

Windows, Window-makers, Double-glazed Windows and Entrepreneurs: Post-socialist Transformations in the Bucharest community of Margau window-makers

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Introduction and Objectives



Fig. 1. Family photographs of Mărgău window-makers in the early 1900s.

This paper is an account of the anthropological research that I have been conducting since 2005, on a professional community of window-makers who migrated from a rural area of Romania (the village of Mărgău, northern Transylvania) and settled in the peripheries of Bucharest between 1940 and 1990. During socialism they were grouped under the state-owned Window Processing Cooperative (CTS) and had developed a professional dialect - *gumușasca* - which they used to escape the constraints of planned economy.



Fig. 2. Diamond tools for cutting



Fig. 3. Manufacturer using conventional cutting tools

OBJECTIVES

➤ the way in which the community of practice underwent various changes in the socialist era, as well as the post-socialist transformations upon the window industry

➤ the labour shift between centralized and secondary economy during socialism and the recent influence of global technological trends and of the European Union quality standards.

➤ the way in which the new technologies modify their perceptions on work and time, as the community evolves from manufacturing work, associated with the still-functioning Window Processing Cooperative to industrial process of labour and adoption of new technologies, characteristic to the entrepreneurial segment of the community ("young blood") and the dynamic of labour market inside the industry.

Early 2000

The emergence of a market for double-glazed windows (its appearance on the Romanian market had all the indicators of a striking event).

Turning point in the professional transition from artisans to entrepreneurs.

Metaphor for:
➤ the market changes
➤ the transformations occurred in the labour process and the "transition to market economy".

I am also interested in the manner in which the cooperative and non-cooperative artisans imagine market-placement strategies on a market apparently dominated by those artefacts produced in hyper-technological industrial spaces.

Methods

Direct observation and semi-structured discussions in the context of repeated short and long-term visits in:

- CTS workshops
- workshops of small independent manufacturer entrepreneurs
- the premises of double-glazed window companies belonging to the young entrepreneurs (offices as well as industrial facilities)



Fig. 4. Double-glazed window production facility

Extensive interviews with manufacturers, workers for double-glazed window companies and entrepreneurs (influential actors) focused on the specific changes in the work field and on the window-consumption

Initiation of fictional price-offer requests for windows in order to gain direct access to the performance of sale strategies and to discussions about the window market

Readings of specialized magazines and of researches on window consumption

Discussion

"In the time of communists we were capitalists, in capitalism we are communists!" (CTS president)

The ethnographic material opens directions of interpretations connected to the anthropology of work in the context of globalisation, anthropology of kinship in the post-socialist context when vertical skill-transmission ceased, economic anthropology of a period characterised by the consumption of fetish-objects of domestic and industrial furniture (the double-glazed windows) but also about the way in which different actors imagine a management of the economic crisis emerging in Romania in the early 2009.

I regard the double-glazed window as an example of an object taken for granted - one particular type of window dominates Romanian urban landscape (and not only)* by its nature of fetish object, but also one full of tensions.

**"Using the phrase 'blindingly obvious', it considers the problems posed by objects that have become ubiquitous" (Manifesto for a study of denim, *Social Anthropology*, Volume 15 Issue 3, Pages 335 - 351)



Double-glazed window - a social fashion - a way to express status and an intrinsic condition to subjectively define comfort.

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