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**Social mobility and social stratification in a Transylvanian village:  
historical changes and generational experiences**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Sociology  
by

**Călin G. Goina**

**2012**

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2012

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION:**

Social mobility and social stratification in a Transylvanian village: historical changes and generational experiences

by  
Călin G. Goina,  
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology,  
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012  
Professor Gail Kligman, Committee co-chair  
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This thesis offers an ethnographic exploration of social transformation: it explores the processes of (re)stratification as experienced in one rural community – Sântana, in western Romania – as a means to understand how macro changes impact everyday life at the local level. I explore the articulation between macro-social historical transformations and the opportunities and constraints that the resultant political and property regimes presented for villagers. I build on the ethnographic analyses of rural Eastern Europe by adding an historical analysis of the configurations and reconfigurations of life trajectories across three successive generations. The villagers I study lived a succession of property and political configurations: democratic and authoritarian regimes grounded in free market and private property until 1947, a totalitarian regime of state-socialism until 1989, and a liberal democracy re-building a free market economy from 1990 until today. This succession of regimes altered, configured and reconfigured the life trajectories of Sântana's inhabitants.

In contrast with quantitative studies on re-stratification this qualitative study focuses on the villagers' own understandings of the changes they have experienced. I look at opportunities and resultant mobility (upward and downward) as experienced and accounted for by them. My approach toward social stratification is grounded in the classificatory schemes that my informants use in their life story narratives, which are classificatory schemes that position the subject with respect to others.

My project is mainly informed by the ethnographic method, through which the researcher immerses him/herself in the ocean of meanings and practices which structure and constitute the day-to-day life of those he/she studies. As a researcher who returned to the village where he was raised, and who interviewed his co-villagers (many of them friends and relatives), I was placed in the position of the insider or "native" ethnographer. In addition to ethnography, my study builds on a burgeoning set of methods: life course or biographical studies. The villagers' experiences with the three political and property regimes addressed are structured along generational lines: for each regime I collected five story accounts from the members of the same family, across three successive generations.

The dissertation is organized according to the three generations' experiences as these overlapped with the three political and property regimes. Chapter two offers an historical account of the site, introducing each of the three political and property regimes that constitute the background of my study. In chapter three I introduce a set of six life stories intended to give voice to the villagers' own understandings and explanations of change in their lives (people who grew up in the pre-WWII village). Chapter four covers the life stories of five individuals who are the children of those introduced in the previous chapter, people who grew up and established their occupational careers under state socialism. In chapter five I address the third generation of

villagers, those born in the 1970s, who negotiated their life trajectories in the context of post-communist Romania. I sum up my findings in chapter six, where I describe these three generationally distinct configurations of class, status, party, ethnicity, education and gender among the villagers of Sântana, specific to each property regime, highlighting the manner in which the three political and property regimes altered the set of opportunities and constraints within which the villagers had to negotiate their daily lives.

My study allows me to make sense of how my co-villagers made their everyday lives meaningful as the world unfolded around them, and explore how they have navigated through the macro parameters of socio-political and economic change within their local possibilities to manage the ups and downs of their own and their families' lives.

The dissertation of Călin G. Goina is approved.

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Goina, Călin. 2004. "Ce poti face azi nu lasa pe maine: cazul colhozului-model GAC 'Viata Noua' Sântana" ('Do not leave for tomorrow what you can do today!': an exercise on the birth of a kolkhoz-model" in Dorin Dobrinu, Constantin Iordachi (eds). *Taranimea si puterea. Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii in România, 1949-1962* (The peasants and the power: the process of collectivization of agriculture in Romania 1949-1962). Iasi: Polirom.

Goina, Călin. 2005. "How the state shaped the nation: an essay on the making of the Romanian nation." *Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society*, vol. 8, 2005.

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Goina, Călin. 2012. "Cine nu sare, nu vrea schimbare!" (He who's not jumping does not cheer for change) in Stoica, Catalin and Vintila Mihailescu (eds)., *Iarna vrajbei noastre: protestele din Romania, ianuarie-februarie 2012*, (The winter of our wrath: the Romanian collective protests of January-February, 2012," Bucuresti: Editura Paidea.

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## Introduction

*“Even if before we were wealthy, we ended up with nothing. When we finally joined the collective farm, we were poor, because we paid high taxes as kulaks. They [the tax collectors] took everything, even our clothes. They took our pigs, too. We could not keep pigs. A neighbor would keep them for us [claiming they were his own] It was our luck that people were kind.”* (Sena R., Romanian woman, peasant, 1927-2011)

*“In 1959, when we joined the collective we got [at the end of the year] so much wheat that we simply did not have where to store it all, so we had to store some at my uncles’ house. For there were four of us: I drove a horse-driven wagon, my father worked at the stables, my mother had a lot of land in her charge and my sister worked at the [collective farm’s] greenhouses. All of us worked, my old aunt was here [taking care of the domestic chores]. It went well, they led us back home with a brass band. We were among the first, we were [declared] work leaders!”* (Seppi R, German man, kolkhoz member, b. 1940)

*“After 1990 we [the Roma] were the first to be fired from the factories, and this was not a local occurrence, it happened everywhere, across the country. This was the problem: the Roma were the first [to be fired]. And we did not receive any sort of support, you know? There was deep poverty, and our Roma had to survive on welfare. And that social welfare support was miserable. Imagine, having to live on two million lei, if you had a family of seven-eight!”* (Marcu E, Roma entrepreneur, b. 1968)

1989 transformed Eastern Europe into a “living sociological laboratory.” The fall of communism created opportunities but also opened a Pandora’s box of problems. While the institutional void that resulted from the sudden collapse of the Ceaușescu regime attracted the most attention, the citizens of Romania continued to live their daily lives, trying to navigate through, and make sense of, a completely changed environment. Moreover, for many of Romania’s citizens, the radical changes that 1989 brought were not the first they experienced; for those born in the 1940s and earlier, it was the advent of socialism that had previously turned their or their families’ lives upside down. Thus, many experienced two significant regime changes in their lifetimes.

This thesis offers an ethnographic exploration of social transformation. More specifically, it explores the processes of (re)stratification as experienced in one rural community – Sântana, in western Romania – as a means to understanding how macro changes impact everyday life at the local level. Building on Ivan Szelenyi et al.'s (1988) analysis of the life trajectories of rural Hungarians out of the pre-WWII village and into the one structured by state-socialism, I add both historical depth (analyzing three successive generations) and a more complex analytical model based on categories that have emerged from the narratives I collected, which also takes into consideration factors neglected by Szelenyi et al., such as ethnicity and gender. The following paragraphs outline the main characteristics of my case-study.

## **1.1 Setting**

I address the history of a rural community in Transylvania from the 1940s to 2012. Sântana is located on the Western Plain of Romania, 28 kilometers north of the county capital, Arad, and 20 kilometers east of the Hungarian border. The rich soil of the area made agriculture the main occupation of the village's inhabitants throughout modern history. Historically Sântana consisted of two geographically contiguous settlements: Sanktanna and Comlăuș. Sanktanna was inhabited almost exclusively by ethnic Germans (*Schwaben*) while Comlăuș had roughly an equal number of Romanians and Germans, and a sizable Roma community. The first available census (1747) found Comlăuș inhabited overwhelmingly by Romanians, besides a handful of Hungarians. The Germans were brought to the village during the following decades (mid 17<sup>th</sup> century) by the local landlord who founded Sanktanna in the context created by Empress Marie Therese's colonization of the neighboring Crown province of Banat with Catholic Germans. Sântana's Roma first appeared in the historical record in the 1770s. The village was shared by

the three ethnicities until the early 1990s, when the large majority of Sântana's Germans chose to immigrate to Germany.

This case study thus offers a rich and complex mixture of ethnic communities -Roma, Germans, and Romanians; languages- Romanian, the local German dialect, and the Romani language; and religions -the Germans are Catholics, most of the Romanians are Eastern Orthodox, while the majority of the village's Roma converted during the 1990s to the Pentecostal church. This socio-cultural and historical complexity makes Sântana<sup>1</sup> a strategic site for my inquiry.

My approach illuminates the impact of macro-historical and social changes on the daily life of the villagers. I cover here the succession of three property and political regimes in the village: the period prior to WWII, a traditional village formed by a majority of independent small farmers living under a constitutional monarchy; the period from the late 1940s until 1989, a collectivized village under a state-socialist totalitarian regime; and the post-1990 era, when Romania became a liberal democracy with an economy grounded in private property and free market principles. The data and analysis cover the processes that have reshaped the village's social stratification system, as well as the ways in which each generation of villagers have tried to make sense of these processes of transformation.

To this end, I focus on family members belonging to three successive generations, and study their life accounts. I use this set of intergenerational life stories to understand the impact of radical social transformations over time by focusing on (1) the ways in which local hierarchies have been affected by each set of economic and political changes experienced by the inhabitants

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<sup>1</sup> I address Sântana's history in chapter 2.

of Sântana since the end of WW I, and (2) the major criteria of social distinction that have emerged or disappeared with each property and political regime.

## **1.2 Literature review**

In contrast with quantitative studies on re-stratification that identify changing occupational aggregates over time or develop scales of prestige or social standing (Treiman and Szelenyi 1992; Szelenyi 1998; Hanley and Treiman 2004; Hanley and Treiman 2005), this qualitative study focuses on the villagers' own understandings of the changes they have experienced. I look at opportunities and resultant mobility (upward and downward) as experienced and accounted for by them. My approach toward social stratification is grounded in the classificatory schemes that my informants use in their Life story narratives, which are classificatory schemes that position the subject with respect to others. Thus, I will categorize as stratification narratives any references that include at least one of the three classic Weberian dimensions of:

(1) Class-location: relational terms concerning the subjects' positions in market-related terms (e.g. income, economic assets).

(2) Status: relational terms indicating the subjects' status positions, defined as the unequal amount of social respect allocated to individuals or families, and the grounds on which this respect is attributed. Following Crompton (1983), I see the concept of 'status' as implying three distinct dimensions:

(a) Conscious communities aware of their common belonging or shared prestige;

(b) Individuals who share a similar life-style or social standing;

(c) Strata raising the same claims to material advantages or 'life chances' that are not grounded in market locations.

3. Party: relational terms denominating the subjects' position of institutional, organizational or political authority. References to any of these dimensions are treated as a stratification-related issue. Besides these, the positionings of my subjects are also shaped by gender, ethnicity, and regional solidarities.

In order to address the interplay of factors that are seen at work in shaping a life-trajectory and that ground a Life story, I build on Somers' (1997) concept of "narrative." I situate her approach in the tradition of symbolic interactionism, and I see the accounts shared by the social actors as the main elements through which "we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world and through which we constitute our identities" (1997: 82). Thus, according to Somers, narratives "are constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space and characterized by (...) causal employment" (1997: 82). She advocates the use of the concept of 'narratives' instead of 'interests.' The scholar of class working with the term 'interest' is forced to assume that under 'normal' conditions "entities within that category will demonstrate appropriate 'categorical' behavior" (1997: 88). Starting from this assumption, Somers notes that the researcher will run into spurious questions such as "why do workers not act as they should, given their class interest?" By dropping the concept of 'class interest' in favor of 'class narratives,' Somers addresses a social actor who is embedded in temporally and spatially shifting configurations. Instead of explaining an event by situating it within a specific category, (such as 'class interest' or 'gender role'), the researcher positions his/her subjects in the set of institutions and social relations which structure their world, and look in those very institutions and relations for an explanation of the subjects' acts.

The narratives used by subjects (or the narratives available to them) are not their invention *ex nihilo*: rather, they are chosen from the panoply of already available stories, be they 'ontological' narratives (those built and used by the actors to account for their life trajectories), 'public or institutional narratives' (attached to publics or groups, such as of the rise of the working class, or the alleged moral unworthiness, for example, of the Roma), 'analytical/sociological' narratives reconstructing the first two types of narratives in a conceptually rigorous, theoretically-informed manner, and 'meta-narratives,' master stories in which we are embedded, both as actors and as scholars, such as Progress, Industrialization, or Globalization (Somers 1997: 86)

As I focus on the narratives constructed and used by the actors to make sense of their life trajectories, I also draw from the literature on "framing," exploring the ways in which my subjects narrate and describe their class, gender, or, ethnic positions in their life stories. Here I follow Goffman, who defined frames as "schemata of interpretation" that enable the actor to "locate, perceive, identify and label" the events from his surrounding reality (1974: 21). Frames are understood as rendering the outside world intelligible, organizing experience and guiding action. Another concept, developed by Snow and Benford, is the "master frame", defined as a meta-frame, being to "specific collective action what paradigms are to finely tuned theories" (1992: 138). Ethnicity or class can be seen as master frames that provide the rules and mechanisms through which their derivative, subsequent framing mechanisms, inform the patterns we use to make sense out of the surrounding world. Thus instances like a village pub brawl can be interpreted in terms of class (landless peasants against rich peasants), ethnicity (Romanians against Germans), age (restless young people) or simply as the effect of too much alcohol.

The narrative approach, combined with the literature on framing, is able to provide several key mechanisms and concepts that enrich my analysis. I examine instances in which certain events are invoked in narratives and identify the conceptual frame used to render events meaningful and to guide or justify social action.

### **1.2.1. Generations:**

The villagers' experiences with the three political and property regimes I explore in chapter two will be structured along generational lines: for each regime I sketch the portrait of a generation, through six illustrative life stories. I approach the term 'generation' in the vein of Mannheim (1959), Prager (2003), and Kligman and Verdery (2011).

Following Mannheim, I categorize as members of the same generation people for whom co-existence means more than just chronology: they constitute a generation because they are subjected to similar influences. Thus the social phenomenon of generation represents "a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process" (Mannheim, 1956: 292). Another essential concept put forward by Mannheim is that of 'similarity of location' within a generation. What creates a similar location is not their chronological co-existence, but "that they are in a position to experience the same events and data, etc. and especially that these experiences impinge upon a similarly 'stratified' consciousness "(1956: 296).

Noting that generations are not concrete groups,<sup>2</sup> Mannheim sees them as a *social category*, comparable to that of 'class.' The position of an individual within his generation,

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<sup>2</sup> For Mannheim, concrete groups are "a union of individuals through naturally developed or consciously willed ties" (such as a family or a tribe) (1956: 282).

according to Mannheim, is structurally similar to his class position. Thus, we can speak of a *generation as actuality* only “where a concrete bond is created between the members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization” (1956: 303). In consequence, generations can be divided and studied along ‘generation units.’

Following Prager (2003), I do not assume that inter-generational relations are unproblematic. Instead, the connection, and the passage of narratives, memories and practices from one generation to another is itself an essential locus of sociological explanation of social mobility. Prager focuses on the transmission of trauma and its effects on both the children’s and parents’ generations involved in this transmission. His study is highly relevant for my case-study as the first generation I cover in my study experienced the trauma of forced deportation to the USSR, collectivization, and passage from an imperfect democratic regime to a series of authoritarian, fascist and Communist, dictatorships. The second and third generations went through the later stages of communism, the trauma of the violent repression of the mass uprising against the Ceaușescu dictatorship, as well as the momentous changes brought about by the events of 1989: a high-risk society replacing communist stability, sky-rocketing inflation, deep economic crisis, increased pauperization, and mass emigration. As “generations are fundamentally relational in their nature” there will be “inevitable tension and strain between generations that encapsulate different lived lives” (Prager 2003: 175). Consequently, a narrative of family history told by a son whose past is shadowed by a traumatic event that scarred the lives of the parents will tend to identify with their trauma and to carry on the secret, to cover up the shame transferring it into “a foreign body, an alien object (...) a toxic force; yet outside the kernel of the self” (Prager 2003: 179). We will see that the collectivization process, for example,

sometimes had this effect on the offspring of families persecuted by the communist regime. Prager's contribution opens a new path in the study of inter-generational connections (social mobility included) and opens new doors for life-course analysis.

Kligman and Verdery (2011: 31) note the essential role of generation in interpreting the past and present, "for where one is positioned in the life cycle bears significantly on how one remembers or views both past and present. We do not mean to imply that such factors as gender, religion, nationality, or geographical location are any less significant (...). Nevertheless, in times of rupture, generation anchors memory in fundamental ways." I chose therefore as the unit of selection for my cases not the cohort (understood as all those born in the same year) but the generation. My subjects have been in a position to experience the same events, and to be marked by similar experiences, and therefore, they do share a certain perspective about the world which is specific to their generation and distinguishes them from other generations. It is this that allows me to cluster them in distinct modes of remembering and interpreting the past.

### ***1.2.2. Literature on rural Eastern Europe***

Moving away from the macro-structural perspective, I ground both my reading of the village historical and economic context and my interpretation of the villagers' discourses in the concepts put forward by a particularly vibrant ethnographic literature devoted to Eastern European villages and social change.

For the pre-WWII village, I start with a bow to the great Romanian sociologist and historian Henri Stahl (1980), whose contributions to the study of social differentiation within the traditional Romanian village in the 1920s and 1930s, developed within the 'Bucharest school of rural sociology' founded by Dimitrie Gusti, laid the groundwork for subsequent inquiries into

Romania's rural world. Stahl's work was continued by social scientists like Ion Aluaș (1977 1982), whose research in the 1960s and 1970s focused on rural distinctions in Transylvania, and Smaranda Vultur (1997, 2000, 2008), who collected in the 1990s a treasure trove of oral histories in the rural Banat, addressing not only the trajectories of ethnic Romanians, but also those of the Germans and of the Jewish population in Transylvania. Last but not least, Mihailescu (1989, 1999, 2009) has written the most recent contributions to the Romanian literature on cultural anthropology.

However, in my view, the most influential recent body of work spanning the period from the mid 1970s until today is constituted by Katherine Verdery's (1983, 1985, 1991, 1996, 1999, 2003) and Gail Kligman's (1981, 1988, 2011) contributions to Romania's socio-historiography<sup>3</sup>. Their work on Romanian collectivization (2011) also makes available to scholars of social stratification and social history a comprehensive and insightful conceptual vocabulary apt to describe not only the socialist period that they primarily address but also the pre-WWII village. In addition, I will build on the distinction between a status-order village community (linked by sets of moral obligations) versus a class-structured one (mediated by impersonal, cash-nexus based relationships) as developed in the work of Jowitt (1978), a political theorist whose work engages anthropology, especially of Romania and the former Soviet sphere.

For the socialist period,<sup>4</sup> Kligman (1981, 1988) opens a perspective over the social (and ritual) transformations that the traditional village experienced as a consequence of the transition to the state-socialist regime. In the same vein, Verdery (1983) explores the social history of the village Aurel Vlaicu from the nineteenth century until the late 1970s, addressing especially the

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<sup>3</sup> From the same generation of western anthropologists and sociologists I refer to the contributions of Karnouh (1983) and Cole (1984).

<sup>4</sup> I focus on social structure, not on the history of rural Romania, and therefore I will not refer to the voluminous historical literature on this issue.

relations between the three ethnicities found in the village: Romanians, Germans, and Hungarians; an analysis upon which I built in my study of Romanian, German and Roma villagers (2009). The two authors have made a definitive contribution to the study of the process of collectivizing Romania's agriculture and its social impact between 1949 and 1962. For kolkhozes and rural agriculture under socialism, I also use the work of Kideckel (1993).

For the post-1989 village, I ground my perspective in Verdery's seminal work on de-collectivization (2003), which covers the reintroduction in the early 1990s of private property in the rural world and its consequences for the lives of villagers.

On a par with the conceptually rich analyses of Kligman and Verdery (together and individually), but devoted to Hungary, is Ivan Szelenyi et al.'s work on life trajectories and classificatory schemes, developed in "Socialist Entrepreneurs" (1988). The main thesis is that biographical patterns predict who among the villagers is going to turn into an entrepreneur. Thus, peasants whose parents had been stopped in their 'embourgeoisement' by the advent of communism are more likely to inherit the 'cultural capital' necessary to take over where their families could not, and are predicted to form the new dominant ruling class in rural Hungary. As we will see in the following pages, this argument does not hold for my case study in Romania. Also, as Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley (1998) illustrate in a later book, pre-1945 cultural capital may in some cases be important, but other dimensions and types of capital related to the ways in which families lived for almost a half a century under the communist regime are equally relevant for predicting mobility as the 'embourgeoisement' thesis.

In the same vein, the work of Martha Lampland (1995) focuses on the social history and commodification of labor in a Hungarian village under socialism between the 1950s and 1980s. The detailed analysis of the distinct strata of the Hungarian peasantry in the inter-war period and

its aftermath provides an interesting comparison with the situation in the village I study, as socially, geographically, and ecologically the two communities are very similar. Her thesis, stressing the ways in which the industrialization and rationalization of production under the communist regime triggered a process of commodification of labor in the village is most certainly replicated in the community I survey. Beside her work on the socialist era, in 2002 the author returned to her site and addressed the rise and fall of the cooperative farm managers in the post-socialist economy, uncovering the changes experienced there after the demise of the regime (1991).

Likewise, Gerald Creed offers a compelling image of the social history of the Bulgarian village community of Zamfirovo (1998). The author also covers the first years of de-collectivization, and documents peasant opposition toward disbanding the collective farm, after having ‘domesticated’ the socialist regime and managed to use it in their own interests. In a late 1990s revisit to the site Creed surveys (on a smaller scale) the impact that the demise of communism had on the village (2000).

The ethnographic work of Hollos (2001) on an eastern Hungarian village (Tiszadomb) is most similar to the one I undertake. Hollos aims to describe the social history of the village by choosing an incident that marked the end of the patriarchal domination of the local Communist ‘boss’ as well as the affirmation of the free press and citizens’ involvement in politics that preceded the momentous changes of 1989. Hollos chooses three exemplary actors involved in the crisis: a leading Communist family, the heirs of a local rich family, and a young intellectual who is the product of the regime’s educational opportunities. In the case of the two families the author traces in detail the family evolution over three or even four generations, providing exceptional insights into East European social history and into the interaction between history and biography

in the region. Unfortunately, Hollos leaves the trajectories to speak for themselves. The book lacks an explicit theoretical framework, as well as any conceptual apparatus besides the concepts she implicitly uses in order to make her descriptions intelligible. My project has benefited from her detailed social frescoes, yet I am convinced that life trajectories in and of themselves, no matter how intricate and fascinating, cannot replace the explicit analytical work of linking specific generations, who have been shaped by specific sets of events and historical settings, to their own accounts.

While informative and valuable, these post-socialist ethnographic revisits of the site (Burawoy 2003) are summarized in the extent of a chapter, focusing on a particular theme (agricultural leadership in the case of Lampland, the re-configuration of rituals in the new, harsher, economic conditions, in the case of Creed) and are not comparable with the amount of work and the analytical resources offered by Verdery's book on de-collectivization (2003).

The works of these ethnographers offer detailed insights into the ways in which the subjects of transition themselves define and understand their life trajectories and settings. The villagers are given voice, and we are able to see how their concepts and their understandings of village life inform the theoretical re-interpretation offered by the sociologist/anthropologist. Nevertheless, from the perspective of my interest in social mobility, these works fail to offer the continuous life trajectories and relationships in and out of communism. In most of the cases they deal with a certain site at a certain moment in history, and with the exception of Verdery, Kligman, and Kideckel, none of them returns to substantially study their site after the demise of state socialism. Yet, even in Verdery's case, the focus is mainly on the ways in which the villagers understood private property and the institutional and economic settings that shaped the death of the peasantry in the early 1990s in Transylvania. While her study does address

continuities and crises in the lives of several village families, the inter-generational insights, which were present in *Transylvanian Villagers*, are almost entirely absent in *The Vanishing Hectare*. A case-study that attends in detail to the life-courses of successive generations of villagers will add to the ethnographic literature on socialist and post-socialist transitions, by incorporating an analysis of the interaction between macro and micro processes of transformation. Also, following Kligman and Verdery (2011) regarding the significance of generational location, my study focuses on generations as an analytical tool in the study of East European social history.

Last but not least, in recent years scholars of Eastern Europe have benefited from the publication of a series of ethnographies of transition (Gal and Kligman 2000b; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Pine 1998; Hann 2002; Hann 2003; Kideckel 2008). While these works do not have the scope and breadth of the major ethnographies reviewed above, they present a mosaic of cases and issues that offer the researcher a detailed image of the tectonic changes experienced by the people of Eastern Europe after the demise of state socialism.

I approach my subject matter at the macro level following the approach developed by Michael Mann (1986) in his analysis on how the four sources of social power (military, economic, ideological and political) are reconfigured in different historical periods, crystalizing in distinct configurations, according to the empirical context. *Mutatis mutandis*, my study analyses the ways in which the three political and property regimes impact the configurations of opportunities and constraints available to the members of the generations I study. I explore the articulation between macro-social historical change—the three political and property regime changes—and the opportunities and constraints that these regimes presented for the generations I examine. I build on the ethnographic analyses of rural Eastern Europe presented above by adding

a historical analysis of the configurations and reconfigurations of life trajectories across three successive generations.

### **1.3. Methods**

My project is mainly informed by the ethnographic method, through which the researcher immerses him/herself in the ocean of meanings and practices which structure and constitute the day-to-day life of those he/she studies. By “engaging in the same body rhythms” (Emerson, 2001:154-155) as those studied, the ethnographer hopes to arrive at a better understanding of their experiences, articulated through their own categories and framed by their local context.

Ethnographic knowledge is situated knowledge. Any interactions in the field are and should be construed both as “sources of information about a social world and episodes situated within and expressive of that world” (Emerson and Pollner 1988: 194). This realization brings to a new attention the researcher/researched interaction, as the major determinant of the quality of knowledge we can extract from the field. As a researcher who returned to the village where he was raised, and who interviewed his co-villagers, (many of them friends and relatives) I was placed in the position of the insider, or native ethnographer. Nevertheless, while I indeed had easier access to some communities, I was treated as an ‘outsider’ in others, as the village is structured by regional, kin, class, gender, an ethnic lines.

In addition to ethnography, my study builds on a burgeoning new set of methods: life-course or biographical studies (Bertaux 1997a; Breckner 2002; Chamberlayne 2000; Chamberlayne’ 2002; Clausen 1998; Giele 1998). I follow Bertaux (1997a), who asserts that intergenerational life stories allow us to look at “their strategic efforts, the roles played by women and men, and by different generations, in the transmission of skills and resources,

ambitions and dreams, and compare such efforts at transmission in various social milieux” (Bertaux, Thomson 1997:19). I analyse the life course as a series of turning points, each of which marks “a time or event when one took a different direction from that in which one had been traveling” (Clausen 1998: 203). Events such as entering an occupation, marrying, or having a child constitute turning points. Following Clausen, I consider three types of 'points:' events (as defined above), circumstances that lead to new opportunities, and 'imperceptible' points such as the long drift from a happy marriage to a miserable one.

Adding to the analysis of Clausen, Dirk nevertheless notes that life-course narratives pose methodological and analytic challenges. Such narratives, according to him, offer “a selective memorizing of the past to shut out debilitating events (a selective forgetfulness) and a compartmentalization of the spheres of life to shut out spaces/episodes/statuses in which powerlessness was experienced and assumed” (2001: 527)

Should then life-course narratives be treated as recountings of actual experiences, or as personal (re)constructions, if not outright fabrications, serving a didactic and normative role and reinforcing moral, socially acceptable positions and stances? Breckner and Rupp (2002:293) see the relation between the life course narrative and history as “a relation between text and actual lived life.” In this perspective the life narrative does cover sequences of situations and events that have actually occurred. Nevertheless, the recollection of these situations is given from the perspective of situated “biography, in which social and personal contexts and experiences have created specific forms of perception and attitude” (Breckner and Rupp 2002: 292). We can talk, thus, about narrations as biographical strategies, as “partly conscious, partly unconscious patterns” which are guiding the ways in which individuals handle the past events and present outcomes which have had an impact and shaped their lives. Following Kligman and Verdery

(2011), I will underline here the interaction between someone's generational position and the timing of macro-historical change. One of the key issues in approaching the interaction between history and biography -and the key strategy of my analysis- relates to timing: where a person is in his or her life cycle when major macro events occur, affects his/her opportunities and constraints.

To obtain these sorts of narratives, I conducted open interviews, leaving the narrators the freedom to structure their life stories along the themes they used to make sense of their experiences.<sup>5</sup> In order to analyze the social positioning of my subjects I also collected data that allowed me to map their life trajectories. By life-trajectory I mean the progression of several crucial elements of these people's lives: social position of their family, educational level, social position of their spouse before marriage, occupational career, membership in political or civic organizations or clubs, and the number of children they had. I asked subjects to describe their own life-trajectory, including references to the lives of their parents and children. I use these data to trace each individual's social mobility in its historical context. Cross-interview data, ethnographic data, and the use of personal documents add to the subject's narrative and produce a more comprehensive life-trajectory chart.

I approach the interplay between life trajectories and life-narratives that re-create a life story in the chronological order of the significant turning points in the lives of my subjects, as these were introduced and accounted for during the interviews. In this way, like Giele (1998: 241), I conclude with both intra- and inter-generational comparisons.

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<sup>5</sup> To do so, I endeavored to follow Jack Katz's suggestion (personal communication) that the perfect interview consists of two questions: "How did you get here?" and "And then?"

#### **1.4. The structure of the work**

My aim in the chapters to follow is to empirically articulate how people made sense of each of the major changes they experienced over the course of their lives. Chapter 2 opens with a section on the ecological setting of the village, followed by a short review of its known history (from the Middle Ages to the end of WW I) as a baseline for introducing each of the three political and property regimes that constitute the background of my study. I sketch the political, economic and social dimensions of each period, describing the inter-war twin villages of Comlăuș and Sanktanna, the state-socialist ‘Sîntana commune’ that united them, as well as the post-socialist town renamed Sântana. I do so in order to introduce the reader to the major lines of change and transformation that shaped the lives of my subjects.

In chapter three I move away from the macro-historical presentation toward uncovering the local perspective. The first of three substantive chapters, each covering a generation of villagers, chapter three introduces a set of six life stories intended to give voice to the villagers’ own understandings and explanations of change in their lives. These are people who grew up in the pre-WWII village, and whose lives were marked by the war and the transition to state-socialism. Born between 1923 and 1931, they include four women and two men. They range from the daughter of a rich family to a former servant, and include three Romanians, two Germans and a Roma. This chapter, like the following ones, concludes with the major characteristics marking the trajectories of the members of this generation, contrasting and comparing the intra-generational traits.

Chapter four covers the life stories of five individuals who are the children of those introduced in the previous chapter. These people grew up and established their occupational careers under state-socialism and most of them were near retirement at the time of the systemic

changes brought about by the collapse of communism in 1989. Born between 1936 and 1948, they include a member of the village intelligentsia, a university educated teacher, a kolkhoz member, and an industrial worker. I cover two Germans, two Romanians and a Roma.

In chapter five I address the third generation of villagers, those born in the 1970s, who were young adults or in their late teens at the time of the property and political regime change of 1989, and who negotiated their life trajectories in the context of post-communist Romania. They include a university-trained engineer who worked for a series of multinational corporations, a local entrepreneur, and an industrial worker. Their lives allow us to complete the picture of three successive generations struggling through the ups and downs of radical political and economic change. I sum up my findings in chapter six, where I describe these three distinct configurations of class, status, party, ethnicity, education and gender among the villagers of Sântana, specific to each property regime.

## **Chapter 2. Three property and political regimes**

Sântana is a village situated in western Romania at the crossroads between several empires: the Habsburg Empire to the West, the Ottomans to the South, and, although distant, the Russian Empire to the East. Over the course of the past century, along with the entire Central European region, the village has experienced shifts between three political and property regimes. In this chapter, I review Sântana's history as a means, in particular, to illuminate those three fundamental transformations. So doing makes it possible to then explore the impact of these changes as understood in the life experiences of the villagers I highlight in this thesis.

I begin with a section in which I review Sântana's origins, in order to account for the specific configuration of ethnicities, economic and social distinctions that define the rural world I study after the end of WWI. Next, in subsections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4, I review the periods that roughly correspond to those in which the three generations I address have lived: the world of independent farmers that spanned from the agrarian reform of 1919 to 1922, the consolidation of all land into the collective farm “New Life” between 1950 and 1989, and, last but not least, the latest developments in a settlement that transitioned from being a post-socialist village to becoming a small town in the European Union.

First I introduce the place and its environment, offering an overview of regional and statewide data and trends. These serve as a background against which I discuss the village's history, drawing on the limited local data available (specific material regarding the village's history are scarce and fragmentary).

Although Sântana comprises a compact inhabited area, history and local knowledge divides it into two villages and (at least) three ethnic communities: the village of Sanktanna,

populated almost exclusively by Romanian Germans (Swaben) and the village of Comlăuș, an ethnically-mixed village hosting an almost equal number of ethnic Romanians and Germans, besides a sizable Roma community.

After the creation of the German settlement, the names changed: as these two villages were geographically contiguous, they were constantly treated as a bi-nuclear unit, as suggested by the usage of the same name for them (“Old” and “New Sanktanna”)<sup>6</sup> in all administrative documents. Nevertheless, it was only in 1951 that the Romanian communist state merged the two villages into a single, larger rural unit named Sântana.<sup>7</sup> In 2003 Sântana acquired urban status and is currently classified as a town.

## **2.1. Sântana: the site, its geography and its history**

Sântana<sup>8</sup> is located about 25 km east of the Hungarian-Romanian border and 20 km northeast of the city of Arad. The town is located near the eastern limits of the great Pannonian plain, which ends at the foothills of the Occidental Carpathians -less than 30 kilometers to the east of Sântana. The flatness of the plain and the richness of the agricultural soil are the dominant ecological characteristics of the area: it shares very much the same characteristics with the Banat region (from which it is separated by the river Mureș) and with the eastern Hungarian plain (which demarcated the post-WWI border line between Hungary and Romania). Although this

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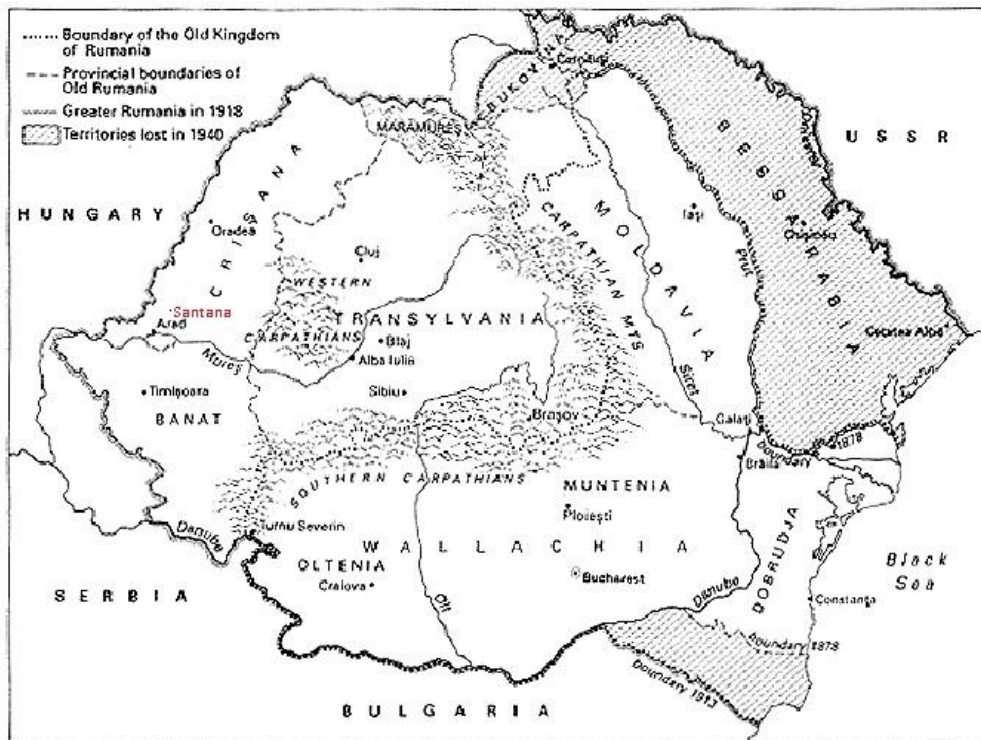
<sup>6</sup>Comlăuș was officially re-named ‘Old-Sanktanna (O Szentanna in Hungarian), while “New-Sanktanna” (Uj Szentanna) referred to the German village. However, I will use the current name throughout this chapter. For a quasi-similar Hungarian case, see the O Domb and the Uj Domb communities treated by Hollos (2001: 15) which also were united only in 1950 under the name of Tiszadomb.

<sup>7</sup>The spelling varies: it was *Sanktanna* in German, or *Uj Szentanna* in Hungarian under the Habsburgs, *Sf. Ana* in the interwar period, *Sîntana* under the communist regime, and *Sântana* after 1990 (all meaning Saint Anne). For simplicity, I will use the current spelling every time. I refer to the entire inhabited area, and I will use the term Comlăuș or Sanktanna when I mean the two historical villages out of which the modern settlement is composed.

<sup>8</sup> For details on Sântana, see Chelcea and Lățea (2000), Hübner (1986), and Sinescu (2011).

region is sometimes considered to be part of Transylvania, it is separated from it by the Occidental Carpathian Mountains. There are major ecological differences between the high, mountain-surrounded Transylvanian plateau and the Pannonian plain where Sântana is located.

*Map 1. Location of Sântana, map of Romania including the historical provinces:<sup>9</sup>*



Agriculture was always a large part of people’s livelihoods, as the fields surrounding the village are of very high agricultural quality: 65% of Sântana’s arable lands are classified today as belonging to the best type of soil (the agro-productive category number 1), 34% of them belong to the second quality (the agro-productive category number 2) and only 1% is assigned to the

<sup>9</sup> Map’s source Hitchins (1994: x).

third category.<sup>10</sup> While there are no rivers or lakes in the area, underground water is relatively easily accessed through wells.

Today's landscape is the product of relative modern developments. Maps and documents from the sixteenth century indicate that the area where Sântana stood (then called Komlós) was covered in forests, lakes and wetlands.<sup>11</sup> During the eighteenth century constant efforts of deforestation and draining of the swamps transformed the area into the plain it now is. Successful deforestation allowed for a switch from cattle rearing to agriculture (mainly for wheat, corn and other cereals). Today, no traces of the huge forests of the past can be found.<sup>12</sup>

### ***2.1.1. An overview of the regional history: from the Hungarian Kingdom to the Hapsburg Empire***

The settlement today called Sântana, located in Arad county, first belonged to the Hungarian medieval kingdom. It appeared in the tax lists of the Catholic Church in 1334 under the name of Komlos (Comlăuș in Romanian) as a hamlet with 10 to 15 households. After Hungary's defeat at Mohacs (1526) it belonged successively to the principality of Transylvania, to the Ottoman Empire, and, from 1691, to the Habsburg Empire. After the dissolution of Austro-Hungary (the late version of the Habsburgs' ruled territories), Sântana became part of

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<sup>10</sup>By comparison, in Ieud, the Transylvanian village studied by Kligman [1988], most of the agricultural land belongs to the 5<sup>th</sup> agro-productive category).

<sup>11</sup>See Brad (1976: 24), quoting a 1515 document of the local landlord Massay on damage done to the forests "Harclean and Marot" between Caporal Alexa and Sicula (thus a forest at least 30 km long).

<sup>12</sup> The only exception is a few hectares of the Tokacs Forest, 7 km west of Sântana.

Romania. The settlement is mentioned throughout the next centuries, always as a small community of serfs on the lists of the domains of local Hungarian feudal lords.<sup>13</sup>

After the defeat of the kingdom of Hungary by the Sublime Porte (1526), Arad region was contested between the two 'heirs' of the Hungarian kingdom: the Habsburg Empire and the principality of Transylvania then under Turkish suzerainty. From 1566 the Turks assumed direct control of the area and Comlăuș became part of the Ottoman *villaet* (administrative unit) of Timișoara.

The end of the seventeenth century witnessed the crumbling of the Ottoman power in the region and the rise of the Habsburg Empire: Vienna extended its sway over eastern Hungary and the previously independent principality of Transylvania, eventually reaching the Danube as its border with the shrinking Ottoman Empire. The areas controlled directly by the Turks became part of the Habsburg Empire in two steps: the region north of the river Mureș (including Komlós/Comlăuș) was integrated into Hungary in 1699; the region south of the Mureș was integrated in 1718 as a new administrative unit, a 'Land of the Crown' named the Banat of Timișoara.<sup>14</sup> It was only in Banat, the last region that the Habsburgs conquered, that they could set up a province that would showcase the centralized model that the Court favored. The poorly populated 'Crown land' was colonized with Catholic German-speaking, but also with small communities of Italians, French, and even Spaniards.<sup>15</sup> This movement of populations aimed

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<sup>13</sup> See Zarna (1994: 20). Between 1549 and 1561, Comlăuș belonged to two nobles (Massay and Sassay) and depends administratively on the fortress of Ineu. By 1640 the settlement of thirty houses belonged to the aristocratic family Kiraly. By 1663 the domain belonged to the Vizesy family ([www.sanktanna.info](http://www.sanktanna.info), accessed on December 7, 2007) only to become a part of the Habsburg imperial domains (erarium) after the Ottoman defeat.

<sup>14</sup>For a detailed discussion of the intricacies and local specificities of the mind-boggling puzzle offered by the administrative and territorial provinces of the Habsburg Empire, see Macartney (1937), Jaszi (1961), Taylor (1967), Mann (1993), Prodan (1979), and Verdery (1983).

<sup>15</sup>The newcomers were settled into new villages with streets designed along geometric lines like a chessboard or in concentric circles of houses surrounding a circular central square, and presented graphic illustrations of the ideology

both to energize the economy of the newly conquered lands and to promote the imperial policy of the Counter Reformation. For the first time in the region's history, Empress Marie Therese allowed the nomadic Gypsies to settle in nearby towns and villages.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the demographic data indicate that Romanians constituted by far the largest ethnic group in the Banat at the time of its creation, followed by the German-speaking colonists.<sup>17</sup>

Comlăuș, located north of the river Mureș, having being conquered earlier, was incorporated by Imperial decree into the province of Hungary in 1732. Some 30 km east of Comlăuș, the new demarcation line was drawn between Transylvania and Hungary, running along the sub-Carpathians hills. Consequently, the village is located roughly at the intersection of three provinces and three distinct paths of development: Banat, Hungary and Transylvania. These shifts in international relations have had a lasting impact over my case study.

### ***2.1.2 Local developments***

Undoubtedly the most influential feudal lord in the history of the village was Baron Jakob Bibics,<sup>18</sup> who acquired Comlăuș in 1745 (Ciuhandu, 1940: 90). The baron represents the new nobility created by the Habsburgs: a 'new man,' who bought his title in 1722, who was also a recent convert to Catholicism. Following the example of the Imperial Court's colonization of

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of rationalism and Enlightenment ideas shared by the Court of Marie Therese and Joseph the Second, aiming to create a model region of the Empire in Banat.

<sup>16</sup>The Empress' effort marks, to my knowledge, the first attempt to give the Gypsy a politically correct name: the stigmatizing 'Gypsy' was to be officially replaced by the term "Neubanater" (New inhabitant of Banat). See Grisellini (1984).

<sup>17</sup>Grisellini (1984: 157), who studied the Banat between 1776 and 1777, offers the following data for Banat: 181, 639 Romanians; 42, 201 colonists (Germans, Italians and French); 78, 780 Serbians; 8, 683 Bulgarians; 5, 272 Gypsies; and 353 Jews.

<sup>18</sup>Baron Bibics lived at his estate in Zarand together with his wife Margaret. Like him, she was not a noble by blood but rather a daughter of an ethnic Armenian regional manager of the Postal Services of the empire who bought his aristocratic title.

Banat with Catholic German-speaking peasants, Baron Bibics brought Catholic German speaking families from Speyer, Baden-Württemberg, Westfalia, Turingia, Tirol, Schwartzwald, and Bayern. The new colonists were settled in a swamp area in the forests southwest of Comlăuș in the late 1740s and 1750s.<sup>19</sup> Every German serf was granted the usage of 13.5 hectares of arable land and 6 hectares of forest.<sup>20</sup>

As can be seen in Map 2, a military map dating from the period 1782-1785, several decades after its colonization, Sanktanna was already systematized following the pattern dominant in the Banat Swaben colonies- a rectangle divided by perpendicular streets with the Catholic Church in the center.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, Comlăuș presents the older structure of an unsystematically-organized traditional village.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, the colonization of Sanktanna resulted from the private initiative of the local lord and was not part of the Imperial process.

<sup>20</sup>This demonstrates that when the German settlers arrived, a sizable part of the surrounding area was not yet deforested: it seems that the colonists were to deforest the forested hectares themselves.

<sup>21</sup>The map also suggests that in 1785 the colony was not new, as it included in the lower right corner a cemetery, which remained until the 1950s.

<sup>22</sup>Comlăuș constituted the first host settlement for German-speaking colonists prior to the founding of Sanktanna. It is quite possible that the quasi-regulated square identifiable at its southeastern limits was the 'spatially' identifiable area assigned to the first Germans.

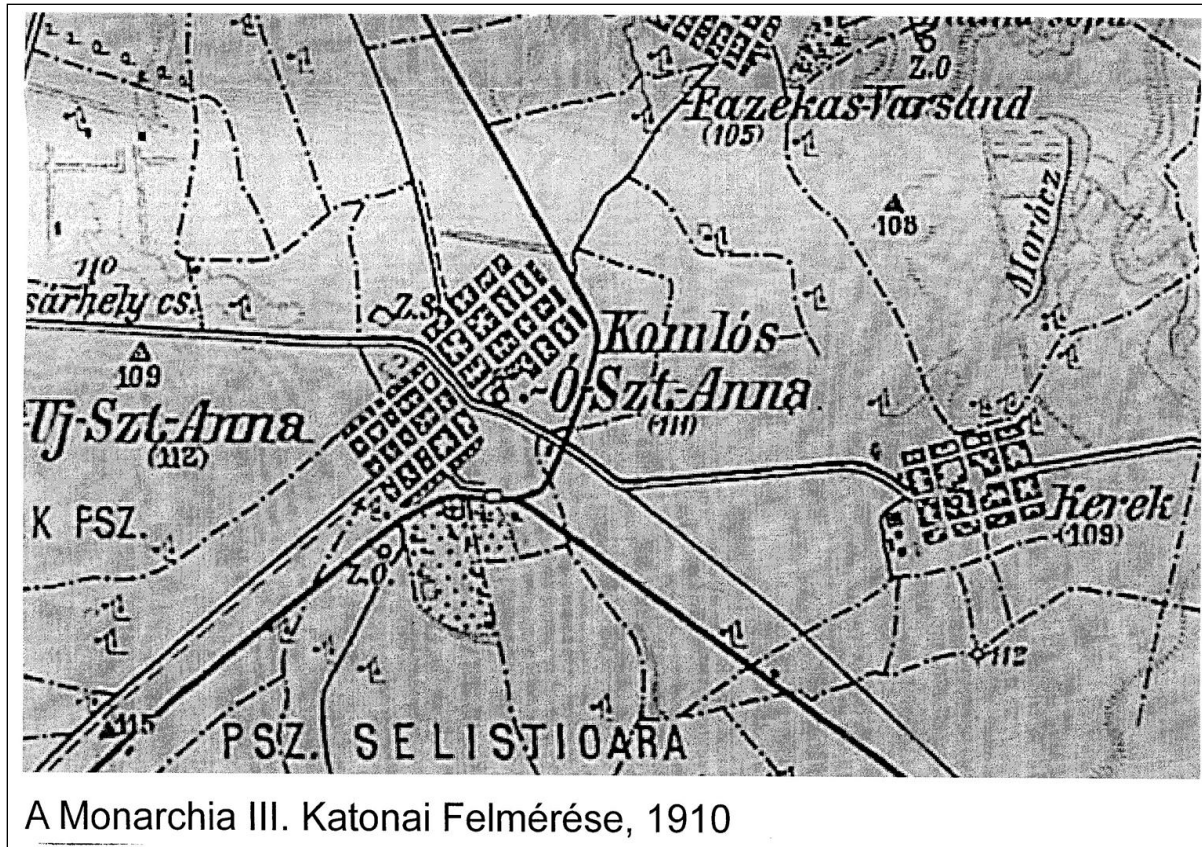
Map 2. Comlăuș (Komlos) and Sanktanna (Sz. Anna) dating from 1782-1785.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>23</sup>From the Arad county Josephinian map (Arad Josephinische Landesaufnahme, p. 24, 30) from the War department archive of the Austrian State archives (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv) available at <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A2ntana> accessed on August 10, 2012. The dark line crossing the map delimits the line between two maps that have been ‘merged’ in my version. (The initial county map was too large to be drawn on a single sheet of paper and is divided into several pages: the northern part of current Sântana, including Comlăuș and a corner of Sanktanna, appear on page 24 of the map, while the southern part, including most of Sanktanna, appears on page 30). I owe many thanks to Kramarik Erika for digitally merging the two sections of the map, while preserving the dark band that marks the limits of each section).

For comparison I offer a much later map (of 1910) indicating the spatial similarity between the two villages after Comlăuș had also been systematized sometime in the early 1800s.

Map 3. Sanktanna (Uj-Szt-Anna) and Comlăuș (Komlós) in 1910.<sup>24</sup>



The Roma were first mentioned in a 1771 census of Comlăuș, where it seems they made up approximately 5% of the total population<sup>25</sup>. They are again mentioned in 1835 in the report of Gabor Fabian. It is possible that, paralleling the settling of the Gypsies in neighboring Banat by

<sup>24</sup>See Sinescu (2011: 56). Note that Comlăuș had since been systematized along the lines of Sanktanna.

<sup>25</sup>Sinescu (2011: 28).

the order of Empress Marie Therese, Baron Bibics followed the Court's initiative in this respect too, as he did with the German colonization. The local Roma spoke their own language (Romanes) and until the early 1990's, they were of the Greek Orthodox faith.

The major inflection point in the social history of the region was marked by the liberal and national Hungarian revolution of 1848, the postponed conclusion of which was the abolition of serfdom in 1853. The serfs who had the usage of a piece of land were endowed with it, while the landless serfs received nothing.<sup>26</sup>

The insertion of Hungary into the European flux of capital brought about an increased commercialization of agriculture, for which serf labor was not lucrative enough. After 1800 the large state domains were sold. Arad county was transformed into an area of large domains, owned mostly by non-nobles who invested in commercial agriculture. The specificity of Sanktanna's position is that, unlike its neighboring villages, it witnessed the rapid development of a class of independent peasant landowners. Statistical data suggest a steady rise of independent peasant farmers: between the years 1770 and 1802 the amount of land owned by peasants almost doubled from 1,583 to 2,769 hectares, while the grazing area (communal ownership) grew from 705 to 1,248 hectares. Although these peasants were legally still serfs, after 1781 they began to pay a lump sum to the landlord to cover the cost of "buying out" their servile obligations.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the village's social stratification, data from 1886 mentions the ethnic Germans in Sanktanna and Comlăuș (no data are available on the ethnic Romanians or Roma):

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<sup>26</sup>According to Stokes "the formal freeing of the Hungarian serfs in 1848 left 60% of them landless" (1989: 43).

<sup>27</sup>For example, between 1804 and 1826, the city of Arad paid 200,000 florins to purchase its freedom from its servile obligation. See Ardelean and Manea (1978: 173-174).

*Table 2.1. Social stratification by occupations of the Germans living in Sanktanna and Comlăuș by 1886.<sup>28</sup>*

Ethnic Germans	Sanktanna	%	Comlăuș	%
Farmers	884	67	354	71
Craftsmen	232	18	53	11
Agricultural workers	126	10	80	16
Intellectuals	22	2	7	1
Heads of family	1264	100	494	100
Total of Germans	5562		1458	
Nr of households	901		339	

A closer look reveals that they are classified as: 6 great land-owners; 11 agricultural entrepreneurs, renting more than 50 hectares each; 506 peasant households owning between 25 and 50 hectares; 86 peasants households owning less than 10 hectares; 119 servants and hired workers; and 730 landless peasants.<sup>29</sup> These figures reflect the dividing lines that delineate the relevant social divisions among the German peasants of Sântana just before the turn of the century: a tiny minority of large landholding farmers (about 1%); a sizable population of well-to-do independent farmers (34%) as well as a few small farmers (6%) having at their disposal the plentiful reserve of labor of the rest of the villagers: landless peasants (50%) and agricultural workers and servants (8%), to which are added local craftsmen and intellectuals.<sup>30</sup> Also, according to a local historian quoted in Sinescu,<sup>31</sup> at the time fewer than 2% of Sanktanna's population owed more than 50 hectares, 50% were farmers owning from 5 to 50 hectares, 8%

<sup>28</sup>Source Zarna (1998: 25).

<sup>29</sup>Zarna (1998: 25).

<sup>30</sup>Unfortunately data on ethnically-mixed Comlăuș are not available.

<sup>31</sup>Sinescu (1986: 14).

represented poor peasants owning less than 5 ha and 40% were (landless) servants and agricultural workers.

The existence of a vibrant German community of relatively rich peasants was undoubtedly a factor that accelerated the tendency of the Romanian inhabitants of Komlós/Comlăuș to strive for independent peasant property. The only available data (for 1900) indicate that Romanian peasant land ownership lagged behind that of the Germans: while the peasants from Comlăuș owned 3,124 hectares, those from Sanktanna totaled 7,263.<sup>32</sup>

In the context in which the commercialization of agriculture pushed for a more intensive and extensive cultivation of the land, farmers became more and more interested in producing for a larger market.<sup>33</sup> These developments resulted in 1899 in an open and bloody conflict between rich and poor peasants, in what was called the *Antonikrieg*: with the complicity of the mayor, a group of rich German farmers claimed ownership of parts of the communal grazing fields. This triggered a riot of the poor German peasants, which was settled only after the intervention of the military and which left five poor peasant women dead. The intended ‘privatization’ of the communal pasture was, however, abandoned.

As noted, Sanktanna was inhabited not only by peasants, but also by craftsmen (many of them ethnic Hungarians), merchants (some of whom were Jewish) and local intelligentsia. While 55% percent of Sanktanna’s Germans were involved in agriculture, in Comlăuș, over 75% of Romanians were. The list of local crafts created an image of an overwhelmingly rural world, dominated by agriculture with an industrial sector comprised of a series of small shops providing for local needs. The Germans of Sanktanna formed the majority of the skilled population;

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<sup>32</sup>Zarna (1998: 48).

<sup>33</sup>The railway came to Sanktanna in 1871.

virtually all date show the dominance of Sanktanna craftsmen- Germans and a few Hungarians- over those in Comlăuș. Literacy rates indicate the same trends:

*Table 2.2. Literacy in Sanktanna and Comlăuș in 1900.*<sup>34</sup>

Literacy in 1900	Sanktanna	%	Comlăuș	%
Writes and Reads	3613	62%	1599	32%
Writes and Reads in Hungarian <sup>35</sup>	2707	47%	673	13%
Total population	5814	100%	5010	100%

The data on literacy confirm that the German population had a literacy rate of 62% (presumably in German), doubling that of the Germans and Romanians from Comlăuș (assuming an insignificant, if any, level of Gypsy literacy at that time).<sup>36</sup>

To summarize this overview of Sanktanna and Comlăuș before WW I, historical changes and the data present a distinctive picture: Germans moved first toward land ownership, and dominated the area with their independent farms. In contrast, Romanians owned much less land, although a class of small farmers did emerge; they also had less access to crafts and industrial activities, being limited primarily to agricultural work. Their literacy rate was approximately half that of their neighbors.

In conclusion, I underscore that the fate of these rural communities was largely shaped by the shifting boundaries around them, which resulted in a rural, ethnically-mixed settlement in

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<sup>34</sup>See Rotariu et al. (1999: 652).

<sup>35</sup>I assume that the difference between literacy and ‘literacy in Hungarian’ was due to local forms of education, with teaching in German and Romanian, respectively. Most probably those who were literate in Hungarian as well represented a sub-sample of the larger, literate population.

<sup>36</sup>For comparison, in the neighboring Romanian village, Caporal Alexa, the literacy rate was 28%.

which three language communities -Romanian, German and Roma- cohabited in two contiguous villages -Sanktanna and Comlăuș. Following the German lead, both moved away from serfdom to independent land ownership.

## **2.2. A world of small farmers (from the 1920's to the late 50's)**

In this section, I review the major trends of the post WWI era in Sântana, tracing the events that span from 1919 until the late 1950's when, under the pressure of the newly formed communist state's policies, land was collectivized and the autonomous peasant farm disappeared both as an economic unit and as a nucleus of social life in the village.

This time frame includes a dizzying succession of political regimes. At the end of WW I, the kingdom of Romania incorporated Romanian-inhabited provinces that belonged to Austria-Hungary as well as Bessarabia, which had belonged to tsarist Russia. The kingdom of Romania, a constitutional democracy since 1866, had its first constitution adopted under the reign of its first king, Carol I (who belonged to the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen branch of the German imperial dynasty). Liberal democracy was initially based on a censitary suffrage, extended to all in 1919 save women.<sup>37</sup> The functioning of the pre-WWII Romanian liberal democracy was very much skewed by the fact that as a rule it was not elections that brought a new party to power, but rather the appointment of a prime minister by the king. The governing party organized elections using all the legal and paralegal means available to influence voters and, almost without exception, to obtain a majority of votes (Seton-Watson 1963; Hitchings, 1994; Scurtu 1982).

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<sup>37</sup>Women received the right to vote in Romania in 1938.

The democratic regime lasted seven decades, until 1939, when the young Charles II established a regime of royal dictatorship, toying with corporatism (Schmitter 1978). The Hitler-induced alteration of the balance of power in Europe resulted in the loss of two significant territories to Romania's neighbors: Northern Transylvania went to Hungary (following the Hitler-sponsored 'Vienna agreement') and Bessarabia to the USSR (following a Soviet ultimatum in consequence of the Ribbentrop-Molotov secret agreement). Having lost territories and the public's support, the king fled the country in 1940. Romania endured several months of a fascist regime led by the Legion of Michael Archangel party, sharing power with the leader of the army, General Antonescu, and with the still minor King Michael as the nominal head of state. A fascist uprising meant to replace the General was crushed by the army, consolidating Antonescu's power. The General's authoritarian regime (1940-1944) entered WWII on Germany's side, taking part in Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union. As the defeat of Germany was evident, with the Soviet troops having crossed Romania's eastern border, King Michael had Antonescu arrested in August 1944. Romania switched sides and fought alongside Soviet troops. After the war the country experienced a short-lived return to a constitutional democracy until the rigging of the 1946 elections under the pressure of the Soviet occupation army. This brought the previously illegal Communist Party to power. December 30, 1947 marks the date when King Michael of Romania was forced to abdicate and Romania became a Popular Republic, accelerating its transition toward a single party rule and the etatization of almost all forms of private property.<sup>38</sup>

Romania's economy after WWI was dominated by the cereal production and agrarian problems constituted key economic and political issues. In keeping with Verdery (1983: 277), I

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<sup>38</sup>For an overview of Romania's political history, see Hitchens (1994), Roberts (1951), Jowitt (1978), Tismaneanu (2009).

view the Romanian state as having been “used by different parties to perform the leading entrepreneurial role in economic development.” The key role played by the state is evident in the agrarian reform that was implemented in the aftermath of WWI, expropriating private properties over 100 hectares, and redistributing the land (with the payment of compensation) to war veterans and to poor peasant households.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence, according to Macartney (1937: 350), in Transylvania the proportion of land holdings of fewer than 10 hectares more than doubled from 24 to an astounding 56 percent. The poor and landless villagers, who in other conditions would have migrated to the cities and might have become proletarians, or, as in the pre-WWI period, might have immigrated to the United States or other emigrant-recipient countries, were turned into small farmers. The peasantry was strengthened, despite the fact that the blueprint of the reform was not intended (and did not succeed) in creating a more efficient and a more productive Romanian agriculture but was “designed to appease the peasant’s land hunger” (Roberts 1951: 38). The productivity (and overall output) of Romania’s agriculture actually decreased in the years following the enactment of the agrarian reform, as a result of a dominance of small farms using obsolete tools and producing a limited output for commercialization.

At the end of WWII, a second agrarian reform was put in place, expropriating primarily the lands owned by war criminals, those of ethnic Germans living in Romania (Schwabians and Saxons) –who were defined as “collaborators” with Hitler’s Germany- as well as all individual land holdings exceeding 50 hectares (Sandru 2000; Hichings 1994; Roberts 1951). The scale of the 1945 agrarian reform was much smaller as compared to that of 1919-1923, and, according to Hichings (1994: 538), the overall impact on the amount of land owned by farmers was by and

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<sup>39</sup>For studies dedicated to the agrarian reform of 1919-1923 see Mitrany (1968), Sandru (1975), Roberts (1951) and, for Transylvania, Verdery (1983).

large negligible, as the average area received per household in 1945 was 1.5 hectares.<sup>40</sup> By the time the process of land redistribution related to the reform was achieved, an opposite process was launched: collectivization. Starting in 1949 the peasants were pressured to ‘voluntarily’ join land cooperatives in order to eliminate the last stronghold of private property in Romania. The state-socialist regime used the entire range of tools at its disposal (propaganda, economic pressure and outright violence) to achieve this goal (Dobrincu, Iordachi et al. 2005; Kligman and Verdery 2011). By 1962 the collectivization process was completed in the entire country, save some mountainous areas unfit for agriculture. At the same time, the state-socialist regime launched an intensive effort of industrialization. If at the beginning of the state-socialist regime in 1948, 77% of Romania’s population lived in rural areas (Kligman and Verdery 2011: 3), only 45% did so in 1992, two years after the regime’s demise, witnessing the radical social changes of the state-socialist years.

In the following pages I focus on the fate of Sântana’s inhabitants throughout these historical changes. As noted previously, after Austro-Hungary’s defeat in the World War I, the Arad county ceased to be a part of Hungary and was incorporated into Greater Romania. The new border between Hungary and the kingdom of Romania was drawn almost 30 km west of Sântana.

Arad region was initially occupied in March-May 1919 by the French army, and only subsequently by the Romanian army. According to Hubner (1973: 59), a French general who lead an international committee that addressed the issue of drawing the new border asked the leaders of Sântana’s Germans (the mayor, the priest, and a few rich farmers) whether they preferred

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<sup>40</sup>The 1945 agrarian reform had a major impact on the site of my study, as Sântana was inhabited almost exclusively by Schwabians.

their village to belong to the new Hungarian state or to the Romanian kingdom. The Catholic priest was the one who spoke out and chose Romania, criticizing Hungary's previous policies of Magyarizing the Germans. With the state change, German replaced Hungarian as the language of schooling in Sanktanna, and as the language used in the Catholic local church. The Romanians from Comlăuș celebrated the arrival of the Romanian army, dancing in the main square of the village and shouting: "As long as the world will last, here will be Hungary no more."<sup>41</sup> By fall 1918, the practical authority of the Hungarian state was contested, as Comlăuș formed its Romanian National Guard, a militia that served under the orders of the Romanian National Party of Transylvania, a *de facto* parallel force to the Hungarian state police. This gave birth to chaos: in November 1918, armed ex-soldiers from Comlăuș, having served in the Austro-Hungarian army, returned to the village and rioted against the local dignitaries, who apparently embezzled some of the sums that were to be paid to the wives and widows of those serving at the front. Only the intervention of the soldiers from the county capital, Arad, saved the local 'notary' from being shot by the rebellious war veterans. Thirteen of the rioting ex-soldiers were killed in the village during the fight with the gendarmes (Sinescu 2011: 60).

This was not the only instance of violent unrest in the village: an oral history mentions a 'punitive expedition' of a group of Comlăuș peasants against the neighboring landlord from the neighboring village of Mișca, whom they resented for having mistreated them. The landlord was kidnapped by the people from Comlăuș only to be rescued from them by another group of

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<sup>41</sup>"Hu-iu-iu, pana-i lume / No mai fi Ungarie" using the local dialectal pronunciation of Romanian (Hubner 1986: 60).

Romanian peasants from ‘his own’ village of Mișca, peasants who apparently had reasons to be grateful to their former patron.<sup>42</sup>

The years after 1918 were revolutionary times in the village. The land hunger of peasants was unstoppable and 131 hectares from the largest domain in the area<sup>43</sup> were “forcefully rented” by the poor and landless peasants from Comlăuș, without the agreement of the owner. At the same time the county administration in Arad received a petition signed by “over 700 landless peasants from Comlăuș [who] were threatening the authorities that they will forcefully take over the land if there will be no agrarian reform in the village.”<sup>44</sup> The social unrest affected not only the new ‘first citizens’ of the new state, the Romanian peasants, but also the Germans. On May 12, 1921 the mayor of Sântana informed the authorities about the existence of a “strong communistic”<sup>45</sup> agitation among the poor peasants in the German village, who were hungry for land.<sup>46</sup>

This social unrest was finally answered with the implementation of the agrarian reform in the village between 1921 and 1923. As the areas formerly belonging to Hungary enjoyed a (temporary) form of autonomy within the enlarged Romanian kingdom, it was the Cluj-based Governing Council that ratified the agrarian reform law on July 23, 1921. The agrarian reform in the provinces of Transylvania, Maramures, Banat and Crisana (where Sântana was then located) was similar but not identical to the provisions enacted in the old Kingdom of Romania.<sup>47</sup> It expropriated (with compensation) *grosso modo*, any domain greater than 290 hectares. Below

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<sup>42</sup>According to Oniuț S., male, Romanian from Comlăuș, industrial worker, 1925-2008.

<sup>43</sup>The Kinczig domain.

<sup>44</sup>Source Fond Serviciul Agricol Judetean Arad (1920: 59).

<sup>45</sup>“Communistic” is not necessarily a metaphor, as right across the very fresh (and permeable) border the Hungarian Republic of Soviets was born under the leadership of Bela Kun.

<sup>46</sup>In Ardelea and Manea (1978: 472).

<sup>47</sup>For coverage of the agrarian reform of 1921 in Transylvania see Mitrany (1968), Sandru (1975), Roberts (1951), Verdery (1983).

this figure land was expropriated “on a sliding scale down to an exempted minimum<sup>48</sup>” of 116 hectares. Only peasants owning less than 3 ha were to receive land, yet in the Transylvanian version of the law, it was the war veterans and the war widows (and not the poor) who were foremost entitled to land. Land distribution on the basis of need was secondary, depending on the amount of land available for distribution.

Comlăuș, as an ethnically-mixed village, distributed land expropriated from the major surrounding domains to its Romanians, Germans, and Roma inhabitants in 1923. In the following section I review the data I collected and analyzed from the Arad county Romanian State Archives, concerning the enactment of the 1923 agrarian reform in Sanktanna and Comlăuș in order to draw a baseline of the social conditions in the village in the post-WWI era. *Table 2.3* provides a rough estimate of the number of peasants who received land in Comlăuș in 1923 by ethnicity -as I inferred from their family names:

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<sup>48</sup>See Roberts (1951: 38).

Table 2.3. *Comlăuș households that received land in 1923, by ethnicity.*<sup>49</sup>

Comlăuș	Land recipients in 1923		Total population in 1930	
	Households	Percentage	Inhabitants	Percentage
Romanians	437	87%	2600	50%
Germans	55	10%	1826	35%
Roma	17	3%	653	13%
Others	NA	NA	118	2%
Total	509	100%	5197	100%

Thus, among the households receiving land in Comlăuș, more than 80% were Romanian, although at the time ethnic Romanians represented only 50% of the village's population. The Germans, who comprised 35% of village inhabitants, represented roughly 10% of the households that received land, while the Roma fared the worst: although they represented 13% of the village's inhabitants, only ca. 3% of the households received land. I note that all the members of the local committee signing the agrarian reform papers were ethnic Romanians, suggesting that the redistribution was skewed to favor the Romanians at the expense of the other ethnicities. Had the "owning less than 3 ha" criterion been the dominant one, the overwhelming majority of Roma families would have qualified, but this was not the case. It seems that land was distributed mostly to war veterans (398 recipients) and war widows (26 recipients), leaving only 85 households that (apparently) qualified for need-based distribution.

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<sup>49</sup>Sources: for the ethnic distribution of the village inhabitants, I referred to the 1930 census (Manuilă (1931)), while the data concerning land reform in the village are from the *Dosar Reforma Agrara Comlăuș* (1923).

The huge impact of the agrarian reform on the Romanian community is emphasized by another interpretation of the same numbers. The 1923 agrarian reform records indicate also the number of family members ‘available to work in the fields.’ The 437 Romanian households that received land comprised 1,353 active members. The 1930 census indicates that the number of ethnic Romanians in the village was 2,600, implying that the agrarian reform affected (roughly) half or the village’s Romanian population.

Of the Germans from Comlăuș, the (estimated) number of 55 families that received land comprised 124 active members who represented approximately 7% out of the total population. If we assume that the committee was fair, and did not favor the ethnic Romanians at the expense of their German villagers, than only 7% of the village’s Germans were members of poor and landless peasant households, while 50% of Romanians were in this category.<sup>50</sup>

The 17 Roma families that qualified for land comprised a number of 59 active members, which means roughly that 10% of the Roma inhabitants of the village were affected by the agrarian reform.<sup>51</sup>

The peasants who received land in 1923 did not own land, agricultural tools, or animals with which to work the land. Among the land recipients, 75% (382 heads of family) were landless peasants. Also, 81% of the land recipients (415 households) did not own a horse, and 84% did not own a plough or other agricultural tools.

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<sup>50</sup>As the Germans were more literate than the Romanians, I assume that they would have protested against a biased distribution of land orchestrated by the Romanians dominated the local council.

<sup>51</sup>Only 13 of the 17 Roma families were families of war veterans. I cannot grasp why the local agrarian reform committee endowed only four Roma families on the basis of need, while there more definitely more Roma families who could have used access to land.

The data are similar for the poor Germans and Roma that qualified for land distribution: among the 55 German families, only 49 families were either landless or owned less than a hectare, and only 6 families owned between 1.5 and 2 hectares. Only 8 families had a horse while the others had none. Also, all 17 Roma families that received land in 1923 were landless. None of these Roma households owned any agricultural tools and only 2 families owned hoes.

These data offer a glimpse into the poor strata of the peasantry rescued by the agrarian reform. The Romanians (who were the most numerous poor and landless peasants) were, by far, the winners of these changes. As discussed above, the Roma seem to have been forgotten.

In Sanktanna the archival data is limited to the papers covering the expropriation of one domain (Feldioara) owned by a rich German from Sanktanna, Adelman Carol, who seems to have left the country after the war. Either the records preserved in the Arad State Archives are incomplete, and there may have been other neighboring domains that had been expropriated, or the 124 households that received lots from Adelman's land represent the total number of poor peasants from the village.

The agrarian reform of 1922-1923 made the small family farm the dominant form of land exploitation. Until the end of the 1950's both Sanktanna's and Comlăuș's economic activities consisted of a large majority of farms practicing subsistence farming and turning their surplus toward the market. I was unable to identify statistical data concerning the size of farms in the area. As a rule the Germans owned larger farms than Romanians. Among the Romanians from Comlăuș, all oral history interviews agree that in the 30's there were no more than four to six families that owned farms between 20 and 30 hectares. The German farms were larger: there

were a handful of German farmers who owned more than several hundred hectares. However, the majority of Romanian farmers as well as some German farmers owned 3 hectares or less.

The peasant family, both German and Romanian, was dominated by a male patriarch who owned the land. Marriage was as a rule decided by parents, not by the young couple, and was in large measure determined by the land wealth of each partner, which ideally was expected to be equal. If a son or a daughter married, the farmer was expected to endow them with a lot of land, sons usually qualifying for a slightly larger area of land than that given to a daughter as dowry. Local inheritance customs, both for Romanians and Germans, required the farm to be divided (to the extent possible) in more or less equal parts to the surviving children, male or female.

Although the economic divide between the Germans from Sanktana and the Romanians from Comlăuș was alleviated by the 1923 reform, other boundaries proved more resilient. The 1930 census marks the literacy divide between Sanktanna and Comlăuș:

*Table 2.4. Literacy in 1930 in Comlăuș:<sup>52</sup>*

Comlăuș	Total	Male	Female
Population	5197	2521	2676
Literate	2739	1437	1302
Literacy %	53%	57%	49%

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<sup>52</sup>Manuila (1931: 224).

*Table 2.5. Literacy in 1930 in Sanktanna.<sup>53</sup>*

Sanktanna	1930	Male	Female
Population	5582	2736	2846
Literate	4448	2224	2224
Literacy %	80%	81%	78%

As we see, the literacy rate in Comlăuș is 27% lower than that of Sanktanna.<sup>54</sup> I assume that the literacy rate of the Germans in Comlăuș was higher, and later data tend to suggest a very low literacy rate among the Roma of the same village. I read these data as underlining the major differences (both in terms of land ownership and in terms of literacy) separating the two spatially contiguous villages.

Besides Germans and Romanians, a minority of Hungarians who were almost exclusively craftsmen, and a handful of Jews inhabited Sântana. The post-WWI era was strongly marked by the agrarian reform there as it was throughout the entire country. Although the impact of the Big Depression of 1929 was significant, it certainly meant less locally than did the momentous changes brought about by the agrarian reform. Several memoirs addressed to the Ministry of Finance in 1930 by the craftsmen from Sanktanna complain that craftsmen had lost 50% of their customers, as the peasants, hard hit by the crisis, were strapped for cash, and could barely pay the interest for the debts they had with the banks. Knowing the endowment of the large majority of the peasant families who received land in 1923, it is not surprising to see them struggling with

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<sup>53</sup> Manuila (1931: 224).

<sup>54</sup> For comparison, I add the 1930 census data of a neighboring village, where neither Germans nor Roma resided, Caporal Alexa: male literacy 58%, female literacy 65%, and overall village literacy 51%.

interests on debts they took on, most probably, to gather the necessary inventory for working their new land.

The occupational structure of the village is rather similar to that previously found in the village in the 1910s: the population was comprised of an overwhelming majority of farmers and landless peasants, besides a number of craftsmen, traders and members of the intelligentsia. For instance, among the 22 Catholic (almost exclusively German) couples that married in Comlăuș in 1933, 17 males were recorded as “agricultural worker” (plugar) and two as “farmer” (agricultor). There are three exceptions to the rule: a shoe maker, a wheeler and a builder. All the women, with no exception, were housewives. Out of the 17 Orthodox (almost exclusively Romanian) couples that married in the same year, 10 were recorded as “agricultural workers,” one as a “daily worker,” one shoe maker, two carpenters, and two teachers. With one exception (a teacher) all married women were recorded as housewives. With one exception, all were endogamous marriages.

The farmers in Sântana were more immersed in the cash nexus and commercial agriculture than the villagers in neighboring area. During the periods of intensive agricultural labor, large and middle-sized farms used the hands of the local poor and the seasonal workforce that relocated to Sântana for the harvest. The extra hands were paid either in cash or in kind. To draw a contrast with more subsistence-based, moral economy communities, I refer to the story of Oniuț S., a man from Comlăuș born in 1925 into a family of well-to-do farmers. His father took a loan and bought ca. 50 ha of land in the Banat. Unlike in Sanktanna and Comlăuș, in that region there were fewer people who did work for money; instead they were part of a moral community in which neighbor and kin helped each other; the cash nexus played a less important role in the acquisitions of labor. The large amount of land acquired by Oniuț S.’s father required, in periods

of labor-intensive agricultural tasks, a multitude of hands, and the hands were simply not available in the region: except for a few poor peasants, all the others had no time to sell their labor force for money, as they owed it (on mutual terms) to their moral networks of kin and neighborhood. Consequently, Oniuț S.' family enterprise failed, lacking not the money, but the 'free labor' and, unable to pay back one of the installments, the family lost everything.<sup>55</sup>

The political life of the village is quasi-absent from the archival record and from the oral-history interviews. Until 1951 there had been two distinct villages, and two city halls, which I treat separately. In Comlăuș, by tradition and by number of voters, the city hall was dominated by Romanians although some Germans were also council members.<sup>56</sup> Roma were not part of the local political process: the Roma community was not included in any public decision making. However, oral histories suggest that there was an informal big chief who served as an interface between the Roma community and the local authorities, as well as a traditional form of 'council of the elders' that addressed minor issues according to Roma customary law.<sup>57</sup>

Local politics were dominated initially by the National Party of the Romanians from Transylvania, which reshaped itself into the National Peasant Party after Romanian unification, and its arch rival, the National Liberal Party. In the 30's Comlăuș saw the rise of an active minority of young men associated with the Romanian fascist party (the Legion of the Archangel Michael), who, at a certain point, attempted to assault the mayor, the local leader of the National Liberal Party. Warned in advance, the mayor sent home for the pistol he was entitled to carry and scared off his club-armed aggressors.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Interview with Oniuț S., 1925-2008, male from Comlăuș, industrial worker.

<sup>56</sup>Interview with Maria E., , 1936-2007, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, rich peasant, collective farmer.

<sup>57</sup>Interview with Pali E., born in 1928, male, Roma, feather collector, industrial worker.

<sup>58</sup>Interview with Maria E., 1936-2007, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, rich peasant, collective farmer.

In Sântana, on the other hand, as more than 90% of the inhabitants were ethnic Germans, the mayor and the city councilors had constantly been German in the interwar period. Between November 1940 and October 1944 the political form of organization of the Germans from Romania was the German Ethnic Group, an organization that comprised all the Romanian Germans. The German Ethnic Group was subordinated to the Third Reich, which took charge of all German-language schools, and all German-language media in Romania, and was a faithful and active voice disseminating Nazi ideas among its members. The few Jews living in Sântana were forcibly relocated in 1941 to the county capital, Arad, where they remained until the end of the war. A Romanian soldier killed at least one, a mentally retarded man, at the Arad relocation site for Jews.<sup>59</sup>

Romania entered WWII as an ally of Hitler's Germany, joining its attack on the Soviet Union. During WWII, while Romanians were fulfilling their military service in the Romanian Army, the Germans, with few exceptions, were sent to Germany to serve in the Waffen SS troops, according to agreements between the Romanian government and the Third Reich. However, despite Nazi propaganda, in 1943, when a large number of young Germans from Sântana were conscripted as Waffen SS soldiers to be sent to the front, the German women from the village collectively manifested their discontent. It would be wrong to assume a homogeneous support on the part of Sântana's Germans for the Third Reich's policies, although it is beyond doubt that the pro-Nazi local political entrepreneurs enjoyed the enthusiastic backing of many of the German population.

As already mentioned, on August 23,<sup>rd</sup> 1944, Romania switched sides and joined the cause of the Allies, fighting alongside the Soviet troops in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On

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<sup>59</sup>Interview with Judit T., born in 1925, female, Jewish from Sântana, surgeon.

January 17, 1945 the Soviet army deported most of Sanktanna's German adult population (all males between the ages of 17 and 45 and all females between 18 and 35) to labor camps in the Soviet Union, mostly in the Ural Mountains and in Ukraine. In total, ca. 2,500 German civilians were deported, 275 never to return.<sup>60</sup> After the deportation Sanktanna remained populated mostly by children and the elderly. Several months later, the Romanian state confiscated the land, houses, and agricultural equipment owned by the ethnic Germans, with the exception of a minority who had fought during the war as soldiers in the Romanian Army.<sup>61</sup> The Germans who remained in Sanktanna, as well as those who managed to return from the Soviet labor camps, were allowed to live in their homes but they no longer owned their houses, which had become state property. Once expropriated, the Germans from Sântana had few means of survival other than to seek employment either working on other peoples' land or in the neighboring town. The village social hierarchy was thus crudely and suddenly leveled.

On the Romanian side, the post-WWII agrarian reformed strengthened the dominance of small, subsistence farms in the area, as it did throughout the country. In Sântana, the land expropriated from the Germans was initially redistributed to 400 Romanian war veterans,<sup>62</sup> each family receiving five hectares. They arrived in Sântana between 1946 and 1948, coming from neighboring counties with poor quality land, and high fertility and infant mortality rates. In the 1950s, Romanians from mountainous villages also resettled in Sântana to join the prospering collective farm. By 1956, Sântana's demographic face had changed: with the colonized Romanians and the return of the deported Germans, Sântana's population (not including

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<sup>60</sup>The actual number of Germans deported remains unknown; the figures I use are estimates. See, for example, Zarna (1998: 77).

<sup>61</sup>Decree 187 of March 23, 1945 confiscated the entire land and agricultural properties belonging to the German citizens, and to the Romanian citizens of German ethnicity, who had collaborated with Nazi Germany.

<sup>62</sup>Single veterans were ineligible to receive land. Interview with Victor C. 1923-2009, Romanian male colonized in Sântana from Halmagiu region, industrial worker.

Comlăuș) numbered 6,358 inhabitants, comprised of 1,750 German families, 568 Romanian, 103 Hungarian, and five Slovak families.

The poor and landless families of Romanians and Roma in the village benefited from the 1945 agrarian reform (and the expropriation of the Germans' property): this time the land distribution included all the families of Roma who had taken part in the war, besides those of the Romanians. Unlike the land allocated in Sântana, the recipients of the 1945 agrarian reform in Comlăuș received smaller lots of land: while those colonized at Sântana received invariably five hectares, in Comlăuș the larger lots rarely exceeded three hectares, and the amount of land distributed was in relationship to the amount of time served on the front.

The several hundred Romanians 'colonized' in Sântana were "hosted" in the Germans' former houses: according to a state ordinance, each German household had to accommodate a colonist family, giving them the best room and half of the vegetable garden. Forced cohabitation as well as the abuses of some 'hosts' generated conflicts between the colonists and the Germans. From time to time, groups of men from each "camp" would get into fights. It was only gradually that these tensions abated, especially after 1955-1956, when after a ten year delay, the regime allocated parcels of land to the Romanian colonists on which they built their own houses.

The second agrarian reform, and its corollary, the 'colonization' of Sântana with Romanian war veterans, altered the ethnic profile of the village: instead of a German-only village, Sântana hosted a significant minority of Romanians, among whom the local political leaders were invariably appointed, placing the Germans in second place. In terms of occupation, the Romanians were almost without exception farmers, while the landless Germans turned toward employment in industry in the neighboring town of Arad or daily agricultural labor.

Post-1945 village life meant also political repression and violence: the advent of state-socialism ended all forms of local political democracy: beginning in 1948, the mayors were no longer elected but appointed by the upper echelons of the party-state. Also, well-respected community leaders or former mayors from Comlăuș were arrested and sent to prison for no reason other than having formerly been involved in local politics, especially as members of the former historical political parties [e.g. the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party]. The new Soviet backed regime introduced a system of selective and targeted taxation of farmers aimed at fomenting class struggle in the Romanian village (Kligman and Verdery 2011) while undermining the class of well-to-do or large farmers. According to the communist regime's taxation categories, the inhabitants of Sântana were re-"class"-ified as follows: 1,533 families of poor peasants, 601 families of middle peasants, and 295 families of "*chiaburi*" or rich peasants or exploiters. In Sântana (but not Comlăuș), this last category applied exclusively to Germans who, although their property had been expropriated, had owned more than 20 hectares of land, or a mill, a tractor, or other means of production before 1946. The colonized Romanians and the few Germans who had fought in the Romanian Army made up the category of middle peasants. The poor, with few exceptions, were the Germans who had been expropriated.<sup>63</sup>

The village economic life, as well as village social relations, which had centered on the existence of a large majority of small to medium family farms was shattered by the policies of land collectivization put in practice by the state-socialist regime that dominated the country after 1948. I have covered extensively the collectivization of Sântana (Goina 2009) that meant the end of autonomous family farms, and of the life-style and social hierarchies related to them. Unlike in other areas, the main factor that promoted the collectivization of agriculture was economic

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<sup>63</sup>There were no Roma in Sântana, hence their absence in this description.

pressure (both negative, through state taxation of the non-collectivized farms, and positive through the financial incentive the local collective was able to offer to its members). The Sântana colonists, lacking agricultural tools, joined very early in the process: by 1952, more than two thirds of Sântana's land was collectivized. Comlăuș peasants resisted state pressure longer, and only by the end of the process, 1959-1961, did the local land cooperative encompass the vast majority of Comlăuș' land. The late 1950's mark the end of private land ownership both in Comlăuș and Sântana, and the beginning of a new political and property regime: state-socialism and collective farming.

In conclusion, the inter-bellum village was a community dominated by small farms that have been revived by the agrarian reform of 1919-1923. Very few Romanians and several tens of families of Germans owned more than 20 hectares of land, and therefore could develop commercial farming. As a rule the German farms were larger, better equipped than their Romanian counterparts. WWII and its aftermath destroyed the German farms: their land was expropriated by the Romanian state and redistributed to a new community of ex-Romanian soldiers who were colonized in the village. The new community supported the policies of the new state-socialist regime from the very beginning and established a collective farm that grew rapidly and became a model of economic success. The new policies of industrialization and the collectivization destroyed the traditional way of life of Germans, Romanians and Roma, and launched the villagers on new paths.

### **2.3. From the late 1950s to 1990: a village under state-socialism**

The time-span covered in this section is marked by almost half a century of state socialist rule, which, in Yurchak's words (2006), seemed "to last forever." The history of Romania's communist rule can be divided into several stages: from 1945 to 1948 the Communist Party had to share power with other political parties, and with King Michael. After the King's forced abdication on December 30, 1947, the Romanian Communist Party remained the sole ruler of the country. Year 1958 marks the moment when the last Soviet troops left Romania, which made it easier for the Secretary General of the Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, to steer the regime toward a more independent position from the Soviet Union (Câmpeanu 1986; Deletant 1999). After Dej's death, a young Nicolae Ceaușescu assumed the leadership of the party (and of the country) continuing his predecessor's policy of less dependence on the Soviet leadership (Deletant 1995). The period 1965-1978 is usually seen as one of détente, when Romania experimented with a less Stalinist form of state socialism and acted independently (at least in its foreign policy) from the Soviet Union; the golden moment of this trajectory was Ceaușescu's public condemnation of the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (Jowitt 1971; Berend 1996). It was also a period when limited forms of private enterprise were tolerated,<sup>64</sup> especially in agriculture. There were also massive investments in infrastructure and industry, facilitated by cheap loans that international financial markets made available. However, these loans had to be paid back in the 1980s, and the investments made by Romania's central planners did not yield the expected profits. In order to pay back Romania's foreign debt, an increasingly authoritarian Ceaușescu launched policies of strict economic austerity that had a major negative impact on the population's standard of living (Jowitt 1992; Deletant 1995; Berend 1996). The

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<sup>64</sup>See also the illuminating parallel case of Hungary in Szelenyi et al. (1988).

disappearance of consumer goods went hand in hand with an increasingly authoritarian regime that would not tolerate any form of public opposition (Berend 1996; Dobrinu et al. 2007). In December 1989, in the context of the major political shifts in Eastern Europe, Romanians rose up against the regime; after a week of bloody repression, the army switched sides and the regime was toppled (Berend 1996; Tismaneanu 1999). In 1990 Romania began its transition from authoritarianism toward democracy (Linz and Stepan, 1966) as well as its transition from a centrally-planned economy toward a free market one (Pasti 1995; Pasti 2006). Below I briefly discuss the impact that these macro-historical developments had on the villagers of Sântana.

I begin with a 2010 map of Sântana, which includes the addition of the “New Village, or the ‘colony’ where the recipients of the 1945 agrarian reform have settled:

Map 4. *Sântana* in the XXth century<sup>65</sup>:



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<sup>65</sup>Goina (2009b: 151).

The area in green indicates the German-inhabited area, the one in blue the ex-village of Comlăuș, and the red areas, the neighborhood where Roma are located. The areas inhabited by the post-1945 'colonists' are in gray.

By the end of the 50's, Sântana was a collectivized village, with the exception of a handful of families who were soon forced by political and economic pressure to join the bandwagon of 'cooperative' ownership. Sântana's agricultural cooperative "New Life" was created in 1950 with the aim of establishing a 'model' kolkhoz that would stimulate other peasants to join the collectivization process. As such, the cooperative enjoyed media attention, a special access to some resources and, last but not least, it was created in an area with high quality soil and a full stock of machinery confiscated from the prosperous German farmers.

The collectivization of Sanktanna proved very successful. Most of the new masters of the land, the 'colonists,' lacked both the agricultural tools and the local know-how to set up lucrative small farms, especially in the context in which the regime used taxation as an instrument to pressure the peasants into joining the kolkhozes (whose members, unlike individual farmers, did not have to pay taxes). The colonists consisted of young families, cut off from the conservative influence of their extended families and their communities of origin; they found it easy to break away from the traditional ways of doing agriculture and to try out the new collective model. The German population, which had been left landless and without many possible sources of income, represented a major resource for the local kolkhoz, for once they were accepted as members, the Germans provided the collective farm with a workforce of devoted and very knowledgeable agricultural workers. By 1952, 90% of the land pertaining to Sanktanna (owned by the colonists) was already a part of the new collective farm.

Unlike the colonists the peasants from Comlăuș (with the exception of some of the poor and the Roma) did not join the cooperative farm until the late stages of the collectivization process, 1958-1961. In order to attract them, in 1956 a second kolkhoz was opened in Comlăuș proper. The contrast between the success of collectivization among colonists, on the one hand, and the resistance toward collectivization by the stable and traditional community of Romanians in Comlăuș, on the other, is stark. But over time, partially due to the very favorable ecological characteristics of the soil, both collective farms turned out to very successful economic units, with the kolkhoz of Sântana nevertheless being more successful than the one in Comlăuș. As previously introduced, the founder and president of the “New Life” collective farm, Gheorghe Goina, was a colonist who joined the ranks of the communist party in 1947. Unlike the majority of the colonists, who had at best a 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, Goina had completed six years and was trained as a church sexton. He proved to be a good manager and was appointed by the Communist Party to organize the collective farm, after being sent for a couple of weeks to visit the Soviet Union and see the ‘achievements’ of the collective farms there. The success of the collective farm was directly connected with the successful political career of its chairman: he became a congressman in 1952 and served in Romania’s state-socialist parliament until the demise of the regime in 1989. In 1966 he was awarded the most important medal of the regime, the title of “Hero of Socialist Work,” turning him into a public figure, and one of the most important party leaders at the county level. Under his leadership the cooperative extended its portfolio: it built stables and reared cattle and horses; it built several hectares of greenhouses, orchards, a unit specialized in raising sheep; it bought tractors, agricultural tools and even a locomotive. For the cooperative members bathrooms were built, followed by a kindergarten, a club, and a small hotel in a mountain resort. In 1957, the hotel owned by the Sântana collective

farm was the first of its kind in Romania. In the 80s the kolkhoz built a second hotel for its members near the mineral water resort of Felix in Bihor county in Romania's northwest. All in all, from the 1950's until the late 1980s, the cooperative was a successful economic enterprise, and was awarded numerous prizes and decorations by the party-state, visited by heads of state and government, from Iosip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia to the President of Botswana. The collective farm was appreciated by its members; their incomes tended to be higher than the average of other cooperative members.

Also, the former shops of craftsmen had been 'willingly' united in a 'cooperative' of craftsmen and retailers. Although formally both the kolkhoz and the retail cooperative were not state owned but were based on the cooperative principle, in practice their leadership was determined by party-state structures and had to comply with all the requests of the planned economy. The only forms of private property that remained in the village were the household and the relatively large gardens (0.1-0.25 ha) surrounding them.

At the same time, the industrialization of Arad (the county capital) made more and more villagers seek employment in the newly opened plants and factories, especially the plant producing railway cars, the Lathe Machines Factory, the several textile factories, and the furniture production plant. The commute by train between Sântana and Arad (25 kilometers) took only half an hour. This fact transformed Sântana into one of the pools providing industrial workers for the county capital, to the extent that already by 1975 the active population of the village was dominated by those employed in industry. Although statistical data available at the commune level are scarce, I was able to find the number of villagers according to their occupations between 1975 and 1985:

*Table 2.6. Active population of Sântana between 1975 and 1985.<sup>66</sup>*

Year	Total employed	Employed in Industry	Employed in Agriculture	Employed in Education and Health
1975	1363	424	249	270
1976	1500	493	271	300
1977	1257	282	149	294
1978	1600	414	254	298
1979	1647	352	352	303
1980	1668	450	354	291
1981	1936	488	368	312
1982	1837	516	424	308
1983	1921	630	454	304
1984	1870	524	455	295
1985	1921	595	505	347

The new villager, the industrial worker-commuter, was found in all the communities of the village. While Germans were the first to turn toward industry, Romanians and Roma provided significant numbers of commuters as well. For many families, the cash income provided by the members working in Arad complemented the grain income derived from the members working in the local kolkhoz.

The state-socialist regime's industrialization project resulted in a crucial change for the Roma community in Comlăuș: the traditional crafts and occupations of the Roma men

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<sup>66</sup>From Directia Generala de Statistica a judetului Arad (1989).

disappeared and the large majority of them ended up, by the mid '50s, as industrial workers, commuting daily between Sântana and Arad. Most of the women did work in the Comlăuș agricultural cooperative, “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Romanian Worker’s Party.”

Also, after 1956 the Romanians ‘colonized’ through the agrarian reform of 1945 were finally allocated plots for their future houses in a new neighborhood along the southeast limits of the village. Moreover, they were also the recipients of significant state-offered, interest-free loans, meant to help them build their houses. The economic success of the local kolkhoz, combined with these state-backed family loans, brought about a boost in the number of houses built in the village per year, as shown in Table 2.7:

*Table 2.7: New houses being built at Sântana between 1990 and 1980.<sup>67</sup>*

<b>Time-frame</b>	1900-1914	1915-1929	1930-1944	1945-1960	1961-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980
<b>Newly built Houses</b>	252	319	296	<b>827</b>	<b>668</b>	237	128

While it was mostly the colonized Romanians who built their neighborhood in the fields previously cultivated with hemp, the figures of Table 2.7 also include houses built by Germans and Romanian from Comlăuș; the '60s and the

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<sup>67</sup>From Chelcea and Latea (2000: 23).

'70s seem to have been years of economic boom in that community. With the exception of a short cobblestone road linking the center of the German village to the railway station, all the streets in the village were made of dirt. Things changed in 1963, when all the main roads crossing the village were paved. The state invested in the electrification of the commune, which was achieved in 1976, according to Table 2.8:

*Table 2.8.: The households connected to the electricity grid in Sântana, between 1965 and 1976.*<sup>68</sup>

<b>Sântana</b>	<b>Total Households</b>	<b>Households with electricity</b>
<b>1965</b>	3896	245
<b>1966</b>	3691	1467
<b>1967</b>	3844	1484
<b>1968</b>	3850	1590
<b>1969</b>	3860	2400
<b>1970</b>	3870	2900
<b>1971</b>	3877	2990
<b>1972</b>	3879	3001
<b>1973</b>	3774	3001
<b>1974</b>	3905	3618
<b>1975</b>	3750	3645
<b>1976</b>	3750	3725

<sup>68</sup>See Directia Generala de Statistica a judetului Arad (1989: 16).

The electrification made possible the spread of other amenities, such as TV sets, washing machines, and telephones. There are some partial data about the spread of these services among the villagers, as indicated in Table 2.9:

*Table 2.9: Households paying a monthly subscription for telephone service, and a yearly subscription to the National TV Company, in Sântana, between 1965 and 1988.<sup>69</sup>*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Telephones</b>	<b>TV</b>	<b>Total Inhabitants</b>
<b>1965</b>	-	223	15860
<b>1968</b>	-	618	17362
<b>1975</b>	80	1336	17203
<b>1985</b>	450	2637	17203
<b>1986</b>	473	2601	17203
<b>1987</b>	477	2544	15895
<b>1988</b>	488	2477	15963

Access to a telephone line was limited: there are five times fewer telephone subscriptions than TV subscriptions. Until the early 1990s, in order to make a phone call, one had first to speak with a switchboard operator. These technical limitations curtailed the number of telephone subscriptions available per village, making it extremely difficult for a young family to get an approval for a telephone subscription.

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<sup>69</sup>From Directia Generala de Statistica a judetului Arad (1989: 12).

By contrast, there was no cap on owning a tv set, except the price (for this entire period, tv sets were black and white). However, by 1988 the price of a tv set was not a major factor. The ratio of yearly tv subscriptions per entire population is roughly six persons per one television subscription, which supports the assumption that every family owned one.

While televisions and even telephones could be obtained, access to running water remained scarce. As we will see in the next section, in the year 2000, only 13% of the Sântana's households had a water closet and only 26% had a bathroom.

With regard to education, the new regime launched a campaign of 'alphabetization' that aimed to teach everyone in the village to read and write. This was not, however, an accurate statement; the level of illiteracy in the village seems to have shrunk significantly when compared to the figures of the 1930s. While 'officially' everyone was literate, especially among Roma and elderly peasants, there were still individuals who did not read or write. New schools were built: in 1959 the elementary school located in the new neighborhood inhabited by those colonized after 1946; in 1961 the main secondary school in Sântana for grades V to VIII; in 1971 a new secondary school in Comlăuș. The state-socialist regime initially opened a vocational school for agricultural mechanics (1961),<sup>70</sup> and, since 1967, a high school in Sântana. For the early generation, the high school did indeed serve as a launch pad for future college graduates, but over time it became a rather low level provider of education, while the promising village students commuted to Arad high schools.

In 1956, a local hospital was opened in the largest two story building in the village (nationalized from the Rauchbauer family) with 50 beds, 6 doctors and 17 nurses (Sinescu 2011:

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<sup>70</sup>In Romanian "Școala Profesională de Mecanici Agricoli" – it started with 160 students, all of whom received board and housing, and eight teachers.

93). The supply of educational and health services changed radically during the '60s and '70s due to major state investments in these domains. It should be noted that the building of new institutions was not limited to health and education, but extended to realms less favored by the regime, namely the church. In 1974, for example, a new Greek-Orthodox church was consecrated.

The transformations of the village's occupational structure brought by the advent of state-socialism are notable. As indicated in Table 2.6, by 1985, out of an active population of 1,921 persons, the most numerous were those working in industry (595). Out of them, 15 are recorded as managers or engineers, and 580 are recorded as workers, not managers or administrators. The other half of the workforce was employed in agriculture: 505. However, at the village level, the statistics count 57 managers and agronomists, while the remaining 448 are recorded as agricultural workers. Lastly, the village had 347 people working in education or health services, out of which 226 are recorded as either college graduates or graduates of other forms of secondary education (e.g., teachers, nurses). Only 81 of them are recorded as workers. In consequence, the village under state socialism had a total of 338 college graduates or people in mid-management positions (18%) and 1,853 workers (in industry, agriculture or services). Although the data on the pre-WWII village are inconsistent and a proper comparison cannot be made, the proportion of college graduates and specialists with secondary education is significantly higher in the post-socialist village.

The changes introduced by the collectivization of the land, as well as by industrialization, were also reflected in the transformation of the traditional community ways. Among Romanians from Comlăuș, the late '60s and the early '70s saw the disappearance of the Sunday dance, the central institution where couples met under the gaze of the elders. In Comlăuș, the Sunday dance

was linked to the farmers' world: sons and daughters of the intelligentsia, craftsmen or tradesmen were welcomed, but as 'invited' guests, as traditionally these status and occupational segments did not intermingle, and rarely intermarried with those engaged in agricultural labor. To attend the Sunday dance meant to be available for marriage, as a farmer-to-be, or as a future wife of a farmer. Once the farms disappeared, the traditional Sunday dance lost its main *raison d'être*, and was replaced by less formal 'balls' or, later on, 'discos' where the older generations, parents and grandparents did not participate. The demise of the Sunday dance marks, in my view, a major cornerstone in the social transformation of the village. However, while Comlăuș lost its Sunday dances (both for Romanians and for Roma) by the early '70s, the Germans from Sântana kept them until late into the '80s, possibly due to the higher level of social closure as an ethnic and language minority community. The same traditionalism was notable also at the level of the religious Sunday schooling of children. While for Orthodox Romanians the socialist regime meant the elimination of religion from the school curricula, many Germans kept sending their children for after school religious classes, taught by the Catholic priest at the local church.

Most of the interviews I conducted in the village with Romanians, Roma and Germans agree on their appreciation of the economic growth they experienced during the 60's and 70's. The face of the village changed: most everybody owned a house, a new one or a refurbished one; families acquired refrigerators, TV sets, washing machines, and agriculture no longer implied hard manual effort. The family was less dependent on a patriarch controlling its wealth (either land or a shop) and the extended family gave way to nuclear families still well connected with the extended family, but less dependent on it.

However, the modernizing effects of the 1960s and 1970s did fade away during the 1980s. The last decade of state-socialism is remembered as a period of increasing deprivation:

the austerity policies introduced by the Ceaușescu regime, in its attempt to pay back Romania's external debt took their toll on villagers' living standards. The income of the kolkhoz members was reduced, as the central government capped the amount of grain a cooperative member could receive if it bypassed the plan. While the income of the industrial workers was not reduced, the amount and the quality of consumer goods that could be acquired legally dropped abruptly. The gains of electrification were undermined by the savage power cuts that lasted several hours daily. The relatively new TV sets became, during the same decade, increasingly useless: Ceaușescu's regime of austerity limited the broadcast of the Romanian National TV programming to two hours per day.

The response of the young people, especially of the Germans from Sântana, to the new standard of living in the village was immigration: either legal or illegal. For ethnic Germans there was the possibility to apply for the right to emigrate to West Germany, although this involved a long period of waiting and uncertainty. Crossing the Danube to Yugoslavia illegally, or the Hungarian border on foot, were alternatives that some villagers risked. Such attempts, if one was caught, could result in being shot by the border guards or being severely beaten by the soldiers. Such was life in Romania before the regime collapsed in 1989.

#### **2.4. From 1990 to 2011: a European Union town.**

The popular uprising against the Ceaușescu dictatorship opened the way to a new constitution, free elections and the beginning of the transition to a free market economy and private property. In retracing Romania's political transition from authoritarianism to democracy I

ground my analysis on the detailed historical overview offered by Dan and Huiu (2003), while conceptually I am primarily indebted to Linz and Stepan (1996), and Pasti (1995; 2006).

The collapse of communism in Romania was unlike that which occurred in neighboring countries, a factor that Linz and Stepan attribute to the exceptionalism of Romanian communism. They see the Ceaușescu regime as a case of totalitarianism-cum-sultanism (Linz and Stepan, 1996) defined by an atomized society in the grips of a pyramidal structure of patronage and clientele structured so that all the privileges were ultimately depended on the very person of the ‘sultan’ dominating the system. Therefore, lacking even weak civil society structures, Romania was denied the path of roundtable negotiations between the representatives of the civil society, or political opposition and the leaders of the communist party. This is why once the unstructured and leaderless collective protests against Nicolae Ceaușescu began on December 16, 1989 in Timisoara (spreading on December 21 to a handful of other towns, including Bucharest, the capital) they were answered with bullets. But by December 22, the head of the army switched sides, and the troops retired to their units or stood by. A group of second tier communist officials backed by the leaders of the army assumed power, under the name of National Salvation Front and swiftly shot the ‘sultan’ (alongside with his wife) on December 25<sup>th</sup> 1989, at the end of a mock trial that lasted but a few hours.

The violence of Romania’s collapse was not limited to December 1989. The Front, acting as the executive and legislative power, abolished all the political structures of the former state-socialist regime, decreed the freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and set up free elections for a two year Constituent Assembly whose main task was to discuss and draft the new democratic Constitution. Although the Front declared initially that it would not take part in the Spring 1990 elections, it actually did, limiting the access to the national TV and across the

country of the electoral campaigns of the other parties.<sup>71</sup> Despite the unequal access to resources and mass media, the elections of May 1990 are considered to have been free and to have reflected the overwhelming support that the National Salvation Front and its leader enjoyed among the Romanians: the party won over 67 % of the votes, and Iliescu assumed the Presidency with 85% support from Romanian voters.<sup>72</sup> At the end of the two years, Romania's constitution, establishing a bi-cameral Parliament and a semi-presidential regime (tailored to suit the ambition of Mr. Iliescu),<sup>73</sup> was approved both by the Constituent Assembly and by popular referendum.

The first two years of transition from authoritarianism to democracy saw several instances when those in power achieved their political goals by unleashing forms of state-sponsored violence via pro-regime vigilantes. For instance, the miners from the Jiu valley were bused several times to the capital: between June 13 and 15, 1990 they smashed the headquarters of the main opposition parties and attacked the young urban protesters who occupied the center of the town. In September 1991 the same miners, acting largely on behalf of the President, were brought to Bucharest and forced the resignation of then Prime Minister Petre Roman.<sup>74</sup> Also, in March 1990 ethnic clashes occurred in the town of Targu-Mures (at the time evenly divided among Romanians and Hungarians), following the same blue-print: a collective of Romanian forest workers were bused from the twin villages of Hodac and Ibanesti and attacked the Hungarians who were protesting in the main square. Six people died and hundreds were injured

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<sup>71</sup>For an analysis of the months following December 1989 see also Goina (2009), Dan and Huiu (2003).

<sup>72</sup>See also Câmpeanu (1993) for an analysis of the electoral results.

<sup>73</sup>Note that the National Salvation Front was able to mold the institutional framework of Romania's democracy almost single-handedly: the National Salvation Front occupied 91 seats in the Senate, the next two major opposition parties (the Alliance of Romania's Hungarians, and the National Liberal Party) each held 12 and 10 seats respectively. The power of the Front was almost irresistible, as the report between the National Salvation Front senators versus senators from all other political parties was 91 to 26. Things were similar in the Chamber of Deputies (i.e., the National Salvation Front had deputies 263 while all the other parties, 132).

<sup>74</sup>See Carey (2004) and Deletant (2004).

in the worst case of ethnic violence in Eastern Europe outside of Yugoslavia.<sup>75</sup> Due to this series of incidents, the Romanian regime was seen as less successful than most of its neighbors in consolidating its young democracy.

Nevertheless, the recourse to violence was limited, and the level of ethnic conflict kept under control, if we compare Romania's case with its southwestern neighbor, Yugoslavia. The requirements of the Hungarian minority have been addressed in Parliament rather than in the street, with the organization representing the interests of the Hungarians from Romania acting as a significant political force<sup>76</sup> in the Bucharest political scene. The post-1990s Romanian political landscape has been dominated by a series of center-right coalitions competing against, or ruling together with, the Social Democratic Party, successor of Iliescu's Front.

The 1992 elections were not marred by the same campaign troubles as those of 1990. Both President Iliescu and his party (the Democratic National Salvation Front) won the elections but with significantly lower electoral scores: the president with 61%, the Front with 27% (Câmpeanu 1993). The country had assumed a series of major goals, supported across the political spectrum: NATO and European Union membership. Unlike its Central European neighbors (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic), the Romanian political transition kept the second tier communists in power until the elections of 1996, when both Iliescu and his party lost in favor of a center left coalition. The first democratic power transfer in the history of post-1989 marked a milestone in the consolidation of Romania's democracy (Dan and Huiu 2003).

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<sup>75</sup>On post-1989 nationalism in Transylvania (Brubaker, 2006).

<sup>76</sup>The Democratic Union of the Hungarians from Romania is not a political party but can act as one, from an electoral perspective in light of the Law 68/1992 which allows the organizations representing national minorities to compete in elections.

Although Romania was not accepted as a NATO member in 1997 (when Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic acceded to membership) its staunch support for the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia 1999 seems to have been the tipping point of the process, with the country becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty in 2004. In an almost parallel process, in December 1999 Romania was invited to formally begin its European Union accession negotiation. Lagging again behind Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, which became EU members in May 2004, Romania and Bulgaria joined the Union on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

While the Constituent Assembly's main task was to draft the new Constitution, it also served as Romania's Parliament, and issued a series of essential laws, one of the most important being Law 18/1991 disbanding the collective farms and entitling the cooperative members to reclaim their land (up to a maximum limit of 10 hectares, initially). The same provisions were taken with respect to the retail and craftsmen's cooperatives, and on the issue of the nationalized real estate under state socialism (Chelcea 2004). However, if the reluctant National Salvation Front agreed to return (some) land to its former owners, its policies toward the privatization of state-socialist industry were extremely cautious. All in all, this provoked Stoica to observe that: "Assuming there is such a thing as a successful transition to the market economy (which I doubt there is), Romania, by all accounts, is not that 'thing'" (Stoica 2004: 274). Instead of a (more or less) rapid privatization process, following the Polish or Hungarian models, throughout the 1990s the various Romanian governments were slow in selling the socialist plants and factories.<sup>77</sup> One of the privatization measures that managed to relinquish plants and factories from state ownership (with limited subsequent success) was the so-called Management Employee Buyout

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<sup>77</sup>For an excellent survey of the various 'privatization schemes' which were applied at a time or another in the 1990s and early 2000s, see Earle and Telegdi (2002).

(MEBO), which allowed the employees to buy stakes in the state-owned company that employed them. According to Earle and Telegdi (2002), this facilitated an evolution in the property landscape and for the depolitization of enterprise behavior, it also, as a rule, imposed caps on the number of workers that could be laid off, or on the major activities of the company, which made restructuring these companies difficult.

Quoting Stoica once again, in post-socialist Romania “the key resources for entering the private sector as an employer will be an individual’s political capital” (Stoica 2004: 253). It was political capital that allowed entrepreneurs to “siphon” off the resources of the state-owned enterprises, and become private actors in the economic realm. Those near the political center were able to appropriate the former “collective” property and transform it into private assets. This seems to hold also with respect to the managers of the agricultural farms that appeared after the de-collectivization of the land. In contrast, the Central European pathway to capitalism described by Eyal, Szenelnyi and Townsley (1998) favored the “cultural capital” of former communist plant managers and technocrats, who, due to their education and previous managerial experience were hired by the multi-national corporations that invested in Hungary, Czech Republic or Poland.

At the local level in Sântana since 1992, the local administration (Mayor, City Council) has been elected according to Law 70/1991. The parties that won the local elections varied, so no particular pattern can be described. Currently the majority of the City Council is dominated by the Social Democratic Party; the mayor is also from this party. However, for the last eight years the same City Council has been in the hands of the center-right coalition. Representatives of Roma are present in the City Council, something that never happened before 1990 (even if an ethnic Roma could have been a City Council member then, it was not as a Roma representative).

The major change in the local economy was provoked primarily by the law 18/1991 that made liquidated the former agricultural cooperative. However, in contrast with most of the country, over 90% of the members of Sântana's kolkhoz chose to join a new cooperative association, actually the former cooperative re-organized on new legal grounds and re-named "The Romanian-German Agricultural Association" (colloquially named Rom-Gera). Unlike the kolkhoz, the founders of Rom-Gera are rewarded at harvest time according to the land they contributed, not according to the days worked for the unit. The overwhelming majority of those who hold stakes in Rom-Gera do not work for it. The new association has a limited number of workers and cultivates the land mechanically. Throughout the 1990s, the economic output of the new association continued to diminish, much to the dismay of its co-owners. Instead of being tended or replaced with young trees, the old peach orchard had simply been cut down. The barns for the extensive rearing of cattle had either been rented as storage facilities for other entrepreneurs or abandoned. The two hectares of greenhouses ended up being disbanded and sold for scrap iron. The two hotels the unit owned were sold in the pursuit of cash. While in the village there are allegations of mismanagement and embezzlement as concerns the management of Rom-Gera, it is no less true that the Sântana association shares its economic decline with most of the post-1989 agricultural cooperatives in Romania (Verdery 2003).

Sântana hosts a series of other land owner associations, usually run by agronomists, which compete with Rom-Gera, but own relatively less land. Also, a number of villagers are managing their own farms (usually no larger than a handful of hectares). Agriculture ceased to be the principal source of income, or the principal occupation of villagers: while for some few it still represents their workplace, for most others it represents a portfolio, an asset invested in an agricultural cooperative that provides an additional income at harvest time. The consolidation of

large privately owned farms in the area is lagging, although there are signs of both foreigners buying land and of locals amassing farms of 100 hectares or more. However, by far, the cooperative land associations still dominate the agricultural landscape, especially the one from neighboring Curtici, which has proven to be an outstanding economic success, producing not only cereals but also meat, dairy products, vegetables and fruits.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, it has expanded over the lands of Sântana and other villages: owners of plots of several hectares prefer to join the Curtici association as it pays better dividends at the end of the year.

The early 1990s are usually characterized in terms of the process of de-industrialization. One of the reasons for de-industrialization has to do with global factors, such as the fall of the USSR and the disappearance of the markets of the former socialist republics. Some other reasons have to do with managerial factors and the transformation of property rights after 1989: more often than not the interest of local managers was to transfer as much of the assets of the economic unit they managed into their own private property. Consequently, the large factories where the Sântana villagers commuted began to lay off workers: the first to go were the Roma, as they were usually unskilled or low skilled workers, those who were the most disposable. By the end of the 1990s the huge majority of commuters had to return to the village, lacking employment. While some began to work their own land (those fortunate enough to have received some) many others chose to emigrate to Western Europe, looking for employment, whether seasonal or permanent (Sandu 2006, 2010). The occupational landscape of the village in 2000:

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<sup>78</sup>While wages in agriculture border on the minimum wage, a little more than 200 dollars, a skilled tractor driver working for the Curtici land association makes over 2,800 dollars. See Befu (2011).

## 2.10. The occupational landscape of Sântana in 2000:<sup>79</sup>

Domains	Inhabitants
Total active population	1601
Agriculture	566
Industry	214
Constructions	31
Trade	161
Transport, communications	49
Finance, banking, insurance	17
Public administration	31
Education	289
Health services	179
Other	64

The data confirm the steep decline of industrial jobs:<sup>80</sup> less than half of those employed in industry in 1985 are still working. As the number of those living from agriculture remained roughly the same, I assume that most of those who lost their factory jobs chose to emigrate. While we lack statistical data on migrants, the local migration seems to have two dimensions: a seasonal one, mostly toward Germany and Italy (but also Spain or France), and a permanent one (Spain and Belgium). Especially Sântana's Roma population took the path of permanent migration to Belgium (to the Brussels area). These migrants are defined generationally, as most of those born in the '70s have relocated abroad. They were replaced in turn in Sântana's Roma neighborhood via the internal migration of Roma families from other parts of Romania. It is a very common in that neighborhood to have households where grandparents are living and taking care of some of their grandchildren while the parents are abroad.

The post-socialist period has clearly brought major changes for the Roma

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<sup>79</sup> Proiect Arad SA (2000: 32).

<sup>80</sup> See the data presented in Table 2.10.

community. For the first time in history, Roma children are taught the Romani language in school. The inflation and the de-industrialization of the early 1990s have had a deep impact on the Roma, who were forced to live off of the meager social assistance the Romanian state offered. Many have sunk to abject levels of poverty. Nevertheless, migration and free enterprise have enabled some Roma to amass significant incomes. Another historical first is that Roma are leaving the 'Roma' area and building houses near the center of Sântana, breaking the barrier of territorial segregation.<sup>81</sup>

However, the major change in the ethnic landscape of Sântana occurred between 1990 and 1992 when the large majority of ethnic Germans chose to immigrate to Western Germany. While throughout the 20th century ca. 6,000 Germans lived in Sântana, in 1992 there remained roughly 1,000, and in 2002 but 400. By 2012 the number of ethnic Germans shrunk to approximately 300. (See Table 2.11). The ethnic migration was facilitated by the special legal framework of Germany, which granted fast-lane access to citizenship and generous packages of social support for the ethnic Germans that chose to settle in the country.

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<sup>81</sup>For a more detailed study of the Roma situation after 1990 see Goina (2009b).

*Table 2.11. Inhabitants of Sântana, by ethnicity between 1966 and 2002.<sup>82</sup>*

Year	1966	1977	1992	2002
Total	12926	13636	10877	12936
Romanian	5530	6110	8254	10230
Hungarian	311	243	269	284
German	6855	6449	1090	452
Other	230	834	1264	7
Jewish	-	-	1	1
Gypsy	222	813	1217	1929
Ukrainian	-	2	39	26
Serbian	1	-	1	1
Slovak	3	15	4	6

The area historically inhabited by Germans is now inhabited by ethnic Romanians, usually economic migrants from other less developed areas of Romania: either from Moldova (the Romanian province) or from the mountainous areas of Transylvania. The figure for ethnic Romanians living in Sântana nearly doubled between 1966 and 2002, an increase that cannot be attributed to natural demographic growth. The only explanation for the growth of Sântana's Romanian population is that the village has become a destination for internal migrants at the same time that it constitutes a place of departure for those emigrating out of Romania (mainly Germans, but not only them).

The limited degree to which living conditions have improved since state socialism is illustrated by the following data from the 2000 General Urban Plan of Sântana:<sup>83</sup> while 3,269 households have a kitchen, only 892 households have a bathroom, and only 440 (13%) have a water closet. It is telling that half of the village households' heads who had built a bathroom did

<sup>82</sup>For the years 1966-1992, see Varga (2002); for 2002, Directia Generala de Statistica a judetului Arad (2003).

<sup>83</sup>Proiect Arad SA (2000: 45).

not find it proper to have an indoor water-closet, preferring to use the old ways (e.g., the outhouse).

Other seismic changes in the social landscape of the village have to do with the access to health and schooling. The austerity measures that followed the 2009 economic crises prompted Romania's government to shut down Sântana's hospital. Beyond primary care, the villagers have to go to a hospital in Arad to be treated, which has an impact especially on poor families, for whom the cost of train transportation can be an issue, especially for a series of consultations. Also, access to schooling for children has shrunk since 1990, as indicated in the Table 2.12:

*Table 2. 12. Level of education of Sântana's inhabitants, 2002.*<sup>84</sup>

2002 Education -over 10 years old	Villagers	Percentage
University education 4-5 years	313	2.8
University education 3 years	28	0.3
Post-high school specialization	181	1.6
High school	1867	16.9
Vocational training	1469	13.1
8 grades education	3571	32.3
4 grades (elementary) education	2646	23.9
Did not graduate 4 grades	901	8.1
Refused to answer	65	0.6
Total	11041	100

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<sup>84</sup>Source, Directia Generala de Statistica a judetului Arad (2003).

Note that more than 30% of Sântana's 2002 population has a maximum of 4 years of education or less. In the new, post-socialist context, Sântana's poor inhabitants, irrespective of ethnicity, tend to exploit the work of their children, and therefore to curtail their access to education.

Nevertheless, post-socialist Sântana continues to host a high school which is not perceived as providing a high quality education, so those who want to continue their studies commute to Arad. Unlike under state-socialism, the number of universities and of college students has grown significantly since 1990. While previously there was no institution of higher education in Arad, there are now two: a public and a private university. Consequently, the number of college graduates in the village has increased. Note that the figure of 341 college graduates in the village does not include those who graduated and moved, following careers outside of the village.

Since 2003 Sântana is a town, according to Romania's administrative structure. Its economic landscape is dominated by EKR, a German-owned plant producing car parts which is located on the premises of the former Center for Mechanized Agriculture; EKR employs over 400 people. The town also hosts an Italian owned textile factory and an aluminum recycling plant belonging to an Austrian corporation. Some villagers work either in the new plants and factories in Arad, or in the outsourced plants that have been built in the area in the neighboring towns of Ineu, Curtici or Nadab. Also, agriculture provides a limited number of jobs at a series of farms and agricultural associations. The retail cooperative has lost most of its real estate, as former owners were able to legally re-gain their ownership. However it has not been disbanded and is still active, owning a bakery and a series of bread distribution points not only in town, but in several neighboring villages too.

A stratum of professionals has their own firms in the village: a notary, two pharmacy owners, and several lawyers. Also, a successful female entrepreneur who was formerly a shop assistant during state socialism has built a small local chain of retail shops in the last years. Together with her daughter, she developed this local private enterprise, which is the second largest business in town, second only to EKR.

The post-1989 decades have generally meant a net loss of population for the town, although the large number of migrants (especially Germans and Roma) who have left has been compensated for by the arrival of others from less economically developed parts of Romania. The industrial landscape is less varied than under state-socialism, but after the abysmal number of Sântana inhabitants employed in industry during the early 1990s, there is an ascendant trend. Two entirely new phenomena mark the occupational structure of the town. On the one hand, a significant number of families find their subsistence through seasonal migration to western Europe. On the other hand, the changes brought by the demise of state-socialism have given rise to the birth of a number of independent owners of private enterprises and professionals who are dominant in the town, both economically and in terms of status.

This overview of Romania's history and Sântana's in it sets the stage for the next three chapters in which I present summaries of the life histories of seventeen persons. Each case is unique yet representative of the impact that many of the macro-historical changes reviewed in this chapter have had on the daily lives of these villagers. In chapter 3, I review the life cycle opportunities and constraints of six individuals who were born between 1923 and 1930. In chapter 4, I focus on the life trajectories of their offspring born between 1937 and 1948. Last but not least, in chapter 5, I introduce the grandchildren of those presented in chapter 3: five villagers born between 1964 and 1979. In each life history or summary thereof, I discuss, in particular,

educational attainment, marital and family relations, and occupational experience. So doing makes it possible to trace what I refer to as “inflection points,” and how these have shaped each individual’s opportunities, according to his or her gender, ethnicity, or positioning in local economic and status hierarchies.

## Chapter 3 – The villagers before WWII

In this chapter, I cover the life stories of six villagers, four women and two men. The main criterion used for their selection is their positioning in the economic and status hierarchies of the village, according to the way in which they were defined by my subjects: Judit, the half-German, half-Hungarian daughter of a better-off agricultural entrepreneur and landowner, Sali, daughter of a middle class German farmer, Sena, daughter of a middle class Romanian farmer, Mitru, son of a Romanian landless servant, and Pali, the offspring of a Roma family ranked, in the Roma community, as a middle class one. The oldest, Mitru, was born in 1923, while the youngest, Judit is 7 years younger than him.

All these life trajectories are marked by the advent of the WWII and by Romania's transition to a regime of state-socialism that reshaped the distribution of power, economic wealth and social status in the village, and had a major impact on the life trajectories of my subjects. I begin with Judit, the offspring of a better off, ethnically mix Sanktanna family:

### 3.1. Judit T. (b. 1930)<sup>85</sup>

Judit was born in Sântana out of a mixed family: her father was Hungarian and her mother was German. They had four children, a daughter that died as an infant, Judit, a younger sister, sixteenth months younger than her, and an older brother, born in 1928.

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<sup>85</sup> I use here quotes from two interviews with Judit, one conducted by me, the other conducted by two students, Emese Vaszi and Diana Benea, during research project “The German and Jewish Minority from Transylvania in the Immediate Postwar Years. (Hi)stories and Reconciling Memories” I co-directed at Sântana.

Although her mother's family was German, that had lived for generations in Sântana, they had come to speak Hungarian at home, like some other German families, undoubtedly as a consequence of the cultural and political factors at work in the late Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Her father was of Calvinist faith while her mother was Catholic. They were allowed to be married in the Catholic church of Sanktana, with the proviso that the children should be baptized into the Catholic faith: and thus Judit and her brother were brought up as Catholics.

Nevertheless, her father did not have to renounce his faith: although he joined the family in attending the Sunday Catholic mass, he remained a Calvinist. When he died the family invited the Calvinist minister to officiate at the funeral ceremony.

Both her father and her mother were raised by wealthy families: her mother, Charlotte, was the daughter of a well-to-do German merchant in Sântana, who had nine children and owned over 100 hectares of land. She indicates that arguably the most imposing building in Sântana, currently hosting the local hospital, had been owned by a sister of her mother. All her life her mother had been a housewife, as was the custom among the wives of the better-off Sântana merchants and landowners:

Those who were wealthy were keeping their wives at home. She stayed at home. She was working at home, domestic issues, that's what she had to do: educate children, raise children.

His father, a WWI veteran, owned mechanical agricultural tools that he rented to other farmers. His shop repaired those relatively new and expensive mechanical devices, and he also owned land. He was considered to be one of the richest local entrepreneurs. His father owned one of the very few steam-powered threshers in the area, the shop and he had paid for the

education of his son who received technical training at a high school specialized in mechanics in Szeged (now in Hungary).

At the time Sântana was almost exclusively German, and Judit has a very good opinion of the Germans:

The Germans were very hard-working! (...) It was very rich [the village, CG]. It continues to be a rich [community] but not as rich as it had been. Most of the people were in agriculture, every one owned land. A great deal of land!

She is quick to add that there were not only farmers, but also craftsmen in the village:

The bricklayers were Germans, the carpenters were Germans. And they gained lots of money. They earned really well. Especially those who were very good bricklayers, or carpenters, they earned well. Now, it's not the same. Some died, some left [for Germany]. Or the painters. It's impossible to find nowadays a wall-painter, except for some who barely stole some skills. The best left.

As a child, Judit did not have any interactions with the Romanians from Comlăuș, who are conspicuously absent from her life-account. Nevertheless her family employed a Roma woman, who did the laundry:

We had a Gypsy woman who came to do the laundry. She was very good at that! She was a decent [cumsecade] woman, and she was doing such a good job, everything was white. There were some Gypsies who worked for the better-off families, the women worked. And I remember the one that worked for our family. (). She came once a week, or once every two weeks and asked: "Lady, can you give me something to do?"

Judit's overall image on the Roma before the advent of the communist regime was not at all good, although in this respect she differs little from the large majority of the villagers, be they German or Romanian:

Oh, the Gypsy, may the devil strike them! So I won't have to say anything more. There are, among them, very decent people. But the majority were thieves [she emphasizes the word], they did not want to work, all they did was stealing! (...) They did not work; of course they did not work! Very few of among them .. were better-off. And, maybe, those kids went to school. For there are among them [Gypsies] who did study.

At the same time, Judit's description of the German village tends to depict a majority of well-to do people, and in setting the pre-WWII scene, she stresses that pretty much everybody had a high standard of living. It feels almost as if she has to make an effort to remember that there were also some poor people in the community:

Especially here in Sântana, people were very rich. I mean, the majority... there were people who were not rich, but they worked for those who owned more land. Nevertheless, they had a high standard of living!

Judit followed the first three grades at the local German school. In 1941, the German Ethnic Group (the local branch of a Nazi-influenced national organization of the Germans from Romania) cleansed the German school of non-Germans. As Judit's father was a Hungarian, and thus not a member of the German Ethnic Group, his daughter was removed in order to make place for a 'pure' German classroom and she had to continue the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the Romanian school. That's how she began to learn Romanian.

They threw me out; as we were not Germans (...) those were the times when Hitler sympathizers were in power. And who was not on the lists of the German Ethnic Group so they throw us out [of the German-language school].

Her father contested the decision, and after she graduated the Romanian language class her family was re-considered by the German Ethnic Group as German. However, beginning with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Judit's father moved her to a town school, in neighboring Arad, where she studied in Hungarian.

Other signs that the times were changing came with WWII. She was marked, in the first place, by the events of WWII. The Russian army, on its way toward Berlin passed through Sântana, and stole and confiscated everything it could.

When the Russians came, when the Russians got here, if they found any food, they took away everything. They took away the pig from the pigsty; they took away your chickens, and everything you had. Some managed to hide something, somewhere... we did not manage.

The family had to host a Russian officer, as they owned one of the best houses of Sântana. However, Judit has nothing negative to say about that man, or about the way her mother was treated – all they required from her was to cook for the Russian officer, from the foodstuff provided by the City Hall.

Raised in a well-to-do family, one of the richest in Sanktanna, Judit was expected to marry a rich boy. She expresses this possible trajectory of her life in impersonal terms:

That's how it was in the old-old times. The wealth was supposed to stay, you were not supposed to divide it [she makes a slight error in Romanian grammar, CG]. A girl, or a boy, whose parents were wealthy, was married this way. German with German, or German with Romanian [implying that it was not the ethnicity, but the money that mattered]. Nowadays it's not the same anymore. Well, it is also the truth that nowadays there are no fortunes in the village as in those times.

Nevertheless, although Judit would have been an eligible heiress coming from a prominent local family, things were radically altered in her life: after the war, the state confiscated all the land of the ethnic Germans, and Judit's father, who was not enough German for the German Ethnic Group, proved German enough to have his workshop, his agricultural tools and all his land expropriated. It was an extraordinary blow for the family.

I am telling you: they took away everything-everything-everything. We barely had enough money to buy bread (...). My father also owned a threshing machine, and a workshop. Everything was taken out of that, everything. And the vineyard owned by my [maternal] grandparent. And that was taken too, in '68 [she probably means 58, as the collectivization process was unfolding].

The land confiscated from the Germans was distributed by the Romanian state in 1945-1946 via the post-WWII agrarian reform. The Romanian families who were the recipients of this land were colonized in the village. Unlike most of the German families from Sântana, Judit's family did not have to host any of these 'colonists.' However, she has a very low opinion of the Romanians that were brought into the village and who received land:

Those who had been brought here, the first, they were only the kind of people who did not want to work... and, how to tell it, they were promised to receive here lots of goods, and then, certainly, they came. But they were lazy, they were, I-don't-know-what, there were many thieves among them.

A couple of years later, by 1949, precisely those people created the first collective farm in Sântana. On the topic of the collective farm, Judit has clear opinions:

Only those who were the managers... those had a very good life [under the communist regime, CG]. And those who run the collective farm! Those had their pockets full, and all the rest, the poor people, were working and they received very little.

Judit's family did not join, nor did they work for, the collective farm. Out of everything they lost, they still have been left with the house, an imposing-looking building located very near the center of German Sanktanna. Ironically, their house was located across the way from the first head-quarters of Sântana's "New Life" collective farm:

This was our house, they did not take it (...). It was half-built by someone else, a neighbor who had been the manager-in-chief at the brick factory, and as he died, his brother sold it. It was only half-built in that time. And my parents finished building it.

In order to support his family, Judit's father became an industrial worker, and continued to be employed by a local tractor and agricultural tools (state owned) rental agency until his death. Her mother remained a housewife and she did not have to work. During this time Judit completed a high school for girls-only, run by Catholic nuns in Hungarian, in Arad, and she is proud of her education:

At the Hungarian school in Arad, we studied Romanian too, with a Romanian teacher, German with a German teacher, and French with a Romanian teacher who was absolutely fluent in French. That's how it was.

When asked whether many girls studied those years, Judit answers affirmatively, although the data do contradict her statement. I assume she considered only the girls of her status and wealth in giving her answer.

After high school, following in the footsteps of her brother, who was studying medicine at the Medical-Pharmaceutical Institute in Targu-Mures, Judit tried to be admitted at the same institute. She stated initially that "she was not admitted, as there were many candidates" but then she added "I was among those who were wealthy:" at that time, in 1948, the communist system allowed a quota of 20% of the available student positions to be open to the sons and daughters of rich landowners and merchants while the remaining 80% of the places were open to the offspring of peasants and workers. In consequence, due to the social position of her parents, Judit's chances of upward mobility through education were significantly diminished. Two years earlier, in different political circumstances, her brother had been accepted by the same medical school and he succeeded in becoming a doctor.

The times were changing, and she could not contemplate a position as a housewife, the way her mother did, for –her brother away- she had to support the family and take a job:

You were good for nothing if you stayed a housewife. You had to go and earn a living, it is that not so? If you stayed at home, there was no pension. Well, my mother did receive a pension after my father died, but she got only half of his [initial pension]. And if your husband died young, what could she do, to go on living, or to raise children? (...) So, when they took everything from us, my father had to get a job, and as I was not admitted to the medical school, I got a job too, to help my parents [as a non-native speaker, she makes another slight error in Romanian].

A high school educated young woman, she was able to find work as an assistant, doing bureaucratic work for the Arad county State Agency of Forestry (Ocolul Silvic). She had to commute daily 25 km to the town of Chisineu-Cris, where the agency was located. She could not work more than a year in this job for:

When I worked at the Agency of Forestry, someone wanted my position. It was an older man. And he insisted so much, that he finally got his way, and they threw me out.

She is understating the facts: as a daughter of a rich man, a former ‘exploiter,’ Judit was labeled as an undesirable and untrustworthy for the new communist regime, and it was this status that made her position unstable. As she follows up with the story of her jobs, she ends up addressing the class-enemy label that had been attached to her, which had a crucial impact on her life-course.

As the communist state had forced all the craftsmen and tradesmen to create a “craftsmen’s and retailer’s cooperative” there were positions available in this new structure, and Judit was hired as a bureaucrat at the cooperative. She was not employed for a long time for:

There the scheme repeated itself: they had to cut some personnel, and of course... you see, my father had been a wealthy man, and they got rid of me.

For the next two years, Judit was hired at a factory of canned vegetables and fruit in the neighboring Arad. Again, the political labeling was a crucial factor, and her hiring was due to the fact that she had a personal connection with the manager:

I found out a factory manager [whom she knew through family connections], at the canned vegetables factory, who told me: ‘Come to me, I guarantee you won’t have any troubles!’ And that’s where I worked, two years or so, in the same position [she had at the Retail Cooperative].

After two years, in 1955, Judit found out that a new school for dentist technicians was opening at Arad. It was a three years training school, but given the fact that she was a high school graduate, she had to study only two years. Judit was a good student, and she could afford to abandon her job (and income) counting on the state-sponsored scholarships awarded to the best students, that she indeed received. So, beginning in 1957, after being chased from job to job, she finally became a qualified dental technician. Graduating from dental school meant that the state would offer her a position. She worked for seven years in the nearby town of Chişineu-Criş, and then she was finally able to get the same job in Sântana. After 35 years working as a dental technician she retired in 1992. She lived all the time in Sântana, supporting her parents, commuting during the years in which her jobs had been either in Chişineu-Criş, or in Arad.

Judit never married, and she does not mention this topic. The traumatic circumstances that radically altered her status in the community, transforming her from one of the richest heiresses of the village into an office worker chased from job to job might offer a possible explanation for the fact that she never married.

Currently she is retired, living alone in the imposing house she inherited from her parents. After 1990, the family recuperated the vineyard that had been taken by the collective farm. Judit is unhappy about the way in which the restitution took place:

They used it for 40 years. I have also a shed [‘colna’] there, a sort of house. That was taken too, everything-everything-everything. And in the basement of that house we had large wooden barrels. We did not receive anything back [not a single barrel], anything. They took all the barrels. And the vineyard, it was a disaster when we got it back. They did not work it properly, they only pretended to work. As they did, in the collective farm [she ends up dismissively].

She is also unhappy about the fact that most of the Germans left either in the 1980s or, as a mass migration, in early 1990s.

[The Germans] left, for most of them had relatives in Germany, and those [the relatives] bewitched them ‘come here, it’s better here’, this and that. Here, [the Germans] worked in the collective farm. So the wages, and the living standard was worse here than in Germany. Food was cheaper there. So, for example, if you had a job, you did not need much [money to live from] and so you could save more. And then many young people left and even built houses there. Many regretted later, especially those who had been wealthy here, they regretted [the decision to emigrate] and especially the old ones. You cannot re-plant an old tree. So many committed suicide while in Germany, many died out of sorrow... and many returned, those who did not sell their house return for the summer, and during the winter they go there [to Germany].

The village where she lives, as well as the street where her house is located, is no longer German. Romanians moved in, as the Germans left. Judit is not interested in having any relationship with her new neighbors. She claims she does not even know them: “I greet them as I return home, and then I shut the door behind me.” However, there is still a German school:

The school near the church is a German-language school, but many children who attend it are Romanian. They go there to learn the language. It is not forbidden, children are not separated. If you are willing to learn, you can go to the German school, or, wherever you want to go.

Another disturbing trait for Judit is the new mixing that the village experiences: the rich Roma are leaving the area situated at the limits of Comlăuș where they have been historically concentrated and move into the center:

Nowadays, they are already here... These Gypsies that own a fortune, who-knows-where-from.. [She implies with a bout of laughter that the fortune cannot have been made out of legal means] they got these buildings in Sântana. If the Germans left a house, they buy that house.. What can I tell you, already we are... [She cuts the phrase, expressing how displeased she is about the Roma moving into the center, into former German houses]. No neighbor was pleased, for example, when someone sold [the house] to a Gypsy; who would consider it acceptable to have a Gypsy as a neighbor?

The two interviews were taken in 2010 and in 2011. Currently she lives alone. She has two grand-daughters, both doctors, like their father. Judit's brother is now retired from practicing medicine. Her younger sister died in 2010 of a heart attack. She 'did not like to study' and ended up as an industrial worker.

Judit's life trajectory reflects the downward mobility of a member of the economic elite of Sântana, facing (as a teenager) the advent of the communist regime.

She belongs to the Sanktanna community and refers exclusively to it as a reference: the communities of Romanians from Comlăuș, or that of the Roma, are worlds apart.

While her belonging to the Sanktanna community was stable, her ethnicity proved flexible: the Nazi-sympathizing local German Ethnic Group cleansed her out of the German-language school, as she was not 'German enough.' Nevertheless, the post-WWII Romanian state considered her family German, and therefore expropriated all the land and all the goods the family owned. From a wealthy owner of land and agricultural tools (that he rented), her father

was forced to become a simple worker, and the economic status of the family, as well as its standard of living, plummeted.

Mark the essential role of the sequencing of Judit and her siblings' interaction with the regime change. Judit's older brother managed to be admitted to the medical school, and despite the material difficulties, the family proved able to support him during his studies. Nevertheless, as state socialism implemented its anti-bourgeois educational policies, Judit was not able to pass the entrance exam at the same school. Judit's younger sister did not even attempt a tertiary education, and ended up as an industrial worker at Arad.

While Judit chose to blame her failure to pass the college admittance test only on herself, the restrictions set by the communist regime against the enrollment of children of wealthy landowners definitely had a role in her inducements. As the family was in dire straits, and had to support her brother in medical school, Judit did not try to use her second chance, and instead got a job to support her family. She had a series of mid-level jobs (as she was a high school graduate, a significant achievement for a girl in late 1940s Romania) only to be chased out after a couple of months or years due to her label as a 'daughter of an exploiter.' Only by the mid 1950s, in the 'milder' political context following Stalin's death, was Judit able to go back to school, study to be a dental technician, and achieved finally job stability as well as a mid-level educational and professional prestige. I say mid-level for she did not graduate from college, a usual requirement in the local criteria for belonging to the 'intelligentsia.' However, her upbringing, her manners and her education seem to have classed her on the margins of that category.

In my reading, Judit's account of her life is centered on the traumatic loss of her status and class situation, linked to the transition to a socialist state. Judit does not seem to have come to terms with the new world, and her perspective, both on the Sântana before WWII and on

Sântana under socialism, is one of a member of the formerly privileged strata. Time and again, the terms ‘wealth’ and ‘fortune’ are brought up: the world before 1945 is seen in positive terms, while the one after 1945 is depicted in darker colors. Although in the post 1990 Romania, she had finally recuperated a part of her father’s wealth, Judit’s comment is bitter: the communists “had used it for 40 years” and for Judit there seems to have been no compensation for all she had to go through, due to the cruel turn taken by history when she reached adulthood.

According to her account, Judit lived in a German community of Sanktanna: the Romanians from Comlăuș are not a part of her world, and the Roma appear only as providers of cheap domestic labor (paid in kind, not in money) and were definitely not members of the moral community she was a part of. The pre-WWII Sanktanna, seen through the eyes of a daughter of a well-to-do capitalist entrepreneur is a village where people were mostly rich and those who were not could work for the rich ones, a village of excellent craftsmen and hard-working peasants. Judit is either blind to the problems of the poor, or she is blaming them (especially the Roma) for their poverty. Also Judit’s perspectives on the educational opportunities of her villagers are surprising; she seems to assume that most of the girls did continue their studies, while only the offspring of the tiny elite of the community did so. However, the early stages of her life-trajectory do indicate that those located at the top class situations within the village did share a high appreciation for education, and that, for them, gender was not an issue that could bar access to higher education.

Judit’s prospects were defined essentially by the class situation of her family that placed her among the top ‘burgher’<sup>86</sup> families of the village by the high status her family enjoyed in the moral community of Sanktanna, and also by her education (as she is among the very few

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<sup>86</sup> See Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsely (1998).

villagers of her generation who had earned a high school degree and had expectations to go to college). Note that an offspring of a well-to-do capitalist entrepreneur was not denied access to education on account on gender: her father sends her to Arad to continue her studies, and the family supports her attempt to get admitted into Medical School, following the footsteps of her brother. This marks a stark contrast with the position of her mother, who was expected to be a housewife and to take care of the children.

The advent of state-socialism marks not only the loss of the economic advantages of Judit's family but the beginning of a period when her pre-WWII class situation has a negative impact on Judit's life-trajectory: it bars her educational pursuits, and also her chances of finding a stable, long-term employment. As her brother is away, studying, she ends up accepting clerical positions and taking care of her ailing parents, while being chased from one job to another on account of the anti-bourgeois ideology of the regime. Only the relaxation of the ideological warfare against the 'former bourgeoisie' following Stalin's death allowed Judit to study, become a dental technician and built a career as an independent single woman in a mid-range position within the socialized medical system of socialist Romania.

She continues to live, and be a part of, the moral community of German Sanktanna, now limited to less than 300 people, and refuses even to know the names of her new (Romanians) neighbors. The loss of economic advantage and the partial loss of the family status within the community are partially replaced by the new status she earned through education and her professional location: Judit is no industrial worker, or collective farm worker, like most of her villagers; instead she is a trained technician. However, she is neither a part of the economical elite, nor of the educational elite of the community. The personal narrative offered by Judit

focuses less on her personal achievements of her adult life under state socialism, as it returns, times and again, to her lost class and economic location in the pre-WWII world.

In the next pages, I turn toward the life of Sali, from a family of middle-class German farmers:

### **3.2. Sali U. (b. 1931)**

Sali was born into a family of German peasants from Sanktanna. Her father owned almost 20 hectares<sup>87</sup> so he was not a poor farmer, but he had a large family: eleven children, out of which Sali was the fifth. She remembers that they owned land, a vineyard; they had horses, cows and a well-settled household.

For such a large family, with the frugality of a hard-working farmer household, the food was not very abundant or diverse: the mother baked eight big loaves of bread at a time (weighing around five kilograms each), and the entire family was expected to share one of these loaves every day, as very often “for breakfast we had milk and bread and for dinner bread and milk.” The children were expected to help with the agricultural work, especially in the vineyard, as well as going to school. Sali has only four years of schooling: she mentions that her elder sisters studied the maximum seven years of general education of the time, but that, as the family size increased, there was less time for children to go to school, and more work for them at home. Thus, for Sali and her siblings the issue was not whether they could hope to continue their studies, but how many years they could attend school at all. Shortly after finishing the fourth grade, Sali was sent to work as a servant in the household of a Jewish family in neighboring Arad. She was barely 12-13 years old at the time. Her mother made her go to work on her own

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<sup>87</sup> 40 cadastral yokes.

with the promise that out of the money she will earn, she will receive the “Paorish” garb with the red apron. Only the nubile girls were allowed to wear it, and, dressed as such, to attend the weekly Sunday village dance “Freimusiek.”

My mother told me: if you go and work as a servant you will earn money and I will buy you the Paorisch garb.<sup>88</sup>

She does not remember the business or the profession of the people for whom she worked during the following 4 to 5 years. They were rich people, who had all kinds of things. She mentions that they were always praying before eating, and they were kind to her. Nevertheless, she was the only servant in the house so she had to cook, to wash, to do everything that needed to be done. Maybe, she accentuates, maybe, she was allowed to return home to the village once a week, but this was not always the rule. She had ceased her employment in Arad by 1945. From the way Sali tells this story, she had assumed her job as a way of earning something for herself, while the sums she earned through her work went to her parents. It is perhaps worth noting that this happened during the war, most probably between 1941 and 1945, when the German Ethnic Group was the dominant political and administrative institution in Sântana, and when anti-Semitism was the official political ideology in the community.

Sali does not remember the days when the Russian army passed through Sântana on its way toward Berlin, since most probably she was working in Arad. One of the most traumatic memories of Sali is related to the moment when the Germans from Sântana were sent to forced labor in Soviet Union in January 1945. The army had sent for her father and her three elder sisters, who went into hiding. In their stead, her mother and few of the young children were taken

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<sup>88</sup> “Dienst-madel gesch, verdiensch dein Geld,” (“Go work as a servant, and earn your money,” in the local German dialect).

and locked, as hostages, to put pressure on those who were hiding. Also, they took away and held her immediate elder sister (born in 1929). She discussed the dilemma of her mother, who was not afraid for herself, as she had small children [so she hoped not to be sent to Russia], but for her daughter, who might have ended up being sent to forced labor in the Soviet Union, where she might have died, and pay the price for saving the others. In these circumstances, the mother decided that, given that this is the law, and that all the others are going, those who were hiding should show up and do their part. Consequently, the father and the three eldest sisters were taken to Russia, while the rest were freed – according to the Allied Convention, those born after 1928 were not to be deported.

Thus Sali remained at home with her mother and her other eight siblings, only to see the 1945 agrarian reform confiscate all the land and the agricultural tools they had. The family lost everything. They went on working as daily workers and taking care of the few animals they were left with. I was surprised to realize that the economic collapse of her family is barely mentioned in Sali's account. One of the possible explanations for the fact is that the same disaster hit all the German families in the village at the same time. The other is that the family troubles proved to be a good deal more menacing than the economic troubles.

Meanwhile, in Russia, Sali's father took a gamble and prepared a 'tobacco soup' in order to appear very ill and be sent back home. Although he could have died from it, or have been left with serious health problems, his strategy worked; after 2 years in a forced labor camp in the Soviet Union he returned to his family.

Less than a year later came another defining point in Sali's life trajectory, when her mother died in 1948, at the age of 43. Sali supposes that it was cancer, but at the time there were few doctors, and nobody knew the cause of the death. Sali seems to have been extremely affected

by this death and dwells on the details of it in her account; how the coffin rested in the ‘best’ room, and her younger sisters needed to step on a little chair to see their mother for the last time, and how the youngest daughter, who was 3, and still in a crib, shouted “Mutter” (Mother) not knowing her mother was dead.

As her elder sisters were either in the Soviet Union, or already married, Sali, at 17, was the oldest woman in the house. She had to assume all the household duties, cooking, washing, and taking care of her younger brothers. Everybody in the family had to work. The oldest were daily-workers in the neighboring agricultural units, vineyards, or (the girls) as house servants. Sali was not only in charge of the domestic chores; she also joined her father working as a day-worker at the Sântana center collecting the cereals. They had to shovel wheat in order to earn a living. While she was working, she asked her younger brother, Faltin, who was 14 at the time (born in 1935) to light the stove and cook the pasta for everybody. She remembers that Faltin usually overcooked the pasta until it was very soft, but that it was better than nothing, when they returned from work.

Meanwhile, her three sisters were together in Soviet Union, in (what is today the Ukrainian town of) Krivoirog, in a forced labor camp. They told Sali that they were so under-fed by the Soviets that they rummaged through the garbage and made soup out of the potato skin that had been peeled off and thrown away, and anything else they could find that was remotely edible. Due to these factors one of her sisters was very ill due to food poisoning. She eventually recovered, but, Sali insists, some of those from the camp died out of hunger and bad food. While in the camp, all the sisters met their future husbands: it was so tough, and they were so hungry, that having a sweetheart helped. Sali adds that they were so hungry that one of the sisters went begging in the town, looking for housewives to whom she offered her services to clean the

kitchen or perform any domestic services for some bread or any kind of food she could take back to the camp to share with her sisters. It is hard to emphasize the intensity of the need that made the daughter of a German farmer to go begging on the streets, something that went against everything she was taught. The camp conditions altered everything around them; it was not only begging, but also stealing that some of the inmates did. One could not leave a loaf of bread from one day to the next for fear that some (German) inmates would steal it.

Back in the village, her father re-married a woman who also had six children of her own. From her father's side were also six children, besides Sali, and she laments their fate, by enumerating their first names: "it was Faltin, and Franz, and Noni [Anna], and Kari, and Seppi, and Toni." She remembers her step-mother as a "wild" person, who exploited the children, AND who would send them up to the top of the apple tree to pick up apples, without any consideration that the children might have an accident. When she complained to her father, he shrugged as if to say there was nothing to be done - who would have married him, with 8 children, but that woman, with six of her own?

By the same time, in 1951, her three elder sisters returned from Soviet Union. It was a sad meeting: "I was expecting them at home, preparing food, but from the railway station they went straight to the cemetery." They had returned to find their mother dead, their father re-married, and the younger children having a new mother "who was not a good mum." Two of them moved in right away with their camp boyfriends, while one stayed at home, where she claimed a room only for herself, and began to commute to neighboring Pâncota, where she was working. The step mother did not give her hot meals unless she worked in the garden, and also insisted that the girl married the man she chose. When Sali's sister refused, as a punishment, the step mother broke into her sister's room and stole the money she had earned through her work.

In these conditions, also in 1951, Sali marries a young German from Comlăuș who, she said, “was ill, but I did not know it.” The marriage was evidently hurried by her need to get out of the house managed by the step-mother, and Sali does not give any indication that it was she herself who chose her husband. In my reading it seems more likely that it was an arranged marriage. By 1951 the German population had been pauperized by the land expropriations of 1945, so her new family was neither richer nor poorer than her own. Her husband had two brothers, one who was already married and another who died in the war.

Sali was now the head of her own household. Her husband, who seems to have had coronary problems all his life “had heart problems, sometimes he did not get enough air,” and could not join the overwhelming majority of the young Germans of his generation, who became commuting industrial workers in the nearby city of Arad, hired by the industries that were being intensively developed by the socialist regime. Most of those, who did not become workers, joined the local kolkhoz, which proved at the time to be an economic success story.

Instead, following the example of her father-in-law, and given the poor health of her husband, the young family took to gardening on their own, in order to sell the products in mountain areas where their products brought a higher profit margin. While not illegal, the situation of the family was peculiar: they owned a “membership card of agricultural producer” without which it was impossible to sell vegetables in any market, and they paid taxes out of their income to the state. Nevertheless, the huge majority of the “agricultural producers” certified by the state had steady jobs and regarded this activity as providing an additional income (mostly one that was delegated to housewives).

The family used to grow, out of seeds, under semi-controlled conditions (in hand-made, wooden boxes covered with glass) seedlings: young plants of tomatoes, bell-peppers, egg-plant,

and also flowers that they sold to other agricultural producers. These producers bought the seedlings, planted them in their fields and gardens and grew them into mature plants.

The 'gardening' began in February, and when the little plants were ready to be harvested and sold, Sali would put them into baskets covered with wet textiles, get into a train and travel to mountain areas, 3 to 7 hours by train, in order to reach market places where her products would sell better than at home, in areas such as Deva, Hunedoara or Petroșani.

The young couple had three daughters, born successively in 1955, 1956, 1957. Living off a quasi-'private' (family-based) enterprise, and selling its products on the quasi-open market of agricultural products in socialist Romania must have meant that the cash income was at least comparable with that of an average wage in industry. However, after only 17 years of marriage, Sali's husband died in 1968. All she knows is that he had a chronic heart illness, and that at a certain time he received a heart-stimulator from Germany. They had considered immigrating together to West Germany as she hoped that there were better doctors there, who might cure her husband. Nevertheless this was not possible at the time, and he died in Romania.

Sali remained a widow when she was 37 years old. She never remarried for, she says, she was marked by the experience of her own family, and of her own brothers and sisters having to live with a step mother. She wanted to spare her daughters these troubles. At the time their father died, Sali's daughters were, the oldest in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, while the other two in the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, respectively.

After she remained a single parent, Sali continued the family business, but for now, when she was away, selling the seedlings in faraway markets, she had to pay a woman to cook and take care of the children. While during the day Sali was away, a day-worker in a local state owned

agricultural unit, she returned home to take care of the children and cooked bread at night.

Although the children were still small, she could not but count on their help:

The 'bed' where the seedlings grew had a length of more than 2 m, and a width of 1 meter; it was made out of boards, [and covered with glass]. The children went to school. I used to wake them up early in the morning, to help me harvest, then they had breakfast and went to school. [As Sali's house was located very near the school] I used to go to school and ask the teacher to let my kids come home, during the break, help me lift the glass that covered the seedlings. I wasn't able to do it on my own as the glass could have destroyed the little plants. I only asked him to let them leave during the break-time. After this was done, I took care of the seedlings, and picked out all the weeds. Then, during another break, I asked the teacher to let the kids run home again, and help her replace the glass on the 'bed' of seedlings. There was a woman, I paid to take care of the kids, but that happened only while I was away, selling the seedlings. Sometimes the teacher offered Sali more kids to help her, but she insisted she needs only her children. She imagined that other parents might be upset and chastise their children: 'What, you go and work for her? (Wie, du gesch arbeit fur)..' so she insisted to take only her children (nur moine). She also asked the teachers to help her youngest daughter to qualify as a boarding student, so that, she could get a cooked lunch at school:

She also asked the teachers to help her youngest daughter to qualify as a boarding student, so that she could get a cooked lunch at school:

It is true that only poor children ate there, but I needed the break in order to be able to work more, to get the bread for the children. I wasn't rich, but I did everything so my children have what they need. It is true, that I paid a woman to feed them, but this way, the little one had something warm.

She insists that she had been in the 'gardening' business for 22 years, and that her trade required a thorough planning. Every year she would deposit her earning into the bank (CEC) and divide them in smaller amounts: she needed this much to buy the manure (in which the seeds would grow), this much to buy wheat and corn, this much to buy a piglet, this much to buy foodstuff and clothes, and she insists that for clothes the sum was always meager.

I told my children: if you are hard-working, then you will get each year a new dress. The same dress for each of you. For, if you make a promise, you ought to keep your word.

Besides frugality, this small account book also allows us to grasp the manner in which her household –which, in this respect, was very similar to most of the German, and Romanian, households in the village- did not rely on buying processed food. Rather, it produced its own foodstuff, and therefore needed a rather limited amount of cash for everyday alimentation. Sali bought wheat in order to prepare pasta and bake bread at home, so she would save the money she would have spent if she had bought these items processed. She also bought corn, that she used to raise her own chickens, and also bought a small piglet, fattened it and killed the pig in winter. With the pork meat and with the chickens, she did not have to spend her money buying meat. The peculiar position of Sali, as compared to other villagers, is that she had to buy the wheat and corn, while the majority of villagers had at least one household member working in the local kolkhoz that paid its workers in corn and wheat, besides a limited amount of money, as cash income.

When Sali left the village in order to sell her seedlings, she was usually away “from Sunday ‘til Saturday.” She carried the seedlings in large baskets, covered by wet cloths, to keep them fresh and humid. She could not carry the large baskets, so she relied on a wagon that sometimes, but not always, waited at the railway station. She always arrived at the market late at night, for this is the rule of the market: the first to arrive chooses the spot. She was always in time to get the best spot, for if you are badly positioned in the market, you cannot sell that much. Her merchandise was very fragile, and in a couple of days could get spoiled, so it was essential to sell it as soon as possible. As she arrived at the market she would get her bag where she

carried her food, place it under her head, cover herself with her cloak and go to sleep right there, in the market place, under the table that she 'claimed' as hers. "Of course it was cold," she adds.

She always counted on the help she received from her daughters. After graduating the eight grades general education in the village, all her three children went not to a high school, but to a vocational school in Arad, where they were trained to work in the textile industry. Even so, they were the most educated persons in their family. When the children started commuting to Arad, for school and training, Sali restrained her 'gardening' activities, because now that she was alone she could process only smaller amount of seedlings. She also changed the markets where she sold them, moving away from distant, mountain areas to locations nearer to home (2, maximum 3 hours away) in places situated in the plains, like Timisoara, Jimbolia, Periam, near the Yugoslav and Hungarian borders. She remembers that:

The children were already in training at the textile vocational school. I wasn't able any more to be in full-scale gardening by then, and the children already earned a bit [at the vocational school]. Let me tell you what happened once: I had been away to Jimbolia [to sell the seedlings in that town's market] and on my way back, I had asked my daughters [as they ended their day of study] to join me at the railway-station in Arad, and to go home together. I asked the girls whether they covered the 'bed' with seedlings during the night, and the middle one told me that "it wasn't that cold," but I have heard a woman in the train saying that "last night it froze." The girls went on, saying, that lady does not know what she's talking about... That year, I had promised them clothes, if they work hard. As soon as I got home, I put down the basket I carried and went to see the seedlings. They were all frozen.

At this point Sali told her daughters that it is over, that they won't receive the red dresses she promised to buy for them, and she is indignant to report that one of the girls answered:

"Never mind, you'll buy us a green one." Her work ethic was seriously upset by the attitude of her children, who appear not to have realized the hard work she had put in, and seemed to count

on a reward irrespective of their actions. Needless to say, there were no dresses that year, neither red nor green.

As she grew older, and as her daughters began to earn their own wages, as commuting industrial workers to Arad, Sali gave up growing seedlings, and began growing tomatoes in her own garden. She did not undertake long and tedious trips to distant market places, in search of better prices for her products, but instead sold her tomatoes in the village, at the state-owned collecting station “Fruct-export.” In doing this, she was also doing what many villagers did, as growing tomatoes in their own gardens and selling them to the state allowed many Sântana families, Romanian and German, a significant boost to their cash income. However, Sali stresses that while growing tomatoes was ‘easier’ it ‘brought less money’ than when she dealt with seedlings. When the tomato business proved less and less lucrative, as the state-controlled collection agency paid less and less, Sali’s last resort merchandise was the poppy-seed trade: she would produce and then sell on the market the surplus in poppy-seed. At this point her trade would not allow her to live off her income, but she was supported by her daughters.

Sali mentioned that she and her husband considered immigrating to West Germany, where some of their fellow villagers and relatives lived – mostly former German army soldiers who did not return after the end of WWII. She made a formal request to be allowed to emigrate (as an ethnic German) but the Romanian authorities denied her request. A couple of years later, her eldest daughter married a man from West Germany (belonging to a family from Sântana) who was looking for a bride. In 1981, Sali made another request to be allowed to emigrate, this time in order to rejoin her daughter. While she was waiting for a response from the Romanian authorities, an event seemed to upset all her plans to leave the country. Her younger daughter, who was married to a German from Arad, illegally crossed the border. Sali remained as guardian

of the two children of the runaway couple. However, quite unexpectedly, Sali received permission to emigrate, and had to take her two grandchildren to their paternal grandparents in Arad and to leave the country.

Today, Sali and all her three (married) daughters live in Germany. Sali lives with one of her daughters. She worked as an industrial worker in Germany from 1981 until 1991, and had requested to be allowed to work two additional years, although 60 was the retirement age in Germany. Because she did not have a pension plan in Romania, she did not qualify for an 'equivalent' German retirement plan, unlike the vast majority of other immigrants. In consequence, she worked until she was 62, and today she lives out of a pension of 250 euros a month. Sali claims that now her life is good; it was hard, sometimes bitter, but now she is content. I took the interview in 2005 while Sali was visiting Sântana village during the summer, together with one of her grandsons.

The village described by Sali is again one bounded by ethnicity and religion: she is a member of the Catholic German (and occasionally Hungarian) community, and her relationship with Romanians and Roma are very restricted. In the light of her account, Sanktanna is a village of farmers, hard-working people, some more, some less successful in their household management. Children work hard from early ages, but this was a trait of the time: everybody should work hard in order to achieve something. Education is not to be expected from most of the villagers: she regrets not being able to complete a seven grade education, like some of her older siblings, and this is seen as the highest educational achievement of those from her world and situation. While she mentions some advantages of state-socialism (as the meals offered to children at school), Sali does not see that period as one of opportunities or of personal advancement. She got by under state-socialism as she did in the pre-WWII village.

I see the life chances of Sali as being defined by her ethnicity, and her gender, more than the class situation of her family, without implying that the economic standing is inconsequential. Sali is one of the offspring of a numerous family of middle-class German farmers, and the status criterion within the farmer's world revolves around the values of hard work and frugality:<sup>89</sup> children are sent to work from an early age, and everybody is expected to contribute to the household.

It is telling that she does not value education as a form of upward mobilization as she does not mention any special desire, or effort, to guide her daughters toward continuing their studies. In relation with her daughters she seems to have insisted on the same values: autonomy, entrepreneurship and hard work, which are but partially embraced by her offspring.

When she is forced, for a limited amount of time, to send her youngest daughter to eat at the boarding school, she distances herself, and her family, from the "poor children" that usually took advantage of that meal. It was only because she could not do otherwise that she had to have recourse to that expedient, but Sali by no means considers herself and the household she manages as poor.

The impact of macro-historical changes brought by the post-WWII on Sali's life-trajectory are mainly related to her ethnicity: the family lost all its means of production as a result of the 1945 expropriation of ethnic Germans. More than that, Sali's household is impoverished by the loss of members, sent to forced labor camps in USSR, also on account of their ethnicity. Another inflection point in Sali's life is related to the gender relations in the traditional, patriarchal moral community of Sanktanna: her life is made miserable by her new step-mother, and in order to escape the exploitation at home she accepts an (most probably)

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<sup>89</sup> See Lampland (1995) and Kligman and Verdery (2011).

arranged marriage with a man she does not know too well, only to learn after the marriage that he is chronically ill.

However, Sali and her husband apply the ‘farmer’ values of autonomy, entrepreneurship and hard-work in the new, state-socialist village: like the huge majority of their co-villagers, they do not join the collective farm or work in the industrial plants of Arad, and instead live exclusively out of the income generated by intensively farming (and retailing) the products of backyard garden.

In the ‘80s the path toward rural entrepreneurship was discouraged by Ceausescu’s regime’s macro-economic measures, unlike the situation in neighboring Hungary. This is the moment when Sali prefers the exit-route, immigrating to West Germany.

The narrative of Sali is one focusing on her own achievements, on the hardships she had to endure, beginning from a very early age, as a servant in Arad, as a young girl exploited by her step-mother, as a wife with a quasi-invalid husband, and as a single-mother and entrepreneur raising three daughters. Life in the pre-WWII world, as well as under state-socialism was one of struggling to maintain a decent economic income and the respect of the villagers through hard-work and frugality. The golden age for Sali is neither the independent farmer’s world, nor the state socialism, but her late years, when, after having worked hard, she lives off of her limited pension in West Germany.

Having explored the life of a girl from a middle-class German family of Sanktanna who married down, let’s turn toward Sena, daughter of a middle-class Romanian farmer, who married up, into a family of rich peasants.

### 3.3. Sena R. (b.1927)

Sena is born in 1927 in a family she considers as one of “middle class peasants.” She accentuates in her recollection of her life trajectory a couple of inflection points. Her family of farmers did not allow her to continue studying past the seventh grade. Marriage meant that she moved from a middle class peasant family into the family of one of the richest Romanian farmers in the village. This happened in 1947, when Sena was 20 years old. She had two children: a girl, and a boy. The major inflection point of her life is the advent of collectivization: the family into which she married is impoverished by over-taxation, and ends up entering the collective farm (during the last push of collectivization). Sena and her husband work in the kolkhoz until they retire for a rather small income, in line with all the other villagers. Both economic and status distinctions of her family are lost. Sena’s story makes sense out of this potential debacle by stressing that she encouraged both of her children to study hard, and that they ended up graduating not only high school but college, and that both of them became respected teachers of mathematics, part of Romania’s intelligentsia. The loss of the pre-war family status based on land ownership seems to be vindicated by the status earned by Sena’s children under the new, Communist Romania, as college graduates, as intellectuals. This story is told in a compressed form by Sena’s husband (as remembered by her daughter): “God had taken away my wealth, but gave wisdom to my children (Dumnezeu mi-o luat averea, da’ le-o dat minte la prunci).”

Sena begins by classifying her father in relation to other villagers:

My father was a middle class peasant (...). He was not among those who would work “by day” [for a daily wage] in the fields, for he owned 10 hectares of land and that was enough to make a living.

A middle class peasant is, for her, someone who owns enough land so that he does not have to sharecrop or to work for others. The family had two children, Sena and her sister who was 11 years younger.

Sena completed the seventh grade, which was about the maximum that, in her generation, the children of farmers could hope for. Nevertheless, even for the children of a “middle class peasant family,” working the land always took precedence over school.

My father ().. did not have a hired hand, and when he went to plough the land, he took me with him, to lead the horses.” (...) “I remember one day we were about to go to plough the corn (...) we were already in the cart about to leave when it began to rain. So, seeing my colleagues going to school, my father said: “Quick, you go to school!” (She laughs) That’s how I went, without even having the time to comb my hair, uncombed, that’s how I went to school!

Favoring the work in the fields over education is a trait of the peasant family in the village: farmers’ sons and daughters are seldom, if ever, allowed to build careers grounded on education. Sena regrets that her parents did not allow her (or her sister) to pursue their studies:

I was good in school, I wasn’t always the first, but I was among the best. And my father had a brother who insisted that my parents allow me to continue to study (...). My mother would not hear of it, for she said, she does not have a sister, she does not have anybody, and when her mother will die she will remain alone, if she lets me go to school. My sister is eleven years younger than I am, and she was even better in school, but my father did not allow us to go on with our studies.

Continuing to study would have meant leaving the village for the nearby town, and in general, getting involved a life-trajectory that most probably would have taken her out of the village for good – and that, Sena claims, was the reason why her mother was against her daughters continuing with their studies. Her mother preferred to have them near her, counting on their support, not only emotional, when she would grow old.

Nevertheless, in her cohort in school there were some children from the village who did pursue an education:

There were some, but very few. Very few went to school. In my class there were two who became doctors. One in [the town of] Timisoara, Traian B. was his name, and the other one in [the town of] Arad, Tibi A. Yet neither of them was from a peasant family. Traian's father was... not really a shoemaker, he repaired boots. And Tibi A's father owned a store. [This father] had three children, one who died during the war, he was a craftsman, and he died when Arad was bombed. And also he had a girl, Luci, who, how can I put it, while we were wearing "large" clothes, in the manner of the peasants, she wore dresses. But I am not sure whether she went on studying, for she remained here, married someone named B., and later on she had a son who became a doctor.

This quote opens a window toward a world of peasants or farmers, a category that comprises all those who live mainly out of working the land. Those who are not peasants, but are tradesmen or craftsmen, are distinct, and the life trajectories of their children are different. This distinction is visible right on the village streets: the dress codes of young peasant girls diverge from those of non-peasant ones.<sup>90</sup> In the 1930s, the life trajectories of the children of peasants, rich or poor, do not involve any schooling besides the four to seven years of elementary education.

Anyhow, even among the peasants, as myself... I had a second cousin, their family is nick-named *Bell-pepper* in the village (...). She was very good in school. But she did not continue. Her father was dead, and her standing was... like ours. For, you see, those who were rich stayed in the village to inherit the wealth, and those who were poor could not [follow up with their studies]. And most of those who went on with their studies did it in order to learn a craft, and go to Arad [town].

The Germans studied in different classes that were taught in German, but the Roma from the village shared the classes with Sena and the Romanian children. Sena claims that they dropped out early:

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<sup>90</sup> For an analysis of dress codes and their transformation in a Hungarian village, see Gergely (1983).

When I was in school there was just one Roma, but I do not know what he did afterwards. I remember him, Ioan D. Just one Roma child came until the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. There were a few others, who dropped out after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

So, in Comlăuș in the 1930s and '40s education meant either 'becoming a gentleman' (her two colleagues who became doctors and moved to town) or learning a trade, but both alternatives were embraced by a tiny minority of villagers, who as a rule, were non-farmers. The peasant children studied usually four, or a maximum of seven elementary grades, while Roma studied even less than the Romanians did. The girls, especially the peasant girls, were expected to get married, help their husband run the farm, and raise children.

In the village, the Romanian peasants danced in a hall owned by the Orthodox Church, which was in the same central square dominated by the church. A marriageable girl was taken to dance (joc) and Sena had participated too. She indicates that people danced with people of similar standing. To begin with, only those who were 'peasants' (lived off farming the land) danced in the main hall, for it was expected that peasants will marry peasants. The craftsmen or intellectuals of the village could 'visit' the dancing hall, and even dance once or twice, but they were not a part of that world. The "young ladies" (domnișoare) as opposed to "peasant girls" (țărănci) did not even have to pay the entry fee, as they were considered 'guests.'

The dancing hall was spatially segregated. Sena remembers that:

That's how it was: as one entered the hall, near the entry, danced with those who were well-regarded in the village, the rich peasants. Then, in the centre of the hall, on a podium, there stood the band. So, those who were poor danced in that area. And right behind band the kids, or the beginners.

In 1947, when Sena was twenty she married the man her parents chose for her, and who danced in the same spatial area with her in the dancing hall. She makes it clear that it was their

choice, not hers, and that the choice had to do with the family standing, translated into the amount of land owned:

So, I did not go against the wishes of my parents. That is how it was then... the parents of the boy would come to the girl's parents, they talked, they haggled: 'I give that much [as a dowry].' And the other one was content, or asked for more... that's how it was. So they came and asked me for their son. In those times it wasn't allowed, like now, that girls visit boys at home, in those times the girl would not go even on the street where the boy lived.

Following the village custom, she moved into the house of her father-in-law, who "wasn't the richest in the village, but it was among the richest," owning 20 hectares of land. What made her husband a very eligible bachelor was that he was a single child, inheriting one of the largest land 'fortunes' in the village. Sena brought a dowry of 4 hectares, and it seems that there were no other girls with such a high dowry, for she knows that her husband's family "also searched for possible matches in the neighboring villages." They lived in the household run by Sena's father-in-law, and the young couple did not farm the land independently; they merely assisted the patriarch of the family, who controlled the land and the family as long as he was physically able.

The farmers' diet was rather poor in the 1930s. Even if the family had a good economic standing, on Sunday the entire family (four adults and, later on, two children) ate only one chicken, out of which the daughter in-law received only one wing. She explains it saying that they were "somewhat stingy." The arrival of Sena in the family meant that they did not hire a hand like before, and that she worked with her husband in the field, while her mother-in-law stayed at home, doing the house-work. The father-in-law, as a rich peasant, did not work manually; he counted on the work of his son, and hired daily workers in the periods of intensive agricultural work. This contrasts, claims Sena, with her father and other 'middle class peasants,' who relied exclusively on the work-force of their own family.

At this point in her life story, Sena expands on her views on the social distinctions in the village in late 30s. She starts from her standing in the new family: her mother-in-law “did not like me, for [she said] I was poor” because she came from a household owning less land. Besides her father-in-law, she mentions the “richest” figures of the village: “the Haicus” who “did not belong to an old family” but “got rich themselves” recently, trading cattle. Also there was “Ghiță Zărna,” an old man from the generation of her father, “whose wife was not Romanian” and who was a wholesale trader of cereals. She mentions that her father-in-law did not sell his harvest, like the other farmers, in the local market, instead “as he dealt in large quantities -he might have had one railway wagon of wheat- he used to sell to Ghiță Zărna , for that one paid cash, on the spot.

We see how the large land-owner is linked to the wholesale trader in ways in which the small land-owners are not, and how he is somehow hedged from the fluctuations of the local market. Also, in these quotes, Sena conveys some of the criteria for social respectability common among her group of ‘old’ families of middle to rich farmers: recent wealth built on trade, as well as economically convenient marriages outside the ethnic group constitute negative social markers.

In the following page, I will expand on Sena’s illustration of the local status and economic hierarchies. She moves from the richest Romanians to the Germans from the village, marking the status hierarchies between the two communities:

The Germans were richer. The Germans had been very rich. The Romanians were not as rich as they were. And they were numerous; there were many Germans who were wealthy. It is also true that, among Germans, those who were poor were poor. They went to work by day. (...) There were no tractors in those times, before the communists... just a few of them. In Comlăuș I think there was just one, [Romanian] Petru Bradean who owned a tractor. Only the Germans owned tractors. There were many of them who had tractors. (...) My father had two or three horses, my father-in-

law had even six horses, and did not need a tractor. (...) Only for threshing, then.. . It was also the Germans who own steam-engine threshing machines. The Romanians did not.

The German community is seen as comprising more numerous strata of middle class peasants and rich peasants as compared to the Romanians, which is not to say that there were not landless, or poor Germans. Besides being on average a richer community, it does have the technological upper hand: Germans own machines that Romanians do not use, or have to pay for using them.

As a contrast, she talks about the Roma in the village:

You have to know that, before the arrival of the communist regime the Gypsy did not work much. They were begging in those times: 'please, give me a loaf of bread.' I remember one, called Brunți, his wife used to work for well-to-do [Romanian] families: cleaning, doing laundry. Then Brunți [the husband] came and ask from one household to another: 'Isn't Lanci here?' And then he'd say 'did not eat anything today, give me something to eat!' Only under the communists did they go to [work in the factories of] Arad.

Sena makes a direct link between the dire poverty of the Roma (some of whom, she claims, did not have much to eat) to their working ethic. It is worth noting the gendered distribution of labor she implies when talking about the Roma family: it is the woman who has a 'constant' job, and the husband who lives off his wife. The comment "they went begging" is loaded with negative, degrading connotations for the entire community it denominates ("they – the Roma").

The Second World War is not mentioned in Sena's story, but the collectivization of agriculture marks the crucial event that structures her entire account. Her first words, after I asked her about her life story were: "Are you interested in what happened before collectivization, or after?" The system of land taxation introduced by the communist regime in order to foment class struggle among the peasants classified her father-in-law as a kulak (chiabur in Romanian).

The new regime aimed to impoverish the rich farmers, the 'chiaburi' through over-taxation, so as to undermine its dominant position in the rural world, while at the same time creating a conflict between the better-off peasants and the poor peasants. Consequently, Sena's father-in-law's taxes became almost impossible to pay. The changes introduced by the heavy taxation began in the rural world immediately after Sena's marriage. After a couple of years, in order to get rid of this tax-bracket, the family split the land: the young family received 8 hectares, and the father in law remained with the rest. Both families fought throughout the 50s with heavy taxation that, in the long run, impoverished them. As they did not manage to pay their high taxes, the tax collectors were entitled to confiscate whatever they saw fit from the household of the farmer who could not pay his taxes in full. Therefore, the family had to subsist on the kindness of their neighbors, who would hide some of Sena's cereals or cattle in their households:

Even if before we were wealthy, we ended up with nothing. When we finally joined the collective farm, we were poor, for we paid the high taxes (cote) as kulaks. They [the tax collectors] took everything, even our clothes. They took our pigs, too. We could not keep pigs... a neighbor would keep them for us [claiming they were his own animals]. It was our luck that people were kind.. and some raised a pig for us, some others hid our wheat in their attic... For we could not have anything at home [out of fear that the tax collector would confiscate it].

Her father-in-law gave up in 1959 and entered the collective farm of Comlăuș with all his land and two horses. As by that time he was an old man, his son expected that the collective farm would provide a pension or a form of help for the old man, but he did not receive anything. For this reason, and out of spite, the Sena's husband joined the competing collective farm from Sântana one year later, with his 8 hectares and two horses. In her recollection, Sena does not dwell much on this period, she rushes over the details, as probably the events are still traumatic

to remember. At the end of the collectivization process the family is poor, her husband is a cart-driver for the collective farm, and she works by day at the farm. In respect to their former position within the village community they had hit the hard bottom: if before the family had been respected and had neighbors and relatives who needed the help of a rich ‘patron’, afterwards they depended year by year on the goodwill of neighbors to raise a pig in order to have something to eat. In terms of economic standing, the family lost everything, and was in the position of those “who had to work ‘by day’” (for a daily wage), like the rest of the village.

Nevertheless, while talking about these changes, Sena stresses the amount of work they were willing to put into the collective farm, in order to gain more:

I’m telling you: me and my husband, we worked! When my daughter bought her first car, we had money to give her. And after that we helped my boy to buy a car too. For those who work and are thrifty – they have. And my man, he was not among those who today go to work and tomorrow go to the pub. And, even in those times [under socialism] those who worked hard managed to do well.

It is worth noting that Sena sees the integrity of one’s labor as an essential attribute of personhood. Not only did Sena and her husband work for the collective farm in order to survive, but the amount of work they put in allowed them to earn more than they needed. Sena is proud that, together with her husband, she was able to contribute with the extra cash her children needed in order to afford a car (an indicator of social and economic distinction in communist Romania).

Retrospectively, Sena can see beyond the immensely negative effect the collectivization had upon her life trajectory. I was surprised by her estimation of the impact collectivization had upon the poor peasants of Comlăuș:

How to tell you, before the agrarian reform, before the collective farm.. [there were people who] were dirt-poor. They earned only in the summer, when they hoed, when they harvested, when they scythed... that's when they had some work. After the foundation of the collective farm there was more work, even in the winter. I went to work in the winter at the collective farm: we repaired sacks, smashed corn, they found something for us to do. (...) Not far from the house of my father there was an area we called the New Village, where people that got land after WWI build houses. Those were weak houses, with only two rooms. But after collectivization everyone built houses, and managed to have a good household.

Social (and spatial) distinction created in the village (such as “the New Village”, the neighborhood of the former landless peasants, recipients of the 1923 agrarian reform) are erased (and in time forgotten) by the radical changes brought in by the socialist regime. In 2005, when she is telling me her story, Sena needs to explain me the term “New Village” as it no longer is in the village, except for those old enough to remember it.

For Sena the hard work and the thrift are the defining characteristics for appreciating someone. This did not change in her life, while most of everything else did. She stresses that the times were hard on the family. To give an example, she recounts how she pushed her son to follow mathematics, instead of engineering, no matter how much he wanted it. Her reason was that he could get a scholarship in mathematics, while for one in engineering he would have had to wait another year; his grades were not good enough right after he graduated high school and tried to be admitted to the Polytechnic Institute. In this fragment Sena emphasizes the major change in the status of her family:

So I told him: Listen, you should remember that we are not wealthy people. For when we were working at the collective farm, we did not own much. Before, indeed we were wealthy. But not any longer.

However, she does not want the same fate for her children: “we did not want them to go daily, like us, to work at the collective farm.” The reason for her emphasis on schooling at the beginning of her story is revealed; Sena does not praise her children for their hard manual work, but for their educational achievements. For Sena, her children are not ‘peasants’ but ‘gentlemen’ for they are college graduates –for the first time in their family history. Both her daughter and her son are professors of mathematics. Sena speaks constantly, and repeats several times this expression: “turning her children into gentlemen”:

I wanted it very much... My husband did not want to let the children continue their studies. Especially our son, he is two years younger than the girl... so, my husband used to tell our son, we were already working in the collective farm:

“Go to the cow's barn, sweep it, feed the pigs!”

“I have to study!” would say the son.

“To hell with the book, you're not going to end up neither priest nor teacher!”

Then I would go, [continues Sena and] sweep or whatever was to be done and I was telling him:

“Go and study!”

The son: “He's not going to let me go study!”

But I was telling him: “If you study, maybe he'll let you, but if you don't, it's a sure thing he won't.” And I kept telling him: “Why, when you'll be a grown up, should you not say: “I studied hard, but my father did not allow me to go on,” why should you : “I disliked school,” for it seems you like to study!” And that's how we sent them to school.

Her daughter lives in the same village, and is a respected mathematics teacher. Her younger son teaches mathematics in a town in northern Romania. Both have grown-up children of their own, who, in turn, have graduated college. Her husband died of a heart attack in 1983, while working in the field.

I took the interview in 2005, when Sena lived alone, in a house adjacent to her daughter's. Sena and her children had regained control over 20 hectares of her initial land, after the fall of the communist regime and the policies of de-collectivization of agriculture of early

1990s. She is proud that she could help her grandson<sup>91</sup> with all her savings, when he needed to settle in Arad, where he works after graduating college. Sena's savings constituted the extra cash necessary for her grandson to buy a studio apartment.

Sena's story ends with the status achievements of her children (in educational and in economic terms: the cars), which rounds up her story and give it meaning. According to my reading, Sena's life-account stresses that the high status her family enjoyed in the pre-WWII world is regained through the gifts and the intelligence of her children.

Sena's account allows us a glimpse into the world of Romanians in Comlăuș in the pre-WWII village. As Judit and Sali lived within the boundaries of the moral community defined by the Catholic Germans (and few Hungarians), Sena's frame of reference is constituted by the community of Romanian language circumscribed to the village of Comlăuș.

For her, the village was divided between peasants (farmers) and those not living out of agriculture: tradesmen, craftsmen or local clerks and members of the intelligentsia. Class situation distinction structure both these segments: rich farmers are mingled among themselves, while rich tradesmen or other non-farmers do not intermingle with those less fortunate from the same social category. The segmental divide is stronger than the class one, as illustrated by the institutional arrangements of Sunday dance hall. Status considerations are related especially on the integrity of one's labor, and on frugality, although considerations on lineage and distinctions, on 'old money' and 'new money' are mentioned as relevant, especially among the village economic elite. However, retrospectively, in Sena's eyes, the pre-WWII village appears poor, characterized by a low level of education and by a rather poor diet. State socialism, despite the

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<sup>91</sup> See the life of Călin, covered in chapter 5.

negative impact it had on Sena's own life-trajectory, is seen as having had a beneficial impact upon Comlăuș' Romanians, especially among the poor farmers.

I see Sena's life trajectory as defined mostly by the intersection of her class situation and her gender. A daughter of a middle-class Romanian farmer, she is denied the access to high school education on gender-related grounds: although she was good in school, and although the family could have afforded the cost of schooling, her mother counts on her daughter support and refuses to allow her to develop a professional career that most probably would have taken her out of the village.

Gender and class situation are at play later on, when Sena 'is married' by her parents (irrespective of her wishes) with a scion of one of the richest farmers in the village. Marrying up means also that her land dowry is incorporated into the field of her father-in-law: the young couple moves patrilocally and the young bride became the subject of her mother-in-law.

Like in Judit case, the 'elite' class situation of her family has negative effects on Sena's trajectory with the onset of the transition to state-socialism: while Judit's family lost its assets due to an anti-German legislation, Sena's family is doomed in name of its class positions, as the new political regime placed it into a punitive taxation bracket. In few years Sena's family loses all economic income and most of its assets, as well as its high status in the community: instead of being at the nexus of an extended network of clients, neighbors and spiritual kin they become constantly dependent of services of these people in hiding goods and animals that would otherwise be confiscated by the tax collectors. Sena and her husband's life trajectories abruptly shift from belonging to an elite class situation and a high status within their moral community

toward belonging to the rather low income and generic status enjoyed by the large majority of villagers, as simple collective farm workers.

However, pushing her children to do well in school, and promoting their access to education allows Sena a reconversion of her status in the state-socialist village. To paraphrase Verdery's epitaph, from a rich landowner family the couple ended up as parents of gentlemen: both their children graduate college and became part of the state socialist elite stratum of intellectuals, who, in the light of Konrad and Szelenyi (1979) have no other title to justify their status except their education. By graduating college, they are highly respected individuals in the new (socialist) world, compensating, or making whole, again, the status continuity that was threatened by the trauma of the collectivization.

In the following life, I turn toward Mitru, a poor Romanian peasant who began as a servant, and who joined the Communist Party and became one of the managers of the local kolkhoz.

### **3.4. Mitru N. (1923-2010)**

Mitru was born in 1923 in a family of poor Romanian peasants from Comlăuș. His paternal grandfather was landless, while his father owned half of one hectare, which he received as a war veteran as a result of the 1923 agrarian reform. His parents had six children -three daughters and three sons- of whom Mitru was the youngest. As the family did not have a house, and could not live from the land they owned, his father always looked for a job as an out-of the village farm keeper. Many German farmers, who owned land rather far away from the village, had a small house in the middle of the fields they owned, where they kept their agricultural tools

and where they raised cattle, pigs and chickens. These farmers needed a servant who would permanently live there to take care of the farm, while they lived in the village. Mitru remembers that the family always lived in these kinds of houses, far into the fields, and that his father was constantly in debt:

He had to eat, you see? All his life he was a debtor. The German told him: (...) “You’ll live at my farm, [take care of the animals and the tools] and I’ll pay you this amount of wheat.” But when the year was over, he [the father] had already eaten the wheat, so he went to another [farmer] if he didn’t like the previous farmer for whom he worked, or if the German didn’t like [the way he worked]. So he got paid some more wheat [and another job] and he never got to have a surplus.

His older brothers and sisters worked as daily agricultural workers who sold their labor literally in the market place, where they waited to be picked up, or not, by the wealthy peasants for whom extra farm hands were needed:

There was a market place, called Johannis [from a statue of Saint John Nepomuck] There poor people gathered around 3 AM, (...) and then the Germans would come, on a bicycle, with a lantern in their hand... Bicycles were rare in those times [suggesting the bicycle was a sign of distinction] there were only three bicycles in the whole village of Comlăuș, so rare an item it was. So [the German] would take a look, assess whether you can work hard: “You, are you fit to work and for this much? If not, you can stay here, at Johannis!,” “I’m coming, master!” “Then, let’s go!” and in the evening, if he liked [the way you worked] he told you at dinner: “You return tomorrow!” and if he did not he said: “You do not return to work tomorrow, neither do you!” Maybe he did not like the way you hoed the weeds, or the way you harvested, it wasn’t as he liked it.

Having to sell one’s labor in the marketplace has marked Mitru’s memory. While he himself did not have a “taste” of this situation, he was eager to emphasize that his brothers and sisters did:

I can only tell you what I lived through, what I saw and heard: and I bear witness that my sister, my sisters, my brothers experienced that life at Johannis; I was spared as I was the smaller one. But they, poor things, they went there, sometimes they got work, sometimes they returned home where there was nothing: except the wind blowing outside?

It was the threat of hunger that pushed the young ones to have to go and look for work. The way the daily workers were treated by the farmers hiring them was sometimes outrageous, as Mitru is keen to tell me:

In the evening they had to walk many kilometers back from the fields, while the wagons were full of corn that then had to be carried on their backs up to the attic. The poor things only arrived around 10 or 11 pm. Only after the corn was properly stored in the attic did the lady of the house serve them dinner, Some of them were more generous; others, more stingy... were kinder, some were stingy, they gave you something to fill you up: if you ate, that's OK, if not, it was also OK. When you worked in the field, it was the same. Here, there were some rich farmers, without children who would give you bread that hadn't been kneaded enough and wasn't baked enough, so that the daily workers would eat less. Some other farmers would prepare food using rotten pork meat, and when you ate it, the worms would float in that soup! Some other farmers acted like gentlemen, treated you right, offered good food, so, if you [worked] properly you created a good rapport with him.

It was poor people's dependence on those who owned more land that defined the relationships in the village. Mitru was a child of a poor peasant, and he described the work conditions of the poor peasants who had to sell their labor to the richer farmers, who were overwhelmingly German:

The people got used to this, and worked hard, for those who were lazy did not have anything to eat when they returned home. They would harvest, as a family, he would scythe the wheat, and she would bind each sheaf. (...) For many the wheat that they earned harvesting in the summer was already borrowed and eaten during the previous

winter. Some farmers—for the wheat they paid you to harvest—even had the nerve to expect you to carry the wheat sacks on your back for an additional two days for free! That's how the poor people were exploited in those days!

The dire conditions in which poor people worked and lived did not affect just a minority of villagers. To the contrary, Mitru describes a village in which poverty was dominant and widespread among the Romanian peasants. He stressed that at least three quarters of the Romanian inhabitants of the village were landless or poor:

In Comlăuș, three quarters of the inhabitants were poor, and only one quarter was somehow better off; those people who did not have to hire people, used only their family to work [the land] and managed to get by. But all the rest, all of them were poor, they lived as servants in the off-the-village farms. One can't describe how tough it was for them, being servants and all... [The master] fed you, but barely enough so as not to die of hunger.

Although he did not have to sell his labor in the market, like his sisters and brothers, when Mitru was 15, he began working as a servant to a well-to-do Romanian farmer, in the village. He was to spend all the year in the household that hired him, as a hired hand:

As a servant, you had to sleep there, in the morning you fed and cleaned the horses, you threw away the garbage, you cleaned the stables. And then you were supposed to help wherever it was needed: go with the plough, carry the manure, in the winter smash corn, chop the wooden stumps; you were there day and night; you slept in the stable.

He does not have fond memories of his time as a servant, and his recollections focus on the fact that he was barely more than a child when he was sent to work, although he was not treated as such:

When I got [hired] for the first time, I was fifteen years old. I was scared out-there [as he had to sleep in the stable] as the horses would stamp their feet, and I peed on myself, so scared was I in the dark. I didn't have a pillow, nothing. When I worked for other farmers I had a pillow, in two places where I worked I received a pillow, even a sheepskin, and those people offered good food. Some other farmers were stingy, did not feed you as well, gave you less meat, you were not allowed to drink milk, which [milk] I really liked!

Mitru is unhappy about some of his former masters, and while he understands his family's dire situation, he makes crystal clear that his fate was to be "sold" for money by his parents:

The parents were poor, so they came to the farmer that hired me, and took from him, as today you'd go to a bank, out of the total sum [he was to receive at the end of the year for his service] say, 500 lei, today; after a month they would ask for 2-300 more, to buy food, or a pig. (...) So when the year was over, the money was spent, so.. you stayed at home perhaps a week, around New Year's Eve, to feel free, and then you went to be a servant for another year. Or sometimes you stayed on, the father would come and haggle with the farmer that hired you (...). CG it was the father who negotiated the bargain? Yes, the father, always him. That's how it was: the parents, they 'sold' you, they got the money.

Mitru spends a good deal of his life story giving details about his time as a servant, and his relationships with his 'masters,' with those for whom he worked. It was not always that the servant was powerless:

I was scything, eating only yogurt; they offered lard, but in the summer lard gets oily on your fingers, so during the summer, when we scythed the wheat, the knife would slide over the lard. I asked: "Please, give me yogurt, I will scythe eating that!" but the lady of the house refused: "We need the milk, we sell it to the dairy farm, and we earn some additional money." So I was upset.. and the cow gave less and less milk for I wasn't feeding her with corn, I gave the cow's corn to the horses, thinking to myself: "Never mind, I'll make sure you'll earn your money [on milk]! And then I asked again: "Can I

get yogurt? You'll see, the cow will give much more milk this way!" And I began to feed it lots of corn (...) and then the cow did give more milk. "Mitru, asked the lady of the house, what did you do to the cow?" "I told you, if you feed me with yogurt, the cow will give lots of milk!" She laughed, mildly cursing "Oh, may the Lord defecate on you, Mitru!" and from that time on I had my yogurt, and every morning I had my boiled milk.

Telling the story of his tribulations as a servant allows Mitru to draw on other life trajectories, in this case of a young boy his age, a son of one of the farmers that employed him:

At that household, I was the master, for the farmer was a drunkard. He was a retired army master sergeant, he used to get drunk and he didn't care what I was doing. He was not sending me to plough, he was not sending me to the mill, he was not telling me what to do – it was I who did all those things. Every morning, I woke up, went to the ladder, got the bread, the lard, the sausages, whatever they had, I was allowed to do it, I ate well and I left. The bottle of wine was always on the window-sill, he kept telling me: "whenever you feel like, drink!" for he also owned a vineyard in neighboring Galsa village. And he had only one son, his son was sent to Bucharest, to school, in order to be a pilot. However, he began to drink there with women, and was kicked out of school, so he never became a pilot.

The story of the retired master-sergeant allows Mitru to make two points: one, to present in derogatory terms a farmer who was not the master of his household, and who did not work hard to improve his fortune –irrespective of how wealthy that person was. Mitru notes that the household was far from being poor, emphasizing the plenitude of food and drink that even the servant enjoyed. The second point allows him to emphasize the distinction between him and the destitute rich son of his master; although one had been sent to study in Bucharest, and had a much better economic standing, his life trajectory had turned into a failure.

The relationship between the servant and his master was complex: there were bonds of trust and moral obligation between the two. Consequently, when Mitru was 20 years old he had

to leave the village to complete compulsory military service. As he could have been sent roughly anywhere in the country, he used the influence of the farmer for whom he worked in order to be assigned to a military unit located in nearby Arad:

I stopped being a servant, and left for military service (...). One of the farmers for whom I worked had known a captain, he went to him and he arranged the matter in such a way that I would not be sent I-don't-know-where [in the country], so I was assigned to an artillery unit in Arad.

As this happened in 1944, during WWII, after a couple of months of his training, Romania switched sides, denounced its previous alliance with Nazi Germany and joined the Allied side. Mitru took part in the battles that defended the Western border of Romania from a Hungarian-German invasion, and then he continued to fight until his unit crossed the Tatra Mountains, in Czechoslovakia, at the end of the war. As a war veteran, Mitru was a beneficiary of the 1945 agrarian reform.

When I returned from the front, I had not even reached home when they enacted the agrarian reform – I was still in Cluj, in a military unit, when I got a letter from home telling me that I had received a horse, a wagon, that I got land (...) three and a half hectares (...). The land had been confiscated from the Germans, they had been expropriated, and also sent [to forced labor] in Russia.

The Germans from Sântana and from Comlăuș had been expropriated by the Romanian state in 1945. The confiscated land and agricultural tools had been re-distributed, through the agrarian reform, to Romanian war veterans and poor peasants. Mitru was a fortunate recipient of the 1945 agrarian reform. He did not need to work as a servant anymore. Instead, he had his own

land, and his own tools to work the land. More than that, he began to sharecrop, to work the land of other people who could not work, in order to increase his income:

That's when I began, I was able to manage a larger household, I sharecropped for one and for another, and when I had money I rented the land.

CG It was more convenient to pay the rent for the land in cash?

Sure, otherwise I had to do all the work and I got only half of the harvest, the owner got the other half. I had to do everything for him: to transport the harvest to his house, to build the haystack, to help him with the threshing, too... I had to do everything for him, I had no choice.

A young and energetic farmer, Mitru looked for other ways in which to develop his activities. Besides his farming activities, he managed to get a position as an agent collecting beetroot in the area for a sugar factory, a very lucrative position, it seems:

I had horses, I had a cow, I had pigs, I had a sow and I was also an agent for a sugar factory, collecting beetroot. I had a monthly wage of 700 lei, for those times that was a good amount, and my work schedule was entirely up to me (...). I kept the sugar, I had the money, I controlled everything. I was paying the farmers, who cultivated beetroot, and when they came to receive the sugar for their harvest, if one was to receive 200 kg and some 100 grams, he left me those 100 grams, and as there were 200 members, I really managed to keep some stuff for my needs. For my household was always full, I kept the sugar, the trucks came to me, the entry room was full [of sugar].

In only a few years, Mitru's status in the village changed significantly. From a poor child of a poor peasant, Mitru became the owner of a middle-sized farm (according to the communities ranking) who proved hard-working and able to build a promising household, mixing the advantages of a flexible state job with those of an independent farmer. In this context Mitru married Maria in 1947, the daughter of a well-to-do family of merchants. Maria's father owned a

store and a pub in the village, and both from the point of view of economic standing, and of the status in the community, one can say that Mitru married up. Maria moved into his house, and they began farming together.

Nevertheless, in just a couple of years, Mitru's father-in-law was branded a kulak, an exploiter, by the newly established communist authorities. This meant over-taxation and the label of an untrustworthy class enemy. Mitru's household was ranked a middle-sized farm. While this did not result in the excessive taxation imposed on those branded as kulaks, it was nevertheless a heavy burden for him and his family. Mitru remembers how he dealt with the taxes the communist regime set for the peasants:

You see, in the morning there was a line of wagons that extended along three or four streets, one had to go and give your harvest, as it was planned CG  
What happened if you did not go? They  
would confiscate everything. There was someone from the county, there was the mayor, they knew how much wheat you were recorded with, and there was another [Communist Party] activist, who was checking whether everything happened according to the rules. So people were afraid, but in time you made friends with them, and they 'missed' some of my harvest, and left me with some 1000 kg, and did not record everything.

While the official taxes were high, and it would have been very difficult to pay the entire amount requested by the state, Mitru managed to bribe ('befriend') some of the tax collectors and to get by in tough times. Nevertheless he, like many of the villagers, ended up joining one of the peasant associations, heavily promoted by the communist regime, which was intended to bring an end to private property in agriculture.

Then they began with the propaganda... about these land associations, telling us that together we'll work the land easier, that the tractor cannot work only on a half a hectare, and so on.. that's how it was, and then the people saw that the lands surrounding the village had been consolidated [and attributed to the new association ] and the land they had been relocated to Serigheza [an area several kilometers away from the village] and then, in order not to lose the land, people said "I'll join the association."

Mitru initially resisted the move, and had his land re-located:

I did not want to join, and they sent me far away, I took that land and worked it, but when I saw that things are getting tight, that I could not go on alone, I joined the association.

Nevertheless, in a short time Mitru seems to have been perceived as a friend of the new manner of doing agriculture, and seems to have been appreciated by the representatives of the new regime, for he was elected to be the president of the largest (of the three) land associations that existed in Comlăuș.

I was the president of the largest association (.). The general assembly elected a new council, I was nominated as a president... and I got the most numerous votes. So I remained the president of the association for three years, until they disbanded the associations and created the kolkhoz.

While Mitru prefers to emphasize that the peasants elected him as a president, which is undoubtedly true, his election, and his chairmanship would have been impossible in those years had he not been perceived as friendly toward the new communist regime, and most probably nominated as a candidate with the agreement and support of the regional party leaders, especially as his father-in-law was being officially classified as a 'kulak' and an exploiter.

Mitru claims he joined the kolkhoz under the pressure of the time. He could not buy oil, or other consumer goods, as he was not a kolkhoz member, and the 1950s were years of food and clothing shortages.

What could one do? You saw that everybody joins [the kolkhoz] that those who did get rights you did not have, the consumption cooperatives had been settled so you did not get oil if you are not listed, you did not get this, you did not get that... so...

Mitru remembers that his father-in-law joined the kolkhoz in order to get rid of his 'kulak' status:

They had a restaurant and a store, and the restaurant had been confiscated and turned into a elementary school. After they joined the collective farm they got the store back.

What seems to have been essential for his wife's family, was less urgent for Mitru. Joining the kolkhoz seems, in his case, less of a pressure and more as seizing a chance of upward mobility. Mitru is genuine about it, when he addresses his decision to jump on the band-wagon and became a member of the Communist Party:

I was a party member. You could not be a leader, you could not attempt to convince someone about this or that... I saw that I had to, and I said to myself that instead of carrying sacks on my back, I carried in two years so many sacks that my skin was scratched on my back and on my shoulder, for the Germans had some sacks that weighed 80 kg. (.). So I said, instead of going back to work hard, I'd better to join the Party.

A couple of years after, Mitru joined the kolkhoz he worked as a truck driver, a much better position than that of a simple agricultural worker. From this position he was promoted to that of a team leader:

I worked for three years on a truck.. (.). and then, the president called me to make me a team-leader. I did not want to do it

CG Wasn't that a more convenient position?

Mitru: It was, but I had graduated only four grades. And they assured me that they would give me a good accountant... and after two or three weeks of discussions, I accepted and I worked in that position thirty years.

I took the interview in 2005. Mitru lived together with his wife in the house they re-built in 1958. They have two children, a girl, and a boy, neither of whom did graduate a college. Both his children work as industrial workers and moved to Arad. Mitru does not dwell much on his children's achievements, he prefers to remember how hard he worked as a servant, and to remember his successful and rewarding life-trajectory.

Mitru's life-trajectory seems defined by his class-location (like Judit, but in the opposite way). His starting point is near the bottom of the class and status hierarchy of Comlăuș' moral community: the son of a landless peasant, having to work as a servant in his early teens, for the better-off farmers of the village with a minimum of elementary education. Both his ethnicity and his class-location mark the inflection point of Mitru's life-trajectory in post-WWII period: as a Romanian, he was neither a subject of expropriation, nor of deportation to USSR. His class location (as a landless peasant) qualified him to benefit from the 1945 agrarian reform.<sup>92</sup> In contrast with his new modest class-location (he owned a small land lot), Mitru managed to achieve a high status in the Comlăuș moral community due to his hard-work and to his enterprising ability to make the most out of limited means. This high status, as well as his gender, allowed him to marry 'up,' the daughter of a well-to-do local shop-owner. As a self-made man, with a highest income and a highest status than his father's, Mitru can afford to

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<sup>92</sup> And receive some of the land expropriated from his ethnically-marked German neighbors.

choose his wife, while it is not clear whether his wife chose him too, or ‘was married’ by her parents.

The process of the socialization of agriculture in Comlăuș was not something that Mitru had hoped for, or desired, and initially he resisted the trend. Very soon he saw that the macro-historical changes altering the face of the village allow him a chance of upward mobility and he joined a local associative farm, as well as the Communist Party not out of conviction (as he candidly confesses) but as a way to avoid hard labor, of escaping physical effort and the fate of the manual workers. For the rest of his life, Mitru remained a part of the village elite, one of the managers of the collective farm, which qualified him to earn more than the rest of the collective farm members, to have access to a network of formal and informal authority over the rest of the villagers (implying access to resources and services nominally accessible to all, but in fact restricted to few).

Mitru’s narrative is loaded with class-references, as he accounts his life-trajectory mostly in drawing a very dark image of the pre-WWII village, one of child exploitation, poverty and injustice. In contrast, state-socialism is seen as a period when no one had to be a servant any more, when everybody had a job, access to education and a much better diet (recall his proud reference to the ‘four pigs’ he kills each year). Although Mitru is a net winner of the transition to state-socialism<sup>93</sup>, he does not see that period (or his achievements as a collective farm manager) as the golden age of his life: instead he focuses in his life-narrative on the transition period when the collectivization was not yet achieved, when he was a successful farmer, and a local beet-root collector for a sugar-producing state-enterprise. His account emphasizes his focus on autonomy

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<sup>93</sup> On the trajectories and implications of turning peasants into Communist Party cadres see chapter 3, ‘Creating Party Cadres’ Kligman and Verdery (2011: 150-214). On relationship between Communist Party and peasantry see as well Jowit (1992: 16-18).

and entrepreneurship (even when that meant cheating a bit his fellow-villagers) as the major values of his life. While education is a criterion in judging the other collective farm managers (distinguishing between the educated and those who ‘hardly had graduated the second grade’), Mitru’s life account, as well as his expectations and efforts toward the life trajectories of his children, do not value education as a path for upward mobility.

In line with the class situation of Mitru, I explore in the following lines the life of Valeria, one of the poor Romanians who were colonized in Sântana as a consequence of the agrarian reform of 1945.

### **3.5. Valeria M. (b. 1927 -2007)**

Valeria is one of the Romanian colonists who moved to Sântana after receiving land in the village at the 1945 agrarian reform. She is born in the village C. near Beius, Bihor County, almost 80 kilometers (bird’s eye view) from Sântana. Beius is a hilly, forested region, where arable land is scarce, less productive and where the peasants were poorer than those of Sântana. Valeria was the fourth out of the five children. Her family was mainly living out of horticulture: by the local standards they were not poor: they owned some (low quality) land, 12 cows, two oxen, pigs, and chicken. Quite tellingly, when I asked her about their living standard, her main answer was “polenta” and cattle:

CG How was your father living?

With polenta, in those times, polenta ruled. We had oxen, we had a cow, we were... we were not poor in terms of cattle heads. We also had pigs.

One of the early motives that seem to have marked the way she remembers her childhood years is the lack of medical care. She was told that when she was a toddler she had a serious head injury, treated in an entirely traditional way:

When I was one year and a half old I cracked my head. My mother had work to do, she was whitewashing the walls. I climbed on a wooden box that fell over me, and hit my head against some stones, for in those times there was no sidewalk. People did not go to doctor those times. My head was cracked; only my brains were protected. And my poor grandpa covered the wound, cleaned it with piss, and with whatever he knew, and that's how I survived. For God gave me days [a long life] to suffer, my child.

1931 marks one of the major inflection points in Valeria's life: the death of her mother, when she was only eight years old. Valeria emphasizes again how harsh life was, and how her mother did not have the chance to be treated, nor was she, at least, taken by her husband, on the wagon, to the doctor: she had to walk all the way, through the forest, taking her eight years old daughter as her companion, while the older sisters and brothers worked in the household:

She [her mother] was 31 years old when she died. She had gone down the hill, with the wagon to bring water, helped by a relative.. and when they returned she lifted the barrel [full of water] from the wagon, and something just broke inside her. She suffered for an entire year. I used to go with her, to Remetea [neighboring village] across the forest, I was going with her to the doctor, there was a sort of doctor's assistant ['felcer,' – meaning he was not a trained doctor]. We always went walking through the forest, and after a year she died. She left behind her a boy who was one year and a half old, I was eight, my brother was ten, my sister twelve and another one fourteen. We were five.

This was not the last funeral in the family. Valeria's youngest brother also died when he was seven. Like in the case of the mother, the family did not have any idea on the cause of the death. In a different interaction, Valeria told me their naïve, uneducated assumption that the child died because he had eaten too green an apple and that this had a bad effect on his stomach.

He lived until he was seven. And then he died. Those times children never wore shoes, and it was cold, for he was taking care of the hogs, taking them down the valley (...). He did lie in bed for a week; there were no doctors in those times, like today. He got sick, and his feces were full of blood.

Note that a seven years old boy was already working, taking out to the pasture the families hogs.

After her mother's death, the father remarried. Valeria lived in a world where calendar was structured around the major traditional Christian holidays, and she is still upset on her father's improper behavior, upsetting the moral traditional order:

He remarried after six weeks. My mother died by Lent's time, and after Easter he married! Well, what could he do, having to take care of five children? She [the step mother] had a girl, so that made six [children in the family]. And she also had an old relative to take care of, who must have been over eighty years old.

Valeria's life with a step mother was not easy. Her older brother was sent at Beiuș [neighboring town], to work as a servant in the household of a rich Hungarian peasant. Valeria does not have any schooling. Instead she had to work very much, and she did not seem to have had a good relationship with her father's new wife:

In that house, I was the donkey and I was the horse [meaning she had to work hard]. I had to take the cows out. One day, I met her [the step mother] when they stored the corn. And she didn't even stand up when I entered with the cows, to let me in, for I had to take care of 12 cows. And I had to leave them unsecured and take care of the ducks that were in her charge, and I finished her job first. Only then she rose from the chair, for she could hardly stand up, as she was very fat [in a sarcastic tone]."

In 1945, when she was 18, her marriage was arranged via her step-mother's brother, who brought Valeria's future husband in the house: Ghiorghie, just returned from the war with a hand

injury, 12 years her elder. When I asked Valeria whether somebody asked her about the planned marriage she answered:

Nobody did. [When they came and settled the marriage] I was in the forest, with the cows, for we had 12 cows. (...) There was no wedding ceremony... [with sarcasm] only God celebrated it.

She explains that for her marriage has meant breaking away from the control of her step-mother:

“I did not mind, for I was sick of having a step-mother.”

The young couple moved to the plains, more than 60 kilometers West, in the village currently named Avram Iancu (previously Queen Mary). The village was a settlement created as a consequence of the post WWI agrarian reform: Ghiorghie's father, returning from the war, was offered 5 hectares of good quality land in the plains. Creating a settlement of ethnic Romanian peasants located only a couple of kilometers away from the newly drawn Hungarian-Romanian border should be seen also as a strategic, nationalist-minded movement of the Romanian state.

The 'colony' (as initially that's how Avram Iancu was called) was a prosperous village grounded on an egalitarian starting point: all its inhabitants had moved there in the second half of 1920s, most of them were families of former soldiers, and all had been endowed by the Romanian state with the same amount of land: 5 hectares.

Only a year after Valeria moved in, in 1946 at their turn, the sons of those who had been colonized after WWI were encouraged to relocate, and 'colonize' the lands confiscated from the Sântana's Germans. Valeria's husband was one of the few who accepted to move to Sântana: had he remained in Avram Iancu he would have received 1 hectare of land at the agrarian reform, while in Sântana he qualified for 5 hectares of a much better quality land.

In a 1995 interview I took from Valeria's husband, he detailed the conditions of their arrival in Sântana by the end of 1946: not only had been German's land confiscated, but also the

harvest of wheat and corn was taken away by the state and distributed to the newcomers. Almost every German household was assigned a Romanian family, to whom they had to offer the best room of the house, and half of their vegetable garden.

I did not like it when I arrived... for the harvest was ripe, and already collected from those who worked it [the Germans] so that we get it. And I didn't like it. (.).. For we have come as revolutionaries [he accentuates the word] to get by force into German's houses. How would it be if someone came now –for this is my house, I build it !- to claim that some 'colonist' will come and get into my house? For they were publicly letting everyone know [he literally says: the drummer announced<sup>94</sup>] that each 'colonist' is entitled to a half of the garden, and to the best room, the one that most cared for, and had the better furniture.

There were troubled, revolutionary times in Sântana: the horses and the agricultural tools owned by the German farmers from the village were confiscated by the local authorities, and distributed to the Romanians. The colonists developed their own justification for their peculiar situation. Again, Valeria's husband:

We have come here as revolutionaries: that's how the agrarian reform was put into practice. The state made space for the peasants, relied on the peasants: do they need land? Then let them fight for it ! Here too... the fact that we fought in the war was not enough!

In another instance, when, talking about the relationship of Romanians that came as 'colonists' at Sântana with the church he mentioned : “They were not paying the church tax, or the priest(...) it was a sort of bolshevism everywhere. “ Valeria's husband sees himself primarily as a 'peasant' revolutionary, as a fighter for the peasant's rights that were granted by the [new] regime, but that had to be fought for. For instance, as Valeria and her husband lived in the

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<sup>94</sup> As many peasants were illiterate, city hall decisions were not only printed, but a drummer hired by the city hall walked throughout the village, stopping at every street corner, drumming to call the attention of the villagers and then shouting out loud the mayor's decision.

household of a German family who owned a horse, and that horse had to be taken away by the city hall, they tried to keep their host's horse for themselves:

[Her host's horse] was taken by those [colonists' leaders] from the city hall and they gave it to whomever they pleased. We tried to keep the horse almost for two weeks, we did not allow to be taken, for we hoped we can keep it for ourselves For they did not trust us, those [colonists] who were then the leaders.

CG : They were dividing the [confiscated] goods ?

They... did everything. But they did not get much out of it. [In long run] God took them away, and they did not enjoy their goods.

The forced co-habitation, as well as the pillage of the German households by some of the young Romanian war veterans gave birth to a deep conflict in the village between the 'colonists' and the Germans. Valeria remembers her troubles with the German host, a family of two. They had one son and one daughter, who was two years older than Valeria, who were both deported in a forced labor camp in the Soviet Union. The parents remained alone, and were assigned Valeria and Gheorghie:

They lodged us into a German household. The husband wasn't that bad, but the wife, she was mean. She could not stand seeing us around. Although I did not ask for anything from her, not even for something from the vegetable garden... anyhow she was evil. Once, she did beat me, she did. I run after Ghiorghie, who was away with our cow-driven wagon, and I told him. He went to the city hall and made a complaint, and those from the city hall decided to replace the German family somewhere in Comlăuș. To remove them. Then the husband came to Ghiorghie and begged him not to throw them away from their home. So they moved into the kitchen we lived in, and we got the best rooms in the house. Afterwards she's got softer. She was scared.

Valeria co-habitated with her German hosts from 1946 until 1957. Only by that time did the authorities granted the 'colonists' spots of land where they could build houses, and allow them to do it. Meanwhile, Valeria had her first child, a daughter, C. in 1947, and two years after, in 1949 a her second child, a boy V.

The first years as owners of a five hectares farm in Sântana were good for Valeria and her husband : although they did not have horses, they managed to do all the necessary agricultural works with the help of their two cows, Duma and Dama, who were not only giving them milk, but also pulled the wagon, and the plough. The two worked not only their own land, but they also share cropped the land of others, in order to increase their margins of profit. Unfortunately, at the same time, the state did impose heavy taxation on the peasants, the so called 'quotas' (cote). Valeria remembers that her family remained, after paying the 'quota' with 2000-2500 kg of wheat (an amount she is proud of), mentioning that without quota they would have had perhaps 7-8000 kg.

While economically their household was a success, she was not at all content on how her husband treated her. She was expected to be subservient and do everything he asked to. Although Valeria did not confess it to me, I have no doubts that she was occasionally a victim of domestic violence. I quote again from the interview, I took with her husband, Ghiorghie, a fragment which I deem illustrative on his take on husband/wife relation:

I ordered her, when I got out of the yard with the wagon: "You should put everything in order, make sure everything is clean, make sure the lines that the wheels leave on the soil disappear." (.).. So, perhaps the German lady of the house asked her to do the same, and my wife [did not do it], ...she's a weak being, as women are, for the women are always talking too much.

As her daughter was not an infant anymore, and as Valeria was already pregnant with her second child, once again she returned to her father's house, ostensibly to leave her daughter in charge of her grandparents for a while, but in fact breaking up with her husband. It seems that her family supported her:

Gheorghe was bad.. Had I knew it, I would have never returned, when I took my daughter to her grandparents. I considered whether it's not better for me to remain in my father's house. Both my father and my step-mother insisted: Daughter, stay with us and raise this girl in our midst! Nevertheless, I could not do this to my daughter. He kept writing me letters, urging me to return. And when I did return, what happened? He was 'living with' the [young] German.. was going hoeing with her.  
CG When you returned, he ceased to...  
Oh, a devil he was, a devil he remained.

Not only was Ghiorghia unaffected by Valeria's desertion, but, she claims, he was cheating her with the daughter of the German family where they lived, who returned from the Soviet Union camp. After a while Valeria was pregnant again. This time she lost the baby:

I had another pregnancy, and the embryo lived until it was in the sixth month. I kept carrying drafts from the railwaystation, on my back. And I had him dead in my belly for another month.

After six years of independent farming, sharing the house with their German hosts, in 1952, the family joined the local collective farm, which had been founded two years earlier in Sântana, initially exclusively by 'colonists,' soon joined by few Gypsy, and some Germans looking for employment. As people joined the farm, land was consolidated so that kolkhoz's land be always made out of contiguous fields. Consequently, the 5 hectares owned by Ghiorghie and Valeria were year by year re-located farther and farther from the village, so that in the Fall of 1952 Ghiorghia decided to finally join the collective farm. According to Valeria, he was a hard-working (and therefore) respected member of the colonist's community:

Almost nobody out of those who lived on our street joined the collective farm, but when they heard that Ghiorghie joined, they all joined too!

When I asked how difficult it was to renounce to their own farm land, and to abandon the life of an autonomous farmer, Valeria's answer focused on their relations with the animals:

It was hard, yes, it wasn't easy. We gave them a cow, and kept one. But the cow did not remain in the collective farm, they could not keep it there by no means, it jumped over the fences and always came back home (.)... Then Goina [the collective farm chairman] let the cow go, for there was nothing to do with it.

Finally, the leaders of the collective farm gave up, and allowed Ghiorghia to get his cow back exchanging it with a cow he got from his brother. The two cows, separated by the intrusion of the collective farm, were again together, and he sent both of them to his brother, at Avram Iancu, a region which was not (yet) collectivized. In my reading, Valeria insists on this cow tale as a minor revenge of their household over the impersonal forces that radically changed their lives: the cow, could not be 'put in line' by the collectivization, and in the end it was them who had to bend the rules, so that the cows get back together, and move in a region where they were not to be separated again.<sup>95</sup>

Initially, Ghiorghie was offered a position of brigade leader, but, after several months he renounced. The income, as well as the authority over others, involved in the position of brigade-leader, was definitely a high achievement. Valeria explains that, as Ghiorghie was a war invalid, he could not go on doing his new job as his wounded hand was troubling him. This is hard to believe, as amount of physical hard work as an independent peasant must have solicited his arm much more than the supervising job he got at the collective farm. According to other villagers, Ghiorghie refused to continue being a brigade-leader out of his concern that '*the Americans are coming,*' and then those associated with the Communist Party, and the leadership of the collective farm will have troubles.

The moment marks an inflection-point in the life of the family: Ghiorghie resigned from a job that would have placed him among the leaders of the community (both in terms of income

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<sup>95</sup> On the relationship between animals and the peasant family, see Kligman and Verdery (2011: 97).

and of authority). He worked for a while as a bartender, in the new retail cooperative, and ended up working most of his life as a watchman of the collective farm. Valeria, as well, began her life-long job as a collective farm worker, out of which she retired. Her two children went to the collective farm crèche:

CG : Did they take care of the kids ?

Sure (.).. and it was for free. They kept the children 'till evening, around 7pm, when we returned from our lots. I had my own lot, I always undertook a lot of 1 hectare of corn, and then one of sun-flower... It is true that, initially, we worked in teams, for 2-3 years, but afterwards they assigned to each one a lot. (.).. Sure, it was better this way, you could work the land as you wanted to, and... it paid off.

The collective farm meant not only work, but also forms of social assistance, such as the crèche, where the children were taken care of, while their parents were working. After joining, the yearly income of the family was not as high as during the times when they were managing their own farm:

CG : So, in the Fall, when the collective farm paid you, how it was ?

We got less, less than before. (.).. We got around 1000 kg of wheat. Not as much as before, but it was enough for our food. They also paid some cash, but not much.

All in all, Valeria is not bitter about the collective farm experience: "It wasn't bad for us, I cannot say it was bad." By 1957, as they were assigned a lot to build a house, the family, as all the other 'colonist' families had access to a state-backed mortgage of 18000 lei, that allowed them to build a house. The money was sufficient for the materials they needed. The actual building was done by the building crew of the collective farm, and the services did not need to be paid in cash. It was the policy of the Sântana collective farm to assist its members who built a new house by allowing them to pay the construction crew via a transfer of days-labored from the house owners to the builders. Also, the extended family helped: Ghiorghia's brother and father,

who came from Avram Iancu to lend a hand. The house was a so-called ‘corner’ house, build according to the blue-print of the modernizing architectural plans of the new regime,<sup>96</sup> larger than many of the German houses where the colonists previously lived. Both Ghiorghie and Valeria were proud of their house, built in the new neighborhood named ‘the colony’ or the New Village, where all the colonists moved.

In 1968, two years after Nicolae Ceaușescu banned abortion in Romania, Valeria gave birth to her third son. She was distressed about her late pregnancy (she was 41, and already a grandmother: her daughter had a two years old son. Out of her three children, only the last one graduated high school. The daughter married at 18, with a tractor driver, and lives a block away from her parent’s house, while the first son followed a vocational school, and moved back to Avram Iancu. The youngest son graduated high school, married and continues to live in the house of his parents.

In 1991 Valeria and her husband received back the land they had, as the collective farm was officially disbanded, but they joined on the spot the successor ‘Romanian-German land association.’ Valeria’s husband died in 2001, at 86. She lives out of a small retirement from the collective farm, and a larger one, as a widow of a war veteran:

So, I remained a member of the collective farm till this day. The devil knows what pension I get from them... for I do have a pension, a good pension, as a widow of the old one, who was a war invalid. Two millions and seven hundred [Romanian lei]. He was wounded, and he also received a medal.

Also, she has a yearly income from her land shares in the local ‘association’ about which she is not too happy :

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<sup>96</sup> On a similar architectural development in rural Hungary, the ‘square’ house, see Szelenyi et al. (1988: 80-81).

[We don't know] how much wheat we'll get. [They pay] 300 kg of corn per hectare. I still have one hectare and a half, the rest I gave to the children. To C [the daughter], I gave 1.75 hectares and to the boy in Avram Iancu 1.75 hectares.

The land was divided between the two children that had left the house. The younger brother<sup>97</sup>, that remained in the house (and cared for his old parents) was supposed to inherit the house, as well as the (slightly) smaller lot of land of his mother. I interviewed her in 2001, and than again in 2004. She passed away in 2007.

Valeria's life trajectory is marked by her gender and class situation. Daughter of a rather poor family, in a backward region, she recalls a life-standard that seem to hardly been different at the beginning of twentieth century from that of the middle ages. Valeria is illiterate, life expectancy in her community appears to be very low, health care equals almost exclusively traditional cures, and the life of the peasants is structured by the traditional cycles of Christian holidays. Children are expected to work for the household from a very early age (at 7 her brother took care of the hogs) and when her mother was ill, no special concern was devoted to her care. As a daughter, Valeria is the subject of her step-mother, whom she sees as exploiting her work. Valeria has nothing to say about her marriage, or about the choice of her husband: she accepts it only to get rid of her mother in law (note the similarity with Sali's choice). From this perspective, her husband is no different: he perceives himself as her master, and also uses her work.

After relocating to Sântana, the relative life-standard of Valeria changes into better: she gave birth in a hospital, leaved her children at a crèche while working in the fields, and embarked into building a modern house.

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<sup>97</sup> See the Life story of Cornel, covered in chapter 5.

The community of reference for Valeria breaks with the already-existing moral communities defined by the Catholic Germans and Hungarians, Comlăuș Romanians, and the Roma. Valeria, as well as most of the colonized Romanians are in the process of building a new community. However, unlike the Romanians Comlăuș they communicate and interact with the German community and the German hosts with whom she shared the same household for many years.

While both she and her husband are simple collective farm members, this is due only to her husband reluctance to join the network of party members and managers of the collective farm, than to his low status among the other colonists. He is invited to be a collective farm team-leader, and his status among his co-villagers is high: Valeria is keen to emphasize that he was an influential person, and once he decided to join the collective farm, he was followed by many others who looked up to his example. In fact almost the unique words of appreciation concerning her husband are related to his ability to work hard and therefore to earn a high ranking status among other farmers.

Arriving in Sântana as ‘colonized’ peasants on the lands previously owned by Germans brings Valeria in the midst of an ethnic conflict, where, again, she is beaten by her German host. This time, Ghiorghie and Valeria are on the winners side of the ethnic conflict. They try to take advantage of the Germans and although they fail to grab the horse of their hosts, after the incident between the two women, they get the best part of the house, relocating the German owners in the back kitchen.

The period prior to collectivization, when Valeria and her husband were farming their new five hectares farm, and sharecropped the land of others appears out of Valeria’s account as

the best time of her life<sup>98</sup>, despite the troubles with her husband on one hand, and of being forced to cohabitate with the German hosts on the other. In due time, however, alongside with the majority of ‘colonist’ households, Valeria and Gheorghie have no other choice but to join the collective farm. The income that they derived from working for the kolkhoz, as well as a state-backed loan aimed at the colonized peasants, allowed them to build a larger, modern house, and raise three children. Education-wise, Valeria’s children had at best a high school diploma: her older son returned in the village of origin, and became a worker, her daughter married a tractor driver (see chapter 4, Lică) and ended up as a housewife, and her late son, born because of the anti-abortion policies of Ceaușescu regime, works in a car parts factory (see chapter 5, Cornel). In the post-1990 period, Valeria lost her husband, and lived in the old house, being taken care of by the family of his younger son, Cornel.

Last but not least, I conclude with the life of a man from the Roma community of Comlăuș, Pali.

### **3.6. Pali E. (b.1928)**

Pali's was born in 1928, in the Roma community located at the Western limit of Comlăuș. His parents had two children, Pali and his younger sister. His father was a feather collector and trader, a prestigious position within the community.

Pali begins by reminiscing about both his grandfathers, who were in the adobe trade. “We lived out of adobe, we built adobe bricks, built houses, repaired... this was men’s part.” The Comlăuș Roma were traditional adobe craftsmen, this was their niche trade. As Roma did not

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<sup>98</sup> Note the similarity with Mitru’s assessment (another ‘winner’ of the transition to state-socialism) considering the time-frame that began with the 1945 agrarian reform and ended with the collectivization as the best in his life-trajectory.

own land (with very few exceptions, such as those who received a hectare or less after the WWI agrarian reform), they engaged seasonally in agriculture, not as farmers but as hired hands during work-intensive agricultural activities, such as hoeing, harvesting, and threshing the harvested cereals:

Also we used to go to the [steam-powered] thresher;<sup>99</sup> we climbed the hayrick, lifted the wheat on the pitchfork and fed the thresher with it. One needed lots of men for that. (...) We were paid in cereals, not in cash. And [some other times] we worked as harvesters, or we hoed.

A specific trait of the Roma community is marked by a strong gender difference of their productive activities, something that emerges from the intervention of Pali's wife in his description of the village:

CG Did the women work in those times [before WWII]?

Pali: No, they did not. They used to go to German ladies, to do the laundry.

Pali's wife: Oh, the women worked much more than men! Men were just waiting idle for their wives to return home. (...) Oh, my mother! When my father died we were 6 children (...) and my mother took care of all six, out of her [work for] the Germans. She did their laundry; she cleaned their houses, she did whatever it took. And she earned enough food to feed perhaps 5 more.

Apparently, for Pali, what women did was not "work." On the contrary, for his wife, it was precisely the "work" of the women that ensured the day-to-day survival of the family. The gendered differentiation did reflect in the standing of the family, as well as in its income. The economic status of the German household for whom the Roma wife provided menial services paralleled the economic income and social status of the Roma women in her community: "The [Roma] women from poor families would work for poorer German households." The amount of foodstuff brought home by the wife could, in many cases, define the status of the Roma family.

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<sup>99</sup> It is quite possible that Pali refers here to the steam-powered thresher owned by Judit's grandfather.

Note that the insertion of Roma in the cash economy is extremely limited; both adobe craftsmen and Roma women that provided menial services were paid in food stuff. In consequence, during the periods when there was less work, there was literally less food, sometimes hunger, for those categories of Roma. The depths of their poverty are easy to reveal. The women did laundry and cleaned for the well-to-do Germans in order to literally “bring home the bacon” so that at the end of the day the family will have something to eat.

Pali’s father did not take on the adobe craftsmanship that he inherited from his father. He rose to be a member of the new trade of the Roma community: feather and leather traders (“pănarî”):

My father was a feather tradesman. [Initially] there was a single man who was trading feathers here. One. He was called Ciupa. He was the first one. And others learned from him, his sons-in-law, who were also his neighbors. And then a brother of my father learned the trade, and when he knew what to do, my father got it, and then others, and others...” (...) They would go with the cart to search for feathers in the [neighboring] villages. [Then] would go to Oradea [major town, 100 km north] where people from the Jewish nation bought feathers. One would gather two-, three- four hundred kilos [of feathers]. [The Roma] bought them with cash, and sold them for cash to the Jews from Oradea. (...) [The Roma] were organized in groups (“ortacie”) (...) earned lots of money, they were not poor. They were not among those who built or repaired adobe buildings. They were [also] dealing in horse skins, rabbit skins... this kind of stuff... fox skins, gathered from various villages.

Pali builds a contrast between the Roma that were immersed in the money economy, and dealt on feathers and skins, and those who (in his view) remained poor and limited to the traditional adobe work. Besides the feather collectors, who, as we saw, represented a new trade in the Roma community, there were also the horse dealers. The involvement of the Roma from Comlăuș in dealing with horses is mentioned by historians as dating at least from the beginning of nineteenth century. According to Pali:

There were a couple of people who were knowledgeable [about the horse] If you, for example, wanted to buy, you would call for me, [one of these knowledgeable Roma]. So I would talk with the seller of the horse, or of the cow, and I would also have a sort of mirror. I would look at the horse (or oxen) to see whether it was healthy, whether it had a blind eye, and the buyer would haggle with the seller. So the 'specialist' received a sort of 'bribe' for saying that the horse does not deserve such a price, that it's lame, or has some imperfection... for he was knowledgeable, as a doctor would have been.

Again, the horse dealers in Comlăuș Roma community did not own horses, besides one or two for their carts. What they sold was not horses, but their knowledge about the horses, or, as it is implied, their rhetoric skills that would influence the negotiation between the buyer and the seller in the favor of those who hired them. Nevertheless, the position of a horse dealer involved a cash income, and it is presented by Pali as a prestigious one in the community, of an equal standing with that of the feather collectors.

He claims that these social distinctions were translated into marital policies, covering the 'cases for distinction' to be made in the pre-WWII Roma community:

CG The feather traders would choose wives among other feather traders?

Pali: Yes, one would choose among the "best" families (he literally says: "most visible"), those from a good "root." They got women from the same kind of people. The feather traders were the highest ranked. Those who lived out of this trade, they were not drunkards, they were thrifty people, who knew how to manage their household, and -as my wife mentioned- their women were working for the rich German households, and thus were able to provide for five or six families. That's how much stuff they would bring back home.

CG - Did they work for Romanians too?

Pali's wife: They did not work for Romanians then, nowadays they do.

Pali: "The [Roma] women from poor families would work for poorer German households.

The community is seen as divided between some old and well-regarded families, those from a “good root” and the rest.<sup>100</sup> As a feather tradesman’s son, Pali claims that the group to which his father belonged was similar to the old respected families in the community. Status differences are defined either by a ‘traditional’ criterion of old and respected families or by moral criteria such as thrift and the qualities of a good household manager, or of a hard-working wife, who worked for a rich German family. It seems nevertheless that all these criteria cover the households with a high economic standing in the community.

As employment in a German family could be passed from mother to daughter, the families of the women who work for the better-off German farmers were richer and more respected than the families where the women had to perform menial services for households of more limited means. This status position within the community that depended on women’s income was reproduced across generations.

Moreover, the analysis of the Roma woman and her menial jobs throws some light on the way farms (and economic income) were distributed in the village; as Romanians owned much smaller farms than the Germans, and their surplus was limited, the Roma women worked exclusively for Germans.

Education-wise Pali did not attend school, nor does he mention schooling in any way. He married when he was 21 and his wife 18. Together they had 14 children. They moved into the house of Pali’s father, who, as the main income provider was the main figure of the family. The young family helped with the cultivation of the three hectares Pali’s father received as a WWII veteran. The marriage decisions were taken by the parents, not by the young couple, something that Pali approves of:

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<sup>100</sup> For a treatment of good root vs. bad root distinctions among the Romanian peasants from the Transylvanian village of Ieud, see Kligman (1988). For an Hungarian example see Szent-Gyorgy (1983).

CG In those times could one take the wife one wanted, or were you expected to heed to the advice of your father?

Pali: In this matter... there was good understanding in the family. Young people obeyed their parents! They obeyed; they were linked by love, in harmony.

The good understanding between generations translates, for Pali, into the undisputed power of the parents over their offspring, especially in respect to their marital choices. Pali does not rank his wife as belonging to a 'good root' family. His wife's father died at 50, leaving his wife alone to take care of three girls and three boys. Pali's mother-in-law did menial services to a well-do-do German household, thus enjoying a certain respect in the Roma community, for, as we saw, the economic income of the German employer reflected upon the standing of the Roma women employed by him. However, Pali's wife's family, a single mother raising six children, went through hardship, and we learn that two of his brothers-in-law worked as servants in the household of a well-to-do Romanian peasant. He uses this example to dwell on the various life trajectories opened to his generation.

Pali: [Many Roma] were servants: they got two changes of clothes per year, one to be worn daily, the other one for the Sundays, and they also received 25-30 lei per year. One of my brothers-in-law was a servant too. (...) He was hired when he was 17-18 years old.

CG Were you expected to stay servant your entire life?

Pali: No, [one usually was a servant] for three-four years. There was one, Coditza, who was a servant for a longer period. (...) He was poor, dirt-poor, and he was a servant for seven-eight years in a row. (...) The Germans hired servants too, they did, but they hired mostly Romanians...(). Not Roma. The Roma were hired only by Romanians.

Working as a servant, hired annually, was a way in which teenagers worked to help their families, or to gather some means to build their own household. Unlike the Roma women, who worked almost exclusively for German households, young Roma men were hired as servants by the Romanian farmers only. The Germans hired servants too, but only poor Germans or

Romanians. Pali insists that the relationships between servants and their masters were sometimes difficult:

There was one who would be (let us not use a curse word)... very stingy. The servants worked for him 4-5-6 months and had to go. When the servant returned home from work he got rancid lard to eat, full of worms...and as they returned, very tired, from work, to see that all you got to eat was a broth of potatoes and lard, with worms were floating in it, you can imagine!

As his father had been a soldier in WWII, he received three hectares of land as a result of the agrarian reform of 1945. Nevertheless, the main productive activity of the family remained the feather trade, until the communist regime took over the free market collection of feathers and dictated state monopoly prices that made the feather traders lose their margin of profit. Consequently, by 1948-1950 the feather trade was gone, and Pali had to work by day at a neighboring state farm. He implies that in those years he literally did not have enough food:

Let me tell you, it was miserable! [One received] a quarter of bread! And, when I was hired, they cut even out of that quarter. They cut out of it ()... It was a life of pain, it was. There were some other farms where they fed people better, realizing that mistreating people would make them leave. I could not work more than four days, for I was starving.

Afterwards he decided to look for employment as an unskilled worker, commuting daily by train to Arad.

CG You abandoned the farm (...) and went to Arad?

Pali: Afterwards, yes. When I got it [the job in the factory], it was as if I received a pie as a gift! For I became employed. Oooh, then I was not lacking anymore [food].

It was a radical change, as it implied none of the things that were considered suitable for a Roma man. The reason for the decision to accept a steady industrial job appears to be the dire need. It was the hunger that chased Pali from continuing to work as an agricultural hired hand, as

his parents and grandparents did, and made him and the men of his generation to start new careers, unheard of to all previous Roma generations.

The forced industrialization that accompanied the advent of the communist regime created new jobs, and a larger number of skilled and unskilled workers. Seemingly for the first time in the history of the Comlăuș Roma community, men like Pali abandoned traditional jobs such as adobe builders, hired hands in agriculture, horse or feather trading for a job in a factory:

Pali: It was around 1948-1950 [when he began to work in the factory].

CG Assuming the communist regime was not in power, and the feather collection trade continued, your father would have liked to have you join him as a feather trader?

Pali: For sure [he emphasizes] it would have happened... but as they saw that it... they desisted to go on with the trade themselves.

Once he began commuting to the nearby town, Pali made a career for himself as a worker:

My first employer was UTA [textile factory in Arad]. Afterwards... I worked for seven years at UTA, and afterwards I went to Dimitrov [Arad railroad car factory], I learned the trade and became a certified locksmith. At UTA my job was to oil the engines. I had 50 weaving machines to take care of, and oil them constantly. In two hours I would finish all I had to do, and in the rest of the time I was just checking to make sure they did not overheat.

He moved from being an unskilled worker in a textile factory to a skilled (and better paid) position as a 'certified locksmith' in a railroad car factory. Pali's choice was not unique, as the great majority of Roma men also became industrial workers in Arad's factories. They commuted by train to and from Arad (a 30 minute ride) but, as Roma were settled at the village limit, they had to walk more than 2 km from their settlement to the main railway station of Sântana, unless the train did stop at a small station near their neighborhood. This made the Roma workers ask collectively for a convenient train schedule:

When we worked in the second shift we had to walk to the main railway station in Sântana. And then we had to wait 2 hours and half in the railway station, before our shift began at 10. And when we returned home, again there was no suitable train. We had to walk home [more than 2 kilometers]. So we, the workers, talked and made a petition. We indicated our [commuting] troubles. Look, we kindly ask you, we are having a life of pain. As we arrive home, we cannot rest, for we have children, and we kindly ask to set up for us a more suitable train. It took 4 years, but afterwards we got our train, and things got much better.

The train schedule incident illustrates the major changes in the Roma community brought by the communist regime: most of the men worked in industry, and commuted to the factories opened in Arad. Also, as the issue of the train schedule was affecting almost exclusively the Roma (as they lived very far from the main railway station) these Roma workers managed to put together a collective request that, in time, bore fruit.

Almost at same time, in early '50s, Pali's father joined the local kolkhoz with the land he received as a war veteran. From Pali's account, the family's experience with the collective farm was good, as they joined early, while most of the other villagers proved very reluctant:

Yes, when the kolkhoz was founded. For here, working at the kolkhoz was very [he emphasizes] lucrative. Especially when.. people were not that much inclined to join, they did it very late, very late.

In joining the kolkhoz rather early in the process of land collectivization Pali's family was not distinct from other Roma families from the village. Most of the Roma families owning land in Comlăuș received the land at the agrarian reform of 1945, and had neither the tools, nor the knowledge of running a farm, and consequently joined the collective farm early, as opposed to the Romanians<sup>101</sup> from Comlăuș, who resisted until the very end of the process, joining in

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<sup>101</sup> Roma are, of course, Romanians, but for the sake of differentiation I distinguish here between ethnic Romanians and Roma.

1959-1960. Consequently, Pali's family is typical of the Roma families of Comlăuș after the 1950: the husband was an industrial worker commuting to Arad, while the wife worked in the local kolkhoz.

Unlike most Roma workers, Pali did not retire from the factory. After he became a skilled locksmith he learned to repair watches, and became an autonomous craftsman (a member of the national union of craftsmen, the only authorized way to perform services –as a private craftsman- in the socialist regime), first as a watch repairer, and later on, as a painter:

Pali: After I left the factory, I went around various villages, repairing watches. This was my job for 50 years.

Wife: And afterwards he became a painter.

Pali: Afterwards I began to paint houses, and that's how I survived, until I retired. But I do not have a lot, 1450 lei, is this a decent pension, I ask you?

The 50 years he claims in his reckoning of years indicates that for a while Pali had two jobs, a 'formal' one as an industrial worker and an 'informal' one, for an additional income, repairing watches. It seems that the income from the second job was so good that in time he left the industrial job he had, and developed a rather singular and unusual career as an autonomous craftsman: besides repairing watches he began painting houses. In the context of the socialist regime, although legal (Pali was a certified craftsman, a member of the Craftsmen's cooperative), he really worked in a grey economy. In a later interview with his son, I was informed that especially the painting business was extremely lucrative, that Pali accepted large works with various well-to-do individuals, and used his sons to create a team of 4 to 6 painters, earning in some months double or triple the wage of a doctor.

The fact that Pali's family (14 children) is much larger than his father's family (2 children) is due to his mother's conversion from the Orthodox to the Baptist faith. In this, Pali's family was also unique, as most of the other Roma in the community remained Orthodox until the early 90s, when the huge majority joined the Pentecostal church. Pali remembers his mother's (and his own subsequent) religious conversion:

One Sunday my mother went to the village market... there was a [German] family, Henz Jakob, who owned a shop where they sold pencils, small blackboards to write on. We did not know he was of Baptist faith. So on that Sunday there were some Baptist brothers from Curtici [neighboring village] who preached and had a band. My mother heard the sermon, it was a sermon, I remember it well, on the blind Bartholomew, who was blind, and how our Lord Jesus gave him back his sight. (...) And when my mother heard this, she wept, for she had not heard about God's miracles. And she came back weeping. (...) Sunday they announced they'll meet at another family, and so we went, one, two, three, four and that's how we started."

Pali had a distinct trajectory among the Comlăuș Roma both in terms of religious faith (a part of a minority of non-Orthodox Roma) and in terms of his job as an itinerant craftsman working on his own, unlike the huge majority of Roma men, working in the factories of Arad. He and his wife had 14 children, two of whom died as infants. His wife remembers that, as the communist regime consolidated, Roma women began to give birth in hospital. Her first children were born at home, without any specialized help, but for the last ones, she had to go to the hospital:

CG You had 14 births, did you have them at home or at the hospital?

Wife: Most of them, I had them at home, but for the youngest ones, for example with Marcu, I went to the hospital. With Marcu I had twins, him and a girl.

CG Is the girl alive?

Wife: No, she died. She died when she was two years and a half.

Pali: After a while, it became compulsory to go give birth in a hospital. It was compulsory.

Wife: yes, but initially it wasn't the case.

The intervention of Pali seems to suggest that they would not have taken the pregnant mother to the hospital had not been compulsory. The reticence of the family toward ‘mainstream’ medicine, and their trust in magic medication appeared several times in our discussion. I was offered a yogurt fermented out of a special sort of mushrooms that, Pali and his wife claimed, could cure an entire set of diseases.

When I asked about his expectations about the future of his children he stressed that he counted on them as becoming industrial workers:

We did not have other ideas, we had trust in a job at the factory. We thought about school, that if the children studied hard, they’ll end up in a good job. As long as there were factories, we were sure that we’ll be able to earn a decent living. But about those kids that were good in school, the teacher would come and say, dear Pali, it’s a pity not to allow this child to study for he, or she is good, force them to attend classes, do not allow them to procrastinate.

He continues giving the example of a son and a daughter that were very good in school, and about whom he was contacted by the teachers. Later on, as I ask about their studies, Pali informs me that both these children had an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Given the average of a minimum of 10 grade education among the Romanian children, the fact that the most hard-working children of Pali barely graduated the village school is telling. Education did not mean much in the life-project of Pali for his offspring. The daughters married early: the daughter that was especially good in school, and who managed to have an 8 grades education married when she was 17. Most of his sons worked in the Arad factories and when massive layoffs began, after the 1990s, 4 of his children immigrated to Belgium. One child, named after his father, is a famous Roma Pentecostal preacher, and Pali is very proud of his achievements. Another son that Pali is very proud of is a local entrepreneur (see the Life story of Marcu in chapter five), who returned from a stint of a couple of years in Belgium as an illegal immigrant and who has a transport

company, linking the significant migrant community of Roma from Comlăuș settled in Brussels, Belgium with the village. He is also an elected representative of the Roma in Sântana City Council, and is building a mansion in the Roma area, for him and his family. Another one of his sons is also building a mansion in the center of Sântana, not in the Roma area, with the money he earns in Belgium.

Right now, both Pali and his wife are retired. They are helped in their household work by a domestic worker, a Roma woman from a different and distinct Roma community (she does not speak Romani, while all the Roma in Comlăuș do). It seems that the wage of the domestic worker is paid by some of their children. Toward the end of our interaction, Pali insisted that he did not feel that he was discriminated against when he and his friends worked in the factory, but mentions an interaction with a member of my extended family, who, in an argument in the market place, had utter racist insulting slurs at Pali and some other Roma who happened to be present. While race does not appear explicitly in the Life story of Pali, it is a powerful latent factor that accounts for the very distinct traits of Pali's life, when compared with those of his non-Roma fellow villagers.

Like Sali and Judit, and like Sena and Mitru, Pali lives in a moral community defined by ethnicity and language: while the Roma interact with both other moral communities, the Germans (from Comlăuș and Sântana) and with the Romanians from Comlăuș, they do consist in a different world: they have distinct occupations, a distinct form of customary law, and a distinct (pre-modern, pre-citizenship) form of political representation. Like the other two communities, they live in a spatially segregated area.

Pali's life trajectory takes off in the middle of a family of feather traders that enjoyed a distinct, elite class location with the Comlăuș Roma community and at least a middle range

status in the hierarchy of lineage distinguishing between ‘good root’ and ‘bad root’ families. Pali’s coming of age was almost simultaneous with the loss of the trade, as the advent of the communist regime introduced controlled prices that made the feather trade disappear. Pali adjusted, and for a while he and his family seem to share the same life trajectories with the large majority of Roma (and non-Roma) from Sântana and Comlăuș: while the men commuted to Arad as industrial workers, the women worked in agriculture, for the local kolkhoz. Nevertheless, Pali, perhaps under the influence of the valorization of autonomy and cash-centered occupation of his father, became a certified craftsman and moved into the grey economy: while his activities were legal, the large majority of his income was undeclared and un-taxed. In conclusion, Pali’s trajectory seems to have reached another point of high status within the Roma community, similar to the one his father’s family enjoyed: a job that allowed him the autonomy that a factory worker lacked, and an income that was definitely more substantial than the average income of a worker. The family relations are strictly patriarchal: it is the parents who decide whom their children will marry, and Pali claims that this is how things should be even at the time I took the interview.

Education was not something that Pali cared much for, and his ‘most educated’ children reached actually the minimum level of education that a citizen of Socialist Romania was required to have, – which implies that the other children were less educated. On the contrary, religion, emigration and entrepreneurship proved to be the ways that allowed for an upward mobility of Pali’s children: he is very proud of his sons: one of whom became a talented preacher (although he has an elementary education), the other, managed to emigrate and build a new life in Belgium, or the third, who became a well-known Roma entrepreneur and local politician.

### 3.7. First generational landscape

The life trajectories, I delineated in this chapter were selected along income and status lines, but also along local communities. I begin with two Germans: Judit, the heiress of a rich, mixed Hungarian-German family, followed by Sali, daughter of a middle-class German farmer. Next I move to the Romanians from Comalus with the story of Sena, a daughter of a middle-class Romanian peasant who married up, into one of the most prominent farmer family in the village, followed by the story of a child of a poor Romanian peasant who began as a servant, Mitru. I conclude with a glimpse into the Roma community with an account of Pali, a son of a feather-collector belonging to the elite of his community.

The life trajectories of this generation are marked by the impact of World War II and its consequences, mainly the radical political, economic and social transformations brought on by the advent the dictatorship of the Romanian Communist party and of the state-socialist regime. Consequently, these people's lives span over two very different political and property-regimes. Class situations, as well as statuses within community, are radically altered by the changes brought by the war and its aftermath.

I begin by addressing the village configuration in the pre-WWII era. The Germans from Sântana were undoubtedly the hardest hit: all their possessions were expropriated by the Romanian state in 1945. Many of them had been deported to labor camps in Soviet Union in the same year. Some of those who remained in the village were forced by the state to host in their very houses the families of Romanian peasants who had been colonized in Sântana, and who received the land formerly owned by the Germans. If the German community enjoyed the highest prestige among all the other inhabitants of the village, this position was partially lost after the war, as the huge majority of the German households were left without their economic

assets. The large part of the young generation of Germans began to commute to the new factories that the communist program of industrialization opened in Arad. The other significant occupation of Sântana's Germans was to be employed by the local collective farm. The fact that schooling<sup>102</sup> became much more affordable than before the war, and more easily accessible, prompted a number of Germans to attend college, or other specialized schools opened under the new regime, and to return to the village as teachers, engineers, agronomists or mid-level technicians.

Many Romanians from Comlăuș were beneficiaries of the 1945 agrarian reform, even if they received on average less land than the Romanians colonized in Sântana. This (second) agrarian reform increased the number of Romanian farmers, and eliminated the poor landless peasants from the village. The advent of the new, socialist regime and the policies of collectivization impoverished the land rich farmers, send some to prison, and encouraged the trajectories of poor peasants who engaged politically, turning them into cadres and mid-level managers. Reluctantly, the Romanians from Comlăuș did finally join the collective farm, in the last stages of the state's push toward a complete collectivization. Some Romanians from Comlăuș did become industrial workers commuting to Arad, although these were less numerous than the Germans who did the same.

Another community, the Romanians that the 1945 agrarian reform colonized on the lands expropriated from Germans, began a slow ascent among Sântana's communities. Each of these peasants received five hectares of good quality land, and, very early they had formed a collective farm that managed to provide its members with access to goods and services that were denied to the non-members. The 'colonists' build a new neighborhood with the help of cheap state-backed

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<sup>102</sup> On the impact of education in the state-socialism social structure see Jowitt (1978).

loans. This community controlled (with Germans in a second position) the rich Sântana collective farm and its revenues.

The Roma community from Comlăuș also benefited from the agrarian reform, although to a lesser extent. The changes that affected the rich landowners, especially the German ones, but also the Romanians, meant less demand for the domestic services of Roma women, and the agricultural services of Roma men. Also, the state imposed fix prices, cutting the margin of profit in the feather trade, leading to the disappearance of this occupation. The few Roma that owned land were among the first to join the collective farm, and under the pressure of dire need, most of the men from the Roma community began commuting to Arad as unskilled industrial workers<sup>103</sup>.

The transformations that affected communities in Sântana and Comlăuș during the late 1940s, '50s and '60s meant that most of the inhabitants ended up in several clusters of occupational-trajectories by 1962, the closing year of the collectivization process:

The colonized Romanians, Germans, Roma and Romanians from Comlăuș worked in the two collective farms. Some of them had become cadres and politically appointed collective farm managers (Mitru), while most of them turned into kolkhoz workers (Sena).

Another cluster of occupational trajectories, shared by Germans, Romanians and the Roma, comprised those who were employed in the industrial factories of Arad. Few moved to the city, but the large majority became commuters. This category was comprised not exclusively of men, however, especially for the Roma, most of the men commuted to Arad's factories, while the women worked in the local collective farms. Pali's transformation from an apprentice feather collector into an industrial worker illustrates allows me to illustrate these changes.

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<sup>103</sup> On Roma under state-socialism see Stewart (1997), Ladanyi and Szelenyi (2003).

The craftsmen in the village were not allowed to exist as individual owners of their business: they were forced to join either an umbrella organization named ‘the cooperative of retail and services’ or the collective farm’s workshops where they could continue to perform their services for prices that were set by the state or by the farm’s management. Also a limited level of family-based agricultural production and trade was tolerated by the regime: the autonomous business managed by Sali would exemplify this cluster.

Last but not least, another layer of trajectories gathered those who took advantage of the opening of the secondary and tertiary education and became members of the intelligentsia. While the village had had this category before World War II, it comprised a tiny minority of perhaps 10-12 people: a couple of priests, a couple of doctors and few (high school-, not college-educated) teachers. The post 1950s village saw these numbers increasing almost ten-fold. Both Judit’s trajectory and that of one of Sena’s children may illuminate this side of the story.

These occupational trajectories do gather together individuals from distinct communities: the cluster of the workers commuting to Arad (for example) includes Germans, Romanian colonists, Romanians from Comlăuș, as well as Roma. Nevertheless, the paths that led those people to end up as workers (or peasants in the collective farm, or members of the intelligentsia) depended very much on the community they belonged to.

In order to make sense of the changes that structured the life of these people, I will review several of the motives that frequently crop up in their life-accounts:

The family model in which they grew up is the traditional patriarchal family, where the old male accumulates the ownership (over land, or the family business) and controls the fate of the extended family. With the exception of Mitru (but not of his wife) not a single one of the members I talked to claimed that his or her marriage was decided by the young couple; instead,

the parents took decisions, informed by class and status considerations. While this family trait is seen as old and pertaining to a passed historical context, it seems to have remained dominant in the Roma community.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, young children were sent to work, and provided an income for their parents at a very young age: Sali become a servant at 13, while Mitru at 15.

One of the dominant elements of this generation is its limited access to education. With the exception of those better-off (such as Judit, or the two colleagues mentioned by Sena) the secondary education (seven grades) was the golden maximum that the large majority of the villagers could hope for. The poor peasants, such as Mitru, or Sali, when the increasing size of her family impoverished it, managed to study a maximum of four years, and in the case of Mitru, I tend to believe that it had been actually even less. The Roma studied in the best case as much as the poor Romanians did, but more often than not they did not attend school at all, like Pali.

A dominant element of the discourses of this generation was the emphasis on frugality and the relationship between frugality and food.<sup>105</sup> Sena remembers how even the rich Romanian peasants from Comlăuș eat less meat in order to save money. Mitru and especially Pali make the food one of the main focuses of their accounts: Pali decided to become an industrial worker as he did not have enough to eat, and in the next phrase he praises his new job in the factory: when “I got it [the job in the factory] it was as if I received a pie as a gift!” Mitru judges his former masters chiefly in terms of how well they fed him, and compares the “four” pigs he kills every year to the meager and weaker one that peasants killed before WWII. Food reveals two aspects of the life in the village: the deep level of poverty, as the poor villagers faced a poor diet that brought them occasionally on the brink of starvation (Pali), and the essential value of frugality:

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<sup>104</sup> On family models and gender relations among Roma see Engebrigstein (2007).

<sup>105</sup> On frugality and status, see also Verdery (1983), Kligman and Verdery (2011), Lampland (1995), and Sarkany (1983).

even those who could afford more food would not indulge in it, in order to save and accumulate more land.

However, most of the members of this generation tended to use their household as the main resource of food until very recently: even when bread ceased to be baked by the women of the house (1960-1970's), meat was provided by the pigs and chickens raised in the household. Cash was only used in exceptional cases in order to buy foodstuffs. One of the reasons for interaction between Romanians and Germans in Comlăuș after 1945 was given by the fact that many Germans, having lost the land and therefore the access to fodder, did not own cows, and out of the money they earned as industrial workers, they used to buy milk from the Romanian peasants.

The status of a villager was given by a multitude of factors, depending on the moral community he belonged to.

One of the essential criteria of positive honor bestowed upon a villager was notion of hard-work. I follow Lampland (1995:14) in stressing the essential role of “integrity of one’s labor” in defining one’s status. Judit uses the term “lazy” several times when she talks about those who worked in the collective farm, not to speak about her characterization of the Roma, who are to be despised for their avoidance of hard work. Conversely, Mitru, Sali, and Sena’s life stories cannot be understood without the focus they place on their social and economic mobility explained almost solely through their hard work.

Hard work represents also a key in understanding the relationship between parents and children: Sena is proud of her income at the collective farm, for working hard did allow her to raise two children, send them to school, and contribute, later on, to their buying of a car, which was a marker of prestige. Mitru’s story also is centered around the “from rags to riches” theme,

as he keeps emphasizing his low status start, as a landless servant, who, chose to become a party cadre in order to avoid hard work, and has ended up as a respected collective farm leader. Sali turns that theme around, and does not only use it to show how she did not end up poor, despite everything that happened to her, chiefly due to her incessant labor in her own garden, in her own household, and as a daily laborer. On the contrary, she was alarmed to realize that her daughters did not share her deeply-held belief in the value of hard work. Although Pali is also proud of his work as an industrial worker, in his case it seems that he, and the Roma community, seems to cherish more the autonomy of one's work than the integrity of one's labor.

The perspective on the value of hard work seems to constitute one of the crucial changes brought by the post WWII developments<sup>106</sup>. Although Sena is proud of her own and her husband's efforts, she wishes that her children go to school, and will not have to work as hard as she did<sup>107</sup>. Also, Pali is especially proud of two of his sons, who enjoy a high economic and status position without having to perform physical work: one is a preacher and the other one an economic and political entrepreneur. It seems that in the new, state-socialist context, education and the benefits brought by it partially replaced the previous key determinant of status in the village, hard work.

## **Chapter 4. Lives under state socialism**

In the following pages, I will address a set of six villagers who are the sons and daughters of those covered in the previous chapter. Once again, the main criterion for choosing these

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<sup>106</sup> On the changing value of work, see Lampland (1995) and Bell (1983) for Hungary. For Romania see Kligman (1988), Verdery (1983), and Heintz (2008).

<sup>107</sup> Bell (1983: 154) addresses the distinctions that peasants from the Hungarian village he studied made when they stressed that only those working in the fields, performing physical labor 'worked' while those who did not, like the brigade leaders and the managers, did not 'work' (and received an inordinate amount of income for that). However, when addressing the case of their educated children employed in white collar positions where they avoided physical labor, the same peasants agreed that this was 'work,' but an easier one.

individuals has been their positioning in the hierarchies of status and wealth within Sântana's communities. I begin with Ica, daughter of Sena, a college-trained village intellectual. I continue with Lică, the son-in-law of Valeria, a poor peasant turned skilled agricultural worker. Then I introduce Seppi, son of a middle class German farmer, who became a kolkhoz worker, and Resi, daughter of a poor German family, who became a construction worker. I conclude with the life of Pali, offspring of a poor Roma family from Comlăuș, who also became a skilled industrial worker.

#### **4.1. Ica N. (b. 1948)**

Ica (daughter of Sena, see chapter 3) is a Romanian from Comlăuș, born into a family of well-to-do farmers, who were labeled 'kulaks' or class enemies by the state-socialist regime. I interviewed Ica in 2005, when she was retired, living with her husband in the house they own in the "New Village" neighborhood of Sântana.

Ica has one younger brother (b. 1950) and grew up in a village transitioning from individual to collective land ownership. Her family was directly affected by the political persecution that the new regime directed against the high-status men in the village, especially against those affiliated with pre-war political parties:

When the communist regime came to power, they took away some old people, my grandfather, [among them] to the prefecture in Arad. [they say] young people were forced to watch them being beaten. I am not sure whether this is true or not. All I know is that my maternal grandfather disliked politics, and that only once, when a mayor of Comlăuș was needed who was not connected with any political party, he was appointed, but that lasted only 2-3 months.

The family lived initially in Ica's paternal grandfather's house, one of the richest Romanian landowners in Comlăuș. For this reason the communist regime classified him as a 'kulak' (exploiter), which placed him in a punitive tax-bracket: his taxes were so high that he simply could not pay them. The tax collectors came and annually confiscated goods from the household, taken away as compensation for the amounts the family owed the state in unpaid taxes. In these troubling circumstances, the young couple and their children moved away, and the land that initially was controlled solely by the family's patriarch was divided (in order to bring at least the young family in the 'middle class farmer' tax-bracket). The grandfather retained 16 hectares, while Ica's parents got eight hectares (of which four represented her mother's dowry).

It wasn't easy for my parents: I remember when we moved out of my grandparent's house. Those were the times when they kept coming to collect the taxes and [my grandfather] could not pay what he had to, so we moved out, someone owned a house on the same street, and there we lived, taking the furniture with us: the [grandfather's] house remained empty.

CG You did it to avoid having it confiscated by the tax-collectors?

Yes, and there, near the house, there was a gate, a fence and a back-gate, so when [the tax collectors] came from the town-hall, usually people warned us, so my father used the other gate to take away the cows or the horses.

Moving away with the furniture and hiding the cows (with the help of a supporting neighborhood community) were short-term strategies of coping with pressure from the state. It seems that Ica's family, like the majority of the villagers at the time, did not expect the regime to last much longer.

As a child, like her mother, Ica was taken out in the fields by her parents, but in her case this happened only as they preferred to have an eye on her, while she was allowed to study. She was no longer expected to contribute work to the well-being of the family:

I remember that in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade we had a sort of graduation test, and they [her parents] went out in the field hoeing, (...). they took us out in the fields not to make us work, but so that we won't stay at home with my grandmother, and keep us out of mischief... I do remember, I had my book and that I was sitting in the shade, under the wagon, reading.

She attributes the change in the attitude toward children, schooling, and work primarily to the influence of her mother:

I can state here that we were allowed to study thanks to my mother. I would not say that my father was against it, but he would not have... when he said [to the children]: "Go, sweep in front of the main door!" you know how it was in Comlăuș, [he'd say] "Put away that book!" and then my mother would intervene and say: "I'll go do the sweeping, let the children study!"

If previous generations of village children were sent to school, this overwhelmingly referred to the sons; daughters were married, not schooled. Ica acknowledges that her gender might have been an issue:

My father occasionally objected, saying that 'she's a girl' or something along these lines, but he never opposed my studies, he was just not into this kind of stuff. My grandmother –she was my mother's mother-in-law- when she saw how my mother kept sending us to study, she used to say [ironically]: "As if you're going to make priests or teachers out of them!"

It must be noted that even the wife of one of the richest farmers in the village did not see education as an available (and possible) career for her grandchildren. The expression "you're not going to make priests or teachers out of them" is one of the *topoi* of my interviews, not at all the creation of the old lady. Besides the gender bias (only men can be priests in the Orthodox Church), the expression, and especially its irony, testifies to a rigid perspective over status and social mobility in the rural world, assuming that everyone should and will keep to their stations.

However, the old 'stations' (the village farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen, and local intelligentsia) and the status hierarchies related to them were crumbling as Ica grew older. The new political regime, in its attempt to foment class struggle, divided the children too, into 'sons

and daughters of workers and peasants' of 'healthy class background' and offspring of 'kulaks' and other class enemies. By the early 1960s, the policies aimed against the 'class enemies' had faded in intensity, as the major objectives of the regime had been largely achieved: industry was nationalized, craftsmen gathered under 'cooperative' centralized structures, and the peasantry, the most stubborn part of the population, was almost completely collectivized. In this context, Ica was largely spared the political persecution reserved for the grand-daughter of a 'kulak:'

I had [political troubles] only once, when [as teenagers] we were nominated to join the Communist Youth Union, I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 14 years old, and I wrote in a declaration how much land owned my grandfather. (...) I was called by the teacher, who asked me: "What did you write there?" I wrote the truth, for I did not care if they got me into the Communist youth or not, I wrote it down, so things won't pop out later on [and cause me troubles]. The teacher was amazed that I could write down such a thing. (...) She surely supported me. (...) So all of us got into the Union [of Communist Youth].

Her family resisted collectivization until very late, in a context in which in 1950 Sântana already had a collective farm and in 1956 Comlăuș' collective farm was also established. By 1958, the majority of the villagers had already joined. Ica's grand-father had joined the Comlăuș collective farm two years earlier. The family finally gave in so that Ica could continue her studies:

My parents did not join the collective farm until I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, (...) for at the time one could not be admitted into high school if one's parents did not join the collective. (...) So my parents joined [the collective farm] by the feast of Epyphany [January 6th] because I was done with secondary school, was graduating 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and, that's why I say, perhaps because I did enjoy studying, they did not oppose it (.). and as there was a high school in Sântana at the time, it was easier [for them].

The educational policies of the state socialist regime meant that attending high school no longer required going to Arad: in 1958 a new high-school opened its gates at Chișineu-Criș, (only 20 km north of Sântana), and in 1961 a high-school was founded in Sântana proper. These

policies, coupled with the loss of land due to the collectivization of agriculture, made some villagers change their expectations concerning the future of their children who (girls included) were allowed to continue their education, either as high school students, or following the vocational school for tractor-drivers:

[Sântana's] high school was founded in '61. The new vocational school for agricultural mechanics was already established. For two years [the local high school had] just one class, and afterwards they had two: one specializing in humanities and the other one in hard science. (...) I think that my generation, as well as those a year older than us, went to school also thanks to the fact we had a high-school in Sântana. Your mother [she refers to my mother, CG], who is two years older than I am, she had to go to the Chişineu-Criş high-school, which was also recently founded; I remember that Ghiţa D and Nelu R [both four years older than Ica] were among the first who went to high-school. Earlier than that there was a high-school only in Arad, so fewer people went there: it was expensive to live in the town, to pay for the boarding school [internat] (...) and that's why I say that my generation was lucky to have a high-school here, in Sântana.

Access to schooling, as well as the change in the ways in which the future of the villagers' children was conceived were of very recent order, both in terms of education, as well as in gender terms, and resulted from state policies:

I remember that there were girls, two years older than I was, who did very well in school, but they did not continue their studies, as the people in the village had this conception [that girls are not supposed to get an education beyond elementary school] CG Perhaps these changes are related to the fact that people had lost their farms? I am not sure, but I would say that this was the idea, when one owned land, the children were kept at home. I remember I had colleagues [in the elementary school] who said that they did not come to school because they had to go hoeing or things like that.

Although the high school had no tradition, and was a very new institution, Ica stresses the education she received there was of a quite high quality, and that she continued to do well in high school too:

In my first year in high school, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, [two students of Sântana's high school] it was I and another student, born in [the neighboring village of] Olari who qualified for the county-level student competitions in physics. I earned the third place for my age and he for his. This happened despite the fact that I came from a village school. When the teacher told me the results, I could not believe it!" (...) In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I participated again in the 'school Olympics' and I did better in the physics competition than in the one in mathematics, but I do not know why, I was not so attracted by physics.

In 1966 Ica tried to be admitted as a college student in the mathematics department of the University of Cluj: "I tried to get into Cluj [University] but I do not know what happened, I did not have a good [enough] score" In this situation, she turned toward the mathematics department of (another) very recently founded school, the Oradea Pedagogical Institute:

[After her summer admittance test at Cluj] I tried again, in September at [the Pedagogical Institute of] Oradea. My father, bless his soul, kept pushing me: go, [try] don't wait for another year. (...) and I did not regret it. At the time, when I arrived at Oradea, I was one of their first cohorts, in 1966 there hardly were one or two generations that graduated at the institution, [As it was a new school, and there were not enough college professors] some of the professors came from Cluj, by bus [150 km] and our schedule depended on their commute.

Both Ica's high school admission and her college admission had been facilitated by the new regime's aggressive expansion of access to education for the masses. In this context, I highlight Ica's refusal to frame her first academic defeat – being rejected by Cluj University – in political terms, and to complain that she did not make it into college as she was a "kulak's cub."<sup>108</sup>

I knew someone who had a son in my class, and who used to say that her child did not make it into college because he was a 'kulak's' cub, but that was simply not true, we took the [Cluj University] college admittance test at the same time, and he did not get a good grade. I got my grade... there was a written and an oral examination (...) the last admitted to the section I chose had 7.33 and I got 7 [out of 10], so what can I say now, I could have [framed it in political terms too]... (.). But I don't believe stories that this one was not admitted as he was a 'kulak cub. Maybe it did make a difference, say, if there were two candidates for the same job, I don't know.

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<sup>108</sup> In Romanian "pui de chiabur."

Ica's rejection of the political bias of the regime is partially explained by the fact that she grew up in an already settled state-socialist regime, much less interested in fomenting class struggle. Had she faced high school and college admission during the 1950s, she would undoubtedly have had a harder time, and her status as a “kulak’s cub” would likely have mattered.

Still, for Ica and many of the members of her generation their life-trajectories appear to have been determined more by merit-based criteria than by political ones. She does not see the new Romania as biased against former rich land owners, her career being implicit proof. Also, despite the fact that the socialization of agriculture shattered the wealth and the status of her family, Ica talks about the positive dimensions of collectivization:

But you must know, whatever happened at the beginning [of the collectivization] with the advent of the collective and of the communists, the face of the village changed. There were some houses... [Her voice inflection suggests contempt... that the houses were small and poorly built]. Sure, our house, when we lived with the grandparents was [voice inflection suggesting that the house was different, bigger] (...) after collectivization, whatever they did, people got jobs, and the face of the village changed! [into better].

The positive assessment of state-socialism, and of the consequences of collectivization, coming from a ‘kulak’s cub’ is striking and makes a powerful point for the major changes that the economically vibrant kolkhoz brought in the lives of the villagers.<sup>109</sup> More than that, in Ica’s eyes, collectivization, as well as the other transformations of the village under the state-socialist regime meant a reluctant embrace by the villagers of a consumer culture, replacing the more austere attitude of the pre-war village:

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<sup>109</sup> However, it would be erroneous to generalize from this case: the economic output of Sântana’s kolkhoz was by no means typical for the performances of the majority of Romania’s collective farms.

I do remember when [the village became electrified] and we got connected to the grid... [people were debating] “Oh, should we get connected [therefore using and paying for electricity] or better not?” You see, people were not into luxuries, I mean, they were not that much into comfort, into enjoying the modern amenities.”

Once she was accepted into college, Ica qualified for a scholarship, so her studies did not weigh too heavily on her parents’ incomes, as two years later, it would happen with her younger brother, who followed in her footsteps:

I got accepted with a score I forgot, but I’ve been told: “you’ve earned a scholarship,” so just for the first month I paid for my own food and what-else, and afterwards I did not need to pay for anything. The scholarship covered the student dormitory, eating at the food-court, and about 30 lei for other expenses [laughing, as the sum was rather meager], anyhow, to go to see a movie was 1.5 lei, so it covered your bare necessities.

Once again, Ica emphasizes that she was not an isolated case, but one of many young people from the village who managed to get into college. Even her somehow reluctant father came to see his daughter as a college student, which, for the gender relations and expectations of the traditional roles in a rural family, was a special gesture:

My father came once to see me in Oradea, he came unannounced, and in those years the custom was that when a parent came to see a student, he carried food parcels [sent by the parents] for all the students who were from Comlăuș, and there were many of us: in the mathematics department there was S (...), there was Viorel R, and from the ‘colony’ Dorel L, many, also Valeria S who was studying Romanian, Neli B, the priest's daughter, so there were many of us. Somebody told me that my father was looking for me: my father??? [she was amazed]. So he came all the way to see me... you see, I assume that people came to appreciate education, it meant something [special] to be in college, otherwise he would not have come.

The status degradation and status restoration that Ica’s family went through are concisely expressed by her father’s take on his life:

“He said many times –you see, he was wealthy, wealthier than my mother was- he used to say: “Ah, God has taken away my wealth, but he gave brains to my children so they did study” [she laughs] so, somehow he was proud of our education.”

God had put things right in the end: although robbed of his position in the village, as well as his wealth, Ica’s father saw his family’s status restored to a high position in the village hierarchy through the educational and professional achievement of his children.

In the new Romania, Ica is a representative of the new intelligentsia, originating mostly from rural areas, that was created as a consequence of the policies of the state-socialist regime. One of the features of this new Sântana and Comlăuș intelligentsia was the desire of many of them, especially the teachers (but not only) to return and exercise their profession in their home village. However, one of the strings attached to free education under state socialism was that graduates had to accept to apply their freshly acquired skills wherever the state sent them. Ica saw herself as lucky not to be assigned to teach somewhere outside the county, but to her dismay she did not manage to get a job in Sântana:

I was lucky to be assigned to a school in our county, (...) at Cinteï, a village which is not far away [11 km from Sântana] but to where it was impossible to commute due to the lack of the means of transportation. So, I could come home only once a week, and every time I left [Sântana], I also had to carry bread with me, as there was no bakery out there... it was hard. I worked ten years there, I did not have any alternative.

As a young mathematics teacher in a small village, Ica turned into a ‘lady’ in her parents’ eyes, and in terms of the traditional status and moral order shared by the villagers, in Cinteï and everywhere else. In the ‘eyes’ of new state-socialist regime, she was the ‘product’ of state policies, expected to educate and enlighten the inhabitants of rural areas. Relatedly, she was a potential candidate for membership in the Communist Party.

There was a [Communist] Party official [activist] from Zarand [local administrative center] who, every time I attended the Communist Youth meetings, kept bugging me about becoming a [Communist Party] member. “Oh, give me some time” [I’d say] and, once, I’m not sure how, he got the idea that I was not really convinced about this party stuff, and with that official I had some troubles, later on, for someone from Zarand told me [in private]: “take care what you discuss with P [the party official] for he’s... [he’s a secret police informer]. “Let him be, I did not do anything wrong, when I think I am ready to be a party member I’ll simply make a request, nobody should... [push me]. Later on, I transferred from Cinteï, and here [at Sântana] they did not push me any longer to join [the Party], I guess as Cinteï was a small village, they did not have many possible candidates, while here, here they had plenty [of those willing to join the Party without being pushed].

As noted, it took Ica ten long years of living in a rented house in Cinteï and returning every week-end to Sântana until she finally managed to transfer her teaching position to her home village. Two years after graduating, Ica married a fellow-villager from Sântana, who was only a high school graduate, and therefore, in the new status hierarchy introduced by the emergence of the new village intelligentsia, had lower prestige than his wife. She does not touch that particular issue, but praises the fact that (very much unlike her mother’s marriage) her parents did not interfere with her choice and decision:

You know how it was, I married late, and they were telling me: “Get married!” [and I’d answer] “Oh, leave me alone!” (...) but not even when my [younger] brother married our parents did not say that she [the daughter-in-law] should be from here, or from there, no, they were, I’d say, quite modern in this respect, they allowed us to do as we pleased (...) I never heard my father say that I am somebody, or that I was wealthy, or something like that.

While she agrees that marrying at 23, two years after graduating college, was ‘late,’ Ica distances herself from other tenets of the traditional moral order of the village: that parents should decide the marriage of their children, that boundaries defined by status and wealth should not be transgressed, and that marriage with someone outside the community is undesirable. Addressing

the changes that her generation brought to the village, breaking with the traditional order, Ica invokes the ‘traditional/modern’ dichotomy when praising her parents for being ‘quite modern.’

Ica’s marriage broke another boundary in the village, as she did not marry someone from her own community, Comlăuș, but a young man from the ‘New Village,’ the son of a ‘colonist.’<sup>110</sup> She moved into her parents-in-law’s house, where she still resides, and had her first and only child, a boy, in 1971. Ica’s husband worked as an inspection officer for the Postal Offices in the county and thus commuted daily to Arad. The couple did well, as her husband remarked in an interview I conducted with him in 2005:

In those times, after I married, I bought a car, and very often we took holidays, either at the sea-side, or in the mountains... our income was sufficient. Nowadays [meaning the early 2000’s] it would be harder [to achieve the same life-style].

Ica’s family owned a new house built by her parents-in-law, who worked at the collective farm, and who had qualified for the state-backed mortgage assisting the ‘colonists’ to build their modern houses. The young couple’s income, combined with financial support from her parents (see the life of her mother, Nuța) not only allowed them to buy a new car –a significant marker of distinction in the socialist village- but also enabled them to engage in yearly leisure activities. Their life-style could not be more different than their parents’, who did not leave the village except in truly exceptional situations and for whom the concept of holidays, much less ‘paid holidays,’ would have been incomprehensible. Nevertheless, Ica’s husband regretted that he did not continue his studies and graduate from college:

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<sup>110</sup> See Chapter 2. The people villagers refer to as ‘colonists’ are those belonging to the community that settled in Sântana as a consequence of the agrarian reform of 1945-1946. At the same time, the neighborhood where these people built their houses and which is spatially segregated from both old Sanktanna and old Comlăuș, is called ‘the colony.’

I was sorry I did not go to college, after high school, I got lazy... for it was hard enough, to do both evening school, and the daily commute to work, it was not easy. And I did not push it further, out of laziness. It would not have been a bad thing to do, though; I could have... [gone, even if only at the Agronomy Institute, it still would have meant something.

The advantage that a college graduate had over someone like Ica's husband was not that much a material one. The wages were not that different, and, actually, for a skilled worker, who was lucky to have opportunities to do some extra-hours, the salary could have been significantly higher than that of a teacher or an agronomist. However, the boost in status, in the way others saw him, would have been significant. It was a fact that while villagers would call each other on a first name basis they would use the "Mister engineer/doctor/teacher" [domnul inginer/doctor/profesor] as a deferential way of marking the status difference.<sup>111</sup>

After Ica's transfer in 1979, she worked as a mathematics teacher in Sântana's main school. She retired in 2000, at 52, as women at that time were allowed to retire early, even before the standard retirement age of 55 for women and 60 for men.

One of her main concerns was her son, who grew up and went to the elementary school in Sântana, and afterwards to a high school in Arad, a half an hour commute by train:

He was commuting; he attended the Romanian Railways High School, and he was complaining [about his professors]: "any time I say something" [at school] I'm rebuked "you are a commuter, you don't study hard" [those who lived in the town did not have to commute, and were presumed to be more diligent]. And, lo and behold, when he took

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<sup>111</sup> While it is true that sometimes, especially in more 'formal' situations the word 'comrade' [tovarăș] was used, this was not at all the rule in day-to-day interaction. It was mainly in relation to people directly related to the party structures, or who had a party position that the term 'comrade' was used in everyday life. My grandfather, chairman of the kolkhoz and Communist Party congressman, was as a rule called "comrade chairman" (while, when he was not present, even his son referred to him as 'the Boss' [Șefu]). However, my father, who was a college graduate agronomist was usually called by those working with him 'mister engineer' [in Romanian an agronomist is an 'engineer agronomist'] and extremely rarely 'comrade engineer.' The same was valid for the kolkhoz crew chiefs, as they were usually appointed not due to their education level, but to their political and ideological allegiance: they were called, almost with no exception 'Comrade B' not 'mister B.' A 'gentleman' in the state-socialist village was someone with college education.

the [Romanian version of the] SAT, his score was higher than any of the average scores he got during high school.

Ica expected her son to do at least as well as she did, to go to college and become a member of the intelligentsia. In 1980s Romania college admission was decided by a number of tests that candidates had to pass. One way of boosting a child's chances to pass the admittance exam was to pay for private lessons given by professors at home, which Ica did:

I paid for private lessons in physics, for he was complaining [about that subject matter] and I told him: "go, take private lessons!" (...) His physics teacher at school asked me: "Why do you pay for private lessons for him? Are you afraid he won't pass my class?" [So I told her:] Lady, I am a teacher, and I have only one child, everybody wants to get into college, it is in my interest to help him be prepared.

She had to fight her son's distrust in the fairness of the educational system: he did not seem to trust that grades were merit-based, but thought that his teachers were rewarding those who brought them gifts:

He [her son] would tell me: "Do you know how all [students] come with large bags [with gifts] and leave them there, for the teachers?" All the time he told me that he did not want to go to college [fearing he will be unfairly rejected] until he saw what happened to his college admission scores.

Her son was admitted into college and after he graduated as an engineer specializing in the Textile industry he was hired by a private firm in a middle-range position, supervising the storage of products.

Călin says now: "according to my job, I am not a 'gentleman' for I rest on my chair only as long as I'm eating".. He's in charge of storage, and [he says:] "I have to be careful, supervise the people I'm in charge of, for some of them try constantly to cheat, not doing their work, so I have to... [take care], especially since they work for a business owner now."

Although Ica's son did graduate college in post-communist Romania, this fact alone does not entitle the holder of a degree to a secure job in his/her field, nor to a special status. He seems to

resent his current position, which is more similar to that of a foreman, eternally chasing his men, than to one of an engineer. Complaining that he sits down only to eat, Călin seems to suggest that for him a 'gentleman' (in the terms of his grandmother) would have a clean job, sitting at a desk, and doing intellectual work versus someone who has to perform physical tasks to earn a living. He used to live in Arad, where, with the family's help, he was able to buy a studio. The real estate prices are high, but as in the previous generation, familial financial assistance made it possible for children and grandchildren to realize some if not all of their daily aspirations. Currently Ica's son took a bank loan and bought a new one bedroom flat, and considers moving back in Ica's house in Sântana. Moving back would allow the young couple to rent out both the studio and their new apartment and use the rent in order to pay the mortgage.

I see in the life of Ica one of the major inflection points of the transition to state socialism. On the one hand, Ica was the offspring of a local rich family, who was most probably expected to marry after graduating seven grades, with a man chosen by her parents according to specific wealth and status considerations. The traumatic loss of her family's status and the pauperization related to it could have easily marked Ica for her entire life. On the contrary, Ica took advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the new regime, and, with the steady support of her family, and especially of her mother, she managed to regain partially the status lost by her family. Her life trajectory had begun as a daughter of a farmer stigmatized as a "kulak's" cub, who was initially a poor student but who eventually through her educational attainment became a respected member of the local intelligentsia. Although she has reasons to regret the pre WWII political and economic regime, the opportunities she found under state socialism made Ica appreciate, and later regret, some of the dynamics of the world in which she grew up and became an adult. The 1970s marked for her and her husband one of the brightest

periods of their lives. Ica is less content, however, with what the changed historical context of the 1980s and 90s offered her son. The competition for college was less merit-based, and the current job market for her son is tight. Seen from her own perspective, her son's trajectory is less upwardly mobile than hers, his status less prestigious, and his income limited. From the daughter of a well-to-do family, who became a member of the village intelligentsia, I turn now to Lică, offspring of a poor peasant family from a village situated in the hills of Bihor, who became a skilled agricultural worker.

#### **4.2. Lică J. (b. 1948)**

Lică is the son-in-law of Valeria (see chapter 3) having married her daughter C. He is an ethnic Romanian from the village of C., situated in a hilly region of the neighboring Bihor County, and the third born in a poor family of “six siblings, two parents and my grandfather.” His father owned a small amount of land -four hectares on which he cultivated wheat- which he worked with a single horse, and very often relied on the work of his children:

We were young, attending school, and he [the father] used to take us out of class, for he did not have anyone to help him work the land. ‘Come, lead the horse, and go!’ Why, we were small children at the time, we were very tired, and we worked the land.

Lică sums up his perspective on the world in which he grew up as a poor villager, where cash was scarce, consumer goods were almost entirely absent, and children wore their older siblings' clothes:

With the money one earned, one could hardly buy anything at the local store. People bought things there more through a form of barter [than paying cash]. They bought sugar, paying with eggs or beans. That's how they got by. It was hard! I don't even mention, for example, buying clothes for children, it was entirely out of the question! In my family, we had a problem, for there were four girls and we were two boys. My

brother was the youngest, we could not easily use the others' clothes; it was the girls that managed this way. It was tough.

He remembers the social distinctions in the village of his childhood, when he mentions the beginning of the new regime's efforts to create land associations:

It did not work at the beginning, for people were divided: those who were wealthy in the village, they kept to themselves. However, [disparagingly] their houses, their clothes, they weren't so different from the others', except they owned more land and more animals.

CG Were they more respected in the village?

I would not say that they were, but they kept to themselves, they helped each other. The rest, those who did not own much land, they had to work by the day for [the rich]. They would call you, 'come and work for me,' but when you did, they did not pay. They did not have... [money] to pay, so they gave you food, and mostly, drink. They kept themselves apart, [the wealthy ones] and I'm afraid our society will, once again, be marked by this [kind of] division.

The family's access to schooling changed in time. Lică assigns these changes to the state-socialist regime's policies toward education: his older sister, who grew up before the implementation of the new educational policies, had limited access to education:

Only two sisters [the eldest] stopped after the 5th grade, the rest of us did graduate 7th grade. The two... could not. They did not have the possibilities, at that time it was hard to study, this chance was not available [to those like us].

Once again, as in Judit's case, timing was of the essence: had those girls been born a couple of years later, they would have been inscribed in the new educational trajectories opened by the new regime. Judit was in the opposite situation: the new educational policy adopted by the state socialism regime hindered her admission to college, while her older brother had the chance to become a student before their implementation.

By the time Lică graduated 7th grade, he had the chance to get free boarding at a vocational school of mechanics for agriculture which had recently opened in a neighboring

village, Tileag. However, because the future school building was still being re-furbished, Lică was sent more than 80 km to the south, at a similar vocational school in Sântana. Lică was not the only child who benefited from this new access to education: "from my generation, my cohort, the majority of us continued our studies, the majority came to Sântana, and over the years [the generations following them] also came to study in Sântana."

For Lică, being hired and mastering a trade was a marker of social distinction which he had the ambition –and the opportunity- to attain, the first one in his family:

In my village, there was only one man who had a job [and people admired him:] ‘Aah, this one is employed, he receives a [monthly] wage and he’s doing fine.’ So, I was ambitious: I graduated 7<sup>th</sup> grade, it’s true, I did not have great grades (...) but I had passing grades, and I went on with schooling.

At 14, Lică left his village, to which he never returned except for short visits to visit his family.

He attended the Sântana vocational school for mechanics for agriculture and lived in the boarding house:

Here it was also difficult. [Most of the today’s] schools had not been built yet. (...) The boarding house offered pretty good conditions: in the basement the classes were taught, and each of us has his own closet, exactly like in the army: a closet to keep ones clothes, and books. (...) But one had to work. After classes nobody told you, go to the dormitory and study, instead we were loaded on trucks and taken to Feldioara [to a sand exploitation] where we had to shovel the sand on to the trucks, for at the time there were no check for word excavators. (...) That’s how the main building of the school was built. (...) One had to work, once you returned from there, you were dead tired. The food was good, the food was very good. (...). That’s how I spent three years here, and that’s how I graduated the vocational school.

1966 was a full year in Lică’s life: he graduated school and began working as a tractor-driver for the Sântana center for mechanized agriculture (SMT), which provided the tractors and the agricultural tools that serviced all of the collective farms in the region. At the same time he married C (b. 1947) and had his first son, H.

He met his future wife C in the village, as she attended the same school, and it so happened that C's mother (Valeria, see her life-story in the previous chapter) originated from the same village as Lică. The two married against the will of C's father. In an interview I conducted with C in 2005, she remembers:

I don't know, he did not like [Lică] as he's from the country side, and... I-don't-know, he was from a family with many children, they were six, and, I-don't-know what else [my father] disliked, but he did not want him [Lică].

It appears that it was mainly the economic standing of Lică's family that her father objected to. However, the couple got married, moved in the house of Lică's parents-in-law, in the "New Village" neighborhood of Sântana. At this point Lică would have preferred to return to his village, but, unlike some of his colleagues from Sântana, who were sent away to work in distant villages, he was offered a job as a tractor-driver at the Center of Mechanized Agriculture in Sântana, which suggests that he was a well-regarded student. Being a tractor-driver in those years, especially a young one, meant hard work:

We were so many tractor-drivers at the centre of mechanized agriculture that in the morning they lined up like in the army. And the shop-manager [would say]: you and you go to Vârșand [a village 32 km to the north,] and you and you to Sântana [?'s fields]. And [we got] only the night shift [the day shift was reserved for older and more experienced drivers]. And you returned from the fields only on Wednesday and on Saturday, or Sunday. Out there [in the fields] we had had a wagon-dormitory, it was all settled. (...) [As a tractor-driver] you were only a guest in your own house, that's what you were, a guest. Wednesdays and Sundays you ate at home, washed yourself, slept, for you were dead-tired, and on Monday, you packed your luggage and off you went!

His initial wage was not much ("704 lei") but, as we also saw in Ica's story above, the life of the new couple was different than that of their parents. The accumulation of consumer goods replaced the drive to buy more land, and possessing goods was a marker of social distinction. In a 2005 interview with Lică's wife, she recalls:

When TV sets began to be sold (...), I remember we were the first on this street to own one. R [a neighbor] came to us to watch TV. We owned one, for Lică bought one with 2800 lei, I'll remember this as long as I'll live. A Romanian brand: 'Diana.' I remember my first son was young, two and a half.

I assume that Lică's income was not limited exclusively to his nominal wage, for he did put in a lot of extra hours, but even taking that into account, the effort to buy the TV set must have been appreciable as its price was four times his monthly income. I see the story of the "Diana" TV set as illustrative for the new forms of distinctions, grounded in the consumer culture that state-socialism made possible in the village. Lică's wife (who remembers the brand of the set after more than 40 years) stresses that they were 'the first on this street' to own a TV set, and that neighbors came to watch.

By the end of the same year, 1968, Lică was drafted for the compulsory 16 months of military service. Even as a soldier, Lică was marked by his new status: he began the service two months after the 'regular' soldiers had, as he was supposed to be drafted in September, when the tractor drivers were needed for harvesting. They were granted a two-month leave, allowing them to finish their agricultural work, as if they were serving their military duty. When he finally left for his Bucharest unit, he was placed in a platoon that consisted exclusively of tractor-drivers: after an initial training, he worked in a military engineering unit, leveling aviation runways at Bucharest's main airport or creating new roads in Moldova's mountains, until he finally returned home in the first months of 1970. In the same year, his second son, Z, was born.

As his schooling was supported by the state, Lică had signed a five year contract as a tractor driver. Therefore, upon his return, he was hired at the Center for the Mechanization of Agriculture in neighboring Caporal-Alexa, 5 km from Sântana:

Then, I began to work at Caporal's section [of the center for mechanization of agriculture] in 1970. Meanwhile, these centers for the mechanization of the agriculture began to modernize. And agricultural work took off. Agricultural work took off, we got tools, equipment, all the tractor-drivers were graduates of a vocational school... (...) I cannot lie, I liked it. We had good equipment, entirely new. Brand new tractors, wagons!

The 1970s was a period where secondary economy flourished in the area: the villagers used their rather large back-yards for intensive cultures of vegetables and took advantage of the higher prices one could get at the farmers markets located in areas less ecologically fit for vegetable production. Lică was able to use the brand new equipment to transport his and others' vegetables to the market in Oradea, which significantly added to his monthly wage:

As I got a brand new tractor at Caporal, I was in charge with transporting stuff. I had two wagons. Those were the times when people cultivated in their back yards bell-peppers, tomatoes, so I was always carrying the vegetables to Oradea [a larger town, in a less favorable ecological area, where the prices of the vegetables were higher]. I used to leave in the evening, and sell in the morning.

CG Was it OK, to use the tractor and sell your own (privately produced) vegetables? Nobody minded. Of course, you had to get from the city hall a card as an individual agricultural producer, stating that you could sell things from your backyard. (...) It was lucrative! At the [town-market] it was I who set the price [of my vegetables].<sup>112</sup>

Nevertheless, second economy earnings were smaller when compared with the income of those who worked for Sântana's collective farm in the 1970s: after three years, he left his job at Caporal, and moved to Sântana's Centre for Mechanized Agriculture. He did so at the insistence of his father-in-law, a 'colonist,' who used his old ties with Sântana's collective farm chairman, as well as with Sântana's [Communist] Party secretary at the center for mechanized agriculture (both of whom were themselves old colonists), to get his son-in-law transferred. The reason for

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<sup>112</sup> While it is hard to approximate Lică's earnings, the general experience of the villagers selling vegetables on the market had been a lucrative one. Given that Lică could afford to drive large quantities of vegetables to the markets of his choice (depending on the fluctuating prices in the neighboring areas), he must have been doing better than the average villager engaged in the same trade.

the change had to do with the income differences between those who worked for a small collective farm, like the one in Caporal, and those who worked for the collective farm in Sântana, an economic power-house.<sup>113</sup>

We, the tractor-drivers, we got a share, 5%, out of the harvest amount that was beyond the amount required by the [Communist Party five-year set] plan. We received everything, everything they cultivated they gave us (...)

CG They wanted to motivate you to put in a high quality job?

Yes, they owed us this much, when the harvest went over the planned one. And, here, in Sântana, people got [he stresses]: money, cereals, wheat, corn, sugar, whatever you could think of!!!

In a point that underlines the large regional income discrepancies that existed in the socialist-state regime, much too easily assumed to have been homogenous, Lică addressed the differences between the two collective farms for which he worked as a tractor driver. Although they were located less than 5 km apart, their size, their economic results, as well as the income of the people working for them were different. Lică attributes this difference to the outstanding performance of Sântana's collective farm in the 1970s<sup>114</sup> (which he implicitly compares with the circumstances of 2005, when I did the interview):

In Sântana they had a great harvest, sir! They did! There are some, who say that the collective farm was not economically efficient, but they can't tell it to me! There was corn, there was wheat. I have not seen that much wheat in my life, as I saw here at Sântana in those years, from 1970 until 1979-1980. You had to slow down the thresher-harvester, that much wheat we had. And I harvested just one lot and the harvester's bunker was full. Nowadays, you get it full after harvesting for half a day!

The economic performances of the collective farm translated into financial advantages for those who worked there, which is why Lică's father-in-law wanted him transferred to Sântana's unit:

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<sup>113</sup> For a detailed presentation of the evolution of the Sântana kolkhoz focusing on the collectivization process, see Goina (2009a).

<sup>114</sup> Recall that, as detailed in chapter 2, Sântana's kolhoz had been a successful economic enterprise, as well as a 'model kolkhoz' for the state-socialist propaganda.

Those working in the fields, the managers, had their wage in direct relationship with the income of their tractor-drivers. Here at Sântana people did earn money! [he emphasized]. People worked hard, but also earned a lot. Why, a manager of a section would earn 10 000 lei per month,<sup>115</sup> in those years. The competition for those positions was cut-throat. But the tractor-drivers...they earned lots of cash. This happened only here, in Sântana and Comlăuș, those were somehow special farms, where they had outstanding economic achievements... it added up.

In these fortunate economic circumstances, Lică and his wife decided to move out of the house they shared with their in-laws and build their own home. They bought a spot a block away from C's parents, and bought a house in 1976. Lică is very proud of his modern house, and of the efforts he made to get it, especially in a single-income family, as his wife was not employed.<sup>116</sup>

I was very frugal: not with respect to food, but my last money I always saved. And when my father-in-law saw that I had saved 49,000 lei, he gave me some money. I also took out two loans, of 10,000 lei each, to be paid back in a year. [The monthly payments for the loan] took away my entire wage. This happened when I got the house. (..). But I was lucky I was here in the village and did not have to pay for potatoes, tomatoes, bell-peppers, onion, wheat, all these I got from the collective farm. And everyone cultivated their back-yards, and they gave us potatoes, tomatoes... "he is a tractor-driver, give him, for he's building." I did not have to pay. That helped a lot.<sup>117</sup>

Although it is certainly hard to assume that a family of four got by with no cash income at all –for he claims that all his cash income went to paying back his loan- this quote clarifies the way in which village life in the late 1970s was structured around two kinds of income: a cash income, of which a meager percentage was used for food, and an income in cereals, vegetables, sugar, and other products that the collective farm produced and distributed as payment to its

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<sup>115</sup> To make sense of that figure it is worth remembering that the top wage in the unit, of the director of the entire center for the mechanized agriculture, hardly reached 3,000 lei per month.

<sup>116</sup> While remaining a housewife was not the rule among the women of this generation, it was not impossible that either by choice, or at the request of the husband, some wives would not get a permanent job.

<sup>117</sup> Lică's mention that being a tractor-driver was the reason why villagers helped him can be interpreted either as the fact that he is a working-class member (he is not well-off) and therefore deserves to be helped, or in a more instrumental way: as he is a tractor-driver, he could 'pay-back' the help he receives by transporting things that the villagers needed in his spare time.

members. The village household was almost entirely self-subsistent in terms of food: the importance (for the villagers) of the amount of corn they received from the collective farm is due to the fact that more corn allowed them to keep more hogs and chickens, so less corn meant less meat throughout the year.

By 1979 Lică had health problems - back pains - most probably caused by the lack of suspensions on his tractor, so he requested to be given a job as a mechanic in the repair shop of the Center for Mechanized Agriculture. The job change may have correlated with his earlier comment that precisely the years 1979-1980 marked the end of the period when the income of those working in the collective farm's fields was high. The job in the shop was not as back breaking as the one in the fields, it involved no extra-hours during the period of intensive agricultural work, and the wage was determined by seniority:

[Unlike the added income received by those working in the fields,] here you got the wage and nothing else. You worked 8 hours. The wage was commensurate with seniority. Those who had worked already 20 years, those got the best wages. (...) [You see,] the foremen, the skilled mechanics, who were all qualified as 'masters,' they were only a notch above my wage, as I had one of the highest degrees as a qualified worker. So the wage differences were minimal. Even the director [of the center], well, he had an additional sum for his leadership position, but even the director, I am quite sure he did not earn 3,000 lei. In the end, when I had some arguments with the shop-manager, M., he was like: "What, [Lică] your wage equals mine?" "Yeah, [it does, I answered] but do you work as much as I do?"

This quote illustrates how a worker in a "workers' regime" seems to have enjoyed, in the 1980s, circumstances in which a skilled worker's income was very similar to that of his foreman, and not very different from that of the unit's top manager.

In 1982, at 34 Lică became a father for the third and last time. As he put it, he and his wife had agreed: "Let's try again, maybe this time it's going to be a girl! But it was a boy once

more.” As father of three, he continued to work at the same shop until the year 2000, when he retired early, for medical reasons.

After the regime change in 1989, there was a period when workers were offered the chance to become the owners of their own shop, receiving some shares for free, as employees, and being allowed to buy shares:<sup>118</sup>

When the privatization began, [we were like:] Oh, let’s all buy! Well, at the time we were many workers there, [so the idea was] let’s pool the money and buy shares. And people began to buy shares, and some actually put money in it, besides the sum that was subtracted from our monthly wage, for ‘privatization.

However the early 1990s turned sour for the Center for the Mechanization of Agriculture in Sântana. According to Lică’s perspective, the management mismanaged the center and followed their vested interests: they sold the shop’s equipment, piece by piece:

[The leadership] explained to us [the workers] that they have a deficit [in their budget] that the accountant left, and let’s forgive her and move on. Then the center’s director, L, had a deficit, 40,000 lei or something, so they asked us to forgive him and not send him to prison. (...) And then, hey, B [the new accountant] had a loss too... Then they sold everything: “It is not a profitable business, we have to sell.” [they said] All the equipment we had, we had lathes, milling machines, planers, we had a foundry, we had huge pneumatic hammers, all you could dream of! They sold everything to some Serbians! (...). If they were functioning fine in Serbia, why couldn’t we work with them here? And now, what were they left with? One lathe they are trying to use, for the other one is broken, they don’t have a milling machine anymore, they don’t have anything, and [the centre] subsists mostly on the money it gets for renting out the main hall to a German enterprise, which is enough to pay the wages of the leadership who remained there, but the people, the people who bought shares, they’ll never see any money from there.

He concludes: “They [the leadership] destroyed everything.. you should have seen the main shop [with emphasis] we had... and the other shop.. you found there every single tool you could think of!”

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<sup>118</sup> For this form of privatization, selling shares to the workers, see Chapter 2.

Even worse, the slow disintegration of the center meant that more and more workers lost their jobs, or had to leave:<sup>119</sup>

In 2000 I retired.., maybe they would have fired me, for they kept firing people: look, these have been recently hired [so let's fire them first], those received a warning for some mistakes made [so let's fire them too]... so, slowly, slowly, only a few of us, those who had a lot of seniority, remained... and there were engines that kept coming to be repaired, but there were no longer any workers to do the job. And we were talking among ourselves: they'll come for us, if not this time, then the next time when they'll reduce the personnel.

The workers employed various strategies when faced with the possibility of unemployment. For those from Lică's cohort who were already over 50, bribing the medical commission and retiring for "medical reasons" before the legal retirement age was a possible way out:

There was a worker, at the center, about my age, who told [the leadership] that he'll retire. He approached me, and told me that he can loan me some money... for you had to 'give' to the commission [the medical commission that decided whether a person qualifies for early retirement for medical reasons], those doctors expected to be 'paid' in German Marks. But I told him, I do not need anyone's help, I do not need charity.

By 1999 Lică had some troubles with the remaining leadership of the center, who did not accept his refusal to drive a truck after an incident caused by his high blood pressure. In a period in which state-backed services, such as medical insurance, and the payment for medical leave, were still covered by the state, Lică took advantage of the institutional and bureaucratic intricacies of the post-communist transition. He managed to take an initial medical leave of three weeks, and afterwards, a one-year medical leave<sup>120</sup> and in this way he removed himself from the

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<sup>119</sup> In a contentious culture like the one of the US, workers who lose their jobs might be tempted to sue the company. However, but a couple of years following the demise of state-socialism the idea to sue the company would have been hardly thinkable. The attitude of workers toward the juridical system was formed under state-socialism, and the idea of an impartial justice that would be fair in a dispute between a citizen versus a state-owned enterprise would have seemed ridiculous at best.

<sup>120</sup> It is not unlikely that he had to bribe the doctors to grant him such a lengthy medical leave.

threat of being laid-off, while his monthly income did not depend on the performance of the unit where he was hired:

The ladies managing the center were asking me: “How long are you going to remain on medical leave?” [He answered:]“Until you’ll be sick of paying me!” And I was being paid, 900,000 lei each month. The [remaining workers at the center] were paid half the wage [as the center was unable to pay them any longer a full wage].

Finally, at 52, in 2000, Lică did get a medical commission to approve his retirement on ‘medical conditions.’ He is not unhappy with his pension, although it is less than what he would have qualified for had he worked until 60. Lică works the land that his wife received after the collective farm was disbanded, 1.75 ha, and in 2011, was still very active (despite his medical condition).

One of Lică’s main concerns is related to the fate of his three sons. He addresses the trajectory of each, beginning with the eldest H., born in 1966, who has two children:

He lived in Pâncota [neighboring town] with his wife, then he got a job at the Romanian Railways Company, indeed, he was promoted, he managed a warehouse, then checked the tickets on the train, and, all in vain, you see, he cannot get by, to own a house. He was unfortunate to have solicited a house from the state precisely when the [1989 Romanian] revolution occurred, and it did not work like that anymore. And go try to buy a house nowadays [suggesting the prices are prohibitive]! Oh well, his job is renting him a house now, and that’s how they live [obviously, this is not what he would have hoped for his son]. I’d like to help him, but how can I? I have no means to help him.

Although his eldest son had acquired the same educational level he had, and although he is a qualified worker, in Lică’s eyes, the current economic situation puts H. (and his family) at a stark disadvantage with the position Lică enjoyed when he was his son’s age.

The second son, Z., is also married and has two children. At the time I conducted the interview, Lică was happy that he had not advised Z. to go search for work in Italy, where his

sister-in-law lived. Z's wife had already left for Italy in order to work and earn money for her family while Z took care of the children and worked in a Sântana factory where the German car industry outsourced the production of cables. After a while Z's wife made a new life in Italy, abandoned her family and divorced Z., who had to sell their house, and to move back with his parents, counting on his mother's help with the children and working at the same factory.

Besides the family troubles, Lică complains about the way in which workers are treated at the new factory where Z. works:

I look at the cable factory where Z. works: They are not even allowed to organize a trade-union! "If you organize one, we'll fire you!" And they do, when they [the management] hear that this [worker]... they fire him. [So, the others are saying] "They're going to terminate our employment, so let's drop it." [Lică's advice:] Stand up, stop working, all of you. Let's see, with whom we will process cables here?" (...) You see, under the communist regime, if a foreman shouted at you, you said "I'll go [complain] to the Party secretary or to the Party committee" (...) they begged you not to go. (...) Nowadays, they [the new owners] will hit you straight on your head, and you're free to go and complain wherever you want... [and nobody would listen].

In his second son's story there are two themes of post-1990 Romania: the family complications created by the large number of young people who look for employment in western Europe, and the new configuration of industrial relations, brought by the influx of western capital outsourcing factories in the country due to low labor costs.

Finally, the youngest, unmarried, of Lică's sons emigrated illegally to Spain, in 2004:

Look, the youngest one causes me trouble. I told him, stay here and get a job... he worked for a cable tv firm here in the village. Well, you might get a better job, whatever the wage might be, since abroad the economic situation might change. [In western Europe] they're not paid as they were some years ago.. He cannot legalize his situation out there, and on the phone he told me: I might be back home in August, and I'll stay home for a month! [Lică answered] "To hell will you come back!" [Knowing that crossing the border without a passport is risky and highly unusual only for a visit] "You stay there, and try to get a job!"

For Lică, the new Romania born after 1990 did not bring anything good: the factory where he worked was sold piece by piece by people who got rich, he lost his employment, and none of his children has a good job, or a chance to become a home owner, one of the elements that for Lică is equivalent with an autonomous, self-sustaining family.

In more general terms, at the time we held the interview (2005), he was unhappy about the way things were going in Romania: he looked back favorably on the process of the collectivization of agriculture, and the radical break it marked from the way agriculture had been done before:

I remember my father, who had a horse, and who scythed the wheat, then bound it, manually... how much could we get out of that, could you call that a harvest? And the kind of wheat, they used [unsophisticated, low yield] local breeds [dismissingly].

Also, Lică is against the privatization of land, if mere ownership results in a situation where there is a lot of land which is not cultivated:

This is my opinion, and I keep stating it: This land is owned by nobody! It belongs to the entire people, to those born here. Each and every one of us must live off of it. But we do it differently, everybody wants to be an owner, to have a paper [an ownership certificate], even if the land lies fallow, better own it and die of hunger, or bring food from abroad for double the price.

In his opinion state socialist industrialization was an achievement (as was collectivization in his view), and he does not have any hopes that Romania will get back to the degree of industrialization it had before 1989. Also, in his view, the growing wealth disparities mark new forms of interaction between people, and those with whom he identifies, the 'small people' lack more and more the respect they deserve, in the eyes of the others:

[Under communism] high positioned people, the leaders from the county level, important people.. talked to you, equal to equal. (..). Nowadays this is impossible, the new land owners, the industry owners... with these people you cannot talk any longer,

for they would not talk to you. The worker does not have anything to say anymore. You do not have the right to talk. You do not have any rights. (..). Even the trade-unions are fading. Here is not like in western Europe. We are not united, one makes a claim in the name of all of us, and all the others back off. So those who want to change things cannot do anything. So the owner does not talk to you... already, those down there [the simple workers] are considered the scum of the Earth. You are nothing but his work force.<sup>121</sup>

Lică's life trajectory was shaped by the advent of state socialism, and he realizes the impact that the socialist transformation of Romania had upon his life. He is the first in his family who had the chance to go beyond an elementary education. Not only did he not have to pay for the vocational school he attended, but room and board was also covered. From the son of a peasant with no other future than farming the land, he was transformed into a worker, proud of his qualifications and of his work.

The powerful contrast that Lică tends to draw between pre-collectivization Romania and the same country under state-socialism is partially due to the fact that he is also a migrant: the region where he lived before collectivization was much poorer than the one where he lived the rest of his life, especially during his best professional years, in the 1970s. While he stresses the hard work he had to do in order to get by, he always emphasizes the monetary dimension of his achievements, especially the fact that he was able to buy a modern, large house for his family. The only other marker of success in the village of those times, a car, is conspicuously absent from the story, an indication that despite the hard work, a skilled worker had a limited income, especially if he was the only bread-winner in the family. While his marriage was not an arranged one, and the power of the parents over the young couple proved weak (C and Lică married against the wishes of her father, nevertheless Lică's family was structured along the pattern of a

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<sup>121</sup> I have to stress that Lică's views are not necessarily representative of other Romanians. In this case class position and life opportunities are key to account for Lică's stance.

male bread-winner alongside a housewife who took care of the children.<sup>122</sup> Although Lică's life and work experiences span three political and property regimes, he identifies with the state-socialist values: for him the best years of his life were those he spent working on 'new equipment,' when his labor was most productive and made him proud of what he was doing, and when his work was properly rewarded. It is from this perspective that Lică judges both the pre-collectivization village, a world that he sees as backward, where survival was tough, and where upward mobility chances were zero, and the post-1990 Romania. The new Romania meant for him the 'disaster' of the economic unit where he worked all his life, the loss of employment, and the reconfiguration of industrial relations to the disadvantage of the worker.

I turn now to a third case, Seppi R, illustrating another life-trajectory available to the villagers: rather than becoming a skilled worker, Seppi chose to keep with the things he loved best and worked the land as a peasant. Although initially he despised the kolkhoz, Seppi spent his life working in the fields. We have here the life of a kolkhoz peasant.

### **4.3. Seppi R. (b. 1940)**

Seppi is the son of a German peasant from Sântana. Besides him, his parents had a younger daughter. His father owned 12 hectares of land, which, in Seppi's appreciation, placed him among the middle-class farmers. In fact, Seppi's father lived in the house of an old, childless aunt who offered the young couple the house, and the inheritance of her land, in exchange for care. As the old aunt owned 12 hectares too, the amount worked by the family reached 24 hectares.

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<sup>122</sup> See especially Kligman and Gal (2000).

Seppi attended the German-language school, like his father, but unlike his aunt, who could study only in Hungarian before WW I. While his father (born in 1913) did not study beyond the third or fourth grade, Seppi “went and did seven grades until I was 14, and then I went to work.” He remembers that even as a child, his desire was to become a Paor, which is the local dialectal term for the German ‘Bauer,’ that is, peasant or farmer:

When I went to school, they asked us what would you like to study, where would you prefer to work, after you graduate. I told them, I want to be a Paor [farmer], I knew what I wanted. (..). When I graduated the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, teacher Frank came to my parents (...). He told them that I said I wanted to become a farmer. And he said they should not allow it, for it was a pity, they should send me to study a trade, not keep me at home. But I didn't want to hear it.

The life of a farmer, as Seppi experienced it from childhood, meant being near and working with horses:

I loved the horses, what can I say, I loved them! Many times, while in school, I chose to do my homework during the break, so that by the time I'd return home, I'd be ready to go with my father, transporting manure with our horse-driven wagon. I loved to drive the horses!

The family had a small building in the fields, and during the summer the entire family worked and lived there:

We had a small building where you lived and worked. When the heat was insufferable you put the horses in the stable there, and you entered the small room, and rested there. And in the evening, so long as there was still light, you worked again. So you lived in the fields, and did not return home for a week, you cooked there.

The village, as he remembers it from his childhood, was almost exclusively a world of German farmers:

Almost everybody, except in the neighborhood across the road, there you could find some Hungarians who repaired shoes or made boots, but except for them everybody

was a farmer. Those who were not [farmers, meaning those who did not own land], worked by the day for the others.

He recalls the richest of them, owners of a couple of hundred hectares: Ronai, a German, who's elder son became a doctor; Mandl, a Hungarian of Jewish origins, and Scherrer Gheza (German), whose son was Seppi's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher. The last one owned a 'building in the fields' right across from the one owned by Seppi's grandfather, where he had not only a house, but also "they had a house for his servants, located not far from his own." When talking about the poor people in the village, Seppi mentioned Johone, or Johannis, and the place where people used to sell their labor by the day:

There were also poor families, who had many children (...). Here, in front of the church there is a park, where these people waited [to be hired], those who worked by the day. And the [hiring farmers] would choose from among them: the one who had his hat pointed downwards, was left among the last ones, for he's lazy, he fears the sun's heat, while the one who had the hat pointed up, or whose trousers were patched at the knees, that was a hard working one, and again the one who had his trousers patched on the seat of his pants, that one does not work, that's how it was.

Apparently, the poor were not conversant in the dress code that gave away how lazy or hardworking they were. It is telling that in the village the day laborer was paid in cash (as day laborers are across much of the world today). However, many other services were paid in cereals, including the barber:

The barber got at the end of the year a wagon of wheat, each farmer would pay him around 50 kg. The grave digger too, was paid in the same manner. [For this amount] if one had children, and brought them to have their hair cut every month, and he came to be shaved twice a week, every Wednesday and Saturday. Oh, so many times, I woke up at midnight, when the barber knocked on the window, to shave my father. [He could not do it during the day] for the farmers were not at home [they were in the fields].

When Seppi was five years old, the land of the family was expropriated, as well as their house, where they continued to live without being the legal owners anymore. However, the land expropriated from the Germans was distributed by the agrarian reform of 1945 to the war veterans and it so happened that Seppi's father belonged to a minority of ethnic Germans who had fought in the war as a soldier of the Romanian army. Therefore, the family lost through expropriation 24 hectares and was granted by the agrarian reform a lot of five hectares, which all Romanian army veterans received.

As his father was a Romanian army war veteran, the family was not assigned to host a 'colonist' family. However, Romanian colonists were living in other houses in their neighborhood, and there was some fighting between the Germans and some colonists:

I do remember that near us lived this Oceanu guy, who [later on] was a driver at the collective farm, he is dead now... so, as it was, anytime we got on the street we fought with him. He was not the kind of person you could easily get along with! And then his father got in the fight, so, what do I know? Somebody beat his father too, and then they learned to be more peaceful.

Being a teenager in the 1950s meant living in troubled times. As the families classified as 'kulaks' (especially the Romanians from Comlăuș) were over-taxed to the point of not being able to pay, very often the city hall confiscated their furniture. This was the moment when Seppi's help was needed, and he had the chance to earn some extra money:

When I was in school, I went with the horses... for my father was too ashamed to go, when they [the city hall] confiscated the furniture from the kulaks. I liked it, I'd go, as soon as I returned from school. It was especially the case of many Romanians, here in Comlăuș. When they could not pay their taxes, their belongings were taken from their house, taken to the city hall.

The class struggle that the regime hoped to stir through the anti-kulak policies does not seem to have resonated with Seppi's father. However, the family took advantage of the events, by performing (via Seppi) a paid service to the city hall. Seppi's father felt ashamed of doing this, as he felt that the regime perpetrated an injustice against those people, and that it was shameful to collaborate.

Although the family had lost more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of its land, they began working the 5 hectares they owned, in addition to sharecropping for others, in order to maximize their earnings:

Besides our land we sharecropped 5 hectares for the professors who were then in Sântana, each of them was assigned 0.25 hectares [by the state] (...). We also rented land in Şiria [neighboring village], there we did not sharecrop, we paid an annual rent for land, and the entire harvest was ours. But sometimes they stole everything, we seeded, we worked, and in the fall others harvested.

The family did well as autonomous farmers and resisted collectivization until very late. "I kept telling [my father]: "if you join the collective, I'll go work in the factory" he remembers, for Seppi abhorred the idea of collective farm to such an extent that he avoided contact with those working there as if they had been contagious:

We worked in the field, and we had some people hired by the day, but... when I saw the people from the collective farm, gathered somewhere at the edge of the field, I'd rather take a long detour, than drive the wagon on that road, near them! [laughing].

Finally, "among the last ones in Sântana," Seppi's father gave in and joined the collective farm.

I remember perfectly, in [19]59, on February 12, my father took the wagon to the collective farm. Agricultural tools, horses... (...). And our horses were used to get corn, and [later on] when they heard me when I arrived in the morning at the [collective farm's] stable, they whinnied "Hahhha!" for they recognized my voice. But I could not give them anything, for I had no corn anymore.

The most painful part of giving up life as a farmer, which Seppi dreamed of since childhood, was the separation from the horses he was so proud of:

With these horses that we gave to the collective [farm] I reached Arad in two hours! Sure, I did not have a watch in those times, but I remember I heard the [church] bell ringing at six [am] and we had to transport the tobacco to the tobacco factory, located right on the town limits. The factory opened its gates at eight [am] and at eight I was there!

Note that the son of a German farmer who had owned 24 hectares of land could not afford a watch in the late 1950s. Almost all the efforts of the household went toward saving money in order to buy more land:

The aunt that lived with us taught us not to refurbish the house, for the house does not produce [a surplus], but [buy land for] the land produces [a surplus]. She kept saying it, and I do remember that people did not repair their houses in those times. It was only after people joined the collective farm that they began refurbishing their homes.

People moved away from the austerity of previous times, as the markers of prestige were not any longer the amount of land somebody managed to acquire through thriftiness and hard work. This was replaced by owning consumer goods and a large and a comfortable house. Right after giving away the land, the horses and the agricultural tools, Seppi's father bought his 19 year old son his first bicycle:

There weren't many bicycles in those times.. I got [my first] bicycle when I joined the collective farm, in '59. [My father] bought it for me, so I wouldn't have to walk all the way [to the farm].

Seppi is proud to state that he and his family worked hard from the very beginning, and that the collective farm did appreciate and acknowledge the integrity of their labor, and rewarded them accordingly:

In 1959, when we joined the collective we got [at the end of the year] so much wheat that we simply did not have where to store all of it, so we had to store some at my uncles' household. For there were four of us: I was driving a horse-driven wagon, my father was working at the stables, my mother had a lot of land in her charge and my sister worked at the [collective farm] greenhouses. All of us worked, my old aunt was here [taking care of the domestic chores]. It went well, [when they divided the harvest among collective farm workers] they led us back home with a brass band. We were among the first, we were [declared] work leaders!

Leading the wagons full of wheat and corn of the work leaders back home to the sound of a brass band celebrating their achievements was, of course, one of the state's strategies for completing the collectivization of the land, showcasing how lucrative work in the collective farm was. Seppi worked for 40 years, driving a horse-driven wagon at the collective farm and, although he had been very reluctant to join, he appreciated the manner in which hard work was required, but also rewarded, at his work-place (which seemingly echoed German cultural predilections toward work):

I have to tell you that we did work a lot at the collective [farm,] but I say: you also earned well there. You knew, you had to transport manure, to do this or that (...). With a horse-driven plough you cut the weeds that grew between the grown corn plants, you covered a hectare, you earned one daily-norm; you covered two hectares, you earned two norms. More, if you did not need someone to lead the horse [if the horse you worked with was old and trained] you earned 1,7 daily norms [per hectare]. I'm telling you, I worked, alongside a colleague, and after I covered 2 hectares in the evening I went to scythe, to bring food for the horses, which meant extra pay. That's what we had in mind, add norms, earn, earn [money]! (...) It was hard, it was hard [work] at the collective, but you also earned!<sup>123</sup> Those who worked, earned well, what's true is true!

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<sup>123</sup> Note that this attitude toward the kolkhoz represents a retrospective view, and by no means represents Seppi's opinion about the "New Life" cooperative at the time of the collectivization. Recall he loathed so much the idea of kolkhoz that he took a long detour on the field just to avoid being in the physical presence of the kolkhoz members.

It is especially the transparency and the rationality<sup>124</sup> of the system by which work was assessed and paid that Seppi appreciated regarding the new way in which agriculture was done. In his eyes, things began to go bad at the collective farm when the transparency and the rationality were lost:

I want to tell you that the old brigade leaders, even if they were not educated, they had graduated four, or six or seven grades, when you returned in the evening from the field and you told them how much you worked, you could not say you did more, or that you did less. Later on [he seems to mean the 1980s] things were less well counted, many people came, one worked, the other didn't but he still earned, that's how it was."<sup>125</sup>

It is the same rationalization of production, and the diversification of tasks that such a complex unit required that made Seppi claim that work at the collective farm was more intense in comparison with the amount of work his father and other peasants had put into cultivating their farms, before collectivization:

I do not want to say that my father did not work when he cultivated his own land, but he did not work as hard as we did! We worked more [he emphasizes the word] for we were pushed by the desire to earn, I had even 400 and 500 day-norms in a year, and normally there were only about 200 per year!<sup>126</sup>

In 1962 the family invested the money earned and began a major refurbishing of the old house, and managed to finish it before the year Seppi spent away for his compulsory military service. Seppi stressed that house-refurbishing or house-building was part of a larger trend:

Many, many people did it, very many people refurbished their houses, they built, and added to their houses. And it was especially the collective farm workers who did it!"  
CG Why so? Were they better paid or?

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<sup>124</sup> For an interesting discussion on several various forms of collective farm organization see also Hann (1983) and Hollos (1983).

<sup>125</sup> For a treatment of the same evolutions, see Kligman and Verdery (2011), especially chapter 8 "The restratification and bureaucratization of rural life."

<sup>126</sup> Note the importance of hard work in Seppi's life account: he stresses that 'we' (the hard-working members of his generation, in my reading, he and his German colleagues working at the collective farm) worked twice as much as others did and also worked even harder than their parents in the days of independent farming.

Well, you earned well when you sold things: those who worked at the factory went every Sunday to the local market, and bought corn, if they raised pigs, and wheat.

More than that, as he preferred to remain in his parents' house, the family saved enough money and bought a house for his younger sister, who got married.

The significant income Seppi attributes to the collective farmers has to be put in the context of the village's changing occupational structure: especially among the German community, the overwhelming number of people worked in the Arad factories, commuting daily.<sup>127</sup>

I'll always remember how it was when the Arad train arrived, for the majority [of the villagers] worked in Arad at the time (...). By five thirty [p.m]. people came from the train. It was full, full, the road was so full of people, you could not ride your bicycle, that's how many people came from the factory.

In 1970, Seppi married his current wife (b. 1935), also a German from Sântana, who had worked since 1952 in an Arad factory. She moved in with Seppi in his parents' house, where they continue to reside. As there was no land to be divided, the new couple broke from the patriarchal control of the family that Seppi did not challenge, although he was 30 years old:

Until I got married, my money went to the family fund... I gave them, and when I needed 5 lei I told them: "look, today I took 5 lei." After I got married, we ate together, but we managed the money separately [the young family managed its own money].

As his wife was a factory worker, the young family had a larger cash income than Seppi's parents. Moreover the (cash) income difference between a collective farm worker and a factory worker was significant: [collective farm workers] "got maximum 700 lei, and then you earned

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<sup>127</sup> See chapter 2 on the fate of Sanktanna's Germans after the land expropriation of 1945.

well, [while] those working at the factory earned even 2,000 lei per month.” The main income villagers derived from the collective farm was not in cash, but in cereals. This allowed the members of the farm not only to avoid having to buy bread (part of the wheat they received at the end of the year was sent to the collective farm bakery) but also meat, as the corn was used to feed the household’s livestock. As factory commuter-workers did not change their life-styles and lived in similar self-sufficient households; they lacked the corn to feed their livestock, and acquired it from their fellow-villagers working at the collective farm, paying for it in cash.

The impact of the socialist change of the agriculture, as well as the extensive industrialization, altered radically the lives of the villagers. The 1970s marked the slow death of the traditional practices of the pre-WWII German farmer community in Sântana, which Seppi recalls with nostalgia:

During the winter we had social evenings (șezători), so when somebody built a house, people helped, it was not like today; the entire street came, as well as all the relatives. Today nobody comes. In those times, when you slaughtered the pig, your relatives were there. And when my father went to a social evening, he sat down with the men, played cards, and after dinner they took a glass of wine. It was like this when I got married [1970]. I went to other people, living on the same street, we went there, there were sometimes two linked tables, so many men played cards. The women, they talked, they worked on some hand-made stuff, played rummy... we laughed... those were good times here.

During every non-Lent weekend, young Germans from Sântana danced in the village hall: Saturday the event was named a ‘ball,’ and Sunday ‘Freimusik.’ The mothers would come with their daughters to the dance hall, and sit down “on three rows of chairs” making sure everything was proper. By the 1960s and 1970s the former distinctions of wealth no longer structured who could dance with whom. The dances were organized according to the four neighborhoods of the village; the Germans from Comlăuș had their own ball. Seppi remembers

that: “before our time people did not dance tango, until our time, by 1960. Before, they danced only polka and waltz, after two waltzes always followed a polka.” Seppi’s wife remembers that after the ball, young boys fought: “There were plenty of fights!”

The fights in the village were not only over girls. While the relationship between the Romanian ‘colonists’ and Germans appears to have improved in time (Seppi is praising the way in which the colonists “learnt how to work” from the Germans), the relationship with the Roma was not amiable:

In those times, you could not see Gypsies in the [German village] streets, in the evening. They came, for example from 6 to 8 [p.m]. if there was a movie [the movie theatre was located behind the German church], but after eight you did not see any Gypsy in [German] Sântana. They were beaten... and they were afraid. Nowadays they are not afraid any longer, they are the strong ones now.

The neighborhoods were territorially marked, and anti-Roma racism blatant: Seppi is proud to recount how any Roma who would be caught in the German quarter after 8 p.m. would end up beaten by the German boys. Moving on chronologically, Seppi remembers the 1980s as tougher economic years:

At the beginnings the collective farm distributed to its members [not only cereals but also] wine, honey, cheese, whatever we produced...

CG Afterwards..

It got tighter and tighter.. .In the end they would not give us even cereals. But your grandfather [the farm’s chairman] did what he did, made a bakery and [because the amount of cereal to be distributed was capped by state regulations] he distributed additional amounts of wheat to every kolkhoz member in the form of a bread allowance [at the harvest time, besides the grain one was entitled to, each Sântana kolkhoz member received a ration ticket for the kolkhoz bakery, mentioning that he or she was entitled to get for free that many kilograms of bread]: ... yes, I remember it, the other [collective farms] did not do it, but he, as he could not distribute [enough] wheat, he distributed bread [via bread allowances at the collective farm’s bakery].

The quote about the bread allowance is related to a decision of the late-Ceaușescu regime that capped the amount of wheat to be distributed to each member of a collective farm at 300kg<sup>128</sup>. Earlier the members were paid according to the day-norms that they worked during the year: the more norm-days a worker accumulated, the more wheat and corn he or she would receive. The quote also illustrates the creative ways in which this ‘model’ collective farm put in practice policies of ‘flexible accommodation’ (Goina, 2009) intermediating between the needs of its members and the requirements of the party-state.

Moreover, the austerity regime that Ceaușescu introduced encouraged the police to tighten their control over the people. One of the most hated and intrusive policemen of those years, nicknamed by the villagers “the Stud” [Harmigu], stopped people in the street and forced them to open their luggage, or bag, to check whether they had stolen things from the fields. Seppi emphasized the autonomy and the political clout of the chairman of the collective farm who – after a while- managed to get “the Stud” removed from the village:

Your grandfather controlled everything here, police and everything. I know it for a fact. Once we went to the railway-station to transport fertilizer, and we [the horse-driven wagon] did not have a lantern, or a torch, and this policeman came, Harmigu, to fine us. And I do remember that they [probably the Communist Party local leaders] had a meeting, at the city hall, and some of us went and told him. Then he came out and said: “Go on with your horses, on my responsibility!” And that one [the policeman] did not work more than a week in Sântana after that.

The quote unveils also the extreme centralization of power in the village under the state-socialist regime: the chairman of the collective farm controlled the land, which represented a source of income for many villagers, and he was at the same time the main political figure in the area. Not even the police could take a stand against his wishes. Seppi was not exactly an admirer

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with Martian M., born in 1923, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, deputy-chairman of the collective farm.

of chairman Goina, who died in 1992. Since in his spare time Seppi was the driver of the horse-driven carriage that takes the dead to the cemetery, he used to joke with the driver of the collective farm's car: "So many times you drove Goina somewhere, you had to drive him back, but when I drove him, I drove him only one way [to the grave]." Toward the end of the interview, Seppi mentioned that he had been a member of the Communist Party too:

I became a member... when... when I went in the army I wasn't even a member of the Communist Youth, and there, I had to become a Communist Youth member, but when I returned, I did not tell them. And when the two horses of mine died, the deputy-chairman came to me and told me: "You join the party and we forget the issue!"

It seems that there had been allegation that Seppi found a way to kill his former horses in the collective farm's barn, so that they won't have to work for the kolkhoz. The deputy-chairman blackmailed him with this story into joining the party.

In 1990 the collective farm was disbanded, but Seppi decided to keep the eight hectares of land he was initially granted in the same associative land cooperative, re-structured on new legal grounds as "The Romanian-German land association" and continued to work as a wagon driver for the new association that had inherited the collective farm.

In the following two years, the large majority of the Germans from Sântana emigrated to Germany, and he remained more or less alone: "what can I say, now it's like somebody had thrown a bomb (...). I cannot complain, and say that I do not have good neighbors, I have good relations with all of them, but I am the only German on the street." Seppi's sister had a daughter, who married a German citizen and emigrated legally in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s her mother –Seppi's sister–went to visit, and did not return to Romania, as she was a victim of domestic violence. She told her brother that: "she's going abroad, and she'll not return. 'Please

don't tell mother, she urged me, for if he hears [the husband] maybe he'll tell [the authorities about her intentions] and she'll be unable to leave the country." After 1990, when traveling abroad was allowed, Seppi went twice to see his sister, and visited some neighbors who had recently emigrated and were in an immigration camp, where they were waiting for the state to issue their papers, as well as an assignment to state supported housing:

And when I saw that camp, with bunk beds, like in the army, I said: I went through the army once, I'm not going to do it twice. My sister said that because I saw that camp, I am sick of Germany. No, I said, I'm not going [to emigrate]!

Seppi is not sure that Germany was worth the effort for many of his generation. "I think that he who worked, built a house here, refurbished it, he certainly regrets leaving [Sântana] especially now when they gave back the land, for here we worked, but we also had fun afterwards. When it was really good here, then people began leaving for Germany."

In 2002 Seppi felt sick, and went to the hospital, he claims, for the first time in his life. Following the advice of a nurse he did get an early retirement:

There was a nurse there, who had worked with me at the collective farm, who asked me: "Are you not retired?" "Not yet, I told her, I am not of legal age." "Well, why don't you ask the doctor, since you are so sick, to get you a retirement on legal grounds?"

Since he retired, Seppi has managed his household, and is quite unhappy about the meager amount paid to the former collective farm workers by the state retirement fund. Seppi's mother died in 1990, and his father in 1996. He has a son, Seppi, born in 1976, who graduated high school and, after working for a while in Germany, has a small, informal business of selling second hand tools and electric devices he buys and transports from Germany. With regard to his son, Seppi deplores the lack of work ethic of the new generation:

The young people... do not work anymore... I see my son, I asked him, when we were in the backyard: Tell me, what are you going to do when I won't be able to cultivate all this? He looked aside and began to laugh. He must have thought: "I am not as stupid as you were!" For I have 700 grapevines in my backyard.

I interviewed Seppi in 2003, and then again in 2005, when Seppi lived in his parents' house with his wife and his son. Seppi's story is that of a German farmer who ended up working for the collective farm. Seppi loved working the land, actually, he loved working the land with horses, and rejected any other life trajectory that was offered to him.

Although the family lost three quarters of their previous land possessions through expropriation, the fortunate event that his father had served in the Romanian army assured the family of a start-up farm of 5 hectares. The family resisted collectivization until very late, and Seppi confessed to having been especially motivated to hate the new form of socialist agriculture. One of the more traumatic events in Seppi's life was the separation from his horses, which his father had to 'give away' when he was forced to join the collective farm.

Quite surprisingly, the transfer of his skills from the exploitation of an autonomous family farm to that of an agricultural worker in a large and rather complex socialist collective farm was easy and lucrative for Seppi. He discovered that he could work with horses again, and that hard work was adequately rewarded at the new farm. After a life-time of work in the Sântana kolkhoz, in 1990 when the process of de-collectivization started, Seppi received the farm owned by his father and did not hesitate to begin a new life as an independent farmer. To that end, he chose to be part of the new cooperative land association that replaced the extinct collective farm.<sup>129</sup>

For Seppi, the period in which he accumulated prestige and economic advantages was the 1970s. Economically things began to go bad in the 1980s. The 1990s represent for him the period

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<sup>129</sup> For an account on the switch from former kolkhozes to post-1990, see Verdery (2003).

when most of the German villagers left for Germany. Seppi remained in the village, part of a minority of less than 10% Germans left in Sântana. Seppi regrets that his son does not seem to have inherited his own work ethic, or his love for land, horses, and agriculture.

From Seppi we move on toward yet another life-trajectory pattern: that of Resi, an offspring of a farmer's family who became an industrial worker, commuting to the nearby town.

#### **4.5. Resi L. (b. 1936)**

Resi is the fifth of eight siblings born to a family of German farmers from Sântana. Her father was a small farmer, owning a couple of hectares of land, and sharecropping. Resi is proud of her parental household: "our father owned his own horses, a cow, we had all we needed."

When Resi was eight years old, the Soviet army occupied the village on its way to Berlin. Although Romania was an ally of the Soviet Union, the "Russians," as she recalls, nearly destroyed her parents' household, forcibly taking all her family's goods, especially the livestock. It was particularly the German community that was hit the hardest by Soviet legal and illegal requisitions:

They took everything, left us with nothing, save a cow. They took our horses, and left with them, we used to have two horses. One horse was taken away, they took it during the night, and in the morning the horse came back, on his own. Such a beautiful horse, white, it ran away [from the Russians] and came home, so that in the morning, lo and behold, the horse was at our gate! But they came back and took it for good. It was only the cow that was left us, all the rest they took away, they took away the grains stored in the attic, and all the food stored in the larder.

Note, again, the special emphasis Resi puts on the relationship with the horse, how beautiful it was, and how attached it was to the family: I see there the special form of "possession" that Kligman and Vedery (2011: 97) see in the peasant household, "softening the

boundaries between persons and things” (animals). I underline this detail to stress how deeply Resi’s account is anchored in a peasant’s perspective.

The second blow to this German household came a couple of months later: in January 1945, Resi’s father, as well as one of her older sisters (born in 1927) were taken by the Soviet army and sent to a forced labor camp in the Soviet Union.<sup>130</sup>

[The Russian soldiers] came and took them. They were going street after street, following a list of persons [to be taken to forced labor in the Soviet Union] provided by the City Hall, or perhaps by the police?.. what-do-I-know? I was 8 years old. So they came after them [she uses the wrong gender in Romanian, as she is a non-native speaker]. My father ran away during the night... they had been locked inside the school building, and he escaped, got out of the building, and by 11am the next day they came after him. He hid under my grandmother’s bed. But later on he got scared: what if they would take my mother instead? What would happen to the family? So he gave himself up: here I am!

Her father chose to give himself up, in order to protect his family. In the long term, he was fortunate, for after a year and a half he was sent back home, while Resi’s sister had to perform five years of forced labor for the Soviets before being allowed to return home:

Five years! What do you think, how hard they had to work out-there, oy-oy!! They did not get almost anything to eat. Dry bread, mostly. And when they died, do you think they were buried in a proper coffin?! They threw one corpse over the other, and poured chemicals over them. [They were left] to mice and rats!!!

The family had a hard time after the departure of the father: they turned toward Resi’s maternal grandfather, who bought a horse and helped the families of his departed sons in their sharecropping agricultural work:

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<sup>130</sup> On the deportations of Romania’s ethnic Germans to the Soviet Union we have the excellent collection of oral histories gathered by Vultur (2000) or the study of Poledna (2001).

We lived in poverty. However, we were content, we owned a cow. And, my mother's father, my grandfather, he took care of us, for many of us [grandchildren] were left without a mother [as women had also been deported to the Soviet Union]. I do not remember how many children [in the German community] had a mother at home. Almost all were motherless. So, I am not sure, my mother had 6 or 7 siblings. And my father too, they were 5 children, so there was a big family, and they helped each other! We sharecropped, we went to work the fields, [with the help of an animal, for] my grandfather had a horse, so we went [working in the field]. It was hard, it was hard.

Resi is careful to stress that her childhood was marked by poverty (which was inflicted by the war and other external factors) and by hardship, all of which was answered with hard work. It is the stress on a work ethic that marks also the 'peasant' outlook that characterized other accounts, like Seppi's above, or Ica's or Mitru's in the previous generation.

However, after her father returned from the Soviet Union, the family's economic condition improved. Also, there was less need for child labor (following the agrarian reform of 1945, there was less land available for sharecropping) and consequently Resi was the first among her siblings to complete 7 grades of education:

[I went to] kindergarten and (...) I've got a seventh grade education. I was the first in my family to make it to the seventh grade, all the others, before me, did not make it. Some had 3 grades, some 2, some four grades...they had to go and work, so we, the rest of us, have something to eat. My mother stayed at home [did not go to work in the fields], for she had her domestic work.

Resi's account continues to accentuate the hard times she had to go through as a child. Although she was allowed to go to school, during holidays she worked as a servant:

[My brothers and sisters] worked wherever they could: when we heard there was a chance for employment, we jumped at it. I was also a servant, while in school, before September, I used to be sent to an aunt, to help her rear her children. Afterwards I worked for a teacher who had a garden, I went there and hoed, and did whatever was to be done. In the mornings, I was working for her, in the evenings I returned home. There was poverty, what can I say... poverty.

By 1951 Resi graduated 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She went to work as a day worker in the fields of a state-owned farm, where she had worked during the holidays, since she was 12 or 13:

I worked there, at ‘the farm.’ That’s how they used to call it, it was like working in a factory, but you worked outside, in the fields: picking onions, whatever there was to be done. Oh, and there were also vineyards. So we left in the morning, we hoed, we took care of the vines, left in the mornings, returned in the evenings. And I was 13, perhaps 12 years old. I was always walking [to and from the fields].

There were tough years: she had to work not only for the money, but also because the farm provided a free lunch for its agricultural workers, and access to food was a problem for many poor people in those years:

They did pay us. They counted us every morning, and after a month, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, or on the 30<sup>th</sup>, they paid. They also offered food, so those who wanted to, could eat there, they killed a young cow, or a pig, or what-do-I-know... and everybody, almost everybody ate there, for at home we didn’t have what to eat. In the mornings one would have breakfast at home, some milk and a loaf of bread, and by noon, one would eat out there [at the farm].

After five years, at 20, Resi reached a major turning point in her life trajectory: she left farming and agricultural work for good, and became an industrial worker. Her first employer was the Romanian Railway Company: she began by helping at the tough job of building a new railway line: “In ’56, I began to work for the Railway company, three years and a half, I worked there, laying rails.” Finally, in 1960 she began to commute to the neighboring town, Arad, where she was hired as a construction worker, by a state-run construction enterprise:

I was hired in 1960. Until then, I worked wherever I could, wherever there was some chance to earn money (..). In 1960, I got stable employment. I worked on building sites, as a construction worker. In Arad, I worked there for 29 years. We were building tall buildings [apartment building for the workers that moved into town]. Many were built, no? We also built factories, huge factory shops, which housed the machinery. I worked at the Railway Cars Factory, at the Lathe Machines Factory.

Resi's was not a singular trajectory: many Germans turned toward industrial work, including many young German girls. Resi does not see anything special in the fact that a woman was working as a construction worker, as there were many like her, and most of them friends from the same village:

There were girls, I'd say 12-13 girls [who were employed there]. The men were from other parts [not locals], they came from Bihor [county], from Maramureș [county], from many areas, who knew from where they all came. They came here, got hired, they came here and worked (...). The girls were German [girls from Sântana]. Most, almost all of them, were girls, there were only one or two married women among us. In time, we got married (...). Some were born in '38, some in '40, in '41, that's how it was. We were young, and there wasn't much chance of employment, unlike today (...). We were commuting, woke up in the morning, and on the construction site, we prepared the cement, the plaster we carried the brick or other building material.

Note the gendered division of labor: men were the professional builders, while women worked as assistants, preparing the cement and carrying the items the men needed in their work. However, Resi is proud of her uninterrupted 29 years of work as a construction worker, and paints an unfavorable comparison between her proletarian path-way in life and the one of her sister, who remained a peasant working at the local kolkhoz.

My sister worked for the kolkhoz. For 20 years. And she earned as much as she worked. That's how it was for them: you had I-don't-know how many rows of corn, and how many rows of beets, and potatoes, and so on, and they had to take care of those, to hoe, to harvest, to turn them in [to the kolkhoz storage house]. I did not work for the kolkhoz, I helped her sometimes, but my work, my work was on the construction site. I would not have changed that: it was not easy on the construction site, but out in the fields it wasn't either! Truth be told, on the construction site you had access to a decent toilet, and you had access to running water, but as a peasant you had to carry your own water with you!

Resi continued to talk about the alternative life-trajectories she could have taken, between remaining a peasant or becoming an industrial worker. Given the specific situation of Sântana's

kolkhoz, it appears that income-wise, the farmers had a slight, overall advantage, but that was not enough to make her change her mind:

I did earn more, but they [peasants], they did not receive that much cash, they did receive, at the end of the year, 300 kilos of wheat, or corn, or, what-do-I-know... how much did they get. So they got grain. We [the industrial workers] got money, and with that money we used to go to those who worked for the kolkhoz and buy grain from them [mainly as fodder, in order to raise livestock]. However, I would not have traded [my life for theirs].

The status of a woman who was working in industry, outside of the fields is presented by Resi as being higher<sup>131</sup>. Although Resi engaged in a path of independence (securing her own wage) and followed her own career, which marked an entirely new life-path for a young German girl from the village, she was still a part of a tight knit rural community that was governed by local customs and expectations. Once she reached 17, she was expected to participate in the local balls and dance events, where young people from the community were supposed to meet, and where marriages were planned:

We used to go every week, it was called Freimuzyiek, it started at 8p.m. and lasted until midnight, on Sundays, except during Lent, of course. So we went. And Saturday, again, Saturdays there was a ball: Saturdays the ball, and Sundays the Freimuzyiek. There were many, many of us, the hall was filled.

It was this way that she met her husband to be, also a German from Sântana: “I met him in ’52 or ’53... and he courted me. Then, in ’56 he left for the army, in ’58 he returned to the village, and in ’61 we got married.” It appears that it was a long courtship and that the young couple waited quite a while until they got married, possibly because of their material circumstances. Note that Resi married the year after she got a stable job in Arad. She did not

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<sup>131</sup> For the same position among Hungarian women, see Kovacs (1983: 60).

mention any pressure from her parents to marry the young man, which would have been virtually impossible, given her material independence from the family. At the same time, Resi does not mention any resistance, either from her family, or from her husband's family, to the marriage.

Her husband was the same age as Resi. He lived with his mother and two siblings. His father died in 1945 as a soldier in the German Army, on the Yugoslavian front. Resi's husband was not rich, but he was employed as an "assistant shop-keeper at the local Consumer's Cooperative, where he sold wood, construction materials, and so on.." The couple moved in the house that Resi's husband shared with his mother and two of his siblings:

The second day after my marriage, which happened on a Sunday, we moved here [her husband's house, where she still lives] with my mother-in-law, we lived in the front room, there was here a room and there another room [the house had only three rooms]. My sister in law lived here with her four kids. So we decided that we [the young couple] will pay the other two siblings to leave the house: 12,500 [Romanian lei] to one and 12,500 lei to the other, you leave and we stay.

Although the income of the young couple was not large, it still seems to have been sufficient for them to undertake such a debt in order to keep the house, and assume responsibility for the care of her mother-in-law when needed. Three years later, Resi gave birth to her only child, a boy named Martin. She was not content with the support that the socialist regime provided for young mothers:

In 1964 I took maternity leave, and they paid me 520 Romanian lei per month. How could one live on that? One paid 300 lei for [100 kg] of corn, no? And the milk was two lei [a liter] or was it one leu?

However, the couple did fairly well: her husband was promoted in time to shop-keeper, and after a while she could return to the construction-site, and to her full wage, leaving little Martin in the care of her mother-in-law.

The relationship between the rules within the community and the patriarchal power of the father are illustrated by a little anecdote regarding to Resi's hair. The German women in the village were expected to have their hair combed and worn in a specific way. By the early 1980s, Resi, now a married woman and a mother, decided to cut her hair short, and she remembers that her father looked at her annoyed, noticing the breach of tradition. In becoming materially independent from her family and pursuing her own career path, Resi broke with the patriarchal expectation of how a 'proper' woman should wear her hair only in her late 40s.

Economically, Resi's situation improved, and by the early 1980s, the family undertook a major refurbishing of the old house:

In '80 we built here. The house wasn't the way you see it now. We built this room, and that one, and we added the bathroom. The corridor used to be open. And the glass-wall, that was also added by us.

Although this refurbishing was by no means exceptional in the village, the fact that Resi's husband was employed by the retail-chain that controlled the distribution of goods in an economy dominated by scarcity might have helped, if only with access to construction materials. However, the family did not enjoy many years in their new house: in 1986 Resi's husband died suddenly of a heart attack while at work:

They had a meeting at work, they were closing the accounts [and the fiscal year] and there was a party every year at his work-place, every February. So they partied, and afterwards he went to shovel the snow, in front of the shop where he worked... from there they took him to the hospital where he died. He was 50 years old.

Resi became a widow at age 50, with a 22 year old son and her mother-in-law. She did not complain, although it appears that her relationship with her mother-in-law was far from good.

She nevertheless concedes that her mother-in-law helped her a lot during Martin's childhood; she knew that her boy was well taken care of when she left for the train early in the morning, returning home only after 5 p.m. or later.

The next major inflection point in Resi's life occurred in the early 1990s when, in the new political context following the collapse of the communist regime, the German community migrated en masse to Germany. Resi is one of those who decided to stay, and her immediate reason is related to the age and physical condition of her mother-in-law:

Where were we supposed to go? My mother-in-law was still alive in '90 when all [the Germans] left. For the majority left in '90, after the... revolution. And my mother-in-law was alive, where to go? She was 85 years old. She was senile, sometimes she lost her reason, and did not know anymore... oy-oy-oy! Where to go? To a refugee camp [in West Germany]? Or to make her live in an urban project, what could I have done with her out there? (...) And [Martin] did not want to emigrate and leave me alone with his grandmother for he was [fond of her]... So he told me, mother, I won't leave you alone... for I know what this means. She [her mother-in-law] tended to listen to him, but not to me, I had no idea what I would have done with her... It was really tough.

It seems that out of loyalty for the old woman, both mother and son decided to go against the current and stay put, as migrating with an old and sick grandmother proved impossible.

However, most of Resi's extended family emigrated in early 1990s:

I still have a sister, here, in the village. In Germany, I have six siblings- four sisters and two brothers. They do visit us... recently, the youngest sister was home. They have their own children, who have their own families out there.

Afterwards, both mother and son visited Germany, but did not find many reasons to emigrate:

Martin was there to see how it is, I was there too... but I did not like it. I've been there four, five times, I've been to a wedding, too and... The weddings are not like we have them here, and the food, either... Noooo, sir! Here, at a wedding, we cook soups, sauces, the way we do it here, but [there] the meat does not taste the same, the soup also, and even the wedding is different.

What she really disliked in Germany was the atomization of society, as compared to the sense of community she experienced every day in the village:

[Out there] if you step out of your house and say “Good day,” they answer you with “Morning” and that’s it! I cannot complain about my neighbors, we all talk to each other, they call us for help, know our names. There isn’t anything wrong going on between our neighbors and us. But out there, they do not even know their neighbors. Otherwise, of course I liked it, first time in ’90 when I went, I did the laundry, and they had hot water on tap, sure [meaning that in the village she did not have hot water, she had to heat it on the stove in order to do the laundry].”

Both mother and son highlight the difference in lifestyles between more traditional village life and the urban life that the émigré villagers had been forced to adopt in Germany. Not everything is great out-there, claims Resi using a metaphor: “so, he went, and as soon as Martin reached Germany he saw... not only the Sundays, but also the other days.”

Currently, Resi lives with Martin in the same old house. Her son graduated from high school, worked for a while in a large furniture factory as a skilled worker, and currently holds a low-management position in a local factory making parts for the car industry, a factory owned by a German corporation that favors managers who speak German. Resi is slightly unhappy that Martin did not marry, but as a retired worker, she is content, having a tranquil life and being a regular church attendant, as she has been all her life. She juxtaposes the years of hardship of her youth, when people attended church, against the secularization of today, both among the villagers who emigrated to Germany and among those who remained at Sântana:

We did not live well, I’m telling you. There was no surplus. Nothing. Each of us had to go and work. There wasn’t such luxury as nowadays. No-no! We did not have that many clothes. We had one God and one dress, and nowadays we’ve got dresses but no God.

The religious tone is not surprising, for Resi had been a faithful church attendant throughout her life. Her career as a worker did not deter her from Church attendance. She was not a Communist

Party member, and she did not mention any pressure to not attend the Catholic mass at the Sanktanna church.

Resi's life trajectory is typical of the opportunities that state socialist industrialization enabled. Many farmers were launched on the path of 'proletarianization' and Resi was most certainly one of them. She started out in a poor and large family. WWII impoverished her family even more, while leaving her future husband fatherless. The deportation of her father and one of her sisters to the Soviet Union for forced labor deepened the misery and hardship that Resi had to endure.

Her family did not benefit from the policies of the socialist regime, not receiving any land. However, in the new post-1945 political context, Resi was the first one among her siblings to complete seven years of education, after which she broke with the family tradition of sharecropping and working the land, choosing instead to become a female construction worker. The decision to marry was taken according to the unwritten rules of the community, after a long courtship of which the two families evidently approved. However, in Resi's story there is no hint that her parents had any role in deciding whom their children should marry.

Resi is proud of her long career as an industrial worker, and does not see anything special in having worked all her active life as a female construction worker. On the contrary, she sees her career-choice as superior to that of those who remained peasants, working on the fields, such as her sister. Her 'proletarianization' (Szelenyi et al., 1988) is limited to that, however: Resi remained a regular member of her village community and largely respected its traditional rules and expectations. Only in her late 40s did Resi dare to go against the prescribed way in which a German woman was to have her hair done and to cut it short, the 'modern' way. But she honored the tradition of caring for her mother-in-law in her old age and ill health, remaining in Romania

to do so rather than emigrating in the 1990s along with most of the other Germans from Sântana. Resi's case exemplifies a trajectory with the 'proletarianization' cluster where the newly created worker does not share much of the traits the regime expected: although she was a construction worker for a quarter of a century, Resi remained all her life a faithful church attendant and obeyed most of the rules of her rural community.

The pleasure she takes in enumerating the local customs in which she and her son participate, and lately, organize (as there are very few Germans left in the village) underscores the worker-peasant character of Resi's life-trajectory. The changes brought by the industrialization of the 1950s and 1960s did make a proletarian out of Resi, but had a lesser impact on the way she related to the traditional village community. Having to choose between the 'radical' modern way of life she saw in urban Germany and the remaining community in the village, Resi and her son decided to remain.

Lastly, I turn to Dezso, whose life illustrates the impact of proletarianization among the Comlăuș Roma.

#### **4.6. Dezso C. (b. 1940)**

Dezso is the oldest son of a Roma family from Comlăuș. He has two younger brothers. His father fought in WWII and was the recipient of three hectares of land following the 1945 agrarian reform. As there were fewer Germans in Comlăuș than in Sântana, there was less land expropriated, meaning that Comlăuș war veterans received less land than those who received land from the Sântana agrarian reform committee.

Dezso's father died in 1948, "right after the war" when his son was eight, so Dezso was raised by his mother, who went and worked for the German families, performing domestic service in exchange for food.

I want to tell you: the old women went into the village [outside of the Roma neighborhood] and worked. And the old men were waiting [for them]. That's how it was in those times, I was a little child, my father died in '48 and my mother was going to work, while we were waiting for her. Isn't it so? She brought us food, this and that... we were three children.

Despite the fact that he grew up without a father in a community where many were illiterate, Dezso went to school and graduated from the 7th grade, an achievement he is proud of: "I did not go beyond the seventh grade, but I did not forget what I studied." To demonstrate he indeed remembers, he told me on the spot, by heart, the definition of 'noun' and of 'adjective' world for word from his childhood textbook.

The world in which Dezso grew up was poor, and the living standards were really low:

We had three rooms, [the house] was little, you know, houses weren't [big] in those times... Some of us slept on the floor. You know? They spread hay [on the floor] for there were seven-eight persons sleeping in a small room, they slept there on the hay and did not have any troubles. People did not have shoes, for example, two brothers shared a pair of shoes or a pair of trousers: "give it to me now, so I can get out" [they would say to one another]. They had sort of traditional leather-made sandals [opinci, in Romanian] and during the winter, when the roads were all mud, people climbed on stilts in order to be able to walk across the mud. For the mud was deep, you did not see it. It was such a mud... you covered your feet in some rags, for there were no shoes, and you walked on stilts [avoiding the mud].

The Roma community seemed rather isolated from the other communities in Comlăuș and Sântana, and in those early years, constituted a moral and self-sufficient community where the modern juridical system was largely ignored, having not yet replaced the traditional practice of customary law:

For example, as it was Butu, the ‘mayor’ [of the Roma], it was my uncle, he was the ‘mayor’ [among the Roma from] Comlăuș. He would gather all the Gypsies and would judge them. They did not go to the courts; they tried to make justice here, and did not pass the culprit over into the police’s hands. When they could not agree they went on debating, nobody served time in prison, this was a big shame, to be in prison. For instance, if I had chicken at home, and someone stole some, I would not go to the police, I would catch him, and then he had to pay you back three or four times the price of the stolen goods. If he was dirt poor, you would usually forgive him, the really poor were excused.

In this respect, the Roma community of Comlăuș did indeed live on the margin of the body politic. Late 18<sup>th</sup> century accounts of the Romanian villages in the area do mention the existence of a similar community law, and of a *judex* (in Latin) that represented and administrated community affairs. Therefore, Roma community organization is not different and distinct from the organization of the Romanian village, but rather it maintained the traditional local practices longer than did their neighbors, and did not submit to the new forms introduced by the state and juridical structures of the Habsburg Empire.

The local hierarchies along which the Roma families are placed illustrate the same resilience of categories that are much less salient in the Romanian Comlăuș community, categories that introduce the lineage-based social boundary between the families of ‘good root’ and those of ‘bad root,’ in Dezso’s words, social distinctions that are inherited by the family and transmitted across generations: "Even now, they remain the same: those born well, are doing well, those born bad, they’re not doing fine." Dezso goes on and gives an example of a ‘good root’ family:

The Palițiș, you’ve heard of them... he was well-to-do, born in ’26, by ’39 or ’40 he graduated from high school [possibly the only one in the community who did so] (...) his father was from Chișinău, he was in good relations with the police, he had a house, a mansion.. . and married the sister of a doctor. And Paliți was a tall man, white, 2m [height]. His father was not from the village, he was from Variaș [village] but his

mother was from here. They were handsome people. And his son-in-law became a teacher; he's still alive, retired.

Note how the physical characteristics are a part of the distinction, as is the high economic status, the high educational status, and the extended family including a distinguished person, who 'married the sister of a doctor.' The family had not lost its preeminence in the village by the 2000s when I conducted the interview, as one of its surviving members was a member of the community's intelligentsia, a teacher.

He follows with some examples of bad root families:

The T. family, they were stealing, and B., your uncle, had problems with them.

CG Were they poor?

Ask G., he'll tell you: their wives hang out by the main road, [and sell sexual services to the drivers that stop for them], they take all their girls [as prostitutes] in order to get by.

Once again, according to Dezso low status is reproduced across generations: in this quote he mentions events from the 1970s or '80s (when the T. family had allegedly stolen from the kolkhoz run by my grandfather, whom Dezso mistakenly identifies as my 'uncle') only to move to the late 1990s mentioning another bad root family pushing women to sell sexual favors by the side of the main road.<sup>132</sup>

Returning to the village in the 1940s and '50s, according to Dezso, there was almost no overlapping with the activities of the others villagers, except working by day for the well-to-do farmers. He reviewed the main occupations of Roma in the village:

There were in those times: feather collectors, horse dealers and people who were building and repairing adobe walls and houses. Some of them went to work by the day, others worked as servants, taking care of horses, of pigs. They went to work, they had work.

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<sup>132</sup> I may note that the wives and the daughters working as prostitutes are taken to the main road, their 'work place' (which is located seven kilometers away from the village), by their husbands, on the back of the bicycle. For a long time the local police had turned a blind eye to this everyday practice.

As Dezso's family owned land, they were affected by the 1950s policies of collectivization. He stressed that few (ten, he claims) Roma joined the collective farm at the very beginning:

The Gypsies founded the collective farm, in '49, there were around ten Gypsies [among the founders] and then others and others joined. (...) all the Gypsies joined the collective farm.

While every family owning land eventually was forced to join the kolkhoz, the Roma did not necessarily join from the very beginning. Dezso's family did not join until very late, its trajectory being much more similar to that of the large majority of Romanian Comlăuș farmers: "In '59 we joined the peasant association led by Bunai, and in 1960 we joined the collective farm, here [in Comlăuș]. My relatives had joined the collective farm in Sântana." I assume that the Roma from Sântana's farm joined early, before the founding of a Comlăuș collective farm in 1955. The collectivization trajectory of Dezso's family speaks to the stubborn resistance of an independent farmer.

When Dezso was 15 years old was he was hired, thanks to family connections, as an assistant to a feather collector who was one of his cousins. Probably he was presumed to learn the trade, as he mentioned that he was poorly paid 'by the day' and when he was young he did not get any pay at all:

By '55, '56, '57, before I went to the work in the factory, I was collecting feathers, with my [older] cousin, R., if you heard of him (...). We went by a horse driven wagon though all the villages, up to Salonta and Oradea [100 km north of Sântana] (...) He was 10 years older than I was, and I was paid by the day, he gave me 10 or 20 lei per day, but this only when I grew up, he was my first cousin and I know how to... I was

going everywhere with him. (...) We sold them to Prodexport [a state agency], I went with him for 10 years.

After his period as a feather collector, until the trade was no longer profitable for them, Dezso got a stable job in a major Arad factory, producing train coaches. Dezso is proud of the time he was a worker, and he underscored that he became a skilled worker in a department that required hard work:

It was good for me here [at the factory] I worked at the forge for 25 years. I worked at the forge department, it wasn't really easy, when I was a child, they took us to the high school [training facilities] and we worked like gentlemen at the locksmith section [meaning that the locksmith's work does not entail physical effort and an unpleasant work environment], and when we got to the forge, there was hard work.

Dezso contrasts his income as an industrial worker with his retirement income at the time of the interview:

I want to tell you how it was, I earned 2,600 lei per month, or 2,500, and we had a form of child support that amounted to 400 lei for four children, that made a total of 3,400 [Romanian lei], right? With that money you could buy around 120 kg of meat, do you get it?

Beside the hard work at the forge, Dezso had to commute daily between Sântana and Arad:

We were commuting. In the winter it was dark when we left in the morning, it was dark when we returned, we left at 5am and got back at 5pm, that's how it was, we woke up at 4:30 a.m. to catch the 5 a.m. train, we returned with the 4: 45 p.m. and at 5:15 p.m. we reached our homes.

The commuting factory workers were a category that comprised all the village's communities. Note that his figures refer only to those taking the train from the small Comlăuș railway station, located near the Roma colony, the large majority of commuters boarded the train in the main railway station at Sântana:

Every morning there were about three hundred Romanians and Gypsies, there were so many they made a row of people from here [his house, located several hundred meters from the Comlăuș railway station] to the station, and also there were Germans. In the second shift there were another one hundred [commuting workers].

Dezso suggests that under the state-socialist regime the relationships between fellow workers were good, and that he did not feel discriminated against as a worker, neither by the management, nor by his colleagues:

There was no discrimination [against Roma] in those times, when I was there, I was appreciated, I was really appreciated [at the factory]. Those times if you went in Sântana [outside of the Roma neighborhood][and you had troubles with the Germans or Romanians] the police would help the Gypsies. Nowadays there the Gypsies are much more discriminated against. Before, they went together [to the factory], the Roma were friends with Romanians, and they did not fight.

By 1964, when he was 24, Dezso married a 14 years old girl. They are still together, and had “four boys, I have not even one girl.” Marriage was another dimension that separated the customs of Roma from those of their villagers, and Dezso felt the need to explain to me the custom of those years:

The Gypsy tradition concerning marriage was that, when the girls were 13 or 14 years old – I took mine when she was 14- you ran away with her, take her somewhere, you did not return for a couple of days [consummated the marriage] and then returned and celebrated the Gypsy wedding. When the family was better-off, they had a rich celebration, with food and lots of things. For example, if a boy ‘took a girl with him’ [meaning the girl lost her virginity] and he did not marry her, he had to pay for her ‘shame’ [virginity].

CG was it expensive?

It all depended on the quality of the family: the old men judged the case and decided.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Recall the discussion above about Roma courts and local adjudication: we have here an illustration on how the customary law functions in the community.

Once again, we see the importance of the lineage in the social stratification of the Roma community: the payment for having deflowered a girl without taking her in marriage depends on the ‘quality’ of the family – more expensive for ‘good root’ families, and cheaper for ‘bad root’ families.

Dezso’s wife did not work, for it is against the custom that a Roma married wife work outside the domestic sphere, except in the cases when she worked in the houses of better of Germans or Romanians. He explains this to me:

Among us it is not the custom that the women go to work. I am not sure, after 1990 our women began to emancipate too, but before that, it was not the case. Some of them did work in other people’s houses, which was all right, but they would not have regular [salaried] jobs.

In terms of inter-ethnic marriage, Dezso notes that after 1990 the closed ethnic boundaries were loosened.<sup>134</sup>

The Romanians or the Germans did not approve of their girls marrying Roma, now it is less so, one can see Gypsies marrying Romanians, and Romanians marrying Gypsies.

The pre-1990 strict boundaries against marriage between Roma and the other villagers were upheld by the fact that there was no common event where young people could have danced together:

I want to be clear: the Gypsies danced here [in their neighborhood], the [Romanians] from Comlăuș in their place, the Germans in theirs. They never mingled. Each group was separated, they never mingled, and they never fought.

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<sup>134</sup> Such constraints were less stringent in urban areas, see Achim (1998), Zamfir and Zamfir (1993), Emigh and Szelenyi (2001), and especially Stewart (1997).

The Roma community organized the dance out in the field (in opposition to the Germans and Romanians, who danced in halls):

We had violin players, perhaps 30 of them in Comlăuș, we all gathered on Sundays, we danced out in the field, boys and girls: we each paid 2-3 lei and paid 100 lei for the music: they had violins, accordion, guitar, there were many of them. And we used to go to other places to, there were perhaps two or three places where people danced. The good families danced on one side, the bad families on the other.

The social hierarchies of the pre-WWII era seem to have survived unchallenged in the Roma community, at least according to Dezso's recollections: the major boundaries structuring the village dance were the same that divided the world of their parents – the lineage distinctions between 'good root' and 'bad root' families.<sup>135</sup>

Leisure habits changed and, in addition to the traditional Sunday dance, Dezso's generation began to do other activities for fun, activities that crossed the traditional isolation of each ethnic group in the village. This was especially the case for the Roma boys, and much less for the Roma girls:

We, for example, played soccer, we the Gypsies, and we used to beat all the other teams. On Sundays we played soccer until noon, after [lunch] we went to see a movie, until 5 p.m., and then, around 7-8 p.m. we played soccer again.

Although there were no ethnically mixed teams, the Roma were less segregated in their own community (as Germans and Romanians became less isolated in theirs). The same observation is valid for the movie goers, where Romanians, Germans, and Roma met at the only movie theatre in the village.

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<sup>135</sup> Note that the distinction between bad root/good root families is not something specific to Roma communities: see Kligman (1998) for an interesting discussion on the same distinction among the ethnic Romanian villagers she studied in Ieud.

The occupational and income homogenization of the community under the state-socialist regime was not complete. While the overwhelming majority of Roma men from Comlăuș commuted as factory workers to Arad, there were few who did not. These Roma constituted the elite, trading goods (illegally), especially gold jewelry. As under state socialisms gold was a state monopoly and it was difficult to buy, the black market flourished.

There were many people who dealt in gold, sold gold [jewels], not any longer, but under Ceaușescu. P. was arrested several times, he served time in prison, and the [authorities] confiscated I don't know how many kilos of gold.

It is worth noting the shift in some 'good root' families of the focus of their autonomous trade activities from, for example, the trade in feathers as feather dealers to that in gold, which was nevertheless not quite legal as a "profession." Dezso's cousin offers a case in point, having changed from selling feathers to dealing in gold. While most Roma had industrial jobs, most of which were in less skilled categories,<sup>136</sup> those who did not work in the industrial sector but were masters of their own trade, such as feather or gold dealers, were considered part of the Roma elite.

The process of decollectivization that followed the crumbling of Ceaușescu's dictatorship marks for Dezso a moment when he felt discriminated against by the (Romanian) local leaders:<sup>137</sup>

When they disbanded the collective farm, I have no idea who, and how, managed to grant me only 2.15 hectares. Where are the rest of my 0.85 hectares? Some people got 3 hectares, or 3.57 hectares. (...) This was our land, the land of the Gypsy, where is our justice, sir, where is it? Whoever dealt with the papers, I have a title for that land. A title for 2.15 hectares. They "lost" 0.85 hectares. My father in law is missing 0.58 hectares. And many, many of us [were cheated in the same way]. They took away our land.

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<sup>136</sup> See Stewart (1997).

<sup>137</sup> On the treatment of Roma during the decollectivization process see Verdey (2003).

It seems that the committee that disbanded the collective farm and divided the land among the inheritors of the original owners took advantage on the low literacy rate of the Roma and cheated them of a part of the land they were entitled to recuperate. I encountered this complaint only among Roma and heard nothing similar from the other Sântana's inhabitants.<sup>138</sup>

Another set of problems related to the post-1990 period has to do with the retirement rights of the widows. As many Roma couples were not legally married, after the death of the husband, the wife does not qualify for half of his retirement, lacking the papers to prove they were legally husband and wife:

My brother in law lived with his wife for 40 years, and now she does not receive any pension, he dies, and she does not qualify for retirement. This was their custom, not to get married legally.

Migration is one of the major themes of the accounts of the post-1990 life in the Comlăuș' Roma community. After the state-socialist regime fell in 1989, for the first time, people were able to travel abroad. Many Roma left [illegally] for western Europe, Dezso included: "after [the 1989 Romanian] revolution I left for Germany, I lived two years and a half there." He did odd jobs that he declined to discuss and was forced to return after quite a while.

He mentions that his children did not study even under state-socialism: "One was big, at 14 he weighed 80 kilos, so he did not complete 8 grades [of elementary education<sup>139</sup>], the other, T., is not able even to sign his name, while the youngest did graduate 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but stopped attending school." All Dezso's sons emigrated to Belgium, and are currently living there. Dezso misses his grandchildren, of which he has 14; the oldest granddaughter was already 18 in 2005:

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<sup>138</sup> My limited foray in the documents of Dezso's family seems to confirm his allegations.

<sup>139</sup> I cannot see how Dezso relates the weight of his boy to his schooling situation: however I find this quote relevant for his position: lacking an excuse for what he probably knew was the social expectation to have his children educated, he clanged to any possible explanation, no matter how weak. However, it is clear, beyond his rhetoric, that he either did not try, or more likely did not succeed in pushing his children to attend school.

I have a grandson in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, that one resembles me, he lived 8 years in Belgium, I think people there do not know [he's Roma], in all grades he was placed the first, they are already Belgians [his grandsons] do you understand? And the little girl, [his sister] she's in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade... these two grandchildren resemble me. I was a multi-lateral personality, I covered many domains, and, anyhow, my father was [also] an intelligent man.

Dezso is proud of his grandchildren who are studying in Belgium, and by the fact that, by now "they are already Belgians." Most of his children's generation left the village and moved abroad, mainly going to Belgium, but also to France, Spain and Portugal. The population lost through emigration has been replaced through the internal migration of Roma coming from the region of Moldova. New migrants, however, are not welcomed by the locals:

Look, it is full of Moldavians [Moldavian Roma] here, they live in the Roma's houses. [Our] Roma are gone and these people, all Moldavians...[came]. They are blacksmiths, they make all kinds of things, but they cannot work in their home villages, for there are too many of them, so that's how they spread throughout the country.

There are several waves of immigration (in the Roma community, as well as in the Romanian community) replacing those who migrated out of the village: mainly the Germans, but also many of the Roma.<sup>140</sup>

When I did the interview in 2005, Dezso was retired, living with his wife in his house in the Roma neighborhood, rather unhappy about his retirement plan:

Now, with my pension, how much meat can I buy, perhaps 30 kg [for the] 3 million and 300 lei I earn. [Recall that in an earlier quote, Pali stated that his wage as a worker was the equivalent of 120 kg of meat] So, where's [the difference] of 80 to 90 kg of meat? You see now? That's how it was, that wage was better compared to today's situation.

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<sup>140</sup> As the post-1945 colonists moved in at the beginning of the second political and property regime, there are new 'incomers' at the start of the third regime.

Although Romania's inflation was really high in the early 1990s, such that a wage that had been expressed in terms of a thousand lei turned into one expressed in millions, and although Dezso graduated only 7 grades, he makes a strong and compelling argument regarding the degree to which people like him have suffered a significant blow in their buying power, as well as in their standard of living in post-communist Romania.<sup>141</sup> Finally, he complains about the lack of opportunities that the poor Roma now have. His example is drawn from those living in the poorest side of the Roma neighborhood:

Look at those who live near the [ex-] railway station. Nothing, nothing, nothing changed, they live in the same house, in the same misery, which means they don't get ahead, they remain in the situation they were.

Dezso's life trajectory moves from having been a quasi-servant of a feather-collector to that of a socialist industrial worker. He retired as a skilled worker from the same factory where he worked for 25 years. Educationally he was above the average of the Roma community, and it seems that he was indeed a gifted student. Having lost his father at the age of eight, his family was unable to support his studies, although in his interview he gives several examples of colleagues of his generation who managed to graduate college.

Dezso lived in a world that is, in many respects parallel to the worlds of Romanian and German peasants: a community ruled by customary law administered by the old and wise, a world in which girls are 'taken away' and in which virginity can be 'paid back' in cash, and a world in which social status is strictly inherited and structured along a dichotomy: one is born into a family with "good roots" or "bad roots." Dezso was born into a 'good root' family, which

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<sup>141</sup> For a detailed analysis of the fate of the workers in post-socialist Romania see Kideckel (2008).

qualified him to become an apprentice to a feather collector, but since his father died young, he did not have the capital necessary to become a feather collector on his own.

The advent of state socialism made him, and the huge majority of his colleagues into industrial workers, commuting to Arad. This assured Dezso of a decent standard of living, and of a respected position among his fellow-workers, be they Roma or non-Roma. However, only one out of his four children graduated from elementary school, as Dezso did, and at least one of them is illiterate, unable to sign his name. The Roma community where Dezso lived seems to be the more isolated, and the least affected by the transformations of the 1960s and '70s. Especially along gender lines, the distance between the Roma community and the other villagers grew. While before WWII the women were usually in charge of the domestic chores, for most of the girls in the village, with the exception of the Roma girls, the 1950s and 60s meant a period when they were allowed either to study or to have a professional career. This was impossible not only for the Roma girls, but also for Roma women, who were not allowed to have a paid job, according to the existing moral agreement in the community where they lived (And the socialist state did not intervene to transform that).

Post-socialist changes have brought some limited changes to the position of women in the community. The major break between Dezso's life and his sons' is that of migration: all of his children live and work in Belgium (while other Roma have gone to Spain, etc). Dezso allowed them to drop out of school if they wanted, counting on the fact that they would become unskilled factory workers. Their migration stories, fortunate if we take into consideration that all the brothers found a form of employment and are encouraging their children to study (in French) is one of the joys of Dezso's old age. He does otherwise see the openings that the events of 1989 made possible as beneficial for his family or Roma in general.

On the contrary, Dezsó's account situates the golden age of his own life sometimes during the 1970s when he earned well, was appreciated at his work place, and played soccer with friends. In his view, except for the opportunity to leave the country, post-1990 Romania is a place where his income dropped to a quarter of his previous one, a legal and administrative frame where Roma were cheated (during de-collectivization) and discriminated against in forms unknown under state-socialism, and a social environment in which poor Roma have no opportunities, and some girls are being asked by their families to prostitute themselves in order to earn a living.

#### **4.7. Second generational landscape:**

I have covered in this section six illustrative life-trajectories and life-stories of villagers born between 1940 and 1948. These people were born during or after WWII and had limited personal experience with the village structures specific to the first political regime, that of independent farmers and craftsmen. The long 1950s were marked by the process of transition from private property toward the consolidation of the village's entire arable land, culminating in two collective farms: the first in Sântana, and the other in Comlăuș. (Although the transition to state-socialism began in 1947, its major achievement in the rural world, the collectivization of the land, had been launched in 1949 and was not completed until 1962).<sup>142</sup> At the same time, the policies of industrialization launched by the state-socialist regime resulted in a majority of the village's active population becoming workers, commuting daily between their rural households and the urban setting of the factories where they worked. Last but not least, the changes

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<sup>142</sup> On collectivization in Romania see Kligman and Verdery (2011), Dobrinu and Iordachi (2005), and Dobrinu and Iordachi (2009).

introduced in the mass educational system and the opening of local vocational and high schools, coupled with the availability of scholarships and in-school boarding for a large majority of students, resulted in levels of educational attainment in this generation that starkly contrasted with those of their parents.

Sântana's communities had been affected, and responded differently to the broader macro-forces at work in the new 'popular' (later 'socialist') republic. The German population, from Sântana and Comlăuș, consisted of a majority of farmers whose property was in 1945 confiscated (with many former landowners being sent to the Soviet Union for forced labor following the war) and a minority of craftsmen. Most Germans turned toward employment in industry, while some joined the local collective farm (Goina 2005). The shift from farmer [Paor] to worker was accompanied by an increased level of education, in most of the cases vocational, but also tertiary, among the young Germans.<sup>143</sup> In this regard, Seppi's case exemplifies the contrary: he did not follow up his studies in order to remain a farmer, while the great majority of his colleagues turned to industrial workers followed some form of post-elementary school of vocational training, evening school, or training at the work-place (the case of Martin). Seppi's family is representative for the cohabitation between two forms of work and income specific to the village under state-socialism. On the one hand, some family members worked at the collective farm, and were rewarded principally in cereals and foodstuff; their cash income was limited. In Seppi's case, the husband was the kolkhoz member (as well as his parents, who lived in the same household with the young couple).

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<sup>143</sup> On social changes among the ethnic Germans from Romania see Poledna (2001).

On the other hand, some family members commuted to Arad for jobs in the factory, where the income was exclusively in cash, amounting to at least double, if not triple the money a collective farm worker received. In Seppi's family, this was the case of Seppi's wife.

Of course, there were families where both (or all) members were collective farm members, or industrial workers. The families having access to both sources of income applied what Szelenyi (1988) named 'the dual strategy' discussing a similar situation in neighboring Hungary. Dual strategy made even more sense considering that very often grandparents either lived with their children who were parents themselves, or that income and services were shared and exchanged within extended family units.

The disappearance of independent German farmers in Sântana broke the rather self-sufficient character of the German community: both the Germans who turned toward industrial employment and those who joined and worked in the collective farm no longer lived and worked in a Germans-only environment, but rather, they shared the work-place with Romanians and Roma (and in the initial period after the war, shared living spaces with them as well, often in their previously owned houses). The intermarriages between Romanians and Germans were not any longer the extraordinary event they would have been for the previous generation: however, an inter-ethnic marriage was a very rare occurrence. The Germans continued to live in a compact area, in the "German" part of the village, and, for instance, they worked in the collective farm in German-only crews, to the extent possible. Half of Sântana's school consisted in classes that were taught in German-only, and this meant also a quite significant minority of German college trained teachers returning, or re-locating in the village. As suggested in Seppi's interview, the relationship between the communities living in Sântana was not always peaceful: the late 1940s and early 50s had marked a period of intermittent ethnic conflict between the Germans and the

Romanian colonists,<sup>144</sup> a conflict that dissipated in time, as the colonists moved out of the German's houses and established their own neighborhood, and as the two communities worked together within the collective farm. However, the dominant position the Germans from Sântana enjoyed in the previous political and property regime was lost. The collective farm chairman, as well as the majority of the mayors and other political leaders of Sântana came out of the 'colonist' ranks, while the position of the Germans was secondary: for many years a quasi-consociational informal arrangement required that the 'vice-chairman' of Sântana's collective farm be a German. In respect with the Comlăuș's Roma, we have seen that informal (and occasionally violently reinforced) rules limited their access after certain hours in the German-inhabited area.<sup>145</sup>

The new politically dominant figures in Sântana came from the inhabitants of the "New village" neighborhood, the Romanian peasants colonized by state policy on the lands expropriated from the Germans. These were the initiators who comprised the majority of the members of the collective farm. (Although the Roma were also among the first to join the kolkhoz, with the founding of the second kolkhoz, the Comlăuș one, they were registered as members of the second economic unit). Many of their children, Lică's case being exemplary from this perspective, did finish the seven years of secondary elementary education (then) and pursued careers as skilled workers, either in Arad factories, or in the context of the mechanization and the modernization of the new, large scale socialist agriculture, in the village. Very few male members of Lică's generation did not acquire a form of vocational training. Women, however and especially those who remained in the village and worked in the collective farm, did not go beyond the level of elementary education. As the 'colonists' were relocated to

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<sup>144</sup> See Goina (2009a).

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Miska L., German male, kolkhoz worker, 1922-2009.

Sântana as a part of a state policy, and as they had reasons to feel grateful to the new property and political regime, it was among this group that the regime preferred to select the local leaders and managers. Also, as most of the ‘colonists’ had migrated to Sântana from less economically developed regions, the contrast between the standard of living they had before their arrival and the one they enjoyed after settling in the village was striking in the eyes of the majority of them. This would account for Lică’s perspective, opposing the image of a poor, uneducated, and backward village world of the pre-collectivization time to the improved harvests, education, and the new life-style that the socialist transformation of Romania made possible. It is telling that the chairman of the collective farm, as well as the majority of the farm’s brigade leaders were ‘colonists.’ This prominent position allowed a minority of children of ‘colonists’ to pursue tertiary education, and return to the village either as professors, agronomists, or to other positions that required tertiary education.

The Romanians from Comlăuș had been much more reluctant than the ‘colonists’ about the new regime and the changes it brought. Consequently, the collective farm in Comlăuș was initiated five years after the one in Sântana,<sup>146</sup> and the significant part of the village had joined only after the major push of the state in 1959-1960. However, for many Comlăuș peasants the agrarian reform of 1945 meant that they could begin as owners of a new or enlarged, independent farm and, despite the heavy taxation of the 1950s, that period of independent farming is remembered favorably by many peasants. As the collectivization of agriculture took away the opportunity to pass the farm to the next generation, the young people from Comlăuș were forced to face the same routes for social mobility as their German and ‘colonist’ colleagues had: they could either follow a vocational form of training, pursue secondary and, if possible,

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<sup>146</sup> See Goina (2009a).

tertiary education, or work in the collective farm. Ica's life trajectory is exemplary of the minority of village intelligentsia formed in the 1960s. Ica's marriage illustrates also the permeability of the formerly tight social boundaries separating Sântana's communities. While initially the 'colonist' Romanians were perceived as poor newcomers in the village and assigned by the Romanians of Comlăuș a status that was only barely superior to that of the Roma, in time the criteria of appreciation, as well as the status ranking, changed. Consequently, marriages between Romanians from Comlăuș and 'colonists' became quite frequent. However, marriages between Romanians and Roma were unheard of.

Last but not least, Comlăuș' Roma community was also radically altered by the advent of the new political and property regime. The new state eroded (partially) the dominance of the customary Roma law<sup>147</sup> in the community, and radically changed the occupational structure of the community. The traditional crafts of Roma vanished, and the overwhelming majority of Roma men turned toward industrial employment in the Arad factories. The Roma women worked in the local collective farm, if they were not housewives<sup>148</sup>; the strong traditional norms of this community, however, worked against women holding regular employment. While in other communities too, the ratio of men to women working in the collective farm favored women, in the case of the Roma the dominance of women is overwhelming.<sup>149</sup>

While the switch from traditional crafts to rational, industrial employment (of the men) marks a major change in the life of most Comlăuș' Roma, other dimensions of the change, present in the lives of the other Sântana villagers, are absent here. First and foremost, the level of

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<sup>147</sup> On changes in the Roma community see also Chelcea and Lățeș (2000).

<sup>148</sup> However, working in the collective farm was not necessarily a proof that Roma women were always equally treated by the brigade leaders or by other collective farm workers. In her account Marica D. (born 1935, female, Roma from Comlăuș, from a musician family, collective worker) told me that, working alone in the field, a Romanian collective farm worker tried to rape her. She insisted that he would not have had the courage to do it were she Romanian and not Roma.

<sup>149</sup> On the feminization of the work force in agriculture, see Kligman and Verdery (2011).

education of the Roma population lagged seriously behind those of the Germans and of Romanians.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, gender relations in this community changed little: the access to post-elementary school education, as well as the access to a career for a young single girl, open to most of Romanian and German colleagues, was denied to Roma girls. While the boundaries that separated the Germans, the Romanians from Comlăuș, and the colonists became more permeable, the boundaries between the Roma and the rest did not. Although the Roma could play soccer against the non-Roma, or go to the movies at the same movie theater, there were times, or places (certain bars, for instance) where they were not welcome. However, Dezso's life story emphasizes that, as a worker, he felt accepted and appreciated at his place of work, and among his fellow-workers, and he stressed that his family economic standing improved considerably thanks to his constant employment, and to the benefits he was entitled to. In conclusion, Roma experienced significantly less discrimination in socialist enterprises although not in educational institutions.<sup>151</sup> This does not mean to say that there was no anti-Roma discrimination under state-socialism. However, in comparison with the previous political and property regime, Roma were less segregated, for instead of performing their traditional, and usually exclusive, trades, they had to turn either into industrial workers, or into kolkhoz members, like most of the non-Roma inhabitants of the village.

Another level of change should be stressed: family relations. The disappearance of the farm as a unit exploitation in common by extended families, and inherited, or split among brothers and sister by the patriarch of the family gave a deadly blow to the patriarchal dominance of the old and rich male (usually the grandfather) over all the members of his extended family. As land ceased to be the only income source of many local families, with industrial

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<sup>150</sup> On Roma schooling, see Stewart (1998), Fleck and Rughinis (2008), and Foszto (2009).

<sup>151</sup> On the issue of Roma discrimination, see also Stewart (1997) and Emigh et al. (1999).

employment, and any other forms of monthly wage (paid in cash) replacing it, the wage-owners became more and more independent of their families. Resi's story about her argument with her father, who insisted that she wear her hair arranged in the traditional way of non-married girls in the village, is illustrative of how a financially independent girl could afford to break with the village tradition, and importantly, with her father's domination, and to cut her hair short, as she wished it to be. I see Resi's story as revealing the larger trends unleashed by the socialist transformation of Romanian society with respect to gender and family relations.<sup>152</sup>

As the social status of a person was not any longer related to land ownership, it seems that the level of one's education became one of the main factors in assessing it.

I have shown how Ica's family embraced the educational achievements of their children as a God-given reward for the hard times they had when they lost their land, their wealth and their status in the village. The high school graduates ranked behind the university- educated 'intelligentsia,' and we have seen how Ica's husband regretted his decision not to continue his education beyond high school. At a lower status level (although superior in terms of income) were placed the graduates of vocational schools who worked as skilled workers (Lică, but to a certain extent Dezso too) and right beneath them those who did not go beyond elementary education (Seppi).

Another dimension of social change related to one of the dominant determinants of social status: the acquisition of land, which was seen as a material manifestation of one's integrity and of one's work. As land acquisition became irrational, as land owners were subjected to punitive tax-brackets, this dimension of social status was replaced by the acquisition of consumer goods, and by ownership of a large house. The 1960s and 70s were the years in which almost every

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<sup>152</sup> On gender relations in Romania, see especially Gal and Kligman (2000a) and Gal and Kligman (2000b).

single family I interviewed or heard of embarked on house building and house refurbishing. Villagers bought bicycles (see the case of Seppi), TV sets (Lică) or cars (Ica).<sup>153</sup> Some of them indulged in holidays on the Romanian sea-side, or in the mountains: Sântana's collective farm had actually built a hotel in a mountain resort where its members could have vacations at significantly lower rates.

While the trajectories, I have covered in this section do suggest that one of the factors accounting for the specific developments in each individual life are related to the norms of the ethnic community in which he or she was raised (Germans, Roma, Romanians), the end result, the variety of occupational positions available under state socialism was limited, and integrated individuals from all communities. The major clusters of Sântana's villagers' occupations were more or less limited to a series of education-cum-profession containers: intelligentsia [tertiary education: Ica], middle-range administrative positions [high school: Sena's husband], industrial factory workers [vocational training: Lică, Seppi's wife, Dezso, Resi], and collective farm members [elementary education: Seppi]. These positions mark (in large strokes) the local hierarchies in the socialist village.

In a Weberian approach, besides the status criteria (which I see as dominantly educational/professional for this generation) an additional element of stratification pertains to political power. Power under state-socialism was centralized to an extent unknown in the previous period, and –especially in Sântana- was concentrated around the chairman of the collective farm, who was also a significant local political figure and a member of the Romanian parliament. The local Party activists (such as the one who appears in Sena's story) were influential figures, who could either help, or damage someone's career. Seppi joined the Party

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<sup>153</sup> On consumer culture under state socialism, see Creed (1998) and Chelcea and Lățea (2000).

threatened by the collective farm's deputy-chairman, who was at the same time the Communist Party secretary of the collective farm while in the previous generation we have seen Mitru joining the Party in order to avoid 'hard work.' In Lică's perspective the Party activists constituted a higher authority to who workers could appeal. However, Ica illustrates a (successful) life trajectory without political involvement, as long as Ica did not have any ambitions to become, for example, the school principal.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> For a discussion on the role of the intellectuals, see Konrad and Szelenyi (1979), Verdery (1991), and also Pasti (1995).

## **Chapter 5: Toward a European Union village**

The third generation of villagers I introduce in this chapter is defined by the last years of Ceaușescu's dictatorship, the anti-regime uprising of December 1989, and the demise of state-socialism. The two decades that have passed have been marked by the deindustrialization of state-socialist factories, the rise of entrepreneurship and privately owned enterprises, the influx of global capital and services (especially after the year 2000) and the phenomenon of migration. In the following pages I introduce five actors: Călin, a college educated engineer, who worked in several factories and corporations; Manfred, a grey market entrepreneur, dealing in the trans-border trade of goods; Martin, a mid-level manager in a local plant owned by German capital; Cornel, an assembly line worker at the same plant; and Marcu, a Roma entrepreneur.

### **5.1. Călin N. (b. 1979)**

Călin is the only child of Ica (see chapter 4), a mathematics teacher in the village, and of S., a high school graduate who worked for the Romanian Postal Service. He grew up in the village and remembers fondly the times when he used to play outside with the other children from the neighborhood:

We were kids here, out on the street, running around, my nails, I do remember, were dark, full of dust and... [but] we were not ill. Nowadays I hear about my child's classmates: this one has an allergy to this, that one... [When he was a child] there were lots of puddles, filled with rain water, and we stepped in them... Here, on this street [the street where he grew up] there were kids of several generations: there were the two D girls, Mihaela and Maria. Maria was three years younger than me, Mihaela four years older. At the other house, there was Ovidiu N, across was Ghita R, twelve years older than me, and then the D brothers, Dan and Ovi, and then Lucian C. There, at the end of

the street, there was an empty lot where we played soccer. Nothing could grow there, not even grass, since during the day it was us, the little ones, running after the ball out there, and in the evening it was the older boys. Nowadays things are different, children, teenagers are spending too much time with their computers, they're plump, fat.

It is worth noting that the kids he remembers are a mix of children of kolkhoz peasants, industrial workers and village intelligentsia (engineers, teachers), all playing together without noticeable traces of social distinction or exclusion, except for the territorial one: these were all Romanian children, territorially segregated both from German kids (who lived in their neighborhood) and definitely segregated from Roma children. Călin remembers his childhood as a happy period, one that was not affected by material worries and with time and resources for extended summer holidays:

I cannot claim I was lacking something, as a child. Of course, within limits ... During the summer...we used to have... [with irony] a clunker, a Dacia 1300 [Romanian made car]. [He corrects himself, cutting the irony] A Dacia 1300. We used to drive to the mountains, to the [Romanian] sea-side, every summer.

In 2011, when I made this interview, the old, communist-time Dacias were despised and considered as probably the worst cars on the market. It seems Călin did re-consider the way he valued the Dacia of his childhood, putting it in the context of the time, when it was the only car available in communist Romania. When Călin was 10 years old, the Romanian revolution of 1989 occurred: it marked the time when the former state-socialist regime was overthrown and the transition from authoritarianism to democracy began. He mentions the event, but given his young age, it did not mean much for him at the time.

Călin went to school in the village for his eight years of general education. Being a student in the village school is remembered as a rather stressful period, partly because of the

degree of social control he experienced, mainly due to the fact that his mother was a teacher at the same school:

Being in the same school wasn't that easy. Like any other child, I was doing some mischief from time to time. Well, my mother usually found out before I ever returned from school, because the teacher used to go and tell her, in front of all the other teachers, look what he did this time! And my mother would bow her head, in shame and... You know, my theory is that there are no bad children, only too energetic children!

He feels his parents expected him to do well in school, and were keenly interested in his school performance. Social distinctions permeate his memories, as he ranks 'families' in the village according to how much emphasis they put on giving an education to their children:

There were families where school was not seen as important, why bother about school, go work. All I can say is that there were lots of chores I was excused from in order to study.

He also recalls that during those times, the state-socialist regime crammed many pupils in one class-room, and during his 5<sup>th</sup> grade there were around 40 children in his class. When asked whether the teachers treated children differently, according to the social or economic status of their parents, Călin declares he does not remember. However, differences in income and school-performance expectations were manifest for his generation in the illegal but ubiquitous practice of taking 'private lessons.' During the 1980s one would get into a 'good' high school by passing written exams, usually in mathematics and Romanian language. As the competition for those high schools was high, the degree of difficulty of the exams also increased, and the well-to do parents began paying for their children's private 'lessons' of individual study offered by some of the teachers in their homes. Călin was one of the recipients, but he is keen to underline that he was not among those who received much private tutoring.

No, I did not get private lessons, except in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, when I took Romanian language private lessons with teacher C; for math, naturally, I had my mother [a mathematics teacher].

He was admitted at a high school in the county capital, Arad. He did not try for one of those high schools that were considered the top of the top (usually those that were either preparing their students for college or for a career as a nurse, an elementary school teacher, or a mid-level accountant) but for a well-regarded high school that prepared students for jobs in the Romanian Railways Company. Călin claims he chose that high school precisely because he did not envisage a career that would include college education:

I chose the Romanian Railways high school. It's enough, I don't want to go to college, I want to get a job, to be on my own.

He explains that the example of his mother was rather revealing, as teachers were not well-paid in general, but especially in the early 1990s when inflation was high, the economic situation of his family was not great:

You see, those years, after the revolution, my mother was a teacher, a college graduate, whatever [suggesting the high-status attached to the position in the village]... and I cannot say we did really well, income-wise.

In the context of the former, state-socialist attribution of prestige, a college diploma automatically meant high status, but also an average income (see the Life story of Călin's mother, Ica). The decade that followed the demise of the socialist regime brought about the decrease in income for some, especially teachers and state employees, and the rise in income for others, mainly those working in the private sector. Călin seems to have judged the advantages a college degree brought in the light of what he saw in the 1990s, while his parents pressured him

to go to college, judging the same college degree in the light of their own, state-socialism formed, experience. In the end, Călin gave in to family pressure:

During my last high school year, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, [parents] convinced me... so I said, I'll try to make it into college. In high school, I chose 'computer science' as my major, and I decided to try to be admitted into a computer science department at the West University of Timișoara. I had two exams, and I got an 8 [out of 10] on the first one, but a score under 5 on the second. And a score under 5... [disqualified him] Had they calculated an average, I would have been admitted. Well, I said, that's it, I'll live with my parents and I'll see what I'll do.

Note that he, like many of his peers, did not automatically think of getting a job, having flunked the college admittance test. Most likely, he would have studied at home for another year and tried to get admitted the following year. However, the smaller, recently founded, University of Arad did not fill out to capacity and offered a second admittance exam in the fall of the same year:

I tried my luck, and having graduated from the Romanian Railways Company high school, I chose as my first option the department of Railways engineering. There was a second option, as an engineer in textile technologies. So I said to myself: there's always going to be a need for clothes, so I picked that as my second choice. I did not have a high enough grade to make it into the department of Railway engineering, so I ended up in the textile engineering department. So, I said, I'll go there, perhaps, after a year, I'll transfer [to the other department] but I ended up an engineer in textile technologies.

Călin spent five years as an undergraduate student, in Arad, in order to earn his engineering diploma. It was during those years that he met his wife, in a context that underlined the increasing wealth disparities of the post-1989 transition:

We had a nice group of friends in the student dormitory, we had lovely parties, not... orgies, as they are having now. So we had a colleague, T, from [the region of] Oltenia, a very nice and well-behaved girl, from a large family. It was tough for her, she had a scholarship, and she also had an older sister working as an accountant in Arad who helped her with money... whatever. So, it was her birthday but she could not afford

throwing a party, so we pooled some money, and said: let's organize a party for her!  
And at that party I saw my wife for the first time.

His wife was studying economics at the same university. She is from a neighboring county, slightly older than Călin. The courtship was long, and they finally decided to get married:

So, we met at the university... and we were together about six years before we got married. And it was good, we had a strong relationship that lasted. We spent a year and a half together initially. Then she graduated with a degree in economics, she's older than me, and returned to T [her home town] but we kept in touch... and then she returned to Arad [to be with him] I did not regret a single moment...

Asked whether his family approved, or had reservations concerning his marital choices, Călin underlines the delicate balance between caring for the opinion of his parents, and the feeling that the decision is his to make:

When I told my parents, mother, look, I was thinking I should ask her hand in marriage... How to put it, it's not that I am afraid of them, I always use the colloquial 'you' and 'ciao' when talking to them [instead of more formal and respectful ways of addressing one's parents, sometimes used in more conservative families] but I was, somehow, embarrassed... how should I put it? And, then, one of them, my mother or my father said: Well, so what took you so long? [Călin voice is signaling relief at their casual, ironic approval].

With the help of the families (neither of them appears to have owned significant economic assets) the young couple made a down-payment for a studio in Arad (see Sena's pride in having contributed a bit to helping her grandson). Income-wise, the match appears to have linked fairly equally endowed families; status-wise and professionally, the groom and the bride were also very similar, both college graduates at the beginning of their careers.

Before getting married, Călin did his military service, in 2003. He was among the penultimate generation of young Romanians to perform compulsory military service, as Romania later moved toward a professional army. He remembers he bribed his way into the army with a

bottle of whiskey, as there were already not enough spots, and of several thousand university graduates in Arad county, only about 120 were to be drafted. After nine months of military service he returned home in 2004 and began looking for employment.

Călin has an ambivalent position on Romania's communist times, and he is especially upset about the way in which the industrial heritage of state socialist industrialization has been squandered:

In 1997, when I graduated, it was the beginning of the end, or, how to put it, they were destroying everything that the communists had left us (...). I cannot say I am a fan of communism or anything... but there were some good things in those times, weren't there? (...) The industrial plants by the time of the revolution were working for the outside (foreign) markets, and what did their managers do? They bankrupted them, so they could buy the same factory [on the cheap] later on.

It was on one of these factories bought by foreign investors that he ended up working in:

“I was in Arad when my mother called me. The cell phones were the newest thing on the block in those years. Check this, she said, I've read in the local newspaper that Textila [textile factory in Arad] is hiring. (...) I went there, there were some guys at the gate (...) and they said: for an engineer's position, leave us a CV. What, a CV? [he sounds rather dismissive, as the use of a CV was as new in those years as cell phone were] I asked them to give me a sheet of paper and a pen, and I gave it to them [the CV he wrote on the spot].”

Călin was hired, initially as a 'computer operator' at the factory's storage facility, for the minimum wage, with the 'promise' that after a month he would get a raise. His new work place used to be, under state socialism, one of the most important industrial enterprises in Arad; it had been privatized around 1998-1999 and was owned by a group of Italian business men. Initially things went well, and Călin gives a lot of details about his successful career at Textila, which reads almost like a professional 'coming of age' story. In time he got promoted head of the storage facilities, supervising the work of 80 people.

So in June I was a computer operator. My wedding was scheduled for August, including a honey-moon in Greece, a week after the wedding. (...) After a month, I asked my superior (...) for a raise. She was non-committal. August got near, and I tell her: Look, I have an unsatisfying wage, and also my wedding is scheduled, so I need a three week holiday. Oh, I cannot allow it now, she answered. In this case, I resign (...). Upon consideration, they granted me the holiday (...). When I returned, they had raised my wage to five million lei. Told them, look, for this wage I cannot remain here (...). By the first of the month, I told them, I'd quit. And then they raised my wage to seven million. And I also got lucky, for at the same time, another engineer left the factory to emigrate to Spain. (...) three of my former college colleagues left the firm, and I got their tasks, and their pay. By 2005 I made 20 million. Those were good money.

Note that the raise was not that big, given the inflation. This fragment also illustrates the beginning of a trend: that of college educated Romanians choosing to emigrate. Călin's colleague who left for Spain did not go there for an engineer's job, but for a job as a construction worker.

Călin spends a significant part of the interview on the ways he earned the respect of his workers - he is proud that one of the old workers, who retired while Călin was his engineer, still calls him at least once a month to see how he is doing - and the respect of his colleagues and managers. However, in time, things changed for the worse at Textila:

In 2004, when I got hired, the factory employed around 3,000 people. When I left, in 2008, they still had 600-700 employees. They tried to cut the costs. The decision-makers, the principal share-holders, were Italians. (...) Around 2007 they said: why not move everything to Moldova?

The owners also had factories in Iași, in the Romanian province of Moldova, and another one in Bălți, in the Republic of Moldova. According to Călin, they tried to take advantage of the income differences between Arad, a relatively prosperous region of Romania, and the other places. While in Arad, according to Călin, the lowest-entry job, no skills required, paid six million Romanian lei, in Iași, only a foreman was paid that much. The income disparities were even higher in the Republic of Moldova, where, Călin claims, the salary of one Arad textile worker

could pay for three or even four Moldavian textile workers. When the production facilities were relocated from Arad to Iași, Călin considered moving with his family, but due to some high management changes, he changed his mind, and finally quit. Călin claims that the relocation has proven a bad choice for Textila, that the Moldavian workers lacked industrial discipline, and that now those factories are also closed.

I found out things from these guys [his former colleagues] who worked there, in [the Republic of] Moldova. The women would come to work, as the work schedule began at 7am, she would come around 9am, because she had to hoe and do it before it was not too hot outside. She left the hoe on the fence, and came to work. And did some work. Then she'd remember, around 11-12, that she forgot to feed the cow. So she went home. This is how things went.

Besides the ethnocentrism and the stereotypical image of the people from the East, seen as uncivilized and lazy, this quote illustrates Călin's pride in the industrial achievements of his factory and his workers. He stresses the core values of professionalism and work ethic and praises, by contrast, what happened 'in his time' at Textila Arad. His last mention of it is that the entire production facilities of Textila have now been re-relocated to China.

After leaving Textila he was hired by a foreign-owned factory of car parts (producing cables for Skoda and Volkswagen Golf) located near a neighboring village, less than an hour's commute from Arad. He disliked the commute, as well as the fact that his relations with his new subordinates were mediated by the foreman. He left that position after six months.

His third position was as a manager of the storage facilities of a major German retail firm that had recently opened a super-market in Arad. The growth of Romania's economy that began after 2004-2005 made it possible for several European retail chains, like Carrefour, to expand to cities like Arad. Călin had a bad experience with the (incompetent, he claims) management there:

The store manager [a female] must have been somebody's lover, otherwise I cannot imagine how such an incompetent person could have reached that high a position. So, from the beginning, it so happened I needed the workers to do overtime. And no, they would not pay overtime. And then I suggested, let's make a table, put in the overtime, and later on, when we need workers less, they can take those hours, and be free to leave, otherwise our workers would not do [unpaid] overtime. "Oh, this is nonsense, how can you say something as stupid as that?" [asked the store manager]. Oh, I beg your pardon! [said Călin] And only one week later, in a meeting with the regional supervisor, the same manager makes this suggestion, of flexible overtime [without mentioning that it was not actually her idea, but Călin's]. That was more than enough for me!"

In December 2009, only four months after being hired, Călin left that position too. In January of the next year he got a new job at a firm distributing plumbing materials to other privately-owned, small retailers in Arad and the neighboring counties. The manager (a Romanian) was also the owner of the business: Călin was assigned a van, and he is in charge with distribution. When describing his new job, he emphasizes the flexible schedule:

In 2009 I got hired in this [business] so I'm the agent, I am in charge of the distribution, I do everything. And it's OK, we all have our own route, and, my boss, you see, if I call him and tell him: "Boss, on Monday I'll be late" or "Boss, Monday I cannot come." [he'll say] "That's OK." (...) So, although I work in the private sector, I'm OK [meaning flexible] I take the kid to the kindergarten, at noon I pick him up. The schedule is more strict for her [his wife, who works as an economist for the Romanian Internal Revenue Service].

Although he is not 'Mr. engineer' any longer, and although he does not have any workers under his authority, Călin seems to be relatively content with his already four-year old job. He and his wife had their second son in 2011 and they recently took a mortgage for a larger apartment in Arad, without having to sell their former studio, which they intend to rent out. While personally he is not discontent with what he succeeded in building for himself and his family, Călin sees in dark colors on the situation in Romania in general, in 2011:

You cannot do much in this country, if you don't get into politics, and by this I mean, if you do not steal along with the others, and if you don't do stuff that... is degrading.

It's useless, sure, you can try opening a business, any kind of business, but if you're not 'greasing' up your way you cannot.

His main complaint concerns the level of corruption he witnesses everywhere around him, and he claims that no one can run a successful business in Romania without getting his hands dirty with corruption and bribes. He seems to suggest that he chose the clean life of an employee to that of a sleazy entrepreneur.

I took this interview in September 2011, when Călin was visiting, with his wife and his two children, his parents in Sântana. At the time, they were considering moving to Sântana and living with Călin's parents in their large house, while renting out both their studio and their new apartment in order to increase their income.

Călin's life-trajectory is defined, first and foremost, by his educational achievements: he is an engineer who graduated college in a period when the post-communist de-industrialization process was unfolding. His experience at 'Textila' is rather illustrative for the fate of many state-socialist plants and factories that closed their doors in the '90s and early 2000's, as well as for the fate of those who worked there. After the years spent as an engineer at Textila, he looked for a similar position in another out-sourced factory (German owned), and later on, working for a major Western-European retail chain, in a supermarket that opened in Arad. In each of these jobs Călin was hired as a manager, having workers under his authority, and occupied a mid-level management position, mainly due to his college degree.

Several factors contributed to the fact that Călin could not continue working for any of these trans-national corporations. His main complaints about his former jobs are not formulated in terms of income (he rarely complains about wages being too low) but in terms of autonomy

grounded in professional training and experience. Incompetent bosses, and badly managed engineer/worker relationships are the reasons he gave for quitting his former jobs.

At the same time, the good relationship between his current manager, as well as his own autonomy (and flexible schedule) are three of the points he stresses about his current job as a distribution agent, working for a small local owner. It is worth stressing that this last occupation does not require a college degree, and that in his new job Călin does not have, nor can he expect to have, workers under his authority: on the contrary, it is Călin who works for the business-owner, who is also the manager.

However, Călin seems to imply that his income is not very different from what he could have expected to make as an engineer working in an outsourced factory, and that materially his family earns enough to have a decent life-standard: he recently acquired a larger apartment.

Călin's marital life was also defined by his education: he met his wife at the university, and married a college-graduate, who works as a public clerk for the Romanian Revenue Service.

One of the major themes of Călin's generation is the phenomenon of migration. Having to choose between emigration (either permanent, to Canada, or seasonal, to the richer economies of Western Europe) and a stable life near Arad, Călin chose the latter, under the pressure of his wife, who had to care for her old and frail mother. He is well aware that many of his colleagues took the other route, and he regrets not having immigrating to Canada. This regret shows Călin's discontent with post-socialist Romania. He sees the current situation as a social and economic environment where only corruption and political connections (understood as traffic of influence) can open ways toward a successful career as an entrepreneur.

I read this negative assessment also as a way in which Călin accounts for not having taken this path: although he lacked an initial capital, with his education and abilities he could

have opened his own business and enjoyed the high status and the potential economic reward of such a position. However, he seems to imply, he chose his current life-trajectory precisely because he refused to be dishonest, and to live in an environment of corruption and bribery.

Next, I turn to Manfred, a German from Sântana who tries hard to turn himself into a local entrepreneur.

## **5.2. Manfred R. ( b. 1978)**

Manfred is Seppi's only son (see chapter 4). He grew up in the German part of Sântana, among children of his age. He played on the street with German-speaking friends, went to a German-language kindergarten, and, later on, to a German-language elementary school located in the same area. Then he moved to the secondary school, where the Romanian-speaking students shared the same building with the German-speaking ones. However, students were taught in their respective languages. Manfred's schooling coincided with the 1989 regime change and with the 1990-1992 mass migration of the Germans from Sântana.

We were 31 [pupils], in first grade. (...) Things began to change by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. When I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, many [of his colleagues] had already left the village. When we were moved to the new school building [the 5<sup>th</sup> grade] we were still a German class. Afterwards, students emigrated, to the extent that only six of us remained. When I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade they had to put more than one grade in the same room [meaning that German-speaking students were so few, that teachers taught, say, 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the same time] (...) It happened to me, I forgot in what year, that my entire class consisted of six pupils. When we took the graduation photo, there were more teachers than students in that image.

Manfred remembers that children were not necessarily treated fairly at school: those who belonged to high status families in the village enjoyed preferential treatment:

Actually, I remember, for I recently talked [about this issue] with someone. It happened that way, it happened... [there were students] who received favors. I know some... It happened: if the parents were, say, engineers, or the mother was a teacher...  
CG – what about those who had [Communist] party connections?  
...there was one, his father was [deputy-] chairman at the C kolkhoz, and, well, he was always treated better than others in school. That's how it was, in those times...

He does not complain that he personally was mistreated, but that he saw some of his colleagues being 'rewarded' for the high status of their parents. As a child of a kolkhoz worker (his father) and of an industrial worker (his mother), Manfred was not positioned high in the status hierarchy of his teachers. In his view, belonging to the village intelligentsia (people with a college degree) or having a position of authority grounded in political credentials seem to have been the two major criteria that distinguished families, and therefore influenced the way children were treated and (at times) mistreated at school. It is worth noting that his school-year memories are not marked by an 'ethnic' frame, that would oppose, say, German to Romanian kids, but by a 'class' frame, opposing offspring of better-placed families to those who were average or below.

Manfred's memories are also marked by material distinctions, especially those resulting from the possession of scarce [and therefore prestigious] consumer goods such as VHS-players, or color TVs, which could be purchased only with the help of relatives who had immigrated, legally or illegally, to West Germany:

[People] owning VHS-players, color TV's... those who did own these kind of things. There weren't many. Very few, actually. They got them from America...  
CG – not from Germany?  
No, those were American [-made]. They got them from the 'shop' in Arad [a special store for foreigners, where these products were sold only for foreign currency, which Romanian citizens were not allowed, as a rule, to own]. It wasn't possible to bring them directly from Germany.

Access to goods from outside of the socialist countries was somewhat easier for the Germans in the village, most of whom had at least some distant relative in West Germany, than for the others. During visits to Romania, these people could spend their foreign currency buying Western consumer goods for their relatives. These consumer goods could be legally purchased from special Romanian stores, available almost exclusively to foreigners. However, goods from the West were really scarce:

When [his aunt from West Germany] sent us a letter, she was also sending one blade of chewing-gum... one... it was really thin so she could sneak that in. And everybody around would tell me: hey, you got a chewing gum! [He laughs] That's how it was, in those years.

The chewing gum ("Wrigley's") from West Germany was both a treat (juicier and softer than the Romanian versions, when the Romanian versions were available) and an event, for it was impossible to buy or order such a thing in communist Romania. For most Romanians in the village, chewing gum was available only through Germans who had received it from their visiting relatives. However, it does not seem that Manfred was enjoying too many of these foreign consumer goods, given the way he emphasizes the fact that more often than not he did not have access to a pack of Wrigley's, but to a single piece of chewing-gum.

In this context, it is not that surprising that the large majority of the Germans in the village chose to emigrate once this became possible. Manfred, whose family decided to stay, is still in contact with some of his old colleagues, but not with many of them:

CG Did you have friends, among those who left.

I did have friends. Among those, I think, I am still friends with... I do talk to them, we communicate... with three, maximum four of them.

CG When they return to visit?

I see them sometimes in Germany, and we chat. But with the rest, not at all! Nothing.

As he gradually became part of a tiny minority of Germans in an overwhelmingly Romanian village, Manfred changed his friendship interests according to what potential friends were available. After graduating from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and completing his secondary education, Manfred went to the local high school, specialized in training agricultural mechanics, and for the first time he switched the language of instruction from German to Romanian. It was not a major problem, he said, since during the last years of his secondary education the level of German of some of his teachers was so low that they hardly spoke the language. He distinctly remembers a teacher who... “barely spoke 2-3 words in German. And she was allegedly teaching [at a ‘German as a mother tongue’ institution] in German. So there were few [trained] teachers.”

The high school Manfred chose was not a prestigious one. Actually, it was probably the least prestigious around, so there is no mentioning of private classes, or of problems in being admitted. Among his former German class-mates, Manfred is the only one who chose this path.

Among all of us. Yes... two of us went to Arad, at the German-language high school. I was the only one who stayed here. The rest... out of the six of us, three remained... I mean, three remained in Romania.

Two other colleagues were admitted to a (more prestigious) high school in Arad which offered education in German, and the other three left for Germany.

Manfred intended initially to work in agriculture, following in his father’s footsteps:

CG Did you not consider a future, like your father, a peasant, [working with] horses?  
Nooo, well, of course, when I was younger.. but, but now.. you see, as I grew up, as years passed, I moved away [from this ideal]. You realize, it makes no sense to turn into a peasant, and I-don’t-know-what...

CG But did you intend to become one?

Oh, I certainly did!

The expectation of making a future for himself in agriculture, like his father, seems to have turned Manfred away from any possible life-trajectory that included more than an average education. It must be noted that he could have given up on completing high school and begun working right away, but he avoided that life course.

After graduating high school (in 1996), Manfred did not look for employment in Romania. He took advantage that his ethnicity qualified him for an entry visa and the right to work in the new united Germany:

After the revolution I was getting a [German entry-] visa [in his passport] valid for one year, with no problems. (...) Yet others [those who were not ethnic Germans] maybe they got one, maybe not. Most of them got a visa valid for one month. I received a visa valid for a whole year. As soon as I was done with school I left, and worked [in Germany].

In the early '90s German state policy favored both a much faster integration and a pathway to citizenship for those of ethnic German background arriving from Eastern Europe, and the granting of entry-visas and the (limited) right to work. Manfred did not emigrate for good. He went and worked for a period of three months, as allowed by his legal status, then came back to Romania for a while, after which he returned for another three-month stint in Germany.

In looking for employment while in Germany, he claims he used his friends' help more than his relatives: "never at my relatives. I lived with friends, and... at my work place. That's where I lived. I never needed relatives." Manfred sees as his major advantage on that labor market not necessarily his qualifications, or his personal qualities, but the fact that he spoke the language:

[Compared with how we worked in Romania] it was harder work in Germany [the employer expected more from you] but, I... I always had this advantage that I could

... speak German, so all the time I [was in a position of authority] I had workers [that he had to direct] That was my luck!”

For a few years (roughly 1996-2000) he worked on a team supervising some oil-refining devices.

Many years I worked at some oil-refining facilities, in Germany. As a skilled worker, yes. Many, many years. We were... doing maintenance work, all the time. We were doing maintenance. The owner [for whom he worked] had invented some ways of measuring... for them, what do I know what he was measuring, the intensity, the density of the fluid... (...) So, with him I went all around Europe: Spain, Germany, Austria.. .Slovakia. We had crews sent around all the time.

The owner of the firm seems to have had a preference for working with immigrants, possibly because of the short-term contracts that allowed him to pay less for social security and other taxes. Thus, Manfred facilitated the short-term employment of other Romanians, when his owner needed work-force “I brought there five or six Romanian friends from here [to work there]. However, while the pay was much better in Germany than in Romania, Manfred did not like it out there:

CG what didn't you like out there, the work, or the life-style?

The life-style is different (...) everything is strict out there. Everything is... exact. You cannot [say] forget about this issue, we'll solve it later. No, everything has to be ..exact. When they asked us to build a fence, that fence had to be straight; it could not lean a bit to the left or to the right, and the height... Everything had to be perfect.

CG So you went there for money?

Yes, for money! At the time, I was earning 100 DM per day. That was good money, man!

He saw also the income disparities: The owner, he claims “earned 70 euros per hour, [for the work performed by Manfred] and he was paying me 40 euros per day. You see, this was the trick!”

While moving to and from Germany in late 1990s, Manfred began “his business:” he bought second hand consumer goods from Germany, especially cars, and sold them at a higher price in Romania. He had worked “four years, maybe more” in the oil refining business.

CG And after that, you began your business?

Ah, I was in business already... but there came a time, either you work, or you do business. I had many orders [for goods to be brought from Germany to Romania], and at the time, that meant a hefty return.

CG ..sure, and I guess it is better to have your own business?

Yeah, sure... I am free when I want, I stay at home when I feel like it, I leave when I see fit, no? When I left my work, I traveled weekly to Germany, with five other people, we went and bought five cars [and he needed 5 drivers to bring them to Romania]. Each and every week!

Once again his special legal status as an ethnic German helped Manfred in his enterprise:

CG There weren't many in this business [trading second hand cars].

No, there weren't because they [ethnic Romanians] had a hard time leaving the country without a [German] entry visa. Many had their visa applications rejected, in those days.

He continues:

At the time, not many people could leave the country. And not many people had money. Now [after the EU countries lifted visa requirements for Romanian citizens] you have no problems, you can go. And there was no internet then [meaning you can look for second-hand cars on Internet sites]. And there was no GPS positioning system. This GPS takes you straight to the [seller's] house. Once upon a time you needed a map, a telephone, you had to call, and the seller would give you directions [if you spoke his language].

Romania's gradual integration into the EU eroded the advantages that entrepreneurs like Manfred enjoyed in the late 1990s and during the first years of the new millennium. What used to be a market to which few had access, due to legal and cultural limitations, expanded very much, cutting the profit margins of Manfred's business. I see Manfred's activities as part of a

‘grey’ market. He never filed to create an official business, but transported those goods as an individual transporting stuff over the border for his own personal needs. Acting as a registered firm would have meant paying a lot of taxes, and he avoided that. It was not the first time that Manfred was in contact with people in the grey, or black market, some of them having been ‘in business’ even during the last years of state-socialism:

In those years, the Gypsies, they were making [fake passports] then! They made 20 000, 30 000, 40 000 DM then. Even today, I know [a Roma guy] who keeps asking me – because I know everybody, and everybody knows me. And this guy: man, didn’t you see that guy [a German who crossed the border illegally using a fake passport] he still owes me 20 000 DM for my services.

He is proud to be well-connected with all the actors in his business, be they officials in charge, other traders, black market dealers, and so on:

CG Weren’t you supposed to pass border controls, deal with paper-work?  
Everybody knew me. With me, there was never any problem. That’s how it was back then.

Elsewhere in the interview, when asked about the changes Romania’s accession to the European Union brought to his business, Manfred explains: “there still are, there still are, places where one has to bribe” but fortunately not the border controls anymore, as the circulation of goods is free within the European Union.

Throughout the ‘90s and the beginning of the next decade the access of most Romanians to the market of second-hand cars from Germany was limited to those who could get an entry visa, and had a minimum of language and cultural tools that qualified them to find and negotiate a deal with the German sellers. Manfred managed to turn from a worker into a grey-market car

trader, who, undoubtedly, had to bribe his way through the various bureaucracies of the highly corrupted post-socialist Romanian state.

In September 2006, when Manfred gave me an initial interview, he was hoping to turn his ‘grey’ market activities into a properly registered firm:

What’s certain is that I won’t immigrate to Germany. I cannot see myself living there. And I don’t want to. To being with... It is possible to [do things] here also [in Romania]. My next plan is to buy a truck and get into the grain business. CG A cereals trading firm?  
Yes, I’ll open a firm. And I’m looking for [a truck] from Germany, for sure. And cars, since cars are my business.

Manfred has meanwhile abandoned the ‘grain trade’ business. During our last interview, in April 2012, he was still living in his parents’ house, and he was still trading goods from Germany to Romania, ‘grey’ market style. He had helped re-furbish the house where he lives with his parents, for, he said, he considers marrying a Romanian girl from the village. He tells me that some friends offered him a job in neighboring Arad, for “25 milion” Romanain lei, (roughly 700 dollars) which is considered a good wage in a country in which the minimal wage is 7 milion lei, but that he did not accept. He felt re-assured, and he is sure that he will land a good job whenever he decides to give up his business, but that he enjoys very much what he does, the freedom and the autonomy of being his own boss.

It appears that ‘being a businessman’ is seen by Manfred as his major achievement. Anytime he mentions his former friends or colleagues, Germans from Sântana who left for Germany, he is keen to stress that almost with no exception all those people landed industrial jobs, and that no one, or almost no one, managed to become an entrepreneur, someone who employs others, instead of being an employee himself. He stresses: “it’s so very clear. Those who don’t work [for the others, CG,] they are the ones who earn, around here.”

I see Manfred's life-trajectory as reflecting the major changes of the post-1989 period: the migration, the rise of the free market and of the entrepreneurship ideal, as well as the struggle to survive in a medium in which corruption within state structures is almost endemic.

Manfred's educational achievements are very low, and he does not hide the fact. Also the status location of his family within the village was not high. He made the most of his ethnicity: as an ethnic German he qualified for a visa, while all the non-Germans in the village did not. Moreover, Manfred's knowledge of the German language and culture eased his access to jobs and business opportunities in Germany.

Manfred's life-trajectory is grounded in the economic disparities between Romania and Germany, the two states where he has a special status: as a Romanian citizen and as an ethnic German, protected by favorable clauses in Germany's treatment of foreign nationals. While the large majority of Germans from Sântana chose permanent emigration to Germany, Manfred is part of the minority that preferred to shuttle between his two 'homes' and make a living out of his 'transnational' status. Although he was born and raised in Romania, Manfred did not work for a single day in a Romanian enterprise; he chose instead to do seasonal jobs in Germany, taking advantage of the huge disparities between wages in Romania and those in Germany.

The key theme of Manfred's account is his self-definition as an entrepreneur, as a self-made man, who does not work under the authority of others and who runs his own business. Indeed, seen from outside, he does not seem necessarily a success story: he does not own a legal firm, and his second-hand car business belongs to the grey economy. His intentions of expanding his activities, or of giving them a formal, legal cover, did not materialize. However, Manfred defines himself as an entrepreneur, and he uses the distinction between employer and employee

in order to position himself with respect to his former colleagues or friends, the majority of whom have stable jobs in West Germany, but do not run their own businesses.

Ironically, Manfred seems to agree with Călin's assessment that one cannot manage a business in Romania without having to bribe and engage in traffic of influence. From Manfred's perspective, however, this is how things stand, and he prides himself with the fact that he 'knows people' which is precisely one of the reasons why he is still in business.

He does not regret not having emigrated. He built his career precisely on the fact that his ethnicity and his social networks as an ethnic German from Romania allow him to exploit his two 'homes' and to make a living shuttling, and exploiting the differences between the two markets and the two societies.

### **5.3. Martin L. (b. 1964)**

Martin is the only son of Resi (see chapter 4), born in 1964. He grew up in the German part of Sântana, living with his parents and his paternal grand-mother. As his mother was an industrial worker, commuting daily to neighboring Arad, Martin grew up mostly in the care of his grandmother.

My grandmother cooked for me. Actually, I... was accustomed to being with her. My grandmother reared me, with her I grew up, here at home.

Martin went to the German-language school in his neighborhood, for the first elementary grades, and then moved to the major school in the village where he studied in German until he graduated the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He remembers that in those years there were so many German-speaking

students in the school, that his class had to be split in two, and from that time on there were two parallel classes, both taught in German.

His family was not rich so during vacations he used to help his father and perform small services at his father work-place: a retail store selling construction materials.

During the holidays I went to the MCC [the acronym for Constructions Materials Cooperative, CG]

CG What were you doing there?

I was measuring the timber, reckoning the cubic meters of the merchandise.

CG Did they pay you for that?

Sure. I used to spend my entire vacation out there.

It is notable that Martin did earn money as a teenager, performing some small tasks. It seems that his family could use the extra-money, and that sending their child to work, instead of allowing him to read or just take time off during his vacations, was part of their work ethic. It is difficult to conceive that the child of an intellectual in the village would have been sent to work and earn money during school breaks. However, in an economy where scarcity was common, his father, as a shop assistant working for the village retail cooperative, had access to desirable goods that were inaccessible to most citizens of socialist Romania. I found out by accident that, as a child, Martin had a bicycle “made in the East German factory MIFA,” an extremely desirable item that only influential families could hope to acquire.

After finishing his secondary education in the village, Martin gave up on completing a four-year high school education, and instead chose vocational training [‘scoala profesionala’] at a school specialized in making furniture and upholstery. Having worked with wood at the construction materials store, helping his father, Martin claims he saw it as quite natural to continue specializing in working with wood.

Also, the decision not to go for a high school degree was shared by many of his colleagues:

Few graduated high school in those years [among his classmates]. Some went to the German language high school [in Arad] but all the rest went for the [two years of] vocational training, or the Sântana high school which was preparing agricultural workers. So most of those who have a high school degree, they got it here, at the Sântana high school.

As most of their parents were either industrial workers, or worked in agriculture, at the local kolkhoz, the German children seem to have tended to replicate the professional achievements of their parents. According to Martin, the large majority of his classmates ended up as industrial workers in Arad, working at the Railway Cars Company or at the Lathe Machines Company.

The vocational school Martin attended was affiliated with a major industrial Furniture production factory in Arad, where he, as a vocational school graduate, had been already assigned a working place. Actually, as his schooling had been sponsored by the Furniture production factory, Martin was required by contract to work there for a certain number of years. He would have preferred to move to a smaller furniture production factory in the village, and avoid commuting, but he was forced by his contractual clause to continue to work in Arad. So for the next two years Martin commuted to the town, like his mother, until he was drafted for the compulsory sixteen months military service.

He was not assigned to perform his military service far away in a distant city, but ended up serving in the military unit of fire-fighters in Arad. However, as his family was not an influential one, neither in political terms, nor in economic terms (and could not afford bribing the

military personnel), Martin was rarely allowed to leave the unit: “in 16 months, I could leave the military unit maybe 11 times.”

In 1985 Martin returned to the factory, but not for a long time. After a couple of months his father had a heart attack at work and died unexpectedly. The sudden family disaster sorted things out for Martin:

After my father died, I talked to [his boss] Mircea H, [head of the Sântana retail and production cooperative] and he intermediated a transfer for me [from his Arad factory to the Sântana cooperative where his father had worked] and only then did the Furniture production factory allow me to leave.

I see this unfortunate incident as illustrative for the formal/informal ways in which production relations were structured under the socialist regime. The personal influence of a manager within the system was enough to overcome the formal barrier of the contract between Martin and the Furniture production factory, which had forced Martin to keep working in Arad. Had his father not died, it would have still been possible for Martin to get a transfer, but it is doubtful that he could have convinced a boss influential enough to throw his power behind Martin’s request. The local boss was sensitive to the new situation of Martin’s family:

I wanted to get the transfer to Sântana because my grandmother was ill and my mother was also commuting. So the choices were: either they offer my mother a job as a janitor at the Sântana cooperative, or they offer me a job there. So the best option was for me to move. And I came, and I liked it a lot here.

It seems that his mother’s salary would have been diminished by going from a construction worker position to that one of a janitor, and it was in the interest of both that she continued commuting at Arad, while Martin moved with his job in the village and cared for his ailing grandmother. Also, as we learnt from Resi’s life account, the relationship between

grandmother and grandson was much better than the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

Once the transfer was approved, Martin became an employee of the Retail and Production Cooperative of Sântana, where his father used to work. He got a position as a carpenter and worked together with seven other carpenters, all ethnic Germans. He seems to have enjoyed his new job and new colleagues. Martin remembers returning to the village as a benefic turning-point in his life-trajectory, especially when compared to his life-style as a commuter:

[When I worked in Arad] I would return home from a party at 3-4 am, and the guys who worked in the village would wake up at 7 am, while I had to be up a 4 am [to catch the train] so it was hard. I learned what life in Sântana meant when I transferred to the carpentry shop here. Work began at 7 am, I lived three minutes from my work place, at noon I'd return home, have lunch, at 1 pm I was back at work, and at 4 pm I was done. It was also different with the [control you had on scheduling] summer vacations, and all that stuff...

Not only the working conditions and his life-style changed, but, Martin is keen to emphasize, a large part of this change altered his relationship with the village community:

Together with my group of friends, beginning in '87, after my father's death, I learned what it meant to live and work in Sântana. You cared about Sântana, for you knew all that happened in the village. I worked in the carpenter shop, I worked in maintenance, in all the stores, and storage houses [run by the retail and production cooperative] and I knew all that happened around. You had another kind of bond with Sântana, when you worked in Sântana.

Martin did not address the 1989 changes, but he resented their impact. Immediately after the collapse of the state-socialist regime, many Germans from Sântana chose to immigrate, and of eight carpenters, four left. As the cooperative where he worked consisted of the workshops

and retail stores which had been previously owned by private tradesmen or craftsmen who had been forced to 'join' the cooperative in late '40s, many of these properties were re-claimed by their former owners, and lost, one by one, by the cooperative.

After 1992, the carpentry shop had one major beneficiary: the community was building a sanatorium for senior ethnic Germans, partially founded by West Germany. As the economy went down, the carpenters were left without orders, and re-specialized in making coffins.

However, in time, the shop lost more and more customers:

Many customers turned toward Arad, toward the [new, private] firms, offering special coffins, modern. We did not have the tools necessary to make them, we did not have the [money to invest in] machines, or [in 'modern' coffins] as they make them nowadays, with upholstery.

By 2003 the Sântana cooperative decided that it cannot afford to keep the shop going anymore. Martin lost his job. However, seven years earlier, a German-owned enterprise opened a small factory producing car parts (interior cables) for the German auto-industry. As the owners and top managers were German, German-speaking workers were selected for mid-management positions. Martin's ethnicity helped him to get a job at the cable factory, where he began as a deputy-foreman, and after 9 years he is still employed by the same firm.

Martin is in a fortunate position, having worked in a large industrial factory in the last years of state socialism, and now, for a multi-national corporation, with factories in Marocco, Bulgaria, Romania and China. He uses his vantage point to make a comparison between the position of the worker in the two systems of production, state-socialist and global capitalist:

As far as I see, people are treated like servants nowadays. Especially when compared with the situation under communism. I won't say that we did not work hard under

communism, but you were not... [pushed that hard]. Now all you hear is: "Go, go, go!" so... they treat you as if you were a robot. Look at the work break situation: there is a 'technical break' of 5 minutes at 9 am, and the big break, 15 minutes, while under communism we had a 25-minute break. Please, you try to eat in 15 minutes. That woman [most of the work force is female] needs to wash, to go to the toilet, to eat, to smoke a cigarette, all that in 15 minutes. Please, you do all these things in 15 minutes. I am telling you, this work is more for robots!

Besides complaining about the "Modern Times" working conditions, Martin addresses the way the workers are controlled, and in his view, exploited.

Working at an assembly line... when you press the button [requesting a halt] the computer is recording: how many times the assembly line was stopped, and who stopped it. (...) It is a system, it's a system where it is easier to control, because of the computer. So they know, it is not necessary to... I am telling you, before, under communism, there was a secret service agent somewhere behind [watching you work]. While now, you have either a CCTV camera, or a... this one [meaning a computer] behind you."

CG And it was easier to trick the secret security agent?

Yes, yes... because the secret security guy, you ended up knowing who he was. But the CCTV camera does not lie, it tells you the date, the hour, the minute and the second, isn't that so? This capacity to control of the current system is greater, and the people.. it's about exploiting the people. This is my opinion; it is all about exploiting the people."

More than that, at the factory where Martin works, he saw the emergence of new relationships between management and workers. He chose to contrast the way in which workers were treated by managers and foremen, before and after the demise of state-socialism:

Look, let's take the example of a guy, 22 years old, who barely graduated college, I don't want to know how he managed to graduate, for we all know how nowadays people graduate [meaning that is it not unusual for students to bribe the professor in order to pass exams]. So this guy arrives, on a Saturday evening, back from Bulgaria, or wherever [the firm has multiple locations], he stops over at the pizza place, eats well, and, his belly full, goes to the assembly line, Saturday evening at 8 pm, and urges the worker: "Go, faster!" when that woman, [the assembly line worker] is 53 years old. What do you say about that? What do you say? Yes, there were foremen under

communism too, but they had to graduate a 'foreman training course' and were taught how to behave with the worker. That was essential. You did not have to know a lot [as a foreman] but you were required to know how to talk to the people. These ones [meaning the managers of his current working place] have no clue how to address the worker.

Last but not least, Martin stresses the differences in income between workers and management, an issue that accounts for much of the unhealthy atmosphere at the work place, according to him:

I'm telling you, the issue of all these differences is the distinction between high level management and low level management. [Under state socialism] an engineer earned, perhaps, 3,500 [Romanian lei] and a worker earned 2,300, I ended up having 2,500. (...) Look, now I have a wage of 12 million [Romanian lei] almost 13. My boss must have around 25 million. And I am deputy-foreman, he is a foreman. He is not even an engineer!

We have to remember that these observations are made from the perspective of someone who is not a worker, but occupies a mid-managerial position: "I worked in the shop for three years, and in the last eight years I've been in an office, but if I meet in the village one of the girls [I supervised during my three years as a foreman], I can look her in the eyes, not duck or try to hide. I never insulted anyone. "

Martin is not unhappy about his position within the firm, but, as a former worker, considers that the situation of the assembly line workers has worsened in the multinational corporation for which he works, as compared with the state socialist factory that he used to know it in the late 1980s. He does not talk about any intention of changing his job, but he would love to be put in charge of the factory's archive.

The passion for archives opens another chapter in Martin's life. While in his account, he does not dwell on the process of migration of the large majority of Germans away from Sântana,

he became accidentally involved in the effort, initiated by those who had already left the village and were settled in Germany, to salvage the history and the memory of their community.

Consequently, Martin spend months and years working pro bono at the National State Archives in Arad, collecting historical data, copying documents, exploring registers. While doing this, Martin undoubtedly found the passion of his life. He is extremely proud of his research, and, while so far he has been content with looking up data that others asked him for, he intends to write a book on the history of the German community in Sântana. In fact, he finds the research activity he has been involved in as the most meaningful and the most prestigious of his life-achievements. This is apparent in a fragment where Martin talks about the achievements of his former school colleagues:

Workers, we've been workers, almost all of us. None of us had an education. One became the driver of the general manager of the Sântana Center for Mechanized Agriculture. And the girls, they become workers too. There was nobody working in an office or something. So, from my generation nobody managed to become an engineer, or a teacher, or something... We're all workers, and all immigrated to Germany. Only two or three remained here, from my class. In 2003 we had a class reunion, in Germany, and they were all workers, out there, too. Some in large factories, some in small factories ().. so nobody is.. or made... I was the only one who worked in the archives, and did historical research, and they praised me, for no one, who came out of Sântana, had done anything remotely similar.

As a result of the attention he devotes to the history of his community, and due to the fact that he is one of the last couple of hundred Germans still living in the village, Martin also pays close attention to the traditional customs and celebrations of the German community. He used to participate as a young boy, and nowadays, as there are fewer and fewer Germans in the village, he takes part in them also as one of the organizers. He is also a member of the Catholic Church committee.

Martin was 47 years old in 2011, at the time of our last interview. He lives with his mother, in their paternal grandparents' house, and he seems determined not to get married. His future plans include continuing to work at the same car-parts factory, to be an active organizer and participant in the civic and church life of the shrinking community of Sântana Germans, and, most of all, to gather historical data, and ideally, write on the history of his community.

I see Martin's life trajectory as defined both by his ethnicity as by his class. Martin was not pushed or trained to do well in school. He was taught that in order to earn money he had to do something lucrative, and during vacations he worked (for pay) at the shop where his father was working. He chose to become a worker, like the overwhelming majority of his (German-speaking) generation, and instead of pursuing a high school degree, he went for a vocational training as a carpenter specializing in furniture production. Although he lost his father when he was 22, Martin sees the years that followed as a period where he had an active life. Having managed to transfer to a job in the village, Martin enjoyed working in an all-German collective of carpenters, hired by the local cooperative, as well as getting involved in the (German) community life, and taking part in all its celebrations and public events. I assume that Martin has re-defined precisely that period as, seemingly, the "golden era" of his life account. Martin chose to stay (see the story of Resi, his mother) and is actively involved in keeping alive the customs, the local culture, and the church events of the Sântana Germans. As the carpenters' cooperative went bankrupt, facing lack of investment and the competition of the burgeoning private firms, Martin had to re-invent himself as a deputy-foreman working for a factory producing car parts, owned by a multi-national corporation. While not unhappy with his new career, Martin is rather critical of the way the corporation for which he works treats its workers, and has developed a set of critical, leftist opinions that he is not afraid to share with others. I found very interesting his

vantage point, of a worker for a large state-socialist enterprise who ended up in a mid-managerial position in a factory belonging to a multi-national corporation. Had he not been an ethnic German, he would not have qualified for his current position, but as the high level management was German, they favored any applicants who spoke the language.

Last but not least, although lacking a high school education and any initial ambition to do intellectual work, Martin ended up discovering his passion for historical research while helping other ex-inhabitants of Sântana settled in Germany to uncover the history of their community of origin. For Martin, his strongest claim to a high status among his colleagues and villagers is his research, his contribution to the history of Sântana.

#### **5.4. Cornel O. (b. 1968)**

Cornel is the late son of Valeria (see chapter 3), the youngest of three siblings. His mother acknowledged that his birth, in 1968, is related to Ceausescu's decree banning abortions, and therefore to her inability to use any measures of family planning. Valeria had Cornel when she was 41 and her husband 49, with a 21 years gap between the birth of the second child, a girl, and the birth of Cornel. He remembers his childhood as a pleasant one. When he was very young his sister and her family still lived in the paternal house, but they soon left and built their own house, so Cornel was raised mainly by his parents. He grew up in the neighborhood settled by the Romanian peasants 'colonized' in the village through the land allocations made possible by the 1945 agrarian reform. During his first years of kindergarten Cornel had to walk, together with other children from the neighborhood, more than a kilometer one way, in order to reach the only available kindergarten, located in the German neighborhood. He remembers how, although he and his classmates were studying in Romanian, they played during breaks with the German

kids (who had their own, German-language section), with whom he occasionally fought, while slurs like “you, Hitlerians!” or “you Gypsies!” were exchanged. The extinguished ethnic conflict of the late 40’s and early ‘50s between Germans and ‘colonists’ still echoed in the way children related to each other in early 1970s. It was only after two years of preschool that a new kindergarten was opened in the (new) neighborhood where Cornel lived, a kindergarten where the student population was entirely Romanian. He was not a great student, loved to play outdoors, and had lots of friends. Consequently, he had minimal educational expectations: he got into the local high school, which specialized in training mechanics for agriculture, and envisioned a life as a worker in agriculture, like his parents and other members of his family:

I graduated from high school in ’86... in those times you were allocated a job [under state-socialism, educational institutions assigned, compulsory, a specific job position to all their graduates]. I graduated the ‘agrarian’ high school, here in the village, the Oxford of Sântana! [derisively] And I worked as a mechanic for the Center for Mechanized Agriculture for six weeks, and then I was drafted to the compulsory military service. (...) my first salary was 2,200 lei, it was a good-enough salary, actually I was surprised I earned that much.

However, after one year and four months of military service, Cornel did not return to his previous position, because he dreaded the hard work, especially driving a tractor:

You had to be back at work after a maximum of 15 days following the military discharge. I did not go on purpose, let them fire me. So they fired me, using the article (1) of the law [breach of the contract due the employee’s fault, an especially bad thing to have on one’s work record under state socialism] but I could not care less... as long as I avoided working as a tractor driver.

What he had in mind was to become a worker at a Furniture Producing factory in a neighboring small town, so he activated his network of friends who knew people, and made some phone calls.

So I worked at the Furniture factory in R. One needed ‘connections’ to get hired there. I worked there for a year and a half or two. (...) There I earned up to 4,000 lei! (...) With a German co-worker, we specialized in a specific task, and there were a couple of months when we made 4,600 lei... Afterwards, they changed the way we were paid, when they saw how much we earned... so we made around 3,200. However, it was quite a good salary. And you were not breaking your back! [Meaning one was not really working that hard].”

It seems that for Cornel, a desirable job had two major characteristics: had a high economic reward, and did not require physical effort. He probably could have earned quite a lot as a tractor driver, but that would have been hard work. He did not mind changing his ‘specialization’ (he is quite dismissive of the skills he acquired during his high school training) in order to get an ‘easier’ job that was also well paid. Note that he used a short-cut: although he had no formal training in Furniture production, with the right kind of ‘friends’ he got an entry-level position.

However, right after the 1989 regime change, Cornel left the factory and got hired by the Romanian Railways Company:

I’m not sure whether I worked one full month after the revolution [at the Furniture production]. And then I went to the Railways Company, as an unskilled worker. What else, the CEO? I was loading and unloading railway cars. So I worked there for a year, as a forklift operator.

As he would not dwell on this incident, I did not want to press the issue of his leaving the factory, but it seems fair to assume that this was not his choice, as his next job required physical effort and did not pay that well. After a year of working as an unskilled worker, he was promoted as second in charge with security and fire prevention (he had to take a two-day ‘training course’ at the Timisoara headquarters). For the next few years, Cornel was in charge of:

Both the security agents and the fire-fighters, around 12 agents and I forgot how many fire-fighters... not that there was a lot to do, but every single day there were fire extinguishers to be filled up, and labeled accordingly. Also, if you're not in charge, the workers will go and get drunk, because you didn't give them something to do that day.

He was now in a position of authority, a definitely better situation than his previous one. Having reached a mid-level managerial position, Cornel stumbled upon an undesired promotion: in that he was appointed as the head of the railway station [exclusively] female team of janitors. It is telling for the male-dominated culture of the Railway Company management how the position of supervising a team of un-educated females was defined as a stigma:

Somebody must have run away from that positions, and what did they say: let's appoint this sucker there! I'm telling you, this is how it must have been, because that positions was normally given only to those who were in trouble, either mid-level managers who had discipline problems, or those who had been caught drinking at work; instead of being fired, they were punished to serve three months [as head of the female janitor team]

CG you were not well paid?

I don't say I did not have a decent salary... it was about having to deal with 46 women, all day long, with these uneducated, gossiping women. All day long they came snitch on each other: that this one is stealing the cleaning materials, the other is stealing the toilet paper, and the other one does not clean this, or that... It was tough. No, it's not a good job at all. Man, you need steel nerves to sit and hear all that rubbish.

After a while, Cornel gave up his 'administrative' position, and moved to a job as a storage-facility agent, within the same company. At the storage facility he worked with a relative, and Cornel seems to have thrived there:

I already had my 'connections' also at the Timisoara [head-quarters of the company]. When the Internal Finances Control team came to check our papers, my boss would be all sweaty. Why... I would bring salami, food-stuff, from home, I asked the carpenter to set up the grill, we made some barbeque... the controllers would walk up-side-down,

drunk like dicks. What kind of Internal Financial Control, they approved everything! I was talking with the workers from S [village] to bring 3-4 kilos of fresh fish, those from G [village] to bring [home-made] plum brandy, each and every one contributed to the bribe. And Mihai, the carpenter, prepared the grill outside the storage-facility... and that's how it worked. You should have seen how the [control team's] pens worked afterwards, on our papers (...). Moreover, any time I had to go to the Timisoara [head-quarters], I would bring [as a bribe] a liter of plum brandy, a salami, some fish, I was good at guessing what they [the bosses] wished for. And it made a difference...

Although it is possible that Cornel's account is somewhat exaggerated, I find his story entirely consistent with the work ethic and the bribe culture that permeated Romania's institutions during the '90s. At a certain level, this bribe culture was a continuation of practices common under state-socialism, but without the control of the party-state, it reached new dimensions.

It was a time when those in management positions would take advantage, and use the assets of the [public] institutions to further their private interests. Cornel's account allows us to take a glimpse at how those things worked:

The deputy station chief was a bandit, a thief, and a smart-ass. The guy had all these qualities, and he was clever. I got from him a welding-device. He opened a railway car that transported merchandise, for he was in charge with the 'complaints' department, within the Romanian Railways Company. Took one, and said: "Look here, some welding devices, don't you need one?" Sure, I answered, of course I do. 'Then get one and take it home with you,' he said. [After a moment, now assured of Cornel's cooperation the boss continued:] 'You know what, he said, let's take all of them, and keep them at the storage facility.' So I went home and sold lots of welding-devices.

The way I read this story is that the deputy chief of station stole the merchandise that was transported by the company he worked for, the Romanian Railways Company, and sold them illegally, with Cornel's help, most probably splitting the profit among them. Note that the stolen merchandise was kept in the storage-facility of the company, run by Cornel, while all the

'complaints' about missing material during rail transport were to be addressed to the deputy chief.

In 1991, while working for the Romanian Railways Company, Cornel married a girl from the village, who was also an industrial worker. She moved in with him, in his parents' house. They have one son.

The major change in Cornel's professional life was to the result of an accidental encounter. On his daily commute to Arad, he had made some friends on the train, who were also commuting daily from the village to the county capital. H, one of Cornel's commute-friends told him that he had been recently appointed as a farm manager by a rich Romanian entrepreneur who had bought a farm in the village, and needed personnel to run it. This is how Cornel left his job at the Romanian Railways Company in 2001 and began working at the private farm owned by Mr. Bora:

The owner, Bora, was younger than I was. I have no clue how he made his money, H. told me that a year before Bora bought the farm here in Sântana. He had a firm that was run from his apartment [it did not even have an office] What is sure is that in a year he made money. Lots and lots of money. How? We have no clue.

Very soon, the owner replaced the farm administrator, H., with Cornel, apparently for stealing too much. Cornel claims he did not know the reason and that he inferred it afterwards, when he was already the acting administrator of the farm:

So this H, was visiting me, and he began to give me some lessons: Look, when you go to the store, ask the shop assistant for an invoice for 10 boxes of mineral water bottles, [for the farm workers] while you buy only two. Then you charge the company for 10 packs, and pocket the difference. Again, you buy supplies, carbide, welding electrodes; you make an invoice for more, and pocket the money. (...) Well, had I done what he told me?.. He would have probably found out, and he would have snitched on me to the owner.

This is how Cornel began to make sense of the farm owner's strange decision: he had appointed Cornel as an administrator not by firing the previous one (Cornel's commuter-friend H). but simply by asking H. to rest, go home and take it easy, keeping his monthly wage as an administrator. Cornel figures that the owner was actually earning money as a consequence of this decision, avoiding the losses he incurred as a result of the theft with the invoices. Cornel also found out later that H. was not just an employee, but also held a 5% ownership share in the farm. Cornel is extremely proud of his achievements as a farm administrator.

I always liked to reward those who helped me... for I was the one deciding the workers' wages. [The owner] never asked, why do you pay this one so much, or why... It is also true that he met us in situations of crisis... and it all went well. We were working at 2-3am. Some machines had troubles (...) and the owner happened to see us, working at those hours, and I saw him... thinking, for he was not dumb: these people work real hard, you know?

Besides working hard, and gaining the trust of his workers, under his administration the farm really did turn profitable:

[The owner] was content, you see, every second day, he was earning 70 million lei... when the production was high. You see, out first harvest, the very first one... sold a kilo for 18 000 lei, now [due to inflation] the sum does not seem that great, but then...

Working in the private sector meant also learning how the owner cheated the revenue system, and participating in the theft:

You see, we were selling the merchandise without invoices, on the black market, 70% of the deals were on the black market, and only for 30% we made invoices [and paid taxes for it]. I gave him every day the money we made illegally. Everything was written down in a [secret] register, I had to record everything: price, amount, VAT. You realize, our selling price included VAT too, because those with whom we dealt had no idea... [they were not declaring their income, therefore they did not have to pay VAT]. With the people from the internal revenue service, I had very good connections, I bribed them

every week. It was the policemen I could not stand, they were shameless, each and every day they were at the farm: I need this, I need that.

This account illuminates one of the dimensions of fiscal evasion and of the black and grey market that emerged after the demise of state-socialism and the beginning of the transition toward a free market. There are no reasons to assume that the case uncovered by Cornel's account is in any way singular. Note that for Cornel the most corrupt and shameless were the policemen, even more corrupt than the agents of the Romanian internal revenue service.

Cornel was, he said, fairly rewarded, wage-wise: while a worker earned around 400 000 lei per month and an engineer 1 500 000, he was paid 2 000 000 a month. However, given the black market dimension of the business, there were trust issues: after one year of serving as a farm administrator, when Cornel bought a second-hand Dacia 1300 car (one of the cheapest cars on the market), the farm's owner accused him of stealing from the farm, and so he could get that car.

You should have seen how angry he was... how, out of my wages, could I afford a car. A 2000 DM car. And I showed him the bank record, indicating the money I took from my father's savings. I took 7 millions from my father's savings, and 2 millions were my money. I asked him, do you find it absurd that I paid 2 millions. This is exactly the amount you pay me each month. And this happened after a year, [of working for him] Călin!

Sometimes, Cornel declares, he almost regrets being so honest with the owner:

I could have stolen his money, man! Especially the money he made illegally: after selling two transports of vegetables, the amount was 100 million. What could he do to me? That was black market money. It was him who broke the law. And I didn't do it!

In the end, the trust issues, along with the interference of other directors from the town, made Cornel quit his job and refuse to return.

One after another, all these things added up... and I said to myself: stop. Although, my father told me, when he heard that the owner called again [asking Cornel to change his mind:] “go back, work for him!” But I didn’t. I have but one word.

It appears that indeed Cornel was a valuable asset for the farm, for, he claims, six months after he quit the farm ceased to exist: “Why wasn’t able the one that took my position to keep producing at least one harvest? to sell it away and earn something?” According to him, it was all about having the knowledge, and the right connections:

Z. [the administrator of a neighboring farm] and I helped each other a lot. So many times Z. came and asked for something, as the firm that employed him was short of cash. I gave him four boxes of (...), which, indeed, represented a value. But then, I went to Z and asked them for 45 tons of manure..? [The owner] Bora.. never asked me: where from do you borrow the plough, who spreads the manure for you? He never asked. But he needed someone with the right kind of connections. Once you have them, everything works smoothly.

Although there might be more to the story of farm’s the demise than the fact that Cornel left, his account stresses the importance of the informal agreements in an economy where many, if not the majority, of the contracts were actually informal and, quite often, illegal.

After leaving the farm, Cornel was unemployed for a while, and then he joined his wife, who was working for the German-owned plant that produces car-parts. From an administrator, he became an assembly-worker, with a rather limited income. I remember him in those years, taking a really expensive loan in order to buy a computer for his son. During some summers he tried to do seasonal work in Western Europe, joining some villager friends, but he found the back breaking work in the fields both very hard and not really well paid. Currently, Cornel lives in the village, and both he and his wife are working at the car-parts plant. He is proud of his son’s educational achievements, who was recently accepted into college.

I see in the Life story of Cornel a window into the new economic relationships that emerged after the demise of state socialism. Compared to his brother-in-law, Lică (see Chapter 4), who worked for the Center for Mechanized Agriculture his entire life, Cornel changed many jobs and many specializations: he began as an agricultural mechanic, continued as an industrial worker in the furniture production, then worked for the railways company, advanced into low-level management, managed teams of janitors, and fire-fighters as well as a storage-facility. Then he re-invented himself again as a farm administrator in the private sector, and ended up as an assembly worker in a plant owned by a multi-national corporation.

Cornel actively searched for opportunities, and he stumbled upon some: he prides himself on being someone who knows how to use the right ‘connections,’ how to smooth things with a bribe, and who has earned some extra-money with these ‘grey’ market techniques. However, in the end he did not make it, neither in the ‘public’ sector, nor in the ‘private’ sector. The son of agricultural workers, he is currently an industrial worker. In my reading, he sees his period as farm manager as perhaps the most fruitful and rewarding of his career. However, nowadays, his call to high status comes mostly from the focus on the educational achievements of his son, who is poised to become the first one in the family to hold a college degree.

### **5.5. Marcu E. (b. 1968)**

Marcu is the youngest of the 14 children of Pali (see Chapter 3). His twin sister died of an unknown illness when they were two and a half. He grew up in the Roma community located at the margins of Comlăuș, where he still lives today. Marcu went to the local school, where at the time Roma children and Romanian children shared the same classroom. He remembers that some children were not at all disturbed by hanging out with Roma:

There were three-four [Romanian] children who went to school with us [with the Roma children] and they hung out with us, they did not like hanging out with the Romanians (...). Look, I've noticed that there are many of the people who grew up with us, with the Roma, since they were little children, they learned [Roma's] language, and they speak it fluently, like we do!

However, it is worth noting that Marcu mentions “three-four” [Romanian] children who hung out with the Roma, while all the rest did not.

Marcu seems to have had a very good relationship with his grandparents, and he proudly remembers them:

My grandmother died recently, she was 88 years old (...), and until she died she was a very intelligent woman, very wise [o avut scaun la minte]. If you mispronounced a word, she would correct you. And she was schooled, can you imagine! She had such a beautiful hand-writing and signature, you'd think she was a doctor or something... trust my word! And my grandfather was the same.

The fact that a Roma woman born in 1901 was literate marks indeed Marcu's grandmother as an outstanding case, certainly the daughter of a high status family in the community. Even among the Romanian villagers it was not at all unlikely for a woman born in the same year to be illiterate. Turning toward his grandfather, Marcu stresses his distinction between the ‘good stock’ families that enjoyed a high status in the community, and the rest:

I remember my grandfather well, he died when I was 15. And he was a man... he's word weighed heavy, here among us. They had been six brothers, and their family all had been well-off, all lived the good life. They were, not the head of the tribe [bulibasa,] for Roma in Comalus are not organized that way, but they could have been. Their family... CG - I see, people respected them not only for their money, but as a family. Precisely, precisely, they were a good family, a “good root” family.

Good root families were not many in the Roma community, Marcu claims, and being born out of ‘good root’ meant that people honored you:

All in all, there were about 5-6 [“good root”] families back then. Also, there was a fiddler, the most famous in the county, and that one was respected too [besides the “good root” families].

CG – So these families were both highly regarded in the community and very rich? Yes, yes, yes... They were. A few families. My grandfather’s family, they were rich, they were six brothers. C’s family... I don’t know if you knew them, they were selling ice-cream, they had been rich for generations [erau bogați din bătrâni].

In an attempt to back up his claim that family distinction was inherited and ran across generations, Marcu gives the following example:

We’ve been a family who runs businesses beginning with my ancestors. I’ll start with my great-grandfather. He was a feather-collector... My grandfather learned from him, took over the trade... actually, they were collecting many things, not only feathers, anything that was lucrative at the time. (.).. My father did not continue...

At this point Marcu’s memories contradict his father’s account: while the son claims that his great-grandfather had been a feather-collector, running a business, the father remembers the same person as a simple adobe-maker. However, both of them agree that Marcu’s grandfather, (Pali’s father) had indeed been a rich and respected feather-collector. His father, however, could not go on “running the business” presumably because of the beginning of state socialism. Nevertheless, Marcu continues to see the confirmation of the exceptional qualities of his family reflected in his father’s achievements:

He learned a trade, he actually mastered many trades: he was a wall-painter, he was a Gypsy, I can say that he was the most intelligent man among the Gypsy. (...) He was the best worker at the railroad car factory. There was no one better than him. That’s how his mind worked, when he learned a trade, you see, no one was better than him at that: he repaired watches, no one did it better, he painted, no one did it better, so whatever trade he learned he got to the top of the [skill] pyramid.

After finishing eighth grades [although, I suspect, even earlier], Marcu abandoned school to join his family business: wall-painting.

And I was the youngest, and I lived with them... and we were authorized wall-painters, we were good at it, with my father. It was very good, a very lucrative trade, and all of us loved to do it (...). Among the Gypsies, we were the only wall-painters, actually there was an older woman too, but she has poor skills... We did not paint here, for the price was low [among the Comlăuș Roma few could afford their prices]. We painted for rich people, for Roma who ran businesses, for policemen... we did not work for just anybody. At the time we were charging seven-eight hundred lei per room, and we grossed five, six, seven thousand lei per painted apartment. And in a week we spent all the money... each week we painted two, three, four apartments. We worked more in Timisoara, in Timisoara and Arad [main towns in the region].

Although Marcu may be bragging a bit about how many apartments his family painted per month, he certainly indicates how the family could have earned a quite decent income under state-socialism. While his father was a state-authorized craftsman, he certainly did not declare on his taxes, either the real number of apartments he did paint, or the actual sum he was charging, which makes me classify his trade as part of the secondary, or grey economy.

In time, the activities of Marcu and Marcu's brothers mixed grey market with black market activities. Unlike their father, the brothers did not settle for working as wall-painters but entered the black market trade with consumer goods bootlegged across the border from neighboring Yugoslavia. The income they earned on the black market was even better, but they needed to have a registered job because under the law of Romanian state-socialism being unemployed was a punishable offence:

Sure, it was better to deal in bootlegged merchandise than to paint walls, but I needed the authorization as a painter, for in those times, you could get arrested! If you did not have an authorization [mentioning you are employed], they could arrest you under the Decree 153 [punishing vagrancy] but as long as I had an authorization [as a wall painter] nobody could touch me!

Although Marcu and his brothers were not the only ones in the Roma community to buy and sell bootlegged merchandise on the black market, they were (once again) part of a small

minority of businessmen and women. We must remember that Marcu was very young at the time:

I entered this trade when I was 14-15, together with my brothers, who also made a living out of it (...). I was dealing on the black market, under communism, I sold spices, [Vegeta], one could hardly find those then... and also cigarettes, “Week-end” [Jugoslavian brand,] “Marlboro,” “Kent”... more “Kent” than “Marlboro” for at that time Kent ruled.

CG- from the Serbians?

Yes, from the Serbians. I used to go to Deta [village near the Romanian-Serbian border] because they had a market there, and also to Stamura-Moravita [another village on the border] but mainly Deta. I got the merchandise from there. I used to buy it cheap, direct, without intermediaries, and sell it in Timisoara or Arad. And many times I used to sell en-gros.

Marcu began working and helping his family at an early age. Moreover, he was involved in this trade (retail and en-gros) at a time when, outside of the black market, trade was controlled exclusively by the state, and by the state run ‘retail-cooperatives.’ Last but not least, Marcu grew up in a context in which his family’s activities were either in the grey area of the law, or outright illegal. He must have been accustomed on the one hand to hiding from the police, and on the other hand, to bribing the police and the representatives of the state agencies that he had to deal with. I do not think that it is by chance that in the (short) enumeration of the customers of his wall-painting activities, Marcu mentions precisely the two categories with which he dealt extensively while dealing under black market conditions: “Roma who ran businesses, policemen.” Legal wall-painting and illegal black market trade could have been complementary activities. While I assume that Marcu had no reason to lie to me, he had also no incentive to address in this interview the entire complexity of his (and his family’s) activities. I have to stress here that Marcu was not yet 18 at the time he is talking about, and that both in the well-painting and in the black market trade, he ‘worked’ together with his numerous brothers.

The regime change of 1990 represented a major inflection point for Marcu, as he could transfer the commercial skills he acquired while he made his money on the black market, into a legal business.

Then, the revolution came [1989] and, as I was accustomed to trading from a young age, I opened a business right away. I rented a space, right after the revolution and I opened a bar. And it went really well. Afterwards, I opened a store too, and by 1994-1995, I opened a restaurant in the center, where there is now a pizza-place. At the time, it was the most beautiful restaurant in Sântana.

However, the same post-1990 years were not as fortunate for the Roma community from Comlăuș. Marcu acknowledges that, despite the opportunity the regime change opened for him, most of the Roma fared badly at the dawn of post-socialist Romania.

After [19]'90, we [the Roma] we were the first to be fired from the factories, and this is not a local occurrence, it happened everywhere across the country. This was the problem: the Roma were the first [to be fired]. And we did not receive any sort of support, do you understand? There was deep poverty, and our Gypsies had to survive on welfare. And that social welfare support was miserable: imagine, living on two million lei, people who had a family of seven-eight, or three-four persons living on 800 000 lei!

Marcu got married when he was 25 years old. His family chose for him a 19 years old girl from a 'good root' family. However, Marcu was in love with another one, whose family came from another village, and whose standing was not as high in the Roma community. He acknowledges that the family pressure were very high, coming especially from his mother, but also from his brothers, so the wedding ceremony was already planned when he, impulsively, took his current wife with him, as she was leaving from a party, and let his family know that he decided, once for all, to make her his wife. However, the fact that he deflowered his current wife before the wedding made impossible a proper wedding ceremony for the couple.

In another interview, from a related project I conducted in 1995 with two Bucharest colleagues, one of the Roma teachers from Comlăuș characterized the impact of de-industrialization on the Roma community as follows: “famine is haunting the households and the people.” The loss of industrial jobs occurred at a time when the previous barriers against traveling abroad were lifted, and soon many Roma (and non Roma) left the village looking for work and opportunities in Western Europe. Marcu talks about the migration wave that characterizes especially people of his age from the Roma community:

“For us it is GOOD [he stresses the word] for, had not the borders been open, a catastrophe would have occurred, because there was no employment for us a couple of years ago. I am telling you, it would have been a very.. a [terrible] catastrophe. We would be now in prison... because when you don’t have [anything], you should do something to survive. If I don’t have bread, after two-three days I’ll go and steal the bread you have on your table. With the risk of being locked, I have to get bread. Because I refuse to die of hunger while... and there are children, you see, there are Roma who have four, six, ten children. So the fact that we could go abroad helped us very much... and, in the beginning, there was this racism [everywhere], NO-BO-DY would hire us. There was racism, it still persists nowadays, less intense.

He estimates the Roma population of Comlăuș at 3,000 people who remained in the village, while 1,000 have migrated and are settled in Western Europe, mostly in Belgium, but also in France, Spain, and Portugal. Marcu, as well as his brothers, also left to look for work and opportunities in Western Europe. Marcu has been a seasonal migrant and he likes to talk about the huge cultural shock he went through when he encountered the realities of Western Europe:

When I went there [to Western Europe] in the beginning, it was like I reached heaven, in comparison with [what was] here [in Romania], do you understand? I told myself, I was raised in a Neo-Protestant family, and I know that God exists. (...) What I want to tell you is this: had I not known that there is a Heaven, I would have said: “Lord, here is Heaven on Earth, all of it! But I said: “Lord, I know that there is a heaven above, and I believe that there, by your side, it is more beautiful, but here... [in Western Europe, expression of admiration]. As compared to... [dismissive, referring to the conditions from Romania].

Marcu did not stay long: “I stayed there [in Western Europe] for six months, seven months, one year... I did not stay three, four, five years.” Despite the initial impression, the Western European Heaven did not prove welcoming. What could the Roma men do out there, not knowing the language, and not having any papers? Marcu decided to base his business in Romania:

You know, I saw my business went well here, so here I stay!

CG Is it easier to start a business here than there?

You can start one out there too, but I know my ways here, and I told myself: Why start from zero, when I am doing well here? Why should I go and do construction work there, or do like other [Roma] did, for example, some go begging... I won't! You understand? [meaning he would not beg for money] So I said, for me it's better here. I build myself a house, a mansion, and I told myself, why rent it to a Romanian or a Roma [while he would live in Western Europe], and not use it with my children.

While Marcu does not get into details, he gives ‘begging’ as an example of a Roma activity he would not get into, allowing us to understand that there are other activities, some Roma perform abroad, not necessarily ‘proper’ or legal. Besides his store and bar, Marcu bought a mini-van and transported persons and luggage between Comlăuș and Bruxelles, Belgium, the focal point of the Roma migrants from the village. (Four of Marcu’s brothers settled in Bruxelles). Although I cannot confirm or disprove the allegations, I heard in the Roma community, some of the Roma I interviewed told me that one could travel to Belgium with the large buss of a private firm from neighboring Arad for 80 euros (one way), or travel with Marcu’s minivan for 200. As I could not grasp why anyone would travel with Marcu, my informant explained: “you see, with Marcu you need no papers,” meaning that Marcu smuggled people across the border (before Romania join the European Union).

Since the elections of 2000, Marcu has also been a member of Sântana's local council, elected on the lists of the Roma Party [Partida Romilor]. As one of the (if not the) richest Roma in the community, he seems to have developed a large network of clients. Thus, when I asked him about his election he mentioned:

CG That's why they [the Roma] have elected you, isn't it?  
You see, I helped for years those who had the worst troubles, if someone was poor and he needed 200 euros, I gave it to him, if he needed 300 euros, I gave it to him, if he needed 100 euros, I gave it him. If he needed to go to the hospital he came to me [asking for help,] if there was something else, it was still me, so I was very appreciated by our Roma, you see?

Marcu is not satisfied with the way in which the Roma are treated by the local administration. Recently, he complains, the Local Council contracted a loan to repair 20 kilometers of roads in Sântana, and not even one road was repaired in the area inhabited by Roma. According to Marcu, the Romanian majority overruled his requests:

We decide here today, not you!" [said the Romanians] (...) We [the Roma] are only three, and they [the Romanians in the Local Council] are 14. Had they repaired at least one or two kilometers of road here, and 18 kilometers were repaired on the Romanian side, I would have said: "you see, there is no racism here." Since there are more Romanians [than Roma] (...) But they did not do anything [for the Roma].

The lack of proper roads in the Roma community is not only an issue of convenience, and Marcu is quick to underline that this is literally an issue of life and death:

This was the reason for the death of two [Roma] children. The bad condition of the dirt roads made it so the firemen could not reach a burning house, during the winter.

Nevertheless, Marcu acknowledges that not all the troubles faced by the Roma community can or should be blamed on others. A case in point, according to him, is the reluctance of Roma parents to send their children to school:

Concerning the school issue, here we are also guilty... because our children don't go to school. Some cannot because they cannot afford [to send their children to school] and that's what we are facing nowadays. [While] those who are better-off, do not want to go [to school]. Here we should assume a part of the guilt, I would not throw the blame on others.

I took the interview in 2007, when Marcu was about to expand his business, open a travel agency (he had already bought two Mercedes mini-vans and proudly showed them to me, at a later stage). At the time, the economic boom in the Arad area resulted in a need for cheap workforce, which in turn made industrial jobs become finally available again to the Roma:

It's been seven-eight months since they started hiring us [Roma]... (...) and already there are seven eight new houses built [in the community].

CG Who is hiring?

The new businesses that opened around here. There are some Italians [owners who are hiring Roma,] the cables factory [German owned], in Ineu [neighboring town] at the furniture factory, in Arad, they [the Roma] work as carpenters, or as upholsters. (...) And right away they took out loans from the banks –because [you cannot build a house] from your salary. And what did they do? They built right away a little house... “Look, I take out a loan, but at least I know what for.” [They said:] “If I could live for 10 years on welfare, on two million lei, I could easily live on six million lei. I pay two million [to the bank] and with four million I can get by, from one day to the next.” Because poor people, they're used to living on a very tight budget.

While the majority of the Roma in Comlăuș were very poor, especially after the de-industrialization of the '90s hit so hard in the capacity of Roma to keep a stable job, some of them did become rich. The rise of the free market, as well as the immigration in Western Europe, produced new forms of social standing within the community, besides the old criteria of being of 'good stock' or not:

CG Things have changed after the revolution? Are there others [besides the few ‘good root’ families] who are respected here?

Now? Yes, there are... Now there are many who are rich. Even if they do not own a large house... even if they do not own a large house, they have money! And... they’re respected. Others go to school... you’ve seen, there is already a Roma policeman here.

The opening of the Romanian society after 1989 pauperized the majority of the Roma families in the village but was favorable for some. Out of trade, or out of the income derived from activities in Western Europe, several Roma families from Comlăuș managed to amass a fair amount of money. Economic upward mobility seems to be linked, in the Roma community, with the necessary display of ownership of a ‘large house,’ although Marcu acknowledges that this does not happen in all the cases.

A couple of Roma managed to take advantage on the post-1990 educational “affirmative action” policies, and to graduate college, usually in a distance education program: one of them was hired after graduation as an agent in the local police and is highly regarded by the other Roma.

The rise of new figures of educated or rich Roma bring Marcu to address the issue of discrimination, and his unhappiness with the homogeneous treatment of Roma by non-Roma:

Look, if you come to me and see I’m dirt poor – this is an example- what does he believe [the Romanian:] ‘they’re all the same.’ A very wrong idea, you see? (...) It happens among Romanians too, I’ve seen Romanians who moved into houses belonging to the Germans [who emigrated] and kept the cow inside, and who destroyed the hardwood floors and who have many children... was I supposed to think all Romanians are the same? This would mean a very poor judgment! Yes, that’s how it’s here, but why do you put us all in the same category?

Marcu claims that he and the rich Roma deserve to be appreciated for their achievements, and to be treated differently (according to their merits, and their standing) by the Romanian majority. At the same time, he would not accept forms of discrimination that are blatantly racist:

I experienced it myself, I was not served in a restaurant, in Sântana (...). We went there, four men and he did not serve us. He said: I'll serve only you, Marcu, not the rest...

CG Ah, he did express deference toward you... so what did you do?

I did not accept, what's that, I go there with three-four men and... (...) I went and I filed a complaint against him, the authorities came right away, and he tried to make excuses for himself. It was a pity I had no witnesses.

CG – Well, there were four of you.

We were, but they told us that all of us were Gypsy and that we all stick together.

However, he does not accuse the police of unfairly treating him, or the Roma. Quite on the contrary, he builds a contrast between Ceausescu's times when the police used to “come at six [am], at five, at four o'clock and lifted you out of your bed. There were four-five-six-ten-twenty-fifty policemen who hit you.” Nowadays:

We have nothing to do with the police, they do not abuse us, do not cause us trouble. Naturally, those who steal... of course [they will face the consequences]. (...) More than that, the police proved understanding when the offences were minor... if they had to fine someone for a minor offence and I went to talk to them, we settled the issue. After '90, there has been no abuse from the side of the police.

According to Marcu, the Romanian society is racist, and the racialized perspectives are learned in the early childhood, via anti-Roma stereotypes. “The parents raise them with ...[when little kids are told by their parents to be silent or] ‘the Gypsy will come and take you,’ or ‘will eat you.’” He stresses the extent to which the Roma are not only spatially segregated, but that a local Romanian would hardly, if ever, walk in the Roma neighborhood “it is like a border:”

They come in the neighborhood only when they have some business with a Gypsy... you know when a Romanian would hang out with a Gypsy? (...) When he needs something, or when he cannot get what he needs but from the Gypsies. You see?

Marcu's statement reflects the new forms of the old taboo on personal contact with a Gypsy. While before WWII Roma women worked in the houses of Germans or Romanians, and while under state-socialism, Roma and non-Roma worked in the same factories, in the post 1990 years contacts between the Roma and the rest decreased gradually. During my fieldwork in the Roma neighborhood, I noticed that the breaking of the taboo, having a non-Roma visit the house of a Roma, was a status distinction in the neighborhood. If the visit was upgraded and the guest accepted to drink a coffee, or even more, to eat in a Roma house, with his Roma host, this meant an even higher compliment.

My observations were confirmed by a story told by Marcu, where two policemen visited his house -the context allows me to grasp that the two were there as friends or business associates, not as agents of law and order. (It is worth noting that policemen are highly regarded in the Roma community; and when I asked several Roma children: "what would you like to become when you'll grow up?" quite a number of them answered: 'policeman.'<sup>155</sup>)

For example, a policeman did eat in my house, I am giving you an example, I do not mean to boast here, for it might very well be that I am a thousand times cleaner than he is, and if he visits my house, he'll be amazed! My toilet is cleaner than his entire house, so, what I was saying, He ate here, I had great food. They were looking for me, and I was just eating, so one of them said [to Marcu's wife:] "Come, give me some food too!" One [of two policemen] ate, the other did not. And after they left -he told me afterwards- the other one [the one who did not eat] said: "What, did you eat in a Gypsy house? Are you out of your mind, eating even with a Gypsy?"

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<sup>155</sup> On the expectations of young Roma in post-1990 Romania see Rughinis and Fleck (2008).

Although Marcu is a young, rich, and upwardly mobile Roma entrepreneur, he still feels that he should caution me that when he mentions that a policeman ate at his table, he does not do this to boast about his status. The racist practices that mark the social boundaries between Roma and non-Roma are alleviated by his new economic status; he is allowed to drink in the bar owned by a rabidly racist ethnic Romanian and a policeman accepts to eat at his table. However, these small victories seem rather sad to me, as they seem to indicate that Marcu has become not one of the successful entrepreneurs and rich men (and women) of Sântana, but merely the Roma entrepreneur.

Marcu reviews his life-trajectory and tends to attribute his entrepreneurial abilities not only to his family tradition “we’ve been a family who runs businesses beginning with my ancestors” but also to an ‘ethnic trait’ of the Roma:

We, Roma, we are like the Jews, you see? We love freedom, we love to trade, to run businesses... However, some [of us] would love to run a business but they cannot afford it, they do not have the means, you see?

In my reading, the use of “we, Roma” signals here an attempt to ‘define’ a certain essence of Roma-ness, an essence he and the other rich Roma entrepreneurs exemplify much better than the rest, those who “do not have the means.” The distinction is grounded in the difference between making a living out of ‘being free’ and ‘running a business’ (more ‘Roma-like’) and making a living out of a daily job (less ‘Roma-like’). This claim to status is certainly contested by many Roma, especially by the generation of those who worked their entire life in the Arad factories. However, even in the 70’s and ‘80s there were Roma who dealt in gold, or in bootlegged merchandise, who grounded their call to status on the same criterion, and looked down upon those who worked in the socialist industry.

I interviewed Marcu in his store, situated in the Roma neighborhood. Behind the store he showed me his mansion, an impressive two-floor building he built for his family.

Marcu's life trajectory is perhaps the best illustration of Szelenyi's (1988) "interrupted embourgeoisment theory." His grandfather used to deal and trade before the advent of the state-socialist regime. While Marcu's father had worked for a while as an industrial worker, as soon as he had the opportunity, he began a career in the secondary economy, as a wall-painter and watch repairer. His elder sons combined grey economy activities with black market trade. As Marcu grew up, he abandoned school early and began to be involved in trading bootlegged merchandise and working either under grey market or under black market conditions. The regime change of 1990 made legal precisely the activities he had experience with, while, at the same time, causing the disappearance of long term jobs for the majority of Sântana's Roma. What had been a curse for many turned out to be a blessing for a few. Marcu opened a bar, then a store, and also began to sell his services by transporting goods and persons between Western Europe (where many of his friends and relatives had emigrated) and his home village. Whether all his dealings had been entirely legal is doubtful. In time, Marcu turned into a local big man, surrounded by a network of clients. The same network of clients, added to his wealth (in a community that was extremely poor), turned him into a local politician, elected by the Roma community as their representative in the Local Council. While Marcu's life trajectory suggests that he distinguished himself both in the local economic realm, as well as in the political realm, the analysis of his life account reveals the strong social boundaries separating the Roma from the non-Roma. Although in terms of political prestige and economic power, Marcu ranks among the most respected persons in the entire village, he remains a Roma, a person with whom non-Roma would deal only out of need,

and who would be only exceptionally allowed to drink in a self-styled ‘for whites only’ local bar, and only as long as he does not bring his friends with him.

### **5.6. Third generational landscape:**

The two decades that followed the demise of state-socialism in Romania are marked by the ebbs and flows of the political transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Linz and Stepan, 1996, Dan and Haicu, 2003), toward a consolidated democracy that became a member of NATO in 2004 and a member of the European Union in 2007.

The period was characterized by a strong economic contraction in the early 1990s. Double digit inflation (in 1999 inflation was still 44%) wiped out the savings of most Romanian citizens, while most of the industrial plants either shut down or significantly reduced both their output and the number of their employees.<sup>156</sup> This economic depression produced a wave of migration toward Western Europe, both seasonal and permanent. During the 2000s Romania enjoyed several years of economic growth, which was brought to a halt by the global economic crisis that began in 2008.

For the villagers of Sântana, the post-1989 period marked the decline of agriculture as the main occupation. The new cooperative land association employed much fewer workers than the former kolkhoz and in time all but eliminated the sectors that became less and less profitable, such as the orchards or the vegetable growing sector. Most of Sântana’s land-owners did not work their land but had it in an associative form of land exploitation. Since this was not enough to make a living, land ownership or land exploitation became a source of secondary income. If

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<sup>156</sup> On Romania’s deindustrialization see Pasti (1995), Pasti (2006), and Verdery (2003).

before WWII the large majority of Sântana's inhabitants lived on agriculture, under state-socialism those who worked in agriculture made up just under half of the active population (see chapter 2). After 1990, agriculture remained the main occupation only for a quarter of Sântana's active population (see Table 2.14).

If we take as a starting point the social categories of late state-socialism – kolhoz workers, industrial workers, intelligentsia, and party managers (nomenklatura) – we see that the transformations of the last two decades have affected the new social categories in significant ways. While agricultural workers represented a small minority, the de-collectivization of 1992 turned many of them into owners (Verdery, 2003) of small farms of under 10 hectares. Călin will benefit from these assets when he inherits his mother's share of land, while Cornel (whose parents are both dead) is the owner of a couple of hectares, which are part of the RomGera association. For them agriculture does not constitute a form of subsistence but an additional income. Sântana also has several large land-owners. Apart from the several agricultural associations, a few individuals managed to amass up to several hundred hectares, and there are some estates that are owned by foreign nationals.

The former commuter-workers of socialism vanished with the de-industrialization of the 1990s. Martin is a good example of a former socialist worker who came back to the village, found work in small local shops, and then returned to an industrial job as soon as the global flux of capital and services reached Sântana with the creation of the plant producing car-parts for the German auto industry. Thanks to his ethnicity, Martin moved up the occupational scale, and from a skilled worker turned into a mid-level manager. His advancement was limited only by his educational achievements. I use Martin's life-account in order to contrast the working conditions and the situation of industrial workers under state-socialism with the situation of those working

in the modern plants outsourced in Eastern Europe by US, Japanese, or Western European capital. Martin, having worked under both systems, manages to offer a comprehensive account, marked by his educational and class perspective: although he is not a worker anymore, he is hardly a ‘winner’ of the transition, and therefore he is not among those who earn the rewarding wages of the plant’s top management.

Many of Martin’s former work colleagues, especially the Germans and the Roma, chose another path, and are now immigrants in Germany, Belgium, France, Spain and Italy. The effect of permanent and especially seasonal migration on the social hierarchies in the village constitutes a crucial factor in my analysis: both Marcu and Manfred rejected permanent migration and chose to build careers as intermediaries, mediating between those who left and those who stayed. Both Marcu and Manfred see themselves as entrepreneurs, as autonomous managers and owners of their own businesses.

Călin’s trajectory illustrates another pattern, the one that Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsely (1998) outline in their ‘capitalism without capitalists’ analysis. The foreign capital that opened new economic enterprises in Romania made possible both the formation of a new category of industrial workers and the rise of a category of technocrats, with middle to upper-level wages. The specificity of Călin’s path is marked by his preference for an autonomous position, with a flexible schedule, over the highly regimented 9-to-5 work in the new, neo-liberal economic environment.

Last but not least, Cornel’s life account illustrates some of the economic developments of the 1990s. His story is relevant for understanding the manner in which state-owned enterprises (like the Romanian Railway Company) were used by their mid- and high-level managers to transfer assets from the public domain into their own private bank accounts. These stories

constitute a leitmotif in many of my interviews: see the account of Cornel's brother in law, Vasile, on a parallel process at the Center of Mechanized Agriculture. Apparently Cornel was not well situated in the patron-client networks that made possible the illegal transfer of property from state or collective associations into the hands of private and ruthless individuals. Failing to land a lucrative job in the public sector, Cornel turned toward the public sector, where a new category of economic up-starts was burgeoning. Once again, his account illustrates the sudden manner of primitive accumulation (to use Marx's term) of the early 1990s, and its –more often than not – illegal or shady roots. While Cornel's image of the way a private farm functioned in the late 1990s cannot be generalized, the manner in which taxes were evaded, and the depths of tax evasion (according to him, in the realm of 75% of the entire production) are highly suggestive of the ways in which bribery, corruption, and tax evasion were endemic in the new Romanian private sector (Pasti 2006). Last, Cornel did try out the other available possibilities (e.g. seasonal migration) but ended up an industrial worker, like Martin.

Note that, with the exception of Călin and Marcu, none of the members of my third generation managed to build or acquire their own house: Martin, Manfred, and Cornel still live with their parents or in the house of their deceased parents. Home ownership among the members of the third generation is much less common than among their parents' generation. I tend to assign this fact to a relative decrease in the buying-power among the majority of the members of this cohort.

I see the stories we followed in this chapter as drawing a sketch of the new social landscape in Sântana. As a result of migration, the German community has been slowly disappearing. Also, the young Roma from Comlăuș emigrated in significant numbers to Western Europe, especially to Belgium. The place of the Germans, on the one hand, and of the young

Roma, on the other, was taken by internal migrants from less economically developed areas of Romania (ethnic Romanians in the first case, Roma in the second).

While the area formerly inhabited by Germans is now an overwhelmingly Romanian area (with a new Orthodox Church being built in the main square where the old Catholic Church stands), the area inhabited by the Roma has been expanding due to demographic pressure, and due to the new middle class Roma who refuse to be contained in the traditional Roma neighborhood. For the first time in the village's history, well-to-do Roma build houses in the center of the village, blurring the boundaries of the formerly compact Roma community.<sup>157</sup>

With the disappearance of the Germans and the changes in the Roma community, the old boundaries between the Romanians from Comlăuș and the Romanians from the 'colony' are slowly but surely becoming irrelevant. Călin, for example, is both an offspring of a very respected Comlăuș family and of a 'colonist.' Other markers of social distinction, such as 'newcomer' (as a result of internal migration) vs. 'local,' have replaced the mid twentieth century local markers.

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<sup>157</sup> See Ringold (2000).

## **Chapter 6. Social stratification in a rural settlement across three political and property regimes.**

In the previous chapters I have discussed how the life trajectories of each of three generations of villagers were differently shaped by the macro-historical changes of the 20th century. I now focus on the impact of these successive property and political regimes on the opportunities and constraints they presented for members of the generations I studied, examining the clusters of these life trajectories, their sequences, their parking-positions (Szelenyi et al. 1988) and their outcomes. My analysis allows me to describe the circumstances in which villagers lived, and the set of conditions within which they had to make choices. Each life-account constitutes also a window toward the social landscape, and the social history, of each of the three property and political regimes I have surveyed. As delineated in the introduction, my project locates the subjects in the set of institutions and social relations which structure their world, and look in those very institutions and relations for an explanation of the subjects' acts. These choices, and the categories and frames the subjects use to explain them narratively allow us to analytically describe: the ways in which local hierarchies have been affected by each set of economic and political changes as well as the major criteria of social distinction that have emerged or disappeared with each property and political regime.

I begin by outlining the social landscape at the beginning of my endeavor, the post-WWI village. The outcome of the war caused the two villages, Comlăuș and Sanktanna, to become part of the Romanian kingdom. The Romanian nation replaced the Hungarian as the titular nation of the state, a revolutionary change for the ethnic Romanians from Comlăuș. The social and economic structure of this rural settlement had been significantly altered (as compared

both with the situation before the war and with the situation across the new border, in neighboring Hungary) by the impact of the agrarian reform of 1919-1922. The poor, especially the poor Romanians (but also some Germans and a few Roma) got land, and the peasantry was reinforced, instead of taking a possible route toward proletarianization or urbanization (as, in the absence of land, people might have had to look for jobs in industry). While Comlăuș and Sântana were not exclusively inhabited by peasants, the farmers and the landless agricultural workers constituted the large majority of the population. Besides them, the villages hosted a handful of very rich land owners who did not work their land themselves, rich craftsmen and entrepreneurs (who, like Judit's father, owned expensive and sought after mechanical tools, such as steam-powered threshers and tractors), retailers, well-to-do grain traders, pharmacy owners, doctors, and teachers –a world of non-peasants who constituted the local bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. The lowest level of social prestige was reserved for the Roma community, who worked in their traditional crafts or as cheap labor for the labor-intensive seasonal agricultural tasks, while the Roma women were employed as domestic servants.

The post-WWI village enclosed ethnic members in territorially segregated communities, distinguished not only by language, but also by distinct dress and by community-centered rituals that were not shared by the rest of the villagers. The major element along which ethnicity in the two contiguous villages was organized was language. The contacts between the German, Romanian, and Roma worlds were almost exclusively limited to the economic realm. There was virtually no intermarriage and, according to the accounts I collected, extremely limited social interaction between the members of these communities.

The linguistic communities (German, Romanian, Romani) were also status communities, with the Germans enjoying the highest degree of 'social honor' (in Weberian terms), and the

Roma the lowest. While there were poor landless Germans and rich Romanians, the general assessment is, however, that the ‘middle-class’ German peasant household was richer in land (owning on average 20 hectares), and better endowed with agricultural tools than the ‘middle-class’ Romanian one (owning on average 5-6 hectares).

The post-WWI agrarian reform had a lesser economic impact on the German community, which entered the new century having inherited an economic status superior to that of the other communities, a dominant position that can be attributed both to the privileges that the German ‘colonists’ had had been bestowed upon them, and to the higher level of literacy and agricultural know-how that the community possessed. However, the agrarian reform had a huge impact on the Romanian community, half of it being saved from the curse of landlessness and poverty by the redistribution brought about by the newly enlarged Romanian state. With the exception of a handful of families, the Roma were virtually unaffected by the reform, as the strong boundaries separating the peasants from the non-peasants (in the eyes of the Romanian villagers who sat on the local land-distribution committee) did not allow them to qualify to receive land. Thus, few Roma owned land while most participated in the agricultural economy only as hired hands, therefore being positioned on the lowest rung of the economic hierarchy<sup>158</sup>.

Therefore, with few exceptions, the economic distinctions operated within, and not among, these three ethnic communities. Although there were a handful of Romanian farmers

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<sup>158</sup> Recall Mitru’s account of the hierarchy of servants before WW II: German farmers would hire only German or Romanian male servants, but no Roma. A Roma who would search for employment as a servant could hope to be employed only by a Romanian farmer. The status hierarchy is clear: Germans, followed by Romanians, followed by Roma. Roma women worked for the better-off German families and only in very rare cases for the better-off Romanians.

who were richer than some Germans, as a rule, Germans related to Germans, Romanians to Romanians, and Roma to Roma, as they married, interacted socially, danced and worshipped<sup>159</sup>.

### **6.1. Social stratification in the post-WWII village.**

I begin by addressing the political and property configuration in the post-WWII era, using the micro-level perspectives opened by my interviewees' life stories to describe the social landscape of the village. The narratives emphasize boundaries related to class, status, education, gender and ethnicity, upon which the three communities of the village were grounded. This was a rural world dominated by private property of farms and of local shops of craftsmen and merchants providing almost exclusively for local needs.

I conclude that, for the pre-WWII village, status groups defined along ethnic and language lines represented the major boundary lines that distinguished villagers: Germans, Romanians, and Roma lived in distinct communities with strong territorial boundaries, having very little in common. Had Marx been right and class lines had cut through ethnic communities, Romanians and Germans owning farms of similar sizes, or landless peasants of all three ethnicities, could have discovered that they were not so far apart and, at a minimum, done things together. However, this did not happen: each language community constituted a virtually endogamous marriage group and the level of interaction between the communities seems to have

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<sup>159</sup> While it is true that Roma and Romanians shared the same faith and church (until the early 1990s) all the accounts agree on the strict spatial separation between the Roma and the Romanians inside the church, as well as on the rule that the Roma will line up behind the Romanians when a ritual or ceremony was performed. See also Hoppal (1983: 248).

been very low and related almost exclusively to economic activities (e.g. Romanians worked for Germans, as servants, Roma women worked in German households).<sup>160</sup>

However, within each ethnic community there were a series of other, more subtle, boundaries. Status groups, understood as groups determined by the amount of “social estimation of honor” (Weber 1978:935) were attributed to a plurality. In the vein of Lipset and Bendix’s (1951) critique of Warner (1941), I do not assume a set of status criteria homogeneously shared throughout the community, and I identify a multitude of criteria for status reputations not only distinguishing each community from the other, but also marking distinctions within each ethnic community.

I see the literature addressing the social distinctions in the early 20th century rural Romania as being focused on Jowitt’s (1978:58-59) claim that the traditional village is structured by a moral economy grounded in status hierarchies (personalized, communal) and not on class hierarchies (impersonal, purely economic). In an agrarian economy made essentially of dwarf-farms practicing subsistence agriculture, and where the production for the market was limited to the occasional surplus, the need for intensive work in the fields was fulfilled by appealing to kinship networks.<sup>161</sup> However, the empirical assessment of the two villages indicate that, while a moral economy grounded in status hierarchies did function among small farms – more so among Romanians than among Germans – the commercialization of agriculture in the area meant that most of the intensive-labor tasks were fulfilled by hands hired on the ‘labor-market’ and paid in cash. Mitru (and also Seppi, Oniuț S., Victor C., among others) insisted on mentioning the

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<sup>160</sup> Democratic politics seem to have made a small fissure in the ethnic wall separating the two communities. I heard a story that in the late 1940s a Comlăuș German farmer involved in local politics, as a member of the Liberal Party, paid calls to the Romanian former mayor, the local leader of the party. It was the only account of Germans and Romanians going to visit someone from another ethnic community, and the fact that this was such an isolated case illustrates the strong barriers between the two language communities. Interview Maria E., 1936-2007, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, rich peasant, collective farmer.

<sup>161</sup> See the outstanding treatment of this theme in Kligmand and Verdey (2011: 88-101)

‘Johone/Johannis’ market-place where (on different days and at different hours) one could buy either vegetables or chickens, or ‘buy’ the poor who were selling their labor. I stress this ‘theme’ of ‘Johone/Johannis’ (the market where the poor were selling and the rich were buying labor) to prove the existence of impersonal cash-nexus interactions in this rural settlement. I uncover the co-existence of a moral economy (grounded in structures of kinship or neighborhood, embedded in relations of mutual help and reciprocity) alongside the realm of ‘class’ relations, where the exchange of labor for cash is the only connection between the employer and employee. Ethnic divides run along the line of the market situation: those who sold their labor were mostly Romanians and Roma; the ‘buyers’ were almost exclusively German farmers. Among the Romanians from Comlăuș, who had smaller farms, there was less need for many hired hands. According to Sena, only for the harvest would the land owner hire teams of workers from outside the village who were paid in kind.

The German community was to be the best integrated in the Austro-Hungarian and (later) Romanian capitalism. Class, in the Weberian sense, was more relevant in distinguishing among the Germans of Sanktanna than among the members of all the other communities. There are huge disparities between wealthy land owners, craftsmen, or merchants on the one hand, and poor or landless farmers, and less economically successful craftsmen on the other. However, the market situation did compete with multiple forms of status distinctions.

First I mention a sectorial<sup>162</sup> one, dividing the community between farmers (rich and poor) and non-farmers, with the latter being further divided between craftsmen, merchants, and the intelligentsia. According to Sinescu (2011:69) these distinctions structured even the manner in which the German villagers played soccer: during the 1920s Sanktanna had two soccer teams,

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<sup>162</sup> I use the distinction between ‘sectorial’ and ‘segmental’ boundaries that divide classes or nations following Mann (1986:4)

one of the intelligentsia and one of the craftsmen (as soccer was not regarded as proper entertainment by farmers). Marriages between children of rich farmers and rich craftsmen and merchants were rare; the class situation was, in general, overruled by sectorial distinctions: farmers married (and danced) among themselves, while the rich merchants or tradesmen did it within their 'rank.'

Secondly, the Germans were divided by segmental distinctions grounded in spatial terms: they danced, dated, and (to a certain extent) married within the limits of Sanktanna's four neighborhoods and the area of Comlăuș inhabited by Germans. Note that, as a rule, the neighborhood boundaries were cross-cut by class: rich Germans dated and married within the group belonging roughly to the same 'market situation'. The neighborhood was more relevant at the level of middle-class and poor Germans. Judit, for example, never mentions neighborhood as a relevant criterion in her life account.

The German family of the first political/property regime was also strongly patriarchal: young couples married according to their parents' wishes, and the elders controlled the land or the means of production. Family, with the exception of well-to-do (Judit), was also a primary economic unit: children's labor was used within the household, or they were sent at very early ages to work as servants to increase the family's income (Sali).

According to the literacy averages among them, education was valued more among the Germans than among the Romanians (to say nothing of the Roma). However, only for the rich bourgeois such as Judit's father (or among owners of very large farms) did education include high school attendance (Judit). For most Sanktanna farmers and craftsmen, seventh grade education was the golden maximum, and quite often children were taken out of school, even if their family owned middle-sized farms, to work for the family (Sali).

Among the Romanians from Comlăuș the economic disparities were less pronounced: rich farmers had farms two or three times larger than middle-class farmers, whereas among the Germans, the largest farms were up to ten times larger than the small. Therefore, the moral economy mentioned by Jowitt characterized to a larger degree the social landscape of the Romanian-language status-group.

This world was also marked by sectorial differences between the overwhelming majority of farmers and the rest (merchants, craftsmen, local intelligentsia), as illustrated by Sena's story about who would qualify as a participant, and who as an 'invited guest' at the Sunday dance. Glimpses of segmental differentiation are also in the story -she mentions distinctions between those living in the northern part of the village and those from the southern part- but these are the only time my informants mentioned them, so I assume the salience of segmental boundaries among Romanian peasants was fading. However, these sectorial differences were not absolute: Mitru, a peasant, married the daughter of a shop- and restaurant-owner.

There are two major status criteria that appear over and over in the interviews, and they are not limited to the German community, but are traits of the 'peasant' sector: the integrity of one's labor and the health and beauty of the household animals.

In the vein of Lampland (1995:14) I also note that, in peasant communities, one's labor "structured local hierarchies of privilege and morality". A hard-working peasant who did not own much land, but acquired some, and was upwardly mobile through the integrity and the quality of his labor, enjoyed a higher status than a farmer who owned much more land, but was not adding to it, or even worse, squandered what he had, by not applying himself enough to the tasks of managing his household.

The second criterion has to do with the status that was derived from the health and beauty of the household's animals, be they horses, cows or (the fatter, the better) pigs. In analyzing the status differentiations between the peasant households, I follow the illuminating discussion of Kligman and Verdery (2011:97) on the "soft boundaries" between the peasant family and its animals. Besides the quality of one's work, there was no other stronger marker of peasant high status than the admiration/honor that others bestowed upon the animals the family tended.

Last but not least, the third criterion I cover here is frugality. The frugal family accumulated more land, and was expected to invest exclusively in cattle or land, not in the quality of its house or even in the quality (or quantity) of its food. A member of this generation (Seppi's aunt) is quoted saying that one should not invest in the house but in more land, for the house does not bring any surplus, while the land does.<sup>163</sup>

Education among the Romanians was less valued than among the Germans, and as a general rule it was not seen as an avenue for social mobility - "you won't make a teacher or a priest out of them"- is a recurrent theme in the type of discourse attributed to the parents of those born in the 1920s. Sena's story mentions the careers of a few children of well-to-do Romanians from Comlăuș who attended high school and even college, but only exceptionally do such stories involve children of farmers. The very limited number of Romanian intelligentsia or local entrepreneurs (such as, in the German village, Judit's father) meant that schooling represented only an extraordinary occurrence among Romanians. This was true even when the children themselves asked to be allowed to continue their studies. This is illustrated by Sena's case. Recall that her parents were not poor and could have afforded to send her to school, so it was not economic but family and gender considerations that prevented Sena's access to education.

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<sup>163</sup> For a similar point, see Kligman and Verdery (2011: 95-99)

Family structures were as patriarchal among the Romanians as they were among Germans. There are no differences to note regarding this point.

Last but not least, I turn to the situation of the third status group, the Roma. The Roma community was a world unto itself. While Romanians and Germans formed two distinct communities, most of them were farmers, unlike the Roma, and this brought them nearer to each other while keeping them apart from the Roma.

Unlike the other two communities, the Roma were structured along lineage lines, as defined by the distance between ‘good root’ and ‘bad root families,’ which determined both the amount of honor granted by the rest of the community to the two groups of families, and the marriage pools. I note that my informants claimed that the distinction marked individuals and families irrespectively of their income or market situation. Only one Romanian from Comlăuș did appeal to a similar distinction among the ‘old’ local Romanian families, mentioning the names of several ‘good root’ families among the Comlăuș Romanians.<sup>164</sup> This form of social distinction is absent from all the other narrations I collected in that community. I conclude that a lineage-based social boundary had faded away among the Romanians (and, possibly, Germans) while it continued to structure social interaction in the pre-WWII Roma community.

Within the two groups marked by the lineage criteria, the Roma were separated by class, in the sense of ‘class situation’ understood in Weberian terms as their market situation (Weber, 1978: 933). Their chances on the market divided the poor from the well-to-do. The poor were constituted by those involved in the traditional craft of adobe-building, who also performed seasonal agricultural work. The well-to-do were structured along sectorial lines: there were the elites of horse-traders, feather-collectors, and musicians, as well as the small elite of literate

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Marioara C., Romanian nurse from Comlăuș, b. 1946.

Roma (only a few people) who worked as clerks and whose literacy was almost entirely related to their parents' pre-WWII migration to United States. Besides belonging to the high status group 'good family', the data allows us to identify several other forms of high (and low) status among the Comlăuș Roma, depending on the position in the community of the person defining the status criteria. For those belonging to the elite, high status was linked especially to autonomous forms of trading and dealing with horses, feathers, or other merchandise<sup>165</sup>. Another status criteria, defining the 'amount of honor' attributed to a wife, seems to be determined by the prestige and economic income of the German family for whom the Roma woman performed menial tasks: the richer the German household employing the Roma, the higher her status among her peers. Last but not least, constant employment in a job that required a certain level of education was a criterion of high status among the Comlăuș' Roma, but education was not seen as a possible route towards social mobility. To conclude, lineage-based assessments of social honor tended to prevail among the Roma over any other forms of social distinction.

Finally, within the Roma community I found strong gender divisions: marriages were decided by the elders and the marriage age was low, often as low as 14 for women. The women were either housewives or worked as servants in the houses of the well-to-do Germans. If a virgin Roma woman was raped and if the aggressor did not want to marry her, he was allowed by the customary law to pay her parents a certain amount of cash. I also noted examples of gender exploitation, for instance, of husbands relying on the daily work of their wives for everyday subsistence. Last, practices that were deemed unacceptable for Roma men were expected from the Roma women.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> For the same criteria of autonomy among Roma men, see Stewart (1997) or Engebrigs (2007: 70-71)

<sup>166</sup> For the distinction between the gendered definition of 'shameful' activities (such as scavenging, begging or doing laundry) in order to provide food, see also Engebrigs (2007: 63).

The Weberian approach to social stratification includes a category that does not seem very relevant in the accounts of the villagers addressing social interaction in the post-WWI village: the party. There were hardly any forms of association that would allow for the use of this type of distinction. Only among the Roma is the existence of a position of authority (the ‘mayor’ of the Roma) mentioned, which was grounded in customary law, and which enjoyed a certain level of authority and distinction. I found relevant, however, that this allegedly prestigious (and influential) position is mentioned only once, and even then cursorily, in all the interviews I conducted. Among Germans and Romanians, holders of political positions in the local administration are sometimes mentioned, but this form of distinction is depicted rarely in the life-accounts, and when it is, it seems to have had a rather negligible influence on local social relations; in most cases, it is class location that accounts and partially explains the political position of authority. The local leader of the fascist movement “The Iron Guard” seemed to have enjoyed a limited popularity and incited at least one alleged attack against the Comlăuș mayor, but, once again, this is mentioned only by a single informant, who happened to have been the daughter of the mayor. No other impact of authority upon the village community that was based on political party was mentioned.

In conclusion, the population of the two contiguous villages was divided in three ethnic communities, constituted as status groups: the Germans enjoying the highest status followed by the Romanians, and in the realm of ‘negative’ status, by the Roma community. I uncovered the co-existence of a status based system of social stratification and an economic class-based system,

where impersonal relations grounded in the cash nexus governed relationships between villagers<sup>167</sup>.

Having underlined the major traits of the social landscape of the pre-WWII village, I move now toward the changes brought about by the advent of the second political and property regime, state socialism.

## **6.2. Social change in the 'Sîntana commune' under state-socialism:**

The post-WWI forms of social stratification were to be shattered by the macro-historical earthquake brought about by the Soviet occupation and the new state-socialist regime that was to stay in power from 1948 until 1989.

World War II and its consequences had radically altered, in half a decade, the rural world I described in the previous section. By 1945-46 the rich Germans of Sanktanna found all of a sudden that the Romanian state had expropriated all their land and their agricultural tools. Recall that, in chapter 4, Miska L., a young German recently back from the front (where he had served in the Waffen SS from 1943) saw the bright side of this overall pauperization of the German community: "Before you could not marry the girl you loved, for it depended on how much land

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<sup>167</sup> Szelenyi et al. use an alternative model that aims to describe the same forms of social stratification, distinguishing between a (status based) traditional rank and a class-grounded one. The first comprises "at the top the landlord (...); below the landlord a couple of families belonging to the genteel middle class (teachers, the doctor, priests, the lawyer, officials of the local administration –town clerks, etc). followed by the land-holding peasants with differing family fortunes and finally by the landless seasonal workers or manorial laborer" (Szelenyi et al. 1988: 68). The second system of stratification (class based) would imply: "the burghers, the local small entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, artisans, owners of the mill, and owner managers of the market-oriented agricultural enterprises (...) followed by peasant-burghers (...) running their family enterprises like family farmers of market producers (...) At the bottom (...) where the wage laborers working from the entrepreneurs" (Szelenyi et al. 1988: 68).

you had, but afterwards... it was 'alles egal' [we were all equals, in German]<sup>168</sup>” And he did marry his sweetheart, whom, he claims, he could not have hoped to ‘get’ previously.

While the Germans had been left without their land and their agricultural tools by the post-war policies of the Romanian state (and without the active work force of their community, which was sent to forced labor in the Soviet Union), a new community was born in Sanktanna: the families of Romanian ex-soldiers, who were each given five hectares of the good quality land confiscated from the Germans and redistributed via the agrarian reform. They were the net winners of these changes. For the Roma and the Romanians from Comlăuș the impact of the war and of the immediate post-war policies was less radical. However, a significant number of soldiers who had served in the Romanian army received one to two hectares of land and were happy to start a life of (hopefully) self-sufficient farming.

While there were few workers in the village before WWII, they either worked for the local craftsmen or commuted to Arad. As a result of the process of industrialization unleashed by the new regime, by 1975 almost half of the village’s active population worked in industry, the large majority being commuter workers (see Table 2.10). By 1980 there were so many commuter workers in the village that all the houses near the railway station earned an additional income renting out bicycle ‘parking spots’ in their yards. The passerby would have seen backyard after backyard literally filled with bicycles, hundreds of them: as Sântana is a rather large village, the workers would come from home to the railway station by bicycle, leave them in the yard (paying a small monthly sum) and in the evening take the bicycle and ride back home.

The pauperized Germans were the first to follow this path. Although most of them were former farmers who had lost their land, the large majority of the active work force within the

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with Miska L., German male, kolkhoz worker, 1922-2009.

German community turned toward industry. It was not only peasants who turned toward industrial employment in the early 1950s: Judit's father, a former successful entrepreneur had no alternative but to get a job as an industrial worker. From the second generation, Resi and Seppi's wife, for example, both began their careers as industrial commuter workers. Seppi considered 'factory work' as an alternative embraced by many of his colleagues and neighbors, and it was only his love of horses that determined him to remain a kolkhoz member all his life. However, Seppi's wife had begun her career as a textile worker in Arad and she worked at the same factory until she retired. Industrial work was the choice of the majority of Germans from Sântana, while others preferred to work for the kolkhoz, either as workers or as cadres, and others yet studied and became intellectuals.

The land expropriations that affected the Germans also had consequences for the Roma community. As traditional Roma occupations (both male and female) depended on the ability of large and middle-size German farms to employ men in construction activities and women to perform menial service, once the German's land was expropriated, a large part of the income of the Roma disappeared. As a consequence, almost all the active male population within that community chose industrial work in the Arad plants. The proletarianization of the Roma throughout the 1950s had a strong gendered trait. While among the Germans both genders turned proletarians, among the Roma only exceptionally would a woman work in an Arad factory. The fact that Roma men had a permanent income marked a major change in the community; although, as we saw in Pali's case, he did not renounce his ideal of autonomous activity, and pursued it despite the 'parking destination' that the textile factory work offered him. Dezsó, instead, is proud of his work, and of his position as a skilled worker at the plant where he worked

until he retired. The gender divide remains strong: almost no Roma man worked the land, while the majority of Roma women worked in the collective farm.

Among the two communities of Romanians that existed after 1945, the inhabitants of Comlăuș on one hand and the ‘colonists’ in Sântana on the other, provided also a sizable number of industrial workers. However, the fact that the ‘colonists’ controlled the Sântana kolkhoz meant that many of them remained and worked in the fields. The situation of the Romanians from Comlăuș was similar to that of the colonists’ after the creation of the second kolkhoz, which was controlled by the Romanians from Comlăuș.

The Arad plants were not the only ones that created proletarians. Lică’s life course illustrates the creation, under state-socialism, of a set of life trajectories that saw the state training and paying for peasants and sons of peasants to become skilled agricultural workers. Lică sees his life as marked by upward mobility, in comparison to his parents, who were uneducated and unskilled peasants. Moreover, he identifies with working class values and is extremely annoyed by the reluctance of the German-owner of a plant relocated in Sântana to allow workers to organize a trade-union. However Lică’s trajectory is not necessarily a typical one. We have the counter-example of Resi’s life-course: after working all her active life as a construction worker, she is very attached to the celebrations and rituals that mark the religious and cultural traditions of her German rural community as if she had never left the village.

The result of the policies that nationalized all industrial means of production and of collectivized property, as well as autonomous private economic enterprises, all but disappeared from Romania. In the absence of a free market it is not possible to talk about class situations in the Weberian sense. Consequently, I again propose adjusting the model Szelenyi et al. (1988)

developed for the analysis of social change in neighboring Hungary. The post-collectivization rural social structure consists of two parallel orders.

The first order, named by Szelenyi and his colleagues, ‘the redistributive-bureaucratic order,’ is put in place by the socialist regime and comprises: the cadre elite, the industrial and agricultural workers and the peasant workers (who add to the wage they earn as industrial workers the revenue they make selling on the grey market the agricultural crop they harvest in their backyards)<sup>169</sup>The second order, “the surviving private sector’ comprises the positions from which former burghers and peasant-burghers were pushed into the redistributive bureaucratic order and the pauperized private peasants”<sup>170</sup> In the following pages I will use elements from Szelenyi et al.’s Hungarian model to introduce the trajectories available to the villagers of Sântana as they were forced to accommodate to the new social framework of state-socialism.

In terms of education, the generation of villagers born mainly during the 1940s is very different from the one that preceded it: if there are some among the Roma community who, despite the pressure of state policies, managed to remain illiterate, they are certainly a very small minority. All the villagers whose lives I covered had a minimum of primary education (7 grades), and the number of secondary education and vocational school graduates grew exponentially in comparison with the generation of their parents. If there are any major traits that would distinguish these two generations, education is certainly one of them.

Ethnicity ceased to structure the status groups marking the dominant boundaries governing the stratification of the village after WWII. As the state-socialist regime settled in, Germans, Romanians, and Roma worked together in similar positions in factories, collective farms, and other institutions. The German population was no longer significantly better off than

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<sup>169</sup> For a graphic illustration of the scheme, see Szelenyi et al. (1988: 69)

<sup>170</sup> Szelenyi et al. (1988: 69)

the others, while the Roma experienced a higher standard of living once the majority of the Roma men had a permanent job in industry, and many Roma women received payments in kind and in cash from the local kolkhoz. In time, the level of social interaction between the Germans and Romanians increased. More than before, people developed friendships, visited each other, and were invited to each other's weddings, so the boundaries between the ethnic groups became more porous<sup>171</sup>. While the Roma men interacted more than in the pre-WWII period with their Romanian and German fellow workers, the level of social interaction between Roma families and the other families in the village did not really change. Therefore, the social barrier separating the Roma from the other villagers remained significant, in a context in which the status distinctions between the Romanians and the Germans had lost some of their salience.

Ethnicity remained a relevant marker: Romanians tended to work in Romanian-only crews within the collective farm, while Germans kept to themselves. The intermarriage rate remained low and, while there were several Romanian-German couples, there were no Romanian-Roma or German-Roma weddings. However, the status hierarchy placing the Germans on the top of the local prestige scale was less powerful; party and status considerations, specifically those related to occupation and education, competed with it.

By far the strongest line of demarcation among the villagers was party membership, a criterion that was almost irrelevant in the pre-war village. The process of turning peasants and craftsmen into Communist Party cadres in the Romanian context has been recently covered by Kligman and Verdery<sup>172</sup> (2012). Part of the specificity of Sântana's case was the relatively rapid process of collectivization among the 'colonist' recipients of land in 1945-46, a process that could not have been achieved without transforming a number of locals into party cadres.

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<sup>171</sup> On a similar trend in another ethnically mixed Transylvanian village, see also Verdery (1985).

<sup>172</sup> See chapter 3, 'Creating Party Cadres' (Kligman and Verdery 2011: 150-214)

The advent of the totalitarian state-socialist regime resulted in the concentration of political power in the hands of a very few people or even a single individual – in Sântana’s case, it was Gheorghe Goina<sup>173</sup>, chairman of the “New Life” collective farm. Chairman Goina’s political position as one of the Communist Party leaders in Arad County endowed him with a quasi-absolute local power: he controlled not only the party hierarchy (i.e. the local administration) but also the greater part of the village’s economic assets, which were concentrated within the framework of the collective farm. In the villagers’ accounts he removed a local policeman, allocated goods and resources at will, made and broke many careers<sup>174</sup>, and bent state rules to accommodate the needs of the collective farm members.

As the Party was a hierarchical structure, the collective farm brigade chiefs and the other people in mid-level party positions within the village were significantly less powerful than the leader at the top. The distinctions made in the accounts I gathered do not mention any other politically significant figure in the village, except for Chairman Goina. When referring to the kolkhoz brigade chiefs, people rarely granted them high status. The amount of status granted to any other party activist was in direct relationship to his education (see Mitru’s case) and with moral considerations concerning his ability to manage, to be a good leader, and to be respectful to the other villagers<sup>175</sup>.

While party position marked the most significant power discrepancies between villagers, the structural positions offered by the redistributive-bureaucratic order of state-socialism tended to replace, or to complement, the role of ethnicity as the main status marker. These structural

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<sup>173</sup> The chairman was ‘elected’ a member of Socialist Romania’s Parliament continuously from 1952 to 1989.

<sup>174</sup> Ion J. (1933-2005) male, teacher, told me during his interview the the chairman, on account on some personal problems between them, used his influence and succeeded to send Ion J. to prison for one year. Conversely, in my interviews with Ana G., born in 1923, the wife of kolkhoz’s chairman, she mentioned a series of villagers who faced the justice system for misdemeanors and who had been ‘helped’ to avoid a guilty verdict thanks to chairman’s influence.

<sup>175</sup> For a treatment of these qualities, see Maday (1983) and Sarkany (1983).

positions defined the only possible ‘destinations’ of a life trajectory under state socialism, a position as an industrial or agricultural worker, peasant worker in the kolkhoz, state or Communist Party cadre (which included the intellectuals, college-educated persons as well as the middle-range clerks and administrators).

I claim that the village status groups of the second (state-socialist) property-regime were defined roughly according to education: the kolkhoz members (Valeria and her husband, Seppi) and the unskilled worker (Resi) ranked rather low (although their income was not necessarily inferior to others)<sup>176</sup>. The skilled workers (Lică) enjoyed a certain level of respect, as most of them were sons or daughters of former peasants who had graduated from vocational training courses. An even higher level of social appreciation in the village was granted to high-school graduates, people involved in white-collar office jobs or middle-management positions (Judit, Resi’s husband, Ica’s husband). The highest form of social prestige (as well as the title of ‘mister’ instead of comrade, or other, more colloquial forms of appellation, went to the college graduates, the intelligentsia (Ica). This ranking pervades the discourses of all my informants. All these status groups comprised each of the three ethnicities, despite the fact that, as a rule, there were more Romanians working in the collective farm, more Germans employed in industry, and very few Roma who joined the ranks of the intellectuals, that is, those who had graduated from college. Being a German worker did not mean a higher status than being a Romanian one, as had been the case before WWII, while a Romanian college graduate was attributed a higher amount of social honor than, for example, a German high-school graduate.

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<sup>176</sup> Physical labor (compare to its high status in the previous generation) was disregarded, while a white collar job was a worthy ideal, especially for it did not involve ‘work’ in the sense of physical labor. Interview with Delia S., born in 1969, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, technician.

Another form of distinction, which replaced the previous peasant concern for frugality, was conspicuous consumption, and the status one would derive from the amenities and the consumption goods a household could display. All the village families were competing in the ownership of a new, large, modern house, electrical appliances, bicycles, motorcycles, and cars. The local party boss, Chairman Goina, while living in a house not larger than or very different from all the others, was the owner of a brand new Mercedes Benz, which he acquired in 1966, when everyone else could only hope to buy a Romanian-made Dacia. By the late 1980s, the chairman and several brigade chiefs and agronomists had built swimming pools in their back yards.

The cash nexus was not, however, absent from the socialized economy: access to college (or a good high school) could have been 'bought' by paying private lessons for one's offspring. However, this marked not so much an economic boundary (workers like Lică actually earned more than many intellectuals) as a cultural one.

Romania's version of state socialism was less tolerant toward 'private enterprise' no matter how small, than was that of its Hungarian neighbor. However, especially during the *détente* brought about by Ceaușescu during the 1970s, this trajectory seemed to have been possible, as Sali's example shows. While Sali's life-trajectory is by no means typical, it exemplifies the possibilities available to those willing to assume risks or desiring to avoid work as a proletarian: investing money and effort in cultivating her back-yard garden, and selling her products in distant markets, taking advantage of the higher prices for agricultural products in mountainous or hilly areas. Another variant of a trajectory that ends up in the same 'entrepreneurial' position is offered by Pali: he began as an 'apprentice to a feather-trader,' moved toward a classic 'proletarianization' course, and became a skilled industrial worker in an

Arad plant, only to later switch to being an autonomous grey-market 'entrepreneur' painting houses with the help of his children and repairing watches at home.

In Szelenyi et al.'s terms, the second order, "the surviving private sector" comprises the positions linked to the cash nexus and situated on the fringe of the redistributive bureaucratic order; both Pali's activities as a house-painter and Sali's activities as a small agricultural entrepreneur can be located in this sector.

The family structure was also marked by the independent careers that education and a skilled worker position made possible. With the exception of Dezso, none of the members of this generation suggested that he/she married at the request or order of a parent. On the contrary, this is the first generation that used the terms of romantic love to account for their marital choices. Dezso addressed the issue of marriage in his account, and it would be hard to assume that his wife, who was 14 when they married, was in the position to make an informed choice. She was 'married' by her parents. Also, in his treatment of the relationship between husband and wife, Dezso insisted that it was not 'proper' for a Roma man to allow his wife to have a permanent job. While a woman engaged in traditional activities as a servant was acceptable, a Roma woman with a career was not. The changes in family structure and relationships mark a break between the German and the Romanian family on the one hand, and the Roma on the other. While for the previous generation, family power relations were the same across the three ethnic communities, after the 1960s the Roma in this respect constituted an outlier.

In conclusion, party authority, status groups structured around the bureaucratic-redistributive order and degree of education, and the increasing isolation of the Roma (in the context of the diminishing social distance among Romanians and Germans) mark the major forms of social distinctions in the state-socialist village. Status associated values such as frugality

or the integrity of one's labor were replaced by conspicuous consumption and the accumulation of consumption goods. Let us turn now toward the changes brought to the village social hierarchies by the post-1990 developments.

### **6.3. The return of class: the post 1990 Sântana.**

Last but not least, I turn to the third generation, those born mostly in the 1970s. They have as their starting point the 'destinations' I covered following Szelenyi et al. They are either offspring of cadre, of intellectuals (Călin), of peasant-workers (Manfred, Cornel), of proletarians (Martin), or of entrepreneurs (Marcu). The return of private property was the major event of the post-1990 years<sup>177</sup>. The economic realm was radically transformed: state-owned factories disappeared and local as well as global capital gave rise to the opening of new enterprises. Here (again) I follow the insights of Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley (1998) in tracing the trajectories of the 'winners' and 'losers' of the transition to a free market society, as well as the contribution of Verdery (2003) in analyzing the new relations between villagers after the de-collectivization process. According to Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley (1998), the 'cultural capital' that tertiary education provides, added to that earned in accumulating experience as a technocrat working in a state-owned enterprise, is essential in the process of engaging in a successful trajectory in the post-socialist world. Stoica (2004) claims that in the Romanian context, 'political capital' proved more important than 'cultural capital' in securing a successful position after 1990. Party affiliations and politically-derived power remained a form of distinction, even if the concentration of power in the hands of the local politicians cannot be compared with that which the villagers experienced under the authority of the Communist Party

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<sup>177</sup> For an illuminating discussion on property in a state-socialist regime, and in post-socialism, see Verdery (2003).

Indeed, tertiary education did not fulfill the same role as it had in the previous generation: the strength of a university diploma was now to be judged according to the market forces that evaluate its bearer's skills and abilities. Thus, although Călin was an engineer, he ended up working in a field very distant from his area of expertise. He exemplifies the trajectory of a former technocrat, working in a collapsing ex-state-owned plant, who was on the job market trying to sell as best as he could his skills and qualifications. Călin's major complaint was that the managers with whom he worked looked less for skills and experience than for compliance and a set of patron-client relations, undermining the economic efficiency of the economic enterprise they were supposedly serving.

Some of the post-1990 life trajectories led to an 'industrial worker' destination, The trajectories of Martin and Cornel make it possible to compare the position and rights of a worker under the state-socialist regime, and those of a worker in a post-socialist factory. Both lead to a sad conclusion on this matter: from the perspective of a worker and of a mid-level manager, workers were seen as being treated worse, having fewer rights, and earning much less, especially when compared with the wages of their managers<sup>178</sup>. Many of the former work places in industry were lost either via post-socialist de-industrialization (see Martin's account) or via outsourcing (Călin's encounter with the Italian entrepreneurs of Textila).

The new 'destination' that market society made possible was that of an autonomous entrepreneur. In line with Szelenyi et al.'s (1988) 'embourgeoisment' theory (applied to a context he did not foresee) Marcu used the skills and values he had learned from his father, an 'entrepreneur' under state socialism, in order to set up his own private firm. Although his activities seem to border on the grey economy, Marcu managed to establish himself in two of the

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<sup>178</sup> For the position of workers in post-socialism see Kideckel (2008)

possible 'destination' points of the post-socialist society: he was the bearer both of 'economic' 'political' capital (Bourdieu, 1984), as the owner and manager of several private enterprises and as a local politician elected to the town council. Manfred, buying cars in Germany and selling them in Romania, illustrates another instance of entrepreneurship as a goal in life, although his economic achievements were less stable and less impressive than Marcu's.

In terms of educational achievements, the members of the third generation are certainly more educated than their parents, but the change is less radical than that between the generation born in the 1920s and the one born in the 1940s. With the exception of the Roma man (Marcu) who only had finished a primary education, all the others graduated either from a vocational school (Martin), high school (Manfred, Cornel) or college (Călin). While education remained a status marker, it was less so in the post-1990 village than under state socialism. On the one hand, the class position of an uneducated but successful entrepreneur did, as a rule, entitle him or her also to a level of social honor. Surprisingly, even the un-accounted for newly acquired wealth of some Roma accorded respect by most villagers -see the deferential treatment Marcu received compared with other Roma men.

On the other hand, the democratization of education in the post-1990 era, as well as the rise of private universities, diluted the social respect for a college graduate: in today's Romania, it is claimed (Călin), virtually anybody can become a college graduate, provided he or she is able to pay the tuition.

Family-wise, the distinction between the Roma family and the non-Roma family persisted. Marcu's choice of a wife against the wishes of his parents, and the alternative marriage that the community established for the cases of 'marriage against the will of the parents,' testifies to the enduring strength of patriarchal family authority over the choices of the young Roma. In

contrast, Călin's role as almost a stay-at-home father who takes the children to and from the school and who does many of the domestic chores because his schedule is more flexible than his wife's illustrates the changes in family relations among ethnic Romanians brought about by the last decades.

The role of ethnicity was less relevant as, after the mass migration of the Germans, the town was dominated by ethnic Romanians. The distinctions between Roma and Romanians were also changing: for the first time in history the well-to-do Roma moved outside of the segregated Roma community, buying or building houses in the town's center, among Romanians. The free market and the values of free enterprise allowed some of them to accumulate wealth that placed them above many ethnic Romanians. From this point of view, the 'entrepreneurship trajectory' (made possible by the post-1990 changes) has been taken up by Romanians, Roma, and Germans alike. Possibly the wealthiest local entrepreneur was a Romanian woman who developed a chain of retail stores in the village, a person who before 1989 had been a shop-assistant with only a high-school education. Marcu and Mandred illustrate other ways (and degrees of success) that this trajectory enabled.

A new form of prestige in the village was constituted by the outcomes of the phenomenon of migration. For Roma and Romanians alike, and for the few remaining Germans, both seasonal and permanent migration represent a means of upward social mobility that was impossible before 1989. Both Manfred and Marcu illustrate the ways in which not only income but also prestige was earned through seasonal work in Western Europe.

To conclude, the major social distinction that the post-1990 changes engendered was that of class situation: entrepreneurship and wealth marked the new forms of social distinction among the villagers. Power and authority derived from party affiliation marked social distinctions, even

if they were definitely less accentuated than in the previous regime. Education remained a significant status-marker. The new status enhancing phenomenon, specific to the post-socialist era, was represented by migration patterns. Gender distinctions and the position of women in this property-regime, however, drew a sharp line between Roma and non-Roma families.

My thesis concludes with these three distinct yet interrelated configurations of class, status, party, ethnicity, education and gender among the villagers of Sântana. Their life stories collected through ethnographic research and analyzed longitudinally have shed light on the ways in which these individuals and the generations they comprise have configured and re-configured the local social hierarchies in which they have lived their lives in three distinct, successive property and political regimes.

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I have examined the lives of a handful of Transylvanian family members from the 1930s until the first decade of the new millennium. During these years, Santanna did not move; history moved over it. The people living there also moved: For the generation born in the '20s a trip to Arad was a major event, often undertaken by foot. The men soon went to the USSR as WWII soldiers, while Sanktanna's Germans were sent to do forced labor in the Ukraine or the Ural mountains. Throughout the decades of state-socialism, villagers were unable to travel abroad, but they did travel internally as industrial workers, or in search of a better education. Later still, the process of Romania's integration into the European Union allowed the inhabitants of Sântana to move permanently or to engage in circulatory migration to western Europe or to anywhere they saw fit-- to Brussels (home of the largest number of Roma who emigrated from Comlăuș), to Lisbon or Dubai. Sântana's proximity to the Hungarian border also shaped the constraints and

opportunities its villagers faced throughout the three property and political regimes discussed in this thesis.

In order to analyze the impact these macro-historical changes had upon the lives of my fellow villagers, I drew upon the tools of ethnographers and biographers. The narrative approach, together with the literature on framing, allowed me to open windows toward the worlds of events that these villagers experienced and the meanings they attributed to them. The strength of my research lies in its longitudinal breadth: structuring my study along three generations allowed me to delineate not only the contours of social stratification in each political and property regime, but also to follow the manner in which criteria structuring local hierarchies changed, and personal lives adjusted to the macro-historical challenges they had to face.

Appealing to biographical narratives, I was able to offer a more detailed and deeper understanding of the way people categorized themselves and others in troubled and changing circumstances. These life narratives draw on master frames such as those identified in each generational landscape: the essential role of the integrity of one's work for the first generation, or of status hierarchy grounded in the level of education for the second generation, or the importance of property ownership and its relationship to labor in the third generation.

Each one of these political and property regimes altered the set of opportunities and constraints within which the villagers negotiated their daily lives and made sense of their experiences. Judit's class situation, for instance, functioned as a constraint over her life chances under socialism, yet, thanks to her education, in the '60s, she managed to complete her education and find a job in her new profession. At the same time, Sena, sharing a similar class situation, and facing the same anti-bourgeois constraints, found that gender served as a major constraint: before WWII, a peasant girl whose father was not an entrepreneur did not have the option of

acquiring an education; she was not allowed. Consequently Sena ended up joining the collective farm and for the rest of her life remained near the bottom of the status hierarchy in the village.

For poor peasants who chose to join the bandwagon of the Communist Party (such as Mitru, or the collective farm chairman), the class-grounded, anti-bourgeois policies opened avenues of political and social upward mobility. It is one of the characteristics of the specific post-WWII trajectory of Sântana that the vast majority of my interviewees (irrespective of ethnicity, class situation or education) benefited from the changes brought by the state socialist regime.

The post-1990 Sântana brought about an entirely different set of constraints and chances for its inhabitants. Gender, for instance, continues to be a strong marker of the life chances of every girl in the Roma community, with virtually no known example of a Roma girl having graduated from high school. That said, there are very few examples of Roma boys who can boast of such a performance. However, after the year 2000, two young men from the Roma community did graduate college. The new property and political regime allowed Marcu to transfer the skills he acquired in state socialism's grey market or in outright illegal economic activities into a burgeoning business. He is a successful entrepreneur, and, he has a successful local political career as he serves (together with a couple of other Roma men) in the Local Council of the young town. On the contrary, other poor Roma, who had worked in the state-owned plants under state-socialism lost their jobs during the deindustrialization of the 1990s and are living on social welfare or work in the outsourced plants that opened relatively recently in the county. These trajectories begin near the bottom of the social hierarchy and remain there. However, I demonstrate that being an industrial worker under state-socialism, is quite different from being an industrial workers nowadays. The accounts of Martin, Cornel, Pali and Lică allow us to gain a

glimpse of the impact these macro-structural transformations have had on the ways industrial workers perceive the changes in their working conditions and their everyday lives.

In conclusion, my narrative approach interweaving history and biography has enriched the complexities that the macro phenomena seen in chapters two and six sketch. It has allowed me to interpret the everyday lives of my co-villagers as they have navigated through the macros parameters of changing political and property regimes within their local possibilities. So doing has illuminated how they have made sense of and made meaningful the restratification of their everyday world and the ups and downs of their and their families' lives within it.

## Appendix 1. List of Interviewers:

Mitru T.: 1910-1998, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, chiabur origin, collective farmer.  
Miron C.: 1916-2011, male, Romanian, priest in Comlăuș.  
Gheorghia O.: 1919-1998, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Ioan C.: 1919-2007, male, Romanian from Caporal-Alexa, ex-kolkhoz chairman.  
Ana T.: 1921-2000, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Mitru N.: 1923-2010, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, landless peasant, kolkhoz brigade leader.  
Paraschiva N.: 1295-2001, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Miska L.: 1922-2009, male, German, poor peasant, collective farmer.  
Ana G.: b. 1923, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer, wife of kolkhoz's chairman.  
Todorea G.: 1923-2012, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, kolkhoz brigade-leader.  
Steffi H.: 1923-2008, male, German, rich farmer, collective farmer.  
Victor C.: 1923-2009, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, industrial worker.  
Valeria C.: b. 1923, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Todor A.: 1923-2008, male, Romanian from Caporal-Alexa, collective farmer.  
Martian M.: b. 1923, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, deputy-chairman of the collective farm.  
Miska N.: 1924-2008, male, German, middle peasant, collective farmer.  
Sofia C.: 1924, female, Romanian moved to Sântana in the 50s, collective farmer.  
Judit T.: 1925, female, Jewish from Sântana, surgeon.  
Floare D.: 1925, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Onut S.: 1925-2008, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, industrial worker.  
Sena R.: 1927-2011, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, rich peasant, collective farmer.  
Valeria M.: 1927-2007, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer  
Pali E.: b. 1928, male, Roma, feather collector, industrial worker.  
Paraschiva C.: 1930-2006, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.  
Sali U.: b.1931, female, German, lived out of farming her backyard, immigrated in Germany.  
Seppi B.: 1932, male, German from Sântana, middle peasant, collective farmer.  
Ion J.: 1933-2005, male, teacher in Sântana.  
Marica D.: b. 1935, female, Roma from Comlăuș, from a musician family, collective worker.  
Alexa C.: b. 1936, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, agricultural technician.  
Iancu R.: b. 1936, male, Roma, industrial worker.  
Maria E.: 1936-2007, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, rich peasant, collective farmer.  
Stefan M.: b. 1936, male, Romanian, from Comlăuș, landless peasant, tractor and truck driver.  
Resi L.: 1936, female, German, middle peasant, construction worker.  
Vasile D.: b. 1937, male, Romanian, moved to Sântana in the 60s, kolkhoz accountant.  
Martin S.: 1937-2011, male, German, bourgeois family, hidro-technician.  
Johan S: b. 1937, male, German, poor peasant, industrial worker.

Judit T.: b. 1939, female, half Hungarian, half German, rich bourgeois family, dental technician.

Traian H.: 1939-2008, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, kolkhoz crew-chief

Stefi X.: b. 1939, male, German, poor peasant, kolkhoz construction worker.

Tuța N.: b. 1939, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, poor peasant, collective farmer.

Deszo C.: b. 1940, male, Roma, apprentice feather collector, industrial worker.

Seppi R.: b. 1940, male, German, middle peasant, collective farmer.

Virgil C.: b. 1940, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, truck driver.

Ioan E.: b. 1940, male, Roma, teacher.

Anica C.: b. 1941, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, teacher.

Gheorghe C.: 1941-2012, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, truck driver.

Ioan D.: b. 1941, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, tractor and truck driver.

Minerva H.: b. 1941, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.

Remus N.: b. 1941, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, postal office worker.

Gheorghe D.: b. 1943, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, teacher.

Mihai C.: b. 1943, male, Roma, industrial worker.

Anton U.: b. 1944, male, German, driver of the collective farm chairman.

Sava C.: b. 1945, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, collective farmer.

Oscar C.: b. 1946, male, German from Sântana, teacher.

Toni C.: b. 1948, male, German, driver of the collective farm chairman.

Floare H.: b. 1946, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, teacher.

Marioara C.: b. 1946, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, nurse.

Elena E.: b. 1946, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, middle peasant, housewife.

Caterina J.: b. 1947, female, Romanian colonized in Sântana, housewife.

Toader D.: b. 1948, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, truck driver.

Costica E.: b. 1848, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, construction worker.

Lică J.: b. 1948, male, Romanian moved in Sântana in the 60s, agricultura mechanic.

Gheorghe H.: b. 1948, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, veterinarian.

Josef M.: b. 1948, male, German, engineer.

Ica N.: b. 1948, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, teacher.

Maria D.: b. 1948, female, Roma, collective farmer.

Dumitru N.: b. 1949, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, industrial worker.

Mara P.: b. 1950, female, Roma, grey-market dealer.

Aron C.: b. 1951, male, Romanian colonized in Sântana, teacher

Rozalia I.: b. 1958, female, German, collective farmer.

Mariana H.: b. 1958, female, Roma, industrial worker.

Anton C.: b. 1959, male, German, teacher.

Delia S.: b. 1969, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, technician.

Florica C.: b. 1964, female, Romanian from a colonized family, engineer.

Martin L.: b. 1964, male, German, industrial worker.

Mariana C.: b. 1965, female, Romanian from a colonized family, flower shop owner.

Martin S.: b. 1967, male, German, manager of a German-owned plant.

Ilie O.: b. 1968, male, Romanian moved to Sântana in the 90s, technician.

Dorin E.: b. 1968, male, Romanian from Comlăuș, technician.

Cornel O.: b. 1968, male, Romanian from a colonized family, industrial worker.

Marcu E.: b. 1968, Roma, entrepreneur.

Giana, H.: b. 1969, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, welfare worker.  
Mandred U.: 1970, male, German, pharmaceutical industry technician, living in Germany.  
Marioara D.: b. 1970, female, Romanian from a colonized family, textile worker.  
Daniel E.: b. 1970, male, Roma, lawyer.  
Liliana M.: b. 1970, female, Romanian from a colonized family, accountant.  
Mihalela C.: b. 1975, female, Roma, illiterate, performs menial jobs for wealthy Romanians.  
Ana C.: b. 1975, female, Romanian from Comlăuș, entrepreneur.  
Manfred T.: b. 1978, male, German, entrepreneur.  
Ciprian D.: b. 1980, male, Roma, teacher.

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