

Waiting for the Cows to Come Home:  
A Political Ethnography of Security in a Complex World.  
Explorations in the Magyar Borderlands of Contemporary Ukraine

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For Princes will do what they will do and academics will continue to ape them and think of the study of politics only in terms of servicing them. But those who do that fundamentally misunderstand the question of the political itself. (Dillon 1996, p.5)

[...] because I claim that the claim upon which the metaphysical tradition of political thought is premised is that security is the ground of (especially modern) politics, whereas I would argue that (in)security, namely the obligatory freedom of human being itself, is the opening which calls forth the prospect of political life. (Dillon 1996, p.128)

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which the everyday (in)securities of people in southwestern Ukraine can illuminate our understanding of contemporary political life. Rather than using traditional units of analysis or given categories—the state, the individual, identity—the dissertation focuses on relations between people in and connected to a single village to develop a novel framework for analyzing politics and the political. The dissertation opens with an interrogation of the practical and theoretical challenges associated with current conceptualizations of security; our understanding of the political; and the role of ethnography in theorization and presents a research design meant to address those challenges. Drawing upon extensive participant-observation and other immersion-based research in a post-Soviet borderland wedged between Ukraine and Slovakia, and using an analytical tool I call “togetherness,” the thesis presents an ethnographic account of social interactions, economy, and authority in this largely Hungarian-speaking rural area. The third part of the dissertation applies the idea of an ontological shift and draws on complex systems and structuration theory (Luhmann and Giddens, respectively) to rethink the ethnographic analysis and to highlight relationships between structural and existential realms of political life. Here, the concept of security becomes central to the theorization, and the overall argument illuminates the intimate relationship between the idea of security and the political. Ultimately, this approach allows us to expand the scope of political ethnography: theorizing beyond thick description; integrating broader perspectives without losing the texture of the local; and developing an approach to research that can be replicated in other settings.

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**PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS**

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1.1 Zsófia

Every morning, Zsófia wakes up in her little village of Palágy-Komoróc hoping she is not sick. Her days are long and filled with things to do: feeding the chickens; caring for the garden plot; just attending to her farmhouse is an enormous task. It used to be full of life, three generations living together, eating together and caring for each other. She was very young when she married and moved to Palágy-Komoróc, barely twenty. In those days, everyone shared the work at home. Her husband was a mason; Zsófia worked as a dispatcher in Ungvár. Things were simpler then, it seems. Men went to Russia or somewhere to do their military service, and then came back. Life was not bad, certainly predictable. Every morning, the cows were sent off with the shepherd for the day. Every evening, Zsófia and her neighbours sat outside on the benches, discussed, and gossiped, while waiting for the cows to come home. Predictable. Life was predictable.

Now, it's different. Her husband is deceased, and her daughters are gone. Betti moved in with her husband and in-laws in a neighboring village; Kati moved to Budapest, she has a better job there. It's another world there. Although retired, Zsófia works almost every day to make some money. Her pension is barely enough to pay the electricity and the phone bill. Days go by and are all different. One day she cleans an apartment in Ungvár, the next, she peels the potatoes received as payment for the lease of her land. It's always different. Life changed, it's fast and unpredictable. It is sometimes scary, she doesn't know who will care for her if she gets sick. Who's going to put on her shoes if she dies alone in her bed? She does not want to be seen on her deathbed without shoes.

It's been several years since Zsófia sold her last cow. It was too expensive to maintain and too much work. Every morning, the kine<sup>1</sup> gathers in the park in the middle of the village. Oh what a park it used be! Now we don't even know whether it belongs to the village or it has been privatized. Rumours abound. There are fewer cows now. But in the evening, we still find the villagers gathered around the benches. Not all of course. The young do not care for that and the newcomers stay in their houses. Only those remembering gather to gossip and discuss, while waiting for the cows to come home.



Figure 1: Field site in relation to Europe

<sup>1</sup> Herd of cows.

### 1.1.2 Politics as it Happens

Sitting as it does on the borders of many worlds, the Ukrainian state has a very particular meaning to people in the villages of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc. Nation, community and family are some of the many concepts that take shape and crisscross one another in their daily life. It is through these ideas that villagers, many of them still using outhouses and discussing local politics every day on their benches while waiting for their cow to come home, as well as “Skyping” their families abroad from the home of a wealthy neighbor, build their sense of security. Amidst the winds of historical narratives and political (dis) illusionment, people are striving every day to make the next one better, and the idea of security develops not only meaning, but translates into speech and acts.

Through my observation of Palágy-Komoróc in the region of Zakarpattia, and in Ukraine more generally between 2007 and 2012, I became aware of the centrality of the feeling of security. Amidst the tremendous changes that occurred with the demise of Soviet state socialism, many people saw, and see, their own realities change. In the shadow of the few who became rich, many people moved from a predictable, controlled communist welfare regime to a status of uncertainty--a risk-riddled life in which security requires concrete forms of survival strategies. Despite a relative peace, the underlying concern is of security.

Some may interpret from my accounts a sense of nostalgia for Soviet times. This is not my intention. Rather, my analysis integrates and reflects the expressions gathered while conducting the ethnography. In fact, the breadth and variety of expressions, both personal and commercial, of nostalgia for the Soviet or communist period (“*Ostalgie*” in

German) has been widely discussed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In their ethnographies of post-socialist borderland villages similar to Palágy Komoroc, Daphne Berdahl in Germany and Mathijs Pelkmans in post-Soviet Georgia show how nostalgia for socialist-era control and surveillance developed, as new forms of isolation and unpredictability took root in the capitalist era (Berdahl 1999, Pelkmans 2006).

This dissertation uses an ethnographic approach as a starting point to investigate the lived experience of security in a post-Soviet border village. My aim is to use the results of this research to illuminate the more general question of politics as a lived and experienced activity. In the post-socialist context, much work has been dedicated to the state while people's experience of the state has gone relatively (though not entirely) untheorized.<sup>3</sup> I propose to reverse the lens. This project addresses the ways in which the every day of people in a particular community can enlighten our understanding of contemporary political life more generally. My goal is to paint a fresco of their political reality. My challenge is to circumvent the gravitational attraction of the state and to free my research from this conceptual harness, creating the possibility of theorizing the

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<sup>2</sup> Research on aspects of nostalgia for the communist past represents a large body of literature. A few examples include: in Bulgaria, Creed, G. W. (2010). *Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria*. *Post-communist nostalgia*. M. Todorova and Z. Gille. New York, Berghahn Books. In Germany, Bach, J. (2002). "The Taste Remains': Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany,." *Public Culture* 14(3): 545-556. And Berdahl, D. (1999). "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things." *Ethnos* 64(2). In Yugoslavia, Lindstrom, N. (2006). "Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia in Former Yugoslavia." *East Central Europe* 32(1-2 (July)): 231-242. and Ugrešić, D. (1998). *The culture of lies : antipolitical essays*, University Park, Pa. : Pennsylvania State University Press. In Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other cities, Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia*. New York, Basic Books. On the production of nostalgia for communism under communism itself, see Scarboro, C. (2010). Today's Unseen Enthusiasm: Communist Nostalgia for Communism in the Socialist Humanist Brigadier Movement. *Post-communist nostalgia*. M. Todorova and Z. Gille. New York, Berghahn Books. And on post-communist nostalgia as prompted by utopian promise for a world that never came to pass, see Yurchak, A. (2006). *Everything was forever, until it was no more : the last Soviet generation*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Dominant paradigms include state withdrawal or the oft-articulated wish in contemporary post-Soviet space that, at least, the state "not bother" people—if it's not going to help them. These perspectives offer a largely descriptive point of departure, but not theorization as such.

political “as it happens” and representing a multi-layered, fragmented and altogether complex view of society.

### 1.1.3 Some Context

Temporally, my research is situated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the post-Soviet era, or simply, today, with all the difficulties that that notion implies. Spatially, the research is situated in Ukraine, on the border of Slovakia, in the westernmost oblast’ of Zakarpattia. Sitting on a discursive as well as a concrete divide, the villages of Palàgy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc lay on the edges of different worlds: Europe, Eurasia<sup>4</sup>, the former Soviet-Union, the now dead Habsburg Empire, or the meeting place of Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic Churches. People in the villages, and in the surroundings, speak mostly Hungarian and are able to converse in either or Russian and Ukrainian.

Leaned against the Carpathian mountains, this region of central Europe has been the crossroads and the passage point of many invading countries. It is through the Verecke Hágo (a mountain pass) in the region that Árpád led his tribes in 895 towards what would become contemporary Hungary. Or so is the story told. For the last century, these villages have lived as part of a borderlands. With the fall of the Habsburg empire and the treaty of Trianon,<sup>5</sup> the region was annexed to Czechoslovakia. In 1938, following the German annexation of Czechoslovakia , the region was returned to Hungary until the end of the war in 1945. After the erection of a fence separating part of the region from post-war Czechoslovakia, its eastern portion then was joined to the USSR as part of the Ukrainian SSR. On August 24 1991, Ukraine declared its independence from the USSR

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<sup>4</sup> I deliberately use “Europe and Eurasia” as they not only delimit uncertain territorial spaces, but define imagined places as well.

<sup>5</sup> This was preceded by a series of short periods that saw its annexation to the West Ukrainian National Republic, Romania, Hungary, before final annexation in 1919.

and became an independent state, of which the villagers of Palágy-Komoróc are now citizens.

As much as the dramatic changes that occurred over the last century have brought wars, destruction and death to the region, it is mostly during the last twenty years that villagers from the immediate area began to move and family structures were reconfigured.<sup>6</sup> The great difficulty the Ukrainian state faced in creating an environment in which people could feel financially secure provoked a dramatic reconfiguration in the ways and means to survive the everyday. The subjective impression of feeling safe was replaced by the very objective tension of being insecure, and having to do something to remedy it.

After a decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and two decades of living in an independent state, the villages of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc still live minutes away from one of the most highly secured borders of the world. Built under the communist regime, the barbed wire fence is still patrolled every day by Ukrainian and Slovakian border guards. For the villagers, crossing into the European Union means months of administrative work and a lot of money, often more than they can afford. Yet, despite this incredible security apparatus, the villagers of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc struggle every day to survive. They fear sickness, as they do not know whether they could afford it; they fear drought, because they can lose all the means they have to put food on the table; they fear getting old, because they don't know who is going to take care of them.

My dissertation contributes to this investigation and sheds some light on this paradox. How can we reconcile and theorize this contradiction? How can we understand

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<sup>6</sup> Resettlement campaigns during the Soviet era also brought demographic change to the village, including the arrival of Ukrainian and other Slavic-speaking populations who today describe themselves as “down from the mountains.”

the success of a state in securing its territory while failing to protect its citizens? Are these reflections of daily life a harbinger of profound change in how we view the political? How can we know?<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.1.4 Exploring the Political

This dissertation investigates the contours of the political from the perspective of people's daily lives. It attempts to uproot foundational and/or dogmatic views of what the political is, or should be, that, as Ian Shapiro notes, lead to “the reproduction of the social and political order” (Shapiro 2005, p.2). In this sense, I am attempting to contribute to the reversal of the “flight from reality that has been so complete that the academics have all but lost sight of what they claim is their object of study” (Shapiro 2005, p.2) and take the time to appropriately define the said object of study. The reader will uncover through the text the irremediable struggle this attempt entails, namely the tension of uncovering the meaning of a concept for which we already have a name, and an (or many) idea(s). By grounding political theory in an ethnography of the everyday experiences of people, I am exploring the contours of the political, not from a normative standpoint but based on deep empirical research.

By directly engaging the concept of the political in this experiential sense, I investigate the gaps between current theorizations and the way in which the political is enacted in the every day. These gaps are provoked by the dissonance between inductive and deductive thought that create confusion as we ask the question: can I see the world as it is, or do I, as in Plato's cave, only see the shadows of that reality? In other words, as we

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<sup>7</sup> To be sure, I am not the first, nor the only one investigating this “paradox”. It is one of the themes under scrutiny by many critical scholars.

go through life, we are faced with forms of complexity that we try to understand, systematize and cognitively organize. Whether we consider theories about environmental degradation in the context of our apparent insatiability for accumulation, theories of justice<sup>8</sup> in the light of the ravages of wars and conflicts, or the fine balance between reason of state and individual freedom, the dissonance between what theories express and lived reality is staggering. In order to conduct this exploration, I engage the question of theorization and its relative predominance over empiricism and strive to strike a balance between the two, remaining conscious that while exploring the gap between theory and the empirical, this implies, as Dilthey argues, the creation of a dialectic between the two realms in order “to be conscious that one is relative” (Gadamer 2003).

#### 1.1.5 The Approach

In this dissertation I try to maintain a balance between the empirical and the conceptual by placing in the same room three unlikely bedfellows: political ethnography, Modern Systems theory (MST)/structuration theory, and (in)security. As a form of inquiry, political ethnography from an interpretivist perspective delves into "raw" life and takes a street-level view of the world. Its object of inquiry is meanings and symbols, and as a specificity of this dissertation, focuses not on individuals' experiences per se, but rather on their interactions, which eventually become the data to be used while experimenting with MST.

As one of my contributions in this dissertation, I create a tool derived from the concept of "World Society", which provokes and challenges the Westphalian view that divides the world into objects of inquiry called states and conceptualizes the "starting

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<sup>8</sup> In the light of the universal declaration of human rights, for example.

point... as only one society, and that is, the world society" (Little 2004, p.xiii). This tool, which I call "togetherness,"<sup>9</sup> allows me to conceptualize my field site in terms of people interacting together instead of bounded territorially. I instill a greater flexibility in drawing out the contours of the social construct, while keeping the possibility of showing the connections to the global, as World Society theory does. By treating my field site as a whole, a group of people for which I do not give an a priori definition, I have the opportunity of letting the field speak, and carve out the multiple dimensions of the field site along discursive lines.

One of the challenges of ethnography in general, and political ethnography specifically, is that by the very nature of its domain of inquiry, it remains focused on the low level, local perspective. It contributes effectively to the subfield of comparative politics as it delves into regional perspectives, but it loses its strength as we try to break free from the gravitational attraction of the specific. How then can I change the dialogue and use a political ethnographic perspective to reach out to a larger forum, less concerned with the politics of a particular place, and more with the encompassing conceptual view of my strategic objective, the political?

In order to do this, the dissertation is built on two movements. In the first movement, Part Two of the dissertation, I conduct the ethnographic investigations, where I analyze along different analytical lines the field site delimited by togetherness. In the second movement, I integrate the empirically informed analysis into a systems theory-based theoretical structure to proceed with a second level analysis. I call this transition from the first to the second movement an ontological shift, in which I change the lens. Using Giddens' structuration theory and Luhmann's modern Systems Theory, I develop a

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Three.

framework that creates this possibility. In fine, the first level analysis provided by the political ethnographic analysis feeds in to a systems theory based framework, providing a window on a larger perspective, unconstrained by pre-defined containers, or categories of analysis (Brubaker and Cooper 2000).

#### 1.1.6 Fieldwork

Based on ethnography, I used an unstructured observation technique, consistent with a participant-observation approach (Gillham 2008). Immersion for a long period of time is central to my approach: I have spent many months, spread across a period of years, in Zakarpattia, developing not only general knowledge of the region, but also a social network that served as my basis for work.<sup>10</sup> I spent a prolonged period, from spring to late fall 2012, in the villages of Palàgy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc, living in a household, integrated into the local community. During this period, I took part in local life, participating in activities, working within the household as well as offering language courses.

In total, I spent over eighteen months in the region and my primary field site, during which I deployed a number of strategies. These included ethnographic conversations in the villages as the basic material for my work; targeted interviews aimed at highlighting specific issues or approaching otherwise inaccessible people such as local politicians, clerics, public servants and leaders in the private sector; analysis of media, including identification of and exposure to media listened to, viewed, and read locally,

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<sup>10</sup> I have spent between one and six months in the region each year since 2007.

and discourse analysis of them<sup>11</sup>; attending commemorations and events—not only large annual celebrations, but also smaller events such as birthdays, weddings, reunions, church celebrations, and visits to the cemetery, all of which occur on a nearly weekly basis; and spatial analysis, including detailed physical analysis of the village and region, and analysis of features in relation to one another and as part of the structuring elements of social life.

Fluent in Hungarian, I was able to interact with the majority of the villagers. However, my lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian language and my basic knowledge of Russian did not give me access to that portion of the villagers on the same terms. In order to reach out, I had to deploy a few alternative strategies, such as discussing with them in Hungarian, as many of them have learned the language, or using the help of a person translating. This is obviously not optimal and runs the risk of creating an unbalanced perception. However, given the strength of the analytical framework I developed and present in Chapter Three, and my focus on interactions rather than individual accounts, I am confident that I could, in the end, provide enough balanced information for a substantial analysis.

#### 1.1.7 Objectives and Audience

This dissertation draws on approaches from a variety of fields and sub-fields of the social sciences. Borrowing from the fields and sub-fields of political theory, International Relations, and comparative politics, as well as the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, I was motivated by a desire to gather theories, concepts and tools that were

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<sup>11</sup> Local papers include: *Kàrpàti Igasz Szo*, *Kàrpàtalja*, *Beregszász Városi hétilap*, *Ukrajnai Magyar Kronika*, *Kàrpàtaljai Hirmondo*; Internet sites included: Kàrpàtinfo, Beregi Hirlap, Kàrpàtaljai Szövetség; Television\radio included: Sion radio, M1 (Hungary), RTL Klub (Hungary).

necessary to work my way through the dissertation. Thus, this dissertation, while interrogating a question central to the study of politics, “what is the political?” sits at the intersection of multiple traditions and cannot be easily be confined to a single field. However, my aim is to situate the dissertation within the emerging sub-field of political ethnography, for which ethnography is not merely a method to study the political, but a research agenda based on deep immersion in order to provide grounded theorization.

My first objective is to create the basis for a research program based on political ethnography that allows researchers to build theory from a particular, contextual, perspective that reaches beyond the local, or in fact, re-frame our ontological perspective of the (social) world. Following in the footsteps of different ethnographic traditions, particularly those addressing the global possibilities of political ethnography (Marcus 1995, Burawoy 2000), I attempt to answer the challenge presented by Aronoff and Kubik as they discuss the relationship between structures and flows/networks in the context of a globalized world:

One consequence of this remapping is a call for ethnography to focus on complex interactions of economic, social, political, and cultural processes, without a priori privileging causally any of them. (2013, p.45)

Within the parameters of this objective, I build a framework that allows me to integrate ethnographic analysis with systemic theorization. In other words, I experiment with re-framing our view of the world, shifting it ontologically from the “lifeworld of subjects” view to a systemic perspective (Marcus 1998 in Aronoff & Kubik, 2013, p. 45). To be sure, I do not want to reproduce “the obsolete holism of Hegel, Comte, Marx, Durkheim or Parsons” and face “intellectual guns” (Bunge 2000, p.147). Instead, I

experiment with complex systems theorization and structuration in the first order, as developed by thinkers such as Niklas Luhmann and Anthony Giddens, but also with theorists such as those in the World Society Research Group interested in “[...] shap(ing) new research agendas in International Relations” (Albert, Brock et al. 2000).

With my second objective, I propose a view of the political that challenges modernist definitions of relations between individuals and groups. The conversation at this level occurs with that branch of IR theory trying to revamp the functionalist approach that was "all washed up" by the dramatic events at the end of the Cold War which could not be predicted by any of the systems theorists of the time (Albert and Cederman 2010). New Systems Theory does not represent a neat and well-defined field of study. It proposes a return to systems theorization to respond to the micro-level reductionism observed within the field of IR (Albert 1999, Albert and Cederman 2010, Nexon 2010). The form of theorizing that I propose begins with a political ethnography and ends with a systemic perspective. It offers the advantage of observing society without either reifying or eliminating given referents and concepts such as the state or identity. Instead, it observes social phenomena through the prism of complexity and flow, rather than fixity and hierarchy. It creates a view of the political that, rather than reproducing paradigm of territoriality, highlights the multiplicity and reconfiguration of the political phenomena.

With my last objective, I attempt to close the gap between theoretical and lived experience using the concept of security. In the context of the dissertation, the concept of security serves as a lens that helps us observe social phenomena more acutely. The discussion about security is best approached through the recognition of its connection with epistemology (Williams (1998) in Buzan and Hansen 2009), and the reader will see

the contradictions and difficulties of such an endeavour. Can anyone escape the meaning of a concept *a priori* of any kind of observation? The clear answer is no. As much as we might try to “empty” the word of meaning, and fill it in with observation, there is an inherent meaning, if only residual. The concept of security is strongly anchored in the field of IR, but through deep immersion (ethnography), I strive to extract the meaning of security from the every day lives of people, and challenge the exclusion of meanings such as social security or existential fear.

The re-formulation I am proposing is a departure from the three pronged classification of subjective, objective and discursive conceptions of security (Buzan and Hansen 2009). Instead of placing security as the object of study, I am experimenting with using it as a relational value. As we will see further, security becomes the product of relations analyzed through the theorization of complex systems. On these terms, it is not security that is the centerpiece of the research, but rather what it offers to expose, in this case, the political.

#### 1.1.8 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into four parts. Part One addresses in depth the foundations upon which the dissertation sits. Following this introduction, Chapter Two presents its epistemological and ontological premises and situates the object of inquiry. Chapter Three delves into the research design and elaborates on the methodological approach, including the two proposed movements and the key concepts.

Part Two of the dissertation is the heart of the first movement. It presents the analysis of the ethnographic investigation. The three chapters each reflect the research design elucidated in Chapter Three. Chapter Four opens the discussion by analyzing

interactions at the most common level, i.e. the daily interactions. Chapter Five pushes the analysis further and examines relations of production, i.e. the interactions produced through economic activities. Finally, Chapter 6 examines relations of authority in Palágy-Komoróc.

Part Three is the heart of the ontological shift and proceeds with the second movement. It integrates the ethnographic analysis into the theoretical framework, and proceeds with the second level analysis of the political. In Chapter Seven, I build the theoretical framework based upon integrative structuration theory and complex systems theory. Chapter 8 uses the ethnographic analysis produced in Part Two to investigate and define the systemic boundaries using security as the focalizing lens. Chapter Nine deepens the previous analysis to define and sketch a perspective of the political. In Part 4, the reader will find the final concluding chapter, as well as the bibliography.

#### 1.1.9 Conclusion

The operative verb for this dissertation is "to join". Through this work, I attempt to join the perspective of experienced life as it happens in the every day and our theorization of the world. It is based on the idea that theory is a cognitive representation of our lived experience, and only by delving into that very experience can we imagine creating a view that resembles it. Only on that basis will we be in a position to act on it.

This dissertation is an attempt to join the local and the global by creating a synergy, a continuum on the theoretical plane. It joins these realms by integrating togetherness within a perception of world society, in which, rather than fighting the traps of methodological individualism and holism, we view the world through the lens of what brings us together: interactions.

This dissertation is also an attempt to join epistemologically two forms of theorization that, at first glance, might appear incompatible. By working on incorporating grounded political ethnography into complex systems, I inform a rather functionalist approach to complexity with the real experience of people. This contextualizes our view of the world, framing it spatially and temporally. It also liberates the political ethnographer from a focus on the local and expands his contribution to a larger framework.

There is a normative choice that must be taken by all who engage in social research. It concerns the point of departure, the inception point of thought, the place and time where we justify our choice. My normative starting point consists in the belief that only through the experience of people can we attempt to explain and theorize. It is on these terms that this dissertation should be read.

## Chapter 2: Essential Concepts: The Political, Politics and Security

Our political imagination has been impoverished by the practices associated with the paradigm of sovereignty/anarchy distinction. As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3, the force of the sovereignty/anarchy distinction works to contain contingency through the instantiation of a sovereign presence, which then acts as a regulative ideal. In terms of the political field, this has meant that the idea of “the political” has been subsumed by and made synonymous with “the state.” In effect, the state has colonized our understanding of “the political” by obscuring those practices through which it has been “fashioned in the likeness of legislated fear,” and foregrounding in their place its claim to be the source of authorized articulations of danger (Campbell 1998, p.199).

### 1.2.1 Introduction

As I alluded to in the introduction, this dissertation's underlying strategic questioning revolves around the concept of the political. I explained that by fixing this objective as the bright light towards which I aim my investigations. I shall follow it as a beacon, as much with the aim of getting closer to it, as with the conviction that the discoveries made during the voyage will open new perspectives. But the word itself needs clarification, as it presents itself not as a unique, well-defined concept, as perhaps some others in the social sciences, but rather as an idea with multiple connotations.

It is not the intent of this chapter, nor of this dissertation, to enter into the debate around the political and its multiple facets. Rather, I join the ongoing conversation that seeks to elucidate and give some clarity to what seems to be an elusive concept:

Without being able to appeal to secure foundations, we are obliged to raise fundamental questions: what is the nature of 'politics' and the 'political'? To what extent is something like 'society' possible? How might we conceive of the 'subject'? How is social and cultural 'identity' constructed? How might we draw the borders of 'community'? How can the relation between 'power' and the social world be conceptualized? What is the nature, if there is one, of 'order of

representation', of 'ideology'? How can we rethink the notions of 'freedom' and 'equality'? And can we revive our ideas of 'democracy' and of 'emancipation'? (Critchley and Marchart 2004, p.1)

All these questions act as signposts throughout the dissertation. The purpose of this chapter is to present the perspective of the political as it is used throughout the dissertation as well as to discuss important concepts used in the investigation. In the first section, I discuss the political as a philosophical concept and its Schmittian counterpart, politics. This relationship between ontological and ontic perspectives is necessary to escape the fixated and dogmatic perception of the political as a foundational given (Laclau in Marchart 2007, p.142). By distinguishing the political from politics, we create the possibility to question those foundations and to attempt to perceive its changes.

Further, by doing so, I position myself at the intersection "between a political-science approach that restricts itself to the empirical domain of politics and a political theory approach, 'which is the domain of philosophers who enquire not about facts of 'politics' but about the essence of the political'" (Mouffe in Marchart 2007, p.143). And in so doing, I introduce Modern Systems Theory (MST), which provides the conceptual tools to operationalize my investigation. The presentation of MST in the present chapter is a brief introduction that is followed later, in Chapter Seven, by a more detailed explanation.

The subsequent sections of this chapter delve further into the presentation of concepts and notions that are cornerstones in this investigation. First, I address politics as performance that lays the basis for my theorization presented in Section 1.2.5. Theory and theorization are another set of words with multiple meanings, which, taken out of the

context of strict scientific inquiry, require a particular definition. This is followed by a section discussing the concept of security, which I position as co-constitutive to any form of political theorisation, and the analysis of which provides fundamental insights into our understanding of the political. I then address the issue of perspectivism, time, and space, followed by a discussion of the local and global in the context of the present work. Finally, I conclude this conceptual conversation with a perspective on the proposed research agenda.

### 1.2.2 The Political, Politics, Modern Systems Theory

The political, like aesthetics, is treated as a uniquely human endeavor that is different from the gregariousness of animals (Goyard-fabre 1992). It has to do with the way humans socialize but engages with issues of power and territoriality, and beyond, to the theorization of what it, the political, should and could be. Thus, we can sense that the political interjects in two realms that is better expressed by the following:

Politics is the subject of social and political sciences, while the political is the subject of reflection, of thought. Politics refers to the political system as a kind of social subsystem that can be distinguished from other subsystems and made the subject of inquiry in the various social sciences. The political, in contrast, is shared thinking on social phenomena, the process through which society composes itself (Granasztoi 2011. p. 40).

Thus, for the political ethnographer and the phenomenological thinker who seeks a critical reflection by creating contrast, dissociating and intersecting the realms of “politics” and “political” become a clear necessity. In this context, the political ethnographer’s work is not to explore the normative possibilities of the political, nor is it

to explore journalistically the makings of daily politics. It is the attempt, as György Granasztói expresses, to uncover "...the process through which society composes itself" (Granasztói 2011, p. 40).

The idea underlying Granasztói's definition is the distinction between the political as philosophical investigation and politics as the constitutive performance of daily human activity. From the point of view adopted in this dissertation, "the political, as the instituting moment of society, functions as a supplementary ground to the groundless stature of society, yet on the other hand this supplementary ground withdraws in the very 'moment' in which it institutes the social" (Marchart 2007, p.8). This post-foundational approach opens the way to studying the political as a concept constantly shifting and changing.

In more practical terms, this approach opens the way to exploring the political through the performances of politics. Throughout this dissertation, the reader will be exposed to the quest for this political at the same time as (s)he will be exposed to an already existing form of the political. These are not contradictory, but rather consistent with a view that "political activity – ungroundable as it is – does not take place in a vacuum, but is always enfolded in sedimented layers of tradition which, conversely, are ungrounded, flexible and changeable for their part" (Marchart 2007, p.3).

Thus, although we seek to uncover the meaning of the political in the ethnographic investigations (Part Two of the dissertation), the presence of an existing definition of the political will be felt. This seeming contradiction, the presence of a definition of the political while searching for it, is quite compatible with and unavoidable in the process of the unfolding investigation. These are Marchart's sedimented layers mixing with the

process of uncovering in the ethnographic analysis; the purpose of these ethnographic investigations is to create the basis for a meaningful differentiation between the ideas of the political and politics, and for creating the possibility of discussing the premises of the political from a contextual perspective.

In order to operationalise the idea of differentiation between politics as performance and the political as an ontological concept, I experiment in Part Three with Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory and Giddens' structuration theory. Using the ethnographic investigations as the starting point for the analysis, I shift the perspective to picture the political as a system. By this movement, the notion of the political, until now inaccessible (Marchart 2007, p.24), becomes, if only fleetingly, visible in its contours. The political system, moving and adapting, becomes a bridge between the philosophical notion of the political and its grounded demonstration, politics. On this rather abstract basis, the following sections discuss the lens used to uncover the political and the view of politics as a performance in the analysis of the political.

### 1.2.3 Exploring the Political through Security

Approaching an understanding of the political requires a lens, a focalizing device that permits the researcher to observe nuances and reliefs and to extract meaningful observations. Without such a device, this exercise would be very much like standing at the top of the Eiffel tower trying to understand urban development without a set of questions. We could indiscriminately observe architecture, streets or sewers. But we could equally focus on people, their revenue, and the issue of migration or criminality. All of these focalizing tools are necessary to engage in the exercise of understanding urban development. Choosing a device then becomes a matter both of choice and

relevance to the topic researched, as, paraphrasing Friedrich Kratochwil, “knowledge is always part of a certain perspective, and direct tests against 'reality' are not available” (2009, p.12).

The political, a realm and an activity that is essentially human in nature, places security in its many forms at the centre of its activities. It goes beyond the instinctual organization found in the animal kingdom to protect against predators. It animates human creativity by providing meaning to ideas and concepts, so that basic territoriality becomes issues of identity, money, power and so forth. Understood in this context, security and the political are not only essential to each other, they are co-constituted. In this project, security is elevated to the level of human concepts such as freedom, equality and such. Moreover, I argue that it supplants them, as security carries intrinsically the ultimate purpose of any living being: survival. It drives our daily lives and activities, and only when it is satisfied can we turn our attention to other objects of interest. But as human activity, it also expands beyond survival, and blends into the realm of human interests and manipulations. From this point of view, security and the political illuminate each other.

Foucault's attempt to explain the paradigmatic shift in political philosophy effectuated during the Enlightenment and the following project of modernity provides us with an interesting contrast to explore the security – political relationship. For him, the emergence of governmentality<sup>12</sup> through the state highlights the tension, and eventual separation, between two fundamental principles: the *principae naturae* and *ratio status*, or the severance between nature and government (Foucault 2007). In essence, this

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<sup>12</sup> Foucault defines governmentality (gouvernementalité) as the art to lead (art de conduire). He sees the birth of the modern state when governmentality was transformed from Christian pastorate to that of a deliberate political practice (calculée et réfléchie) (2004).

dramatic separation dismisses Aquinas' idea that "Royal government did indeed fall under a particular terrestrial art, but its final objective was to ensure that on leaving their terrestrial status, and freed from his human republic, men can arrive at eternal bliss and enjoyment" (Foucault 2007). This philosophical movement produced a (dramatic) shift that separated earthly from celestial objectives, or in other words, created the duality of securing oneself: on earth and for the afterlife.

Through this movement, the extra-terrestrial state is replaced by the state itself as the self-referential end. This is important, not only because it sets the stage for the emergence of an "historical and political temporality" that, in the words of Foucault "no longer poses the problem of origin" and the state will "not have to concern itself with individual salvation" (Foucault 2007), but also because the state and reason of state thus become a self-referential relation of survival around which the state becomes the idea to preserve (Bigo 2008). Governing is separated from the transcendental relation with God and creates its own transcendental illusion: self-preservation becomes the role of government, *raison d'état* its means to justify its acts. Security is thus elevated<sup>13</sup> to represent something tangible, the protection of the state, through which decisions are taken and acts justified. *Raison d'état* (Botero 1589-1590, Machiavelli 1988) becomes the underlying theme for theorizing security, as the state becomes the referent in International Relations (Donelan 1992). By equating governmentality with the state, as well as separating *principae naturae* and *ratio status*, the state, as a reified entity of continuity, is the ultimate broker in public affairs. Security thus derives its meaning from this conceptualization of the political.

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<sup>13</sup> Or lowered, depending one's point of view.

Security finds itself included, implicitly or explicitly,<sup>14</sup> in all forms of political arrangements. The Weberian notion of ‘legitimate monopoly of violence by the state’ (Weber 1965) has dominated theorizing of political arrangements in general, and of security in particular, to the point where it has become normalized. To whom "security" belongs is rarely questioned: strategic studies, peace studies and other derived forms of security studies find their home within the general field of International Relations, often part of a more general branch of political science that is rarely questioned. Security, as an idea, exists; the conceptual and theoretical battles surrounding it pertain to its possible referent and/or the legitimacy that accompanies its application.

Barry Buzan says security is “about crucial political themes such as the state, authority, legitimacy, politics and sovereignty” and further delineates the field with four questions: “whether to privilege the state as the referent object, whether to include internal as well as external threats, whether to expand security beyond the military and the use of force, and whether to see security as inextricably tied to a dynamic of threats, dangers and urgency” (Buzan and Hansen 2009). The problem in framing the concept of security in those terms is that it forces us to choose an a priori definition; and it imposes a definition of terms on which to explore the political, rather than letting the concept be analyzed as specific forms of lived experience. In many instances, this battle for referents makes security a contested concept whilst a tranche of critical theorists explore its meaning from the lived experience.

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<sup>14</sup> The notion of “security” remains rather implicit to ideas like justice, ethics, welfare and law until the end of the so-called Middle Ages in Western philosophy. “Now consider how wisely all the other parts of the system were arranged to further the association of citizens in the pursuit of a happy and honorable life. For the formation of such an association is the primary purpose which brings men together; and the commonwealth ought to secure to men, partly through its institutions and partly through its laws, that fundamental end of social life” Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, Book IV, III, p.231. Then, it becomes a central notion under the aegis of protection by the Prince or state and at the root of the social contract.

Yet, to exclude other possibilities for the political to express itself through security is to dangerously ignore the movements effectuated around us. To exclude from security studies the discussions on social movements, “safety nets,”<sup>15</sup> and the fundamental shifts and schisms discernible today on the political scene<sup>16</sup> means to contribute to the maintenance, if not enlargement, of the gap between theorization and what is “out there”. This is not new. One has only to observe 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe and Asia to realize the dramatic effect social movements had on security. With the creation of labor unions, or at least the idea of rights to “security”, national policies took dramatic turns in many different ways.<sup>17</sup> The mutual exclusion occurring between the fields of security in IR and in the public policy domain underscores the inter- and intra-territorial perspectives still driving the questions pertaining to security as a concept (Neocleous 2006, Neocleous 2008).

It is within this conceptual framework that Western theorizations of security have matured. It has become the ontological battleground on which academics and policymakers create stories of how the world ‘is’, could be, or should be organized. In the name of security, we either reinforce or decry the state system, justifying the reason of state as a necessary evil to protect a named society, or blaming it for denying basic human rights. Observing security through the modernist lens of the political, the latter

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<sup>15</sup> I am referring here to the political tensions created by the “social” state, and to the extent to which it should provide for the individuals “security”. Lord Beveridge’s thoughts on the welfare state, by no means the only ones, but certainly important ones, contributed to the discussion on social security as a state responsibility. Beveridge, W. H. B. (1943). The pillars of security, and other war-time essays and addresses. New York, Macmillan.

<sup>16</sup> For example, bailouts from the IMF and the European Central bank are attached to conditions of reducing state spending or “austerity measures”. In return, the default language seems to cut pensions and other benefits, while often retaining military spending untouched. This, in 2011, has provoked massive reactions from people in Europe.

<sup>17</sup> Consider the relative strength of unions in France and other European countries with regards to policy making, and the political reactions in Europe in the early 20th century--or discussions in the 2012 U.S. Presidential campaign using words like “socialist” and even “communist”.

becomes a narrative of justification and issues of securitization. In other words, when reading Steve Smith's rendering of the genealogy of security studies (Smith 1999), one moves from theory to theory, each presenting their ontological perception of the world out there, *from their respective theoretical perspectives*.

These perspectives, which are fundamentally at odds with one another, remain nonetheless trapped within the same paradigm: a view strongly conditioned by preconceived notions of separation of *principae naturae* and *ratio status* for which the political is synonymous with affairs of the state. This creates the first previously mentioned gap between theory and practice: while theorization on security is engaged in an ontological and epistemological battle for referents and absolutes, it fails to engage with human activities<sup>18</sup> that produce political life. In order to escape this conundrum as we are trying to understand the political with the focusing lens of security, the first objective of this dissertation is to escape the insolvable struggle with the referent.

#### 1.2.4 The Political and its Performance: Politics

To redefine Security is to redefine the Political and hence the State. This is so, because security is the script according to which the Political is institutionalised (i.e. performed) in the State. To re-write Security thus effects changes within the structure and organization of the entities it constitutes (Behnke 1999, p.4).

Notwithstanding the discussion about the possibility of redefining security, following Andreas Behnke (1999) I seek to create the real possibility of observing, defining and understanding the political in the way it is acted out. How does one enter an ethnographic field without preconceived notions of what the political is, or what politics looks like? In Bourdieu's terms, "reflexivity means, not intellectual introspection, but

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<sup>18</sup> They are numerous but I emphasize those activities that transcend the statist views, i.e. migrations, transnational mobilizations, financial and economical to name a few.

ongoing analysis and control of the categories used in the practice of social science” (Schwartz 1997, p. 273 quoted in Oren 2006, p.221). Applied to the political, Bourdieu reminds us not to take categories (such as the state) for granted, as transcending time, but rather reframe them in historical perspective. From this point of view, this dissertation engages with the concept of security as both a category of practice and a category of analysis.<sup>19</sup>

Following this direction, the emphasis for the political ethnographer is not to (re) define security, the political or the state, but rather to identify and decipher the script<sup>20</sup> that defines the contours of what we call the political: a human activity<sup>21</sup>. It is by addressing human activity that we can follow the logic established previously by Foucault. It is by relating theory and human acts that we can extract the meaning of the political. And it is by questioning the political on these terms that we can (re) define the deepest meaning of security, without presupposing its definition. In other words, concepts like political and security are merely tools to understand, to theorize the world in which we live. They have a co-constitutive relationship and it is only by analysing their interaction that we can make sense of them. And this interaction, this co-constitution, remains at the level of cognition until we address them at the level they are really expressed: in the script, or text, produced by everyday human activity.

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<sup>19</sup> On the question of categories of practice and analysis, see Brubaker, R. and F. Cooper (2000). "Beyond "Identity"." Theory and Society 29(1): 1-47.

<sup>20</sup> Script is understood in the sense of “text” in post-modern thinking. Script/text relate to not only written form, but also every form of life experience. It is to be understood as intertextual, i.e. each text relate to each other, creating a “web” of complexity. Using Pauline Marie Rosenau’s spectrum of skeptics-affirmatives post-modernists, I stand closer to the latter, in that the substance of the text, positive and negative, are of importance. For more, see pp.35-36, Rosenau, P. M. (1992). Post-modernism and the social sciences : insights, inroads, and intrusions. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

<sup>21</sup> This is related to Bourdieu’s epistemic reflexivity. For an overview, see Maton, K. (2003). "Reflexivity, Relationism, & Research: Pierre Bourdieu and the Epistemic Conditions of Social Scientific Knowledge." Space and Culture 6(52-65).

It follows then, that in order to escape any form of reification in the exploration of the political, the latter must be treated as a performative act expressed in form through politics. Admitting that the political is an exclusively human activity, it is then difficult to appropriate the political as being the sole terrain of one definition. That would de facto eliminate others, whose elimination is the very proof of their possibility. It also offers the possibility of escaping a dogmatic perspective, a foundational view of human affairs for which there are fundamental laws, external to human will. This fundamental point leads to the second important objective in this dissertation: treating the political as a performance creates the opportunity to conceptualize agency as a possibility within the framework of a structure that is particular.

#### 1.2.5 On Theorization and Political Ethnography

To follow Bourdieu, my theoretical enterprise is “...based on the belief that the deepest logic of the social world can be grasped only if one plunges into the particular of an empirical reality, historically located and dated, but with the objective of constructing it as a ‘special case of what is possible’, as Bachelard puts it—that is, as an exemplary case in a finite world of possible configurations” (Bourdieu 1998, p. 2). Further, I relate theory directly to the acquisition of knowledge of the world, best expressed by Vincent:

Theory does clearly follow the changing contours of philosophical traditions. In ancient Greek culture, theory was characteristically associated with observation. A Thea was a spectacle; the one who observed was a Theoros. Theoria meant beholding<sup>22</sup> a spectacle. Theory was thus envisaged as the intermediary between the event and the

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<sup>22</sup> a. To perceive by the visual faculty; b. To perceive through use of the mental faculty; comprehend; 2. To look upon; gaze at.

observer. It accounted for the event or practice. Theory was not separate from event. Knowledge was, in a sense, the unmediated event itself. In addition, theory was connected, from its earlier inception, with philosophy and knowledge, by the view that philosophy was a contemplative “seeing” or “observing” (2004, p.8).

Such a perspective does not take the “political” or “security” for granted or enshrine them in discursive prisons of referents and philosophical premises, but rather seeks a reflexive observation of the phenomena. This approach has two definite advantages. First, reflexivity becomes an informed version of Plato’s cave, in which the observers *knows* that true knowledge is veiled and that his observations need interpretations; second, theory neither becomes a vehicle to perpetuate an “existing”<sup>23</sup> paradigm, nor does it seek to offer solutions to those same paradigms. Thus, this phenomenological approach enabled by political ethnography cannot assume complete freedom or neutrality, but rather seeks to accommodate a hermeneutical sensibility calling for interpretation of the phenomena observed.

The political ethnographer’s task becomes one of getting involved in the current story he is trying to understand and eventually deciphering the previously alluded to script or text. This text becomes the source for analysis and the material that needs to be deconstructed to reach some form of meaning. Adopting this position, the researcher is confronted not only with the presuppositions carried through the narratives, but is also engaged in a reflexive exercise that involves the constant introspection necessary to assume her relative spatial, temporal and intellectual position. This reflexive position continues beyond observation and into the analysis and reporting, accounting for such

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<sup>23</sup> Existing as in “believed” to exist.

aspects as the idea that "the social science lexicon drawn from the experience of Europe and North America, which is supposed to apply to the whole world, is problematic – particularly for those who hold that there is no universal definition of 'the politic'" (Chabal and Daloz 2006, p.315).

To treat presuppositions as part of the text rather than dogmatic foundations for analysis contributes to the possibility of change. For example, in 212 B.C., Plautus coined the phrase “Homo Homini Lupus Est”, or “Man is a wolf to (his fellow) man” (Freté and Havet 1925), which would be used extensively over the centuries.<sup>24</sup> Hobbes, in *De Cive*, writes: “Man is a God to man, and Man is a wolf to Man”, expressing a clear ambivalence as to the nature of man which he further develops: “The former is true of the relations of citizens with each other, the latter between commonwealths.” This is a moment where Hobbes—and many after him— execute this almost indiscernible, yet so evident move: the translation and transposition of a subjective evaluation of human nature to that of political society. “The wickedness of bad men” he continues, “compels the good too to have recourse, for their own protection, to the virtues of war, which are violence and fraud, i.e. to the predatory nature of beasts” (Hobbes 1998, p. 163).

Adopting philosophical dogmas that decry human beings’ incapacity for virtue, as built of crooked timber (Kant 1963), limits the possibilities of the political and the freedom of critical thinking. To be sure, this is not a call for a reversal, a sort of idealism elevating man to the status opposite of evil. Rather, it elevates the question posed by Ken Booth to the status not of observation, but the real possibility of change: “Humans may be made of what Kant called ‘crooked timber’, but who can doubt that the grain would

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<sup>24</sup> Erasmus in *Adagiorum Collectanea*; Rabelais in *Tiers livre*; Montaigne in *Les Essais*; Agrippa d'Aubigné in *Les Tragiques* (Livre I); F. Bacon in *De Dignitate*; Arthur Schopenhauer in *Le Monde comme volonté et comme représentation*; Sigmund Freud in *Malaise dans la civilisation*.

have been different if the broad structural patterns of our lives globally had been shaped according to sets of different ideas” (Booth 2007). Using this observation as a point of departure for critical thinking, I want to eliminate the doubt expressed by the suggestion that humans “may be made of” as it is a useless assertion. The contrary is equally true. Freed from a normative position, we “denaturalize the Taken-for-Granted” of security (Weldes, Laffey et al. 1999, p.19) and are left with a more positive approach to knowledge: we can aspire to understand what “shaped” us and call it “structure”. And we can acknowledge our capacity to change or act, and call it “emancipation”.

#### 1.2.6 Perspectivism-Time-Space

Ken Booth’s “we are as we are in part because of a great historical paradox: the global playing-out of the law of unintended consequences” (Booth 2007, p.21) opens the discussion on the problematic relation between structure and agency. The former is often viewed as the constraint or the imposed element on human will and freedom, while the latter represents the possibility of acting. Taken into the perspective of the previously discussed dogmatic presuppositions of human nature, we are only free to try, but in essence doomed to always conceptualize security in a negative way. However, observing the political as an ongoing spectacle opens the door to agency as a key to act and change within a context that requires defining.<sup>25</sup> This ontology supports the idea of the political as an ongoing performance in which freedom is expressed at the juncture of structure and agency. By executing this movement, any form of philosophical discourse takes a place in the text that composes the historical and social objectivity defining the structure we are

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<sup>25</sup> One of the telling metaphors pertains to the “relative” freedom of a newborn baby. He comes into the world that is already structured for him. That does not prevent him from acting, but it is in context of the reality he is entering.

observing. These set the phenomenological perspectives, i.e. the experienced reality the researcher is trying to decipher.

This perspectivist definition of agency creates the possibility for freedom within the context of an objective structure, but it also opens the dialogue on the creation of knowledge that is mediated by history. Treating the political as a performance in which we, the researchers, are both actors and observers of the (political) spectacle, we can now discuss the basis for reflexivity. For it is by first, recognizing that we do occupy a particular temporal and spatial position and that we do not have the faculty of omniscience, and thus cannot but have a partial perspective on the spectacle observed, that we can situate our analysis.

The first implication reflexivity has for this research agenda is that it presents the notion of time in a different light than the linear, chronological perception of time. In this context, time is better understood from the perspective of human emotions where it is attached to a script. Time, in and for itself, loses its sense when not related to a text or script, an act or discourse. In other words, in human experience, not every minute has the same length. Moreover, when associated to the notions of “past”, “present” and “future”, time overlaps and allows us to create other concepts like “legacies”, “dreams,” and “possibilities”. From the researcher’s point of view, when engaging in “theoria” or “beholding the spectacle”, we not only observe the linear temporality of the political. We engage in creating an image of the structure that presents itself as an objectified image of a complex script. For we also extrapolate, feel and anticipate the spectacle. These conceptual overlaps have a significant role in the analysis of the political as causality is replaced by possibilities and leads.

### 1.2.7 About the Local and the Global

In the previous sections, I made three important conceptual points. First, in order to make security a useful tool, it must be (at least initially)? uncoupled from any sort of a priori referent; second, that in observing the political as a human activity, it must be treated as a performance, creating the possibility for agency within the framework of a structure; finally, theorization is a phenomenological endeavour that involves hermeneutics, and thus results in a perspectivist exercise.

These three conceptual points provide the ground to discuss the conceptualization of space. To start with the question of space, one might ask which “group” or “society” we are talking about. Where is this political played out? Adopting an approach based on political ethnography that requires “immersion in a community, a cohort, a locale...” (Schatz 2009, p.5), I delve into the cultural-symbolic interpretation of interactions at the level of the “meaningful layer of reality” (Kubik and Aronoff 2013, p.24). Specific and localized, it is based on “the premise that the realm of politics cannot be taken for granted but needs to be studied within the plurality of systems of meanings whence it arises” (Chabal and Daloz 2006, p.39).

This dissertation begins, in Part Two, with a focused analysis of my deep involvement with a community located in Ukraine near the European Union border. But my immersion, per se, took an inverse route. It started from the global to the local, encompassing multiple locations<sup>26</sup> that lead me eventually to zero in on a particular community. From this perspective, I try not only to define the political from a micro environment, but engage in creating a more encompassing perspective, addressing

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<sup>26</sup> My notes cover Haiti, the Middle -East (mostly Iraq, Jordan and Morocco, the Balkans, Western Europe (France extensively), Ukraine, Hungary, Russia, China.

Michael Burawoy's questions head-on: "How can ethnography be global? How can ethnography be anything but micro and ahistorical? How can the study of everyday life grasp the lofty processes that transcend national boundaries?" (Burawoy 2000, p.1)

Classical anthropologists refute the notion that our lives, or those of those we are attempting to understand, are not embedded in history and a micro reality (Lévi-Strauss 2011). In the dissertation, I attempt to reverse Burawoy's questions. By exploring the political, I question the possibility of "not" thinking globally. The question is not "whether" we can think political ethnography globally. The question is "how." Treating the political as a human performance, the terms "local" and "global" become representations of the stage the political ethnographer is proposing to explore and understand.

Coming back to the observer at the top of the Eiffel tower, the obvious deduction that translates his\her perspectivism is that the observation proposed is that of Paris. The stage is Paris, but the scope of observation should be defined and we can imagine a number of ways to observe "urbanization." More importantly, the stage offers the possibility to focus on a small and detailed portion, a large and more general perspective, to either zoom in and out, or to effectuate comparisons between portions. The importance here is twofold. First, the observer does not "arbitrarily" delimit the observed space, but rather chooses a space in relation to his analytical tool. Second, the observed space does not become de facto a world in itself, but remains in relation to the "outside." Conceptually, having created coherence in the research design, the political ethnographer has created the possibility to engage space as it is socially defined. This form of observation of the political space refutes the ontological definition of "local" or "global"

and engages in a more sophisticated view that embraces the possibility of observing from a highly magnified point of view, or from a more general perspective<sup>27</sup> (Marston 2000). The political society, then, in the context of this dissertation, begins with a group of people who live in a particular region of the world. Their experience of life becomes a script, a text that helps us define the contours of their political experiment, but leads us beyond a territorial perspective. It exposes us to the discursive transgressions that permit us to “grasp the lofty processes that transcend national boundaries” (Burawoy 2000, p.1).

#### 1.2.8 Creating a research agenda

The starting point for this dissertation is the deliberate choice of a question whose scope surpasses by far this dissertation: what is the political? This decision is strategic in that this “grand question” creates the context within which I can navigate. This approach is inspired by James C. Scott’s participant-observation in Malaysia where he sought “to make out the case for a different study of power that uncovers contradictions, tensions and immanent possibilities” (Scott 1990). I explore what Scott called “transcripts”<sup>28</sup>, namely the public and private discourses through which “security” can be extracted and understood. By creating a dialogue between security and the political, I intend to achieve three goals.

First, I want to theorize the concept of security in relation to the political. I want to dig below the conceptual surface and attempt to go beyond pre-conceived ideas of security such as those found in the current literature on security. In order to understand

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<sup>27</sup> “What is consistent about the recent interest in scale among social theorists in geography is the commitment to a constructionist framework and the rejection of scale as an ontologically given category. In these recent social theoretical studies, the fundamental point being made is that scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents.” Marston, p.220

<sup>28</sup> See note 14.

security contextually, rather than to advocate for a universal definition, I want to reach its meaning by deconstructing the relations upon which it is built. This endeavour starts with the understanding of the production of the phenomenon through acts and discourses. Second, using the relationship between security and the political, I want to enrich our understanding of the tendencies, processes and concepts that help us create a clearer picture of the political.

One of the highlights of my approach is its focus on the relational part—on interactions among people—rather than on the actor(s) as such. Doing this, I address the irreconcilable tension between methodological individualism and holism (Nexon 2010). As will be described subsequently, I push the theoretical perspective beyond the interactive relationship between the political and security by building a holistic framework based on complex systems theory. By taking the position that security is the outcome of systemic interactions, I denaturalize it, and open the door to the potential for emancipation.

Third, by treating the political as a performance, I want to explore two conceptual possibilities. First, anchoring the political to the human experience on a non-foundational premise, I experiment with its discursive, overlapping and non-chronological perspectives. This way, I leave open the possibility of emancipation and change through agency. To be sure, I do not intend to create an agenda for change, nor am I implying that I can "see" or "foresee" change. Instead, by experimenting with the political as intrinsic rather than epiphenomenal to human life, I attempt to shed some light on its making in daily life.

The political as a performance presents the possibility of pushing the idea of a global ethnography and addressing the conundrum of being “stuck” in the local with little impact on political reflection in general. It entails engaging the concept of globalization head-on and asking, as Burawoy does, whether this phenomenon really belongs to a few while the rest remain marginalized (Burawoy 2000). From an ethnographic perspective that engages the particular, it is clear that globalization represents an idea of being somehow connected, of being influenced, and sometimes even subjected to “something.” And for the political ethnographer, it also means that the global is not equal to the universal, and that the idea of globalization is particular and unique. The political ethnographer’s challenge lies in creating this global perspective from a local view, in establishing the connections that might enlighten a perspective. I intend to experiment with the elasticity of space as the place of exploration and work with conceptual tools that may offer the possibility of reaching beyond the village or the locality when exploring the political with ethnography.

Finally, this dissertation is based on the premise of co-constitution of theoretical and empirical knowledge. The key to the experiment is the unconditional belief, and one can argue that it is my normative starting point,<sup>29</sup> that knowledge stems from the meeting of both types. To lean towards theory-driven knowledge risks engaging in normative theorization of how things “should be”, and worse, basing deductions on false premises. On the other hand, engaging in purely empirically-driven knowledge risks creating theories devoid of historical and conceptual substance. This position stems from the idea that knowledge is not, and cannot be neutral (Gadamer 1977).

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<sup>29</sup> By this I argue that there is no pure objective beginning to reflection.

There is a contention that interpretation might be an hazardous venture when it comes to addressing social phenomena, as it does not provide the “operationalism as a methodological dogma” (Geertz 1973, p.5). Although the study of the political is not an exact science, this does not mean that it is devoid of intellectual rigour and methodological clarity (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, Chap. six). It is the role of the researcher to convince that the search for “deep meaning” and the “webs of significance” (Geertz 1973) is not just an elaborate metaphor. Indeed, I argue that it is through the use of political ethnography that the researcher may become aware of the underlying issues and the tremors of a political society.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

Without theory there is nothing but description, and without methodology there is no transformation of theory into analysis. (Hansen 2006, p.1)

### 1.3.1 Introduction to the research design

Engaging a research project from a political ethnography perspective requires a clear view of one's epistemological stance. There are many ways to apprehend knowledge, and if one is not curious or prudent about the dangers of overlapping methodologies, one runs the risk of creating epistemological contradictions and inconsistencies that may derail the project (Hall 2003). In my view, the challenge of interpretivist work writ large does not reside with epistemological choice per se, but rather with the potential for failure in creating a credible research design leading to theorization. That is why any form of research based on interpretation from a postpositivist perspective must expend considerable effort supporting the credibility of their propositions. The notion of credibility, as I see it, is for interpretivists what validity is for positivists. And, as Schwartz-Shea and Yanow write about trustworthiness: "Asked from an interpretive perspective, it seeks to inquire into the logic and explanatory coherence of the analysis, rather than the "goodness" of the model – Framed in this way, the issue is the adequacy of explanation and analysis – the explanatory coherence of the argument" (Yanow & Shwartz-Shea 2012, p.108).

Doing ethnography traditionally entails a choice between two options when engaging in fieldwork. The first option is to define a field site and establish or create its boundaries. This approach often implies the isolation of the subject (i.e. a village or a community, for example) that is treated as a test subject. From a perspectivist point of view, this approach is unattainable as it creates an "inside\outside" construct that severs

the influences and linkages to the so-called other side (Walker 1993). The second option is to attempt to resolve the dilemma by creating a “multi-sited” approach. This option creates, arguably, a better, more complete perspective for the researcher. However, it creates a view of the world that resembles islands linked by common issues. An enormous quantity of literature produced by anthropologists has addressed this choice (Murphy and Kraidy 2003, Padgett 2004, Coleman and Collins 2006, McCarthy 2007, Nash 2007, Harrison 2008, Inda and Rosaldo 2008, Kien 2009, Melhuus, Mitchell et al. 2010, Browner and Sargent 2011, Coleman and Von Hellermann 2011), particularly since the so-called reflexive turn in anthropology (Humphrey 2002) and the effects of “globalization” on the study of culture. The debate revolving around multi-sited ethnography, transnational nature of identity and the seemingly increasing migration of people is rich and ongoing (Marcus 1995, Coleman and Collins 2006).

The present chapter builds on the theoretical perspectives discussed in the previous chapter and confronts head-on the methodological challenges posed by both perspectivism and globalization for the political ethnographer in this specific research design. The first two sections of the chapter present the field site while insisting on two perspectivist essentials. First, reflexivity, "...not merely as self 'consciousness' but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life" (Giddens 1984, p.3); and second, the presentation of the field site not as an autarkic entity, but as part of the world upon which it acts and to which it responds.

The two following sections present my research design based on two “movements” corresponding to layers of hermeneutical analysis. The first movement, covered in Part Two of the dissertation, concerns the ethnographic investigation. There, I

proceed with a deconstruction along three lines of interaction/relations: daily life, production, and authority. In the second movement, covered in Part Three of the dissertation, I apply a second level of analysis, integrating the ethnographic analysis to a theoretical model built on the basis of Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory and Giddens' structuration theory.

Building theory in this context is like painting a scene with a particular focus or throwing sand on a surface to highlight the grooves and ridges. It does not pretend to present a single truth, but rather an informed image, from a particular perspective (Chabal and Daloz 2006). This chapter engages the reader in explaining the process of building such an image. I will successively present the approach that led to the definition of the project, followed by a description of the site chosen for the main focus of ethnographic investigation. I will then present what I call the dual-movement, or the two successive movements composing this contextual theorization.

### 1.3.2 Interpretive Political Ethnography – The Onion - Approaching the Field Site

As Lene Hansen suggests, “reality is always larger than the number of questions one can ask of it; to formulate a research project is therefore inevitably to make a series of choices” (Hansen 2006). And as important as the question(s) themselves, so is the process that led to the question. The importance of this is twofold. First, it places the researcher at the heart of the research and is the starting point of any reflexive analysis. Understanding the researcher’s motivation in interpretive ethnography not only provides the reader with the necessary background to understand the work, but also more importantly demonstrates consciousness of the reflexive distance between the researcher and his question.

Second, following the researcher's path in determining the question allows the reader to contextually "zoom-in" to the field site. Instead of having the village of Palágy-Komoróc in Ukraine appear from nowhere, following the researcher's route that leads him there provides an initial encounter with the empirical reality. In other words, it places the very concrete village at the end of a specific trek, a path chosen in a certain sequence by the researcher. This path highlights certain specific features geographical, human and others that create for the reader the image of the field site *in context*. This section presents this zooming in, the approach from somewhere to what I call the point 0 of my investigation, the village of Palágy-Komoróc.

Early in my fieldwork, I adopted the metaphor of the onion<sup>30</sup> to guide my research. For all intents and purposes, it means that when I began the fieldwork, I had a notion of my interest but decided to integrate and interact with the environment in order to let the challenges and issues appear. My relationship to the environment<sup>31</sup> was reciprocal and my relative positioning was going to play an interactive role in defining the direction of my work. Layer by layer, as I became increasingly familiar with the research environment, I peeled away, reaching deeper and deeper into its intricacies and my relation with it.<sup>32</sup>

The outer layer of the onion, in my case, was the convergence of a number of questions that stemmed from direct involvement as a military officer in areas of conflict

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<sup>30</sup> Inspired by Günter Grass, this metaphor was reinterpreted by Jessica Pisano in Pisano, J. (2009). How to Tell an Axe Murderer: An Essay on Ethnography, Truth and Lies. Political ethnography: what immersion contributes to the study of power. E. Schatz. Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 361.

<sup>31</sup> "Environment" is meant in a holistic way, and involves as much the people, the physical and spiritual meanings, including my relation to them.

<sup>32</sup> The metaphor of the onion has two particularly interesting facets. First, peeling away may be an exercise that makes one cry out of desperation. And second, one may consider the risk of peeling until there is no more onion: then what?

including Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia and Croatia in the 1990's,<sup>33</sup> and later while working on policies regarding post-9/11 involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Over a period of fifteen years, I was involved closely in these events, and remotely, from home, experiencing what I call "political cognitive dissonance".<sup>34</sup> My personal confusion as witness to so much violence and so many killings, to the discourses justifying them, to the international political arena and the media prompted me to want to make sense of what seemed, from an eyewitness perspective, to be utter nonsense. Moreover, as I became aware of theorization in the larger field of social science, and specifically in IR and security studies, the issues and questions composing this outer layer became increasingly clear: Why is it that, from a situation of relative peace, extreme violence can emerge? How is that related to the political as a lived human experience? This outer layer, composed of complex experiences, made me the researcher I am today: committed to political ethnography, to the rejection of absolutes and general laws, the acknowledgment that one can only have a partial view and that true emancipation resides in the creation of possibility(ies) through knowledge.

Peeling the onion eventually brought me to Central and Eastern Europe, where I decided, not knowing the end of the voyage, that my interest would converge with the search for my genealogical ancestors, as my parents left Hungary in 1956. The initial

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<sup>33</sup> Iraq 1990, Haiti 1990-91, Bosnia (Sarajevo, Srebrenica) 1993, 2000, Croatia (Krajinas) 1995.

<sup>34</sup> The idea of political violence is difficult to grasp and I am working on the notion of cognitive dissonance to explore it. In our everyday lives, we are exposed to conflicting and sometimes unbearable contradictions: images of children dying of hunger while we discard leftovers from our plates; demonstrations of human responsibility in our environmental degradation while we are about to buy our 4 X 4 (useless) truck; hearing the last baseball game's results before the devastation of a tsunami while listening to the news, etc. Yet, we find a way to "go through" these dissociative experiences. In 1959, Leon Festinger and James Carlsmith published "Cognitive Consequences of Forced Compliance" and since then, the idea of cognitive dissonance has been part of the psychologist's toolbox. Festinger, L. and J. Carlsmith (1959). "Cognitive Consequences of Forced compliance." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*(58): 203-210. I borrow the concept and apply it to political studies and more specifically to violence in order to explore linkages between structure and agency in the making of violence.

theme I chose was “identity” in the most general sense, and “Magyars”<sup>35</sup> in Ukraine, of which 151,500 were counted in the westernmost oblast<sup>36</sup> of Zakarpattia.<sup>37</sup> The choice was obvious: wherever one looked since the end of communism, one saw “identity” as both the cause for conflict, and the cornerstone for building a social entity that could survive. Academia was awash in theories related to identity. It seemed like a logical choice to begin the exploration.

Immersing myself in different environments and regions of Ukraine and as many different “identities”<sup>38</sup>, it became clear that “identity” as a category of practice did not make much sense from an interpretive perspective.<sup>39</sup> As one man told me in Beregszász, in Hungarian: “I went to Afghanistan as a soldier with the Russians. I like the Russians. I don’t trust the Ukrainians. And I don’t like the Hungarians. Who I am? I don’t know, Magyar I guess.”<sup>40</sup> Most people express multiple identities in their daily lives, and Zakarpattia as a spatial entity, is no exception.

Identity as a category of analysis then becomes interesting only when we are able to draw the contours around a group of people. And that drawing only becomes possible when some form of mobilization makes the contour visible. For example, every year, on

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<sup>35</sup> In the text, I use Magyars in contrast to Hungarians, people living in Hungary.

<sup>36</sup> Oblast is an administrative unit in Ukraine. There are 24 oblasts, one autonomous republic (Crimea) and 2 cities with special status’ (Kiev and Sevastopol).

<sup>37</sup> A few numbers from the 2001 census. Ukraine had a total population of 48.457 million. Zakarpattia had 1,2 million habitants divided in 7 nationalities (Ukrainian (80,5%), Hungarian (12,1%), Romanian (2,6%), Russian (2,5%), Gypsies (1,1%), Slovaks (0,5%), Germans (0,3%)). Source: State Statistics Committee of Ukraine (<http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/Zakarpattia/>) The next census has been postponed until 2013 (<http://qha.com.ua/ukrainian-census-postponed-until-2013-106174en.html>)

<sup>38</sup> In my preliminary research, I conducted formal and informal interviews with Korean Ukrainians in Kharkov and Kiev, Russian Ukrainians in Crimea, and in Zakarpattia (Beregszász, Ungvár, Nagyszöllös and many villages), as well as Budapest.

<sup>39</sup> I use the terms “category of practice” and “category of analysis” in the sense expressed by Brubaker, R. and F. Cooper (2000). “Beyond “Identity”.” *Theory and Society* 29(1): 1-47.

<sup>40</sup> Field note, Beregszász, June 2007

July 17<sup>th</sup>, Hungarians celebrate their mythological “Turul Madár”<sup>41</sup>, and Zakarpattia is no exception. In the border town of Tiszaújlak, hundreds of people gather from everywhere in the oblast and neighboring Hungary: they assemble around the monument, Ukrainian and Hungarian flags are flying side-by-side, and hussar uniforms are worn. There are speeches from delegates, not the least of which is the Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség (KMKSZ), or the Hungarian cultural association of Zakarpattia,<sup>42</sup> until they leave, and return to their anonymous lives.

As in Bauman's metaphoric theatre, where strangers having dressed up for the occasion meet to share an experience and separate when it is over, so do Hungarians, Ukrainians and Rusyns, once a year around the monument of the Turul. Once finished, they pick-up their metaphoric coats and leave (Bauman 2000). It became clear that observing the “Magyars” would not only create false spatial delimitation around a group of people (Brubaker, Feischmidt et al. 2006), but would also contribute to reproducing and perpetuating the false representation of a structure, history and discourse.

Reviewing and analyzing my notes after over a year and a half spent in the field between 2007 and 2012, observing, talking and interviewing people from Budapest to Sevastopol, Kharkov and Kiev, Beregszász and Ungvár, and finally the village of Palágy-Komoróc, I came to the conclusion that identity-making is a symptom or an effect that becomes perceptible through discourses and acts. Because they are not foundational but

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<sup>41</sup> It's an eagle-like mythological bird that has an important role in the historical narrative. There are many statues of the Turul, in Hungary and in the Magyar regions of the neighbouring countries.

<sup>42</sup> KMKSZ or Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség (Magyar Cultural Association of Zakarpattia - <http://www.karpatalja.com.ua/kmksz/index.html>) is a well organized and structured organization covering the territory of Zakarpattia and for which the aim is to protect and promote cultural, political, economic and social development of Hungarian speaking minorities. It is tied financially to the Hungarian government and financially and philosophically to the ruling party in the Hungarian parliament. It took predominance over its counterpart, the UMDSZ (Ukrajnai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség – Ukrainian Magyar Democratic Association - <http://www.umdsz.uz.ua/>) closer to the Hungarian socialist party when the FIDESZ party took power in 2010 in Hungary.

rather built and expressed, identities cannot be used as a category of analysis, unless we observe them as a socio-political construct. Furthermore—perhaps particularly from the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe—borders between identities (both conceptual and physical borders) are equally problematic if taken as given.

Contemporary politics simplifies the issues when we address them from a statist perspective. There is a clear and defined border separating the European Union (EU) and Ukraine, and the relations are regulated by policies and agreements. Ukraine is a state, internationally recognized, and as such, the citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their language or identity, are protected, and are responsible to that state. However, as I reversed my perspective and decide to observe from the ground up, the political became complex and not so clearly defined. Ukrainians of Korean descent are struggling to be recognized as citizens. Many Ukrainians from Crimea prefer to speak Russian. Young Magyars are leaving for Hungary as the opportunities for higher education in Ukraine have become scarce. And everywhere, the divide between rich and poor deepens, leaving more and more people left to fend for themselves. The “state”, this reified entity that is supposed to protect its citizens, is taking a very different form as society reshapes its meaning on a daily basis.

In the context of the Ukrainian state, the battle for a national narrative--made at the expense of over 100 other “minorities”--between pro-Russia and pro-Europe partisans is fierce. Economically, since its independence, Ukrainians have found themselves in a battle for survival in a mixed environment of neo-liberal freedom and corruption. Socially, the effects of this cocktail are disastrous. The formerly existing safety nets that protected citizens of the former Ukrainian SSR have, for all intents and purposes,

disappeared. The value of savings people amassed under the Soviet regime vanished after 1991. Today, the health care infrastructure is dilapidated. Schools are underfunded and lack basic sanitary requirements. A heating bill in the winter season can consume half the pension of a retiree. At the heart of this re-shaping, everywhere I looked, whomever I spoke to, “security” was the central theme.

Through this turmoil, new alternatives appear. Piri, a young mother of two, receives 20,000 forints<sup>43</sup> per year per child because the children attend the local Hungarian-language school. Every family in Ukraine who sends their child to Hungarian-speaking schools receives this from the KMKSZ, which funnels the money from Budapest.<sup>44</sup> Magyars in Ukraine also have the opportunity to obtain their Hungarian citizenship should they wish. Underlying these opportunities, what we observe from the ground up is a definition of the political. The meaning of the social contract based on the reciprocal engagement between the individual and his\her state is in the process of fundamental revision.

### 1.3.3 A Note on Togetherness, Society, Community

Before we enter the domain of the particular and the political ethnography, it is necessary to situate the discussion, if only to contextualize the scope of the conversation. My work proceeds with the deconstruction of the particular and the rebuilding along theoretical lines that may enlighten our understanding of the larger issues at stake in the world today. The present section aims at clarifying the premises on which the dissertation

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<sup>43</sup> 20000 Ft = Can\$ 90.00 or UAH 725.00. This represents a little less than the monthly pension (UAH 900). A starting teacher at the primary\high school level receives UAH 1000/monthly. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 June 2011.

<sup>44</sup> This support is not exclusive to Ukraine, but is granted to all Hungarians living in neighbouring states under the provisions of article 10 of the Hungarian Status Law, June 19, 2001.

is based and presents the concepts the reader will encounter throughout, such as togetherness, society, community.

### *Togetherness*

Proceeding with the holistic approach presented in the introduction, I introduce togetherness as a conceptual tool that is central to my endeavour, particularly as we engage with the ethnographic analysis in Part Two. Simply put, togetherness is the reflection of the encompassing perspective offered by the concept of "World Society" developed in International Relations and Sociology (Burton 1972, Luhmann 1995, Luhmann 1997, Albert 1999, Albert, Brock et al. 2000, Albert and Hilkermeier 2004, Albert, Cederman et al. 2010). It is a tool I use specifically during the ethnographic investigations in order to address two challenges. From a methodological standpoint, it creates the possibility of unbridling the observation traditionally delimited by the physicality of the field or as Dvora Yanow calls it, "place-ness" (2009, p.283). Second, from an epistemological perspective, approaching a group of people with the only assumption that they live together eliminates the necessity, or the temptation, to create pre-conceived categories of practice. This last point highlights a departure from World Society approaches in that I do not use modeling to define togetherness.<sup>45</sup>

As an ethnographer pursuant of a perspectivist and interpretivist form, delimiting the space as enclosure for a field site is problematic. Togetherness addresses two of the challenges. First, togetherness shifts the boundary making from the physicality of the environment--a village, region, etc.--to its social representation. This renders the field site

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<sup>45</sup> In his book "World Society", John W. Burton attempts to expand from, rather than eliminate the study of international relations. In doing so, he offers a number of models to template the world in different ways. Burton, J. W. (1972). World society, Cambridge England : University Press.

malleable and adaptable, inclusive of movements, physical and virtual. For example, the fact that Zsofia's daughter moved to Hungary does not exclude her from the environment. Moreover, that Zsofia and her daughter exchange frequently over the Internet, and that she even considers to move to Hungary, is an important observation that should not be treated as "outside" of the field site. The physicality of the observer, me, and the choices I make to pursue certain leads, are potential weaknesses of this approach compared to a well-defined, territorially prescribed field-site. This specific challenge is dealt with by the criterion of credibility discussed in the introduction of the present chapter.

From an epistemological standpoint, using togetherness offers an exclusive vantage point. Informed by initial attempts to enter the field with the intention of observing "identity", I realized that in order to extract any form of credible meaning, I had to rid myself of pre-conceived categories of analysis, and focus instead on practices. By engaging the field site from the perspective of togetherness, the observer creates an artificial point 0, a space-time from which (s)he begins the observation. From this point of view, everyone lives together, and as the notes are taken every day, lines and contours begin to appear. They are many initially, but as a *political* ethnographer, one begins to discriminate to eventually create a picture, however imperfect, of the political in the environment (s)he is observing.

This leads to the second epistemological perspective of significance. To approach the environment or field site from the perspective of togetherness gives me the capacity to proceed with a *deconstruction*, rather than a construction based on categories of analysis such as "identity". By doing so, I approach the field site as a totality that I can break along discursive lines. This is crucial in many ways. First, this approach does not

presuppose an arrangement prior to the investigation; Second, the act of deconstruction becomes a true reflexive experiment as both the environment and myself dictate the line along which I investigate; Third, I create the intimate knowledge that is necessary for the reconstruction and theorization I initiate in Part Three of the dissertation.

### *Society/Community*

As Ken Booth appropriately emphasizes, "like 'motherhood' and 'apple-pie', community is the sort of word we are tempted to overuse because of its positive connotation (a sense of common identity, shared interests, mutual obligations, a sense of interdependence, common social understandings, cultural habits, etc.)", the term community, like society and identity, suffers the use and abuse of multiple variations. The terms have been politicized to demarcate national and transnational groups and justify political actions. How then, can I escape this conundrum, and still make use of what are necessary terms for my work of deconstruction? (Booth 2007, p.134).

The deconstruction of togetherness from a political ethnographic perspective can, conceptually, be understood as a microcosm of world society. The discussion then becomes, as Burton explains, a question of scope (Burton 1972, Chapter three). In this work, the scope or approach used is strongly influenced by the desire to escape the structure-agency dilemma. Dealing directly on the ground, unless a deliberate strategy is deployed to circumvent these poles of attraction, it is almost impossible to create a balanced deconstruction. As such, the strategy chosen is to focus on the relational perspective, and from an ethnographic point of view, it means the collection and deciphering of discourse with which we can define the society we are observing.

One of the necessities in research when starting from a rather abstract base such as "togetherness" is the naming of those social "realities" that we encounter as we slowly cut through the discursive maze. To answer Booth's earlier critique, I did not begin with an *a priori* definition of those social realities, but rather let them appear as I wrote the ethnographic investigations chapters. It is in the process of writing, not of observing, that the requirement for defining and differentiating appeared. This process of naming phenomena through the interactive process of observation/writing reinforces the point made earlier, in that approaching the field site with togetherness as a starting point offers the possibility to "let the field speak" and express itself, rather than feed it with pre-conceived notions.

Nonetheless, once I realized my limitations in describing and analyzing my observations, I needed to integrate the terms society, community and identity in the conversation for two reasons. First, as the narrator, I need words and concepts that describe my analytical inquiries; and second, you, the reader, need to lean on concepts with which you can relate through the narration in order to create the story line and eventually fuse the argument. Of the three concepts discussed, only two will find their way into the ethnographic investigations: society and community. These two concepts complement, oppose, and most often co-constitute each other.

Simply put, society and community are used to identify the divide between the rational form organizing social life (society) and the subjective, irrational motivations for groupness. Both these forms of analysis appear through the ethnographic investigations, for example as I discuss modes of economic exchange (society) or existential fears related to life and death (community). Using a more strict definition, society is taken as

the consequence of "a high level of functional differentiation and by a type of rationality that Max Weber labelled as practical or instrumental" (Thomas 2010). Thus, the Weberian concept of "Gesellschaft" (society) relates to the rational organization and structuring of complex societies. The second concept, community, appears as the antithesis to society. Gemeinschaft (community) in its Weberian sense means that "the orientation of social action is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual, traditional, that they belong together" (Group 2000, p.6).

However, as the analysis unfolds, we realize that society and community are not oppositions or even two sides of the same coin. Instead, they are part of the same conceptual continuum through which we are trying to muddle and explain what is constitutive of politics and the political. As such, the interest is not in defining the rational construction of society in abstraction of the subjective feelings motivating the regrouping of people. Nor is it our challenge to decipher which affective and traditional factors create the bonding of togetherness. Rather, as we attempt to deconstruct togetherness from a relational perspective, the use of "society" and "community" in relation to each another becomes an essential tool for identifying the fundamental changes occurring, and that become the objects of analysis in Part Three of the dissertation.

#### 1.3.4 Fieldwork – Point 0 - Introducing the field site

Whether one arrives from the Slovakian border three kilometers to the west, the Hungarian border some fifteen kilometers to the south, or from the town of Ungvár

fifteen kilometers north east, the first thing one sees is the steeple of Palágy-Komoróc' reformed church.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 2: Reformist Church of Palágy-Komoróc - picture taken by author**

The church sits on the highest part of the village called Komoróc, as historically, Palágy and Komoróc were two separate entities that were united in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. For the newcomer, the village seems whole, but people still refer to the specific parts to give directions. The reformed church occupies the highest ground overlooking the village and arguably its center, and beyond it, the fields extend where many of its villagers work every day.

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<sup>46</sup> For a nice view of the church: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUJx89ocG0s>. Note the Hungarian flag.



**Figure 3: Palágy-Komoróc in relation to Ungvár and surrounding countries**

Not many outsiders stop in the village of about 900 inhabitants.<sup>47</sup> They usually go through it, barely noticing its existence and instead head towards its (administratively) sister village of Kisszelmenc, two kilometers away, which with its Slovakian counterpart, Nagyszelmenc, sits on the border between the two countries. Together with Kisszelmenc, but also Szürte, Gáloc, Téglás, Rát, Palló, Botfálva and the regional current capital Ungvár, the village of Palágy-Komoróc shares a long history that dates back to 13th century conquerors, nobility and fiefdom, and for which legends of secret love affairs and crooked deals still abound.

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<sup>47</sup> The last national census was conducted in 2001. The 900 estimate is noted in diverse conversations.



**Figure 4: Palágy-Komoróc in relation to neighbouring villages**

Recent history that is still part of the living memory is one of tumult, adjustment and change. The life of the oldest person in the village, Nagy Szabolcs, born on July 2, 1920, in Passaic, New Jersey, embodies village experience in the past century. Several years before his birth, his mother, Gabriella, and three friends had left the village at the age of 16 to go to the United States. There, Gabriella met his father, who worked the mines in Unionville, Pennsylvania, like many others from Palágy-Komoróc and the region. They had gone to the United States to make money, come back home and buy some land. While villagers of Palágy-Komoróc worked in American mines, the treaty of Trianon was

signed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920 and became effective on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1921, leaving the region outside of Hungary. Nagy Szabolcs was born American and when he came back to the village with his mother at age two, he found himself in Czechoslovakia. The story of Palágy-Komoróc is of people moving, returning or staying; and of borders and regimes passing through what seems, when we stand in the middle of the village today, a humdrum little place.

Nagy Szabolcs stayed in Palágy-Komoróc until 1938, when he joined the Hungarian army following the (re) annexation of the region as part of the Munich agreement and Vienna Award. Like many others, the next six years would be the most terrifying of his lifetime. Attached to a German unit, he was wounded twice in the face and stomach, and survived the Eastern (Russian) campaign all the way to the Don River and back. Captured by the Soviet army in Budapest in 1944, he was set, like thousands others, to do “Malenki rabot” or small work in labor camps in Russia. Instead, he found a way to flee and walked back to his village. By then, Palágy-Komoróc was under the communist regime. Beyond the physical destruction brought by allied bombing campaigns, not much had changed, were it not for all the Jews<sup>48</sup> who had been deported to Auschwitz<sup>49</sup> in the spring of 1944.

The first ten years of the regime were spent exploiting his ten hectares of field. It took a while for the Communist regime to gather the capacity to enforce its philosophy. When it did, Szabolcs had to let go of his ten acres, as did most other villagers, and the kolkhoz, whose ruins we see today, was built. Szabolcs started to work at the kolkhoz, but as an educated man, he was set to a promising start, pending his affiliation to the

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<sup>48</sup> Data are hard to come by, but it seems that there were between 60 and 100 Jews in Palágy-Komoróc before the war started.

<sup>49</sup> Today, people in Palágy-Komoróc refer to Auschwitz as the “crematorium”.

communist party. He refused, and thus was expelled from the kolkhoz and had to find work in Ungvár, which he did, successfully. During the communist regime, people worked at the kolkhoz and cultivated their household crops. Others found work in Ungvár and some could access higher education.

The village saw infrastructural changes too. The kolkhoz, called first "Stalin's Way" and then "Golden Ring" had two main sites. The first, at the southwest edge of the village, housed the tractor brigade and everything that dealt with working the fields. Today, the tractor brigade buildings are almost completely deconstructed.<sup>50</sup> The second, at the southeast edge of the village, housed the farm brigade. Today, many buildings are overgrown with wild vegetation. But the main buildings have kept their initial purpose of housing cows and tractors – this time - for big landowners. In the middle of the village, at the juncture between Palágy and Komoróc, a community centre was built, with an amphitheatre and the obligatory monument to the liberators.

In front of the building, a swamp was drained of water to create an enormous park and two gardeners made sure it was beautiful and well arranged. During this period, a sewer system was built and new housing was added to the two existing styles. In Palágy-Komoróc, the oldest houses date back about a hundred years and consist of a long building that contain everything on one floor, from living room to stable. The second style, the "kocka ház", literally "square house", date back to the early fifties and, like the previous type, are made of mud and straw/hay, but are somewhat smaller, compelling people to build additional buildings for their livestock. Later, in the seventies and eighties, a two-floor model made of concrete blocks appeared. During much of the Soviet

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<sup>50</sup> I use the word "deconstructed" as it was not destroyed, but the material was taken by the people after break-up of the regime.

era in the middle of the park stood a social realist style statue of a woman carrying two enormous cabbages—sign of fertility, prosperity and work. Multiple discourses circulate about the communist era in Palágy-Komoróc. Some are nostalgic for the predictability of the times, while others speak of hard work. People reflect upon some form of harmony; everyone had his\her place in the system. Family values were important as well as hard work. Life was not easy, people say, but it was predictable.

Since the regime change in the early 1990s, Ukraine became a state, and Palágy-Komoróc is part of it. The sewer system lies ineffective, some distant memory of state efficiency. The park is still there, but nobody cares for it and it is growing wild. Only the few cows from the Palágy side of the village enjoy it in the morning while waiting for the shepherd to take them out.

Nagy Szabolcs is now old and barely leaves his home. As a pensioner, he receives about UAH 900 monthly, certainly not enough to pay for his needs. But he is one of the fortunate ones who still has relatives to count on. Over the last twenty years, many of the younger generation have left the village to try their luck elsewhere, mostly in neighboring Hungary. They come to visit and support as much as they can, but they don't have it easy either, and the older ones have to work the fields and sell at the market to make ends meet. For those lucky enough, like Alfréd or Mátyás bácsi,<sup>51</sup> the siblings are still home, and survival is a family affair.

Nagy Szabolcs' wife passed away a few years ago and was buried following the Reformed ritual. People go to church freely now, and Palágy-Komoróc, together with her neighbor and administrative sister, Kiszszelmenc, has three vibrant, although aging, religious communities. The Reformed church, as in most of Zakarpattia, is the most

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<sup>51</sup> “Bácsi” in this context is a term of endearment, much like “uncle” as in “Uncle Joe”.

attended. The Roman Catholic church in Kisszelmenc, and the Greek Catholic church sitting at the Komoróc edge of the village, share the rest of the community. All three communities are strongly “Magyar”, and although services in Ukrainian are offered, the three priests actively remind parishioners of the importance of language, culture, roots and procreation in the name of maintaining “magyarness”.

Nagy Szabolcs is taken care of by one of his granddaughters, also the librarian of the decrepit and underfunded village library housed on the second floor of the community center. From the outside, the building seems mainly abandoned and one has to push hard on the planked door that opens into what seems a like a gutted building. But on the main floor, there is an amphitheatre with wooden chairs that fills beyond capacity when villagers organize the feast of the new bread in August. There are modest signs of money trickling into repairs, new wiring there, a new door here. After climbing the stairs to the second floor, one enters a very big room with shelves of books, and in a corner, a dozen big grain bags filled with the books that Amália managed to recuperate with a tractor from the neighboring village a few years ago, when they closed the library and destroyed the community centre. Not many people come to the library. The adults are too busy working; the youth, well, they’d rather hang out in the schoolyard than read old books.

Sebestyén and his wife Zsófia are the owners of a little grocery store adjacent to the community centre; it attracts more clientele for drinks on the terrace than for foodstuffs. The language spoken here is mostly Hungarian though not exclusively, and is the meeting place for men from morning to late night. It is often the place where people argue, and sometimes there are brawls that end up in fistfights. On the other side of the

Sebestyén's bar, there is an odd little wall that was constructed to separate the noise and the smell of alcohol from the mayor's office.

Illár Jozsef has done well for himself since the regime change some twenty years ago. A well-connected entrepreneur, he is in his third term as a mayor. Governing the villages of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc, he credits himself with opening the border between Kisszelmenc and Nagyszelmenc in Slovakia. He also acquired a great deal of land around the villages and owns a substantial pig farm. Jozsef is the mayor for both villages, but also the law and police, and generally, the go-to person. For here, nobody really knows who is the region's police officer, his phone number, or where his office would be. Anyone with a problem, legal or otherwise, goes to the mayor: he has the connections. And that makes him quite a powerful person.

Amália lives in a large house in the middle of the village, a little less than a hundred meters from Sebestyén's bar. It is the place where the roads from Ungvár and from Szürte meet to go to the border at Kisszelmenc. It is also the where the old battered bus coming from Kisszelmenc stops to pick up the villagers going to the big city Ungvár for about UAH 4.<sup>52</sup> When it rains, people wait for the bus in the village's second grocery facing the intersection. It bears the original sign of the former regime and is more sober than Sebestyén's bar. One finds anything there, from nails and bassinets, to milk and sausage. And as much as one speaks Hungarian in Sebestyén's place, here people make a point of speaking Ukrainian, or Russian, but not Hungarian, even the Magyars.

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<sup>52</sup> About 50 Canadian cents. The distance is about 15 km, centre to centre.

The day starts early in Palágy-Komoróc. By seven o'clock in the morning, the cows are gone with the shepherd.<sup>53</sup> In the summer, the elderly usually start the day by tending to household crops while the younger generation goes to work. Although the younger generation seems reluctant to work the fields, agriculture is a mainstay of the local economy and many men spend their days in the fields. Most able women work, many of them in Ungvár or in a shop in the neighboring border village. The village has also a certain proportion of “outsiders”. They are people who enjoy living in the countryside and work in town, or they are soldiers and customs officers posted here to guard the border. At the edge of the village, between the Greek Catholic church and the military post, a window and door company has been established, employing several people from the village.

When one passes through the countryside and villages of Zakarpattia, eventually arriving in Palágy-Komoróc, one might have the feeling of emptiness Kathryn Lake-Brown describes in her dissertation:

Go to the library and find out about life out in the countryside. I laughed to myself, thinking Mikhail Mikhailovich the absolute academician, who assumes knowledge isn't knowledge unless it is linked on a page ready to be footnoted. Disregarding his advice, I trooped out to the countryside, and walked along dirt roads and through villages that all began to look the same. Only once I passed through dozens of hamlets did I realize Mikhail Mikhailovich had a point. From the perspective of the village, the village is too close: folk culture wisps away into

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<sup>53</sup> There are two herds of cows, one for the Palágy part, one for Komoróc. Shepherds are locals hired for the job and everyone pays a fee to contribute to the salary. Cows are herded in the morning, brought back for milking at lunch, and are herded again until and late afternoon. Interestingly, in neighbouring Kisszelenc, the cows are not brought back at lunch during summer time in order not to interfere with the Slovaks crossing the border to do business on the single street in the village.

abstraction-undefinable, unlocatable in any definite sense. Instead, the view from the village consists of fields surrounded by forests, listing huts, graveyards with crosses made of plumbing pipe, tired men and women wheeling bikes home – a material existence that does not look like “culture” as it is described in books. Mikhail Mikhailovich, after twenty years of fieldwork knew what I did not yet know. He knew I would never find what I was looking for in the village because culture – generalized, definable, autonomous, visible – does not exist there. And so I returned to Kiev, where it turned out, I could get a much better view of the village (Brown 2000).<sup>54</sup>

But delving into an ethnographic observation of socio-political phenomena, life in the village, the region and beyond becomes a tremendous tapestry of interactions. Once you knock on doors, begin listening and engaging in conversations, the whole essence of research takes shape. Political ethnography is about people; it is not found in libraries.

### 1.3.5 First Movement: Let Ethnography Speak or Deconstructing the Field Site

#### *First Step: Fieldwork*

This first ethnographic movement can be summarized in two essential steps. The first consists in the fieldwork as such, during which, over a non-consecutive period of eighteen months, I immersed myself in the life of the region and the village. Living as part of a household, this immersion got me involved in the daily routine of the street, the village, and the region. The essential daily task was to create a record of conversations, events, acts and discourses. I got involved in maintaining the house, the crops and the

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<sup>54</sup> Kathryn Lake Brown later published a book from this dissertation: Brown, K. (2004). *A biography of no place : from ethnic borderland to Soviet heartland*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

chickens, scraping and painting walls, repairing antennas and many other chores. I conducted a number of untargeted interviews, many of them unplanned, as the occasion arose. I gave English courses to young people interested in learning, and I actively participated in family and village activities. I made a point to be deliberately aware of which senses were in use at any one moment, providing for interesting visual and auditory notes.

*Second Step: First Hermeneutical Analysis*

The second step started concomitantly with the first and consists in a first hermeneutical analysis of the information gathered. In order to conduct this deconstructive work, I built an analytical framework to guide my process. I present this model in parts: first, the analytical framework; second, the conceptual tools.

*Analytical Framework*

Referring to the conceptual portion of Donald Black's work on social geometry (Black 1976), I built a model based on three of his five axes.<sup>55</sup> The first axis is inspired by Emile Durkheim's work and refers to social morphology and the study of people on the basis of their interaction and spatial organization. The second axis inspired by Karl Marx addresses what Black calls "stratification, or the vertical aspect of social life", which deals with relations of production and division of labor. The third aspect relates to he calls "organization as the corporate aspect" and deals with relations of authority as well as the formal institutional make-up of the local (Black 1976, p 1.)

Of the two aspects I do not include in my analytical framework, social control and culture, the latter, inspired by Bourdieu, merits some explanation. This dimension

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<sup>55</sup> The five axes are: horizontal/morphological; Vertical; Corporate, Cultural; Normative.

addresses the symbolic and cultural perspective of organization. As I proceed with the deconstruction of togetherness in the context Palágy-Komoróc along the three proposed axes, culture and symbolism will become integral parts of the discovery as they appear *in context* of the dimension studied. As such, I accomplish what I believe is an added value, rather than a loss in the credibility of the work. Rather than uncovering "culture" as a given category in politics, and then creating the fertile soil for identity, I let "culture" emerge naturally through the ethnographic investigations of the other dimensions, without preconceiving of a specific outcome.

In the first chapter on ethnographic investigations, I use social interactions as an entry point to deconstruct the village. From this perspective, I analyze neighborly interaction and daily habits. I delve into the structure of the families and their variety, as well as the changes if any. I also explore the concept of the Other through interactions, and with that, the multiple cloakroom communities (Bauman 2000) that shape life in the village. By this I mean those groupings of people that are temporary in nature, such as clubs or even only recurring conversation in the evening while people wait for their cows to come home. Superimposed on a spatial deconstruction of togetherness, this gives us an initial glimpse of the different parts and a transversal view of the organization of life.

Second, relations of production designate any form of interaction centered on the translation of goods and/or services. In this realm, I observe the daily life of the villagers as they create systems to sustain their material necessities in an evolving economic system. Strategizing ways to survive creates discussions about family, education, migration, inequality, poverty, old age and social safety net. Relations of production cut deep into the very real requirement of eating every day and highlight differences between

socialism and capitalism, moral responsibility and greed. Placed in contrast with the previous chapter, we begin to see certain nuances and changes in the division of labor. We also identify certain rifts and schisms within the togetherness.

The third incision seeks to observe Palágy-Komoróc from a hierarchical perspective and attempts to deconstruct the formal and informal relations of authority in the village. Using the previous chapters and my ethnographic observations, I deconstruct the formal and informal institutions (e.g., local administrative, church, and family) to understand the web of relations they entail. This analysis gives me a glimpse of the relation between formal and informal politics, and the different conduits available for making representations at the local level.

### *Analytical Tools*

In order to deconstruct the texts (discourses and acts), I use three analytical tools: time, space and socio-political organization. In utilizing time, I place any form of interaction presented earlier under a microscope. Interactions are first deconstructed in a linear perspective, comparing what was with what is. An example of this might be the interactions within and outside the family structure from the perspective of memories of the past and the present. This highlights diverse social movements that occasionally tend to reproduce former “ways of doing” but sometimes create a new form of social arrangement that destabilizes and creates a form of (in) security. The future also becomes important as people create stories of possibilities and dreams, plans and eventualities. Here, I conduct genealogical explorations of possibilities that were or were not exploited and compare the actions taken in relation to local discourse. Finally, and most importantly, using time as an analytical tool highlights the concept necessary to engage

the second movement of the dissertation: change. Using time in this way, I can highlight change and the multiple connections it generates, its nuances and reliefs, and as we will see, the threads necessary to form a perspective of the political.<sup>56</sup>

The second analytical tool I employ to deconstruct interactions is space. Here, I use three approaches. First, using Dvora Yanow's analytical tool, I deconstruct the relationship between space and the interactions under observation (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Whether discussing the village park as a symbol of the grander past or the rumors concerning its privatization, the churches as centers for prayer or discord between villagers, or the former kolkhoz, symbolic epitome of communism now representing the exploitation of a ruthless capitalist system, spatial analysis reveals a complex set of interactions and processes.

My second approach is that of movement. This is necessary as space in the context of interactions is both static and moving. This perspective goes beyond the fixed perspective of interactions, i.e. the mapping from place to place, but also the movement and displacement of interactions. The third approach uses a concept borrowed from geography, called scaling. (Marston 2000). More sophisticated than nesting, scaling builds on attempts to represent the social construction of space from a less traditional perspective, including fragmentation of people, movement and networking.<sup>57</sup>

The third analytical tool I use to deconstruct interactions is called the symbolism of groupness. Under this label, I group not only the explicit symbolism expressed through

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<sup>56</sup> See Hodges, M. (2007). The ethnography of time : living with history in modern rural France. Lewiston, N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press.

<sup>57</sup> For space as well, readings on Lefebvre, H. (1991). The production of space; translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford, OX, UK, Blackwell. And Nora, P., Ed. (1996). Realms of memory; English edition edited and with a foreword by Lawrence D. Kritzman ; translated by Arthur Goldhammer. New York, Columbia University Press.

representations such as flags, songs or ceremonies, but also those expressed in daily conversations and interactions. This tool has the inherent danger of misuse by the researcher, i.e. of creating categories of analysis rather than of practice. In other words, my purpose is not to reify a grouping called “Magyars” and then observe how they interact, but rather to identify existing groupings, as they are locally understood and represented. As such, this analytical tool does not build on pre-conceived symbolic meaning(s), but rather allows their symbolic meaning(s) to become apparent as the analysis progresses.<sup>58</sup> Finally, this analytical tool follows time and space dimensions, providing insight into the social realm while highlighting interactions.

In essence, the first hermeneutical movement consists in an ethnography whose purpose is the deconstruction of a community that I do not treat as hermetically closed, but as an integral part of the world. I chose to focus on three realms of interaction (social, production, authority) that I deconstruct using three dimensions of human life: time, space and society. Deconstructing in this way has the advantage of escaping the structure-agency and individualism-holism conundrums. Instead, it allows me to focus on the more malleable and flexible concept of relation. This first deconstructing movement gives me the possibility to re-frame security and to anchor it in real lived experience, opening the door to placing the political in relation to security. I effectuate these re-framings in my second movement.

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<sup>58</sup> For example, some people in the village use the word “Tóth” to identify certain persons. My approach is to deconstruct the meaning of this word and identify what and how it means in terms of groupings and relationships.

### 1.3.6 Second Movement

In the second movement, I take those deconstructed pieces and create an image of the political using security as the relational concept, the one that provides me the capacity to objectify, or freeze in an instant, this perspective. In the same way that Foucault explains the transition from pastoral state to governmentality using security as the explicating concept, I propose to re-frame our current view of the political based on assumptions of states and borders to one that includes globalized spaces. My intent is to go beyond existing critiques of national thinking to provide an alternative construct – one that is grounded in deep, contextual research. Security in this reconstruction is not a function of securing “something” or “someone” but rather a relationship that can create or deny opportunities. Here the “states” protecting the nearby passage between Ukraine and Slovakia are not represented merely by a line called “border”, but reconceptualized as an expression of the multiple relations upon which it are created.

The second movement I propose to accomplish is composed of two steps. Using Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory and Giddens' structuration theory, the first step consists of defining the contours of systems and their environment by observing their intersection, where security becomes apparent. To do that, using the rifts and tensions identified during the ethnographic analysis, I reframe the systems (political, social, economic) by identifying the points where they intersect, collide and interpenetrate. In systems theory parlance, this is where "irritations" occur, and in my analysis, I use security to observe them. In fine, I draw the contours of the political system in order to engage with the second step, analyzing it.

This first step is essentially built around two chapters. In Chapter Seven, I build the theoretical model based on Luhmann's MST and Giddens' structuration theory. This chapter is highly abstract but nonetheless crucial as it creates the conditions for shifting our perspective from an ethnographic to a systemic one. In Chapter Eight, using the theoretical model, I effectuate what I call an ontological shift, or in other words, a shift in our view of the "reality" we are observing. By moving our perspective from the daily lives of people to one based on systems, I create the possibility of pushing the conversation beyond the physical boundaries of the ethnographic investigations.

In the second step, having defined the contours of the systems, and of the political in particular, I bring the conversation to the conceptual level. First, using the analysis made on the society/community continuum and their relation to security, I attempt to reformulate the basic tenets, or discourses that define the political from this particular perspective. Building from the ground up, I begin using the specificities of Palágy-Komoróc and its immediate environment--Zakarpattia, Ukraine and the European Union. This discussion opens the door to further analysis made possible by the differentiation between politics as observed and the political as conceptualized. They are self-reflecting mirrors that create the possibility to discuss and theorize issues of social contract and sovereignty as basic tenets of the political.

Further, I re-engage with the discussion started in Chapter Two about Foucault's governmentality and the self-referential state within the theorization about security and discuss the conditions under which we can discuss the idea of paradigmatic change. These conversations eventually open the dialogue on the global and what we could mean on the political plane using this terminology in a context of multiplicity while at the same

time recognizing that humanity as reached a level of wholeness. Can we have a political perspective of the global by re-defining its realm beyond the strict view of the state as the sole beholder of the political?

### 1.3.7 Conclusion

Doing interpretive political ethnography is challenging, as not only do we not have the support of theory as a form of template that we propose to verify, we need to deal with the interpretation of text, understood here as the discourse and the act performed by people. While Chapter Two presented the theoretical origins and notional pillars of this research, the present chapter introduced the methodological foundations of the research. It is, as some say, where the “rubber hits the road.”

As the previous pages have shown, my approach to interpretation is complex and begins with a strong notion of reflexivity and my position as a researcher. I presented earlier the metaphor of the onion, peeling away layers of observation and analysis that led me from a personal standpoint to a physical place called Palágy-Komoróc, currently in a country called Ukraine, but previously part of Hungary, then Czechoslovakia, and after the Soviet Union; and the intent to explore the relation between security and the political. Both of these concepts have pre-registered meanings in our minds, and through reflexivity, observation through immersion, and analysis, I explore the nature of the relationship. This dissertation is not the real beginning, of course. But it is the nature of such work to begin where the question is. In interpretive political ethnography, it should be stressed, the years leading to the question are as crucial as the period taken to explore it.

Thus the point zero of this research, the place where conceptually my “zooming in” meets my “zooming out” is a village called Palágy-Komoróc. From the onset, it is very much like any other village, with churches, stores, peoples and histories. It is here that I begin exploring the interactions that create the political. In order to make sense of an otherwise complex scene blended in colors, shapes and movements, I deconstruct the village, breaking the image into pieces of text and concepts. This initial hermeneutical investigation of time, change, and socio-political organization puts into perspective social interactions, the relations of production and of authority, providing me the analytical tools necessary to continue my exploration of the relationship between security and the political.

My second hermeneutical analysis builds on this ethnographic investigation and is meant to paint an image with the pieces gathered during the first movement. In this second hermeneutical movement, I develop a theoretical framework based on complex systems theory and structuration theory in order to (re) construct our view from a different perspective. To be sure, theory in this sense is just another filter to help us grasp a sense of the reality out there, and is not there merely to convey what reality looks like. Systems theory has the strong value of pushing aside the structure-agency dilemma and providing us with the means to reach beyond the local, in fact, making the very notion obsolete.

Ultimately, as I presented in Chapter One, I strive to achieve three objectives: First, I want to create the basis for a research program based on political ethnography that allows researchers to build theory from a particular, contextual, perspective that reaches beyond the local, or in fact, re-frame our ontological perspective of the (social) world.

With my second objective, I propose a view of the political that challenges modernist definitions of relations between individuals and groups. With my last objective, I attempt to close the gap between theoretical and lived experience using the concept of security.

## **PART TWO: ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATIONS**

In this part, I proceed with the first movement in which I analyze the information gathered during my fieldwork. Each of the three chapters follows a specific line of relations:

Chapter Four: social relations

Chapter Five: relations of production

Chapter Six: relations of authority

## Chapter 4: Defining Palágy-Komoróc through Social Relations

### 2.4.1 Introduction

In this first chapter of the ethnographic analysis trilogy, I pose the question: “how do people live together in Palágy-Komoróc?” By deconstructing along the lines of interactions, I extract the basic components of the village of Palágy-Komoróc. By "basic", I mean the elementary organizational structures and processes that give meaning to the socio-political realm. Following discussions and conversations, meetings and ceremonies, the communicative symbols highlight the particularities of entities such as households. These basic elements provide an essential perspective as we progress further in Part Three in reconstructing the system(s) and their environment.

I analyze interactions from two perspectives. Using time as a first vector for analysis, I open the door on an intricate set of relations based on traditions and habits that are reconfigured partly due to the relative modification of the household structure. Then, using the spatial vector, I trace the physical image emerging from these relations and observe that what seems like a nested construct<sup>59</sup> is better explained by the notion of a network in which interactions are treated as irregular and multidimensional. This first deconstruction exposes two types of households existing in the same system, interacting together, as well as producing their own specific dynamic.

After uncovering a first layer of interactions, I deepen the analysis by deconstructing the discursive and physical layout of the village in order to expose the components of the system. Instead of entering the scene with pre-conceived variables

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<sup>59</sup> Nested could be imagined like a matrioshka: close family, extended family, friends, community, village, county, nation-state, and world...

based on identities such as Magyars, Ukrainians and Roms<sup>60</sup>, I uncover identity as an effect of interactions rather than an underlying and foundational “reality”, and begin tracing the fine line separating the reflexive self trying to define itself and the political self that emerges through socialization. Identities are treated as discursively constructed, allowing for flexibility and multiplicity expressed by symbols, signs and acts. Individuals have multiple identities, and I am interested in the ways in which the meanings shape the identity system, not in identity as a pre-given norm. Again, I conduct an exercise in differentiation in which sameness is broken up: "household" is not a single unit; it is the denomination for multiple possibilities that become apparent only when contrasted with one another.

Using these two approaches, I uncover an initial perspective of the village by digging into its socio-political organization. I scrape a first layer of observation that exposes an initial set of ideas, concepts and building blocks that we will use later to rebuild the system and its environment.

#### 2.4.2 Introducing Social Systems in Palágy-Komoróc – Nested and Networked

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind. Therefore, never send to know for whom the bells tolls, it tolls for thee.

John Donne (1572-1631), *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, Meditation XVII*

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<sup>60</sup> As Leonardo Piasere explains, scholars conceptualize Roms in two ways. The first is to consider them a marginal group that needs to be recuperated and integrated at the social level; the second is to consider the social relation as the spatio-temporal product of interactions. Piasere, L. (2011). Roms, une histoire européenne (traduit de l'italien par Viviane Dutaut). Montrouge, Bayard. In my work, I use the second approach. Roms, Magyars, Ukrainians, Rusyn, Toths etc, are all discursive expressions designed to identify people. It is not pejorative nor is it my intent to isolate a group vis-à-vis the other. To the contrary, I work my way up from experience and discourse. In this case, “Roms”, “Romas” or “ciganys” are locally recognized as a distinct group of people. These denominations are local and do weigh more or less against each other. For more on the origins and uses of the way to identify “Roms” generally, refer to Piasere, op.cit., pp. 10-23.

I am not a painter, but I imagine that my technique to sketch the relational map of Palágy-Komoróc is similar. My metaphorical canvas is empty but my head is full of images that need processing. I first use a pencil to draw the contours of my analysis. Later, I will use the brushes and the colors that will make it vivid. But first, stroke-by-stroke, I have to create the forms; then, I will add the shades. In this first section, I create an initial impression of the social interactions in the village by sketching a funeral, because of all events, it is the one that most vividly presents the actors and the hierarchy in which they operate. It is by no means the only way to represent this hierarchy, but it's a starting point from which we can elaborate.

“Of all the sources of religion, the supreme and final crisis of life – death – is of the greatest importance” (Malinowski in Geertz 1973, p.162). When a person dies in Palágy-Komoróc, the body of the deceased is not brought to a funeral home, as there are none in the village. Instead, the body remains at home, where the immediate family washes and dresses it for the funeral ceremonies. It is a relatively quick affair, for the obvious reasons of putrefaction.<sup>61</sup> People are made aware fairly quickly when someone dies in the village and the surrounding villages, for relationships extend very often to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and even 5<sup>th</sup> villages.<sup>62</sup> It is a close-knit society from this point of view. Everyone knows someone who is affected by the loss.

The vigil held during the evening is usually a closed affair for family members. Membership is not strict, but it is understood that it is intended for close and extended family, men and women, as well as important persons such as the priest and the mayor.

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<sup>61</sup> There is no possibility of refrigeration in the village.

<sup>62</sup> In local parlance, people refer to the neighbouring village using their relative positioning. For example, Galoc is called 1<sup>st</sup> village as it is next to Palágy-Komoróc. Obviously this requires a certain knowledge of local geography.

The burial takes place the next day, and many make their way to the courtyard as the bell tolls. The gathering can stretch all the way to the street. The casket is closed in the courtyard; chairs are set up to accommodate the family and the important persons. The rest of the crowd remains standing and people recognize each other in the crowd, hands are shaken, groups are formed, often by gender. People of all three faiths come to pay their respects.<sup>63</sup> Once the priest has finished his blessings, the casket is loaded onto the hearse pulled by a Lada, and the procession begins towards the cemetery at the edge of the village. At each intersection, groups of people leave the procession, and, by the time we get to the cemetery, more than half have left, still leaving a good number to attend the short burial ceremony. From then on, only the immediate relative return to the house for the wake. It is common for friends of the family to help prepare some food to serve to the guests.<sup>64</sup>

The late Dezső's family structure represents one of the configurations found in the region. It is based on a multi-generational<sup>65</sup> family structure living in a house. There is an informal hierarchy established within the household through which work is organized. From a temporal perspective, this arrangement is based on continuity, in which the oldest child marries and becomes the head of the household. Beyond the household, the structure of the extended family is complex but takes the form of concentric circles covering the region. It is generally, but not exclusively, a patriarchal system: it is the oldest son who remains, while the younger siblings are sent to marry.

For those in the village who live a generationally nested life, the idea of growing old, becoming sick and dying is, if not reassuring, a predictable process in an

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<sup>63</sup> Reformed, Roman and Greek Catholic.

<sup>64</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 13 June 2011.

<sup>65</sup> The "typical" structure observed is based three on generations.

environment where care is provided by loved ones. It is not uncommon to hear older people say that they are now ready to join the other world, their time on earth being done. They not only express weariness of earthly life, but also their idea of continuity and the natural order of things.

For those who take care of the dying, the mourning period starts with the passage from life to death. Dying is a process, not a moment. About sixty-five years ago, András's mother was sent from her village in the mountains<sup>66</sup> to marry a man she barely knew, in Kisszelmenc. She wasn't even twenty and couldn't speak a word of Hungarian. Today, she lives surrounded by her family: her husband, András; her son András and his wife Anikó; and her grandson Mate. Long life and hard work have taken their toll, and although she cherishes her family and goes to church every Sunday, she expresses openly her tiredness of living, and begs God to relieve her from earthly life. No one in the household is offended by those words<sup>67</sup>, acting as the passage of time and expressing the normalcy of the inevitable.

This "traditional" household setting is met with another perspective in the village. "Udvarok halnak", the "courtyards are dying out" as Fejér József, an elderly man describes the phenomenon in which the young are moving out, leaving the elders with no one to replace them and take care of them.<sup>68</sup> Demographically, the region of Zakarpattia follows the national Ukrainian negative demographic trend caused by migration and negative population growth.<sup>69</sup> The interest in statistics regarding the population in

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<sup>66</sup> "The mountains" often referred to are the Carpathian mountains.

<sup>67</sup> Fieldnotes, Kisszelmenc, August 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Fieldnotes, 18 June 2011.

<sup>69</sup> State statistics of Ukraine, All Ukrainian Population Census 2001, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>

general, and of minorities in particular, produced a number of such studies<sup>70</sup> in the region,<sup>71</sup> and the downward trend seems exacerbated in rural regions. Not only is the younger generation seeking opportunities abroad, another portion is simply not interested in the farming business.<sup>72</sup>

Like many along her street, Szabadság utca (Freedom Street), Zsófia lives alone in her big house. She came here some 30 years ago from Botfálva, a neighbouring village, to marry Balázs, a mason. She joined the household with Balázs's parents and soon, she had two children. Balázs's parents died, and soon after that, he died of cancer. Her younger child, Betti, married and joined her husband's household in the second village, Sislóc; Her older child, Kati, to whom the house and the land would go, decided to move to Budapest a few years ago. At 59, Zsófia has been living by herself for the best of ten years and she represents a reality that parallels the other: she lives alone in her big farm house not knowing what the next day will bring, but more importantly, not knowing who will take care of her if she gets sick.<sup>73</sup>

For many like Zsófia in Palágy-Komoróc, checking on friends is part of a daily routine. The fear of dying alone and not being discovered in time creates an implicit movement of solidarity amongst friends and neighbors<sup>74</sup> that is extended to sickness and daily chores. As we observe the movements and interactions in the village, we can

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<sup>70</sup> Not exclusively, but the Hungarian government and associated NGOs and universities support many agencies and studies related to Hungarian minorities all around Hungary.

<sup>71</sup> For more on Zakarpattia specific, consult Fedinec, C. and M. Vehesh (2010). Kárpátalja : 1919-2009 : történelem, politika, kultúra. Budapest, Argumentum.and Fodor, G. (2010). A humán erőforrás-fejlesztés helyzete Kárpátalján Interetnikus megközelítésben. PhD, Debreceni Egyetem.

<sup>72</sup> This explanation is present both in statistics and in local discourse. Amongst many, Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 13 June 2011. My aim here, however, is not to attribute causality, but rather to underline the fact that the "traditional" nested household organization is met with another reality.

<sup>73</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 16 June 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Many make explicit arrangements as to what they want to wear when dead, where they want to lay in the house, etc.

initially identify two trends. First, we find a type of autarky within the multigenerational households. These households tend to fend for themselves and absorb the different types of crisis the family may encounter. This may apply to caring for a sick family member, like Szilvia, who fell ill with pneumonia, or providing for manpower to harvest the grapes in the household plot. The second type described is the mono-generational type of household that, contrary to the first, creates linkages well beyond the house, the street, the village, and well beyond the close and extended family. In this configuration, expectations for support because of family values are transformed into an elaborate mix of friendship and exchange arrangements.<sup>75</sup>

If we attempt to analyze these interactions in terms of socially constructed spaces, we can start sketching on our canvas two different lines. The multigenerational household based interactions show a neat, matrioshka-like nesting. The inner family based on the household is the nucleus, followed by the second scale provided by the close family, and the third, the extended family. Neighbors, friends, and people with status like the mayor and the priest follow this inner circle. This neat nesting of scales represented by the relations within a household, the village, and extending to the surrounding villages is clearly expressed in everyday parlance.

Palágy-Komoróc being the centre, villagers refer to locations using the terms 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc. villages. For Palágy-Komoróc, the 1<sup>st</sup> villages would be Kisszelmenc, Gáloc and Szürte. The 2<sup>nd</sup> villages would be Téglás, Bátfa etc. This discursive way of organizing space is accompanied by an even more elaborate referencing to lineage.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Exchange arrangements are discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>76</sup> Referencing people follows a very elaborate linguistic protocol that includes not only immediate family (grand parents, cousins, aunts, uncles etc.), but also “removed” or cross-generational relations. It also includes the referencing of in-laws in multiple generations. The difficulty of cutting through this elaborate

Once done with this three dimensional metaphorical sketching, we see a series of nested families, all intersecting horizontally with other families.

In this model, the physical epicenter for interactions is the household based on the home. Although people meet outside their home, at the store, the church or the café, the centre of gravity for interactions, the place where existential comfort is sought, remains the household. Second, although complex, the discursive coding utilized to describe either the village (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup>) or the position in the family tree is either learned from the moment one joins a household, or, as a newcomer or foreigner,<sup>77</sup> by immersion and learning the intricate coding. Notwithstanding the time it takes to acquire the knowledge to *understand* the relationships, the spatial construct of this model is made up of a number of sealed social receptacles that are linked to others by passageways. To move about these social constructs usually requires access and the knowledge of how to communicate and navigate them.

As we attempt to sketch the second type of interactions, the production of space as a form of social relations (Agnew John A 2007), or scaling<sup>78</sup>, highlights a number of overlapping and sometimes conflicting spatial realms. In this instance, we are pushed from nesting to a process of uncovering complex networks. When we begin observing and tracing the relationships that create the spatial construct, we quickly realize that the

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way of referencing is exacerbated by the common repetition of first names, making it difficult to differentiate people without knowing their position in the family tree. For example, just referring to “Betti” may only narrow the choice to at least a few options within a “family”.

<sup>77</sup> As in a new settler in the village or as a researcher like me.

<sup>78</sup> I use scaling as used in the literature in (political) geography, as a conceptualization of space through social relations. It is not meant to represent an ontological reality, but a framework of analysis. Marston, S. A. (2000). "The social construction of scale." *Progress in Human Geography* 24(2): 219-242, Brenner, N. (2001). "The limits to scale? Methodological reflections on scalar structuration." *Ibid.* 25(4): 591-614, Paasi, A. (2004). "Place and region: looking through the prism of scale." *Ibid.* 28: 536-546, Howitt, R. (2008). *Scale. A Companion to Political Geography*. M. K. T. G. Agnew John A. Malden, Blackwell, Moore, A. (2008). "Rethinking scale as a geographical category: from analysis to practice." *Progress in Human Geography* 32(2): 203-225, MacKinnon, D. (2010). "Reconstructing scale: Towards a new scalar politics." *Ibid.* 35(1): 21-36.

neat physicality of the nested household is replaced by a system made of nodes and movements.

The nodes are physical or virtual places where people interact; they could be houses, but also benches where people discuss; the café where people meet; the church where people gather sometimes according to their faith, sometimes according to their language, and even sometimes just to be with friends.<sup>79</sup> They could be virtual: interacting with people over the phone or on the Internet is commonplace to maintain contact with people who might be geographically distant. In this case, those who have Internet connections readily let others use it.

The discursive referencing system is also adapted to this second construct. Rather than identifying relations by using the structured coding used for genealogy, we enter a world where informal knowledge becomes dominant, where people are referred to in a multitude of ways, and usually using multiple layers of description. This means that the first descriptor is usually the first name and the last or family name. But as many first names and last names are common in the region, people add another layer to the descriptor, using either the relative position in the family of the person described (requiring thorough knowledge of that person's family tree), a geographical reference (a house, a village), a status (the teacher's husband) etc.<sup>80</sup> This type of knowledge has three characteristics. First, it is acquired through interacting as it is not a given to a set structure. Second, it changes and evolves as not only does it follow the movement of people, but it also adapts to the relative importance of the relationship. Finally, unlike the

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<sup>79</sup> It is not uncommon to see people from one faith attend the service of someone from another faith.

<sup>80</sup> Descriptive are very elaborate and sometimes redundant. For example, one might hear "yellow pizzeria", but there is only one pizzeria in the neighbouring village, or "the American woman with short hair", but there is only one American woman in the vicinity.

nested structure in which one's relative importance is associated with one's position in the structure by a process of codification (son, father, uncle, etc.), the networked structure presents a fluid and changing approach to designate relative importance. In other words, my position today may be of relative importance because I have something people want, whereas tomorrow, I may become relatively unimportant if individuals' wants or needs should change.<sup>81</sup>

It is the movement between the nodes that exposes the physicality of the spatial construct. Without that observation, sitting in the middle of the village or the region, the whole construct would seem to be transparent, and as people move from node to node to interact, the giant web of social relations would remain unseen. This web is spun every day, every moment, as relationships are created and severed. They are observable through the relative monotony of daily life, on benches while waiting for the cows to come home, at the store or at church. Every day, on Szabadság Street facing the park, and in the path connecting the household plots behind the houses, there is an incessant, though subtle movement. Alfréd is going from house to house to help his lonely neighbors in exchange for some wine. Éva néni is checking on her old neighbor couple, Cecilia and Demeter, while Zsófia lends money to Irénke who just had some bad luck. There are many benign interactions of this nature every day. But every once in a while, they polarize around an event.

Éva néni, 74, is married to Károly, himself in his 70s, sick and requiring constant attention. Their son, Ákos, has decided not to stay in the family home and left about ten

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<sup>81</sup> Irénke is a friendly figure in the network, and is sometimes dependent financially on others to sustain her (now grown) son. This dependence, however, is punctually switched when one of her creditors needs her to intercede with her husband László to help or assist in some way. These two types of interactions are not treated interdependently (in other words, favour does not imply a return in kind, or the expectation of a favour in return).

years ago for Hungary to make a living. Their daughter, meanwhile, married and left for the city of Ungvár with her husband. In January of 2011, Éva's kitchen caught fire, smoke poured from the courtyard from number 8 Szabadság Street, and very soon, the whole street was alerted. With no fire department to speak of in case of emergency, neighbors came to help extinguish the fire and pull old Károly out of the house. The incident in itself is somewhat banal: Éva néni had washed her husband's clothes and, as usual, hung them above the kitchen stove to dry. Unfortunately that day, a piece of clothing fell on the stove and caught fire while she was out running errands, and Károly, her husband, slept in the next room. When she asked him why he didn't put out the fire, his only answer was that he was waiting on her to do that.<sup>82</sup>

In this incident, a node became predominant and the movements converged to provide assistance, not only just at first, but also for months afterwards as villagers pitched in to clean the premises and provide food. Should a similar incident occur in a nested model household, we would observe a similar surge for help in the first moments, but rather quickly the household would re-establish its own semi-autonomous and integrated form.

Multi-generation households tend to be self-sufficient in providing for their own sense of security. Márton owns his two-storey home and works his 8 hectares of field every day. His wife, Szilvia, works as a midwife in a hospital in Ungvár. Their son, Oliver, works the fields with his father while his wife works in Ungvár as well. They have a son, János, who goes to high school. Recently, Szilvia fell very ill, to the point where she had to take a leave of absence, with no pay.<sup>83</sup> Although the episode was

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<sup>82</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 June 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 14 March 2012.

dramatic and stressful, the household's social structure provided for the continuity and survival of all, including her care. In this instance, the node flared up, attracting attention for a moment but the relative autonomy of the nested model worked to care for itself and the noticeable movements remained mostly at the level of neighborly concern.

These movements, one could argue, do not discriminate or exclude the people from either model from interacting with each other. In fact, the two models are overlapping and integrated. This type of scaling opens a window on types of relations without denying the complexity of the system and the interaction between them. Moreover, as we will see, these two models of interactions are not the only ones at play in Palágy-Komoróc: the system is more complex than the sum of its parts: first, there are other relational systems in the village and beyond.<sup>84</sup> Second, systems are overlapping and integrated, meaning that they are conceptual constructs across which people may travel simultaneously.<sup>85</sup>

The following example describes this integration. Kati, Zsófia's daughter, and her husband, Rudi, live outside Budapest. When Rudi's grand-mother, who lived in an adjacent village to Palágy-Komoróc,<sup>86</sup> became very ill, Zsófia felt compelled to replace her daughter Kati to provide support and inquire about the progress of the sickness. Normally, this would have been Kati's responsibility, but given the distance, Zsófia took it upon herself to replace her daughter. At the funeral, since Kati and her husband did not return for the ceremonies, Zsófia filled in, bringing food and replacing her daughter

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<sup>84</sup> That will be presented in subsequent sections and chapters.

<sup>85</sup> Luhmann's systems theorization will be explored further in the dissertation. For more, see Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social systems*, Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, Moeller, H.-G. (2006). *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*, Open Court. Moeller, H.-G. (2012). *The Radical Luhmann*, Columbia University Press.

<sup>86</sup> Rudi is Zsófia's son in law (husband of Nora, Zsófia's daughter). His grandmother fell ill, and eventually died.

during the three-day event.<sup>87</sup> In this example, we see a reconstruction or an adaptation of what was perceived by Zsófia as an anomaly. She “felt” that she owed it not only to her daughter, but also out of respect to her son in law’s grandmother. Zsófia has lived, speaks about and understands the nested structure. She often reminisces about the past when she lived in such a household, with her husband, parents-in-law and children. She even re-creates it on occasion, discursively and on the very occasional family reunions. But now she lives in a networked setting in which family, friends and relationships are nodes for interaction and support.

In the light of this initial inquiry, we can begin to explore the idea of (in) security based on the social organization of the villagers. From the perspective of socially constructed space, we observe that interactions create a feeling of security as well as concrete measures in case of need. Based on the two forms analyzed, nested and networked, people are adopting one of the systems according to the family structure available to them. However, these “systems” have two characteristics: they are transparent to the people in the sense that they do not represent separate ontological realities to them; and the systems are not mutually exclusive as they are totally integrated to create one reality.<sup>88</sup>

We have also introduced the notion of knowledge as a social construct necessary for navigating social space, both discursively and physically. Here, the concept of knowledge encompasses Polanyi's explicit and tacit knowledge (1966). The first is quite self-explanatory as it represents knowledge expressed through language. The second, tacit knowledge, has two particularities of interest for our current work. First, it is

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<sup>87</sup> Fieldnotes, 13 June 2011. Zsófia assisted in preparing food for the vigil, attended the burial ceremony and was invited to the post-burial gathering.

<sup>88</sup> To use an analogy, it is not like a gated community and poor suburb living side by side.

acquired through experience, and as such applies to the case of Palágy-Komoróc and the understanding and reproduction of the social system. Second, it addresses an unexplored dimension of knowledge that resides within the individual's experience. As such, it works in opposition to value-free knowledge and invites the investigation of normative or perspectivist foundations for knowledge. It is only one step for us to integrate knowledge as part and parcel of the construction of the social system we are observing. Not only is the knowledge itself of interest, but its origin and its evolution should help us delineate the system under scrutiny.

In the nested form, knowledge is necessary for navigating within a complex, although predictable social structure. The network form requires a more fluid approach to knowledge, one that leaves space for change and adaptation. Both types are accessible to, if not necessary, for all, but vary in importance depending on one's relative position. Finally, knowledge is not only necessary to create and maintain a social system; it also provides opportunities to maneuver, and as we will see later, to exploit it to create opportunities--for political or economical advancement for example.

As both constructs overlap and interact, we see the integration in one spatial realm. It would be more precise, however, to define this process as the separation of one realm in two constructs. It is as if we were observing one metaphorical theatre stage called Palágy-Komoróc and identified what appears to be two different ways of socially creating space. The troubling part is that we see the same actors interacting in both realms. This is because I am observing one stage and cognitively organizing it to better understand it. Instead of cutting apart the social players into variables, what we can do is to keep our focus on the patterns of interactions and what they can tell us. The next

sections builds on this initial discovery we have created and discusses the issue of togetherness.

### 2.4.3 Living Together – Mapping

The notion of living together is central to my endeavor and joins in with the general recognition that the social world in the most general terms is complex and intertwined. It cannot be dissected in neat little pieces but rather is better understood through deconstructive processes (Rosenau 1992). With togetherness, I conceptualize political society from the point of view of the interactions and linkages that create the existence of political society.<sup>89</sup> Even under the worst conditions, human beings live “together.” Concurrently, by observing these connections, I want to unveil the fault lines or points of tension that create the possibility of Otherness—not as the self-reflexive individual creating her\his own identity, but rather the creation of polarizing interactions that are either latent or invisible because of the absence of apparent violence or tension.

In order to unveil togetherness, I first deconstruct the village from a spatial point of view. Placed in historical perspective, the spatial analysis through discourse and enactment gives us an initial glimpse of the socio-political construction of the village. For the newcomer to Palágy-Komoróc, it is first and foremost the physicality of the place that exposes the ideas of system and differentiation. These two concepts work simultaneously and are necessary to expose one another (Luhmann 1977). Before even engaging in discussions with people, one becomes quickly aware of the long historical perspective that creates today’s socio-political arrangement. Lying on the western side of the

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<sup>89</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the political “...in contrast, is shared thinking on social phenomena, the process through which society composes itself.” Granasztói, G. (2011). "2010: What Happened? The Reconstitution of the Political." *Hungarian Review* II(5): 36-50.

Carpathian Mountains, on the edge of the Carpathian basin, or today's Hungary, Transcarpathia or Zakarpattia has been the ground for many fights and invasions. It is, it seems, a land of passage that is met with the discourse of continuity, of eternal Hungarianness<sup>90</sup> (Bálint 1939). "Palád" appears in official documents of the Anjou dynasty as early as 1325, and since then, has had a physical reality, if only demonstrated by the now Reformist Church standing in the middle of the village since the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Haraszi 1931).

*Private spaces: houses in Palágy-Komoróc*

From a bird's eye view, Palágy-Komoróc shows an agglomeration made of single houses<sup>91</sup> and a number of more important buildings along streets and green spaces. Three main roads converge at the centre of the village: one connecting to her (current) sister village, Kisszelmenc,<sup>92</sup> and Slovakia<sup>93</sup> to the South-West; one connecting to the city of Csap (Chop) and to Hungary<sup>94</sup> to the South East; and a third road connecting to today's Ungvár (Uzhhorod)<sup>95</sup> and Ukraine to the North<sup>96</sup>. Finally, the village is surrounded by fields, evidence of its agrarian heritage.

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<sup>90</sup> The historical narrative describing the presence of Magyars since the 862 AD is omnipresent in Hungary. One has only to go to any bookstore in Hungary to be overwhelmed by the literature establishing historical proprietorship over the territory of the Carpathian basin. Zakarpattia plays a central role as it is through the Verecke pass (Verecke hago), in the now Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains, that Arpad and his followers came to the Carpathian basin to establish the Magyar territory.

<sup>91</sup> There are about 250 houses in the village, according to the Town Hall's administrative staff.

<sup>92</sup> Kisszelmenc and Palágy-Komoróc are currently sister villages as they are under the same administrative purview since the Soviet period. They share the same mayor and everything that relates to local administration. This arrangement is not however the reflection of a long historical relationship and is rather recent (20<sup>th</sup> century). The separation between the two prior to the current administrative organization was based on religious belief, Kisszelmenc housing the Roman Catholic Church, Palágy-Komoróc the Reformist and Greek Catholic.

<sup>93</sup> Between the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and 1938, the region belonged to Czechoslovakia.

<sup>94</sup> Csap (Chop, Чоп) was an important railway station during the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg period. At the end of WW I, it was cut from Hungary to be attached to Czechoslovakia. From 1938 to 1945, the whole region was occupied by Hungary.

<sup>95</sup> Ungvár is the Hungarian name for this administrative town that currently houses the "oblast's" or province's parliament. Hungarian history traces the history of the city back to Arpad (the leader of the first



**Figure 5: Palágy-Komoróc. Yellow line represents border with Slovakia**

The dominant style of housing is locally referred to as “kocka ház” or literally “cube house”, a product of post-WW II Soviet type constructions. These houses provided a standard set of facilities and were easily reproduced, although they required local adaptation to accommodate not only multi-generation families, but also life in a rural area.<sup>97</sup> These types of houses are either seen in their original form, with the normal signs of aging<sup>98</sup> or partially renovated.

If the kocka ház is the temporal median for construction in the village, and the most common, then the long farmhouse stands as the elder. Often built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>99</sup> their long, uniform rectangular shapes are easily identified: they are functionally built, providing for all the necessities within the building itself. Nowadays,

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Magyars) that after having crossed the famous Verecke pass in today’s Ukraine’s Carpathian Mountains, he took possession of Ungvár .

<sup>96</sup> The word “Ukraine” is often used locally to indicate a place beyond Zakarpattia. Similarly, the word “Ukrainian” often indicates an unspecified other.

<sup>97</sup> These extensions vary from stables to granary, but also summer kitchens. Often, the winter kitchen is separated from the original construction.

<sup>98</sup> For these houses the signs of aging are cracks in the walls, roofs requiring work, and the original greyish colour marked by dark streaks.

<sup>99</sup> Cecilia and Alfréd’s house on Szabadság Street dates back to 1922. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 4 July 2011.

those long houses can be seen in generally two forms: first, as old and decrepit and on the verge of falling apart; or completely renewed through obviously massive injections of money. With the slowly disappearing long houses, we find the most recent type of Soviet style building: the two-storey home dating to the 1960s. The main characteristic differentiating it from its predecessors is that it can house two independently living families. Today, these houses are still inhabited by either an elder or an older couple, or by a multi-generational household sharing the same building. Some of them house separate households with no family affiliation.<sup>100</sup> Last, the more recent type of housing seen in Palágy-Komoróc has been built over the last twenty years and does not resemble at all the Soviet format but rather the more recent architecture frequently seen in the suburbs of Ungvár.<sup>101</sup> These houses are few and are found at the southern end of the village where land is still available for construction.<sup>102</sup>

These four types of housing, each representing a different period in twentieth century history, are lined up side by side along the streets of Palágy-Komoróc. They face the street and are fenced, often guarded by dogs, whose announced functions seem to vary, but in any case fend off unwanted trespassers. The first impression for any outsider walking through the village along a road is one of exclusion and incapacity to enter the private lair that a household seems to represent. In the village, the philosophical

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<sup>100</sup> As a note, Szilvia and her husband applied for a construction permit in 1985 for a “kocka”. Their request was denied and they were forced to build a two-storey house. Today, they live on the ground floor and their son with his wife and son on the second floor. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 25 June 2011.

<sup>101</sup> Órdarma, near Ungvár, is such an example. Passing it through by bus on the way to the city, one can see the line-up of houses recently built or under construction. Usually quite massive and high, they offer a sense of “nouveau-riche”: kitsch with Greek columns and long driveways, sturdy fences and manicured lawns.

<sup>102</sup> Agricultural fields are immediately adjacent to the Northern edge of the village. Westward, towards Kisszelmenc, there is a large piece of land that formerly housed the tractor company of the kolkhoz that theoretically could be available for rezoning and construction. However, “nobody seems to know” who the land belongs to. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 March 2012 (Interview with senior administrator at the Town hall).

discussion about public and private spaces and where the line between the two dimensions pass seems irrelevant. From a social point of view, it is clear in daily practices that only those who have been granted permission to the inner circle of a household have access, such as Alfréd who visits his neighbors on a daily basis to visit them or Erzébet calling on her friend unannounced.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, if one is to interpret the public realm as the regulation mechanisms imposed by a form of government, then in this case as well, the dividing line clearly excludes the households. As discussed earlier in the case of Éva néni's fire in her home, there is no clear requirement for insurance to cover any form of responsibility nor is there any efficient form of fire prevention in the village. With regards to protecting private property, Sanyi's experience of calling the "milicija", the Ukrainian police, is quite telling. When he asked what could be done with regards to items being stolen from his home, the answer came: "protect it!"<sup>104</sup> As another example, abuse of alcohol and domestic violence both occur but are rarely discussed in public, and they are treated solely as private matters. In the end, the household remains the social structure within which solutions need to be found. Few people even know the number of police officers dedicated to the region and the mayor (polgármester)<sup>105</sup> is the person people to call on

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<sup>103</sup> Entering a household follows a certain non-written protocol. Sometimes close friends will enter freely the inner court, while family will be standing outside, shouting to request access. Having access to the inner courtyard does not automatically grant permission to enter the house. Here too, there is a protocol of hierarchy.

<sup>104</sup> "Vigyáz rá!" were the exact words. "Vigyázni" is a verb better translated as "watch over" or "guard". Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 11 July 2011

<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, the word "bíró" meaning "judge" in Hungarian is used frequently by the villagers when speaking of the mayor. The latter rejects the term as he does not want to be perceived as an arbiter of issues. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 2 August 2011. (Interview with the mayor of Palágy-Komoróc)

when help is required.<sup>106</sup> Here, the expression “the state has no business in our bedrooms” is to be understood quite literally.

*Waiting for the cows to come home: interaction at the street level*

Social interactions in Palágy-Komoróc begin at the street level, in the evening when everyone sits in front of their home. Every morning, the cows are sent out to graze with the shepherd and in the evening, as can be seen in many villages in Zakarpattia before sunset, people are outside their homes, on benches that are built for that special purpose: waiting for the cows to come home. It is a pause in a hard day’s work that often starts before the sun rises, and people leave their affairs momentarily to gather and discuss. It is a way to account for everyone, and if somebody misses the daily event, it is noted, not as fault, but rather as point of concern. Everyone on the street mingles, regardless of origin or language. This moment that can last as long as two hours when people meet each other is quite revealing. What seems like gossip at first is really an exercise in exchange and discussing about people in the village and their relatives. Everyone knows about everyone and through these conversations, the village becomes connected, sharing the pain and the joy through the gossip and the stories. Here we learn when a cow had a calf or somebody got sick. Almost no story goes untold, no event unscrutinized and at any one time. Truth takes many forms, and in the end finds a consensus, demystifying and often breaking antagonisms.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> The resolution of domestic violence remains essentially within the family structure, close and extended. There are no “safe houses” or “hot lines” that people know of. The notion that the police might become involved in a positive way is hopeful at best. People prefer to keep the issues private. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 18 August 2011 (conversation with the Reformist minister).

<sup>107</sup> Discussion relating to other people in the village often serves as clarifying an event or issue through an exercise of building a story with pieces of information. A person will start by saying that (s)he saw so and so take the bus, another will jump in saying that the person was going to the hospital in Ungvár, another will tell about the relative sick and hospitalized etc...

It is also an important moment for sharing information about politics and policies. Access to media information being uneven amongst the villagers,<sup>108</sup> every evening there is convergence of information on different issues. For example, as the Hungarian state began the process of “honosítás” or granting Hungarian citizenship to Magyars living outside Hungary in January 2011, the discussion around the issue became more and more animated. By June 2011, a first group of eight people were sworn in at the consulate in Ungvár, and following that, there was explicit pressure on the population applied by the Ukrainian government agencies.<sup>109</sup> This event brought endless discussions about the scare from the “SBU”<sup>110</sup>, ranging from physical threat, administrative harassment such as denial of visas or indirect pressure on relatives working for the government; and discussions concerning the whole process: how to go about applying; what would be the advantages and disadvantages; and the important, but somewhat improbable possibility for a pensioner to receive social support from Hungary once across the border.

These evening discussions become an odd blend between maintaining social connections and creating the space for public debate. In these moments, there is no force of vote, but it is the space where discussions about issues affecting the people morph from the household, and become public. Villagers discuss the next trip organized for the local retiree club or the noise generated by the Saturday evening dances. But it is also the space for substantial issues for which there is no real access for debate: whether it is the

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<sup>108</sup> Many Hungarian-speaking people orient their TV antennas towards Hungary, getting little or no local, regional and Ukrainian national news. Many of them receive the weekly journal “Kárpát Igaz Szo” that treats Zakarpattia issues from a Hungarian speaking perspective. Internet connexion is available, but not everyone finds the money to buy it. On Szabadság Street, only Szilvia’s house has a connection, and neighbours go to her place mostly to converse on Skype.

<sup>109</sup> People were interrogated on their motivation and about other people applying. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 June 2011 Public servants and people occupying functions such school director and such are denied the right to apply. Fieldnotes 11 June 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Служба безпеки України or the Ukrainian secret service.

construction of a waste treatment centre<sup>111</sup>, the opening of the border to vehicles<sup>112</sup> or the way in which Balogh, the local entrepreneur, will pay for use of the land he leases,<sup>113</sup> knowledge about issues are compared, preferences expressed, opinions discussed. These informal exchanges amongst neighbors are crucial in maintaining if not a public debate in the formal sense of the word, then at least providing a forum where discontent, or at least opinion is expressed, created, and shared about current policy.

Attendance at these evening meetings, however, is slowly, but constantly diminishing for two reasons. First, as the economy fluctuates, the price of keeping a cow (or cows) at home surpasses the benefits of selling the milk and simply buying dairy at the store, prompting more and more people to get rid of their cow(s).<sup>114</sup> This changes the demographic and the number of people sitting and discussing in the evening, leaving the still standing cow owners as well as those elderly people keeping the habit of socialization after a day's work. This tendency is compounded by the "generational" movement as courtyards are dying out, abandoned by their owners, such as Zsófia's two neighbors; or bought by a new generation of owners coming from "the mountains"<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> A Spanish consortium was to establish an ultra-modern environmentally friendly waste treatment facility, creating many jobs for the region. According to the mayor, the project died mainly because the people did not want it. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 3 August 2011.

<sup>112</sup> Since its opening in 2005, the border in neighbouring Kisszelmenc is only for people on foot.

<sup>113</sup> At the end of the Soviet regime, the collectivised land was redistributed. Many people could not exploit the land and leased their share to a local entrepreneur (Balogh) in exchange for a yearly fee paid in kind. For more on the subject in the Post Soviet space, Allina-Pisano, J. (2008). The post-Soviet Potemkin village : politics and property rights in the black earth. New York, NY, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>114</sup> Direct costs related to cows: salary of the shepherd (in the village, all cows owners share the salary of the shepherd on an annual basis. There are two herds of cows in Palágy-Komoróc); hay (feeding the cow(s) is the main issue. For farmers, hay comes from their fields. For others, the issue is more problematic. This will be discussed in the next section); vaccines and medical.

<sup>115</sup> The expression "comes from the mountain" (hegyekből jön) is generally used to qualify a person, usually a woman, who joined a household and came from beyond Ungvár towards the Carpathian mountains (vice the plain towards Munkács and Beregszász). The more recent usage also designates newcomers to the village who buy a house and establish themselves. In either case, it was not perceived as pejorative but mostly to indicate two factors: the person is not from here; and comes from the Carpathian Mountains. It may also underline the non-Magyar origin of the person.

The intricate bonding based on communal life is morphing into a different social arrangement.

*(Re) creating interaction*

Two sets of buildings sit unremarkably at the edges of Palágy-Komoróc. To the east, the big metal frame of the building housing the former tractor brigade and the adjacent administrative building of the defunct “Golden Ring” kolkhoz stand in the middle of a field. To the south, a series of buildings overtaken by nature are the relics of the kolkhoz' cattle brigade. Here, a few buildings remain active, taken over by private interests.<sup>116</sup> Until 2000, the kolkhoz was vibrant and life in the village revolved around it. Both the tractor and the cattle brigades employed many women and men in the village, and even if there were “independent” tradesmen<sup>117</sup> or others like Blumenthal Béla working in a hotel in Ungvár, most people were linked, directly or indirectly to the kolkhoz. For men and women; Magyars, Roms or Ukrainians; leaders and workers; the kolkhoz was more than an enterprise, it was a social forum, where people were working, eating, borrowing tools, sending their children to kindergarten.

Over the nine years between 1991 and 2000 during which the kolkhoz system was slowly replaced by private enterprise, to be finally reorganized by Presidential decree in 2000, the social gathering system changed fundamentally, creating quite a different landscape for social exchange. Mapping today's interaction map shows a series of nodes marked in time and space. Some of these nodes become sharper at specific times, like church, school and community centre; others know a more constant, uninterrupted flow

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<sup>116</sup> Balogh, the previously mentioned entrepreneur, is central to the exploitation of the facilities. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

<sup>117</sup> For example, Balázs, Zsófia's husband, was a mason, and thus not working for the kolkhoz per se.

of activity, like the general stores and the cemeteries. What is notable in these two views is that although they provide forums of exchange to people, they segregate and separate the community rather than unify them.

Of the sharper, punctual nodes of social interactions, the most prominent are the churches. Both Greek Catholic and Reformist churches in Palágy-Komoróc attract a congregation for Sunday services,<sup>118</sup> and possibly even more for specific events like burials or religious events. When entering the Reformist Church of Palágy-Komoróc, our attention is naturally attracted towards the national Hungarian flag with a shield inside, hung on the wall above the altar. The priest is proud to speak of “magyarság”<sup>119</sup>, making sure to differentiate their cultural affiliation and the political reality of the state of Hungary: being "Magyar" is not a political affair, he insists; rather, it is a cultural reality anchored in “language and history”.<sup>120</sup> Everyone is welcome to the church although all services are in Hungarian. Like the Russian-speaking Ludmila who married Péter a long time ago and attends services, one needs to adapt.<sup>121</sup>

About a hundred meters further, in sharp contrast to the sober architecture of the Református church, the Greek Catholic church stands bright and yellow, proof of the recent revival of the Church.<sup>122</sup> Here, arguably in a more tangible effort to open the door to non-Hungarian speaking followers, the priest offers some services in Ukrainian. However, this openness remains the decision of the priest, and lately the Ukrainian

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<sup>118</sup> There is a Roman Catholic church in Kisszelmenc. Many Roman Catholic worshippers, due to old age, were allowed to celebrate in the Greek Catholic Church.

<sup>119</sup> I use “magyarság” and “magyar” as Hungarianness in the broader sense (culture, language, history) in opposition to nationalistic discourse.

<sup>120</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 August 2011 (discussion with Reformist priest).

<sup>121</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 August 2011.

<sup>122</sup> Both Roman and Greek Catholic Churches were banned during the Soviet era. The Orthodox and Reformist Churches were allowed to operate. Fedinec, C. and M. Vehesh (2010). *Kárpátalja : 1919-2009 : történelem, politika, kultúra*. Budapest, Argumentum. The Greek Catholic church was transformed into a sport centre. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, Budapest, 25 December 2011.

language services were held very early on Sunday mornings at seven. Magyariness remains the focal point of the Greek Catholic priest as well, as expressed in Jenő atya's<sup>123</sup> sermon addressed to his audience before he was transferred<sup>124</sup>: "Palágy jobb lesz, mikor lesz több gyerekek, magyar emberek" (Palágy will be better, when there will be more children, Magyar people).<sup>125</sup>

Although relative attendance at church services tends to be low,<sup>126</sup> the majority of the villagers identifies with a faith. Marriages within the community are often mixed in that the bride and the groom may come from different faiths<sup>127</sup> and are almost always celebrated in church following a set of prescribed rules and traditions. According to the local habit, the religious ceremony follows the faith of the bride. When children are born, daughters usually follow the faith of their mother, while sons follow the faith of their fathers.<sup>128</sup> After years of mixing, mapping the village along religious lines brings us well into the realm of the household and shows very intricate connections all the way to the core of the private space. It also shows a fracture along lines based on language and perceived origins.

All three Christian churches in the immediate area<sup>129</sup> seem to give a strong sense of Magyariness by not only providing services and ceremonies in Hungarian, but also advocating for strengthening the presence of the language. On the other hand, by failing

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<sup>123</sup> "Atya" means "father" in Hungarian.

<sup>124</sup> Jenő atya has been replaced since by Péter atya in August 2011 as the Greek Catholic priest in Palágy-Komoróc.

<sup>125</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 7 August 2011 (Greek Catholic priest's sermon).

<sup>126</sup> Other than on religious celebrations, which tend to attract more people, attendance at any one church on ordinary Sundays vary between 15 and 40 people per church. Demographically, it tends to lean towards older generation, although a good proportion is middle-aged. There are slightly more women than men in general. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, over the period of observation.

<sup>127</sup> According to the Roman Catholic priest, "mixed" faith marriages were not permitted until the 1940's. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 3 August 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 9 August 2011.

<sup>129</sup> The third one is the Roman Catholic church, which is located in the sister village of Kisszelmenc.

to provide, or by providing only a minimal, and somewhat unpractical level of service to non-Hungarian speakers, they exclude the latter from potential interaction.<sup>130</sup>

### *Changing landscape*

Walking through the cemeteries of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc, we see not only the mixing of faiths<sup>131</sup> and origins<sup>132</sup> between family plots, but also within them.<sup>133</sup> Things are changing. As Liuda, the old Russian lady, or András' mother became totally fluent in Hungarian, a new generation of newcomers is settling in. Scattered discretely amongst the households of the villages, we find some of the houses occupied by a new breed of settlers. Halyna is about thirty years old and came to live in Kisszelmenc, where her husband is on duty at the border crossing. With two children, she works full time as a teacher in a Ukrainian school in Ungvár. Neither she, her husband, nor her children speak Hungarian. This young couple represents the more recent trend modifying the social landscape of not only the village, but also the whole region. Mobile, seeking opportunities or responding to professional exigencies, they represent the increasing number of recently created households coming from elsewhere in the region or even further.<sup>134</sup> Incidentally, the moment Éva néni, a pensioner living on Szabadság Street

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<sup>130</sup> I am not saying that they cause tensions or create rifts. The “negative” approach simply denies a possibility to communicate, exchange or bridge.

<sup>131</sup> A Reformist tombstone will have a chalice, a Roman Catholic one, a cross. There were tombs of Jewish people in Palágy-Komoróc, but they disappeared during the Soviet times, when they were ploughed under to make place for fields. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 31 August 2010.

<sup>132</sup> We can see tombstones with Hungarian-like, Slavic-like and Roma-like names As well, Cyrillic is sometimes used.

<sup>133</sup> However, this observation speaks strongly to gender issues as well. In Magyar marriages, the wife loses her name and surname to adopt her husband's. For example, my wife could be Simonyi Andrásné, the “né” indicating the fact that she is my spouse. Today, women have the choice. Thus, on tombstones, it is more difficult, although one can use the first name (when written) as an indicator.

<sup>134</sup> Taking a little detour using numbers, we see that there is reportedly 250 houses in Palágy-Komoróc, of which about twenty are sited in the Rom “camp”. Over the last years, twelve houses, or about five per cent were bought by “outsiders”, i.e. not passed on to family or local owners. On Szabadság street, of the ten houses facing the park, at least two are either vacant or sold, and four are inhabited by pensioners whose

announced her potential interest in selling her home in order to join her son in Hungary, potential buyers from outside the village and the region descended on her house.<sup>135</sup>

The social construction of Palágy-Komoróc and the region has been, for a long time, based on the inward and outward movements of “individuals” in and out of households. The moving unit was in these cases the child,<sup>136</sup> creating a complex system integrating a number of factors such as language and faith. The more recent trend sees the elevation of the smallest denominator to the level of entire households: instead of one individual joining or leaving a household, we see entire families disappear or move in the village boundaries. These units usually arrive integral, with all their parts, and settle in their new community not as part of an intricate web of relations, faith and language, but rather as a new entity in itself, relatively indivisible. This has the effect of elevating discursively all qualifiers to the level of the household instead of the individual: They are Ukrainian, Orthodox, and speak Ukrainian. Furthermore, their integration in the local life does not come automatically, but requires an effort and willingness.

### *The Roms of Palágy-Komoróc*

Walking towards the northeastern part of the village, at the edge of the fields,<sup>137</sup> one encounters totally different scenery. The neighborhood, often called “tabor” or camp, is connected by dirt roads and made up of mostly unfinished mud houses, often without

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siblings have either moved or have clearly expressed their unwillingness to take over the house. This observation has been made over time and through discussions. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, August 2010 and June 2011 – March 2012. Also, on the subject, Pisano, J. (2009). "From Iron Curtain to Golden Curtain: Remaking Identity in the European Union Borderlands." *East European Politics & Societies* 23(2): 266-290.

<sup>135</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 August 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Habitually, but not exclusively, daughters.

<sup>137</sup> The last national census dates back to 2001 and thus the exact reported number of Roms in the village vary as we discuss with people. The average reported number of Roms varies between 88 and 120 (based in different conversations). The registered population of Palágy-Komoróc in 2012 is 924 (Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 March 2012 (Discussion with village head administrator).

electricity and water. The people living here are locally called Rom(a)s or Cigánys and have been part of the community for many centuries and are part of the local social symbiosis.<sup>138</sup> The encounters between Roms and non-Roms rarely occur at the level of the household and initial observations easily give the impression of marginality and separation. However, observing from the standpoint of togetherness, the interactions within the spatial realm of the village tells us two stories. First, Roms and non-Roms have a symbiotic relationship that complements each other and contributes to social peace. And second, the relationship is changing.

From a spatial perspective, Roms and non-Roms share the village according to seemingly well-established rules. Interaction with non-Rom people seems to remain essentially at the level of economy: selling clothes to the women waiting for their cows, picking up metal that they bring to the local foundry,<sup>139</sup> performing chores such as cutting hay or working the fields for the local landowners. We also see Roms living at the edges of the community, picking fruit and nuts from trees along roads, digging for metal in roadside ditches for which property rights remain unclear. The Rom community of Palágy-Komoróc is not integrated at the level of the household and represents the most significant “other” in the community and, similar to the “Ukrainian” newcomers, interactions do not seem to have the intricate nature of the nested and networked households. As such, the contours of the Rom community, in its relationship with other villagers, are much easier to define.

In the village, these places of encounter are principally the two shops and the cemetery where people from both communities meet briefly. The school, however, is the

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<sup>138</sup> Roms are fully integrated in the local economy. We will cover that aspect in the next chapter.

<sup>139</sup> Other villagers would call upon Roms when they get rid of appliances or other pieces of metal. They bring the metal to a foundry in Ungvár where they sell it.

place where the meeting of the Magyar and Rom communities takes on a greater significance: every day, children from both communities gather in class. Whereas usually the communities live side by side, interacting mostly on economic terms, the school becomes the meeting ground for socialization. Situated near the centre of the village, facing the park, the two-storey school built in 1976 is host to 67 children. With a Hungarian flag hanging by the door, there is no ambivalence as to the Magyar complexion of the school, which is one of the 17 Magyar schools in Zakarpattia.<sup>140</sup> Although most of the adults born in Palágy-Komoróc or Kiszszelmenc<sup>141</sup> have attended the school, every year, for the last few years, has seen a constant decrease in the number of Magyar children and a relative increase of Roms' children.<sup>142</sup>

Polarization against the local Rom community, expressed in part by some Magyar parents' choice to send their children to another school,<sup>143</sup> opens another spatial perspective on togetherness in Palágy-Komoróc. In this case, what we observe in the village is the reaction of the "Magyar" parents to what they perceive as an "invasion" of their school by Rom children. With no public space where to express their concerns, discuss, and potentially find common ground, those parents find no other viable approach

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<sup>140</sup> There are a total of 36 primary/secondary schools in Zakarpattia. Nineteen are solely in Ukrainian language, while 17 are either Magyar (as in Palágy-Komoróc) or bilingual housing both languages (the schools in Sislóc and Koncháza, both geographically between Palágy-Komoróc and Ungvár are such schools)

<sup>141</sup> The school serves both communities. Both villages are unified under a common administration (mayor, representatives, etc.)

<sup>142</sup> According to the school director, of the 67 children attending, 25 are Roms from Palágy-Komoróc, 14 are Roms from Galocs, a neighbouring village, and 28 are Magyars from Palágy-Komoróc. From the same source, about 17 Magyar children are attending school either in Sislóc or in Ungvár (both schools require taking the bus) Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 15 March 2012. According to the Reformist priest, the number of Magyar children attending schools elsewhere is 22. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 16 March 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Discursively, the reason invoked for this choice is that Roms children are undisciplined, not willing or incapable of learning and slowing down the progress of the better performing Magyar children. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 5 August 2011. There is counter-discourse by Magyars opposing this view. Fieldnotes, Koncháza, 20 March 2012 and Palágy-Komoróc, 16 March 2012.

to the perceived problem than to remove their children and send them to schools in Sislóc or Ungvár.

#### 2.4.4 Togetherness – Systems

This first attempt to paint the socio-political realm of Palágy-Komoróc gives us a first glimpse at some interesting details. We have seen that the deconstruction of socio-political interactions of Palágy-Komoróc shows a number of superimposed and integrated systems. The first is built around the nested household based on individuals' integration into an elaborate system of filiations and family ties that extend well beyond the village into the neighbouring region. The second system is networked and its lines do not exclusively follow filiations and family, as it is the severing of those ties that create the need to create alternative forms of relations. These two systems are so intertwined that it is not unusual to have an individual navigating both, providing (s)he has the know-how to do so.

In these two systems, social interpenetration begins at the individual level, integrating language and faith at the root of the social construct. As such, mixity occurs *within* the household. This integrating system is met, however, with a relatively recent trend of migration out of the village that is replaced by a slow but steady increase of “ready-made” households buying houses to settle in the region. This third system elevates the issue of social integration to the level of the household. In other words, the basic common denominator moving is no longer the individual, but the household. Language, faith and origin are no longer solely the attribute of individuals, but that of a complete household that can be identified as such.

The recognition of these three systems brings us to the second observation based on togetherness: the change in the public dialogue. For some time, the kolkhoz acted as policy regulator and unifier agent, creating the physical and discursive space around which people lived. Although far from perfect, the private, public and economic realms were in relative symbiosis. Today, as slowly but relentlessly the daily dialogues around the benches in the evening disappear, the osmosis between the private and public realms morphs into new forms.

The horizontal and vertical integration that occurred during the kolkhoz system, and since, on the benches and through the family networks, is increasingly being replaced by alternate forms of dialogue. Churches and other small organizations<sup>144</sup> fill the natural void created by the disappearance of the previous platforms. These, however, have two main characteristics. First, the priests' discourse centered on religion divides the citizenry into a number of groups. Local churches serve three different groups of Christian followers that themselves are divided along linguistic lines. There is no Ukrainian or Russian Orthodox church in either Palágy-Komoróc nor Kisszelmenc, so their followers attend church in neighbouring villages. Second, the three local churches have strong cultural and financial<sup>145</sup> links to Hungary, explicitly promoting the choice of Hungarian as the local language and culture to the exclusion of others, which in this realm, end up creating their reflexive reality within the public space.

The two plaques proudly decorating the entrance of the school in Palágy-Komoróc epitomize the break in the socio-political horizontal and vertical integration at

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<sup>144</sup> The local pensioners club for example.

<sup>145</sup> One of the challenging part of being a priest or minister is the task of raising funds from foundations. Many (most) foundations, private and public, helping the local churches, come from Hungary. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, multiple interactions with the priests and minister and the KMKSZ representative.

the local level. The first, written in Russian and Ukrainian, given in honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress of the KPSS to the children of the kolkhoz in 1976<sup>146</sup>; the second, written in Hungarian, was offered by a generous donor from Sárospatak in Hungary in 2009, to honor his father, a former priest. Today, the school follows the path of the school in Koncháza where classes, within the last five years, became exclusively Rom as the “Magyar” parents removed their children. The Rom community of Palágy-Komoróc, present for centuries in the region, is increasingly isolated and ostracized. As for the incoming households settling into the village, their capacity to engage into the realm of public debate has been, for all intents and purposes, reduced to nothing.

In this chapter, I used a concept called togetherness to deconstruct the socio-political realm of the village. This analysis delved into the relational aspect of the social organization through which we can start seeing the shades of some fault lines potentially leading to (in)security. Essentially, we see the fragmentation of social interaction leading to the polarization around some nodal points that reinforce separation. These nodal points do not provide the political agora linking the private and the public spheres, provoking not only the marginalization of the Rom community by exclusion and the relative polarization of the incoming households as they do not find the space to join the public dialogue, but also the fragmentation of the whole community as the socio-political landscape is shifting.

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<sup>146</sup> The school was built in 1976. The KPSS is Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

## Chapter 5: Relations of Production in Palágy-Komoróc

### 2.5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we uncovered a complex society from the perspective of its interactions. We observed different types of households based on their particular structures and integrated them in a system so as not to imagine any of these types of households as independent from the rest. From this perspective, the social system in Palágy-Komoróc and the region appears to be changing: since the end of communism in the early 1990s, the horizontal and vertical integration of civic dialogue that creates the systemic synergy of society has been altered. Alternative approaches emerged while others disappeared, creating a system showing breaks and fault lines in the guise of social polarization and identity politics.

In this chapter on relations of production, I follow the trail we started to clear in Chapter Three. As I initially asked, “how is society enacted by its social interactions?” now I ask: “how is society enacted by its relations of production?” As the analysis began to reveal that social relations and relations of production were apparently superimposed prior to the regime change, I focus now on the ways in which those relations of production play out today. The regime change that occurred a little more than twenty years ago was more than the proclaimed victory of freedom. The liberalization of markets and the privatization of much that was social have had deep effects on the way in which people interact on a daily basis (Verdery 1996, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Verdery 1999, Suda and Musil 2000, Allina-Pisano 2008, Pisano 2009). However, this chapter is not a critique of neoliberalism or the market economy, but an analysis of the relations of

production that have emerged from the fundamental change that the institutionalisation of these ideas has instigated.

Stepping back from the micro system perspective of the household and its spatial referent, the house, we see a village with two churches, a large park, a school, a set of buildings housing the town hall and the community centre, the former kolkhoz, fields, and three roads intersecting at the village centre. As we plunge closer, we see people living together whom I previously divided into four categories: nested households, networked households, Roms and new arrivals. In this chapter, I analyze these groupings and their relations based on production and exchange. I observe and analyze the different interactions that are conducted every day on the basis of exchanging goods and services for money or other form of payments. By examining the particular groupings, and then expanding upon the relations amongst them, I seek to uncover another systemic perspective.

### 2.5.2 Nested Households

At 41, András is the head of the household and the farm he took over from his parents. His wife, Anikó, slightly younger, comes from a neighbouring village, and is a very successful civil servant working at the oblast level in Ungvár. As heads of household, they sleep in the master bedroom. Their teenage son, Mate, studies computer technology in Ungvár and helps his father to care for the land, the pigs and the cows. He has his own room. Old András bácsi, András' father, used to be an important person at the time of kolkhoz, and now, well into his seventies, he helps around the house, and

sleeps on a couch in the kitchen. In a “traditional” setting, András and Anikó’s teenage son would eventually replace his father as the head of the household.<sup>147</sup>

Relations of production within the nested household follow a simple pattern. The older parents usually work until their retirement and contribute financially to the household, although they retain a certain amount of autonomy in that the money is not completely transferred to a common fund. Nowadays, in most of the remaining nested households, the older generation has reached the age of retirement and their contribution to the household is mostly “in-kind”, i.e. they work in the kitchen or help in the garden plot. There is no standard pattern when it comes to the older generation but rather a general tendency. Having contributed with their life’s work to the household – for some it meant literally building their homestead, there is no real expectation to “produce” anything. In this sense, each household is quite different as age, capacity and character are all contributing factors to the level of involvement. In most households, however, the older generation is seen to contribute to the extent to which they can.<sup>148</sup>

Members of the younger generation are rarely seen as an integral part of the relations of production before completion of their academic studies. Younger children, until high school, are most often seen going to school and playing outside. The summer is a long vacation and not much is expected from them. Older teenagers and young adults pursue their studies, technical or university in Ungvár or Beregszász and most often

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<sup>147</sup> This formal view does not illuminate the complexity of interactions and power structure within the household. Moreover, as we are discussing change, there are fundamental shifts occurring as women begin to have access to more remunerative employment, and in the case of András and Anikó for example, she earns more than her husband. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>148</sup> In Palágy-Komoróc and the region, the older generation seems to share a work ethic in which the idea of retirement does not equal stopping work and enjoying life. It means passing the burden of responsibility to the next generation, while still contributing to the extent of their capacity. Fieldnotes, 2006-2012.

require a considerable amount of money to access those institutions.<sup>149</sup> The youth employment programs for the summer period being mostly non-existent, the financial burden of supporting studies rests with the parents, while teenagers “hang-out” together in their former schoolyard. Some, like Mate, help their parents in the fields, learning the ropes of the family business should they one day take over.<sup>150</sup> For those young adults not pursuing studies at some level, joining the work force means the expectation of being a full contributor to the household, and that, until (s)he leaves. In Palágy-Komoróc and the surrounding villages, many young people who have joined the work force stay and contribute to the household until they marry.

In the nested household, the synergy revolves around the middle generation. These households follow a somewhat typical pattern in that the husband is often born in the house, grows up, and takes over when his parents become too old to work. Women, mostly in their mid thirties to mid forties, join the household in their late teens or early twenties and became part of a complex interactional system. Their educational period involved having children, learning how to manage a complex household, and, usually, became the anchors of the domestic economy. Today, for the household to sustain the tremendous economic pressure of caring for the elders, educating the child(ren) and maintaining the buildings and if necessary the machinery, the burden falls on the shoulders of this, the middle generation.

Within nested households, we find two distinct patterns of economic production based on either farming or working in another sector of the economy, such as services or

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<sup>149</sup> The higher (university) education system in Ukraine is competition-based, with only a certain number of candidates receiving a state scholarship. The remainder must pay tuition.

<sup>150</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 17 March 2012.

industry.<sup>151</sup> However, regardless of the sector of economy, the nested households' income comes from three different streams. The first stream of income comes from the woman earning a pay outside of the household. The second stream of income comes from the man's wage that stems from his economic activity. These two streams are accompanied by a third, much more informal form of exchange, based on the sale or exchange of goods produced within the household.

Each nested household living off their land approaches its domestic economy as a small enterprise. András chose to invest in pigs, and over the years, the pigsty has more than doubled, housing close to thirty pigs at any one time. Every day, from early February to late Fall, he is out in the fields, the land that he received following the reorganization of the kolkhoz.<sup>152</sup> He and other peasants of the region often work together on the same field, concentrating efforts to increase their capacity. Towards the end of the summer, he also hires Alfréd, the local owner of a combine, to harvest his fields.<sup>153</sup> All

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<sup>151</sup> We find men working as truck drivers or in the flooring plant near Csap. Many of these men could not engage in exploiting their land because they either lacked the know-how or the equipment to work the fields. They had to reinvent themselves. We also find a number of men working as tradesmen (mason, plumber, electrician.), following their education when they were young.

<sup>152</sup> There was no "restitution" of land based on historical ownership, i.e. giving back land to those who owned land prior to the collectivization. "Starting in 1991, Ukraine initiated a land reform which, along with other objectives, aimed at introducing private ownership of agricultural land. As a result of land reform, 30.3 million hectares of agricultural land, including 27.7 million hectares of land for agricultural commodity production, have been transferred into private ownership free of charge; approx. 46,000 private farms and around 18,000 non-state agricultural enterprises have developed; 6.79 million citizens (of 6.91 million entitled) have received a land certificate as result of land sharing of former collective farms (5.7 million of these land certificates have already been transferred to land titles); and 16.4 million land plots with a total area of 3.6 million hectares have been allocated to 11.7 million citizens of Ukraine for various purposes (whereby so far only 3.7 million land titles have been issued)." Dells, K., M. Fedorchenko, O. Frankewycz and P. Steffens (2006). State Land Management of Agricultural Land in Ukraine. o. b. o. t. Land Management Sector Project of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH, G. F. M. f. E. Cooperation and Development. Berlin, BVVG Bodenverwertungs und verwaltungen GmbH. p.9.

<sup>153</sup> Interestingly, in Palágy-Komoróc, and in most villages of the region where there used to be a kolkhoz, farmers have not regrouped to create a cooperative, but rather became autonomous, small enterprises. However, as mentioned in the text, farmers will regroup to work the fields of one then the other for the sake of efficiency. This is one of the ways in which privatization occurred in the post-communist space. For another perspective: Allina-Pisano, J. (2008). The post-Soviet Potemkin village : politics and property rights in the black earth. New York, NY, Cambridge University Press.

his efforts for the best part of three seasons are aimed at one purpose: to feed his livestock. Whether it is to feed directly his cows, chickens or rabbits, or to sell the potatoes to use the money to buy food for the pigs, this production is meant first and foremost to maintain his capacity to engage in his primary source of revenue: selling the pigs.<sup>154</sup>

However, regardless of the endless hours, András can barely keep up with the market pressure. Not only is he competing with other peasants from the region, he is also facing the huge pig farm in Szürte, two villages away, or the pork imported to Ukraine from the EU.<sup>155</sup> In these conditions, he can barely sustain the overhead with very little left over. It is this context of “savage” liberalization of the markets and the transformation of the nested household into a private enterprise that a great number of wives in Zakarpattia have seen their role not only change to adapt, but become central to the financial survival of the household. Like most of the wives of peasants, Anikó and Szilvia, after tending to their cows in the early morning hours, head off to take the bus to Ungvár, where they work as professionals within state institutions. For the farming

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<sup>154</sup> Farmers have a limited number of choices as to which form of economy to engage. They can cultivate their land for cereals or potatoes for resale. These farmers usually have a smaller margin of profit as the competition is fierce and the earth, unlike that on Eastern side of the Carpathian Mountains, is not as rich and fertile. Or they can choose, like András, to raise pigs. In this case, the land generates the income necessary to buy the feed necessary for the pigs yearlong. This approach is more demanding, but potentially generates more revenue. In all cases, part of the production goes to feed the rest of the household's livestock, cows, chickens, rabbits etc.

<sup>155</sup> “Analysts state that in the first two months of this year, Ukraine imported 2.3 times more pork than in the same period in 2011. It is worth to note that Ukraine currently imports mainly cheap and low-quality pork, which could be sold at about 30% lower prices than pork produced domestically. As a result, Ukrainian pork producers face significant losses due to the inability to sell their products.” Vorotnikov, V. (2012). Ukraine imported lots of low-quality pork in beginning of 2012. [Pig Progress.net](http://www.pigprogress.net/management/buying-selling-forecasting/ukraine-imported-lots-of-low-quality-pork-in-beginning-of-2012-8577.html). <http://www.pigprogress.net/management/buying-selling-forecasting/ukraine-imported-lots-of-low-quality-pork-in-beginning-of-2012-8577.html>.

household, these women provide the only constant and (relatively) reliable revenue that keeps the household from sinking financially.<sup>156</sup>

In these hard economic times, there is a third stream of revenue: the local informal economy. For Szilvia and her husband, this means reselling locally the 60 litres of milk and dairy products produced daily by their three cows, the eggs from the chicken, jam and the vegetables from their garden. The production of these goods is a family effort: women tend to the cows, make the dairy products, jams and others; men perform the heavier duties associated with this type of work. But as the men are in the fields from early morning to late night, women, and sometimes the elders, are the ones in charge of production. For the resale, there are three main forms. Every week, Balázs goes to the market with produce, which as he says, is already pre-sold. He sells below market value, and in these times, it sells well. Second, some sellers come to pick up the foodstuff themselves to bring to the market. Third, the goods are sold or exchanged between neighbours—often, as we will soon see, to the networked households that do not produce these things.

For the non-peasant nested households such as Piri's, whose husband is a truck driver, or Vilmos, the mason, the informal economy takes another form. Keeping animals in such households is not economically viable: the overhead to feed and care for livestock if one has to buy all the feed on the open market is just too high. When the kolkhoz officially closed its doors and the land was finally redistributed, many villagers were

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<sup>156</sup> Going through a domestic budget for a nested household shows that the product of the farming barely keeps the business going year-in, year-out. There are many reasons that could be attributed to this, not the least of which the lack of business experience of the farmers, the relatively recent liberalization of the markets and an economic environment that does not provide much protection for the farmers. And, the farmers remain subject to environmental challenges, bad weather (as in 2010) or animal disease.

simply not capable of working their fields: they were too far away;<sup>157</sup> they did not have the necessary equipment and not enough money to get it; they were not “peasants” but tradesman; or they were just too old to work the land. These new owners leased their fields to a new breed of local entrepreneurs who, in exchange for the land, promised a yearly return in kind.<sup>158</sup> This yearly return was initially given in animal feed that would make the maintaining of livestock in these households profitable: they could still produce milk eggs and other goods that would complement the household’s economy. But as years went by the yearly returns were more rare, sometimes even skipping a year.<sup>159</sup> For the non-peasant household, the logical conclusion ensued: it is not profitable to maintain livestock to produce an informal income. Other solutions must be found.<sup>160</sup>

Piri is a mother of two whose husband works as a truck driver on a fixed wage. Her in-laws help around the house, but they do not own land or livestock. As a school teacher, she is relatively well paid, but the household’s combined revenues, as for many in Zakarpattia, are not enough to sustain the cost of living and to create the necessary funds for rainy days and the future schooling of their children. Piri had to be creative and

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<sup>157</sup> Many (most) villagers who received land found themselves having non-adjacent fields. Usually, a household received 4 hectares of good land and 4 hectares of poorer land, often quite distanced from the village. I have encountered a person who was given land that was completely enclaved, i.e. surrounded by other fields. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 6 July 2011. However, some people received very good plots, adjacent to the village and very accessible. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 13 July 2011.

<sup>158</sup> The initial arrangement/lease between Balogh and the owner was established for ten years. This period was expired in 2011, but no continuance of contracts was arranged. Balogh continues to exploit the land nonetheless. In the initial arrangements, owners have signed contracts, but no copies were given to them. They are kept at Balogh's offices. The owners have nothing to show for and have minimal recourse. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 6 June, 5 and 6 July 2011. This is a common practice across the post-Soviet space, with variations as to how it is implemented. Humphrey, C. (1998). Marx went away - but Karl stayed behind. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

<sup>159</sup> In 2010, the villagers involved in the deal did not receive a return. The reason invoked was the bad weather. According to the explanation given, the crops were barely enough to sustain the enterprises overhead. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, June 2011.

<sup>160</sup> The math is simple: a household received on average 8 hectares of land (4 hectares per person having served the kolkhoz). They would lease the four “good” hectares to the entrepreneur. It takes about 4 hectares of hay per year to feed a cow. Anything less than that means feed must be bought or found in some other form. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 July 2011.

find ways to bring more money home. Every afternoon, in early fall, when she is done caring for her class, correcting and preparing, as well as cleaning the classroom, she joins many people in picking potatoes for local farmers.<sup>161</sup> When the season is over, she re-invests the money into material used to craft wreaths that she sells year long for funerals and ceremonies. The selling highlight of the year is All Saint's Day at the beginning of November, for which she occupies a space on the street of Kisszelmenc, and, for the whole month of October, she spends most of her afternoons selling them to Slovaks looking for good deals.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the nested household that carries generations through space and time creates a secure environment, physical and emotional, by clearly defining the inside\outside realms of the household. Today, as political and economic regimes have changed, the nested household still survives by its capacity to compound everyone's efforts. On the economic front, the household is placed under tremendous pressure to find ways to live and survive the day to day. To do this, households engage in informal economies to create the capacity to engage in those activities for which two salaries, and the pensions, can barely create the possibility.

The change that occurred about twenty years ago had a deep impact on the nested household, modifying dramatically its *raison d'être*. From the perspective of the household itself, the stake changed from working everyday to provide the necessary and sometimes the extra required, the generational continuity to guarantee this capacity as well as to provide an immediate safety net for each other, to fighting everyday for the survival of the household itself. In other words, in previous decades, the safety of the household was not second-guessed. Today, this guarantee has all but disappeared, making

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<sup>161</sup> Fieldnotes, Sislóc, 17 August 2011.

all household members essential pillars for its survival. From this perspective, the role of each generation and members has shifted.

It is an observable tension within certain households that the older generation, once taken care of as part of normal continuity, is sometimes perceived as a financial burden.<sup>162</sup> The younger generation, presented with a model of economic survival rather than a way of living, ponders its options in these difficult times. Given the choice, many of them opt out of farming or sustaining the nested household as their future responsibility and seek opportunities elsewhere.<sup>163</sup> Paradoxically, many parents in these households that find themselves burdened by the cost of studies in order to give their children the chance to emancipate themselves, support this movement.<sup>164</sup> Finally, it is important to note the change in the role of gender in the light of relations of production. Women in these households have been propelled to the status of essential pillar of these small enterprises. Seeking job opportunities and very often becoming the main financial provider within the household, the women of Palágy-Komoróc and the whole region are indeed not re-defining gender relations within the household and beyond.<sup>165</sup> Instead, adding to their existing chores, women are taking on additional roles that increase their influence beyond the household.

The integration of the nested household in the capitalist market system changes radically its very nature. Once regarded a bastion of security based on generational continuity, providing support from within, integrated in a socio-political system that

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<sup>162</sup> Fieldnotes, Sislóc, 17 August 2011.

<sup>163</sup> There is a feeling shared among people in the region that youth are increasingly disinterested in working the land. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 13 June 2011.

<sup>164</sup> There are many examples to provide. The mother of Tünde (15) insists on supporting her daughter's private language courses so she can one day have a chance to become a translator. Similarly, Judit (17) takes a private course in chemistry to be competitive when she applies for a dentistry program.

<sup>165</sup> The impact of shifting gender roles is addressed in Chapter Six.

encouraged such arrangement, the nested household is now placed under a tremendous amount of pressure that modifies its existential perceptions. From living day to day, they are struggling for tomorrow.

### 2.5.3 Networked households

Unlike the nested household, the networked household does not have the financial depth or the capacity to create a reserve that would allow people to survive the vicissitudes of life. For these households, essentially composed of pensioners and older people, the challenge is quite simple to understand: should they be subjected to a misfortune or worse, illness, their revenue solely based on the government's pension does not guarantee them the capacity to survive. For these households, what we observe is the combination of the overlapping of social interactions to create a networked economy, and the diversification of their capacity to generate means to survive. It is within the spatial confines of the household—the house and its adjacent gardens—that goods are produced and exchange is sometimes conducted. The household is, in itself, the principal asset of the owner.<sup>166</sup> But as these assets, building and land, do not provide liquidity, the only exchangeable income available is the government's pension.<sup>167</sup> To compensate or to create an acceptable margin of excess, networked households develop a number of strategies to augment their revenue. Friendship and support are blurred through a symbolic mimicry of exchanges, similar to Bourdieu's symbolic exchange (1992). Alfréd,

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<sup>166</sup> Networked households are often people that kept their generational house but end up alone or as a couple.

<sup>167</sup> Very few people, if any, have money set aside as retirement fund. There are many stories of people having lost all their savings in the early 1990's during the regime change at which time many post-Soviet states were afflicted by hyperinflation. People often lost as much or more than 40000 roubles—more than the equivalent sum in dollars at that time. The 1990s and early 2000s were marked by recession and unemployment, leaving most networked households barely scraping by. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 6 July 2011. For more on the subject, amongst others, see Humphrey, C. (2002). The unmaking of Soviet life : everyday economies after socialism. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

the helpful neighbour on Szabadság Street, provides services to his friends on a daily basis that are usually being repaid in glasses of wine. He is a friend and a service provider. These exchanges are sometimes explicitly considered as paid services, but often disguised under the veil of neighbourly friendship and care.

For most networked households, assets and incomes can be divided in four parts. First, ownership of houses was granted to their inhabitants at the fall of communism and the house often is their principal asset.<sup>168</sup> Close to the border with the EU and a major regional city, many outsiders coming from Eastern Ukraine attracted by business opportunities with the EU, or work in neighbouring Ungvár,<sup>169</sup> are seeking to buy in the region. The idea of selling their home and joining their child in the city or abroad to live is a constant discussion amongst the elderly, many of whom make up the majority of networked households. Few, however, seem to want to give up their property and prefer to stay.<sup>170</sup> In this case, the house becomes a financial burden, with utilities to pay and upkeep and maintenance to do. This decision to keep their houses rather than to sell and leave conditions in many ways their economic activities that end up sustaining their capacity to stay.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Interestingly, houses and adjacent land plots and gardens were left to the inhabitants on the premise that they would go through the process of privatization. This consists of having the property surveyed and registering with the official state offices. The price of going through the process is relatively high (UAH 5000 or USD 620) and is fraught with administrative hurdles. To this date, according to the mayor's office, about 70% of the houses in the village are not privatized. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 March 2012.

<sup>169</sup> As discussed earlier, the region is witnessing an increase of people from oblasts East of Zakarpattia.

<sup>170</sup> For many of these pensioners, the children have to move to another country, mostly Hungary, but also elsewhere in Europe. Although tempted, they often mention the loss of their pension fund as the claimed excuse to refuse to move. However, for most, there are deeper reasons preventing them from moving (usually complex family issues).

<sup>171</sup> Or capacity to leave. Cecilia and Demeter, an elderly couple well into their 70s do not have the option to join their children for a variety of reasons. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 9 July 2011. They could, however, sell and move into a smaller apartment. Most elderly refuse this option, mostly because they cannot imagine a change in life style at this stage of their life.

The second source of income related to ownership comes from the land that was redistributed following the regime change and the reorganization of the kolkhoz. In this case, the fate of the networked households followed the same trajectory as those nested households that did not exploit land for a living. The fluctuations in, and sometimes year skipping of,<sup>172</sup> the in-kind payment added to the physical demands on an ageing population and contributed to the elimination of livestock from networked households. Every year, for the last few years, the in-kind payment has been announced at the end of the season and is usually in the form of grain used to feed the chickens. In 2011, the in-kind payment decided upon by the local entrepreneur was one metric ton (1000 kg) of potatoes. Recipients had to organize their own transport and find ways to resell the potatoes for a profit<sup>173</sup> in an already saturated market.<sup>174</sup> Many elders decided not to receive their potatoes, adding the supplementary burden on their shoulders to compensate for the loss. For many, the land they lease is an object of frustration that they would gladly sell. A government moratorium on the sale of land prevents them from doing this.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> In 2010 for example, in-kind payment was not given because it was a bad year for the crops.

<sup>173</sup> This meant paying for the transport as well as rewarding the men unloading the cart, separating the potatoes (screening), bagging, and finding a way to sell them. Usually, this meant finding a transport to carry the bags to Ungvár where the market could deal with the quantity. In previous years, one kilo of potatoes sold for UAH 5. In the fall of 2011, the price dropped to 1,5 UAH on the market, and to 1,2 UAH to the reseller. Rózsa sold 500 kg. After expenses, her profit was around UAH 400 (USD 50.00), which constitutes her earnings for leasing her 8 hectares (80000m<sup>2</sup>). She bought grain for her chickens.

<sup>174</sup> 2011 was a record-breaking year for potato crops in Central-Eastern Europe, exceeding close to one million tonnes in the Ukrainian market. Fruit-Inform, [Harvesting of the biggest potato crop start in Ukraine](http://www.fruit-inform.com/eng/vegetables/showart.php?id=111733), 28 August 2011, <http://www.lol.org.ua/eng/vegetables/showart.php?id=111733>

<sup>175</sup> The issue of land sale in Ukraine is complex. One argument for extending the moratorium is the ill preparedness of government geodesic and cadastral services to keep positive control on the process of ownership. The argument for the marketization of the land is the elimination of corruption through market processes. [Message from US Embassy Kiev – US Sec State](http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09KYIV2172), 21 Dec 2009, <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09KYIV2172>

The third source of revenue consists of wages received in the form of pensions, often supplemented by some form of work.<sup>176</sup> This revenue provides the greater part of the household's liquidity that can be used for "formal" expenses such as paying the monthly bills, buying the food not available through informal exchanges, such as bread, or the occasional piece of clothing, and building a reserve.<sup>177</sup> Most importantly for an older generation exposed to medical risks in a health system assessed as "... complex, inefficient, highly inequitable, and of low quality" (Menon 2010, p.4), this translates into a simple fact: one has to pay to cut through red tape, obtain favours and ultimately not only obtaining the care required, but also making sure that it is given on time. The system of favour is called "hála" in Hungarian, meaning "gratitude". This habit is found not only in Ukraine, but also in neighbouring Hungary. This informal mode of payment follows a deliberate "ceremonial" between patient and anyone in the medical system. For example, one person who contracted a bad cold/bronchitis in Palágy-Komoróc paid UAH 500 (as a reminder, the pension is about UAH 700/month) in "hála" simply for access to X-rays, medication and doctor.<sup>178</sup>

These pensions and wages earned otherwise must be complemented by other forms of sustenance. The fourth form comes from the domestic animals and the gardens.

In the back of most of the houses in Palágy-Komoróc, we find an outer fenced courtyard

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<sup>176</sup> Rózsa receives a pension and supplements it by working as a baby sitter in the village next door, and, once a week, goes to Ungvár to clean her friend's daughter's apartment. László, also a retiree, works everyday from 3 AM until late afternoon feeding the cows at the former kolkhoz (now a private enterprise).

<sup>177</sup> For most elderly people in networked households, it is extremely difficult to put aside money given the little revenue and the cost of living. For one person, who could not put aside money for a rainy day fund, this meant taking out a loan of UAH 4000 at the local bank to provide for her husband's health care. The bank loaned the UAH 4000 (USD 400.00) for 36 months, with monthly payments of UAH 230. Simple mathematics will show that the person will have reimbursed the bank UAH 8130 over the life of the loan. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 14 March 2012.

<sup>178</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 14 March 2012. For more, consult Ledeneva, A. V. (1998). Russia's economy of favours : blat, networking, and informal exchange. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Ledeneva, A. V. (2006). How Russia really works : the informal practices that shaped post-Soviet politics and business. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

with a variety of small animals, usually chickens. In these courtyards we see the vestiges of times past when now-empty stalls were still inhabited by bigger animals like cows and pigs.<sup>179</sup> Beyond that courtyard, there usually is a second, larger enclosure, where we find greenery and vegetables and often grapevines. And beyond that, we find the often unfenced, larger portion where potatoes, corn and larger vegetables such as pumpkins and squash are grown. We can also see in many of the backyards towering nut trees that are an important part of the economy. For the elder couple or single person, maintaining these small animals and growing fruits, vegetables and nuts is often the main sources of livelihood. Little of the produce ends up on their table: in a networked environment, most of it becomes a product for exchange.

This form of production may be sub-divided in three categories. With market prices relatively high, making it difficult to buy foodstuffs at the store, a small part of the produce coming from the household, eggs and vegetables, is directly used by the producer for his/her own needs.<sup>180</sup> The second category of use is cash crops, as produce sold on the market. For example, for those who have walnut trees, the latter part of the summer and early fall is spent knocking, picking, bagging and sometimes shelling nuts for resellers who come door to door, exporting them as far as Italy. Excess produce from the garden is taken to the market in Ungvár to be sold. Sometimes, the produce is

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<sup>179</sup> The amount of work and relative investment necessary to upkeep the animals make it if not impossible, economically illogical to maintain for two reasons: First, as many of these households are made up of pensioners, the work required to care for the animals and the garden and conduct affairs is physically overwhelming; second, similar to the non-peasant nested household, it is financially very difficult to sustain/justify.

<sup>180</sup> Living as part of such a household for a period of time, one realizes two things: first, that nutrition follows seasons; second, that it follows the produce from the garden; and although meat is regarded and spoken of as an important part of nutrition, it is expensive and remains a rare treat. Food is often one of the places where economies are made, often to the detriment of a healthy and complemented nutrition.

transformed or canned.<sup>181</sup> The revenue and cash flow created through cash crops should not be overestimated: for a single person, even a couple, to produce significant amounts to make a profit requires an incredible amount of time. If we take the example of walnuts, which in itself is a simple process that does not require cooking, mixing or any form of preparation, the gathering of nuts from two or three trees takes a few weeks to a month; a part of the unshelled nuts are then bagged and sold as is; the remainder are shelled throughout the winter.<sup>182</sup>

The third category of production that stems from the garden plot and the animals is informal exchange, arguably the most significant for the networked household. Every day, along the streets and through the trails in the back of the garden plots of Palágy-Komoróc, there is a discreet but endless movement, people visiting each other, socializing as well as exchanging products. Sometimes it is eggs in exchange for “túró”<sup>183</sup> or tomatoes for milk; sometimes, it is money for a piece of ham or sausage. In the context of informal exchange, wine occupies an important place. In Palágy-Komoróc, every and any service is at least thanked, if not paid for, with alcohol. For those who do not brew their own wine, this means putting aside a substantial amount of money to buy the necessary liquor. Sometimes informal exchanges involve bigger items, such as the use of Rózsa’s scaffold, which she kept when her husband, a mason, passed away.<sup>184</sup> Informal exchanges most often imply payments in-kind, but are sometimes made in cash. Sometimes, they involve deferring the in-kind payment until the product becomes

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<sup>181</sup> Cucumbers, pickles, tomatoes or fruits for jam.

<sup>182</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, September-November 2011.

<sup>183</sup> Hungarian cottage cheese made from cow’s milk.

<sup>184</sup> Rózsa’s scaffold is not the only object that provides some revenue from renting; it is also contributing to her own image and reputation. Greek Catholic herself, the scaffold was used by the Roman Catholic priest to repair the church in Kisszelmenc. Not only did the mayor get involved in the transaction, but the visual effect of having Rózsa’s scaffold erected in the church contributed to her own image. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 27 June and 4 August 2011.

available. Most importantly, it involves the whole community, as most of the villagers take part in this form of exchange.

The break-up of a significant number of formerly nested households into networked households re-configured the ways in which the local economy is performed. For the ageing population in networked households, survival and security means finding additional ways to guarantee their capacity to sustain the hardship to which they are subjected. Any form of sickness or disability may result in the impossibility of surviving the next day. With this in mind, informal exchanges are not only an economically advantageous outlet to maintain a certain capacity; they are also a total juxtaposition to the social interactions discussed in the previous chapter and create forms of social synergy. In other words, observing Palágy-Komoróc from the perspective of economic or social interaction offers a juxtaposed, symbiotic perspective of two systems that exist side by side, in the same village. But, as the networked households slowly fade, as the “courtyards are dying out”<sup>185</sup>, the symbiosis is fading.

#### 2.5.4 The Roms

Analyzing the relations of production within the Rom community provides us with three different and complementary approaches. The first, and arguably the most important form of revenue, derives from a great variety of informal work, much of it creatively improvised. Walking the streets of Palágy-Komoróc, the trails along the fields or the roads in the region, one is almost certain to catch a glimpse of this form of inventiveness. Gathering metal scraps from the side of the road or sometimes from villagers who want to get rid of some old appliance is a lucrative business. Women will

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<sup>185</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 18 June 2011.

walk the streets while other villagers wait for the cows to come home, selling clothes to eager customers. Others will be hired to accomplish odd jobs, like cutting hay in a field. Others still will be seen climbing the trees along the roads, where the line between public and private is fuzzy, to pick the fruits and sell them near the market, together with the mushrooms they picked in the forest. Whether we call it informal or seasonal, this form of work seems in many ways to complement or fill a demand, a form of service not provided otherwise. However, as property becomes spatially more enclosed through privatization or services become regulated through formal channels, the areas of informal work available to Roms are quickly disappearing, forcing the community to adapt and change.

The second form of revenue generation used by the Rom community in Palágy-Komoróc (and in the region) is to work as day labourers for the land entrepreneurs in the region. Everyday, the little blue minibus owned by M. Balogh headquartered in neighbouring Galoc does the back and forth between Rom settlements, the fields and the former kolkhoz buildings. His workers are not exclusively Roms, but given the very low salary, a mere UAH 70 per day for very hard work during long days, the non-Roms tend to find other forms of revenue.<sup>186</sup> Whether they lease or use their land, most non-Rom villagers do not need to submit themselves to this excruciating labour.<sup>187</sup> This work, however, is seasonal and depends strongly on the market pressure and the user's capacity

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<sup>186</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 18 August 2011.

<sup>187</sup> During a "visit" to the former kolkhoz operated by M. Balogh (from which we were promptly expelled when discovered), we spoke with a woman responsible for milking cows. She was being picked up every day at 02:45 A.M. in a neighbouring village and brought back home between 7:30 and 9:00 PM every day. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 July 2011.

to sustain the payments, and this meagre salary is by no means guaranteed,<sup>188</sup> pushing Roms to find other creative forms of revenue.

The third, and increasingly important revenue source available to Roms comes in the form of government assistance. As part of attempts to reinvigorate the national birth rate, the Ukrainian government provides cash payments to parents for every newborn child. This payment arrives in two ways: first, for each newborn, an immediate cash remittance is given, increasing relative to the number of children in a household.<sup>189</sup> Second, a regular monthly payment is made until the child reaches the age of eighteen years. The third form of subsidy does not come from the Ukrainian government, but rather from the Hungarian government, through the services of its local extension, the KMKSZ. In effect, in order to promote the preservation of the Hungarian language amongst its cross-border minorities, Hungary subsidizes families with the yearly amount of 20,000 HUF<sup>190</sup> per child attending school<sup>191</sup> in the Hungarian language.

As courtyards become enclosed behind the curtain of private property and the liberalization of the market economy formalizes exchanges, irremediably altering many forms of horizontal economy, Roms find themselves deprived of their primary form of revenue: informal exchanges. With a decreasing capacity to generate revenue, Roms

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<sup>188</sup> On October 6, 2011, László, a Magyar, had not been paid for two months, although he had worked every day from three in the morning until late afternoon. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 6 October 2011.

<sup>189</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> child: UAH 28000 (USD 3475); 2<sup>nd</sup> child: UAH 56000 (USD 6950); 3<sup>rd</sup> child: UAH 109000 (USD 13500) Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 16 March 2012. Newborn support began in Ukraine following the Orange Revolution in 2004. Zawada, Z. (2007) "Campaign promises under attack with start of political posturing." *The Ukrainian Weekly* LXXV, 1. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/12812110/The-Ukrainian-Weekly-200725>

<sup>190</sup> About USD 85 or UAH 675. Remember that a pensioner receives an average of 700 to 900 UAH monthly.

<sup>191</sup> We are talking about primary and secondary education.

become increasingly dependent on government subsidies for survival.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, while attempting to survive, some enter financial arrangements that only worsen their situation. These dealings range from banks that lend money to Roms, only to eventually seize the household's assets, to loan sharks engaging in fraudulent deals that leave Roms with nothing.

The end-state is a quick descent into extreme living conditions, alcohol abuse and domestic violence.<sup>193</sup> However, if we leave the street-level view of causes and effects, we observe an increasing marginalization of Roms in and around the village, accompanied by discourses of blame and accusation. In numerous conversations among non-Rom residents of Palágy accusations were freely, and without support of evidence, made against Roms. When confronted to defend the argument, the accuser usually retreats behind excuses like "everybody does it" and such. It is also noteworthy that in the village, those living in closer physical proximity to the Rom community are usually the ones who are, if not defending them, at the minimum not laying blame.<sup>194</sup> The extreme position is the one adopted by the second village from Palágy-Komoróc, Palló: there is a ban—said to be enforced by the villagers of Palló— preventing Roms from settling within the village limits.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> On Roms employment: Number of persons of working age residing in rural Roma settlements of Uzhhorod district and Chop, who have regular or part-time work - Palad'-Komarivtsi (Palágy-Komoróc): # women of working age (18-55): 34; # men of working age (18-60): 24  
Of whom have regular work: 0; Of whom have part-time work: 23  
Unemployed: 47; Pensioners: 6  
Total for all villages listed (Kontsovo, Kholmok, Siurte, Rativtsi, Galoch, Tisaaktelek, P-K, Botfalvo, Tarnivtsi, Khudl'ovo, Rus'ki-Komarivtsi, Minai, Solomonovo, Mala Dobron', Chop):  
# women: 787; # men: 663  
reg work: 75; part-time: 367  
unemployed: 920; pensioner: 211  
Fodorova, O. V. (2010). *Romy Uzhhorodschny: Analiz, otsinky*. Uzhhorod, Lira.

<sup>193</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 16 March 2012.

<sup>194</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 4 July 2011.

<sup>195</sup> Fieldnotes, Palló, 3 August 2011.

We can observe this marginalization from two perspectives: from the relations of production; and from the marginalization at the level of local discourse, which isolates the group under increasing accusations of social diseases like stealing, lack of hygiene, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and a generally unruly attitude.<sup>196</sup> This phenomenon of marginalization compounds rifts between communities. In Palágy-Komoróc, the school's once entirely mixed Magyar\Rom population is shifting to become exclusively Rom.<sup>197</sup> This tendency is echoed within the region, including the schools of Koncháza, or the new school built in Szürte exclusively for Rom children.<sup>198</sup> In the current context, the ghettoization of Roms follows a course that seems irremediable and unstoppable. For one highly placed authority in the village, "Roms don't live like humans. "They don't have the possibility to study (speaking of houses, etc..). We have big social problems. We don't have the tools, it's not our problem. I can't resolve this".<sup>199</sup>

What we see through the Rom experience of surviving the everyday is the marginalization that pushes them further and further from social integration. This term, "integration", must not be understood as the deliberate attempt to obliterate one's "identity" or way of life, but rather the creation of the necessary conditions to make togetherness or social life peaceful. Instead, what we observe is the creation and the amplification of a rift that separates and isolates. Roms in and around Palágy find it

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<sup>196</sup> It is an observable fact that alcohol abuse is not restricted to Roms, but afflicts a great part of the male population in general. As well, stealing, as much as it is attributed to Roms roaming the fields at night, it is also widely recognized by non-Rom villagers that "others" called "fehér cigánys" or "white cigánys" are culprits. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 9 August 2011. Here, tellingly, the word "cigány" indicates a generic thief, and "fehér" or "white" qualifies him.

<sup>197</sup> See chapter Four, footnotes 141, 142, 143.

<sup>198</sup> I found little official evidence as to the reason for the exclusivity. One unofficial version mentions that the ostracization and isolation of Roma children in public schools added to other social challenges depletes the chance to pursue education. The school in Szürte stems from an initiative taken by a Dutch NGO and Rom parents to create a better environment. Nickel, K. (2005). "From Segregation to Integration: An Alternative Approach to Education Among Roma." *Mozaik* 2: 21-22.

<sup>199</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, Interview (anonymous), 16 March 2012.

increasingly difficult to find the spaces to be part of a vibrant community. Instead, they are pushed towards the margins of economic activities and to rely on government subsidies that are meant to fight a falling demography on the one hand, and sustain a Magyar reality on the other.

#### 2.5.5 Shifting Relations of Production – Shifting Togetherness - Rifts

Before we extract ourselves from the street level to adopt an intermediate perspective of the system, let us take a moment to briefly recapitulate. First, we observed that the very nature of the nested household, the bastion of security for its members, has been shaken at its core. The reason for this tremendous change is that it was not, until recently, an autonomously economic entity for which failure was a possibility but part of the greater socio-economic construct. Today, whether we discuss the farming or the non-farming type, these entities have become autonomously responsible for their survival. They are not part of a greater ensemble intricately linked that layers the idea of security from the inner to the outer, but are now responsible for their own survival. This simple, but tremendous change, places the members of the household under incredible pressure to support their own while severing those social ties that were described in chapter three. And, on the other hand, the household is placed under incredible pressure under the guise of opportunities and movements that may in the end disaggregate the unity of the household.<sup>200</sup>

The networked household's analysis of relations of production shows the opposite movement. With no nucleus other than themselves to rely on, the networked household has no other choice than to seek security with others. All of their schemes are oriented

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<sup>200</sup> I refer here to the freedom of movement, the temptation to seek better opportunities elsewhere, education etc.

outward, by need and opportunity. Most of their efforts are directed to providing them the security necessary to survive the vicissitudes of life and old age: sickness and survival. These households present a paradox in that they are directly contributing to the demise of the very system that keeps them going.

The principal relation of production on which these households base their revenue is found in social interactions, the networks. However, as we have first seen in the previous chapter, and further in this one, their incapacity to sustain the production of goods leads to the elimination of their livestock and other means to produce the goods. By rationally deciding to rid themselves of their cow(s) because they can't sustain their upkeep, they slowly deplete not only the products from the market, but contribute to the disappearance of the networks on which they rely.

Following this thread, and taking a little altitude, we observe that the principal linkage of togetherness in the context of relations of production is the conduct of the informal economy. My argument here is that through the observation of the disappearance of informal economy at the local level, we can observe the rifts that are created by the separation of two realms of interaction: the social and the economy. The key to observing the separation of these two realms is the networked household, as it provides and maintains the bridge between the two systems. Crossing to the side where the social and the economic interactions continue to be embedded, we observe an endless movement between gardens and households, exchanging jam and eggs, services for wine. Here, people not only exchange formally as if going to the store; they create and maintain links and dialogue, discuss and inform. They make plans. Through this whole process, goods are exchanged to the advantage of both parties. On this side of the bridge, social

and relations of production are quite transparent. They are inclusive of all, Roms, Ukrainians, and Magyars.<sup>201</sup>

On the other side of the bridge, we observe households that are subjected to the financial pressures of the market that entice them to create more liquidity. Here, goods are translated into money. Those living on this side of the bridge are mostly those having the capacity to produce, the nested households such as Piri crafting wreaths for Slovaks to buy or Balázs going on a weekly basis to the market in Ungvár to sell the produce from his farm. Here, exchange is not social; it is impersonal and only meant to obtain money for goods. It is not inclusive of people other than those buyers with whom pre-arranged sales have been discussed.

If the networked households provide the bridge between the two economies as they go from one side to the other quite freely to get their goods, the nested households, especially those working the fields and having livestock, are the heart of the system. They have the capacity to produce the goods that will either end up in the market or as an item to exchange between neighbours. However, the bridge essentially built by the village elders is dying out, making place for new households, the newcomers for which networking in the manner of informal economy is foreign and unnecessary. So, what we observe from this perspective, as there are fewer and fewer people waiting for their cows to come home at night, is the increasing isolation of individual households and the disappearance of a social thread linking the people and their issues.

The other ripple effect produced by the disappearance of the informal economy and enclosure of property is the constant marginalization of the Roms. Part of the social

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<sup>201</sup> Karl Polanyi's market-society comes to mind. Polanyi, K. (1957). The Great transformation. Boston, Beacon Press.

system for centuries, the relatively sudden change from the production point of view saw this community pushed toward the edges of local society. In effect, by denying them the capacity to operate within the realm of informal economy without any other alternative than day labouring and government subsidies, the Roms find themselves ostracized and excluded from the rest. Using the metaphor of the bridge, the dislocation of the once juxtaposed socio-economic system of interactions highlights another effect. Unlike the disappearance and eventual replacement of the networked households, Roms find themselves excluded from most possibilities. If the walling up of households can be expressed in terms of isolation, I use the word marginalization to address the walling up of a complete community.

From the perspective of security, this analysis touches the social interactions that fundamentally change the ways in which people live together while the world turns. It creates a view that this specific society is in the process of isolation and marginalization with the potential consequences that might ensue. We can witness so far that the changing of the system of interactions, social and economic, has profound repercussions and ripple effects. These ripples do not present, in and of themselves, signs of emerging violence. They are social tremors that may pass or erupt. I do not, however, cross the bridge of prediction and propose what those consequences might be. Instead, I continue my investigation to enlarge the view to better understand the system I observe.

Whether or not it was actually the case, at least in ideational terms, and in today's local nostalgic discourse,<sup>202</sup> the Soviet era kolkhoz provided a communal sense of

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<sup>202</sup> Nostalgic recollections of (Soviet) times past are common when talking to people who have lived under the Soviet regime and the kolkhoz. They often refer to the strong sense of community and respect; order and discipline that is often demonstrated by infrastructure that is now deficient, such as the park, the buildings, the roads and the sewer system (the village previously had a functioning sewer system); and

survival. In contrast, there is a clearly expressed impression today that every individual is contributing to living the good life. Today, whether we take a macro or micro view of Palágy-Komoróc, achieving the good life and survival, and the strategies to achieve it\them, are not discussed as a communal experience but rather as personal responsibility. And as togetherness creates the links that runs through society, by deconstructing this society along lines of interactions, we are able to observe the current emergence of a different configuration.

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exchange and access to equipment, for example they could use the tools from the kolkhoz to work their garden plots; With regards to income, people frequently refer to the steadiness and predictability in the past: “Under the Russians, there was nothing in the store, but we could build the village; Now the stores are full, but can’t build anything”. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 11 July 2011, amongst many. For more on nostalgia, Boym, S. (2001). The future of nostalgia. New York, Basic Books.

## Chapter 6: Relations of Authority in Palágy-Komoróc

### 2.6.1 Introduction

In this last chapter of the political ethnography trilogy, I wish to complete the context necessary to engage with the last three chapters, which are dedicated to theorizing the political. We turn to the last transversal incision of this investigation by addressing the relations of authority, for if living together takes its meaning from social interactions and relations of production, it is also characterized by hierarchical forms of relationships. The present section examines these relations of authority in Palágy-Komoróc from the perspective of togetherness, and asks: "What are the formal and informal relations of authority in Palágy-Komoróc?" The purpose of this investigation is to deconstruct the village along these lines and highlight the formal and informal structures present. Moreover, as the environment has been changing over the last twenty years, this perspective should also inform the processes related to debates in the public arena.

I address the issue of relations of authority by following three analytical lines. The first line consists of observing and analyzing those offices that are recognized and have an official denomination. First on the list is the office of the mayor of Palágy-Komoróc who holds an important role in the village. As an elected official, he represents the villagers, and as such the relations with his constituents, and the way he entertains them, are crucial in the making, or absence, of public debate. Moreover, he holds a symbolic importance, as for many in the village, he epitomizes the idea of transition towards a particular form of representative politics. The other official institution discussed is that of the Church. As the communist regime disappeared, churches regained their status and became very active within the community. They grew to be more than a place of worship;

they became alternative spaces of dialogue, exchange, as well as a conduit to keep "magyarness" alive.

The second analytical line pursued to observe relations of authority brings us to street-level debates. This rather informal level of dialogue is engaged by people on the street, on village benches and in the privacy of their homes. It becomes nonetheless crucial in understanding the relations of authority as these dialogues express the fears and frustrations of the villagers in the face of a changing system. These debates sometimes mobilize people to act in order to deal with an issue of public interest.

The third analytical line followed is that of emerging and alternate voices. In this category I present the current shift in the role of women that relates to relations of authority. As women are increasingly propelled to the public and private realm of employment, we observe an alternate voice emerging. This section is followed by a discussion of three metaphorically voiceless groups of Palágy-Komoróc: the outsiders, the Roms and the youth. These three groups have different reasons for their voicelessness in the current context, and as such, provide three fundamentally different, and important perspectives. This chapter completes the ethnographic trilogy by deconstructing Palágy-Komoróc using interactions as the focal point.

### 2.6.2 Opacity, Co-Optation and Loss of Trust – The Public Office

When the trucks carrying gravel showed up on a sunny August morning in Palágy-Komoróc to asphalt the battered "Freedom" street, villagers were prudent and sceptical at first. But their scepticism was quickly replaced by curiosity and amazement, even happiness. For many, it was long overdue, and given what little has been done over the last twenty years to repair and maintain their village's infrastructure, the asphaltting of

their street was far from what they imagined as possible. But that morning, everyone was outside, discussing and smiling. And amongst them was the mayor, proud and straight, speaking with his constituents, revelling in a sense of personal accomplishment.<sup>203</sup> Everyone was pleased that the children wouldn't have to walk through mud to get to school on rainy days. Not many, however, were certain of the real motivation behind this sudden and unexpected surprise. When workers showed up to repair the entrance of the community centre a few months later, it seemed that the mayor had entered the electoral season.<sup>204</sup> For some, it was quite natural for the mayor to seek re-election: after all, after completing four mandates, he would be eligible to receive a lifetime pension.<sup>205</sup>

Ilár Jozsef has been the mayor of Palágy-komoróc and Kisszelmenc for three terms now and is often credited with opening the border between Kisszelmenc and Nagyszelmenc, Ukraine and Slovakia in December 2005.<sup>206</sup> Despite his efforts and success in this enterprise that created space for local businesses to flourish, the three-term mayor's accomplishments are seen by many villagers as self-serving. His tenure has not been exceptional and the administrative unit of Kisszelmenc and Palágy-Komoróc has not seen much improvement: the infrastructure is decrepit, roads are not maintained, the sewer system is nonexistent and people discard their garbage in the nearest ditch.<sup>207</sup> It is

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<sup>203</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 August 2011.

<sup>204</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 18 March 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 4 August 2010.

<sup>206</sup> He was a strong advocate for opening the border that separated the villages of Kisszelmenc and Nagyszelmenc since the end of WW2. For more, Pisano, J. (2009). "From Iron Curtain to Golden Curtain: Remaking Identity in the European Union Borderlands." *East European Politics & Societies* **23**(2): 266-290.

<sup>207</sup> In an interview, the mayor mentioned that the village receives UAH 500000 (Approx. USD 61000) per year for operations and maintenance. Although the opening of the border brought businesses, he asserts that owners do not pay their taxes but rather evade their obligations. As well, businesses pay their taxes to the town where they register, excluding de facto lucrative businesses such as Lastochka, which uses the former cow brigade facility at the edge of Palágy-Komoróc, but is registered in neighbouring Gáloc. Fieldnotes, Interview with the mayor, 2 August, 2011.

also common knowledge that the mayor, a former machinist in Ungvár,<sup>208</sup> built himself a rather important cow farm and acquired a substantial amount of land.

In this section, I am not concerned with exposing the mayor's and others' "wheeling and dealing" to take advantage of their situation; corruption, the obvious word on everyone's mind, is often "... approached in a vacuum, oblivious to its social context" (Sajo 2002, p.2). Rather, I am interested in exploring the context that puts democracy's conceptual rule of law and the struggle against corruption and favouritism in relation to one another (Sajo 2002, p.2). Using the lens of legitimacy, I analyze the relations between the public office and the village's citizens, leading me to extract three particularities of local politics: the opacity of processes related to public goods; the alleged co-optation of the political process by external or non-legitimate entities; and the loss of trust in the democratic process and the search for alternatives to formal processes of representation.

There is no better place to begin the discussion about opacity than in the park in the middle of the village, for it is a subject that arises frequently in conversation.<sup>209</sup> It was the pride of the village during the Communist era, in the 1960s and early 70s: there were two lakes linked by a little bridge, nice trees to offer shade in the hot summer evenings, and even a stage for the occasional orchestra to play music. Two gardeners were busy keeping it beautiful. And in the middle of it stood the "Kaposzta nő", the cabbage lady, a large statue of a strong, young, peasant woman holding two cabbages in her arms, and children at her side. All this has disappeared now and only the elders remember and pass the memory on to their children and grandchildren who look at the park and can only

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<sup>208</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 6 July 2011.

<sup>209</sup> I have numerous entries in my fieldnotes in which the park is either the centre of the discussion, used as an example or a metaphor to illustrate the lack of clarity/transparency related to an issue.

imagine how it could have been: "Those were the days" is a phrase you will sometimes hear.<sup>210</sup>

Today, the lakes and the statue are gone, leaving barely a photograph to be remembered by, and the gardeners have been replaced by the cows from the lower part of the village gathering in the morning before going off to pasture and Balázs's goat, who spends his days alongside the road, attached to a stake. Towards the end of the summer, Roms cut hay there, allegedly for the mayor.<sup>211</sup> The park, everyone agrees, could be the pride of the village again, if only someone knew to whom it belonged. As it stands, many villagers would offer volunteering to make the park nice again, but none would commit to the work as nobody is certain of its status.<sup>212</sup> There are numerous stories of shady privatization schemes in the region, where a piece of land that is considered for public use becomes suddenly a building site for a hotel often belonging to people who are "connected."<sup>213</sup> The park standing in the middle of the village belongs to this category of "unknowns" and represents the very opacity of the current relationship between the public office and its constituents.<sup>214</sup>

The issue of the privatization of the commons is one of the many frustrations expressed by the villagers. Following the regime change in 1991, the land that has not been redistributed to the former collective farm members was placed under the control of

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<sup>210</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, many times.

<sup>211</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 13 August 2011. When asked, the villagers come up with different reasons for the cutting. Some say it is to make it nicer while others say it is to get hay for the livestock.

<sup>212</sup> "There is no point in working on the park as we don't know who it belongs to. If it belongs to someone, people don't feel compelled to work." Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, (translated from Hungarian), 30 July 2011. This testimony was given by one of the well-informed citizens in the village. It echoes the many testimonies received during the fieldwork.

<sup>213</sup> Reportedly there is, near Csap, a city near the Hungarian border about 15 km south of Palágy-Komoróc, a forest where people use to go pick mushrooms. It was considered a public space. Eventually, a hotel was built. Fieldnotes, Csop, 18 July 2011.

<sup>214</sup> For more on property rights and transfers in the post Soviet space, Verdery, K. (1996). What was socialism, and what comes next? Princeton, Princeton University Press.

district and village land committees, to be distributed or leased at their discretion. In other words, it is land and real estate that was not categorized or definitively zoned as either private or agricultural land. Such public space is under the administrative responsibility of the mayor of the village. However, over the last twenty years, occurrences of privatization of public land<sup>215</sup> or the misappropriation of public goods for private use<sup>216</sup> made it into a public discourse that is neither denied nor confirmed by the official representatives.<sup>217</sup> The lack of transparency in public affairs lead villagers to be sceptical of any form of government, convinced, rightly or wrongly, of the co-optation by, and even cooperation between, public officials and private interests.<sup>218</sup>

Opacity and the belief that the public offices are co-opted lead to feelings of mistrust and even cynicism towards public office. For a few years now, the regional government in Ungvár has been exploring solutions for the disposal of garbage across the region. Uncontrolled dumping of domestic, industrial and hazardous material was (still is) becoming endemic and had to be addressed. Following a failed attempt to bring the resolution to the eastern towards town of Nagyszöllős in 2009, the affair came to a stand still. Opposing the Ungvár's town council's decision to have such a facility in the region, the people took the street to stop the project. It worked (Kárpátalja 2009).

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<sup>215</sup> The trail leading from the main road in Kisszelmenc into the cows grazing fields is said to have been privatized by the mayor, whose house is adjacent, extending his property. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 28 August 2010.

<sup>216</sup> A few years ago, the "Kultúr ház" or cultural centre in Kisszelmenc was demolished. The material has been allegedly taken by public servants for personal use. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 July 2010.

<sup>217</sup> For example, when asked about the status of the former tractor brigade land and buildings sitting on the west-southwest side of Palágy-Komoróc, believed by some villagers to have been appropriated by a relative of the mayor, the interviewed civil servant, without explicitly refusing to answer, denied any concrete form of explanation. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 18 March 2012.

<sup>218</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 5 July 2011, 20 March 2012.

Two years later, in the early months of 2011, when everyone thought that the issue had disappeared, the discussion had moved West, including discussions of foreign investment (EU) and a transborder association with the neighbouring Slovak town of Ptruksa (Szirénfalva). Pressuring the mayor of Palágy-Komoróc and the council<sup>219</sup> to open the discussion and make the issue public, the villagers<sup>220</sup> managed to have the decision brought to a vote. The project was turned down. Meanwhile, neither the mayor of the Slovakian town of Ptruksa (Szirénfalva) nor the head of the Ungvár regional council (of which Palágy-Komoróc is part) seemed to be aware of the mayor's plans (Badó 2011).

Some projects, like the repairing of the road or the renovation of the Palágy-Komoróc community centre, are perceived by the villagers as positive because they enhance the quality of everyone's life and bring an air of change and improvement. Given the absence of any form of garbage collection, even the discussion of a dump or a waste management facility sounded positive. However, the absence of consultation and the effect of surprise compounded by shady or unexplained instances of privatization of public spaces rendered the public office of the mayor open to criticism and cynicism. Moreover, rumours of co-optation and illegal deals are part of the public discourse that de-legitimizes the elected office while it retains its capacity to act.

In Palágy-Komoróc, Ilár Jozsef is called "bíró" or judge as much as he is called "polgármester" or mayor. That people choose this appellation is significant: it often refers to the position as one to decide between two opinions or to call on when some public

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<sup>219</sup> The town council is made of 16 councillors: 12 from Palágy-Komoróc and 4 from Kisszelmenc.

<sup>220</sup> Many villagers were not aware of the project, whether by not being informed or by apathy. One villager took the initiative to speak up against the project and force the involvement of the villagers in the decision. Following a strong altercation, a presentation was organized to which only a few villagers showed up. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 July 2011

service is required, such as the police or the intervention in an issue of domestic violence. Despite this name, and although one barely ever sees a police car, hears of an arrest or witnesses the imprisonment of a citizen, there is a general qualifier used by the villagers to talk about their village and their world: "törvénytelen" or literally, lawless.<sup>221</sup> This is not only felt in relation to crime specifically, but expressed as a deeper and more fundamental sense of being abandoned. This loss of fundamental trust in the political system is expressed in different ways generationally. For the older generation, the pensioners, most of their opinions express nostalgia from times past when things were simpler and predictable.<sup>222</sup> When 78-year-old Bözsi wanted to appeal the payment form proposed for the land she leases out, she was met with silence. Her incapacity to turn to someone to make her rights respected frustrated her and made her feel vulnerable. She is convinced this wouldn't have happened in the old days. After her failed attempt to obtain satisfaction, instead of appealing to the mayor, the villagers consulted amongst friends and decided to act in an organized manner. The pensioners organized themselves to appeal to Balogh, the owner-manager of Lastochka<sup>223</sup>, and force him to correct the situation.<sup>224</sup> There is an argument to be made that it was never the mayor's responsibility in the first place to protect his constituents. However, context here is important. The fact that he was altogether ignored is important not only because it demonstrates an initial expectation from the mayor to intervene, placing the public office closer to the position

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<sup>221</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 28 August 2010 and 30 July 2011. The state of "lawlessness" is expressed in many different forms, of which "the absence of the state of right"- Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 5 July 2011, or helplessness in the face of a political system that does what it wants, Fieldnotes, Kisszelmenc, 28 August 2010.

<sup>222</sup> "Sokall jobb volt az Oroszok alatt mint Ukrajna alatt. Most törvénytelen" – "It was much better under the Russians than under Ukraine. Now it's lawless". Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 30 July 2011. This is a sample of many similar comments.

<sup>223</sup> See note 9, this chapter.

<sup>224</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 5 July 2011.

of judge (Bíró) than mayor (Polgármester), but also because it expresses a lack of trust in the will of the mayor to protect his constituents.

Although combative, many elders find refuge in melancholy and nostalgia of times past. The working generations, those sons and daughters who provide most of the workforce in the village, express cynicism and apparent disinterest. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the members of this generation have either left the region mostly for neighbouring Hungary, or are busy working long hours and long weeks to make ends meet. When addressed about the issue of politics, local or beyond, they do not hesitate to use words like "corruption" and "cronyism" to characterize the political landscape.<sup>225</sup> Their view of the political transcends the local and Ukrainian levels to express powerlessness: "Mit lehet, semmit nem lehet!" (what can one do, there is nothing one can do!).<sup>226</sup>

For this generation, what seems like a sold-out political system, feelings of anger, frustration and submission collide on a daily basis. According to András, the peasant from Kisszelmenc,<sup>227</sup> the land plot besides his house is in the process of being privatized and appropriated by the mayor. As a farmer, he would have liked to acquire it, but he was excluded from the arrangements. When asked, he raises his shoulders and responds with discouragement: "there is nothing we can do here".<sup>228</sup> Even István, who acts as a village councillor and works many different jobs, expresses his dismay before what seems like the inevitable. For him, the Marxian perspective persists: "It's all about protecting the bourgeoisie; in the end, politicians will buy all the land." In the face of this

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<sup>225</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 25 June 2011. Description of current government, local to national, is often described as corrupt.

<sup>226</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 28 July 2011.

<sup>227</sup> Chapter Four, Section 2.

<sup>228</sup> Fieldnotes, Kisszelmenc, 31 August 2010.

powerlessness, this generation turns to work as a means not only to provide for themselves and their family, but also to protect themselves. In Palágy-Komoróc, the state is doubly problematic: on the one hand, it offers no protection; on the other, its agents act in predatory ways.

However, despite this grim outlook on the capacity to elevate oneself at the level of the public debate, there are moments of light in the darkness. The political vacuum created by the absence of public dialogue opened the door to opportunities as unintended consequences. As we saw in Chapter Four, the discussions along the streets, while villagers waited for their cows to come home, is such an occasion. For the older generation, but not exclusively, the re-opening of the free access to faith and churches in 1991 offered an alternative platform for discussion and re-creating political dialogue. This empowered churches and priests to adopt certain positions that were, and still are, unclear to villagers. For the working generation, the combination of the economic pressures presented in Chapter Five and the political void opened the path to another form of empowerment, this time along gender lines. Women, propelled into the market place over the last twenty years to compensate for their counterparts' loss of work and to augment the family wage, find themselves not only empowered professionally, but also on the political scene. Finally, the unheard, those members of society that we do not hear, namely the younger generation and the Roms, are also empowered, but in a totally different manner. The following sections focus on these different groups.

### 2.6.3 Friends, Neighbours, Households – Public Debates at the Street Level

In Palágy-Komoróc, public debates begin at the street level and for many villagers, these are their only means to challenge a political system that almost

systematically excludes them from the public debate. In a system where information flow is not readily conveyed through daily papers<sup>229</sup>, television antennas are often set towards Hungary,<sup>230</sup> and local politics are the business of a select few rather than the majority, acquiring information requires face-to-face interaction. The way in which information is used for a deliberate purpose helps us trace the initial line defining authority and influence. In the present analysis, knowledge enables capacity.

For the villagers, exchange of information comes naturally. For many, a greater part of their daily lives is spent discussing and exchanging on issues. More importantly, it is in many ways this information that gives them the possibility to create opportunities as well as protect themselves in a rather opaque system. It is through the daily exchanges of information that Rózsa the widower is capable of finding job opportunities as a maid in Ungvár, puts to profit her late husband's scaffold, or receives information from her friend on how to apply for Hungarian citizenship. It is also through these daily interactions that important contractual issues concerning the payment of the rent for the use of the land they are leasing come to light.

Information is also a crucial commodity, one that is integral to the villagers' survival kit. Incidentally, because of this propensity to acquire and disseminate information, the networked households relay issues by creating a public space. They create a de facto dialogue, becoming a voice for the village. This voice of the "villagers" is often sneered at and downplayed by people of authority as rumours or the opinions of

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<sup>229</sup> The weekly "Kárpáti Igaz Szó" is for all intents and purposes, the only available paper for news. It covers regional (Zakarpatia) news essentially. It is available online: [http://kiszó.hhrf.org/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://kiszó.hhrf.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

<sup>230</sup> Most houses are equipped with antennas. Hungarian or Ukrainian reception is set according to the direction of the antenna.

the "ignorant."<sup>231</sup> However, whether the information circulated is "true" or "false" does not eliminate the existence of a public discourse that serves to contest otherwise unchallenged power brokers. For example, towards the end of the summer, when Balogh, the land user, prepares to pay the owners in kind, rumours and discussions spread within the village as to the nature of the in-kind payment to be received. Many people were dissatisfied with the arrangement and made appeals to change the arrangement.<sup>232</sup> In this case, there were consultations<sup>233</sup> between individuals that led to action.

One should not exaggerate the extent to which the voice of the villagers is produced through the networked household. The role of information and knowledge at this level should be perceived at two levels. First, the dialogue conveying information and its use as knowledge serves foremost the purpose of surviving the every day. Whether we discuss work opportunities or seek the services of someone, the networked households feeds on this capacity to create the conditions to survive. At this level, gathering knowledge gives one authority and influence amongst peers. The second level represents a consequence of this everyday dialogue in that public affairs become part of the daily discussions and represent the only forum for dialogue at the local level. In this case, this group of networked households, through their daily voices, creates a de facto authority. Their voice being their sole legitimacy, their influence, however, remains weak at best.

This street-level dialogue that occurs while waiting for the cows, at the store or in private courtyards is important to acknowledge as it feeds into public debates, even if it

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<sup>231</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 1 August 2011.

<sup>232</sup> See note 12, Chapter 5, Section 2 for details on the contractual arrangements pertaining to the lease of the land.

<sup>233</sup> To say that villagers were strategizing a mobilization would be going one step too far, but discussions were made as to who should go and discuss, as well as some basic form of unified rhetoric use.

rarely becomes part of official local government discourse. In Palágy-Komoróc, there are two forms of public debate: one that occurs behind closed doors, between the mayor, his advisors and the village representatives; and one that occurs amongst the villagers.<sup>234</sup> But, as the networked households are fading away and the village's demography is changing, informal debates occur in different venues based on a series of new interlocutors. For the moment, this relative silence and absence from public debate empowers those in the region that do not seek to be observed, but rather enjoy the freedom of acting without scrutiny. I refer here to interested parties within the public and private realms that seek profit by association. Replacing the voice produced by the networked households by the relative absence from public discourse of newcomers not only eliminates the already anemic public dialogue and scrutiny, it empowers those who seek to act outside of public scrutiny. Information and knowledge disappear from the streets and remain the objects of backroom discussions, where they serve the few--for the moment.

#### 2.6.4 The Dual Role of Churches: Faith and Identity

One of the few institutions that offers a space for community are the churches. With the regime change of 1991 came a renewal in people's attraction to faith (Fedinec and Vehesh 2010). How do the churches deal with the relative absence of public dialogue? Do they offer an alternative discourse or platform, even to the point of taking on the political agenda? In fact, the local churches have pursued their role of providing a home for faith in a relatively traditional manner, in that they are performing the celebrations and rituals, but do not, so far, embrace the complexities of today's world: the disruption of the nested households, the fragmentation of the community among ethnic

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<sup>234</sup> James C. Scott theorized this form of discourse in terms of domination and resistance. See Scott, J. C. (1990). Domination and the arts of resistance : hidden transcripts. New Haven : Yale University Press.

and linguistic lines and the new opportunities for the youth, amongst many other factors. As for adopting a political agenda, they walk a very fine line by not endorsing local politics and the claims of the followers, but engaging in identity politics by actively promoting "Hungarianness", supporting celebrations and commemorations, and seeking funding for their churches mainly through Hungarian channels.<sup>235</sup>

In Zakarpattia, churches were allowed to function freely following the fall of communism. But the starting point was rather unequal, as, during the communist period, the Reformed Church operated with reduced capacity, the Roman Catholic was partly closed, and the Greek Catholic church completely eliminated to the point of using the building as a sports and recreation center. Since then, churches as institutions and churches as places of gathering have rebuilt themselves, first by attracting villagers to the practice of faith, and second, with the help of money given by private foundations and sometimes public money. Today, churches in Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc derive their influence from two sources. First, through faith, they reach down and bring together their communities. Second, through their churches, they funnel Magyar culture, politics and money by remaining staunchly dedicated to Hungarian traditions.

As in any community, there is a core of people who actively participate in church activities. When attending the Sunday services, we see a constant number of people returning every week, while the rest of the villagers choose to attend on occasion. Usually, exceptions are made for particular ceremonies such as a wedding or a funeral, or particular religious instances. As presented in Chapter Three, the interconnections created by family life, whether it is nested or networked, makes everyone a de facto member of

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<sup>235</sup> By Hungarian channels I mean from Hungary.

one of the churches.<sup>236</sup> Churches are meeting points for social exchange, recognition and belonging to a group. From this point of view, the presence of three churches dividing the community along lines of faith contributes to social fragmentation. For example, this sense of belonging leads to conflict amongst villagers along these lines, as when the members of the Roman and Greek Catholic churches stopped talking to each other following a dispute.<sup>237</sup> While this was dividing two groups, the third one, the reformist, stayed on the sidelines and avoided getting involved.

However, the enthusiasm of the villagers to attend service has steadily declined over the years, and nowadays only a handful of worshippers gather on Sundays. In the words of the Roman Catholic priest, "faith is not the issue. The issue is that they prioritize faith below everything else."<sup>238</sup> He adds that, "consumerism is to blame for the lack of participation."<sup>239</sup> However, as one observes the daily lives of the villagers and discusses with them, one should not understand "consumerism" as the suburban escape on weekends to the local mall. Most people in Palágy-Komoróc, young and old, have difficulty making ends meet and are subjected to enormous pressure in their every day lives. For many, Sundays are spent working, as we see the tractors going to the fields as we walk to church. Surviving the everyday for the generation that is of working age creates all sorts of excuses, mostly work in the field or the household, to fail to attend church.

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<sup>236</sup> I am not commenting on true belief, which is a rather normative issue, but rather that everyone associates her/himself, and is associated by others to a church.

<sup>237</sup> Telephone Interview, Palágy-Komoróc, 25 December 2011.

<sup>238</sup> Fieldnotes, interview with Roman Catholic priest, Palágy-Komoróc, 3 August 2011.

<sup>239</sup> Idem.

Opinions vary amongst those still attending as to why church attendance has dropped. Whether it be consumerism or laziness<sup>240</sup>, there is a general consensus that people, especially the younger generation, are becoming indifferent to traditions, as the Roman Catholic priest, echoed by his Reformist counterpart expressed, "Globalization brings phones, computers [...] the young generation is not interested in tradition, they escape tradition, they want to change tradition."<sup>241</sup> But for many youths, it is not a matter of escaping tradition as much as it is embracing opportunity and creating a life that seems full according to their norms. And those norms are not set, at least not convincingly, by churches that react to novelty, but rather by those instruments of "globalization".

While the three churches divide the villagers into three uneven groups, they also bring the community together under the same guiding principle of keeping Hungarianness alive. Their priests, all educated in Hungary, have a strong discourse about Magyariness and the importance of maintaining language and tradition as an anchor to the community. Whether, as we saw previously, it is the Greek Catholic priest mentioning that "Palágy-Komoróc will be a better place when there will be more children, Magyar people. Magyar children"<sup>242</sup> or the presence of the Hungarian flag in the reformist church, it is clear that the survival of "magyariness", expressed mostly by the use of language, is at the centre of their concerns.

It is an interesting and rather contradictory position adopted by the three churches in that all, implicitly or explicitly, refuse to get involved in politics, big or small. By endorsing and promoting Hungarian culture and language, they are, in effect,

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<sup>240</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 9 August 2011.

<sup>241</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 11 August 2011.

<sup>242</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 7 August 2011.

discriminating against others. In other words, if you do not speak Hungarian, you are limited to attending the occasional Ukrainian service at the Greek Catholic church. But the support of the churches for Hungarian language and culture is not only passive. It reaches into official sermons and seemingly innocuous discourses<sup>243</sup> and further, engages in identity politics by streaming money to uphold the churches' capacity. It is no secret that in order to repair their churches, one of the challenges facing the priests is raising money from donors, usually, if not exclusively from Hungary.

As much as magyarness is a unifying theme in both Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc, it hardly reaches the point of becoming an issue of identity, defined within the framework of politics of identity (Connolly 1991). For the commemoration of the revolution of 1848<sup>244</sup> only a handful of villagers gathered around the "Kopjafa"<sup>245</sup> near the Greek Catholic church, despite the presence of a donor from Hungary.<sup>246</sup> Political infighting and general lack of interest amongst the villagers for what appears to be a "Hungarian" celebration made for timid festivities. This lack of interest at the local level, while in large cities such as Ungvár and Beregszász, several hundreds gather to commemorate the liberation war against Habsburg Monarchy, exposes an interesting divide. While the three churches find their empowerment through money, their most important base for legitimacy is slowly eroding: the villagers.

Interestingly, the initial deduction that comes from the observation of the churches is that of a strong voice promoting identity. With money obtained from

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<sup>243</sup> In sermons, as I presented an example in Chapter Four, Section Three; or even symbols, as it is difficult to miss the Hungarian flag spread across the wall in the Reformist Church.

<sup>244</sup> War of independence against the Austrian Empire under the rule of the Habsburg

<sup>245</sup> Carved wooden plinth/obelisk. It seems to originate from the region of Székely, in Transylvania, near Moldova. It is traditionally meant to commemorate and celebrate a departed person. The symbolism of the Kopjafa varies from "freedom" to "identity" to "Hungarian".

<sup>246</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 15 March 2012

Hungarian foundations, they manage to restore and repair their physical churches, flagships of their faith, and with it, magyarness. The discourse is strong and relentless: in order to survive, we need to stay, have children and preserve our culture. However, little is done beyond the words. Overworked, the Catholic priests cover as many as eight villages and care for three to four churches.<sup>247</sup> They act mostly alone and their capacity to delve below the surface of the social issues is limited.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, with scarce funds, little money goes to dealing with daily issues lived by the villagers. There is no local program for social support such as alcoholism or domestic violence, nor is there the capacity to bring the youth together while they spend their summers hanging out.<sup>249</sup> Even the retirees' choir is funded through the initiative of a local woman who created a foundation to attract money and fund activities.<sup>250</sup>

The three churches of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc seek their empowerment and their legitimacy from the same place: faith and the followers, Magyarness, and money to maintain their capacity. Observing the current relations of authority, they manage to maintain themselves. But, pursuant to their current strategy, their impact is slowly eroding, and with it, their empowerment and legitimacy at the local level. Although they still have the support of Hungarian funds to sustain their infrastructure, their lack of involvement in badly needed social support and their ignoring of the impact of local politics on their constituents slowly isolates them. Even their vocational base for

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<sup>247</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 3 August 2011

<sup>248</sup> Their overextension makes it difficult if not impossible to organize at the local level. Their time is consumed between services in different villages and maintaining the buildings. The rest of the time is mostly spent travelling to meetings or raising money.

<sup>249</sup> There are such programs in Zakarpattia, but they are organized centrally, and in great part by the Reformist Church. Attendance to such organized sessions, like alcohol prevention, requires travelling and paying – highly unpractical for farmers and people that just can't leave work in general.

<sup>250</sup> Teréz created the "Kangaroo alapítvány (foundation) in order to funnel money legally. Her initiative runs in cooperation with, but outside of the realm of the Churches.

legitimacy, faith, is under attack as fewer young people relate to the traditional church and the family influence is eroding. Although they seem to provide a rallying point around Magyariness, they also contribute to the already addressed multiple socio-political fracture by excluding two important groups: the newcomers on the basis of language; and the Roms on the basis of culture.

#### 2.6.5 Re-Defining Women's Role – Integrating the Public Dialogue

When showing for a KMKSZ meeting as a recently nominated regional representative, Amália asked the small audience rhetorically - "Where are the women?" The answer came back without hesitation – "In the kitchen".

Fieldnotes, Csop, 18 March 2012 (Interview with KMKSZ representative, Ungvári Járás)

Over the last twenty years, households have been placed under an enormous amount of economic pressure. Striving to survive the every day, they adjusted and shifted to adapt to the financial pressure. Recession and unemployment placed the male workforce in a bind and with it the whole household. Women had to step up to save and maintain the integrity of first, the spatial reality of the household; and second, to provide for the generational continuity on which the nested environment is based. For the women who reached adulthood in the early 1990's and who now constitute the backbone of the female work force, the last twenty years have propelled them in a world of possibility that fundamentally changed their social positioning in the relations of production at the level of the household and the community.

This reaction to economic uncertainty motivated women into finding creative solutions to access the job market. Today, some of these women have moved up

institutional ladders, creating a new voice.<sup>251</sup> And as they diversify their activities, women become increasingly involved in public dialogue, if only, for the moment, at the informal level. This empowerment creates its own effects. First, there is the generation gap amongst women in the village and the region that highlights not only the rifts in the dialogue, but also the silences and misunderstandings when they meet. Beyond this apparent separation, there is the unequivocal emergence of a gender-based legitimacy to express and voice in a strongly male dominated environment. With the accession of women to positions of authority, we also observe the emergence of alternative forums of public debate.

In Palágy-Komoróc, for women of the previous generation,<sup>252</sup> joining the work force meant working on the kolkhoz,<sup>253</sup> in a state shop or selling at the market in Ungvár. For many, going to school was not a matter of talent or intellectual possibility, but rather the consequence of a household economy demanding that everyone worked. As Rózsa recounts, she did not have time to study as a teenager. When she returned home from school in the afternoon, she had to work in the fields. Then, she had to feed to geese, for the feathers would be used for the blankets she would bring as her dowry. She would have liked to do more, believes she could have. But life was not like that, she had to work and get married.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> For a perspective on women's employment in early post-socialism, see Sperling, V. (1999). Organizing women in contemporary Russia : engendering transition. New York, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>252</sup> Those that are within reach of their pension or older.

<sup>253</sup> Many women worked in the kolkhoz, from Sonia the accountant, Margit the milker to Juliska in the cafeteria. On women's work on the Soviet kolkhoz, see chapters 11-14 of Farnsworth, B. and L. Viola, Eds. (1992). Russian peasant women. New York, Oxford University Press. For the classic work on women's labour in the Soviet Union more generally, see Gray, F. d. P. (1990). Soviet women : walking the tightrope. New York, Doubleday.

<sup>254</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 8 July 2011.

For Tünde, Rózsa's 16-year-old granddaughter, this scenario seems surreal. She is a very good student at the high school in Sislóc, works diligently on her homework, and has already won several competitions across Zakarpattia, in Hungarian and Ukrainian. Her goal is to become a translator or an interpreter, and maybe work at the EU in Brussels or Strasbourg. Twice a week, she follows extra language courses in English to reach the competitive level required to secure one of the rare scholarships to attend university.<sup>255</sup> She is not expected to work after school, although she sometimes helps her mother at home. Rózsa, her grandmother, has mixed feeling about this. While she is impressed and happy to see Tünde perform so well, she wonders why so much energy is spent on education, as Tünde will surely get married by the age of twenty-five, settle down, and have children; or risk being treated as an old, single, unmarried woman.<sup>256</sup>

Rózsa's daughter and Tünde's mother bridge this rift. Betti is in her mid to late thirties and as most women of her generation, came of age as communism was fading, opening a different world. For this generation of women, marrying into a nested household did not mean joining a safe and predictable environment, but rather a tough world in which the new rules of economic neoliberalism would transform the meaning of the word security. Women got more and more involved, first by increasing their relative importance in the relations of production as providers. Second, they diversified their occupational capacity to encompass not only one area of expertise, but two and often three. Betti is a full time teacher at the school in Sislóc. She spends many of her

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<sup>255</sup> According to her mother, Betti, it will cost around UAH 10000 per year should she have to pay for it. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 24 July 2011.

<sup>256</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 June 2011.

afternoons crafting wreaths that she sells as far as three villages away.<sup>257</sup> In late summer\early fall, she spends many afternoons picking potatoes. Betti's three-pronged approach to the household economy is refined. The money she earns from picking potatoes<sup>258</sup> in early fall is directly re-invested into material used to build the wreaths that she sells with a fifty per cent profit margin.<sup>259</sup> In relation to her husband's fixed monthly salary, Betti's income is far superior.<sup>260</sup>

The stories of women in Palágy-Komoróc and the region living in nested households, accessing professional positions at the same time as generating secondary revenues, while retaining the expectation of raising the children, is the norm rather than the exception. This participation in the work force is not only accompanied by the rise of the relative importance of women in the relations of production within the household, it increasingly places them in positions of influence in the public sphere. Although most of the political, economical and spiritual positions of leadership are still retained in majority by men, public office, shop owners, land entrepreneurs and clergy, women are increasingly present beyond the household and the street-level discussions.

Accessing the public debate in formal capacities can be deconstructed in three initial categories. First, we have a group of women with the potential to influence the public debate by the simple fact of their employment. In this category, we can cite the senior administrator in the municipality of Palágy-Komoróc and Kisszelmenc. Eszter is not an elected official but a senior local civil servant. She has worked in the town hall for

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<sup>257</sup> All Saints Day is one of the big occasions to sell wreaths, weeks ahead of the event. On those occasions, Betti rents a place in Kisszelmenc where she sells to Slovaks looking for deals across the border.

<sup>258</sup> She is paid about UAH 100 (USD12.00) for 1 1/2 hours of labour. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 4 August 2011.

<sup>259</sup> Betti mentions an average of UAH 4000 (USD 490.00 ) in sales for the November festivities.

<sup>260</sup> Betti's husband earns a fixed salary of UAH 1500 (USD 183.00) monthly. In addition to her other economic activities, she earns UAH 2000 (USD 245.00) from being a teacher.

42 years, was there when the village passed from one regime to the other, and has been involved in every issue official and unofficial.<sup>261</sup> Another in this category is Anikó whom worked the ladders of hierarchy at the "white house"<sup>262</sup> in Ungvár, becoming the managing director of all pensions in the "province" (oblast) of Zakarpattia. Both school directors of Sislóc and Koncháza also belong to this category as they manage big budgets, speak for and influence several hundred children and parents from multiple communities, and sit on committees at the oblast level.<sup>263</sup> All these women exemplify on one side the phenomenon of power by proxy, or the capacity to influence policy through suggestion.

The second category concerns women with a direct interest in politics and policy making. Here we find Lujza, the school director of Palágy-Komoróc and member of the Ukrainian party of regions. She not only directs the school efficiently, but also anticipates pursuing a PhD in education in order to make a real difference in policy. She is active in local politics and the current mayor finds in her a harsh critic.<sup>264</sup> Magda is much younger and works in a little shop in Kisszelmenc selling clothes. In her free time, she is the local representative for the KMKSZ, the organization through which Magyars of Zakarpattia receive support from Hungary. Her involvement is on a voluntary basis and she actively promotes KMKSZ's programs and values.<sup>265</sup> Amália, a full time teacher at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute,<sup>266</sup> is about ten years older

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<sup>261</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 March 2012.

<sup>262</sup> In Hungarian "Fejér Ház", literally "White House". Name given to the building housing the oblast "provincial" administration because it is white.

<sup>263</sup> Fieldnotes, Sislóc, 17 August 2011. And, fieldnotes, Koncháza, 20 March 2012.

<sup>264</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 15 March 2012

<sup>265</sup> Note on KMKSZ Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 16 March 2012.

<sup>266</sup> The Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute is a higher level education institution situated in Beregszász. <http://www.kmf.uz.ua/eng114/>

than Magda and has just been appointed as one of the eight regional representatives of KMKSZ. She started off like Magda, at the local level, to eventually be in charge of a region covering one-fifth of the oblast, including thirty representatives each representing a village or a group of villages. Whether at the national, regional or local levels, women like these begin to find their way on the public scene and influence the outcome of policy.

The third category of women discussed are engaged within the community and the development of a civil society. Teréz lives in Palágy-Komoróc and teaches Rom children in the school in Koncháza. Locally, she is known for her active involvement with the pensioners. Over the years, she has organized trips to Hungary and even arranged for an appearance of the local pensioners' singers group on Duna Television in Budapest. These activities were only made possible through the raising of funds, which Teréz does by presenting proposals to private foundations mostly in Hungary. She also created a local foundation to administer the money. In creating this foundation, she sought the mayor's support as well as the Reformist priest's, unearthing in the process a property rights issue concerning a building with no apparent owner that she wanted to use for her pensioners. At the source, Teréz's involvement in community life is benign. However, the involvement of donors from Hungary supporting "Magyariness" in neighbouring countries as well as the potential use of a disputed building places Teréz in a public debate, whether she likes it or not.

The impact of the increased responsibilities of women is still unclear. Women always had important functions, but in the current system, women are creating new space for self-empowerment and legitimizing their actions. The implicit failure of the public

office to provide for citizens and the inability of the churches to take on those social responsibilities and their exclusion of parts of the community, opens the door to some transversal action. By bypassing, ignoring or to the contrary, influencing local and regional politics, women are dislocating the current socio-political framework.

#### 2.6.6 Voices in the Dark – Outsiders, Roms and the Youth

What about those who do not seem to have a voice, those people who we see and meet on the streets of the village, on the side of the roads and trails, in the parks and behind the school during the long summer evenings? Those people living in houses that have been or are being rebuilt, or to the contrary, who live in shanty houses with limited electricity and running water? In Palágy-Komoróc not everyone has a voice, or can find the space to have her/his voice heard. I argue there are three such groups: the outsiders, the Roms and the youth. They, however, represent a significant portion of the village and their legitimacy and empowerment is often unaccounted for, as they do not seem to make a difference. The outsiders are silent and go about their business without too much apparent involvement; the Roms are excluded and marginalized from the other villagers; the young live under the wings of their adult supervisors: they do not express opinions publicly.

##### *The Outsiders*

On Sunday mornings, the bells are calling for the religious services. But they are not meant for everyone, as there is a growing fringe of society that does not attend these services. I define them as outsiders to underline their distance from the dominant

demographic of the village.<sup>267</sup> Some of them are soldiers and border guards posted in the area. Others have come to Palágy-Komoróc to establish themselves, buy a house and live outside the city of Ungvár where they work. Many of these households come from the East and speak mostly Ukrainian. The third group of outsiders has lived in the village for a long time, often married into a family, or came to work at the kolkhoz and never left. For many in this latter group, the stigma of being an outsider remains. They attend the Ukrainian-speaking mass at odd hours and are sometimes given qualifiers used by the villagers to identify them: "She is a Tóth" or "He came from the mountains" is the type of gentle reminder of otherness. However, as many come from elsewhere, this otherness most often designates a non-Magyar status.

There is a parenthesis to be made here. I deliberately use words like "outsiders" in opposition to "core" community. This is taken in the spirit of Brubaker and Cooper's "category of practice" rather than "category of analysis"; with ethnography, I reach into the social organization and attempt to depict it rather than having pre-conceived notions of its organization.

By 'categories of practice', following Bourdieu, we mean something akin to what others have called 'native' or 'folk' or 'lay' categories. These are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts. (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p.4)

As such, the use of these categories must be understood as a discursive method of creating a mental image of the local community. It is not meant to crystallize the idea of

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<sup>267</sup> The data available are not precise. The mayor's office holds the census and tracks property and offered these numbers: total inhabitants in Palágy-Komoróc: 924; of which Roms: about 120. There are 250 houses in the village, of which 12 were bought by "outsiders" in the recent years. Their number is estimated at 88 to 100. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 15 and 19 March 2012.

two separate groups living in the same place, but rather to give an image of an aspect of their interaction. They are very much integrated at many levels.

For these outsiders, togetherness means to be aware of the differences and that admission to the "core" community is very difficult, if not impossible. Notwithstanding that most Magyars of the older generation speak Russian, and that of the more recent generations learn and speak Ukrainian, exchanges between core and outsiders are rare. As the school in Palágy-Komoróc functions exclusively in Hungarian, their children attend school in the city of Ungvár. And apart from those attending the Greek Catholic church's Ukrainian service, most prefer to attend services in an orthodox church, if at all. As for the local political scene, they seem completely absent.

For the outsiders, voicelessness stems from a number of origins. For the soldiers and border guards, their physical presence is temporary, their contribution to local life ephemeral. Volodia, the border guard and his wife, Halyna, a teacher of English, have lived in Kisszelemenc for eight years. They express no desire to learn the Hungarian language and Halyna dreams of leaving someday. Rózsa, a Hungarian woman from Palágy-Komoróc, regularly babysits their children, and when she does, she speaks Ukrainian<sup>268</sup>. Similarly, the more permanent new households usually do not speak Hungarian, which limits their capacity to engage in street-level debates. Between 2007 and 2012, only twelve houses of the 250 in Palágy-Komoróc were bought by outsiders.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> "It's hard to say what language she speaks--it's a Slavic amalgam, but I think it is closer to Zakarpattia dialect of Ukrainian, and she thinks what she's speaking is Ukrainian (or calls it that nowadays, anyway). I've found that many Magyar speakers in Zakarpattia not educated in the post-Soviet period don't distinguish much in practice or in name between Russian and Ukrainian. Rózsa does not speak either well, if we insist on a "clean" version of either." Note from discussion, Jessica Pisano, Budapest, 24 July 2012.

<sup>269</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 March 2012. This number, however, must be taken in context. It only accounts for "houses" bought, not Ukrainian speaking individuals living within the boundaries of the village. The number most often heard is in the proportion of 20% of the villagers being Ukrainian speaking. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 15 March 2012.

While their chance to access a public office position is slim, they remain interested. Béla, Rózsa's neighbor, just sold his house to people from the mountain,<sup>270</sup> and Éva néni, who openly spreads the rumour of her possible move to Hungary,<sup>271</sup> receives many offers for her house. And as the networked households slowly disappear, property is becoming available to those who have money.

The slow but steady influx of newcomers to the village represents the silent trend identified over the last twenty years that shows the Ukrainisation of an increasing number of "Hungarian" villages (Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi 1998, Fedinec and Vehesh 2010, Dupka 2011). The point is not to predict the future disappearance of Hungarians in Palágy-Komoróc or the region, but rather to take note of the creation of otherness based on language and origin within togetherness. Second, as this otherness is becoming an integral part of the local reality, it is important to acknowledge the impact on the public discourse. For it is not because one is silent that he does not have voice, and for the time being, this group of well off residents are going about their business, in silence. But they represent a fracture, an "other" in the mapping of the togetherness.

### *The Roms*

The second group of voiceless that makes apparent a fracture are the Roms. The particularity of their voicelessness is that it is based on exclusion. In the political process, their voice is barely heard, their claims constantly refused. When Palágy-Komoróc was subjected to heavy rains, their houses were flooded and partly destroyed, their appeal

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<sup>270</sup> Béla, in his sixties, expatriated with his family to Hungary to the nearby town of Nyíregyháza, but kept his house and land in Palágy-Komoróc. He operates a transborder trucking business that brings goods from Italy to Russia. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 19 July 2011.

<sup>271</sup> Éva has a son in Hungary. She often emulates the possibility of moving in with his family. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 10 June 2011.

remained unheard. Their applications for work at the unemployment office are systematically rejected.<sup>272</sup> The only quasi-legal form of work available to them is to work for Balogh in the fields on a daily basis. Their capacity to demand help is limited, if not inexistent. But through all these stories of rejection and extortion, there is a new component of society that is slowly emerging at the local level: a civil society based on conscience. Through people like Teréz, whom we spoken of earlier, the idea that the Roms not only deserve justice but also require some form of outsider assistance to get it is making its way passed the office of the mayor and the churches.

For the latter, with all their demagoguery, do not exclude the Roms from their community, but neither do they create the conditions for their inclusion, nor for their support.<sup>273</sup> As a result, and as part of the general increase of "other" faiths in Zakarpattia, Roms increasingly turn to alternative churches that are more than eager to welcome them. It is not uncommon to see Jehovah's Witnesses walking the streets of the village and shouting over fences to attract the attention of the villagers, who seem interested in engaging in conversations with them. These "new" churches,<sup>274</sup> much more flexible, less hierarchically established, closer to the people, attract the criticism of the priests, and the interests of those who cannot fit in the mainstream.

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<sup>272</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 20 March 2012.

<sup>273</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 29 September 2011. And "Reformed theology emphasizes the doctrines of grace, best known by the acronym TULIP. L stands for limited atonement: The name is potentially misleading, for it seems to suggest that reformed people want somehow to restrict the value of Christ's death. This is not the case. The value of Jesus' death is infinite. The question rather is what is the purpose of Christ's death, and what He accomplished in it. Did Christ intend to make salvation no more than possible? Or did He actually save those for whom He died? Reformed theology stresses that Jesus actually atoned for the sins of those the Father had chosen. He actually propitiated the wrath of God toward His people by taking their judgment upon Himself, actually redeemed them, and actually reconciled those specific persons to God. A better name for "limited" atonement would be "particular" or "specific" redemption." <http://www.reformedreader.org/t.u.l.i.p.htm>

<sup>274</sup> I place new in quotation marks, as there is a documented history of persecution of Jehovah witnesses in the former Soviet Union.

Adding to local civil society and alternative churches, NGOs originating from outside of the territory of Ukraine are taking an interest in the Roms. Though barely noticeable at first, we become increasingly aware of their presence and actions as we interacted and discuss with villagers and schoolteachers. Every once and again, we see a parked car or minivan with Dutch plates. They are quite impersonally called the "Dutch" by the villagers, often accompanied by expressions of curiosity as to their intent. These NGOs usually work at two levels. First, directly with the people, sometimes even bringing their own construction workers, as it happened when the Roma school in Szürte was built; (Badó 2005) or by assisting local and regional NGOs to engage in a multiplicity of programs.<sup>275</sup>

### *The Youth*

When Tünde and her brother accompany their mother for a Sunday lunch at their grandmother's house, theirs is not to speak. Or when asked about her future plans, Judit, 16, promptly let her mother answer for her. There is very little room for the younger generation to get involved in adult conversations, let alone politics. The structure of local government is such that it does not provide for spaces for dialogue nor does it include positions specifically made to express the voice of the youth. Devoid of any responsibility other than going to school and sometimes assisting in domestic chores, the youth is silent in formal as well as informal debates.<sup>276</sup> This group of voiceless apparently led by their parents and seniors are expected to assume their pre-formatted responsibility. For the boys, it means taking over the house and assume its continuity, by marrying and

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<sup>275</sup> The Carpathian Foundation International for example. <http://carpathianfoundation.eu/>

<sup>276</sup> Very rarely does it occur that a member of the younger generation gets involved in a debate in a domestic context, say at the dinner table. Nor is it common to see them mix with the people waiting for their cows in the evening.

working, possibly in the footsteps of his father. For the girls, it is to marry, have children and support the family the way she learned.

To speak of legitimacy and empowerment when discussing the youth is difficult as we are neither talking about an organized group, nor do they have an agenda. The nature of their empowerment is given by one factor: they have a choice about their futures, and for many teenagers and young adults in the village, this choice is still hard to grasp as they are subjected to a disconcerting discourse about having the freedom to choose on one hand, and the responsibility to maintain tradition, whether it relates to family or Hungarianness and all this in a situation of economic constraint, transformation and uncertainty.

It is still unclear what members of the young generation will decide. Transported by their parents through the rocky years following the regime changes, they are emerging on the other side with a variety of ideas. Some have already embraced the continuity of the household, other are pursuing studies in a difficult economy; some are already working while staying home for economic reasons, unsure of their future decisions; while others are determined to make their dreams happen, sometimes under the impulse of their parents, sometimes simply because they want to.

The analytical importance of the youth in the present context is twofold. First, they provide a window at the local level on the capacity for all to engage with the future, on practical and philosophical terms. From this point of view, we observe a multiple, deep generational divide. For the elders, the discourse is plain and predictable, carrying mostly the values of continuity and faith. Their nostalgia for the recent past is often expressed and passed on as the importance of maintaining at the forefront those

principles related to family and society. The working generation, the parents, having a foot in both the communist and post-communist eras, their philosophical definition of life today is represented by a mixed approach. As much as they see the importance of continuity and stability from a social and familial perspective, they also recognize the difficult environment, financial and political, and the possibility to make a life for themselves.

Often derided as "superficial", and "not interested in traditions", the young generation is sometimes seen lost in the face of mercantilism and capitalism, aimless.<sup>277</sup> They, however, represent the deep philosophical divide across which they are standing. They represent, in relation to their grandparents and parents, the generation that carries the difficult task of making do with a strong legacy based on territorial stability and social continuity on one hand, and the possibility of redefining the meaning of good life according to them. In the perspective of our analytical concepts, empowerment and legitimacy, their voices is represented by the potential future they represent. Rather than extrapolating on what "could" happen in a possible future, this empowerment must be reflected analytically in terms of how society deals with this potential today.

#### 2.6.6 Conclusion – Division and Alternatives

In this final chapter in the ethnographic investigations, we uncover a very complex set of interactions and relations of authority. They show that below the apparent lethargy along the streets of Palágy-Komoróc, there are multiple rifts and schisms that crisscross the socio-political makeup of the society. Rather than viewing them as indicators of a future pattern of conflict, they must be taken as analytical deductions to

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<sup>277</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 28 July 2010.

engage with reality as it is today. And as such, Palágy-Komoróc today is at relative peace. Taking the analysis of relations of authority to the next level by bringing the pieces together and observing from a more remote position, we can see two tendencies. The first resembles a dislocation where togetherness is broken up into little pieces of groupness called "identity", "family" or even "individuals". The second movement shows emerging trends of governance that offer alternatives for public debates.

As mentioned, the first tendency observed is a constant and seemingly unstoppable decomposition of the formal political system. Under the relentless assault of opacity and cronyism, the hope of a healthy democratic social contract at the local level is fading and has occasioned reflection on times past with nostalgia and regret. Concretely, with the absence of any form of public forum, public scrutiny, and systematic voicelessness, the divide between the villagers and their representatives has been growing to the point where the villagers are disinterested. The public office is not only seen as a failure, but also a demonstration that public money does not serve public interests. As such, as shown in the daily life of Palágy-Komoróc and the region, daily matters are usually dealt with at the street level, *while waiting for the cows to come home*.

This horizontal mobilization created by ad hoc discussions about specific issues, such as the "dump" or the yearly payment for the lease of the land, is difficult to achieve for two reasons. It is difficult for the villagers to cut through the complex red tape in place to protect their interests; and, as demography evolves, there is less and less possibility to find a public space, notwithstanding the difficulty of mobilizing a people that are striving to survive every day. Despite the obvious possibility, the churches do not provide for that public dialogue, the political alternative to elevate the voice of their

constituents. Instead, they divide the villagers along multiple lines: faith, language, culture, generation.

Amidst this apparent atomization of the villagers in multiple groups and even individuals, there are other movements that point in the direction of a new form of governance. The redefinition of gender roles in the public space is multiple and informative. By accessing those positions of authority, many women begin creating the space for alternate modes of dialogue that cut transversally across those dividing lines. Whether it is power by proxy as a school director or mid to high level bureaucrat, direct influence in public policy or the emergence of a local civil society, the actions of these women all contribute to compensate for the absence of dialogue. This absence of dialogue is epitomized by the voiceless, whose suppression, instead of provoking a silence, creates opportunities. Palágy-Komoróc and the region is not an isolated island: new churches are taking an interest in the voiceless, as are international NGOs seen in the case of Roms.

Deconstructing Palágy-Komoróc along the lines of empowerment and legitimacy rather than observing only the formal institutions of power highlight the mechanisms of governance, formal and informal. Not only does it expose those places of division between public and private discourse, it also shows the fading line between the two realms. The political takes alternative forms to compensate for the perceived failings of the public office. In the light of this last chapter, we can now turn to the next part and proceed with the second movement.

### **PART THREE: THEORIZATION**

In this part, I use the analytical pieces to proceed with the second movement and complete the ontological shift. The end state is to provide a systemic perspective from which I can draw conclusions.

In Chapter Seven, I present the theoretical framework I use to execute the second movement;

In Chapter Eight, I proceed with a first integration of the ethnographic investigation to complex systems theorization;

In Chapter Nine, I complete the movement and draw some conclusions

## Chapter 7: Building a Theoretical Framework: Structuration and Complex Systems

Systems theory looks at the world in terms of the interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena, and in this framework an integrated whole whose properties cannot be reduced to those of its parts is called a system.  
(Capra 1982, p.43)

### 3.7.1 Introduction

Building theory starts with ontological premises and the decision as to whether an approach follows a positivist or non-positivist stance. The theoretical construct of this dissertation is based on the fundamental idea that social reality<sup>278</sup> cannot be grasped fully, and we can only attempt to create its representations. Theoretical constructs in this context are metaphorical frameworks that assist us in observing social phenomena from a specific angle. It follows, then, that part of the ontological premise is that one can only observe from a perspective--reflexive, spatial and temporal--that is bound to occlude some parts of social reality. This also means that, much like a zoom on a lens, the narrower the perspective, the finer the detail.

This theoretical framework, *in fine*, is intended to explore the political as it appears through the lived experience observed, although not exclusively, in the village of Palágy-Komoróc, in contemporary Ukraine. In order to build this framework, I borrowed from poststructuralism and structuration theory, as well as complex systems theory or non-linear dynamics. Obviously, their work is related to the works of functionalist thinkers in IR such as Ernst Haas (1964), David Mitrany (1946, 1976) that later evolved into work on interdependence (Keohane 2001). It is, however, mostly sociologists and scientists who have synthesized ideas of structuration and complex social systems

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<sup>278</sup> Contra natural phenomena, the domain of natural sciences.

theoretically. (Parsons 1951, Parsons 1961, Giddens 1977, Giddens 1979, Capra 1982, Giddens 1984, Habermas 1984, Luhmann 1995, Capra 2002).

In this chapter, I begin by posing some theoretical foundations necessary for the building of the framework. By bringing together structuration and complex systems theory, I want to create a framework that addresses the conundrum presented by the structural sociology and methodological individualism dilemma. Using Giddens, I integrate his dominant idea of the structure as recursive and changing (Giddens 1984). To induce agency and render structural movement palpable, I use complex systems theory, functional domains and systems, to cut across the rigidity of the structure and allow for some room for shifts and changes.

Rather than using this framework from a top-down approach, for example using "international system" as the point of departure for the analysis, I pursue the theoretical work that I began with my ethnographic deconstruction. With these elements, I proceed to the reconstruction, critical and interpretive of social reality, and seek to uncover the processes and structures that make up the social system, and the environment within which they exist.<sup>279</sup>

The final conceptual piece covered in the current chapter is that of security. I have a number of purposes for this concept, the main one being that of a focusing lens. I should be satisfied in uniting structuration, complex systems and ethnography. However, my specific interest lies in the political, and as such, I cannot leave it on its own terms, as I would with other systems, economic, religious, etc. By uncovering the relationship

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<sup>279</sup> Maybe even radical constructivism in that "cognitive construction is the 'condition of the possibility' for the emergence of reality. Here, Luhmann "reverses the relation between ontology and epistemology" as "reality is not the a priori condition for experience". Moeller, H.-G. (2012). *The Radical Luhmann*, Columbia University Press. Pages xi-xii and Chapter Seven.

between security and the political, I create the possibility of observing an intimate couple that changes across time and defines in a certain measure the philosophical organization of our society. This tool requires the strength of simplicity, and must be flexible and adaptable to its different meanings in various contexts.

My intent in this chapter is to make this theory useable from an analytical perspective. Complex systems and structuration theories are highly sophisticated and highly theoretical (Moeller 2006). The challenge of this chapter is to bring out the essential without voiding the theories of their respective content, and to create a useful framework.

### 3.7.2 Building Theory: Foundations

This theoretical framework is intended for observing a system, the political, within a group of systems, using ethnography as the conceptual bricks and mortar. Without expanding too deeply on the theoretical abstractions of the different theoretical models that inspire this approach, a few words are necessary to address certain apparent contradictions. The use of ethnography to reconstruct the social realm invites an oversimplification of the concept of structure as defined in social theory by simply reconstructing the social along corporeal, physical and spatial lines. Concurrently, the inherent physicality expressed by the ethnographic deconstruction should not be dissolved in the abstraction of systemic approaches. The current framework has to possess the integrative capacity to bring together the physical, the metaphysical, and functional in order to conceptualise the systems and their environment.

### *Ontological Shift*

The context of this theoretical exercise, it must be remembered, is that I am seeking to "sketch the political" by observing the difference between an abstract/philosophical notion of the "political" and its enactment in daily life, politics. In order to create the possibility of sketching the political, my intent is to proceed with an ontological shift, or in other words, to change the perspective we take toward the "reality" we are observing. By this, I am attempting to integrate the ethnography that finds its source in the daily life of real people and a highly theoretical framework based on structuration and complex systems.

In order to explain the shift, let me take a short tangent using the human body as an analogy. As we know from biology, observing parts of the body gives us a "variables" perspective, whereas a systemic perspective opens on a holistic dimension in which *systems* relate to each other: skeletal, muscular, cardiovascular, digestive, endocrine, nervous, respiratory, lymphatic, urinary, reproductive, integumentary.<sup>280</sup> Moreover, many (most) individual parts (heart, lung, liver, bone etc.) do not act solely within a single system and contribute to different systems, creating a *complex system* of relationships<sup>281</sup>(Capra 1996). The ethnography presented in Part Two exposed the different parts of the body and their relations: the liver, the heart, the brain, the lungs, and I proceeded on

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<sup>280</sup> For more on systems, <http://www.innerbody.com/htm/body.html>

<sup>281</sup> For example, "The skeletal system includes all of the bones and joints in the body. Each bone is a complex living organ that is made up of many cells, protein fibers, and minerals. The skeleton acts as a scaffold by providing support and protection for the soft tissues that make up the rest of the body. The skeletal system also provides attachment points for muscles to allow movements at the joints. New blood cells are produced by the red bone marrow inside of our bones. Bones act as the body's warehouse for calcium, iron, and energy in the form of fat. Finally, the skeleton grows throughout childhood and provides a framework for the rest of the body to grow along with it." InnerBody. (1997). "Inner Body: Anatomy Systems, <http://www.innerbody.com/htm/aboutsite.html>."

the basis of their interactions. In order to have a clear and deep picture of the *environment*, the whole body, I needed to explore their specific components and their relational dimensions. As I proceeded with ethnographic analysis, I also uncovered, although only partially, another perspective: the systemic dimension.

Similar to our shifting from body parts to systems, the present theoretical framework has the role of shifting our attention from the parts and their interactions exposed during the ethnographic analysis to a systemic perspective uncovering the economic, the social and the political. These systems are all detectable within the different parts of the social construct, within the households, groups, churches etc. However, similarities are always dangerous, and my use of the human body to explain may attract criticism or uncover dissonances. I offer it solely for the purpose of producing a mental image of the ontological shift I am attempting, or at least experimenting with.

### *Highlighting the Political*

Since the beginning of the dissertation, I have been insisting on the metaphorical "sketching of the political." As I conceptualize the political as a system among systems, I need to find a way to make the political more visible in a way that places it in relief. Consistent with complex systems theorization, it is important to realize that any form of isolation can create only a partial and imperfect view. Much like extracting the lymphatic system would only give a severed perspective, the political remains a domain of analysis that cannot be observed without keeping in mind its relations with other systems, as well as with the environment.

In order to highlight the political, I chose to use security as the focalizing concept. In this context, security is part of the social construct, a product of our structural/systemic

organization, very much like Foucault treated in his work.<sup>282</sup> (1997, 2004). Locating security as I proceed with the analysis will serve three purposes. First, it will assist us in defining the contours of the political system by highlighting it and contrasting it in relation to other systems. Second, it will illuminate the point of intersection between the political and other systems that share security as an issue. Third, it allows us to (re) formulate the relation between the issue of security and the political.

To be sure, I realize that this endeavour is ambitious and that by nature, can only be incomplete. I see it as a small incision amongst the many, in the possibility of exploring alternative ways of thinking about security, and responding and contributing to Ken Booth's call that "the global 'we' desperately need a theory of security for our times" (2007, p.2).

### 3.7.3 Building Theory: Elements of Epistemology

Although we may find a strictly theoretical logic in a solely functional explanation of the world, one cannot ignore our corporeal experience. In other words, although there is a way to explain the world along functional lines through analysis of economic, political, social, and legal systems, not only can we not ignore our corporeal experiences as analyzed in the current dissertation through interactions, they form an integral part of the very making of the systems and environment we are trying to identify. Moreover, following Giddens' structuration theory, if we are to integrate agency and possibility based on norms, rules and acts, (1984) we must recognize that that form of understanding of the social construction begins with social life.

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<sup>282</sup> Ref. Chapter Two.

In this section I address the elements necessary to proceed with the ontological shift, from the four-dimensional localised ethnographic perspective to the complex systemic view. To do this, I rely on Luhmann's theorization, which recognizes two historical moments well suited to serve our purpose when applied to an analytical model. Luhmann presents a clear delineation between the pre-modern and the modern as a defining moment used to distinguish types of systems. While the former, the pre-modern, is bounded by the corporeal physicality of social existence, the latter, the modern, is defined by functions, where the body transcends the systems and communication determines their nature (1977, 1995, 2006).

So, in order to integrate life experience, I inject both the pre-modern and modern systemic models into the analytical framework.<sup>283</sup> Luhmann's pre-modern framework, anchored in the physicality of social life, offers the opportunity to build three different perspectives (explained below) using the elements of the ethnographic analysis. Concurrently, I superimpose his functional model to identify and create the shapes of the different systems (economic, political, etc.). Finally, I create a fourth perspective using Giddens' conceptual contradictions, existential and structural, (Giddens 1984, pp. 193-199) to analyze the normative premises of the social construct. These premises stem from the metaphysical realm of social life, determinant in the meaning-making process of life in general, creating a window to peer into the motivations that prompt actions.

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<sup>283</sup> In Luhmann's theorization, a dominant system does not eliminate the others. There is a continuity in systems, even if one dominates the others. Moeller, H.-G. (2006). *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*, Open Court. Pp. 41-42.

### *Giddens and Structuration Theory*

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the ontological shift I am introducing translates the lived experience informed by a deep ethnographic analysis into a complex systems perspective. The strength of the ontological shift is that it introduces agency to the otherwise a-human version of the Luhmannian systems theorization. It is also the challenge, as it requires some theoretical maneuvering to create this possibility. To bridge the ethnographic perspective and the complex systems approach, I use Giddens' structuration theory. His concepts of existential and structural contradictions are central to create the continuum of subjective/objective security.

While elaborating his structuration theory, Giddens' was deeply concerned with the separation between the naturalistic and hermeneutical perspectives. Specifically, he addressed the ways in which "[...] the concepts of action, meaning and subjectivity should be specified and how they might relate to notions of structure and constraint" (1984, p.2) The opening offered by his theorization displaces the foundational perspective of structures and, by including agency, creates the possibility of change, and thus emancipation. Importantly, it gives interpretive political ethnography the capacity to be theorized further as the structures are not external to human experience, but an integral part of them.

Amongst the richness expressed in Giddens' theorization, I want to extract two closely related elements. First, instead of distancing the functionalist and post-structuralist view of structures, he brings them closer together. The first, the functionalist perspective, presents structures as a

patterning of social phenomena, [...] often naively conceived of in terms of visual imagery, akin to the skeleton or morphology of an organism or the girders of a building. [...] structure here appears as external”. (1984, p.16)

The second, post-structuralist approach presents structures as

[...] an intersection of presence and absence; underlying codes have to be inferred from surface manifestations. (1984, p.16)

As he further theorizes, rather than emphasizing their distance, he brings these two perspectives closer together in order to create a model of social construct based on

[...] structuring properties allowing the binding of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them systemic form. (1984, p.17)

In effect, Giddens internalized the model of structure to the human dimension, placing the structure in relation not only to itself through agency (self-reflexivity), but also in relation to a “paradigmatic dimension”, the system.

As I am interested in observing the political from a systemic perspective, Giddens’ structuration theory provides the bridge for this possibility. In effect, political ethnography makes it possible to present a structural view that engages with human agency and renders the systemic perspective perceptible. By overlapping systems theory conceptualization with structuration, I am able to build the analytical framework with which to observe systems.

### *Pre-Modern Models*

Luhmann elaborated his pre-modern models following an historical trajectory that he divided in three distinct models: segmentary, center-periphery and stratified. A segmentary social system is composed of equal sub-systems. These represent the most archaic societies based on “either descent<sup>284</sup> or settlement” (1977, p.33). In these societies, there is “no center of social power – no tribe or segment is generally perceived to be at the core” (Moeller 2006, p.42).<sup>285</sup> The advantage of using this cross-cutting is to observe Palágy-Komoróc as a net of households and solely differentiate them on an equal basis, while identifying the way in which functional systems appear from this perspective.

Luhmann describes the second model, centre-periphery, as follows:

Traits of the center periphery differentiation can already be found in segmentary societies, especially when one of these societies takes on a dominant role in external trade. Still, it does not yet challenge the segmentary differentiation. This only happens when the dominant status of the center is used to establish another kind of differentiation and particularly stronger role-differentiation (division of labor). The centre periphery differentiation results from the differentiation of the center. It is, so to speak, at home at the center. (Luhmann in Moeller 2006, p.43-44)

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<sup>284</sup>Kinship (my footnote)

<sup>285</sup> Moeller further explains: “One would, for instance, be perceived as a member of the Ojibwa prior to being perceived as a chief. The community of the Ojibwa has more structural value than the community of chiefs. The subsystems in these societies would not be groups of chiefs and groups of warriors but rather the segments that define themselves by common descent or communal living.” Moeller, H.-G. (2006). *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*, Open Court. P.43.

Relating to Palágy-Komoróc, this cross-cutting exposes the polarizations between groupings, as the model presents, between dominant and subordinates. According to the model, this polarization of groupings is based mostly on kinship and may expand to other forms based on wealth and power. This, however, remains geographically localized and does not apply equally to an enlarged societal view. For example, we can imagine a region ruled by a clan, while the adjacent region is responding to another arrangement. In our context, we see the analogy of the Magyar-Rom duality and the ideas of otherness and identity. This view opens windows on aspects that are hidden from view in the previous perspective, but also ever so slightly expands the spatial realm.

The third and last model used to reconstruct is stratificatory. In Luhmann's view, this model historically precedes modernity and the functional differentiation. It is based on differentiation or division of society into unequal subsystems. In this case Luhmann clearly expands the centre-periphery model to what he calls "environment" without clearly defining its contours. What is clear from this model is that it divides society along equality/inequality lines rather than on kinship. Wealth and power and their unequal distribution are central to its definition.

Using these three perspectives creates the opportunity to integrate the real life construct into three different models, each highlighting specificities of the social construct. It also provides a three dimensional approach to identify and define the functional systems and their relationship. More, as we will see, these three models only show similarities with the actual construct, and as such, the differences between the models and real life experience provide many interesting findings for our purposes.

*On Complexity, Environment and Systems*

As discussed earlier, non-linear dynamics or complexity theory is inspired by the natural sciences, and more specifically by the biological study of living systems. This form of modelling signalled a departure from functional or mechanistic approach to organizational or systemic thinking. In essence it means that "a system has come to mean an integrated whole whose essential properties arise from the relationships between its parts, and 'systems thinking' the understanding of a phenomenon within the context of a larger whole" (Capra 1996, p.27). This definition delineates the complex nature of any systems studied under these premises. Not only is a system more than the sum of its parts; it is defined by the relationships established among the various components.

This has an immediate impact from an epistemological perspective. Non-linear dynamics is not well suited for the separation of variables, and the model does not expose causal relationships between its parts. In systems thinking, "connectedness, relationships and context" are central themes, making the essential properties "properties of the whole which none of the parts have" (Capra 1996, p.29). This contextual framing of thought counters the purely analytical approach that tries to understand parts by isolating them. To the contrary, a systems approach "means putting it [them] into the context of the larger whole" (Capra 1996, p.30).

In order to conceptualize the complexity of modernity, Niklas Luhmann added another of form differentiation that replaces, although does not eliminate the pre-modern systems<sup>286</sup>: the function systems. These systems take a radical turn from the traditional Aristotelian view that places the human being as a body within a community "of men

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<sup>286</sup> Niklas Luhmann defines modernity by the change of system, from stratified (aristocracy, class system) to the function system. Luhmann, N. (1977). "Differentiation of Society." Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers canadiens de sociologie 2(1): 29.

sharing a way of life" (Allan Bloom, cited in Moeller 2006, p. 5). Instead, function systems are made up of communications (Luhmann 1995), not of physical groupings. This view of systems helps us deal with the great complexity achieved by the social system in that not only is the human body highly mobile, but the environment in which it moves has become fluid and multiple. This approach uses communications *between* humans to identify systems, and as such, at any given time, in any given place, there are a number of juxtaposed systems: political, economic, media, legal, etc., each with their own perspective and their own reality. Human beings learn to interact within these systems, moving from one to the other constantly without noticing, sometimes with some level of irritation.

Function systems are closed to each other, in that they have their specific structures and processes. The economic system, for example, has an elaborate process in place for payments, transactions, ownership, mortgages etc. They are closed in that they are not shared by other systems. However, they interact with the political, legal, media and other systems that make up the environment and as such, change and adapt their structure and processes. For example, we have many economic regulations that stem from the political system. In such a case, the political system influences, and even forces the economic system to change.

Conceptually, these are "sub-systems of society" but are not "strictly speaking, parts of a whole" as "a system does not become less whole when a system ceases to function. Before the mass media.... society was not less whole" (Moeller 2006, p. 24). As such, our bodies are part of all the systems with no differentiation. But we

communicate within references to systems: we buy things (economy), we vote (political) etc. But we learn to navigate through them and even deal with them simultaneously.

One reason we can bear [the metaphysical burden of social reality] is that the complex structure of social reality is, so to speak, weightless and invisible. (Searle 1995, p.4)

Systems are part of a larger whole: the environment. However, each system has its own environment, and all systems share an environment. Environments can be treated as finite and as having a number of systems and subsystems, all interacting together. But they can also be treated as open, as the human body is also part of a greater ecological and/or social environment. In the context of this dissertation, we begin by treating Palágy-Komoróc as an environment to eventually proceed with the ontological shift towards systems thinking. We then will be in a position to explore the theoretical possibility of linking the particular to the whole, or to use other terms, the local to the global.<sup>287</sup>

#### 3.7.4 Building Theory: Tools

Now that I have defined the foundational and epistemological elements for the ontological shift I am proposing to execute, I present a few theoretical concepts and tools that are not explicit without explanation. They are derived mainly from complex systems theory.

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<sup>287</sup> “Local to global” is only used to create an image, as in systems’ theory holism it is difficult, if not impossible to breakdown into pieces or parts of the whole.

### *On Differentiation*

In order to observe these systems in their environment as dynamic and evolutionary, we use the concept of differentiation, which is defined as the "reduplication of the difference between system and environment within systems" (Luhmann 1977, p.31). This means that systems evolve reflexively through processes. The most telling example in Palágy-Komoróc is the transformation from nested households into networked households as the system evolves and reacts to its environment. Conversely, we observe at the social system level the adaptation of the basic segmentary unit to respond to the complexity.

### *On the Precedence of Systems and their Relation to Time*

So far we have seen that there are a number of ways to differentiate social systems: segmentary, center-periphery, stratified and functional. These are theoretical constructs that do not exclude potential others (Moeller 2006), but as they tend to be generic, they present the clear advantage of usability. However, as much as we can use these modes of differentiation to analyze social systems, we must remember that former modes (segmentary, center-periphery, stratified) have been supplanted by what Luhmann calls modernity along the lines of functional differentiation.<sup>288</sup> This means that although "social evolution in the strict sense takes places when a new differentiation becomes dominant" (Moeller 2006, p.42), the former types of differentiation do not disappear. In other words, when observing a social system, we are likely to recognize segmentation, centre-periphery and/or stratification alongside functional systems as we can have

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<sup>288</sup> We will deal with these subsequently. Examples of functional differentiation are economy, politics, law etc.

different systems overlapping. In Palágy-Komoróc, we recognize households that fit the segmentary mode of differentiation, but they are part of the dominant functional systems.

When in theory, functional differentiation (economy, political, legal, etc.) takes precedence, the presence of other subsystems is not ruled out. (Luhmann 1977, p.40) As Luhmann explains:

Functional differentiation, again, for many of its functions, depends on segmentary differentiation within functional subsystems. The most spectacular example is the political system. Even the global system of the world society has, so far, not changed the fact that the political function needs a territorial basis for its decision making, and this so much more if it is supposed to maximize consensus and to optimize democratic rule. Thus, the political system of the world society is divided into political states not only in the sense of a more or less obsolete "survival" of history but apparently as a requisite of functional specification. (Luhmann 1977, 41)

Concretely, it would mean that although world society can be differentiated "globally" along functional lines, the very concrete socio-political structure of Palágy-Komoróc remains relevant to understanding the system itself.

Thus, from the standpoint of political ethnography, the integration of all modes of differentiation is not only necessary but essential to the analysis for three reasons. First, as we have seen in Part Two, the ethnographic work dealt with phenomena as they occurred in order to uncover the structures and processes for the subsequent analysis. Here, we do not merely apply theory to a society; rather we uncover societal production with the help of theoretical abstractions. Modes of differentiation like "segmentation",

"centre-periphery" and "stratification" are not theoretical blueprints, but rather provide a cognitive frame for thinking about social structure.

Second, it introduces the notion of temporality into the social system. If segmentary, centre-periphery and stratified modes are reflections of the past, their making of the social in the form of households and communities cannot be ignored from the interpretation of the social system. If these modes of differentiation are both "...obsolete 'survival' of history..." and "... a requisite of functional specification" (Luhmann 1977, p.41), then I submit that we should treat them not as mere artefacts, but rather as the ontological presence of the past.

#### *On Structural Coupling and Interpenetration*

Third, recognizing the multiplicity of social systems in a common environment, we introduce the idea that systems encounter and influence each other through change. Each system evolves and reproduces itself normally, and as such, if we take the example of Palágy-Komoróc, we can imagine the period of the nineteen sixties, seventies, and eighties as one of relatively un-dramatic change. The environment was stable and within it the social systems reproduced themselves as well as evolved and complexified. In this relative stability, the [normal] meetings of systems are called "structural coupling" (Luhmann 1995, p.222). These couplings cause "irritations" (Moeller 2006, p.32), which in complexity theory does not mean a causal relationship, but rather underlines an effect. In other words, as human beings navigate, cross and sometimes overlap different systems, couplings and irritations are normal features of "life". These irritations also contribute to the phenomenon of change as society readjusts its governance, economy, laws or norms.

The concept of structural coupling serves the purpose of explaining how systems (economic, political etc..) that are autopoietic and operationally closed can still be connected and, what is more, how they existentially depend on each other. Without the existence of bodies and minds, that is of biological and psychic systems, there cannot be communication... Structural coupling not only means that the existence of two systems is co dependent, but also that what happens in one system will have a great effect on the other system – these systems will co-evolve. (Moeller 2006, p. 226)

This does not mean that structural couplings or the meeting of systems cannot produce irritations that disturb social peace. It means that they maintain their inner coherence.

*Interpenetration* brings structural coupling to another level. In this case, under the effect of dramatic environmental change, social systems may interpenetrate each other and even break down until a reconstituted system(s) emerge(s). In the case of Palágy-Komoróc, we may ask ourselves whether its accession to the pan-European environment produced such interpenetration at the end of the Cold War. However, interpenetration may occur, or according to Luhmann is more likely to occur between systems (Luhmann 1995). In this case, we are dealing with an extreme level of disturbance within and/or between systems that act as reciprocal destabilizing effects. In this case, we could examine the dramatic effects of the passage from controlled economy to the free market system in relation to the shift in the political system.

### 3.7.5 Building Theory: Focusing Lens - Security

Up to this point I have proceeded with the construction of my theoretical framework, taking the ethnographic analysis anchored in phenomenological observations and shifting towards a systemic view. As I discussed earlier, in order to highlight the political through this ontological shift, I am using security as the conceptual tool that I propose to discuss in the present section. I divide the discussion in three parts: First I address the relation between the subjective and objective meanings of security; Second, I introduce the notions of existential and structural contradictions as found in Giddens's structuration theory; Lastly, I discuss the use of the concept as an analytical tool in complex systems theorization.

#### *Security as Subjective and Objective Value*

I begin this discussion with a return to Foucault's paradigmatic shift I introduced in Chapter Two, which stated that "[...] the emergence of governmentality through the state highlights the tension, and eventual separation, between two fundamental principles: the *principae naturae* and *ratio status*, or the severance between nature and government..." (pp. 23-25). This separation propels the discourse about security to the realm of what Booth calls its non-subjective value, or "[...] what hindsight and history reveal, or what a hypothetical omniscient being might know at the time" (Booth 2007, p.105). To make security an objective value implies what Frédéric Gros sees as the elimination, or at least identification of the causes for (in)security (Gros 2012). Security in this case is confronted with its opposite, (in)security, and opens a discussion about the

sources of (in)security, dangers, or what Baldwin refers to as the security problematique (Baldwin 1997).<sup>289</sup>

Before discussing my treatment of the objective meaning of security, I will address my insistence on injecting the subjective value of security in the ontological shift. Michael Dillon presents a rich deconstruction of the concept, whereby security is not only a transformative concept in that “by being secured, something becomes that it previously was not” (Dillon 1996, p.122). Security is also a duality used in some instances to reflect that “certainty is not a subjective experience of security in the present, but the promise of immortality in the future” (Dillon 1996, pp. 125-126).<sup>290</sup> This subjective feeling that transcends the lived experience peers into our relation with nature, which, as Jameson notes, changes and becomes something different:

“Today it may be possible to think all this in a different way, at a moment of a radical eclipse of Nature itself: Heidegger’s ‘field path’ is, after all, irremediably and irrevocably destroyed by late capital, by the green revolution, by neocolonialism and megalopolis, which runs its superhighways over the older fields and vacant lots and turns Heidegger’s ‘house of being’ into condominiums, if not the most miserable, rat-infested tenement buildings. The *other* of our society is in that sense no longer Nature at all, as it was in precapitalist societies, but something else which we must now identify” (2003 (1984), p.568)

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<sup>289</sup> In his article, Baldwin “identify(ies) some specifications that would facilitate analysing the rationality of security policy” : Security for whom? Security for which values? How much Security? From what threats? By what means? At what cost? In what time period? Baldwin, D. A. (1997). "The concept of security." Review of International Studies(23): 5-26.Pp. 12-17.

<sup>290</sup> To be sure, in his deconstruction, Michael Dillon opens different perspectives on the meaning of security. I use his analysis of Calvin. For the latter, “[t]he believer’s doubt within his own human experience does not affect the integrity of the assurance of salvation that resides beyond all human experience”. Dillon, M. (1996). Politics of security : towards a political philosophy of continental thought. London, Routledge. p.126.

My use of the subjective meaning of security as it emerges from my ethnographic analysis is not to proclaim or demonstrate the death of pre-capitalism, but rather to explore the transitions and bridges that Luhmann and Giddens laid in their theorization between these models. The ethnographic analysis clearly depicted people's existential concerns and the different ways they see to address them. Integrating the subjective meaning of security into the analysis is thus not mere enrichment, but central to the enterprise of theorizing in dialogue with lived experience.

From an analytical perspective, however, to use the subjective meaning on its own terms is problematic. The nature of its rendering is often expressed in discourse and symbols, habits and ceremonies. It can be narrated through a thick description, but contrast is difficult to highlight. However, as noted previously in the text, the concept of security is not the object of analysis, but rather the conduit or focal lens that gives us, in combination with the systemic perspective presented in the current chapter, our perspective. To create this possibility, I further follow Dillon's lead, and do not treat the subjective and objective meanings of security as separate values, but rather as a concept placed on along the same continuum.

*Securitas* is consequently defined as freedom from concern; unconcern; composure; freedom from danger; safety; security. While Cicero frequently also used *securitas* as a kind of synonym for the stoic word meaning free from mental perturbation, tranquility or peace of mind (*euthumonia*), in the Augustan period it also came to mean a guarantee or security for a debt or obligation (Dillon 1996, p.125).

In order to provide analytical substance to this continuum, I follow my earlier presentation of Giddens' structuration theory to further integrate two additional concepts: existential and structural contradictions.

### *Existential and Structural Contradictions*

As part of the bridging process I am engaging between the ethnographic analysis and the complex systems theorization, I am introducing the idea of contradictions as employed by Giddens. Contradictions relate to the idea of *differentiation* earlier developed, in that they highlight the contradictory principles under which structures are operating. More importantly for our purpose, Giddens' contradictions give us a way to integrate the subjective and objective meanings of security as presented earlier by Dillon.

Giddens defines two types of contradictions:

By existential contradiction I refer to an elemental aspect of human existence in relation to nature or the material world. There is, one might say, an antagonism of opposites at the very heart of the human condition, in the sense that life is predicated upon nature, yet is not of nature and is set off against it. Human beings emerge from the 'nothingness' of inorganic nature and disappear back into that alien state of the inorganic.

And,

[...] Structural contradiction refers to the constitutive features of human societies.

I suggest that structural principles operate in contradiction. What I mean by this is that structural principles operate in terms of one another but yet also contravene each other. (Giddens 1984, p.193)

The relative presence and mitigation of existential and structural contradictions are, according to Giddens, directly related to the complexity of a society. The simpler and closer a society, such as “tribe”, the more contradictions are dealt through myths and stories. The more complex, such as capitalist societies, the more contradictions are dealt through institutions and other structural constructs:

Myths mediate existential contradiction cognitively. That is to say, in myth themes of incest, of sexuality, of life and death are explored and ‘explicated’ for those who tell them and those who listen to them. (Giddens 1984, p.194)

On the other hand, by the formation of complex societies beyond the tribal society “existential contradiction is weakened [...] but not altogether dissolved (Giddens 1984, p.195).

Although Giddens pursues the analysis of contradictions as a consequence of city and state formations (1984, p.197-198), I stop short of integrating his conclusions. Rather, I am interested in using the model of continuum between existential and structural contradictions, as it proves to be flexible enough to integrate the subjective and the objective without creating an exclusion, but rather recognizing the presence of both. The interest in uncovering these contradictions lie in their relationship and in how they allows us to reflect on the social organization.

### *Security as Analytical Tool*

The purpose of this part is to create a useable analytical tool. To do so, I lean heavily on Luhmann’s theorization while linking it to Giddens’ structuration approach. To present security as analytical tool I need to deconstruct the concept to extract the analytical perspectives that are useful in the context of systems theorization. First, I

discuss security in relation to the concept of *change* as the conceptual reflection of systems evolving and interacting. In this perspective, change is not temporally fixed in time (fall of communism) or teleologically determined (democratic transition), but rather a normal function of systems evolving. This will bring me to the second step in which I further unpack security by introducing additional tools. Recognizing in systemic terms that change is happening normally and constantly as a function of time and agency, (in)security can be used as a function of stability.

Systems theory addresses the idea of change "... only in relation to structures" (Luhmann 1995, p.345). This means that the way a system deals with change can only be observed by differentiation within its structure. And that is why, as a system, change does not mean the complete evacuation of the "prior" to be replaced with the "after", but rather the reconfiguration of the structure and the processes in which one can still recognize traces of the past (Luhmann 1995). In broad terms, change within the social environment occurs all the time, but the "degree" of change observed depends on the time frame or the relative importance of the change.

Having established the relation between (in)security and change, we can now proceed to unpack the latter. As we conceive of change as the continuous evolution of a structure, we now make the idea of security useful, first through the notion of expectation. This notion quite simply entails the idea that "what is expected is likely to occur" and thus, "an expectation can be more or less secure" (Luhmann 1995, p. 308). From this point of view, one can see that in a stable structure submitted to a temporal sequence of relatively benign events, the level of (in)security remains low. Change occurs, but the predictability and the expectations are met with regularity. Relating to

discussions in Palágy-Komoróc, the nostalgia of times past expressed by the elders is met by the present anxiety of not knowing what the next day will bring. In systems theory terms, these relative levels of unpredictability are based on the structural capacity to provide the mechanisms necessary to satisfy expectations.

When presented with a structure like the one observed in current Palágy-Komoróc, where the capacity for predictability is low, the systemic temporal horizon shortens in relation to real time, as the expectations for the future are uncertain. In Palágy-Komoróc, the event of harvesting potatoes is relatively predictable; however, the fact that Balogh can not depend on a guaranteed yearly return to the household economies to whom he leases land, forces the landowners to elaborate a contingency plan to address their insecurity. They sell their cows or find other economic activities to compensate for unpredictability. Assuming the reverse were true and these households knew that their return on investment would come in as expected, the systemic time horizon would be lengthened, or even longer, given that they could save money for the future.

The temporal dimension of predictability is further integrated in the system through the process of meaning making as a preventive device. What Luhmann calls "anticipatory systems" is based on the differential between time and (in)security and serves as a coping mechanism in a relatively unpredictable environment.

Even organic life develops anticipatory systems by means of it, selecting indicators in the present (which is all that is available) that will correlate more securely with changes in the future and can thereby prepare for the future "without knowing" it. (Luhmann 1995, p. 309)

A concrete example of this can be found in the decision of Magyar parents to remove their children from the local school based on their anticipated perception that Rom children will be a negative influence on the learning environment.<sup>291</sup> Choosing as an indicator the increasing number of Rom children in the community and the relative decline in their (the Roms') economic capacity, Magyar parents decided to act by transferring their children to another school. In this case, both unpredictability and anticipatory systems are flexible functions of change but also of (in) security: The higher the unpredictability, the higher the level of (in) security.

The second notion related to the idea of change is that of "connective value" of events, which refers to a system's autopoietic reproduction<sup>292</sup> (Luhmann 1995, p. 368). This means that while a system is constantly evolving and reproducing itself, this reproduction is not predetermined teleologically. Bound by its environment and the social indeterminacy of the future, a system follows a trajectory that may be influenced by events that are temporal and contingent. As such, these indeterminacies inject a relative level of (in)security.

Although the notion of connective value of events relates to a form of predictability, it more drastically induces the idea of contradiction. What we see in these occurrences is the temporal encounter of two events that are in some way opposed and force the system not only to react, but integrate the contradiction into its structure (Luhmann 1995). Over the last two decades, the economic system in Palágy-Komoróc has been reacting to a major event for which the connective value, or its recognition, was

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<sup>291</sup> Chapter Four, section 2.4.3.

<sup>292</sup> "An autopoietic system produces and reproduces the elements of which it consists through the elements of which it consists". Moeller, H.-G. (2006). *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*, Open Court.

very low. In other words, beyond the normal predictability value of evolution, "economy" was presented with a "contradiction" that had to be integrated at the very core and forcing a re-evaluation of its structure, to the point of breaking it up. This has concrete repercussions that translate into insecurity in the face of great unpredictability. When the system not only evolves but also reassesses its own structure, it creates a moment that can be observed in society. The passage from a controlled economy to a free market was beyond the systemic capacity of dealing in terms of expectations and even anticipatory systems.

Compounded by the fact that the change affected multiple systems beyond their capacity of adjusting, the effects were dramatic. The connective value between events was very low, instilling a very high level of insecurity. Nonetheless, the ensuing social indeterminacy did not result in violent conflict but in social, political, and economic (amongst many) adjustments. In Palágy-Komoróc, the physical movement of the younger generation in the mid to late 1990s to seek opportunities and the reorganizing of the household economy are but only two apparent reactions to the systems adjusting to fundamental contradictions.

The parameters for locating (in) security are irremediably associated with the concept of change. Systems inherently change their structure under the effects of time and social agency. Structural changes occur at every moment in every system and they carry the inherent value of predictability. According to this theoretical framework, the more stable and predictable the structures we operate in, the more secure we "feel" and act. For example, in a predictable economic system, we contend with the less anxiety we

live with. But in moments of great depressions, insecurity rises as predictability shortens the temporal horizon and forces us into schemes to survive moments of crisis.<sup>293</sup>

From this analysis, we see that change is part of the normal movement of environment and structure, and that (in) security is not to be seen in absolute value but rather from the relative perspective of predictability and expectation, the creation of anticipatory systems or even the fundamental reconfiguration of the structure itself. Were we to analyze a totally chaotic environment, that is a place subject to acute (in)security and potentially volatile or violent events, we would be witnessing the temporary breakdown of systems: the political, economic and others interpenetrated to the point of being overtaken by chaos.

This is not the case in Palágy-Komoróc, Zakarpattia, Ukraine or even Central Europe today. The initial ethnographic analysis revealed tensions, rifts and schisms in the social fabric; in the second round of analysis, I integrate them into the complex systems approach, and delineate whether we are witnessing structural adjustments of the systems or deeper interpenetration that may further destabilize the environment. I have identified three common threads that cross horizontally through the analysis of social, economic and relations of authority. First, in each analysis, a somewhat fundamental reconfiguration of the social structure is emerging; second, information and knowledge is not only becoming a commodity, but a necessity for survival; third, an existential reformulation of reality is in process, affecting individuals conflicted with issues of life and death, and entire communities are being marginalized.

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<sup>293</sup> There is an argument to be made that there is a possibility that we might feel secure even when we are not. Systems theory does not deal with psychology, but rather assesses the relative predictability of a system and the relative response (anticipatory systems) put in place.

Instead of exploring the meltdown of systems, we are positioned to observe systems as they still interact through structural coupling, but show signs of greater irritation. We are not looking at violent clashes<sup>294</sup> in "retrospect" or as it happens, but rather at an environment that has been subjected to dramatic changes but not to the point of physical violence.

### 3.7.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to lay out the theoretical and methodological frameworks necessary for the next chapters. I began by explaining that positioning the chapter in the middle of the dissertation is coherent in two ways. First, it reflects my intent to balance the inductive-deductive tension. As such, following the "peeling of the onion", I have reached the moment when it is necessary to frame theory and methodology for the continuation. Second, it also marks the moment when I engage with the second motion following the ethnographic analysis.

The first important notion to integrate is my intent to proceed with an ontological shift. As my work starts from the ground up, from human experience, it is grounded in real people, living in real houses. This physicality of the empirical strata conditions how we further conceptualize the framing of the social construction. However, I want to use ethnography not only to understand the local reality from a geographical perspective but also to explore beyond, and to contribute to the efforts of linking the local to the global, even to the point of making this duality irrelevant. To create this possibility, I am exploring the capacity to shift our ontological perception from the corporeal to that of a systemic perspective, integrating complexity and structuration under one roof.

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<sup>294</sup> Uprising, revolution, war, genocide etc..

This brings into light the complex perspective and holistic nature of the model. With the different elements of epistemology – pre modern, modern, complexity and existential, one should not read an attempt to deconstruct the whole. Rather, I attempt to cut transversally in order to better understand the processes that shape the systems and their environment. This radical constructivism aims not only at getting a glimpse at the whole, but also locating the political in its midst.

In order to highlight the political system I pursued two strategies. First, with the tools of predictability, anticipatory systems and connective value, I used change as the operative word to uncover the location of security and proceed with the ontological shift towards the systemic perspective. Second, reversing Gros' ontological lenses of security into epistemological frameworks, I located the meaning of security within the systems, preparing the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of the political that I present in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8: Locating Security and Defining the Contours of the Political

An undeniable constitutive part of today's phenomenon of 'post-Soviet nostalgia,' which is a complex post-Soviet construct, is the longing for the very real humane values, ethics, friendships, and creative possibilities that the reality of socialism afforded--often in spite of the state's proclaimed goals--and that were as irreducibly part of the everyday life of socialism as were the feelings of dullness and alienation. (Yurchak 2006, p. 8-9)

### 3.8.1 Introduction

In Part Two of the dissertation, we deconstructed Palágy-Komoróc along three different lines, using interactions as the central theme. In this chapter, I use these bits and pieces of life and history to construct a theoretical perspective on the environment in the systemic sense.<sup>295</sup> My purpose from the outset was to explore the political; to do that, I followed a double movement. Having completed the first movement, I am now engaging the second movement, which consists of reconstructing the environment in order to define the political systems I seek to observe.

In the current chapter I first proceed by intersecting Giddens' structuration theory and Luhmann's complex systems approach to construct the environment. I do this by using four analytical frameworks, each of which provides a different, complementing perspective on Palágy-Komoróc. In the first analytical framework, I return to my

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<sup>295</sup> Ref. Chapter Seven. The environment refers to the political, social, and economic worlds of Palágy-Komoróc. But it also refers to its more abstract definition in that "systems thinking is 'contextual thinking; and since explaining things in terms of their context means explaining them in terms of their environment, we can also say that all systems thinking is environmental thinking." Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life*. New York, Doubleday. p. 37. And, "the environment as such is not a specific system, it is everything other than the system for which it is the environment." Moeller, H.-G. (2006). *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*, Open Court. p. 220.

ethnographic observations relating to death "as a passage"<sup>296</sup> and draw on Giddens' notion of existential and structural contradictions to analyze the normative shift and change currently occurring in Palágy-Komoróc under the various influences to which it has been subjected (Giddens 1984, p.195). Using elements of the ethnographic investigations, I analyze security through the lens of existential and structural contradictions, and the shift from the subjective to the objective realm.

The second, third and fourth analytical frameworks are based on Luhmann's pre-modern systemic differentiation models: segmentary, centre-periphery and stratification. All these models address concrete, physical and spatial dimensions currently found in Palágy-Komoróc. In Luhmann's perspective, these models are not entirely defunct but remain as sub-systems "dethroned as the primary scheme of differentiation" (Luhmann 1977, p.41). For my own purposes, as discussed in the third section of Chapter Seven, these models represent the essence of structuration, where the past meets the present. On this,

To say that structure is a 'virtual order' of transformative relations means that social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have 'structures' but rather exhibit 'structural properties' and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents. (Giddens 1984, p.17)

As I rebuild the social systems using these four models, I integrate complex systems theory with structuration, using the idea of *change*. I evaluate and identify change by observing relative predictability within the different systemic functions; the creation of anticipatory systems to deal with foreseen change; and the connective values

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<sup>296</sup> Ref. Chapter four.

between events that may provoke change, or even collapse, within and between functional systems. This superimposition of structure and functional systems provides a dynamic perspective of the systems and their environment(s). After this analysis, we will be in a position to see the different systems and their relative position vis-a-vis each other.

### 3.8.2 Existential and Structural (In) security

In this section, I begin the reconstruction by analyzing the normative premises of (in) security. By moving upstream, following the shifts in praxis that contribute to the transformation of the social system, I reach those moments when social norms evolve into new, modified ones. Using existential and structural contradictions, concepts borrowed from Anthony Giddens (1984), I deconstruct the meaning of change and analyze the reconstruction of new or modified norms norms. Here, I remind the reader of the two essential contradictions to which Giddens refers: existential and structural.

I begin with existential contradictions and the idea of death, as it is, in the human perspective, the most dramatic and final claim. Brought to its extreme, death represents the ultimate paradigm of (in) security: not only does it represent the end of earthly life; it also embodies the shared meaning of its subjective value. Whether one follows a strong theological compass or pursues an agnostic road, the way we build our lives is permeated by our ontological philosophical commitments regarding the end of life.

Death, as described in Chapter Four, is a complex event, the observation of which allows us to reflect deeply on the existential perspective of a society. In Palágy-Komoróc, death is a process, a journey people make through their lives to reach that moment of passage. For the elders of Palágy-Komoróc, death is not final. For this disappearing

fringe of the population, security is defined almost exclusively in terms of stability, which allows individuals to move from old age through to death. Death is liberation from the weight of earthly life.<sup>297</sup> Existential contradiction dominates and conditions the social arrangement of life. With its immanent relation to nature, the contradiction presented by death is dealt with through the integration of both religion and myth.<sup>298</sup>

For an important, yet decreasing number of people in Palágy-Komoróc, religion helps them navigate the existential contradictions of life. Churches are still busy on Sundays, and every year, a pilgrimage is organized to travel and visit Jublyk, where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to a little girl in 2002, and to Kigyós, to see the weeping statue of the Virgin Mary.<sup>299</sup> Myths and superstitions, at least among the older generation, are also part of the discourse used to explain the unexplainable, often defying any capacity for rational explanation. Irénke, for instance, is absolutely convinced that she knows a woman capable of making people or animals ill just by looking at them. They had a cow that came back once with teary eyes, and, after many inconclusive medical examinations, they had to kill the animal, fearing it would collapse in the field. The woman had looked into the cow's eyes. Old Cecilia's mother presumably was one such person and she could not die before passing on the curse. She had to be locked up in

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<sup>297</sup> András' mother's discourse is a long and endless litany explaining the burden of life and how liberating it will be to die, to be recalled by the Lord. This discourse is often heard amongst the elders in the region. Fieldnotes, Kisszelmenc, July 2009, August 2010, and all subsequent meetings with András' mother.

<sup>298</sup> "The mythic 'world view' and the modes of representation that it employs serve to establish homologies between natural and social conditions..." and "Existential contradiction is directly expressed, as it were, in those institutions by virtue of the key role of kinship and tradition." Giddens, A. (1984). The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p.194.

<sup>299</sup> Every year, in July, people from Palágy-Komoróc, mostly women, of all three faiths (Roman, Greek, Reformed Catholic) rent a local bus to visit and pray. It is solemn and they even pray as a group on the bus. Jublyk, in 2002, was a relatively remote village. Now, a cathedral is being built on the site of the apparition. For more, <http://www.wumag.kiev.ua/index2.php?param=pgs20054/124> The weeping Virgin Mary in Kigyós is in a private home. It causes quite a stir in the local community, as most of the village belongs to the Reformed Church and does not recognize icons. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 31 July 2011.

her courtyard as she would escape and “stroll the world” forever. She presumably passed it on to Eva, Cecilia’s daughter. When a cow has been cursed, one has to pick grass from nine different people’s properties and dry it. Then fur is collected from nine different animals. The furs and grasses are then intermixed and burned, with said cow inhaling the smoke.<sup>300</sup>

The integration of existential contradictions begins, as we have seen, within the nested household, and continues to include the whole of society, forming a relatively harmonic ensemble. The capacity to integrate these contradictions has been contingent on one important factor: continuity within the household through generations. Three generations share the same space along a relatively predictable and linear timeline. Integrated in a larger social structure that makes room for existential contradictions to be dealt with by myths and superstitions, facing (in) security requires guaranteeing and maintaining this harmony. Death, not daily survival, is the issue; as long as we care to entertain the spiritual and earthly life in a balanced way, we are assured of a good life.

With the visible change from a well-integrated community in which existential and structural contradictions were dealt with harmoniously, to the current arrangement of groups, people and households, the generationally-based time horizon is reduced without being replaced by any apparent systemic form to compensate. Suddenly, tomorrow is not what it was meant to be, but rather something we need to address in the here and now, in

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<sup>300</sup> There are many stories like this, and people tell them with great respect of the unexplainable. A few more examples: There was a man in Szelmenc who, by no fault of his own, would kill piglets only by staring at them. It is the habit to spit around a newborn to protect him. It is considered dangerous to speak ill of a cow, as the cow then attracts curses. Another example involves Bandí, who had a cow with enormous teats. She had been looked and cursed at, causing the growth. In neighboring Rát, there were two families living side by side. One of the families’ cows did not produce much milk and they suspected one of the neighbors of cursing the cow. They kept watch and one night they caught the neighbor doing it at midnight. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 4 July 2011. Palágy-Komoróc, 22 July 2011. Palágy-Komoróc, 24 July 2011.

order to survive it.<sup>301</sup> Surviving the everyday is gradually replacing long-term predictability as the way to regulate life. Existential contradiction has made space for structural contradiction and, although, the people of Palágy-Komoróc still entertain their metaphysical selves, the meaning attributed to death as a passage is being replaced by surviving the everyday by dealing with the "constitutive features of human societies" (Giddens 1984, 193).

The transition from existential to structural contradiction may be understood through an examination of the issue of health. As the social arrangements of families and community change, the possibility of becoming sick not only raises the problems of getting treatment and/or facing the inevitable, but also is an idea that exists prior to the event and in itself instills fear. Falling ill in Palágy-Komoróc means almost literally jeopardizing any possibility of surviving the next day, unless one has taken steps to prevent this unfortunate possibility. From an existential and normative standpoint, this indicates two directions. First, in the current context, sickness leaves the metaphysical, philosophical or theological dimensions aside to become one of practical reasoning: for those outside the tradition of nested households, one has to prevent the possibility of becoming incapacitated rather than prepare for death itself.

This leads to the second direction and the concern with predictability and anticipatory systems. The idea of preventing or preparing for the possibility of incapacitating illness takes on a very concrete dimension for an increasing number of

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<sup>301</sup> Alexei Yurchak addresses the temporal perspective of change. "It had never occurred to me that in the Soviet Union anything could ever change. Let alone that it could disappear. No one expected it. Neither children, not adults. There was a complete impression that everything was forever." Andrei Makarevich, in Yurchak, A. (2006). Everything was forever, until it was no more : the last Soviet generation. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press. p.1

households that do not have the generational capacity to sustain such an event.<sup>302</sup> From a temporal perspective, surviving the next day involves calculating the risk of illness and preparing contingencies to address the possibility of incapacitating illness. In this highly unpredictable environment, we observe a change in the anticipatory systems that are indicators for the shifting location of (in) security.

These point towards the shift toward the prioritization of economic concerns within the realm of the private household, motivating the creation of anticipatory systems which deal with structural, rather than existential, contradictions. It is by achieving economic independence, or better yet, wealth that people guarantee their capacity to survive tomorrow. Without creating an economic safety net, a person who has become ill is not capable of acquiring the basic necessities, let alone medical attention and medication. With this shift, (in) security based on the moral ground of maintaining social cohesion within the household for the sake of temporal continuity has been replaced by the pragmatic, structural reality of surviving the everyday.

But existential contradictions have not totally disappeared. Rather, they have been displaced laterally and compartmentalized, to be dealt with by the local churches. We can see in Palágy-Komoróc a positive, but nonetheless diminishing effort to maintain and entertain those existential insecurities by means of ceremonies, burials, marriages and such. But Sunday attendance at church is mainly an activity of older people and is consistently decreasing. In the words of the Roman Catholic priest, it is not that people

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<sup>302</sup> We recall Szilvia who, struck by pneumonia, could not work for a long time. Living in a multigenerational household, the rest of the adults had the capacity to compensate. This is not the case for all the single-family households in Palágy-Komoróc, many of which do not have such a built-in safety net.

lack faith; it is that they prioritize everything else above faith. He systematically blames the consumer society.<sup>303</sup>

The priest, although not recognizing the wider systemic shift, he senses the pressures that provoke the retreat of individuals unto themselves: "what does it mean to go to Church, is it the place or the family?" he asks; and he adds "is it not like 'going home'?",<sup>304</sup> expressing the existential meaning of security as described earlier by Michael Dillon.<sup>305</sup> With the erosion of interest in dealing with existential (in) securities compounded by financial pressures, all three churches have shifted their attention towards structural (in) securities: some get involved in social endeavors; and all get involved in their own survival by attracting money from sponsors, letting identity politics enter Palágy-Komoróc through the backdoor.<sup>306</sup>

From this analysis we see a displacement from existential to structural contradictions in the everyday arrangements of life. Security as the subjective, cosmological feeling of being in harmony with the universe has been an integral part, until recently, of the social arrangement based on physical and temporal continuity.<sup>307</sup> Today, in Palágy-Komoróc, as the "courtyards are dying out", living the everyday no longer means facing death with expectation and peace; living the everyday means hoping not to get sick—and thus not losing the earning capacity that sustains tomorrow. As much as churches are trying to provide comfort for the existential and metaphysical aspects of life, they are competing with the everyday necessity of survival. The subjective realm of

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<sup>303</sup> Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 3 August 2011.

<sup>304</sup> Idem.

<sup>305</sup> See page 190.

<sup>306</sup> Ref. Chapter six, section 2.6.4

<sup>307</sup> I refer here to Chapter one, section 1.1.3. Also, Gros, F. (2012). Le principe sécurité. Paris, Gallimard.

security, referring to the feeling of serenity and harmony, is disappearing, increasingly replaced by security's objective counterpart: surviving the every day.<sup>308</sup>

In Palágy-Komoróc, security has thus shifted from a predominantly subjective meaning to an objective meaning in which daily, practical insecurity is people's main preoccupation and the absence of danger a central goal.<sup>309</sup> This is not to suggest that the appearance of this objective meaning is new; rather, in the light of the current analysis, existential contradictions dealt with the metaphysical, and the physical ordering of social life is shifting to become predominantly structural. Locating (in)security in this context does not explicitly tell us where we can find it, at the state or at the functional level, or both. It does show us, however, that the subjective realm or definition of security<sup>310</sup>—that which all of us may experience occasionally when we "feel" at peace with the world—has gone, and only a few elders in Palágy-Komoróc still living within their multigenerational households experience this form of security.

### 3.8.3 The Courtyards are Dying Out: Segmentary Differentiation in Palágy-Komoróc

By observing households in general, and nested households specifically, we naturally differentiate them from a segmentary perspective. To recall our earlier discussion in Chapter Four, this means that we see the differences between them according to their inner structure. For example, the nested and the networked are differentiated as one is multi-generational and the other single generational.

The nested household has provided the integrative cell of the social construct in Palágy-Komoróc and the region. As such, it has represented the common denominator or

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<sup>308</sup> The subjective realm of security refers to the feeling of serenity and harmony and should be placed in relation the objective realm of security. The latter relates to the capacity of positively identifying the source of danger.

<sup>309</sup> Idem.

<sup>310</sup> I use "security" without the prefix "(in)" as it represents the subjective realm and is absolute.

building block for this construct. Based on multigenerational integration to maintain the continuity of the household, the unit was premised on autonomy within a greater ensemble of mostly similar households. The symbolic meaning expressed by the human kinship (Lévi-Strauss 2006) shared by the nested households of Palágy-Komoróc and the region was essentially located at the intersection of the society and community.<sup>311</sup>

All the households shared a common economic reality, contributing as a community to the system through the kolkhoz. They also maintained a parallel form of economy that supplemented the formal economy. As we saw in Chapter Five, this informal mode remains an important source of revenue for many in the village, while the formal, state imposed system has disappeared to be replaced by the market economy. Nonetheless, the households were all roughly equal contributors to the system. Both faith and religion were also integrated within the household structure under the same roof. Under these conditions, predictability was high, and most of the anticipated actions required concerned the maintenance of the household as a unit.

In return, functional uncertainty, such as concerns regarding economic sustainment, although very real, was shared at the next level, locating (in) security at the systemic, even the environmental level. In other words, non-existential (in) securities were dealt with at the state level, providing an integrative environment for different functional systems. In practical terms, we observe under these conditions an overlap between the community/society at the level of the village/kolkhoz, where both existential and structural contradictions meet. This conclusion will be further analyzed in Chapter Nine.

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<sup>311</sup> For the definitions of society and community, see Chapter Three, section 1.3.3.

Today, the nested household still projects an image of stability and social integration. But beneath the surface, discourses reveal fragility. At the time of writing, while the *idea* of the nested households lingers on in Palágy-Komoróc, profound changes threaten its survival. The nested household as an ideal-type has been fading over the last years and is becoming increasingly a figment of history that still pervades not only the imaginary of times past through stories, but also continuing habits. The symbolic meaning of kinship has not altogether disappeared, as we still witness simulacra or renderings in the practices of daily life, marriages, and burial ceremonies. But with the constant erosion of the household unit, continuity based on marriage is disappearing; the religious integration of multi-faith households is flattening and we see an increasing number of single faith households; the multiple languages of the village are less integrated within households and we see an increase of Ukrainian and Hungarian speaking households living side by side, not integrated under the same roof.

With the mobility of the younger generation and the gradual disappearance of the older generation, the nested household is facing the threat of extinction and the symbolic loss of being a beacon for the community. And although it maintains certain attributes through force of habit, deep structural changes constrain people to adapt and survive in an evolving environment. In terms of predictability, i.e. the capacity to make assumptions with regards to the future, individuals have shifted their focus from maintaining a social system based on kinship to economic survival of its inhabitants. In today's environment, the meaning of "failure" is taking a tangible form, as the household is becoming the primary economic unit.<sup>312</sup> And as the household loses its trans-generational component, survival is gradually becoming an individual concern. As survival is progressively

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<sup>312</sup> Ref. Chapter Five, section 2.5.5.

dependent on the household as economic unit, and as the generational structure of households shift, individuals are left increasingly unprotected. Post-socialism/neoliberalism is leaving most individuals vulnerable in all kinds of new ways.<sup>313</sup>

Viewing economic activities as a functional component of society, we can consider three approaches. First, looking at economic activity as the struggle for scarce resources, the nested household has moved from an autonomous position within a community to an autarkic one. Not only has the centrality of the social function been replaced by the economic, it has all but disappeared as a reliable safety net in case of emergency. Second, considering the economy as a set of activities, we see the nested household deploying many strategies to sustain the pressure. Moreover, in its current form, the market being mostly self-regulated, the nested household finds little protection in any form of governmental oversight, reducing its capacity to predict and forcing it to create anticipatory mechanisms for dealing with uncertainty and risk. For example, the nested household bears the economic brunt of a bad crop due to bad weather or the decision to allow EU pig imports, which drives the price of pork below the threshold of profitability. Third, as relations of production, the shift to autarky reconfigured households' modes of production, with deep impacts on the social structure. Again, with little capacity to predict, these households have to develop anticipatory systems to compensate the pressure.

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<sup>313</sup> Others have observed similar outcomes, particularly in rural post-socialist settings. For example, see Humphrey, C. (1998). Marx went away - but Karl stayed behind. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, *ibid.*, Humphrey, C. (2002). The unmaking of Soviet life : everyday economies after socialism. Ithaca, Cornell University Press. And, Verdery, K. (2003). The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

This first analysis of the nested household as a segmentary unit shows a shift from its status as basic building block of the community. In turn, the community is no longer the principal building block for the economic system. Today, the nested household is increasingly pushed back into itself and its survival is no longer predicated on kinship as such, but rather on a broader set of economic survival strategies. We are dealing with two overlapping phenomena: while the nested household retains the aura of generational continuity through a decaying network of families, it becomes increasingly isolated when it comes to economic survival. As such, such households adapt anticipatory systems to prioritize economic survival.

From a systems perspective, the changes within the nested households show that they are subjected to high unpredictability and (in)security as the economic system grows and shifts. The symptoms of irritations—the younger generation leaving, daily economic insecurity, and new incoming households—are signs that economic concerns have now crept to a lower level, into the private setting of the household. In return, the social system is morphing from a series of concentric circles of households to a new, spatially expanded realm. The economic system not only irritates the social system, but also literally penetrates it, forcing its reconfiguration.

Observation of Palágy-Komoróc from a segmentary perspective initially would suggest that we are facing three different types of households. However, a closer look shows that from a social perspective, all three types of households are economic units operating independently from any external institution or safety net, albeit at different stages of "evolution." In this reconfigured social landscape, all three types of households face identical challenges with regards to failure and survival. Change, and the

unpredictability it inherently carries, as our optic, we see that the nested household is key to understanding the current social construct. Although differentiation is apparently emerging *between* the types of households analyzed, in fact, a closer look demonstrates that they display the same characteristics. Currently, all three types of households find their *raison d'être* in their capacity for economic survival. They appear to represent different stages of the social construct of the household. Whereas the nested household, in appearance, is in the process of transforming into a single-family unit, the networked household seems on the path of extinction, while the newcomers represent the end-state of the transformation.

Real differentiation, however, does not lie within the household structure as such, but at the level of the imagined and enacted purposes of these households. From this angle, we see the real differentiation coming to light from a temporal perspective. Palágy-Komoróc's generic household used to be integrated into a system of systems (social, economic, political) in which survival was based on its capacity to maintain its social positioning. As the environment changed, producing incredible frictions, people started to move, structures began to change, dismantling the previous social organization and re-adapting it to face new (in)securities.

Locating (in)security in the light of this reconstruction indicates a dislocation between the different systems. With the transition toward a market-based economic system and political transformation that moved mainly towards the model of representative democracy, the social structure was subject to tremendous pressure to self-adjust. Under the current reconfiguration, economic (in) securities have penetrated the realm of the private space, shifting, as presented in the previous section, the local

meaning of security from subjective to objective. In the current context, maintaining the household no longer means providing for a harmonious life;<sup>314</sup> rather, it now relates to everyone's capacity to provide food, shelter, and healthcare for the everyday needs.

From this segmentary analysis, we once again find that locating security along functional lines is more efficient. Economic security seems central, even overwhelming as most (in)securities can be expressed in this realm. However, concluding that every communication occurs within the economic system would defeat the purpose of defining the different systems in the environment. Using social security (health, education, (un)employment) as a domain of communication that often straddles systems, we can explore the (shifting) location of security, one that will contribute to our subsequent definition of the political system itself. In Palágy-Komoróc, with a political system lacking the capacity and/or the will to address effectively issues of social and public security, we clearly see security straddling two systems. People have to take matters into their hands and face these issues within the economic realm.

One recalls the remarkable absence of the “state” as regulator or even as a discourse throughout the ethnographic analysis. If we consider that politics is the reflexion of the political,<sup>315</sup> then the relative incapacity of the state to address issues of social security, combined with the retreat of the public office from its responsibility towards its constituents, shows that from a segmentary perspective, the political overlaps, if not disappears behind the economic system. Referring back to Chapter seven, in systems theory parlance, the change that accompanied the fall of communism was so dramatic that connective values faded to the point where the social security system

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<sup>314</sup> This is not a comment on quality of life, but on the nature of people’s preoccupations under late state socialism—it was no paradise in absolute terms, but people were not worrying about survival.

<sup>315</sup> Chapter two, section 1.2.2.

(employment, health, etc..) could not be reproduced. Grave economic concerns entered the realm of the social, and now we are witnessing a confusing image of both systems integrating the contradictions. Security in this context is not only positioned at the intersection of the two systems, but we can also see that in this case, (in) security highlights an ideational clash between the state as guarantor of security and the political function of public and social security.

#### 3.8.4 Centre-periphery - Walling Communities

In this section, I shift perspective to observe the social construction of Palágy-Komoróc using the centre-periphery model.<sup>316</sup> With this model of differentiation we speak of historical kinship-based domination of one group over another. This approach provides another view; a different transversal cut that exposes perspectives unseen through the previous model. As we will see, centre-periphery, much like segmentary differentiation, offers similarities between modeling and contemporary social structure; but as we dig deeper, we realize that these are similarities through which we can see more of systemic arrangements.

The household is decreasingly the space in which the integration of language and faith occurs. As such, we observe this integration happening at the community level with the creation of new groups. These groupings are currently benign and not violent. However, as I have described in the ethnographic analysis, there is an increasing politicization of language, partly through the churches under the influence of neighbouring Hungary, as well as a relative isolation of the Ukrainian presence in Palágy-Komoróc. Although Ukrainian speakers find it extremely difficult to integrate into the

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<sup>316</sup> Ref. Chapter Seven.

community, even after a few years,<sup>317</sup> there is no apparent conflict<sup>318</sup> between groups. From this perspective, the interesting phenomenon is the conjunction, or interpenetration of the social and the political systems, while the relations with the economic system remain relatively unchanged. This interaction between the social, the political and economic takes a more explicit form as we discuss the Rom community of Palágy-Komoróc.

Alongside the segmentary differentiation, which highlights social units as households, Palágy-Komoróc is home to another form of apparent differentiation. The centre-periphery model differentiates between groups as one dominating the other. Usually, the model advances, the centre-periphery model stems from the segmentary model when one family or clan becomes dominant over the others (Luhmann 1977). In Palágy-Komoróc, the Magyar community seems clearly dominant over the others, not only in demographic terms, but also with regards to the different positions of authority held. Presented from this point of view, the differentiation identified should be observed purely from the perspective of genealogy, lineage or some form of differentiation that clearly empowers one group versus another. In the case of Roms and Magyars in Palágy-Komoróc, the ethnographic investigations may, in appearance, point towards ethnic and

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<sup>317</sup> Fieldnotes, Kisszelmenc, 31 August 2010.

<sup>318</sup> Anthony Giddens distinguishes "conflict" and "contradiction" as " they tend to coincide because contradiction expresses the main 'fault lines' in the structural constitution of societal systems". He continues in saying that "...the conditions under which actors not only are aware of their interests but are both able and motivated to act on them are widely variable". Giddens, A. (1984). The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. p.198-199. In other words, "contradictions" in this case is the ethnographic realization of isolation between groups, whereas conflict is one possible outcome.

racial differentiation to divide the groups. The issue would be clearly related to identity and otherness.<sup>319</sup>

However, a systemic perspective shows that polarization based on identities does not result from the reconfiguration of society into vertical hierarchies, but rather is the expression of irritation resulting from the structural coupling between systems. Unlike the nested households, which can still capitalize on their networks and reorganize based on a family economy, Roms are pushed towards the margins of subsistence. They have little or no capacity to engage in the formal economy, nor any mechanism in place to provide them with the capacity to create long-term expectations. As such, they live on the economic and political fringe, living off the informal economy as they dig for metal scraps and collect nuts on the shrinking, unclaimed land around the village, or work as cheap labour for the local landowners. In systems theory terms, their levels of expectation are very low, their situation highly insecure, and their capacity to create preventive measures, such as saving money or acquiring higher education for example, is close to non-existent.

Increasingly stripped of land, property and opportunity to maneuver informally, Roms find themselves economically, socially, and politically marginalized and not represented while they are struggling to re-create a form of economy that would allow them to survive. As it stands, the marginalization of Roms is not yet fully complete, although they find themselves excluded from the political system and physically isolated

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<sup>319</sup> For work that takes identity categories in Zakarpattia as given, see Sherrill Stroschein's research on ethnic contention in the region. Stroschein, S. (2012). Ethnic struggle, coexistence, and democratization in Eastern Europe. New York, Cambridge University Press. For an approach that uses ethnic identity categories but nonetheless calls them into question, see Rogers Brubaker et alia's work in the broader region on the Transylvanian city of Cluj. Brubaker, R., M. Feischmidt, J. Fox and L. Grancea (2006). Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

on the edges of the village.<sup>320</sup> This retrenchment is an indicator that change within the environment is not yet complete. As the market economy and forms of privatization move in, informal economies are slowly being squeezed out. In this case, in order to survive, Roms need to re-adjust their activities within the system and the environment. Much like the elders in Palágy-Komoróc, Roms currently create anticipatory systems by living on three<sup>321</sup> forms of revenue: informal exchanges, formal employment and government support. As opportunities for informal exchange are increasingly difficult to find and formal employment limited to daily jobs in the fields at very low wages, Roms find themselves dependent on government subsidies.<sup>322</sup>

The Roms' lack of economic and political capacity does not allow them to plan their lives nor does it provide them with any capacity to create preventive measures. In this context, the terms failure and breaking-down take on very concrete meaning. And, consequently, the marginalization of complete communities, as we can observe in most of the town and villages that have Rom communities in their midst. The location of (in)security is paradoxically consistent with the previous analysis of households. The economic function, pushed downwards and entering the private realm of the household contributed, in the case of the Roms and the whole community, to the exacerbation of differences and polarization of groups. In the case of the Roms, the difference is that individual failure and survival are *perceived* by others (Magyars mainly) as belonging to the group, when in fact, groupness is the result of marginalization. From a systems

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<sup>320</sup> With the increasing ghettoization of Roms comes a seemingly endless fall into grave social problems that spiral into a series of vicious circles: limited access to employment, increased birth rate, deficient health care, alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. This isolation is noticeable in all urban settings across Zakarpattia.

<sup>321</sup> The networked households have a fourth form of revenue: the lease of their land. As was discussed in the ethnographic chapters, most Roms have either not received land or lost it through shady deals. This form of revenue is for all intents and purposes inexistent.

<sup>322</sup> Ref. Chapter five, section 2.5.4

perspective, the creation of Roms as a "community" is external to the Roms themselves, rather than a foundational definition of identity.

As in the previous sections, we are working our way through the effects of change that run so deep that the connective values degraded to the point of forcing the systems to re-evaluate and reshape their structure. From a centre-periphery perspective, we note that the location of (in)security remains largely within the economic function. Concurrently, the overwhelming importance of the economic function is having a deep effect on the restructuring of the other systems, political and social. There are two concepts that are worth extracting from this current analysis and pushing a little further as we explore the location of (in) security and its relation to systems: identity and legitimacy.

As discussed earlier in the text, identity is often taken as a foundational culprit for exacerbating sentiments of (in)security. The case of the Roms and the newcomers alike in Palágy-Komoróc begs some additional analysis. Where is (in) security located when we discuss the issue of identity? Taking the newcomers as our first case, one will recall that households are becoming single-family economic units and that the arrival of the newcomers is based on a variety of factors, none of them related to violence or conflict. The "silent" walling currently occurring in Palágy-Komoróc is happening through the language politics of neighbouring Hungary. Passing through different channels, namely the religious, by maintaining strong ties and subsidies; and the political, by providing advantages such as facilitating the process of obtaining Hungarian citizenship, or money through the subsidy for education etc., these politics implicitly encourage the affirmation of the Magyar identity, and its language, isolating the two groups from one another.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> I describe these dynamics in detail in Chapter Five, section 2.5.4

In this case, structural shifts have resulted in a situation in which identity has emerged as a site of (in) security. In effect, identity falls squarely in the realm of the state as the guarantor for the public order of its citizens. On one side, the Ukrainian state quite explicitly disagrees<sup>324</sup> with the Hungarian implementation of the status law.<sup>325</sup> In return, Hungary's actions to maintain Magyariness<sup>326</sup> follow functional paths, namely social (security), religious and political to exacerbate nationalist sentiments among Magyar populations beyond the borders of Hungary.

In contrast, the exacerbation and elevation of the Rom identity as an issue of politics is somewhat paradoxical. Recognized almost exclusively through their fringe activities within the economic function, locating (in) security for them is relatively easy: it is everywhere. Systematically excluded, Roms lack legitimacy within the local political and religious forums. However they are finding some legitimacy with the emergence of a local and regional civil society, as we have seen at the local level through the actions of Teréz, who runs a local NGO that assists the Rom community in Palágy. These actions are compounded by those of international and transnational NGOs that work for the betterment of the Rom people. As a human security issue at the European Union level,<sup>327</sup> these organizations' activities also have the secondary effects of keeping the Rom question alive at the level of politics. The question of legitimacy in this case seems to fall

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<sup>324</sup> And sometimes acts upon, as we have seen the case of Éva interrogated by the SBU when she was getting her Hungarian citizenship.

<sup>325</sup> The Hungarian Status law was voted in 2001 and "aimed at helping more than three million ethnic Hungarians who live in neighbouring countries to work and study in Hungary. The conservative government, which sponsored the bill, said the legislation would help to protect the cultural identity of Hungarian minorities in the lands where they have lived for centuries." BBC, [Hungary 'Status Law' irks neighbours](#), 19 June 2001. For more, Ieda, O., Ed. (2006). [Beyond sovereignty : from status law to transnational citizenship?](#), Sapporo : Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University.

<sup>326</sup> It is not my place here to extrapolate on the reasons motivating the current (and former) government to support these politics.

<sup>327</sup> Refs. Chapter Six, section 2.6.6. Also, Tadjbakhsh, S. and O. Tomescu-Hatto (2007). Promoting Human Security: Ethical, Normative and Educational Frameworks in Eastern Europe. D. Section of Human Security and Philosophy. Paris, UNESCO.

at the intersection of the economic and the political systems. For economic (in) security to be addressed, the political system needs to recognize and act in a significant way.

### 3.8.5 Stratificatory Differentiation: Wealth, Power, and Inequality

Following Luhmann's model, we have reached the last form of differentiation that will help us complete our view of Palágy-Komoróc from a systemic perspective. Stratification "differentiates society into unequal subsystems" (Luhmann 1977, p.33). From this perspective, "inequality becomes a norm within the system..", and "depends in its own identity and self-conception on this pre-supposition" (Luhmann 1977, p.33). Referring back to Chapter Six on the relations of authority, we recall the division within Palágy-Komoróc made along the decision-making line. On one side, we could find the local representatives, the land users and entrepreneurs, while on the other, the citizens without particular access to decision making. Both sub-groups recognize the difference, often criticizing each other for not understanding or tending to affairs, but also accepting the current state of affairs.<sup>328</sup>

To have stratification, a system "...require(s) unequal distribution of wealth and power – or to put it more generally, unequal distribution of communication potential" (Luhmann 1977, p.33). Moreover, it is based on a conception of equality / inequality, wherein a system one would find different sub-systems based specifically on functional inequality. This latter point means that differentiation between the subsystems is not made on the basis of family or kinship, but rather on an "accidental and extra functional rise of unequal distribution" (Luhmann 1977, p.33). We find in Palágy-Komoróc a number of sub-systems based on functional inequality, more specifically the religious, the

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<sup>328</sup> Although criticized, the mayor is in his third term in the post and the citizens seem to prefer having a known figure than a new "unknown". Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 14 August 2010.

economic and the political. But even between these sub-systems, there is a form of inequality demarcating the religious on one side and the economic and the political on the other. Both sub-groups concentrate wealth and power, with very different effects.

The religious sub-group made up of the three priests claims its legitimacy through the institutions the priests and minister represent and their role at the metaphysical level. However, they receive the wealth necessary for their survival not only through engagement of the villagers and donors at the local level, but mostly through the financing of Magyariness from transnational actors, private foreign donors and charities. Thus, the churches find themselves straddling two functions: the religious and the political. The latter function in terms of locating security is rather important, as the churches combine the legitimacy of their position, their *relative* neutrality within the political domain, and the capacity to spread a strong message to their followers.

The political/economic subgroup derives its legitimacy from its cooptation of the political process. In this context, wealth and power are found explicitly with those having the "symbolic differentiation" (Luhmann 1977, p.33) of either belonging to the political class in Palágy-Komoróc and beyond,<sup>329</sup> or being closely associated to it. Legitimacy, as we have seen in the ethnographic analysis, is as much, if not more, based on the capacity to demonstrate power as it is accorded through democratic vote. Power and wealth reinforce each other through their mutual capacity to use both the political and economic sectors to their advantage. In the case of Palágy-Komoróc, the exclusive communications shared within this sub-subsystem, even blurring the lines between them, leads to privatization of land, cooptation, patronage, and favoritism in awarding contracts.

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<sup>329</sup> In the stratification model, and in the case of Palágy-Komoróc, the sub-system of the wealthy and powerful goes beyond the local.

Finally, this differentiation between sub-groups is maintained by the "lower strata having the problem of getting the attention and becoming a topic of influential communication, and their only means (to make a claim) seems to be conflict<sup>330</sup>: social movements, peasant revolts, uproars" (Luhmann 1977, p. 34). However, in Palágy-Komoróc as "the courtyards are dying out" and the public debate that happens "waiting for the cows to come home" is slowly disappearing, the means to communicate and mobilize around an issue are fading. As the economic system is transforming the relations of production, and with it the atomization of the local society in individual aggregates, we observe the disappearance of the public dialogue in its past and current forms.<sup>331</sup>

We should not, however, forget the alternate routes taken to avoid this polarization. First, as we have seen, one of the consequences of the economic pressures placed on households is the increased role imposed on women as earners. From this point of view, a number of women are accessing positions where they can influence local and regional politics. Second, the effect of the increasing number of outsiders settling in the region remains unclear. But as the demography changes, so might the political balance of power and the current dialogue about Magyariness.

The role of the state as protector and the relation between the political and the economic in their systemic interaction becomes (more) prominent in the stratificatory perspective. From a local perspective, the presence of the state, beyond the presence of elected officials, is felt through one piece of legislation: the moratorium on the sale of the

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<sup>330</sup> By this, Luhmann means that the only venue the lower stratum has at its disposal to make a claim is through conflict.

<sup>331</sup> Even at this moment, a simple mobilization to force the yearly in-kind payment for the lease of their land was, for all intents and purposes, a failure. As noted before, the in-kind payment was eventually made, but not on the lenders' terms. The "mobilization" involved a small portion of the lenders, who eventually made their claims individually.

lands linked to the land reform. For all intents and purposes, agricultural land in Ukraine cannot be sold, tying the current owners to their current arrangements.<sup>332</sup> For the rest, the presence of the state is felt "in absentia." Social justice is mostly decentralized to the citizens as we have seen the cases of brawls and domestic violence,<sup>333</sup> and citizens organize their own protection by fencing their households.<sup>334</sup>

Locating insecurity is best understood when we view the state as a functional component of the social system. However, when we do this, we encounter a discursive challenge as the word "political" carries little meaning locally other than to represent a vague idea. Discussing the politics in Palágy-Komoróc often means discussing issues far away, in the capital, for which people have opinions, sometimes, but often remain oblivious, echoing Rózsá's sudden outburst: "why should I worry about Ukraine? Ukraine never did anything for me!"<sup>335</sup>

### 3.8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has served multiple purposes. After having deconstructed the environment of Palágy-Komoróc, I reconstructed it using a theoretical framework drawing from elements of Giddens' structuration theory and Luhmann's complex system theory. One of the challenges of this reconstruction is to integrate the theoretical insights with the empirical richness. Often, in these cases, bringing the life 'out there' within the framework of theoretical creations invites the analyst to distort and to "squeeze" facts

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<sup>332</sup> As a reminder, at the dissolution of the kolkhoz, members received a land plot for their own use. Many, especially the elderly, lease the land to the Balogh who pays in-kind, (almost) every year.

<sup>333</sup> We have seen in Chapter Four that cases of domestic violence and even brawls happening at the local pub are rarely dealt with by authorities such as the police, but kept private or at the level of individual citizens.

<sup>334</sup> One will remember the story of Sanyi when after having been stolen in his home, the police told him "to protect his stuff". Ref. Chapter four, section 2.4.3

<sup>335</sup> Translated from the Hungarian. Fieldnotes, Palágy-Komoróc, 14 August 2010.

"just a little" to fit the mold. Another danger with this type of work is the "trimming" of the empirical analysis to keep the conversation light enough.

In this chapter, on the basis of Giddens' structuration theory and using Luhmann's pre-modern differentiation models, I observed Palágy-Komoróc from four different perspectives: normative, segmentary, centre-periphery and stratificatory. These different social structural models create different views of the same thing, exposing different aspects of them. These models, grounded in real-life experience, assisted me in shifting from an ontological towards a systemic perspective. By applying the structural to the functional systems model, I intended to bring together the consequences of history and the possibility of agency. By analyzing predictability, anticipatory systems and connective values, I used the structural, physical view of Palágy-Komoróc and shifted to the systemic organization of society. Through the current analysis, I brought you to the edge of the complex systems organization; our perception at this moment is still straddling the structural and functional.

Finally, using (in)security as a focalizing concept, I further delineated the contours of the systems. In this analysis, security appears through two venues. First, by analyzing predictability and anticipatory systems, the idea of security makes itself meaningful. From that point of view, issues such as legitimacy and identity emerge. Second, I proceeded to deconstruct those ideas in the local context, further illuminating sites of (in)security and propelling us into the topic of the next chapter, the content of the political. Thus, the purpose of using security as a concept is to focus the transfer of

functional "responsibility"<sup>336</sup> and further highlight the contours of the political system, my final object of research.

From this analysis, I want to underscore a number of concluding remarks. The analysis of the normative premises upon which the social<sup>337</sup> framework of Palágy-Komoróc is built showed a drastic shift between existential and structural contradictions, the latter becoming increasingly prevalent. This shift may not seem dramatic for those who are accustomed to living in such an environment. But in the context of the current research on the political, this shift carries enormous weight, as the political premises of any social structure begins with an idea, a philosophical preconception. What we see through the experience of this village is the environmental readjustment or realignment of the systems, while treating the existential and structural contradictions as either unintended consequences or collateral damage. The shift from the subjective perception of security based on an ordered and harmonious view of the world, to one in which security deals with the here and now as a matter of survival affects, to say the least, the political construct of the system that will serve our subsequent explorations.

Second, the double phenomena of economic concerns overtaking the private realm and the transformation of the systemic purpose of the household unit fundamentally reshapes the social construct as an amalgam of independent units whose sole purpose is survival in the economic realm. This perspective blurs our vision, as everywhere we view the overwhelming importance of the economic function. Here then, locating security means also discussing where real and perceived responsibility(ies) lie.

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<sup>336</sup> I use quotations marks here to underscore the fact functions do not have responsibilities per se.

<sup>337</sup> As I reminder of the definition of society in Chapter Three, section 1.3.3, society relates to the rational organization and structuring of complex societies.

By doing this, we suddenly see the political reappear in the dialogue, both from a statist and a functional perspective.

The tremendous pressure imposed by the economic system on the structure also highlights the issues of otherness and identity. Although at many levels there is a discourse of identity based on foundational differences, the current analysis points in many different directions. The interest I am pursuing in the current debate is to explore the relationship or the incidence of the political and security in the exacerbation of identities. In the case of the Roms, we see that they are increasingly marginalized socially and politically, and this begs exploration of their legitimate status, and on what terms and in which realm this legitimacy is granted. This plays an important role in the definition of the political, its functional role of controlling the body and having a non-entity status. As Coicaud writes,

A government's legitimacy is measured by its power to express, defend, and promulgate the values with which individuals identify within a given collectivity. (2002, p.234)

This raises the additional issue of the "transnationalization" of the Rom issue, crossing the traditional territorial boundary of the state, Again, citing Coicaud,

These values have to be translated into a concrete way of distributing material and symbolic goods that is deemed just. But what is the extent of the community to which these principles apply? It therefore becomes a matter of knowing the borders that delimit the terrain upon which one evaluates justice, and by of consequence, the duties of governmental action *vis-à-vis* the populace. (2002, p.234)

This discussion spills over into the complex issue of the ways in which Magyars are clearly being courted by the Hungarian state, using all of the functions at its disposal. In return, Magyars are subjected to their own Ukrainian statist political function that tries to control them.<sup>338</sup> At the local level, households are becoming cultural monoliths, and churches emphasize the importance of the Magyar. Using security as the operative concept, we are naturally drawn beyond the local as we seek to uncover those places and moments in the systemic structure where identity arises as an issue. It also feeds back, and further, into the interactions between the political and the economic realm, and their respective place in the formation of identities.

Finally, with the stratificatory system, we see a social structure literally separated in two realms. Those in power, combining the capacity to make decisions, draw wealth and communicate strategically in order to further their position. And those excluded from this exclusive communicative mode and their incapacity to create coherence in order to mobilize and/or advance their own agendas, economic and political. Here again, the issue of legitimacy arises and is combined with the location of security. The overlapping of functional lines further confuses this fine line between legitimacy and responsibility for security. In the current construct, those without power travel mostly along within the economic system, fighting their way through. Local officials enjoy the combination of economic power and political legitimacy. And beyond, almost unreachable, security located within the realm of the political in the form of the state, remains mostly irrelevant to the simple farmer of Palágy-Komoróc.

Having completed this initial ontological shift, we can now turn to the final chapter in which I push and continue the theorization of the political.

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<sup>338</sup> For example, obtaining a visa to cross into the European Union is very restrictive.

## Chapter 9: Shifting Grounds: Uncovering the instituting moment of society

### 3.9.1 Introduction

In this final analytical chapter, I want to exploit the analysis that permitted us to define the contours of political systems. To accomplish this, we used the ethnographic investigations and proceeded with an ontological shift that changes our view from an empirical perspective to one based on systems theory. In Chapter Eight, I proceeded with a first shift, integrating both approaches, the ethnographic and systemic, and opened a conversation that helped us to define certain features and contours of the systems, as well as using descriptors for security that are anchored in lived experience.

In this chapter, I proceed with yet another shift. My purpose is to observe the shifting ground of the political, and to create an image, although imperfect, of what it looks like. To do this, I theorize further the analysis of the previous chapter to extract and discuss those ideas and concepts that may help provide some colour to the sketch. I push further the systemic approach and explore its capacity to enlighten beyond the local, to provide a broader and expanded view.

Building on the previous chapter, I will begin by analyzing the community/society relationship. This image of change can be used to question the given premises of their known definitions. This questioning offers an alternative view of the community/society continuum that I then use to shift further into a systems theory perspective that moves beyond the local and propels us into a discussion of the relative positioning of systems within their environment. This chapter is an attempt to explore the possibilities of pushing political ethnography into a systems theory perspective within the limits of the current dissertation, in order to understand, or, sketch the political. It is not an end-state,

nor a final conclusion with a dramatic ending. Rather, it is an opening to further dialogues and possibilities.

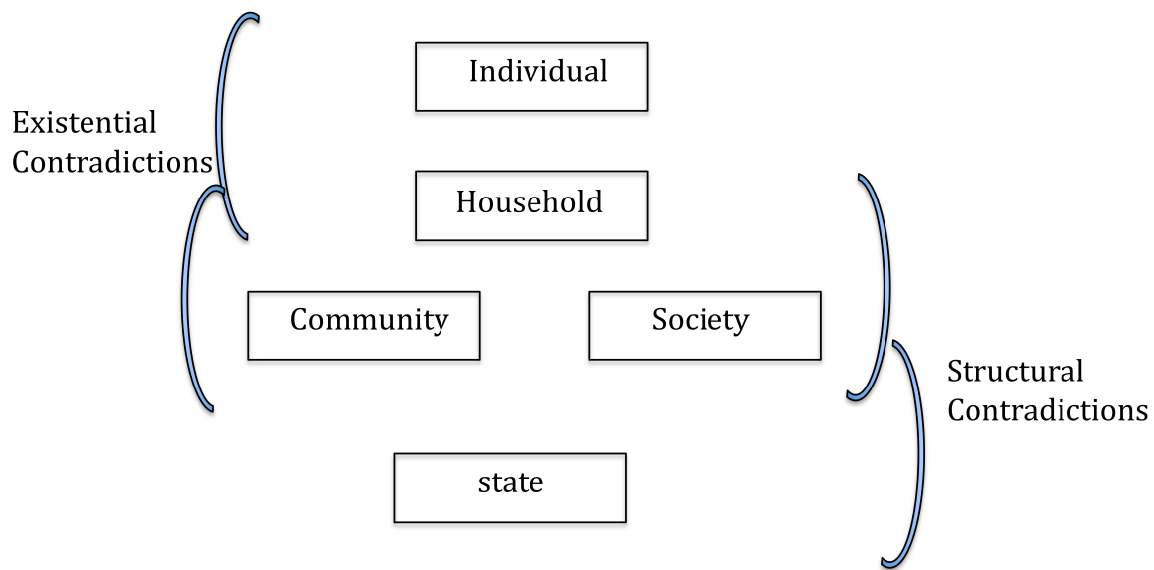
### 3.9.2 Compressing Community, Expanding Society

In this section, I pick up on sections two and three of the previous chapter in which the analysis came to a particular form of delimitation marked by a shift between existential and structural contradictions: the shift from the subjective perception of security based on an ordered and harmonious view of the world, to one in which security deals with the here and now as a matter of survival, affects, to say the least, the political construct of the system. What is the importance of this shift? How does it help define the contours of the political system?

From this perspective, considering that Luhmann viewed the political system as neither unique nor deterritorialized, but multiple and defined locally, the displacement of subjective and objective meanings of security leads us to those places where we may take these meanings into account. This bottom-up approach brings us two interesting factors to discuss when trying to define the political system. First, it opens the discussion about the territoriality of a community versus a society understood as the difference between the "affection" driven and "rational calculations" defining the (international) society (Brock 2004, p.88-89). Second, it foregrounds the relative importance of defining the evolving continuum between community and society as understood in the Weberian sense of communal (*Vergemeinschaftung*) and societal (*Vergesellschaftung*) (Group 2000).

In order to mentally map the relation between existential and structural contradictions as was observed in Palágy-Komoróc, it is helpful to think in terms of

changes and shifts. I have mentioned several times that both in the local discourse and in the visible remnants of a fading social organization, the household was the centerpiece of integration, combining language, faith and ethnicity under the same roof. Moreover, we also saw that the social organization beyond the household remained hierarchical with two overlapping levels of integration for existential and structural contradictions. Although simplified and two dimensional, the purpose of figure 6 is to show the space of overlap for dealing with contradictions.<sup>339</sup>



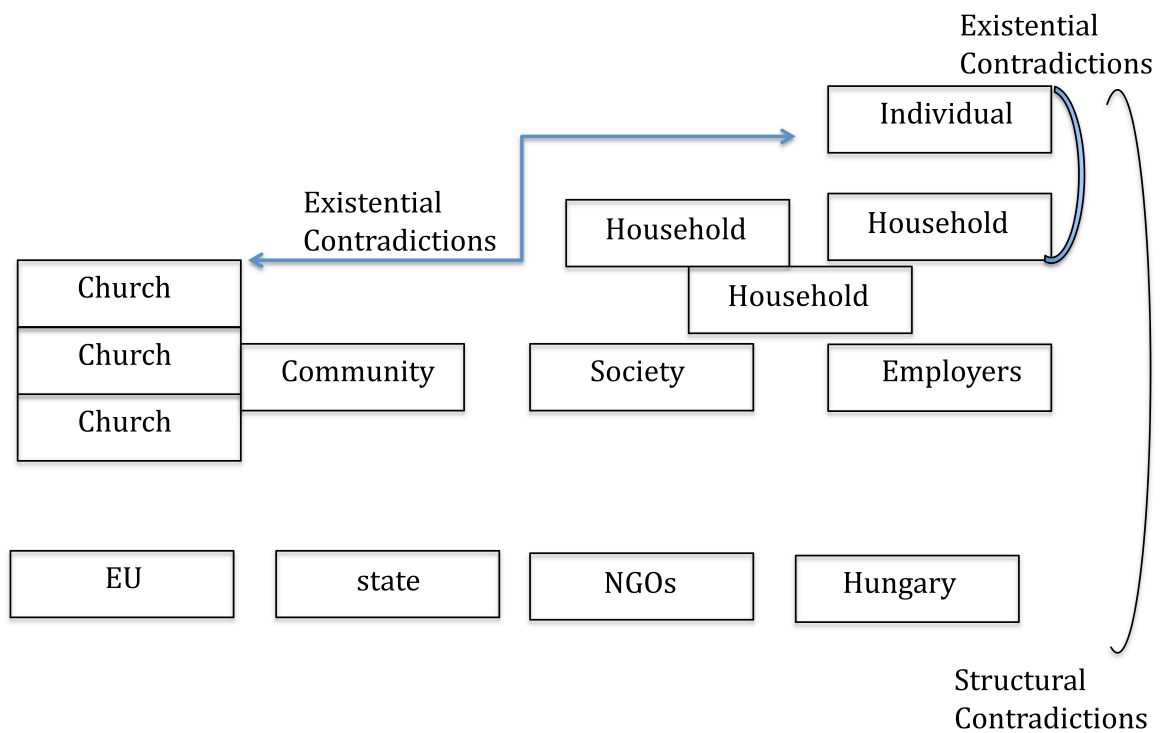
**Figure 6: Integration of existential and structural contradictions - Before the regime change**

In effect, we not only see integration occurring at the level of the household, but also from a more holistic perspective, we have a continuum between the different levels, horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, individuals integrate existential and structural contradictions at the level of the household, while households integrate at the level of community and society. It follows that the systems (political, economic) that create those contradictions are integrated vertically, between the household and the state; and horizontally, between community and society. This perspective is not a statement on the

<sup>339</sup> Contradictions refer to Giddens' definition explained in Chapter Seven, Section 3.7.5.

efficiency or relative value of this environment; rather, it is tool that will serve to differentiate (in the Luhmannian sense) between changing environments and systems.

The shift that I identified in Part Two of the dissertation might seem somewhat confused or confusing because, as noted earlier, the change in the environment was so drastic that the normal structural coupling between systems was transformed into interpenetration. Both political and economic systems were transformed, inviting with them a series of changes in existing systems, like the legal, civil society or religious. All systems interpenetrate each other, introducing into one another their own set of rules, creating a "moment" of instability.



**Figure 7: Existential and Structural contradictions - Today**

While observing existential and structural contradictions, we note two general tendencies. First, from a structural point of view, we note a fragmentation of the overall construct. Of significance is the previously mentioned disaggregation of the multi-generational

household that not only breaks apart its integrative capacity, but also isolates individuals. Second, accompanying the disaggregation, we note the multiplication of new "actors" on the scene.

Regarding existential contradictions, we observe that the importance of the community, composed of the networking of families, is losing ground as they are breaking apart and the "courtyards are dying out". This responsibility is increasingly pushed down to the individual households, often composed nowadays by single individuals. Horizontally, the former integration of contradictions that occurred at the community/society level has all but disappeared. It is replaced by the voluntary relationship between individuals and their church. This movement is significant for multiple reasons. It is important to note that it is within households that *individuals* decide to maintain some form of relationship with the church, and based on the observations, it is clear that the current trend is not favorable, further isolating the individual and the household in dealing with existential contradictions<sup>340</sup>.

The second observation of significance is the nature of the horizontal integration happening at the level of the Churches. In the prior model, community and society integrated to create a vertical continuum. Now, as we have seen, with the apparent extinction of the community beyond the household, the churches become the sole integrators of existential and structural contradictions. And for the latter, they point in two different directions: for the Magyar community, the three churches create explicit links with neighboring Hungary, while for the Ukrainian churches<sup>340</sup> point toward Kiev

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<sup>340</sup>The orthodox Church in Ukraine has two patriarchates: Kiev and Moscow. *Patriarchate* (Greek *patriarcheia*; Latin *patriarchatus*) is the derived word meaning a patriarch's office, see, reign, or, most often, the territory he governs. It corresponds to episcopacy, episcopate, and diocese in relation to a bishop.

or Moscow. This, however, must be placed in the context of the ethnographic observations, where it was apparent that although "Magyariness" is strongly encouraged and emphasized, one should not overestimate the impact of the churches as integrative, even mobilizing factors. The current tendency lends more towards a fading away of existential worries to deal with the "here and now" of structural contradictions, i.e. surviving every day combined with the isolation of the household and the individual.

In the case of the Roms, the effect of walling up discussed previously prevents the dislocation of the communal life into smaller elements, creating physical ghettos found in the margins of many towns and villages in Zakarpattia, and in Palágy-Komoróc. The horizontal and vertical integrative process between subjective and objective contradictions for the Rom community follows a similar pattern of fragmentation. Implicitly excluded from church activities, there is little space for horizontal integration with the rest of the villagers. Through the isolation process, they gradually overtake institutions like schools and physical space for living, living side by side with the other villagers rather than forming an integrated whole.

With these observations, we can see that the former integration at the horizontal level, bringing the networked households and the Roms into an integrated environment, has been dismantled and re-shaped into an apparently dislocated arrangement. On this horizontal level, we see a Magyar community fragmented unto itself but still finding an integrative process at two levels: the remnants of the nested households and the churches.

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For more see, Fortescue, A. (2013). Patriarch and Patriarchate. The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York, Robert Appleton Company (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11549a.htm>).

The Roms and the Ukrainian-speaking newcomers are increasingly entrenched and isolated physically, with very little capacity to integrate horizontally at the village level.

This fragmentation and isolation is further emphasized vertically by the replacement of a relatively simple continuum between the individual and the state by a great number of actors. Figure 7 should not be seen from a hierarchical perspective, but rather as a fragmented constellation of actors interacting directly with communities and amongst themselves. Instead of having an integrative space, where horizontal and vertical integration is occurring, we have a very disjointed perspective. Individuals and households may have diverse interactions on different planes at the same time without the integrative structure that unites them under one common roof.

In this section, I focus on the existential and structural contradictions in an effort to map the environment. Through this diachronic perspective, we observe that the former environment provided a seemingly coherent horizontal and vertical integration of systems and seamless continuum between places where existential and structural contradictions were dealt. Both forms of (in)securities blended at the community/society level, creating a harmonious effect that comforted both the requirement for feeling secure and the assurance that every day survival was not compromised.<sup>341</sup>

The on-going environment is still re-adjusting from the major traumatic change in both political and economic system that influenced, if not penetrated, all the other systems of the environment, namely the legal, educational and religious systems. Through an extremely chaotic period from a systemic perspective, people re-adjusted their lives to new conditions and premises that are still quite unpredictable. This is what

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<sup>341</sup> Although "harmonious", it is important to note that the environment nonetheless collapsed. It is not the scope of this research to explore this collapse, although I argue that my analytical model could be used for such an endeavour.

we call structural contradictions and in the present situation, the capacity to predict and prevent, although improved, still does not leave much room for longer term planning. Under the immediacy and urgency of surviving the everyday, whether it is to make sure one remains healthy in bad medical environment or simply to have enough money to pay their creditors, people adapted their lives to the new, and still emerging environment.

Through the current differential between arrangements to deal with existential and structural contradictions we see the dislocation between community, "the human association viewed as a set of relations desired for their own sake" (Unger 1987, p.43), and society, for which "social reality is a constructed reality in which agents and societal structures are mutually constitutive of one another" (Risse-Kappen in Weller 2000, p.54). The next section analyzes the consequences of this dislocation.

### 3.9.3 Dislocation

In this section, I address the idea of the dislocation between community and society and continue my investigation of the contours of the political. Before we move on, I must reiterate that concepts like community and society remain intellectual constructs attempting to explain, or even name, ways of understanding how humans live together. In this perspective, the community/society continuum is marked by the separation between feelings and rationality. Therefore, there is a form of association called "community" where irrational, or at least unexplainable, feelings motivate the association of human beings. On the other hand, society represents the deliberate and rational construction and organization of togetherness, where, one might argue, one finds the polity and politics. And it is from this relationship that I propose to move forward in the analysis.

The key to unlocking or highlighting the demarcation between community and society has been the concept of security. As we have seen, using the ethnographic approach and re-building based on existential and structural contradictions, we can "see" community and society, and question the idea that "nationalism, ethnicity, separatism, and other forms of social fragmentation can thus be understood as specific expressions of community formation which can come into being under certain conditions and can serve either to advance or to hinder the society-formation process that is advancing at the same time" (Weller 2000, p.45). To the contrary, as an initial conclusion, my research has shown that, identity is not to be found solely in the subjectivity of community, as an imagined phenomenon, but rather through the continuum between the subjectivity of community and the rationality of society. In other words, this analysis shows that Weller's "nationalism, ethnicity, separatism and other forms of separatisms", rather than being subjective forms of defining "community", are instead produced through the rationality of society. This view contradicts Benedict Anderson's view that the nation "...is imagined as a *community*<sup>342</sup>, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 2006, p.7). From my analysis, if we are to accept that there is such a place of belonging that is called "community" that stands on precepts of subjective feelings, then this work shows that it does not stand on foundational grounds but is rather re-imagined, not along Anderson's line of nationalism, but along lines of insecurity.

To elaborate on the previous statement, I am not suggesting that Anderson's concept of *imagined* community is erroneous. My analysis shows that it is the horizontal and vertical integration of imagination, to paraphrase Anderson, and rationality that

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<sup>342</sup> Emphasis in Anderson's book.

makes nationalism possible. Recall, however, that Anderson does not separate the notions of nation and state.<sup>343</sup> From this point of view, in order to maintain the integrity between territory, state and a group of humans in harmony, both existential and structural contradictions must find an integrative process to create a continuum.

Under the current re-organization in Ukraine, we observe that the integration from individual to a political arrangement called the state has been dislocated and fragmented in multiple pieces. The fine balance between the territorial integrity of the state and newly acquired freedom has been compensated by the actual "re-imagination" by communities at the local level in order to find a new equilibrium in their dealings with subjective and the objective contradictions. The walling up of communities and the migration of individuals and families are symptoms of these adjustments. These re-alignments break-up the former integrative construct that provided for the harmony between people from different ethnic, religious and linguistic origins within a same territory.

It is on this basis that identities are to be understood. They are always multiple and vary from the individual loyalty to his/her family or clan all the way up to the flag, which represents the highest level of integration of security. The magnitude of the change that has been occurring for the last twenty years in Palágy-Komoróc and the region more generally has shifted and displaced the imaginary to the point where the line between the individual that belongs to a group, a nation and a state has been broken into multiple fragments, all trying to find their way to harmonize their sense of community, society and security.

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<sup>343</sup> "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community as both inherently limited and sovereign". Anderson, B. (2006). Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London New York, Verso. Pp. 5-6.

My analysis shows that it is not identity as a starting point that enlightens the path to understanding the political system. Rather, it is the continuum between community and society observed through the lens of existential and structural contradictions. In order for it to be a useful tool, this relationship should be seen as co-constitutive rather than separate. So, instead of looking at the change depicted in figures 6 and 7 as a compression, a retraction of sorts to the "benefit" of the rationalism of society construction, we should see it as a fragmentation of multiple community/society relationships.

#### 3.9.4 A Curious Paradox

The discussion so far showed that the dislocation between community and society at the local and regional level gives the impression, as presented in section two, of a simple compression. In other words, the change from figure 6 to figure 7 shows that the community "lost ground" to the rationality of society. This is an impression conveyed by the lag or the differential between the discourses and acts that are enshrined in a set of codes and norms, and the adaptation to the changing systems. When we observe and listen to the environment, we are still exposed to old habits and simulacra of the past that blur the perspectives and clues helping define the current structure. The different systems - political, economic, and legal - interpenetrate each other under the influence of change in the environment, but maintain their communicative ways and means. These codes and norms become extremely complicated to decipher as they are mixed and somewhat taken over by interacting systems, not only for the ethnographer, but for the people confronted by the changes themselves. Moreover, not only are the codes and norms challenging in their present context, they also carry forward, through stories, memories, habits, and

institutions of the past, all overlapping with the present.<sup>344</sup> And they obscure the political by presenting "identity" as the principal discourse.

In order to cut through this confusion, I am suggesting that instead of observing the relative compression/expansion of community and society as reified objects affecting each other, we should observe them through conflicting discourses shaping an environment. In this case the metaphorical "communicating vessel" is represented by the state as an immutable container of those communities and societies it is responsible to protect. The discourses represent the "social structures and processes [are] organized through institutions and practices, such as the law, the political system, the church, the family, the education system and the media, each of which is located in and structured by a particular discursive field" (Weedon 1987, p.35).

Following the discourses defining those institutions along the lines of structural contradictions, we observe a fundamental reconfiguration of the arrangements of politics. Instead of having a vertical conduit that integrates and deals with the different aspects of structural security, whether it is education, pension, or health within a bounded territorial framework we call the state, we observe a multi-layered mix of arrangements. Whether we account for the funneling of money from Hungary through the KMKSZ, the funding of children attending Hungarian-speaking schools, international NGOs' support for the Rom community or even the massive numbers of migrant workers heading for the EU on a daily basis, all these arrangements fall outside of the purview of the Ukrainian state. These particular arrangements to deal with the structural contradictions have been

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<sup>344</sup> For more on this topic see Pisano, J. (Forthcoming 2013). Pokazukha and Cardiologist Khrenov: Soviet legacies, legacy theatre, and usable pasts. The Historical Legacies of Communism: State Executives, Property, Law, and Geopolitics since the 1970s. M. Beissinger and S. Kotkin. New York, Cambridge University Press. And Boym, S. (2001). The future of nostalgia. New York, Basic Books.

integrated at the community level, creating islands of ethnicities based on language or ethnic origins. Within each of these reconfigured communities, practical solutions are sought to deal with the structural insecurities from which the state has either retracted, or does not show the capacity to address.

Interestingly, although these strategies are often observed in terms of migration, such as Ukrainian citizens moving "out" of Ukraine, the identity-territoriality disruption also occurs within the borders of the state itself. NGOs moving in to create projects, Hungary sponsoring local politics and donors supporting churches are strategies contributing to the identity-territory rupture. This rupture is met with resistance and we see the "state" react, by either compensating through programs of social protection or by introducing coercive measures to restrain people territorially. For example, the visa regime imposed on Ukrainian citizens wishing to enter the EU is managed and influenced not only by EU member states' agents that impose prohibitive measures,<sup>345</sup> but also by constraining Ukrainian administrative regulations and other forms of pressures. We will remember the pressure on those Magyars who seek Hungarian citizenship: no government employee is allowed to apply, as well as pressure from the SBU (Ukrainian secret service) on citizens proceeding with their application.<sup>346</sup>

This outreach beyond the boundaries of the territorial state creates a curious paradox. Through this confusing image of apparent chaos, following the leads provided by our study along the lines of security, we can identify a fundamental rupture in the unified perception of territoriality. We observe that the alignment between the individual

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<sup>345</sup> High prices, distance from the application centres, convoluted administrative requirements. See Tuchynska, S. (2010). Ukrainians: Visas still too difficult to obtain for travel to European Union nations. KyivPost, <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ukrainians-visas-still-too-difficult-to-obtain-for-84568.html>.

<sup>346</sup> See Chapter 4, Section 2.4.3.

and the territorial state is challenged by a deep reconfiguration that breaks down the territorial integrity of the state. This was shown by the change in the alignment between community and society, where communities realign their strategies to respond to their structural contradictions. This realignment of strategies re-creates new community/society linkages that integrate a multiplicity of options.

### 3.9.5 Different codings

In order to elevate the conversation beyond the grassroots observations, the current sections address the codings, or vocabularies, that characterize the communicative aspects of the logics identified previously. As we move into the systems' theorization, we are not necessarily moving away from the lived experience; we are shifting our ontological view to systems, and as such, adopting or using a new vocabulary. We will remember that in Luhmann's theorization, systems are characterized and differentiated by communication; and each of these systems have a particular coding. For example the legal system's communication ensemble comprises the laws, but also the procedures, the robes and accoutrements, the ceremonials etc. (Luhmann 1995, pp.142-143).<sup>347</sup>

The purpose of this first attempt at coding, or naming, is to define the sub-systems that are interacting within the same environment. I expressly say sub-system, as the schism we have observed in the previous sections occurs within the same system, the territorially defined political system within Ukraine. From the previous discussion, we seem to witness today a challenge to the apparent logic of the nation-state, in which the "raison d'état must arrive at [is] state's integrity, its completion, consolidation, and its re-establishment..." (Foucault 2007, p.287) and the appearance of another logic that is not

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<sup>347</sup> As well, I cover this in Chapter Seven, particularly section 3.7.3.

openly confrontational, but complementary or supplementary to the first-order logic found within the dominant nation-state.

The first-order logic stems from the dominant political system that emerged from the radical change in the 1990s. This political sub-system adopted the overarching coding of representational democracy. Since 1991, this sub-system has been defined as a territorially defined state, something that was new for Ukraine. And since, all of its official precepts, codes and norms recognize the trinity of the three fundamental principles upon which we are basing the coding for this system: territory – identity – security, as enshrined in the first four articles of its constitution:

Article 1. Ukraine shall be a sovereign and independent, democratic, social, law-based state.

Article 2. The sovereignty of Ukraine shall extend throughout its entire territory. Ukraine shall be a unitary state.

The territory of Ukraine within its present borders shall be indivisible and inviolable.

Article 3. An individual, his life and health, honour and dignity, inviolability and security shall be recognised in Ukraine as the highest social value.

Human rights and freedoms, and guarantees thereof shall determine the essence and course of activities of the State. The State shall be responsible to the individual for its activities. Affirming and ensuring human rights and freedoms shall be the main duty of the State.

Article 4. There shall be a single form of citizenship in Ukraine. The grounds for the acquisition and termination of Ukrainian citizenship shall be determined by law.

Extract from the Constitution of Ukraine, online,  
[http://static.rada.gov.ua/site/const\\_eng/constitution\\_eng.htm](http://static.rada.gov.ua/site/const_eng/constitution_eng.htm)

In this sub-system that I call identity/territory, all communicative aspects expressed through structures, norm, and laws are based on the indivisibility of the triumvirate identity/territory/security, in which security denotes the protection against all forms of structural contradictions. Through encompassing rules about citizenship,

language, and minorities in general, the coding of these sub-systems attempts to integrate identity vertically and horizontally in order to create the security continuum. I insist that this is the coding for the current dominant *political sub-system* called identity/territory. As we are currently moving towards a systems theory perspective, these comments, although valid in discussing *politics*<sup>348</sup>, in the current context, they are the result of irritations or contradictions from the coupling or interpenetrations of systems.

However, these irritations and contradictions do influence the current environment of territorial Ukraine, and we have seen the weakening of the current identity/territory sub-system and its dislocation identified by an alternate set of codes. In this political sub-system I call security/network, the codes are not enshrined in a constitution and represent a completely different and rather difficult set to grasp. The reason being that there is not one code, but a multiplicity of codes that, when deciphered, gives only a partial perspective of the system. Discussion about migrants, the funding of churches or NGOs acting to help communities then seem disconnected from each other and create multiple level of studies or policy analysis. But taken on their own terms, and changing our perspective, we begin to see that they are all part of a sub-system that finds its coding in the very separation from the dominant one.

In this sub-system, we still find the same triumvirate identity/territory/security, but they are assuming different and adaptable forms. The first adaptation that occurs from the dislocation between security and community is territorial fragmentation.<sup>349</sup> Under

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<sup>348</sup> As a reminder, politics pertains to the enactment in daily life of its activities/discourses.

<sup>349</sup> I prefer fragmentation to "deterritorialization" as the latter term expresses a severance from place. See <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/deterritorialization>

these conditions, the conceptual unicity of territory and sovereignty<sup>350</sup> is challenged, and we see "people"-created multiple community/society continuums, integrating "staying in place" and moving as strategies. The reproduction of communities in different countries and cities does not always represent the same people staying, but rather people moving through them. Or this reproduction takes place virtually in fora such as the "Ukrainian Migrant Network" found on Facebook. At the same time, communities stay fixed such as the Roms of Palágy-Komoróc.

The second schism noticed in the security/network sub-system follows the previous territorial fragmentation. Under these new premises, existential and structural contradictions are separated and not dealt with within the continuum of community to state, but on separate terms. Instead, the subjective realm of security, Anderson's imagined community, is not aligned with the state, but instead re-aligned along the multiplicities of social arrangements possible. The complexity of this arrangement runs deep, as even communities themselves are difficult to identify. It is appropriate here to mention the unique perspective offered by political ethnography, which accounts for these alternative arrangements. With the fragmentation we have underscored in the ethnographic investigations and more recently in Chapter Eight, individuals and groups of individuals may re-imagine a multiplicity of arrangements.

Lastly, as we are discussing coding, I reiterate that these sub-systems share the same political environment, that of territorial Ukraine. However, through all their multiplicity, they express claims that are at the political level. Certain communities do

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<sup>350</sup> "Modern political theory tends to understand geography entirely as territorial: the world is divided up into contiguous spatial units with the territorial state as the basic building block from which other territorial units (such as alliances, spheres of influence, and empires) derive or develop." Agnew, J. A. and M. Kuus (2008). *Theorizing the State Geographically: Sovereignty, Subjectivity, Territoriality*. The Sage Handbook of Political Geography. K. R. Cox, M. Low and J. Robinson. Los Angeles, Sage Publications. P.100

explicitly present those claims. And all the coding found in the sub-system present a challenge or at least a claim to the legitimacy of living in a state of security, perceived and real.

### 3.9.6 Applying Systems Theory to the Model

Using the systems approach to integrate these observations, we see two levels of system interpenetration. As a point of departure, we will remember that in Luhmann's theorization, the political systems remain territorially anchored. From this perspective, Palágy-Komoróc, Zakarpattia and Ukraine form an environment in which two political subsystems are interpenetrating. The first political system pursues an inner logic of maintaining the integrity of identity and territory while the second pursues a logic based on security and territory. We know of these subsystems based on their communication strategies previously highlighted through the analysis of the dislocation between community and society. Each of these subsystems presents self-referential processes that are fundamentally at odds with each other.

One important factor to include in this conversation is that, in this environment, these two political subsystems are not the only ones that interpenetrate. As we have discussed earlier, the change occurring over the last twenty years has not only "shaken" the environment, it has disrupted it at its core. So, while the identity/territory political sub-system is struggling to maintain its integrity, the economic system, amongst many, is also interpenetrating other (sub) systems. One of the effects we have observed at the local level is the relative overlap, if not quasi-fusion between the identity/territory subsystem and the economic system. We have observed, particularly in Chapter Six, the opacity of the superimposition of public and private dealings at the local level. This interpenetration,

observed through the reflecting mirror of polity and politics, shows that the identity/territory *political* sub-system was *itself* reconfiguring.

In fact, ongoing reconfiguration of the identity/territory sub-system is a clue to differentiate it from the security/network sub-system. It became clear throughout the ethnographic investigation that it was difficult to separate economics and politics at the local level. Only in matters of particular policies could we identify the systemic realm. But in most cases of privatization and business, the lines became quickly blurred and confused. The codes and norms crossed through systems. We can analyze this from two perspectives: a temporal and an environmental perspective.

From a temporal perspective, the deep reconfiguration of the coding of the systems, political and economic, did not create a "blank slate", replacing all former codes, norms and structures, but rather adapted, integrated and fused with the new ones. This systemic re-organization does not affect the security/network sub-system as it finds itself excluded from it. In fact, both systems do not interpenetrate each other, they merely couple when interactions occur, but they mostly "learn" to operate independently from each other. As we have seen, it is when issues arise, such as the land fill, when there is an attempt to modify the identity/territory system's coding that irritations occur as the sub-systems interpenetrate each other.

This temporal differentiation, i.e. the identity/territory integrating historical and cross systemic codes and norms, while the security/network, excluded from it, creates its own communicative rules, brings the conversation to a greater communicative realm: the environment. This sub-systemic interpenetration within the territory of Ukraine has not occurred in a vacuum. Instead, it was deeply penetrated horizontally by other political

and economic systems and vertically by a new environment and its own coding of democracy. The complexity of this interpenetration cannot be understated. Of the several movements that have occurred, we can identify the separation of former Soviet republics as independent states; the separation of the countries from the Warsaw pact; the expansion of "Europe" as an idea; the transformation of economy from state-coordinated to market-based; the challenge of neo-liberalism in the newly formed states. And these are just a few examples to illustrate the incredible confusion and pressure in which the environments and systems find themselves.

### 3.9.7 Conclusion

The purpose of the current chapter is to complete the ontological shift that I use to move from ethnographic investigation to systems theorization. Leaning on the previous chapter's analysis, I began by pushing the analysis of the society\community continuum. Mapping the continuum in relation to change, we initially see a compression of the communal as a subjective grouping, with an expansion of the social realm<sup>351</sup>. This mapping is possible as we integrate the places where existential and structural contradictions are dealt with and integrated. The conjunction of the horizontal and vertical integration of community and society that took place at the village/kokhoz level has shifted and fragmented. In its current form, we see not only a multiplicity of integrative arrangements, but also an individualization of the choices made and the realignment of strategies to deal with those contradictions.

As we move closer to systems theorization, the fragmentation and rupture that occurred within the community/society continuum highlighted a number of alternative

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<sup>351</sup> As presented earlier, the rational construction of society.

modes of dealing with existential and structural contradictions that presented themselves as parallel to the dominant *modus operandi* enshrined in the state with its alignment of territory and identity and a specific coding. As the *modus operandi* and its coding does not have capacity to integrate the contradictions, alternate measures are taken to compensate. In systems theory parlance, what occurred over the last two decades is the separation and creation of another political system, parallel to the dominant one based identity/territory and enshrined in the state.

The second political sub-system that I called security/network does not pursue the same logic of the dominant identity/territory sub-system. It breaks with the tradition based on the alignment of state–territory–identity and pursues a logic of movement and flow, as people renegotiate constantly their actions to address their contradictions. In terms of coding, or communication, the new sub-system (security/network) is extremely versatile: instead of reinventing its own coding and enshrining its laws, constitutions, habits, symbols and such, it adapts and uses the existing ones. In other words, as people migrate and move, they adapt and use the systems available to them. While they are moving they are recreating new communities to address their existential contradictions, sometimes based on old existing ones (ethnicity, nationality) or even creating new ones.

With this final chapter of the systemic theorization I wanted to accomplish a few objectives. First, I wanted to pursue the ontological shift as far I could, and complete the experiment of building a systemic perspective using lived experience. This raises an obvious question: how far can we push? It is clear that in the context of the current dissertation and the fieldwork that I have engaged, that I am at the limit of that capacity.

Not that I could not further the analysis, but in terms of spatial scope (Ukraine, Europe, the World), anything beyond would be an extrapolation.

The second goal is to pursue an image of the political that is consistent with lived experience. The conclusions that I have advanced are anchored in deep political ethnography and create a perspective from which we can begin to theorize the political.

## **PART FOUR : CONCLUSION**

## Chapter 10: Concluding Remarks

Not many cars stop at Palágy-Komoróc as their final destination. Either they drive through to get to the town of Chop, at the border separating Ukraine and Hungary, some fifteen kilometres to the south, or they go to Kisszelmenc, Palágy-Komoróc's sister village, one kilometre away and a passage point to Slovakia. Only the old Soviet-era battered blue bus stops regularly at the centre of the village, carrying locals to and from the principal city of the oblast, Ungvár, some fifteen kilometres to the north. Sitting on a bench, facing the park in Palágy, life seems to stand still. Villagers walk to the store, Rom men on their wooden horse carts travel towards the fields, tractors with their loads of hay pass through the village en route to their farm house. Once in a while, on weekends, groups of Slovak cyclists zoom by, without stopping. Palágy-Komoróc is a quiet village, almost bucolic, where nothing seems to happen.

Yet, there is life. As we have seen, Palágy-Komoróc is not immobile and for the last two decades, dramatic changes have occurred. Yet again, the villagers changed their official allegiance to another state, this time Ukraine, for the fifth or sixth time for people like old Deszö, born in the early 1920's. Nobody bothers to count anymore. Most people in Palágy-Komoróc do not identify with the state; for most people identity is about language and traditions, which over the years became superposed and mixed, creating a community that had roots in most, if not all, the households.

As I travelled through Zakarpattia and sat on benches in Palágy-Komoróc, immersing myself over the last five years, I became aware of the profound changes that are occurring in the village and beyond. Following the premise of the "onion," peeling away at observations as time passed, I learned about the fundamental changes within

family structures, the dislocation of an apparently seamlessly networked community, and the reconfiguration of life in Palágy-Komoróc. As I sat on a village bench, facing the park with cows grazing in the morning, this village with no apparent interest to most of the world became the object of the dissertation you have just read.

It is from the apparent peace encountered in the quiet, almost mundane life of Palágy-Komoróc that the idea of using security as focalizing lens emerged. During the immersion in the village from year to year, I can safely affirm that the word "security" rarely, if ever, came up explicitly. However, as time passed and I became increasingly aware of the issues driving the local life, the idea of security, in all its multiplicity, surfaced repeatedly in my interactions with people. It is these discourses and acts that eventually populated the ethnographic analysis as I was deconstructing the village along the lines of interaction. Fear of death and sickness, expressions of denigration against a neighbour or a group, frustrations in the face of resistant bureaucrats or the migration of the younger generation to a neighbouring country, are all pieces of the great puzzle of security.

These clues are were all very important and need to be theorized in order to draw any analytical conclusions. In other words, as much as the ethnographic work provided a deep and rich perspective of Palágy-Komoróc and Zakarpattia, it was necessary to further theorize it in order to observe the political. As one of my goals was to extricate the ethnography from the local perspective through theorization, I turned to structuration and complex systems theory, both integrating security in their analytical framework without reifying the object of study. In other words, I could re-build the perspective without naming security, but rather giving it characteristics, such as predictability and

contradictions. Clearly, in future work, these concepts could be refined to introduce additional complexity, integrating ideas such as risk, fear or trust.

Although my field site sits at the edge of the European Union, separated by barbed wire fences, soldiers and dogs, security in my work does not come out explicitly as the traditional fear of a potential invader. Further, from an ethnographic perspective, security per se is an awkward concept, difficult to deploy as it quickly begs the question "security of what?" For the people in the villages, the border is a symbol of separation, economic opportunity as well as envy and frustration. Observing security through the lens of first order actors – people - I seek to reclaim the concept from the battle of referents and make it a useable, analytical concept.

It is in my second movement with the theoretical re-construction based on the ontological shift that the use of security becomes central. Here, I deconstruct the idea of "security" in sub-pieces and integrate them to the systems theorization completing the shift from first to second order hermeneutics. This mechanical theorization of security leads to observe and analyze the paradigmatic shift that is occurring in the world today. It is by highlighting the intimate relationship between the political and security that we can begin to comprehend the true complexity of the system and harmonize International Relations as a field with the way world society is moving and acting.

In the dissertation, security is not used as a stand-alone concept. Rather, it is used in a paradigmatic relation with the political, and it is exactly by highlighting this relationship that we can have a glimpse at both. With Foucault, in Chapter Two, I presented the uncoupling of two fundamental principles - the *principae naturae* and *ratio*

*status*, (Foucault 2007)<sup>352</sup>—that created the natural realm of the political. The theorization that I presented implicitly challenges the position of the political solely in *ratio status*, and suggests that it is within the dislocation, not the severance, between *principae naturae* and *ratio status*, that we can uncover the political.

Rather than assuming *ratio status* as the place of the political, and the state its enactment, my earlier analysis regarding the dislocation of the society/community dyad indicated their intimate, if not inseparable, relationship. Foucault's governmentality in my theorization is the careful assemblage and integration within the political structure of the means to address existential and structural dilemmas. In Chapter Nine we view this intimate relationship through the dislocation of community and society, and the reorganization of those subjective and objective values along different lines. In other words, what we see today is not the eradication of *principae naturae*, but indeed, its rearticulation along different lines with *ratio status*.

This is not to suggest that the state has disappeared, or ceases to be relevant. The systemic perspective offered in this dissertation shows a struggle of sub-systems within a territorial environment defined by contemporary Ukraine. But beyond this struggle, we also observe a more fundamental restructuring of the foundational coding of the state. Here, the state is not the Foucaultian state that emerged with Modernity as a self-referential unit, providing security and applying violence within its limits on its own terms. Instead, from this perspective, the state struggles to integrate existential and structural contradictions, while another system cuts across the territorially-based political systems. This other *political* system, instead of "owning" its own polity, uses multiple

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<sup>352</sup> Chapter Two, Section 1.2.3.

venues, and as such, cannot claim political autonomy in the traditional sense, but rather designates a new form of legitimacy.

In order to expose and theorize the rearticulation of *principae naturae* and *ratio status*, I built the dissertation on a double-movement at the heart of an ontological shift that sought to ground the theoretical framework in a detailed ethnography. The nature of this ontological shift is based on a framework that draws on Giddens' structuration theory and Luhmann's Modern Systems Theory, which allows me to integrate the ethnographic analysis.

As a political ethnographer interested in theorizing his research, the double-movement approach gave me the freedom to choose when to integrate the conceptual perspectives. As both the political and security exist as second-level observation and analysis, I was able to keep my ethnographic work free from these concepts. In other words, it gave me the freedom to immerse myself in the "field" without the burden of looking for something, namely "security" or the "political". Instead, I deconstructed the environment in the first movement, creating the empirical toolbox for the reconstruction/theorization in the second movement. Building theory in this context is not about generalizing from the local, but the production of a specific type of knowledge anchored in lived experience that can reach beyond the local. In addition to providing an epistemological capacity to integrate experience into a theoretical framework, rather than awkwardly integrating both at the same time, the shift towards systems theory expands the knowledge acquired within togetherness to an enlarged vision. There is a danger of going beyond the purview of our empirical observation and entering the terrain of extrapolation. Instead, a meticulous approach will highlight the possible limitations of

such theorization and suggest possible subsequent lines of investigation that might further enlarge our perspective.

One of the principal goals of this research — from the initial prospectus, through fieldwork and the final analytical stage—was to create the possibility of observing the world and my field site as a stage, and the political as the performance. The strategy I developed was to conduct an ethnography in which I would deconstruct the metaphorical stage in order to gather enough information to reconstruct a well-informed perception of the political. Although the plan was sensible in theory, I faced two challenges. First, I was confronted with the dilemma of choosing between structure and agency, or to negotiating a balancing act to maintain both equidistant. Second, I had to decide along which discursive elements or vocabulary I was going to name the deconstructed pieces.

The theoretical approach that allowed me to address these dilemmas was the idea togetherness. This concept stems from Burton's World Society, which challenges the Westphalian view of International Relations (IR) in which the state is the main unit of analysis (Little 2004), engages "the total environment in which the behaviour of individuals, groups, nations and states occurs" and is based on the premise that "the behaviour of one part of the society affects the behaviour of others" (Burton 1972, p.4). Treating the social world as a whole, without pre-supposing a certain arrangement, this approach gave me the possibility of treating my field site as a "blank slate" and deconstruct it in order to uncover its organization.

World society, however, proved to be difficult to transpose to the local within the framework of an ethnography. Therefore, I altered the concept to make it more adaptable and transportable. Togetherness proved to be a valuable methodological tool, allowing

me to deconstruct my field site along discursive lines. Treating the field site as one "piece" of knowledge, I could then break it apart following different lines of investigation. As an epistemological concept, it created the possibility of defining a field site without physical or other conceptual boundaries. Moreover, it freed me from entering a field site with a list of categories of analysis that could have tainted the research from the very beginning. For example, using togetherness, I did not have to "look for" Magyars or others; rather, I was able to let the discourse lead me to the categories of practices that were true to the village. Togetherness also holds the advantage of focusing on interactions rather than on individuals, groups or structures. This was not only important as I wanted to free myself as much as possible from the agency-structure dilemma, but also in the context of my subsequent use of Modern Systems Theory. In this line of theorization, systems are differentiated by their communicative referents. This means that we define systems by their codes, norms and their interactions. Using the relational perspective within the framework of togetherness proved to be an essential element to further integrate in the systems theorization.

For the political ethnographer, the concepts of togetherness and ontological shift are very useful tools to explore beyond the local and harmonize the process of theorization. The question arises as to the limit of this approach and to what extent one can extend this limit to encompass a larger perspective. This question can be addressed from different perspectives that complement one another. From the perspective of togetherness, it is the choice of the researcher to determine the extent of his reach. Togetherness is not like an umbrella that covers more or less "field" depending on its size. Instead, it is relative to the positioning of the researcher, and thus its reach is relative

to the time allocated to research and the capacity to extend and follow the interactional linkages. Togetherness is highly adaptable and exportable, capable of being used in most, if not all contexts.

With the ontological shift, the researcher separates levels of analysis by creating a second level of interpretation. The first ethnographic level consists of gathering the information and applying a first level of analysis. In the current dissertation, this movement was characterized by the deconstruction along types of interactions. The second movement consists of shifting our conceptualization of the world in order to further our analytical capabilities. In the present case, this second hermeneutical move consisted of reconstructing the environment and creating a systemic view of the field. This movement builds on Giddens' idea of double hermeneutic and gives the option to the political ethnographer to separate levels of analysis in a systematic way by creating the appropriate analytical framework for the second level. Furthermore, it lends credibility to the text, as it frees the political ethnographer from the purely narrative account, shifting the emphasis to the theoretical discussion.

It is then necessary to account for these levels of analytical integration in order to create the credibility required. More, it is useful to think about the deployment of different strategies to expand the reach, both of togetherness and of the ontological shift. One such strategy could be borrowed and expanded from Michael Burawoy's global ethnography in the form of collaborative work adopting similar methodological and epistemological perspectives (Burawoy 2000). While this approach quite requires commitment and coordination, it offers the potential to reach beyond the local and create a much larger perspective informed by grounded ethnography.

This dissertation began with the intersection of a number of disciplines, fields and sub-fields of social science that provide the necessary conceptual vocabulary to work within this emerging sub-field. Political ethnography is not merely the study of the political using ethnography as a method. It is an approach that is anchored in deep immersion that provides the researcher with the empirical grounds for theorizing the political in the context of people's real, everyday experiences. As an interpretive approach within the tradition of critical theory and action-theory, the sub-field of political ethnography used this way does not propose predictive theorization and the present work should not be read as a view on future social rest or unrest in Zakarpattia. At the same time, being anchored in lived experience and immersed in the environment s(he) is observing, the political ethnographer is in a unique position to feel the tremors of society, and theorize from that starting place.

It is my hope that this dissertation has accomplished three things: First, that in its research design, with a focus on interactions rather than individuals, and suggestion of analytical tools such as “togetherness,” it has offered a possible “way out” of several intractable dilemmas in the study of politics—the contradiction created by the analytical need for specification of the boundaries of political communities where such boundaries are less and less evident; the gravitational pull of the state in contexts where alternate forms of political life are developing; and the arguably rigid epistemological apparatus that frames our ideas about the place of security in how we understand the political. Second, with ontological shift, that it suggests a way forward for theorization in political ethnography, an approach that has long been criticized as overly descriptive or locked in the specifics of the local. And third and finally, that the dissertation points to the potential

for more fully understanding the political, thus offering a small opportunity for rethinking and emancipating aspects of the human project and re-imagining the foundations of the political—as not of crooked timber made, but rather of a material that can, with care and work, be made straight.

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