

A City on Romania's Map?
A Few Considerations about Labor and Everyday Life in Călan, 1950-1965
(Abstract)

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This article investigates the social dimension of the industrialization process in Romania during the first decade of the communist regime by a case study: the steel production center of Calan located in the Hunedoara region. It pays a particular attention to the ways in which the mobility of the labour force towards the Victoria Steel Plants influenced the process of urbanization in the area. This investigation is based on the employment records of the workers of this industrial center. These files include autobiographies, letters of recommendations, technical evaluations, as well as personal information about the workers' financial situation and family, education, employment history, political activity prior to 1945. Given the highly influential part of the propagandistic discourse, I premise on the assumption that such documents illustrate an outcome of the joint between the official identity and individual interests. Accordingly, this article argues that the state-led program of intensive industrialization, urbanization and mobility of the labor force conducted by the Romanian communist government during the 1950s had two effects. First, the decision-making factors developed a well-shaped hierarchical bureaucratic network across the country, which had to secure the functioning of the program and the financial and material economic resources through institutional control and loyal elites' involvement. Second, as the population's transfer from rural to urban areas occurred given the political program of agricultural collectivization, the integration of the new comers within the urban space as well as their every day practice were profoundly marked by the previous experiences, subjective reading of the state-led politics and personal interests and expectations. This coincided with a complicated process of renegotiation of the collective and individual identities within the Romanian socialist public space. While for the state, industrial work was a conducted collective experience, and labor was both means to the regime's self-legitimizing drive and illustrative of the commensurate increase in the population's consumer satisfaction, workers experienced labor individually by acceptance and/or contestation of some spaces, which took multitude of forms.