

MARTOR



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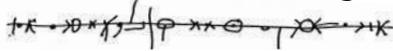
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REVIEWS

The two guest-editors of the volume have decided to include in the special issue a book review section for two reasons. First, the reviewed books have close links with the agrarian question, the topic of the special issue. Cornel Micu and Aneliya Kuzmanova who are contributors to the volume are reviewers and respectively the author of one of the reviewed books. Thus, the book reviews reflect and complete the papers in the volume. Ger Duijzings' book review addresses an issue which was not openly addressed in the volume: the social differentiation based on migrants' remittances. Second, the scarcity of books published on the rural areas in Southeast Europe convinced us to include a review section as an addendum to the special issue.

Cornel Micu, *From Peasants to Farmers? Agrarian Reforms and Modernisation in Twentieth Century Romania*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012.



Reviewed by Mihai-Dan Cîrjan

The rural commune which provides the case-study for this complex and sophisticated analysis of 20th century Romanian rural reforms is also the focus of a longish, meticulous and very detailed Wikipedia article¹. Written in Romanian, the Wikipedia entry painstakingly tries to describe the state socialist period, ending with a sentence which summarizes the 1980s: “Radu Perianu, the last communist mayor, a primitive and [politically] zealous tractor-driver, aided by his lover “The Rabid One”, were the dread of the villagers ... [Ultimul primar comunist, Radu Perianu, un tractorist primitiv și zelos, secundat de amanta sa “Turbata”, au fost spaima locuitorilor]”.

This personalized depiction of 1980s' Romania remains, despite its rather quaint humor and awkward sense of agency, a good example of how rural history has been written in this part of the world in the last twenty years. Namely, as an individualized description of the adventures and troubles of the Romanian peasantry in which Radu Perianu can be easily replaced with Nicolae Ceaușescu, while the sexist image of the anonymous *Turbata* is taken over by similarly sexist views on female leaders like Ana Pauker or Elena Ceaușescu. Displaying a

certain degree of abstraction, this personalization may identify the communist elites, the Russia-based Communist Party, or simply the personal will of Charles II or Nicolae Ceaușescu as the main agents within a story heavily underpinned by ethical undertones and within which the collectivization features as the dramatic, central narrative piece.² Despite the abundance of empirical information the archives have recently provided, despite the possibilities opened up by the access to both local and central archives, the fortunes and misfortunes of the Romanian peasantry and, along with it, of Romanian social history, are still seen as the ill-fated results of personal decision, of various well-identified and usually ill-willed heroes. This stands in strange contrast with the history of the working class which, at least recently, has gained a rather different status and has managed to cater for the interest of new Ph.D. students, while new graduate programs dedicated to labor studies have started to appear.

It is the merit of this book to offer an alternative to this type of rural history, allowing a breathing space for narratives which, by going beyond the mere anecdotal, would connect the trajectory of the

1) http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comuna_Bordei_Verde,_Br%C4%83ila.

2) Examples of such perspectives can be found in Aline Mungiu-Pippidi's work or in the 2006 Report of the Romanian Presidential Commission: Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *A Tale of Two Villages: Effects of Coerced Modernisation on the East European Countryside* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2010); *Final Report of the Presidential Commission on the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship* (http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf)

Romanian peasantry to macro-social processes of a larger theoretical scope. One of its results is that the focus on complex social dynamics such as the development of rural administration, the technical and legal infrastructure of the Romanian property regime, or elite-peasantry dynamics is theoretically broad enough to avoid a type of methodological nationalism³ which, alas, has marked Romanian historiography up to this day. If the 2000s have witnessed a certain criticism of the ideological nationalist narratives of Romanian historiography, seldom have Romanian historians taken the next step to provide methodological and theoretical frameworks that would avoid a rather more insidious form of nationalism, embedded in the institutional framework of our academic institutions and in the theoretical underpinnings of our narratives. It is a step that the book manages to take as the ambitious theoretical focus which it evinces can connect the Romanian context with other social trajectories, enabling trans-national comparisons which, at the moment, are still a very rare feature of Romanian social history. In this sense, the methodological and the theoretical vocabulary that Cornel Micu uses is in itself an attempt to actually open up Romanian social history towards another form of politics of history.

That is the reason why, in this review, I will try to focus not on the carefully selected empirical material which supports the author's argument, but on its methodological implications, its theoretical effects. This "discriminatory" perspective might be necessary because these implications, far from merely underpinning the theoretical scaffolding of the book, can actually pinpoint some of the dangers and the opportunities awaiting rural and other social historians. Since the 1950s, social history has been marked, as most social sciences, by its insertion into Cold War politics. Historical debates on modernization processes, rural development, have been essential within this ideology-fraught context⁴. Romanian rural history, however, has seldom taken

heed of this hidden presence within the profession, a presence which has rendered the methodological frameworks and the concepts we use imbued with specific political rationalities⁵. Part of this review is intended to address this issue by tackling the type of vocabulary we might use, as Eastern European historians, in what can hopefully be considered a post-Cold War scholarship.

2. *From Peasants to Farmers* focuses on the modernization projects launched by the Romanian elites in the aftermath of the First World War. The reform projects are interpreted through the lenses of the transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial agricultural production, from peasants to farmers or, in Polanyian language, from embedded economy to dis-embedded markets. Perceived as responses to what classical historical sociology has termed the "problem of backwardness", these projects led to the rural reforms of 1919/1921, 1945 and the post-socialist period, as well as to the set of ongoing processes that followed these responses and their actual implementation. In this sense, the author deftly manages to avoid the danger of reifying these historical moments by seeing the reforms as on-going processes rather than well-defined temporal landmarks⁶. The small commune of Bordeiu Verde, the empirical focus of the book, provides the locale through which these macro-social processes can be observed; an extended case study⁷ through which the interaction between the modernizing elites and the peasants can be analyzed.

As a result of this limited but rich case-study, the book manages to unfold and deploy the empirical results and the oftentimes unexpected consequences that the actual implementation of the reforms had on ground-level. It is through this type of empirical groundwork, backed up by extensive archival research, that the author manages to dismantle the rather vague and overly broad concepts of "state," or "modernization process". There are two important elements through which the interactions between the

3) For a critical perspective on what methodological nationalism is and what it might be, see Daniel Chernilo, "Social Theory's Methodological Nationalism Myth and Reality," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 5–22."

4) Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernisation Theory in Cold War America* (JHU Press, 2003).

5) *Staging Growth: Modernisation, Development, and the Global Cold War, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

6) The rural reform that followed the First World War was a long process which, even officially, was not finished by the beginning of the Second World War.

7) Michael Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method," *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 1 (1998): 4–33.

Romanian modernizing state and the rural countryside are analyzed: on the one hand, the complex network of relationships between various sections of the Romanian elite and, on the other, the infrastructural relays through which reform programs could be implemented. One of the main themes of the book is that the Romanian modernization of the countryside failed since Romanian elites, far from focusing on the economic development of the rural area, harnessed this project to various ideological perspectives: nationalism, the preservation of the post-1918 status-quo or creating an egalitarian society. Regarding the second aspect, the bureaucratic infrastructure of rural development, the book offers - following D. Mueller's work - one of the best analysis of the Romanian state's administrative (in)capacity to establish a secure and stable property structure.

The book relies on a complex model of elites interaction that focuses not only on the contacts between local elites and their central avatars, but also on the differences and conflicts that may appear between different sectors of the local elite itself as well as the hierarchical relationships between them⁸. Some of the conclusions that the author draws are rather surprising: the interwar social structure relied on the co-optation and the support of traditional elites, leading, in this regard, to a renewed form of traditionalism, despite the modernizing discourse of the Romanian central elites⁹. On the other hand, it was only in the communist period that a new layer of professionals could appear due to the well-developed educational system which produced a generation of technicians and experts capable of replacing traditional rural elites. Nevertheless, what was common to both periods was the lack of incentives which might have boosted an economic entrepreneurial class capable of replacing these position elites. It is this botched attempt to provide for an entrepreneurial elite that might have forwarded the transition from a subsistence economy to a market-based economic structure, from peasants to farmers, that the author follows

up throughout its history, being one of the important threads of the book. If it can be easily understood why this attempt was unsuccessful during the state socialist period, the failure of this embourgeoisement project is very well explained by Cornel Micu in respect to the interwar years. It stems not only from the interactions between various elites, but also from the incapacity of the state to secure a viable rural infrastructure: throughout the interwar period, the cadastral laws were never implemented, which impeded legal land transactions and, consequently, a stable market. In respect to this failure of the Romanian administrative and legal infrastructure, historians are faced with a quaint paradox: despite the interventionist stance of the Romanian state throughout this period, the state seldom found the means to actually intervene in rural economic life. And when it did, it seldom managed to actually meet the demands of its own discourse. This does not mean that state policies did not have important effects on rural life: they did swerve, however, from the models sought out by the Romanian elites. Thus, the circulation of land throughout the interwar period was made through informal means which were still very much dependent on traditional social structures such as kinship and matrimonial ceremonies. Moreover, as it is well known in the specialized literature, the legislation hindered the development of a land market for a long time, which might have provided rural entrepreneurs with the possibility of having a head-start in the race for development.

The bewailing of the lack of an entrepreneurial class is strangely reminiscent of a certain *Sonderweg* thesis regarding Eastern Europe in which Romania implicitly and Eastern Europe (more broadly) is constantly compared with a certain view on Western development. This is partly due to a certain cultural hegemony of the West which made our historical actors, the Romanian elites, to constantly draw this comparison and to build their modernization programs on this model. However, while we should take heed

8) See Chapter 3.

9) My own opinion is that this "traditionalism" was as much invented as renewed. One only has to look at the literature created by the Haretian movement, the cooperative movement or ASTRA, to see how much these traditional elites were a programmatic class-creation project rather than a return to traditional social structures.

of this cultural hegemony (and the author is very skilled in analyzing it) the question is whether we, as social historians, should also employ this perspective, whether the transition from peasants to farmer is indeed the model of development that we should use in our historical narratives as an interpretative tool or even, as in Micu's study, as an evaluative yardstick¹⁰. There is a tendency within the book to assess various modernization projects based on a specific notion of rural modernity in which the farmer and market-oriented production are taken up as representative of a successful modernization. Moreover, market and modernization seem to be intimately connected, although various socialist project, including Romanian state socialism, were based on the idea that this is not the case: that it is possible to "modernize" the countryside without entering the global market or accepting capitalist social relations. Furthermore, we now know that even market-based rural economies in the West did not necessarily do away with traditional farm structures based on kinship and family ties, as the book seems to imply¹¹. The ambiguity of the relationship between markets, capitalism and modernization can be traced in the author's assessment of the socialist period and in his discussion of the Romanian National Peasant program. I will focus a little bit on these points since this discussion may bring forward other issues which touch upon what I would call the ethics of methodological distance, the distinction between the etic and the emic which Marvin Harris, one of the book's main references, draws up.

3. Along with Dietmar Mueller, A. Harre and Dumitru Sandru, Micu's analysis of the Peasant Party program is probably one of the most insightful discussions on the Romanian Peasant Party, despite a certain lack of attention for the international character of this type of populist discourse¹². Similarly, the author seems to avoid tackling the anti-capitalist rhetoric which the Peasant Party, despite its practices, resorted to. One

of the main points Cornel Micu makes is a seeming contradiction between the Peasant Party support for small-holding enterprises and cooperatives, on the one hand, and the necessities of a modernized agriculture, on the other. It is this contradiction which led, in the aftermath of the Great Depression, to the bankruptcy of the Peasant Party program. Of course, with the advantage of hindsight, we might now claim that the program was unrealistic, that the Great Depression, as well as the credit crisis of the 1930s proved them wrong. Nevertheless, the lack of credit throughout the 1930s was a problem that affected peasantries throughout the entire world, peasantries that had been subjected to "modernization programs" fairly different from the Romanian one. For instance, the 1930s wave of farm bankruptcies in the United States was just an instance of an overarching mismatch between the demands of the financial system and the necessities of the peasantries across the globe, a mismatch that ran from the American state of Washington to French Indochina¹³.

Moreover, quite a lot of the modernization programs of the interwar period were proven wrong by the Great Depression, including a certain version of market liberalism. Unfortunately, some might say, discourses praising market rationality are still with us today, alive and kicking. In this sense, I think it might be an overstatement to regard the Great Depression as an intellectual retort to the program of the Peasant Party. I say this partly because of the complexity of the Great Depression as a social phenomenon, partly because the intellectual efforts of the Peasant Party went into the direction of criticizing a certain vision of rural modernity: one based on market-oriented farms and on what, from a Polanyian tradition, we might call the dis-embedding of the peasant household from its social determinations. In this sense, when the author says that the policy of the Peasant Party proved unrealistic, one might interpret this claim not simply as a neutral historical evaluation of the populist program, but as a relatively con-

10) For a contextualized criticism of the opposition peasants vs. farmers, see Andrew Cartwright and Nigel Swain, "Finding Farmers': Vital for Policy-Makers but Politically Inexpedient," *Eastern European Countryside* 9 (2003), http://www.soc.umk.pl/eec/2003/1_Cartwright%20Swain.pdf.

11) Chriss Hann "Still an Awkward Class," *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, March 31, 2014, <http://www.praktykateoretyczna.pl/czasopismo/still-an-awkward-clas/>.

12) Pointing out the international character of the Peasant Party's anti-capitalist discourse or the connection they had with the Green International might help us get out of the methodological nationalism conundrum which I mentioned in the beginning of the review.

13) For these two contexts, see Lee J. Alston, "Farm Foreclosures in the United States during the Interwar Period," *The Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 04 (1983): 885-903; Melin, Pierre. *L'endettement agraire et la liquidation des dettes agricoles en Cochinchine*. Paris: Librairie Sociale et Économique, 1939."

tentious clash between two visions of rural modernity: an ahistorical argument between Virgil Madgearu and the present book. How are we to take sides in this debate?

While the interwar period is analyzed as a failure of specific modernization models, having their own coherence and their own inner structure, the socialist state policy regarding agriculture is enjoying a totally different approach. The socialist period seems to be tackled, unlike the party programs of the interwar period, more as a system of policies rather than as an ideological project, more as a day-to-day praxis than as a coherent ideological project¹⁴. We know, however, that the socialist period engendered a fertile, although (partly) hidden discussion over what agriculture and agricultural markets mean or over Romania's role in the global capitalist economy. Despite our (otherwise sound) political intuitions, journals such as *Lupta de Clasa* and *Era Socialista*, in which these debates took place, should be perceived as much more than simple propaganda: they contained a certain ideological rationality that can actually explicate the position(s) of the socialist state regarding economic development. Not taking them into consideration and focusing solely on the policy level may very well impoverish our view on the period, avoiding an analysis of what Stephen Kotkin¹⁵ called the "civilizational" aspect of state socialism, its own developmental logic. Moreover, I think that over-doing the continuities between state socialism and the interwar period, as the book tends to do, presents its own dangers: avoiding the specificities of the socialist developmental project, its anti-market rhetoric, its vision of agricultural production and its own modernization program. This danger becomes even more evident when one avoids discussing the anti-capitalist discourses of the interwar period.

I think that some of these ambiguities in assessing the Peasant Party and the socialist state developmental projects may spring not so much from critical inadequacies, as from a specific concept of modernization which

the author uses and which clashes with both the socialist and the populist perspective of the Romanian Peasant Party. According to the definition borrowed from A. Sterbling, Cornel Micu's modernization presupposes "the extension of economic capacity of production and political participation in a given society."¹⁶ My claim is that this definition not only simplifies quite a lot, but it also disqualifies an entire range of modernization projects (such as state socialism and agrarian populism) which put social rights in its center and viewed "political rights" as useless if devoid of proper access to economic and cultural resources. The Peasant Party has always warned, within the limits of their populist language, that political rights are unusable without a "fair" social organization. The author himself claims that state socialism emphasized social concerns over economic ones in their reform programs. Does this mean that they swerved from the modernization path or simply that they proposed another modernization model in which economic productivism was supposed to listen to social justice constraints? Then, who are we to take sides with: the author or the protagonists of his narrative? To this question one should add that economic and social rationalities cannot be that easily disentangled, not even on a theoretical level. This quaint differentiation between social and economic "reasons" may be the result of a specific history, interspersed with social conflicts and through which economic production became increasingly differentiated from its social embedding¹⁷. An important role to play in this process was a certain vision of modernity which emphasized economic productivity at the expense of social concerns, a vision which seems to be present in the book as well¹⁸. How else are we to interpret the ideological conflict between Romanian liberals and the Peasant Party?

Moreover, it is still unclear what historical examples of modernization the author's definition might refer to. There is a certain claim that modernization was conterminous with the Western model. I will leave

14) Similarly to the analysis of the Peasant Party, there is no discussion over the ideological structures that inspired socialist agricultural policies, its anti-capitalist rhetoric or its refusal of the market as a system of resource distribution.

15) Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

16) Cornel Micu, *From Peasants to Farmers?* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 14.

17) I am referring here to Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), but also to "intellectual histories" such as Pierre Rosanvallon's *Le Libéralisme Économique* (Editions du Seuil, 1989). Ever since Marx and Weber, however, it is the main task of economic anthropology in general to show that economic rationality has a history and this history needs to be told (Chris Hann and Keith Hart, *Economic Anthropology* (Polity, 2011).

18) A good analysis of the productivist bias of modernisation programs is provided by Robert Kurz, *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung* (Eichborn, 1991). (I have used the Portuguese translation *O colapso da modernização*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1992).

aside the justified criticisms that this Western-centered perspective on modernization might receive¹⁹ and ask: which Western model? German state-led capitalist development, British capitalism along with its colonial dimensions, US capitalism and its racial segregation, Italian fascist corporatism, the Italian workers' councils? In the interwar period there were contentious visions of the West: some radical Peasant Party members talked about socialist cooperatives, M. Manolescu looked at fascism as a possible model, Social-Democrats looked at the SPD's anti-capitalist project, the Peasant Party refused the capitalist dimensions of the Western model, etc. These divergent opinions over what the "West" actually meant were underpinned by different modernization projects and class interests, which listened to different discursive constraints. As Elley and Blackburn have tried to show and as some post-colonial scholars have pointed out, the existence of a "Western model" is little more than a discursive trope, used in particular local ideological conflicts²⁰.

Similarly, it is difficult to pin-point the exact elements that make up a "successful" modernization, the specific package that the term modernization bundles up. I find relatively imprecise the contention that every "Western" social feature which led to "increased economic productivity and political participation" is part of a modernization process. How this political participation was defined and how this productivity was reached are also important questions. For instance, one of the arguments used by the author to support his view on the modern influence of EU policies is the surface increase of agricultural holdings. Why this should be a sign of modernization is left unexplained, except for a short note: "in comparison with other EU members, Romania still has the lowest average area for a holding"²¹ The passage is followed by the claim that due to the EU influence "agriculture was no longer used to sustain the industrial development and nation-building process and became, instead, subject of the

capital flow."²² And, indeed, this might be the case, but, again, the question arises: being subject to capital flow is a sign of modernization or simply a sign of capitalism? And if it is a sign of capitalist relations, why not get rid of the word modernization and start talking about markets and capitalism? As in the discussion about state socialism and the program of the Peasant Party, the relationship between modernization, markets and capitalist economy is left in a vague theoretical backwoods.

4. Throughout the book, terms such as backwardness or modernization are used by both author and his actors. Following Marvin Harris's distinction (which the author employs) the distance between the etic and the emic levels remains blurred, as the modernization framework in which the Romanian interwar period and socialist elites thought and acted seems to be shared by the author. The fact that both social actors and the author meet on this common ground raises some important questions regarding the methodological and theoretical framework employed and which go beyond the manner in which the book is conceived and beyond its immediate stakes. As the author himself somehow manages to hint at, the language of modernization vs. backwardness or the modernization of the Romanian village are not just problems of the scholarly discourse, but also important ideological tools. In a context where modernization claims can function as an important political strategy, the historian's attitude towards this discourse should be much warier. Moreover, due to the specific Cold War academic context and of its impact on peasant studies, this language has been layered with specific ideological substructures which I believe should be made evident, rather than internalized and employed as a conceptual framework. These concepts were and, unfortunately, still are deeply immersed in the political and public discourse of various social groups, as well as in the politics that social sciences enact²³.

19) See for instance Gurminder K. Bhabra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke, 2007). Or the classical Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

20) David Blackburn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Jean-François Bayart, "Postcolonial Studies: A Political Invention of Tradition?" *Ab Imperio* 2013, no. 2 (2013): 65–96.

21) This opens up a historical question over the adequate size of agricultural holdings, a question which has been nagging rural economics since their inception. One should add that the adequate size depends on a variety of variables (types of crop, access to credit and modern machineries, access to markets, etc) which do not automatically disqualify small holdings as backwards or inefficient.

22) Micu, *From Peasants to Farmers*, 262.

23) For instance, in today's Romania, the discourses of the main political players regarding agricultural policies get their legitimation from a consensus regarding the proper "modernization" of the countryside: creating a commercial, farm-based rural economy.

24) Frederick Cooper, "Modernity," *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 2005, 113–49

25) Cooper, 146.

26) "Neither the temporal patterns nor the contents of change fit the colonial modernity package—or alternative packages—but the story of this volatile moment suggests another way of looking at the language of modernity: as a claim-making device... We see here how the idea of modernization was used in a particular context and we can trace the effects of its usage and its relation to politics on the ground." (Cooper, 146–147)

27) Martha Lampland, "False Numbers as Formalizing Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 377–404.

28) For a critique of EU agricultural policies in Eastern Europe, see Nigel Swain, "Agriculture 'East of the Elbe' and the Common Agricultural Policy," *Sociologia Ruralis* 53, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 369–89. Gorton, M., C. Hubbard and L. Hubbard (2009) "The folly of EU policy transfer: why the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) does not fit Central and Eastern Europe." *Regional Studies* 43 (10) pp. 1305–1317; Grant, W. (2008b) *Richest farmers benefit from CAP funding. Common Agricultural Policyblog*, Saturday 17 May, 2008. Available online at http://commonagpolicy.blogspot.co.uk/2012_01_01_archive.html last Accessed 26 May 2014.

29) L. Alan Winters, "The European Agricultural Trade Policies and Poverty," *European Review of Agricultural Economics* 32, no. 3 (September 1, 2005): 319–46.

I think that, in this sense, it might be useful to take heed of some of the warnings F. Cooper made in relation to modernization studies, but also in respect to the proliferation of the modernity concepts which we have been witnessing in recent years²⁴. Namely, instead of talking about modernization as a package of elements and instead of employing it as a conceptual framework, we should try to unpack it, to see how social actors related not to "modernization" as such, but to various social realities such as market, liberal discourses, specific social configurations. More importantly, one should see modernization not as a phenomenon, but as a specific "claim-making device"²⁵, as a specific legitimization discourse used in various manners by our historical actors.

The Peasant Party, the Communist or the Liberal ones have tried to prove that their programs would bring about the modernization of the countryside. Instead of showing that they had failed in doing so and instead of proposing our own modernization theory and our own set of political choices, I think it is much useful to try to analyze the structure of these discourses and their pragmatic effects²⁶. It would be useful to see the way in which our historical actors use these frames without necessarily adopting or espousing modernization theories as if the ideological battles of the Cold War would have never happened. This attention to the modernization discourses that our actors employed might trigger not only a focus on political programs and on official discourses, but also on the political implication of the administrative and technological infrastructure on which these modernization programs relied. Cornel Micu does an incredible job of emphasizing the importance of professionals for the interwar period and especially for the post-war era. Moreover, we know from Martha Lampland, that far from being simple, neutral technocratic discourses, the practices these professionals enacted contained important political presuppositions over what

peasant economic production meant and how development should be envisioned²⁷.

I think that historicizing modernization discourse instead of employing it as a conceptual framework can be a strategy which might push Romanian social history into a post-Cold War framework. Not only because we might avoid the theoretical deadlock of a teleological Western-centered perspective on Eastern Europe, but also because of the political implication that this might bear. By reinforcing some of the Cold War understandings of modernization we tend to forget all too easily that agricultural production is also embedded in concrete social relations with very concrete social effects. The theoretical outshoots of this position is that, for instance, we keep avoiding any discussion over the economic inequalities which EU agricultural policies have spawned across the European Union and the effects that they have had on the social welfare of Romanian villages²⁸. We know that, despite the CAP rhetoric, big farms are actually rewarded much more than small farms: having in view its land distribution, the effects can be socially damaging for Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the fact that the peasantries in South-Asia and South America are, to a certain extent, negatively affected by the EU's CAP is also, again, a fact much too easily brushed aside in the Romanian scholarship²⁹.

Cornel Micu's *From Peasants to Farmer* manages to bring all these topics, questions and quandaries together in one of the most elegant and, for Romanian historiographical field, motivating analyses in recent years. Due to this nifty mixture of painstaking archival research and theoretical adroitness, Bordei Verde and its history can be considered the beginning of an inquiry over how Romanian and Eastern European social history has dealt with its past and how it should envision its future, over the methodologies that we use and the politics that we enact through them.