

**Universitatea “Babeş-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca**

**Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie**

**Școala doctorală Istorie, Cultură, Civilizație**

## **Teză de doctorat**

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**Construcția și Funcțiile Spațiului Public în Regimul Comunist din  
România**

**The Construction and Functions of Public Space in the Romanian  
Communist Regime**

**Îndrumător științific:**

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In an official propaganda story from 1956 called “*A great force of citizenship*” some women are given as example about what it is to be a great communist: “*In the Capital [of the region], in just about 5 months, almost 200.000 women took part to a number of citizen activities as: mending and electrification of the streets, a good management of children and medical establishments, of parks and other green spaces etc.[...] As a result, 380 women’s committees and almost 5.000 group delegates were trained for patriotic games as to mobilize their own in the plowing campaign, the growing of vegetables and of silkworms.*”<sup>1</sup>

The universe thus described, by this kind of activities is by itself a social one, a complete structure in which work, party fidelity, a care for the future and for an imagined now is, are all present as interacting elements. These women live in a public space, but as *a mobilised to mobilise* part of it, simple followers of above decisions taken at face value as being true. An abnormal space, inscribed in conscious activities, settled and ruled by the all-knowing party power.

We begin from the idea that, in using the public space, the party power – named simply from hereafter as power – must include not just the elements regarding control – such as *keeping order and a measure of public civility* but also a rewriting of human typologies, as the target to be more attuned to communist policies. Even if a work plan and a final utopic ideal both exist in theory, the immediate real inner workings of the mechanism are the best suited to indicate success or failure. Or, on another way to put it – the distance between the theory and its practical applicability is greater as the moment of utopic finality comes closer. How do we know that?

The answer to this question is the whole purpose of a study of the public space. Starting with some empirical definitions, followed by some clearly defined aspects, we will try to reason if these elements regarding the public are or if they are not related to the communist regime.

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<sup>1</sup> *Activiste pe țărâm obștească : (din activitatea comisiilor de femei de pe lângă Sfaturile Populare)* (București: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Politică, 1956) (p. 73).

### ***Starting hypothesis.***

The space it's not a clearly defined concept. In French *speze*, a word from the late XII'th century was linked with the idea of a *moment*, meaning a time for/of space. *Espace*, a latter word, signified a place in a place at a certain time. This concise approach was in time *relativized* by numerous new definitions.

The most important element is represented by the rupture that Einstein made, in his famous introduction to the works of Max Jammer, *The concepts of space*. There, by linking space with a psychological state, where a place is defined by a sum of human interactions, its proximity with material objects becomes clearly identifiable for the first time<sup>2</sup>.

The definitions slowly became integrated in a Hegelian or Marxist frame, the most important to let a mark on the debate on public space, as those of the Frankfurt School did. In its contact with the United States, where a great number of its member found refuge in the middle of the Second World War, the young German school defines some of its aspects. The level of a consumerist society, of an industry marked by the ideas regarding the line production like that of Ford and the effects of cinema – seen by them as a perfect image to be used by corporations as to impose a degree of relative and temporary wellbeing, that in turn will prevent the youth from rebelling, takes them to the conclusion that the American society is nothing more than a new devious way of subjugating the individual, a problem on which even Marx insisted in its studies. Adorno it the on most regarded Frankfurt School author that had criticized this type of submission to capitalistic norms in a public space or a public sphere, and also the circulation of ideas, who are to be always free, in his opinion, regardless of the type of space they are created in<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Albert Einstein, 'Introduction', in *Concepts of Space*, ed. by Max Jammer (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press , 1954), p. 196 (pp. XI-XVI).

<sup>3</sup> Teodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. by Gunzelin Noerr Schmid (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 314.

One of the first critical views on this theory, focused especially on the studies of Adorno and Horkheimer, is that of Habermas, which in the "*Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Investigation of a Category of Bourgeois Society*"<sup>4</sup>, also one of his early works and his least critical towards Marxism, is mildly contesting the assumptions of his predecessor by which any form of enlightenment brings forward the expansion of the power of some authority, of capitalist control and domination. The pessimist idea used by the two is refused by Habermas, which sees a public sphere, not a public space, where the illuminist ideal of liberty, equality and solidarity exists in its purest form.

With this in mind, he does not dare a separation of the public sphere from its ideological part, as in his early years Habermas kept a Marxist line of thought. Taking the formula of Adorno, who stipulates that public sphere is first of all ideology – a social institution and in the same time a man made one, created to give a certain coherence to some type of domination of an elite, by maintaining the illusion that institutions could not be changed and that they are eternal, Habermas adds on top of it the assumption that public sphere is also first of all an idea. In theory, the public sphere is identified with the public space, by its extensive degree of possible participation, in practice – as a certain degree of education and wellbeing is required – the limits are varying. The public can participate, as can anybody who is involved in some sort of social contract, but just as long as he is not in direct conflict with the authorities, as long as he has some money and an education, and - a thing omitted by Habermas – as long as he is accepted as such. The public space is distancing itself right from the beginning from the public sphere, their usage being different from this moment forward.

Regardless of this, Habermas considers that the ideal public sphere must not be forgotten even if utopic. The second part of its book on public sphere is interesting in this regard as the ideal is not disintegrated in the masses from the time the media control of the corporations are modeling the society towards consume and not towards ideas. Adorno's pessimistic approach gets his peer here as

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<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Investigation of a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA.: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

the public space is yet again one for a consumerist society, and the public sphere is just behind it in the same lines. Except this, Habermas considers that inside the political parties a new type of public sphere could be created that could climb towards state institutions, idea towards which Adorno on one hand and also Foucault on the other were extremely skeptical. A certain degree of maturity, so as one could think for himself, is suggested, and also a certain degree of institutionalized democratic power that could resist the capitalist erosion. This obligation, although necessary is not sufficient, as people tend to have a rational side in the limits of some economic and administrative rules, imposed upon them.

The public sphere approach does not explain a series of elements resurgent in the post-communist states and especially in our case: post 1989 Romania. How is it possible, if a non-communist state of mind is considered as necessary for the inevitable collapse of the system, that in the first elections of 1990, Romanians give broad support to the leftist leader Ion Iliescu? The propaganda explanation, in which the future president of Romania stands accused of misconduct, is insufficient also, as most of the voters were genuinely supporting the FSN (The National Salvation Front), Iliescu being elected with 85% votes in his favor at a turnout at an exceptional 86%.

So, it seems that a more profound reason is needed, separating the understanding of public space in capitalist/Western and communist/Eastern societies. This is the idea that stands at the core of our thesis. We do not forget to take into account approaches like that of Fukuyama who considers oriental/Chinese spaces and societies as being the most easily achieved cohesion groups on the lines of the state, the rule of law and accountable government but insufficient elements connecting the three distinct societies exist thus far in political studies<sup>5</sup>.

We prefer following the constructivist approach, barely used outside psychology, sociology and in some sciences which derive from history, as is the case of social history, or in the more controversial case of psychohistory. The constructivist approach offers the basis for the following idea: the

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<sup>5</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order. From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*, 1st edn (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), I, 585 (pp. 14-22).



communism, once the initial stages of its coming into power are achieved, is bound to adopt a learning curve imposed on ordinary citizens. As the new system is learned, apprehended and discussed in both ways: being a part of it and being against it - sometimes as an internal conflict, as survival skills are beginning to come into place - so is a need for it so stay the same in the personal environment. This means that any rupture, as the Romanian Revolution of 1989 or before that the 1968 Czechoslovak invasion and Ceausescu's response to it, or even before that as is the case of Stalin's death, is bound to hit hard the society. Also is important to be perceived as a new dawn, good or bad, that must first and foremost preserve a social status quo or else the general majority is forced to change itself. Communism, as an apprehended way of life is thus hard to erase once it comes into being as a predominant structure. The early years of the 50's or the late 80's and the beginning of the 90's are so tumultuous and remembered so vividly not just because of their exceptional economic or political elements, but mainly because they are part of a learning curve and disentanglement of a dominant ideology. People cope with what is imposed mentally, but the framework is public, especially dominant in the public space. Thus the conclusion: the public space is the main focus of propaganda, the place of an objective response by the receiver and of strategic learning. Once the ideological sedimentation is complete, only generational upheavals like the Hungarian 1965 revolution, or extreme social conditions like hunger, unemployment etc. could partially disrupt the apprehended stratus, thus steady sedimentation of the regime.

The constructivist approach stresses the importance of interaction in creating one's social life, status and mentality. As observed in the study from 1966 of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*<sup>6</sup>, the classical theoretical approach is limited by an elitist need to structure just a zone of social interaction. A whole list of minor exchanges that could create a social environment as where one works, which is which, what is needed for a particular interaction or what opinions are

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<sup>6</sup> Peter. L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).

deemed socially acceptable, seems to elude the elitist approach and the broad Marxist one. But all those minor elements are in fact merging in the fabric of reality. Reality is thus constructed. Language as a unifier, the institutionalization of social space, a re-learning of practices, of approved ways of doing things are important parts in a continuous process where the personal place is an induction called socialization. Other elements are Conversation as a way to preserve the identity and Identity as a means to unify conflicting realities under a recognizable banner.

The role oriented constructivists like to explain any social action as speech acts, in a sense that an action is recognizable by other social actors as what it is and thus a message is transmitted. The repetition of a message assures a habit being perpetuated in which agency is required as agents *convey validity claims, including evaluations of the validity claims of others*<sup>7</sup>. In the implementation of communist ideals the regime uses a whole range of speech acts from violent physical ones to the more subtle propaganda ones. The idea is that a message is carried in those acts, perceived by the population who must comply or challenge it. But, in all totalitarian regimes to comply assures a physical survival or at least a temporary one, as the subject remains in the grasp of the regime. A lack of acceptance, an ostracisation is also positive for the regime because the critic could be given as a bad example, punished or eliminated and invariably served as a lesson against future dissent.

Speech acts come in three forms: assertions, directives and commitments, the latter being a socially accepted way of recognizing some mutual obligations. All three are necessary for a message to be sent as a communicatively rational act that thus effectively conveys validity claims and invokes social rules so that others correctly interpret that act.<sup>8</sup> This could in turn validate Habermas theory that communicative action provides three action-coordinating functions of the *lifeworld*:

1. the reproduction of cultural knowledge (or truth claims);

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<sup>7</sup> Gavan Duffy and Brian Frederking, 'Changing the Rules: A Speech Act Analysis of the End of the Cold War', *International Studies Quarterly*, June 2009, p. 325–347 (p. 327).

<sup>8</sup> Gavan Duffy and Brian Frederking, 'Changing the Rules: A Speech Act Analysis of the End of the Cold War', *International Studies Quarterly*, June 2009, p. 325–347 (p. 328).

2. the reproduction of social norms (or appropriateness claims); and
3. the socialization of identities (or sincerity claims).<sup>9</sup>

The distinctive element that links the human as individual and the social environment in which he lives is the social memory. This allows us a duality in the exchange of information and in the participation to the public. It is debatable if the social memory and for that matter any kind of memory is purely social or not, the purist social theory supporters considering that memory is social because the intelligence that is at the core of memory is in the same time socially attained because *memories of each individual are related to a personal past, to an experience lived in a certain context, using the notions, language of the attended groups*. This puts an equality of sense between the social memory and the *“social entourage”*<sup>10</sup>.

Best described by Halbwachs, the social memory as group creation and encompassing all memory, was criticized as diminishing the role of the individual. This counterargument is that there is always a place in our memory in synchronization with the collective, as the digging for a lost memory is in fact a reenactment of contact points between us as part of a community, and what that community remembers. We support the idea of the French sociologist and philosopher as in his own words *“it is not enough to reconstruct, piece by piece of a past event as to get a memory. That reconstruction must be made by starting from common dates and notions retraceable in our minds as in that of others and vice versa. This is possible only if we are and were part of the same society”*<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Gavan Duffy and Brian Frederking, 'Changing the Rules: A Speech Act Analysis of the End of the Cold War', *International Studies Quarterly*, June 2009, p. 325–347 (p. 329).

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Neculau, 'Context social și practici cotidiene - o rememorare', in *Viața cotidiană în comunism*, ed. by Adrian Neculau (Iași: Polirom, 2004), p. 368 (p. 90).

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Memoria Colectivă*, ed. by Gerard Namer (Iași: Institutul European, 2007), p. 299 (p. 61).

Thus, an infinity of memories is created, that resides in a perceived repetition and plurality of social times. This is the element that leaves us the capacity of intuition when we come into contact with new (understood here as unknown) social frames<sup>12</sup>.

The downsides of this system are the long time effects that social degradation, seen by us as a perversion of democracy, of the rule of law, of truth seem to create. As individuals could only create memories from contact with others, from interaction, it becomes harder and harder to come to a different conclusion than that which the society perceived, if not as a good one, at least as a safe one. Totalitarian regimes are bound to be menacing when it comes to discussing their flaws, so fear could impede not only remembrance but the very creation of memory. The citizen is stuck in the middle between constructed and day to day reality.

Regarding the social norms, the middle element of the equation, the socialist theoreticians, especially in the field of law did not regard it lightly. Continuation of an argumentation by Engels from *Anti-Duhring*, based on the idea that one could identify not a moral but morals, directly dependable on the economic and historical structures of the society, a PhD. Student from Cluj-Napoca, Ioan Albu, expanded in his 1963 thesis the role of the social, communal rules – laws. He said that, in *“all the systems based on exploitation, the social norms in general, and the moral norms in special, are lacking any internal unity and harmony, mainly because they express contradictory interests, unappealing, of antagonist classes. Only in the socialist system, in the society of friendly classes, the social norms are back together as a whole, superior, of norms transfigured by the same moral values of the working class [...] and, as we march forward to communism, the action of the moral norms will be expanded, in the same time reducing the rules and norms of the administrative – based inter-human relations”*<sup>13</sup>.

As the wishful thinking is still placed in the future, the author proposes the need to keep the juridical (and not only) categorization of the social norms, as, for now, the effects of the past are still

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<sup>12</sup> Gerard Namer, *Hallbwachs et la Memoire Sociale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 249 (p. 177).

<sup>13</sup> Ioan Albu, *Contribuții la elaborarea sistemului de drept socialist* (Cluj: [n.pub.], 1963), p. 274 (p. 63).

powerful and they needed to keep what seemed valuable in a historical sense. The author quotes a lot from I.Gh. Maurer, a communist leader, especially his foreword to the first issue of the Law Magazine *Studii și Cercetări Juridice*, where Maurer is not convinced that the classics (of Marxism) are clearly stating the need for a overhauling of law, as the society to be different from the pre-revolutionary, a.k.a. bourgeois one, or a need arises to keep the most important elements of those societies<sup>14</sup>. This is an important theoretical aspect, as the need to preserve the true morals of the working class must require sacrifices from that part of the law, thus creating exceptions to the infallibility of the law and an indirect justification of opponent's persecution.

As law and social norms are not yet identical, with the socialism morals having the most prominent position, the conflict is inevitable, until the future and idealistic blending of the two. The society is using the law as to dispose of anything non-socialist, even elements of the law itself. The victory of an idea over the rule of law is ensured, and the framework for socialism encoded philosophically.

Because the *evolution* is perceived by Marxists as inevitable, Karl Popper considers this as fake, because people are inevitably bound by the two kind of laws – natural or conventional -, to unite them in one coherent system, challenging the validity of Marx when he said that is “*not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness*”<sup>15</sup> as this is impossible to predict.

This happens because there are a multitude of secondary effects to any gesture and so the unpredictability is great, not to mention the fact that evolution implies gradual and constant changes, and not all of them are tributary to realist rules<sup>16</sup>. Not to mention the degree in which, as Popper

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<sup>14</sup> I. Gh. Maurer, 'Cuvânt Înainte', *Studii și cercetări juridice*, I/1956, 50-57. as quoted in Ioan Albu, *Contribuții la elaborarea sistemului de drept socialist* (Cluj: [n.pub.], 1963), p. 274 (pp. 36-38).

<sup>15</sup> Karl Mark, 'Prefață la Contribuții la critica economiei politice', in *Opere* ([n.p]: [n.pub.], [n.d.]), XIII, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Popper, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei*, 2nd edn (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005), II. EPOCA MARILOR PROFETI: HEGEL ȘI MARX (pp. 118-26).

reflects, the confusion Marx makes between compartmental theory and conspiracy theory, where the fight between classes is placed under the mask of inevitability and historicism when there was nothing of the sort, means that to excuse as class war an aggression is to place oneself in the exploited camp, regardless if you are or not a member of that class<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Hypothesis and the structure of the Thesis.***

Where does the historian come into place in this framework of mostly linguistic and sociological approaches? Is he bound to a level of understanding in which the public space is refraining as solely a language based creation, thus the difficulty in explaining, defining and delimiting it from a particular, private one? Or an objective way would have to be discerned in whose study one could summon different aspects of human knowledge such as archival materials, the totalitarian state's own impression of itself, discerned from the press of the era or social oriented publications, even pure propaganda materials. Is there a way for the historian to compile, arrange and present a compelling presentation of the past? The answer is yes in all cases, as long as the theoretical framework is not limited but juxtaposed on hard scientific evidence, and as long as the materials come into place as elements in understanding an era. And as long as this direct yes could provide the chance for an understood past, and in the end a presented one.

A semblance of definition regarding the communist public space was not created, the main dictionaries failing to define it or considering irrelevant.

**We define public space as the sum of effects of public policies upon the population as a whole, which facilitates changing critical attitudes towards the power center. The communist public space is not so much a physical zone, but the totality of those elements discussed above without a real**

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, (pp. 130-152). Popper arguments go further than this, the historicism of Marx being the idealisation of a kind of happiness that could be imposed on others. But what gives one the right to do something like that, to create his own impression of a perfect society is not discussed by Marx, being in the same category as what communism, once it is achieved, must be.

**critique element. We consider that communism, if it would translate the ideology into practice word for word, it would create the perfect germs for its own destruction, and that the public measures are the failsafe that stops this from happening.**

This theory will be demonstrated on the following grounds:

- the regime supports at a theoretical level the so called *constructive critique*, but in practice they oppose the numbers to the critique (if we decide as a whole on a truth, that truth becomes self-reliant).

- the regime supports education as a means of social evolution, but in practice it limits and perverts education, as real education evolves brains who will at least put into discussion the party dogma.

- the regime supports the workers and their rights, but in practice hard labor, no pauses and long working hours are required, on the premise of high industrialization and future economic happiness.

- the regime supports fair prices and cheap goods, but in practice it could not even cope to enter the world market, a barter economy being time and again relied upon.

- the regime is working for peace, but the propaganda tone is bellicose.

- the regime is democratic, but any opposition is considered evil or insane, democracy meaning the compulsory vote for the regime (for all).

- the citizens all decide, in a two way decision structure – from top to bottom, and from bottom to the top, but in practice the regime decides by decree and the citizens comply, thus creating and extending apathy.

- the state and its supporters are pure, the other whichever he is, is not.

Our theory is that, by inserting into public space a continuous bombardment of this kind of messages, followed by bending the real facts, makes a compelling case for the population to believe the message even though it practically does the opposite. This in turn makes them ready for totalitarian communism, right in the moment when they consider themselves the main enemies of it (late 80`s). Lacking the capacity for critique, they are perfect elements of a discretionary regime, this time not by force as in the 50`s but by special and mental conviction.

The public space confronts two distinct structures one trying to top the other. The first one is represented by the state structuration or the capacity of the state and its institutions to remain stable, firm and powerful in the face of any perturbation albeit social or political. As the state structuration has a particular force, the chances that a second power, represented by leadership to emerge and bend the rules is slim.

On the other hand the leadership could be sorted after the structure proposed by Ph. Cerny: routine leadership (meaning that the leader rules and because of the social conditions is not recognized as such), integrative leadership (*“representing the interests and concerns of society [in the limits of] existing state structure”*), catalytic leadership (more bold but not going over the norms of the state) and finally transformative leadership (crisis creator or solver, with the crisis being, paradoxically, the optional element)<sup>18</sup>.

The interaction of these two forces is defining for any political structure, and it involves implicitly the social actor that is the citizen. The question unanswered by the American author is where on this interaction one could place the relationship between communist leaders and the state, and in

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<sup>18</sup> Philip Cerny, *The changing architecture of politics. Structure, Agency, and the Future of the State* (London: Sage Pub., 1990), p. 267 (pp. 122-25).



doing so explaining if a more personalized, or on the contrary a more structuralized explanation of a totalitarian regime is in order.

Our opinion is that the regime did not have crisis leaders, except in brief moments and that the change was in fact required to bend the rules in a clear framework, nor Stalin or Khrushchev, nor Dej and Ceausescu, going head on against the communist regime only with regard to some minor aspects. The personalization of power towards the man at the top required first of all not a crumbling regime but a well-oiled state apparatus. Thus, by conjuring the image of stability, understood here not in solely economic and social terms but as the impossibility of the majority to change the de-facto state, meant that the political leaders were capable to preserve their ideal of what the society must be like. Crisis would have meant different options in the public and political, which is not the case as, albeit different opinions existed, their chronological aspect (one change as implementation of a reform of the other) denied the chance of simultaneous conflict of ideas. That the public was *evolving* in the same time as the society indicates against all odds the stability and power of the regime and of his institutions.

The historical elements that were important in our endeavor could not miss the contributions of some great historians and some key language elements, the first of them being the relationship between history, as a continuous line of events regarding leaders and countries, and the micro-history, historical anthropology, social representations etc. The final touch was given by the oral historians and the questions of representation of a social event and phenomenon.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> A huge list of books and authors could be inserted here, regarding different opinions of the works of historians. We mention in the debate the most important ones. See for the social approach Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, *Istoria Vieții Private* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1994-1996-1997), I-VIII. ; for the cultural perspective see Geerts C., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1973). and G. Noiriel, *Qu'est-ce que l'histoire contemporaine* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1998).; for social representation the most eloquent case is that of Serge Moscovici, *La psychologie, son image et son public* (Paris: P.U.F., 1976) (p. 26). And for the oral history see the famous E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).

Also it is necessary to pay due respects to those who wrote clearly and concise about the communist Romania, and who as historians, have each and every one of them constructed a framework for the chronological understanding of the period<sup>20</sup>.

Structured in four chapters and a broad introduction, our thesis compares the different stages that the Romanian communism took in order to come to its own demise, in spite of all attempts of the power centres to make otherwise. Chapter one is following the regime from its creation to the death of Stalin in a threefold structure: the political changes, the architectural, both public and private ones and the party propaganda in speech acts and texts. Chapter two takes into account the so-called transformation, from 1953 to 1964 on the same societal structure arguing that, already by 1953, the population understood what it is expected of her, in return the regime easing the pressure that existed in the Stalinist years. Nevertheless any attempt to a serious deviation was still harshly punished.

Chapter four is describing the so-called liberal years of the Ceausescu regime, when in our view, a mix of nationalist pride, of a special path to communism and a mix of consumerist and socialist society was attained. Finally, the last chapter is trying to show how, previous elements, mainly in urban and housing planning, in economic growth and national ideals were in fact botched attempts to ideologically cope with ever-changing realities for which the regime was hardly prepared, and thus the collapse.

We concluded with the assumption that half a decade of communism, both in public and private life made enough mental changes that are bound to remain for decades more, and that are partly at fault for the post 1989 evolution of Romania.

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<sup>20</sup> Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, 2nd edn (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1997). Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu și Securitatea* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998). the Radio Free Europe archival collection in Anneli Ute Gabanny, *Cultul lui Ceaușescu* (Iași: Polirom, 2003). Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate: o istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, 2nd edn (Iași: Polirom, 2005). Mihai Bărbulescu and others, *Istoria României* (Bucharest: Corint, 2003). Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceaușescu, anii numărătorii inverse* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), p. 312. Antonello Biagini, *Storia della Romania Contemporanea*, 1st edn (Milano: Bompiani, 2004), p. 289 (pp. 102-33).

## Conclusions

Finally the last question on the Romanian public space arises: why such a regime collapses?

The loss under the influence of the 70's and 80's economic crises are creating uncertainty that on its turn is a prerequisite for revolt. The transformation of this basic state in a proper movement political or not is directly related to the capacity and interest of the actors involved and also on a great deal of luck. A crowd could active its discontent on the impact of the snowball theory, as in the same time could be kept silenced when a hard regime places it under its boot. The repression and also the revolution are thus related to marginal groups, the rest of the population opting towards waiting until the last moment. The middle beneficiaries are always the most to lose; by not challenging or criticizing they in fact are saving a status-quo of personal safety. On the other hand this does not mean that once a degree of liberty is achieved the middle group could not express its usually conservative ideas – like the post 1989 Romanians, that followed communist ideals if not the communist regime.

The popular democracy regime are manipulating and controlling the public space, but regardless of their attention, some elements escape their rule, as total control is utopic. If until 1953 a terror could be discerned in direct link with the authorities, after Stalin's death, some bursts like the one in Hungary in 1956 and that of Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1968 are a clear indication that relaxation means the improbability to control all the forms of manifestation regardless of the propaganda. This in turn explains that the regime under Stalin was unable to control the society, if at just 3 years after his death; some were erasing any mention of his name in the public sphere. So the question unanswered here is – could a totalitarian regime be totalitarian or just a nightmarish control on the society, battered and subjugated.

The new man of the socialist and communist societies is also missing from the daily picture, the archives being more than full with evidence of the regime's failure to create model citizens, a regime

decided with each new directive to *help* the population towards embracing communism. Our hypothesis that unofficially and in all fields the regime is recognizing his defeat, in economic, social, literary etc., in all aspects of the society is the key in understanding what the people thought communist ought to mean. A backwardness, that make one see in the eastern bloc in the 1980's, barely the developments of the 1960's in the west, could be more reason to explain the appeal of a simplistic propaganda message and the capacity to cope with what the regime threw at the ordinary citizen. If one could be considered a rebel, the 1968 is the main anchor for its ideas, as for the society the consumer years that were the same as the revolutionary years makes one feel nostalgic about the 60's in the hunger of the 80's.

One of the biggest disadvantages of the totalitarian communist regimes regarding the public space is the unstudied until now de-programing and development of ideas and innovations. The regimes structured on immovable constructs, allergic to new ways of seeing things have in the same time an effective command structure, to effective in fact, but in the same time they limit any multiple knowledge, as to keep the innocence of the population in check from a possible contamination from outside, that risks not only to pave the way for ideas exchange but also to a critique of the system. This aspect is equally important as the failure of the economy, and in keeping in mind the final state dissolution has parity with the over studied classical causes: control repression, the limits of power and to power, and the planned economy. As we have seen, even the hint of new ideas regarding education, sexuality, culture or even technologies, not only that were disregarded by the party, the overall population was not even interested in them. Setting fashion aside as a different topic, other particular interests were not only unavailable but also unappealing to a predominantly rural population.

The lack of cultural exchanges, the technological backwardness are just some of the elements that are created and that in their turn are modifying the organic understanding of a public space behavior, and the *positive* classical public spaces, like schools, street demonstrations, governmental

institutions, literary groups are in this context space that are increasingly neutral, not being capable of stimulating nor of contagion<sup>21</sup>.

Another problem regarding public space is about the understanding of the human interaction using a clear Marxist logical scheme. A pyramided-like structure, either on the approved theoretical level where the communist regime is the main exponent of the of the dreams and wishes of the working class, of the real one where the regime is *dictating* the good of the people, this particular understanding of the reality is narrowed by all sorts of limits. An *obey!* policy and the impossibility to adapt itself to a natural change of ideas also to the unpredictability of the society – as new discoveries, new paradigms, a perpetual state or rebellion on various degrees towards the elders, the better both socially and financially – creates a blockage at the decisional level, the so called ossification, derived from the idea that ideas are related only to the individual. Arthur Koestler predicted this, by following the way genial ideas are working and expanding, in three distinct categories – of comedian, researcher and artist, ignoring the group based information and its creation, Even if one considers geniuses as outside the context of the reality, oblivious of other participants to the life of the city, one must consider the importance of the exchanges in ideas and of personal contact as one idea to be created.<sup>22</sup>

Why this deviation from the subject of public space? Mainly because the model of an orderly society, was one towards whom the western society was were responsive. Not like in the capitalist systems where the ups and downs of the market, the ever changing way of life, in the socialist world a thought order even under the risk of renouncing liberties was something very desirable for most of the left in the west. The reality was under another banner in which the main effect of the control and order

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<sup>21</sup> Viziune asupra spațiului public urban ca principal motor de inovație și schimb intelectual la Steve Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* ([n.p]: Riverhead Books, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Kuhn and Jan Hacking, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition* ([n.p]: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

in the society was a state of savage fear and reaction and a huge degree of backwardness, with effects that will span decades to come.<sup>23</sup>

This form of control is mainly masculine, dominative, towards a docile population. Marked by the syndrome of an attraction towards what is evil for her, the masses or the crowd choses to live its life in the framework of imposed rules and not to decide for a bigger freedom. Hungary 1956 or Poland 1968 are in fact explosive breaks with this model of conscious obedience and were not interested in a free life. The fact that exceptions are elements of a rebellious youth, understood here as a tight group, and not in its total aspects, is enforcing the rule. To summarize, the masses are docile and they listen to the power in exchange for some elementary economic rights and a minimum of safety and equality in pauperism.

The fact that in the post 1989 years these elements of safety and equality are best remembered and regretted by nostalgic proves that, it is hard to speak of a communist contagion, more of a communist appeal to primary human mental resorts. Fear, safety, praising/the approval of power, the recognition of a center, the opposition or un-involvement in any dissension, are somewhat like Hobbesian frames, and in the same time very easy to accept by the population.

Is it normal to understand that the eventual costs of the dissention are more expensive than the respect for the authority, and that dissension gives a minimalist victory? It seems so, from the standpoint of the masses. This is possible in two distinct cases, both explain the lack of revolt, and the violence of it when it is bound to happen, also the disillusionment that follows.

In the first case, what happens if somebody, a person or some category prefers to bend or broke the rules of the game and not to respect them, and the authority in any of its avatars is incapable to counterbalance this? We include here all those elements big and small trough which one could fight the

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<sup>23</sup> Igor Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia* ([n.p]: Brookings Institution Press, 2007).

system, by small jokes, pranks, bypassing strict program hours. The regime in its authoritarian form is prepared to fight with direct dissension but it could not fight with this small generalized form of opposition because he cannot pin it down because the numbers of those that made it is too great as to search for any exemplary punishment.

In 1945-1947 this element was nonexistent. The enemy was easily identifiable in the old structures, presented time and again by the historians: old political parties, the old patriarchal society, the elite were easily targeted and crushed if they did not comply. By the 1980's the regime is unable to identify the most subversive of its opponents or it can do nothing to them as they are too many. The culture resistance, or the dissidence, although parts of some heroic gestures are minimal if one considers their capacity of penetration to the masses. The main *dissident* problems is the general mismanagement, half-hearted work and disinterest at the job were the most subversive engine that could be mustered. The new communist society is a failure in its essence as the new man is more interested in economy and welfare than in ideology. A revolution is the perfect catalyst or economic and not ideological trauma, are economic reform is superior to the liberty and the good to democracy. The new man knows exactly what he does not want, he is uncertain on what he wants. It's not about a lack of democratic exercise, or a lack of culture, but of a special mood, responsive to daily problems, in the midst of a lack of powerful democratic institutions. The post 1990 vote for the National Salvation Front, and not for the old revived political parties and the subsequent victory of its candidate, Ion Iliescu could be explained by the above theory as: NSF was the sole party that was recognizable by the people as leading something, and in the same time it promised the best of both worlds – limitations on privatization, semi-market economy and social state, the continuation of the practices from the communist times with regard to the work-pay ratio, etc. By contrast the proposals of the opposition were impossible to digest for a great deal of the voters, democracy, and market economy was being for them some distant avatars of somewhere else or a different past not taken. The public space is all trout

these times in a perpetual pendulation between rediscovered apathy and rediscovered political effervescence, with a clear spatial localization in the movement from the University Square, the arrival of the miners etc. The conflict that ensued between conservative and liberal strata of the society was the follow up of the nonexistence of something like the democratizing polish movement Solidarisnok and of the accent toward a primary animalistic understanding of the political life.

The second interpretation, some sort of conclusion of the thesis, was defined by Durkheim. In his opinion to conform one to the social universally accepted norms is the pathway towards some sort of relative social stability. Even though some agents are bending the rules the masses – following the ideas of Parsons – is obedient. The communist system creates a series of rules that when applied to the populations are creating a state of submission. These rules are contested from time to time, but contestation is easily identifiable. Under the pressure of the regime, much more brutal and direct than in functioning democracies, the power of exemplary punishment is in itself the reaction to the limits that the society could reach. It is undeniable that, when implication is limited, is that apathy becomes the rule of the day, easily to adopt by all the society, and with minimal risks. A state of mind, unhindered by rebellious outbursts is the predominant element so much as it can form an extra-system rule in itself. When not even this valve could ease the economic pressure, the system collapses. The obedience, accepted in the limits of a relative wellbeing becomes fast violent rebellion when a crisis arises, for a brief time.

The communism, bound by theory to not be followed by any other system manages to accomplish all his objectives regarding the new man. But his victories are synonymous to disaster. If they chose to suppress dissent they create apathy, education becomes critique, and the performance creates examples and a powerful voice. All the predicted objectives come to life, just that the most hard core critics of the system are in the same time the most meritocratic and the best raised by it. The keepers of



the communist tradition are, paradoxically, the semi-educated, full of apathy, traditionalist, rural or semi-urbanized mass, because they do not criticize the system just some practical aspects of it. After 1989 they are at the core of stopping reforms, of keeping economic privileges and the ones that do not produce competitive goods, they are the pool for nationalist parties and other extremists. The communist ideals: education, work, honesty, equality, popular democracies, even the need to criticize, are to be found in the most hardcore texts against the regime.

The people under communism are virtually changing planets with every whim of the regime, as it is almost impossible to compare decades and leaders and their subsequent policies. Public space is ever changing, ever corseted in different frames, ever perilous and nervous. The people have to behave in the socialist frame, in the elements required from them, and only then in what they desire and want. The blend of the home, the market, the propaganda, and the ideals are sentiments huge and one could not distinguish one from another in the entanglement they produce. The communist man is in the same time a prisoner of his own mind, as only in there one could think and be free and not in the society, keeping most to himself, even though he must be a part of the world he lives in. A paradoxical duality, created to weaken him, his opposition to the botched attempts of social reconstruction.

We have established what is and what is not included in the public space. The constructions in antithesis, without appealing to definitions are making the researcher to limit his subject, in clear coordinates. The great disadvantage of this approach is the possibility of expanding to the infinite the possible comparisons. Like definitions, the numerous case studies presented above in a chronological order are of some value only if one integrates them in problems and solutions from before and after the event. It is preferable that this direction to surpass the limits of the decades. The sacrality of a house, a specific liberal idea and its counterpart the communist control, have effects on the long run. As it is the case also for the advertising, the propaganda, the urban systematization. Each element could be

separated in its public and private facets by a researcher, as we are convinced that it's demonstrated above. It's what Sartori called a "*conscious thinker, [...] a man that without having a thermometer can say a lot about what it means to be hot or cold*".<sup>24</sup>

The question remains: is public space a delimitation of the overall space in which a society remembers and lives or it is something more. As the authors of the volume *Memory and Impact of political transformation in public space* (2004) explain, the people are "*bound together by imaginative, narrative, and symbolic means. Ruling regimes of all political stripes selectively utilize the past as a strategic resource and erect historical monuments, construct grand buildings, and, more recently, create touring exhibitions of their "national treasure" to bolster international image, shore up domestic support, or placate critics*"<sup>25</sup>. Those elements have a language we might add, sometimes a real one – a standardized and approved way of seeing the past; other times an indirect one, perceived in the register of mentalities by the collective or individual. In both cases there are some who take in the fullest of what this language and its symbols have to give, and those who do not. Both types are nevertheless creating some sort of reaction to it, and both are under the authoritarian effects of its publicity.

The post 1989 Romania, lacked any kind of regulatory mechanism, and a moderate position that could push forward the elements coming from the old apparatchik structure and those (most of them conservative) who had the interwar ideals in mind, who in turn maybe were not that much suited, just as the perestroika ones from the left were coming a too little too late. The challenges from both sides, the violence, the usurpation of public space, the apathy of the general population who came very soon to regret the image of a *social and economic safe communism* where elements of what Florin Abraham

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<sup>24</sup> Giovanni Sartori, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 1970, pp. 1033-53 (p. 56).

<sup>25</sup> Daniel J. Walkowitz and Maya Lisa Knauer, *Memory and Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 238 (pp. 4-5).

called parts of a “*highly conflicting political system*”<sup>26</sup>, a Leviathan-like one based on conflict and the political submission of others.

Apathy had something to do with the fact that in communist Romania, a public space was created by the state, more clearly the state created what he believed a public space should look like. The non-existence of a real area, civic and in the same time mental, where the people could come together, differentiated from another form of space, more private was the rule. What they perceived as public space was: “*a. urban, b. huge, c. monumentalist, d. easily controlled, e. part of a false history, on top of a real one*”. In studying the archaeology of public space in post-communism, Ciprian Mihali, uses three distinct directions: the first being “*the monumental signature left by the communism on the city and the post-communist caricature attempts to rehabilitate it; the second the communist non-existence and the post-communist futility of public space; thirdly the urban post-communist space, or from monumental to non-place, without passing a public space*”<sup>27</sup>. Same as us, the author does not consider the term *dystopia* as being the most easily used when talking about communism as dystopia is “*not the residual element of an historical, political, economic, urban, architectural project, or of other nature, but moreover the finalization of a number of specialized tendencies, manifested and that are still manifesting in all these fields*”<sup>28</sup>.

Having followed the three elements of negation, of definition by analogy and of the specific case, we could explain what it was the communist public space.

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<sup>26</sup> Florin Abraham, *România de la comunism la capitalism* (București: Tritonic Pub., 2006), p. 640 (p. 599).

<sup>27</sup> Ciprian Mihali, 'Orașul Precar. Considerații asupra condiției istorice a spațiilor postcomuniste', in *Genealogii ale postcomunismului*, ed. by Adrian Sîrbu and Alexandru Polgar (Cluj-Napoca: Ideea Design & Print, 2009), pp. 267-82 (pp. 271-74).

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem (p.276).