and to hold to a decent level the consumption of a strategic infrastructure – electricity – within the realms of unproductive sectors such as households and services. The very state accused by neoliberals for having promoted inefficiency in energy networks, had actually favoured a wise allocation of this strategic infrastructure, rewarding investments in productive capacities and repressing energy consumption in the other domains.

The regulated system operated with a higher degree of rigidity, significant especially with regard to the low flexibility in end–user price (Arnt Johnsen, 2002). To clarify matters, insofar as the price of electricity production substantially varies across the year (in relation with the seasonal amount of rain, the melting of snow, etc.), the normal thing would be for the end-user price to vary as well, but this was not the case. The neoliberalisation of the electricity market has introduced a more elastic matching between the peaks of production and the peaks of consumption, by the mediation of a lower price, and, correspondingly, a matching between the 'valleys' of production and the 'valleys' of consumption by the mediation of a higher end-user price. In the big scheme of things, any energy planner would argue that this practice brings substantial overall system efficiency and environmental sustainability, given the technological, economic, and environmental problems accompanying an

annual production curve with too ample oscillations between production peaks and production valleys.
But system rigidity and the attendant system inefficiency apparently characterised the regulated energy system not only on a short-term basis[124], but also on a long-term basis. This should be read in the sense that it necessarily induced low capital return and favoured excessive investment in new capacities for electricity generation, well above the actual increase in energy consumption. As a reminder, the regulated system operated within the ethical – political rationale of *having the obligation* to secure the economic and social development of the country with the required / anticipated electricity needs. Hence, an investment policy centred around minimising the risk of electricity shortage, with the associated economic inefficiency of planning too large capacity generation and thus having low rates of capital return.

The deregulation of 1991 is thought to induce long term efficiency as well, because the expansion of generation capacities follows – or so economists believe (Kneese and Sweeney, 1993) - the optimal investment order. What I suspect is that this rhetoric of long-term efficiency hides a dangerous political maneuver that feebles Norwegian economy by rendering it more vulnerable to the global context and to capitalist forces. Let me elaborate. Let us assume a development scenario for the next decades that consists in a higher rate of electricity consumption than the one estimated. The Norwegian system would then have to import electricity from the neighbouring countries at a higher price than the price of domestic energy production,

[124] As outlined above, in relation to the variation in cost of the natural production along any given year.

hence inducing vulnerability in the economic system and lowering the rate of economic growth that would have been possible in a scenario with abundant domestic electricity supply.

This is significant at an international political economy level, in that the key source of the competitive advantage of Norwegian economy in the international arena (Malecki, 1997) resides first and foremost in is very cheap energy. Cheap energy permits the blossoming of heavy, energy-intensive industries, blossoming against the current among the other developed economies, which have witnessed in the last four decades a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist industries (Storper and Salais, 1997, Harrison, 1997), from energy-intensive to human-capital intensive sectors.

This economic and political vulnerability predicated upon the necessary hypothesis of ultimate recourse to importation[125] is accompanied by what might be called environmental inefficiency. At contingent or structural dependence on energy importation, Norway would use electricity produced in neighbouring countries such as Denmark or Sweden, where unsustainable energy sources by far outweigh hydropower and other renewables. Put it differently, instead of investing in taking into account local hydropower (costly investment, with low capital return and huge investment risks), Norway would arrive to import electricity produced in nuclear plants (Sweden) or conventional fuels plants (Denmark, Germany).

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[125] I.e. It takes time to build new hydropower stations; energy scarcity immediately impacts industrial investment.

From cultural neurosis to the reality-check of global capital

In psychoanalysis and psychiatry the distinction between neurosis and psychosis is well-established. Confronted with a harsh reality, the psychotic cannot accept it and replaces it with an illusory reality, convenient to his/her intra-psychic needs. This denial of reality corresponds to a narcissistic[126] withdrawal of the libido from reality onto oneself[127]. The psychotic is the victim of his/her delusions. Unlike the psychotic, the neurotic does accept reality, but the price paid is the repression of his/her inner wishes and dreams. We have argued that the decades of glorious modernisation that had preceded neoliberalism fuelled a collective neurotic self too proud of its achievements and too unaware of its vulnerabilities. The neoliberal revolution was a reality-check for the Norwegian neurosis and imposed a painful redefinition of the Norwegian identity.

As the beginning of this study suggested, the deregulation of the Norwegian energy market in 1991 has to be placed within the wider framework of the neoliberalisation of space (Peck, Tickell, 2002) that characterises the current global order. Neoliberalism is a particular ideology and practice sustained by those enmeshed in the 'structures of complicity' (Spivak, 1999) of contemporary capitalism. It is visible at the political level by three of its most socially painful manifestations - privatisation, deregulation, marketisation – and by a more difficult to grasp change in the ethical dimension of the legitimating processes of the

[126] Therefore, Freud used to refer to psychoses as narcissistic psychoneuroses.
[127] This withdrawal of libido is known as secondary narcissism.

state. In his lecture at the *Collège de France* on neoliberal governmentality[128], Foucault distinguished several brands of neoliberalism, ranging from that of the Freiburg School (Ordo-liberalism) to that of the Chicago School, with an extreme neoliberal stance in Gary Becker's theory of human capital. What impressed Foucault[129] was the change in the *political ontology of neoliberalism*. Thus, traditional liberals put at the heart of their ethical – political project the freedom of the individual and the need to protect this freedom from the totalitarian tendencies of the state. Unlike traditional liberalism, the core premise of the political ontology within contemporary neoliberalism is that competition, rationality, and search for increased efficiency govern or should govern social and individual life. In a sense, they are seen as the 'natural' features of humankind.

I introduced the term 'ontopolitical therapy' to name these peculiar ontological reworkings required by major ethical-political projects. Contemporary neoliberalism tells us that all organisations and more diffuse social formations should be freed from the cage of anti-liberal organisational frameworks. The latter include hereditarian rights, preservation of status quo, preference given to those with more experience, ethical concern for equality and redistribution, well being of the members of an organisation /network /social formation, etc. These dubious frameworks – the argument goes - must be reframed according to their natural order: the search for more efficiency and rationality, by means of open competition and of meritocratic (as opposed to equalitarian) ethics. To put it simplistically simple, inequalities among people are natural and those with

[128] The lecture was held in March 1979, see Lemke, 2001.
[129] See also Foucault, 1994.

better results in activity deserve to have more than those incapable of such results. Furthering on from this atomistic – individual level of analysis, one can inject the same logic in the case of the deregulated Norwegian energy market, by applying the meritocratic criteria not directly to individuals but to economic agents participating in the energy market: those who can provide cheaper electricity and better services deserve more than those less efficient, who, at best have to catch up with the former, or, at worst have to die.

This neoliberal ideology is premised on the possibility of translating into reality a purely theoretical fiction – that of a free, transparent, atomistic, market, where everybody has unrestricted access to information and to the most efficient provider, and nobody has that much power to restrict the allocation of resources according to – and only to – the logic of maximising efficiency. That the market is not at all transparent, that some economic agents are more powerful than the others I would not pause here for further evidence: even the proponents of deregulation agree with the existence of market imperfection (sic). What I think is worth pausing for are two intertwined theoretical complicities embedded in the neoliberal argument. One concerns the erasure of environmental concerns, the other is about the fiction of individual autonomy and rational behaviour.

While in the regulated energy system as before of 1991, environmental concerns were always a matter to consider, after deregulation they have been *erased* from the agenda because the very way of defining the energy system has shifted: it is not any longer a realm for the allocation of a strategic infrastructure / public utility (energy) through the tight surveillance by state apparatuses that happen to be responsible for the environment as well, in the virtue of its similar strategic importance. Instead, it becomes a technical

organisational framework that ensures the allocation of a commodity (energy) in such a way so as to maximise efficiency.

The only item on the agenda of neoliberal supporters is rendering the system more similar to that of the theoretical fiction of a free market. Environmental problems do exist, but they have nothing to do with the rather technical concerns of deregulationists. It is somebody else's responsibility to take care of them. This disingenuous delegation of responsibility for environmental problems is typical of the neoliberal practice worldwide. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has beautifully theorised the production of theoretical and political margins through the very definition – catachrestic strategies – of a portion of 'reality', by means of her concept of 'epistemic violence'. Whenever we define something, something else is left outside the boundaries of one's definition, and hence is erased from the responsibility of those governing that portion of 'reality' – may it be an energy system, a plant, or a citizen. The new regime of the Norwegian energy system is concerned with reducing the intensity of energy consumption only (e.g. by favouring energy efficient appliances), and not at all the overall consumption. The idea – materialised in a shocking advertisement[130] – is: if you use better appliances you can use more energy, while paying the same.

The second issue I wanted to raise refers to the fiction of individual autonomy and rationality that is held by neoliberals to be the 'real', the natural order of things. Solid elaborations in psychoanalysis, gender studies (Butler, 1997)

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[130] The advertisement suggested that if one uses energy efficient light bulbs, one does not need to switch them off when leaving the room, because their energy intensity is very low

and postcolonial theory (Spivak, 1999) have deconstructed the Cartesian understanding of the subject, revealing its incoherencies, irrational 'burden', irreducible textuality (i.e. you are what society makes of you), and dividual character. For the specific focus of this case study this might help us understand how irrational and not efficiency-driven we are as humans, how the amount of energy we consume depends not on calculus, but on the social constructions we are enmeshed with[131].

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The twin insights that individuals and civilizations are driven by their unconscious and that the unconscious is very difficult to know or tame are Freud's legacy, a legacy largely neglected by other critical geographers. I hope that this book will seduce them to explore this path in more depth than I have been able to do here.

[131] E.g. We are manipulated by advertisements to consume more, we consume energy even when we do not really need it, because it helps the construction of our identity as, say, Norwegians – and it is part of the tradition in Norway to irresponsibly waste electricity, etc.

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Acknowledgements

This book has its beginnings in a series of ideas initially presented in the following papers:

‘Poverty, resource management, and the cultural politics of industrialization in Central Europe: the case of the Romanian Carpathians’ *Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations* 2: 70-87 (2004);
‘Neoliberalizing human resources: the case of a marginal trade union’ *Akademos* I (2): 7-26 (2004);
‘Economy versus culture? Refiguring the domains of the social’ *Scientific and Technical Bulletin: Series Social and Humanistic Sciences*, X (5): 44-55 (2004);
‘The neoliberal turn in Norwegian energy policy’ *Annals of ‘Aurel Vlaicu' University. Series Economics* pp. 409 – 417 (2002);
‘The governmentalization of nature: a political ecology of hydropower in Norway and Romania’ *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium of the Multidisciplinary Research Association from Western Romania,* pp. 949-956, Timisoara, (2002);
‘Framing capitalist dynamics: overdetermination or complexity theory?’ *Proceedings of the 10th Scientific Conference with International Participation, 'Constantin Brancusi' University, Faculty of Economics*, Targu - Jiu, Section 5, pp. 251 - 256 (2002).

In addition, in chapter five, I had to use one drawing and a couple of formulations about the model of recursive

cartographies initially discussed in my earlier book *Pragmatic Scepticism and the Possibilities of Knowledge*.

*

I presented the theoretical developments of this book at a number of international conferences, seminars, and workshops in Romania, Germany, Hungary, Norway, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Canada, and the US. Many thanks to all the people who provided useful comments and suggestions of improvement. I am particularly thankful to Nigel Thrift (University of Oxford), Ron Johnston and Adam Tickell (University of Bristol), Clive Barnett (Open University), Ray Hudson (University of Durham), and Keith Chapman (University of Aberdeen), who read earlier versions of one or several chapters.

I would like to thank my colleagues at Brock University, with whom I discussed some of the ideas presented in this book. Particular thanks to David Butz, Ute Lehrer, and Hugh Gayler for their earlier observations about the research project outlined in chapter six.

I am grateful to the referees of this book for their constructive criticism and for their professionalism. The final version of the book benefited in substantive ways from their very careful reading.

*

Funding for this research came from several sources: SSHRC-Brock University (the grants *Alternative Geographies of Romanian Modernity: the Role of Intellectual and Political Elites*, 2004-2005, and *French Discourses of Development and the Constitution of Resource Semi-peripheries in 19th century Europe*, 2005-2006), the Romanian Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education (the grant *Evaluation of Structural Tensions in the*

Banat Region and Optimal Dynamics Modeling of the Local and Regional Elective Mediums, 2003-2005), University of Bristol, University of Oslo, the Norwegian non-governmental organization Fritts-Ord, Europe-Asia Foundation, and the Developing Areas Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society – Institute of British Geographers. Many thanks for their financial support.

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Last but not least, my thanks to the editors of the book for their help with the technical aspects of this project and for their professionalism.

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Excerpts from reviews of Dr Simandan's first two books:

We have no hesitation in praising this book: on one hand, it is the most original and erudite enquiry in the history and historiography of geography in the Romanian-speaking world, on the other hand, it constitutes an exceptional reference for all those with interests in historiography, discourse analysis, and the social study of science.

> [Solomon C-tin, Coanda Sv 2003 'Book review. Dragos Simandan Regimurile de adevãr ale trecutului. O cercetare în istoriografia si istoria geografiei' Analele *stiintifice ale Universitatea de Stat din Moldova, Sectia Stiinþe socioumanistice,* vol III, Chisinãu, ISBN 9975 - 70-286 - 3, p 479 – 498]

Romanian geography will much benefit from this volume. It brings the promise of rearticulating our parochial practices with the broader conversation taking place among other geographical traditions. Published only two years after his vastly influential book 'The cultural fundaments of the American model', 'The truth regimes of the past' confirms and reinforces Simandan's position as leader of the new generation in Romanian geography. This book is definitely a must-have.

> [Bulzan, C 2004 Book Review *Revista Universitara de Stiinte Sociale*, I, (2), pages 178-179]

This is undoubtedly the best book published in human geography after the fall of Ceausescu in 1989.

> [Pacurariu Gh 2001 'A transdisciplinary approach in human geography. Review of 'The cultural fundaments of the American model'' *Scientific and Technical Bulletin: Series: Economic Sciences & Sociology*, VII, (3), pp. 89 - 91 ISSN 1454 – 8321]